
Subject: Online help with non-windowing devices
Posted by [rivers](#) on Sat, 24 Jun 1995 07:00:00 GMT
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I would like to get IDL online help when I log on from home using a text/Tektronix terminal emulator. In this case my plot device is 'tek' and it can't do windowing.

Prior to IDL 4.0 I could get online help by typing '?', and I would get a text-based interface to the online help. Not beautiful, but it did the job. This no longer works, IDL tries to use the hypertext help and I get an X error opening display.

There was a post about a month ago which described a way to get the old widget based help by using WIDGET_OLH. The old text based help was done with the routine MAN_PROC. MAN_PROC still exists in IDL_DIR/lib/, but when I run it there appears to be no online help library available?

Is it still possible to get help when logged on through a non-windowing device? If not, then IDL 4.0 is a major step backward in this regard.

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Subject: Re: Online help with non-windowing devices
Posted by [scowen](#) on Thu, 29 Jun 1995 07:00:00 GMT
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Mark Rivers (rivers@cars3.uchicago.edu) wrote:

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Yes, there's a way to do this. I have extensive sets of my own help files that I merge into the system help databases, but with this bloody new hyperhelp (piece of crap if you ask me) you can only merge files in .hlp

format for which there are no compilation routines provided. When you run MAN_PROC it sees nothing because IDL v4.0 comes with no .help files in the help/ dir under the IDL tree. What you have to do is go into the pro dirs in the tree and build your own sets of .help files using MK_LIBRARY_HELP and then dump those files into the help/ dir. Then MAN_PROC will see them. I've given up on hyperhelp and use widget_olh pretty much all the time.

I've raised this with RSI and was about the 550th person to do so - RSI is getting the company who wrote the interface (its not even in-house fer crying out loud) to address the flexibility issues and expects to release a new version of hyperhelp sometime very soon (don't hold your breath).

PS. Anybody else noticed how some keywords are now no longer valid on certain routines?? The only really irritating one I've found so far is the dropping of CHANNEL as a valid keyword to PLOTS and XYOUTS - way to go with backward compatibility RSI!!

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Subject: Re: Online help with non-windowing devices

Posted by [rivers](#) on Fri, 30 Jun 1995 07:00:00 GMT

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In article <3stb3tINNpk7@lanews.la.asu.edu>, scowen@tycho.la.asu.edu (Paul A. Scowen) writes:

> Mark Rivers (rivers@cars3.uchicago.edu) wrote:

>

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The problem is that I want to see the help on internal IDL routines, not on routines in \$IDL_DIR/lib or my own routines. If I am working from a non-windowing display I can't get help on PLOT or FINDGEN or any other IDL routine which is built into the IDL image.

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Subject: Re: Online help with non-windowing devices
Posted by [landsman](#) on Fri, 30 Jun 1995 07:00:00 GMT
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Well, it *is* quite useful to have the complete IDL documentation on-line in hypertext format. It probably would have been appreciated a lot more, though, if it wasn't for the annoyance of having to use separate help facilities for RSI-created and user-created procedures.

I do have a somewhat pedantic complaint about the use of the "?" symbol to access the hyperhelp. The "?" facility was unique in the IDL syntax, since it could be immediately followed by a character string (e.g. IDL>?ROUTINES), and thus minimized the required keystrokes. Note that any user-defined help procedure requires the use of at least 3 characters, (1) the (at least) one-letter procedure name, (2) a comma, and (3) a quotation mark, (e.g. IDL>h,'ROUTINES). For that reason, our group has always modified the MAN_PROC procedure so that we could quickly get immediate help on any RSI or user-created procedure, e.g.

IDL>?REBIN or IDL>?MYPROC

But the hypertext help now claims the "?" facility, and it doesn't really need it. The hypertext help is something that one normally only launches once in a session and keeps as a background window until the IDL exit. (Or even longer, since the hypertext help can be run outside of IDL.) And the "?" facility no longer accepts any parameters.

--Wayne Landsman

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