
Subject: Re: Making help for your own functions & procedures

Posted by [knight](#) on Fri, 16 Apr 1993 22:17:41 GMT

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A recent thread (repeated below) concerns making help for your own functions. Here's what I do. On all functions and procedures I include a keyword help, which, when set, triggers doc_library to print the header. For example,

```
IDL> legend,/help
```

```
% Compiled module: LEGEND.
```

```
% Compiled module: DOC_LIBRARY.
```

```
% Compiled module: DL_UNIX.
```

```
----- Documentation for /usr/local/idl/lib/local/legend.pro -----
```

```
Name:
```

```
    legend
```

```
Purpose:
```

```
    This procedure makes a legend for a plot. The legend can contain  
    a mixture of symbols, linestyle, Hershey characters (vectorfont),  
    and filled polygons (usersym).
```

```
Examples:
```

```
    The call:
```

```
        legend,['Plus sign','Asterisk','Period'],psym=[1,2,3]
```

```
    produces:
```

```
    -----  
    |          |  
    | + Plus sign |  
    | * Asterisk  |  
    | . Period    |  
    |          |  
    -----
```

```
etc.
```

Placing an example just after the purpose gives a good overview of the routine on the first page of the doc_library output, so the user can exit from IDL's MORE right away.

The code is simple. All that is needed in the procedure is a single line. For example,

```
pro legend,help=help,items,linestyle=linestyle,psym=psym ...  
;  
; =====>> HELP  
;  
on_error,2  
if keyword_set(help) then begin & doc_library,'legend' & return & endif  
...
```

The method is simple, gives straightforward help, and promotes the inclusion of headers in all routines.

Fred

In article <thompson.734709026@serts.gsfc.nasa.gov>, thompson@serts.gsfc.nasa.gov (William Thompson) writes:

|> deutsch@orac.stsci.edu writes:

|>

|> >In article <thompson.734294880@serts.gsfc.nasa.gov>, thompson@serts.gsfc.nasa.gov (William Thompson) writes:

|> >> kaij@tudelft.nl (Roland Kaijen) writes:

|> >>

|> >>>n IDL 3.0.1 for WINDOWS there is very good online help-tool. Unfortunately

|> >>>only the functions & procedures know by the makers of IDL are in this

|> >>>help-tool; there are however frequently used functions & procedures written

|> >>>by others that we would like to a

|> >>

|> >> Use the routine MK_LIBRARY_HELP in the IDL User's Library.

|> >>

|> >> Bill Thompson

|>

|> > This allows one to create the .HELP files, but what if you are not allowed

|> >to add to the IDL_DIR/help directory? e.g. on a cluster where you are not

|> >the main user of IDL, how can I add .HELP entries (for use with ?)

|> >for me to use, but not for everyone to have to see. Can I set something

|> >somewhere to not only look in the IDL distribution HELP directory, but also

|> >one of my own (or one which applies to a certain package, etc.)

|>

|>

|> The question mark command in IDL actually calls a routine called MAN_PROC. At

|> one point we had edited man_proc.pro to do exactly what you're talking about,

|> but then RSI came out with the widgetized version of "?" and we gave up.

|>

|> Nowadays we depend on another routine called DOC which allows us to browse

|> through the directories in !PATH, and to extract the documentation from it.

|> It's basically a user-friendly front-end to DOC_LIBRARY. The software works

|> best on a widgets platform such as X-windows or Microsoft Windows, but there's

|> also a capability of using it on less sophisticated platforms. If you want

|> this software, please E-mail me and I'll tell you how to get it.

|>

|> If you have widgets available to you (either X-windows or I believe now

|> Microsoft Windows) you can use a routine called XDL, which does more-or-less

|> the same thing as DOC, although somewhat differently. XDL should be supplied

|> with the IDL distribution.

|>

|> Bill Thompson

--

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