
Subject: Re: Two new IDL Help Articles describing how to use the Workbench are made available now.

Posted by [David Fanning](#) on Wed, 05 Dec 2012 19:09:10 GMT

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santorofer@gmail.com writes:

- >
- > David Starbuck and myself (Fernando Santoro) have put together two new Help Articles that describe the IDL Workbench.
- >
- > The first article is called "IDL Workbench Guide" and it's based the Workbench chapter of Mark Piper's "Introduction to IDL" course manual. The Help Article also expands on it by adding some new sections and external links, including our YouTube videos. Please, take a look at it here:
- >
- > <http://www.exelisvis.com/Support/HelpArticleDetail/ArticleId /5300.aspx>
- >
- > The second article is a reference guide called "IDL 8 Workbench Reference". This article provides a description of the menus and views that form the Workbench that users can reference. Please take a look at it here:
- >
- > <http://www.exelisvis.com/Support/HelpArticleDetail/ArticleId /5295.aspx>
- >
- > We hope you will find these articles helpful!

I am absolutely sure some users will find these articles helpful. I am also sure (if you will permit some gentle criticism here) that users who are confused about the Workbench will not find much here to dispel that confusion.

The problem is that the "why" question is not answered in the articles. Why, for example, would someone want to create a project? (My answer is, you don't, but maybe yours would be different.) Still, I would explain why I couldn't live without the Project Explorer, and why it is a great idea to put your files in there, even if you DON'T want them in your Workspace location.

I would definitely explain why you don't have to put all your files in the Workspace location and why it is probably a good idea NOT to do that.

I would explain why when you look at the Workbench of someone who works often with IDL you see maybe a third of the windows that come up in the Workbench's default configuration. I would explain why some windows are essential and why some appear to be put there just to

take up real-estate. I would explain which ones are essential, and which ones can be hidden away until that one time in 10,000 when you might actually need them.

I guess what I am saying is that these articles explain the Workbench from a "company's" perspective. What most users need is the Workbench explained from a "users" perspective. And, maybe several users perspectives. Goodness knows we are not all alike. But, what I would like to know is how YOU use the Workbench. That would be valuable to me, and probably to a lot of users like me.

Cheers,

David

--

David Fanning, Ph.D.

Fanning Software Consulting, Inc.

Coyote's Guide to IDL Programming: <http://www.dfanning.com/>

Sepore ma de ni thue. ("Perhaps thou speakest truth.")

Subject: Re: Two new IDL Help Articles describing how to use the Workbench are made available now.

Posted by [David Fanning](#) on Wed, 05 Dec 2012 19:20:04 GMT

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David Fanning writes:

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> santorofer@gmail.com writes:

>

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>> The first article is called "IDL Workbench Guide" and it's based the Workbench chapter of Mark Piper's "Introduction to IDL" course manual. The Help Article also expands on it by adding some new sections and external links, including our YouTube videos. Please, take a look at it here:

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> helpful. I am also sure (if you will permit some gentle
> criticism here) that users who are confused about the
> Workbench will not find much here to dispel that
> confusion.

P.S. In the Workbench article I would write, I would also explain why having IDL manage your IDL path for you according to the projects you open is a recipe for disaster. But, I have heard there are people who think otherwise. I'd be most interested in why they think that.

Cheers,

David

--

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Subject: Re: Two new IDL Help Articles describing how to use the Workbench are made available now.

Posted by [Fabzi](#) on Thu, 06 Dec 2012 16:32:38 GMT

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Hi David,

On 12/05/2012 08:09 PM, David Fanning wrote:

> The problem is that the "why" question is not answered
> in the articles. Why, for example, would someone want to
> create a project? (My answer is, you don't, but maybe
> yours would be different.) Still, I would explain why
> I couldn't live without the Project Explorer, and why
> it is a great idea to put your files in there, even
> if you DON'T want them in your Workspace location.
> I would definitely explain why you don't have to put
> all your files in the Workspace location and why it
> is probably a good idea NOT to do that.

I started IDL with IDL7, after working one year with Java and Eclipse, so I don't know how IDL looked like before. Therefore, I really have no

clue about the issues you are raising here. I am not saying the workbench is perfect (see my recent post about unstable behavior and esthetic consideration). But I don't understand what you mean with the advantages of having code somewhere else than in the workbench, etc. Unlike you, I also have no problem with the concept of "project", even more when the "project" is a team-development managed with SVN. Can you explain what you mean here?

Thanks,

Fabien

Subject: Re: Two new IDL Help Articles describing how to use the Workbench are made available now.

Posted by [David Fanning](#) on Thu, 06 Dec 2012 16:43:14 GMT

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Fab writes:

> I started IDL with IDL7, after working one year with Java and Eclipse,
> so I don't know how IDL looked like before. Therefore, I really have no
> clue about the issues you are raising here. I am not saying the
> workbench is perfect (see my recent post about unstable behavior and
> esthetic consideration). But I don't understand what you mean with the
> advantages of having code somewhere else than in the workbench, etc.
> Unlike you, I also have no problem with the concept of "project", even
> more when the "project" is a team-development managed with SVN. Can you
> explain what you mean here?

First, a lot of people are under the mistaken assumption that to work with the Workbench they need to move all their IDL program files into the Workspace directory. They don't. You can add files to the Workbench from wherever they happen to be on your computer. In other words, you don't have to change anything about your current file directory structure. This is not obvious to many people.

Second, many people assume that if they create a project in the Project Explorer window that it is necessary to "Build" the project in order to use the code there. I don't think I have ever "built" a project in my life, except to explore how disastrous it can be to understanding what the hell is going on in IDL! By "building" a project, you create an IDL save file with all the compiled project code. Then, good luck trying to make a change in one of your project files. Having save files in your program directories is one of the best ways I know to drive yourself completely insane. :-)

Cheers,

David

--

David Fanning, Ph.D.

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Subject: Re: Two new IDL Help Articles describing how to use the Workbench are made available now.

Posted by [wlandsman](#) on Thu, 06 Dec 2012 16:45:26 GMT

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Thanks for posting this. I was about to suggest more documentation for the Workbench.

I am a big fan of the workbench (especially working with Subversion) but I have to admit that I am still clueless about window management. How does one create a new window? When one selects a view, which window does it go into? For example, I seem to only be able to have the IDL console in the bottom right of my four windows. Can one have two files open at the same time? If so, with which file is the outline window associated? Fortunately, whenever I screw up the windows I know I can hit the "Reset Views" button to get me back to my four windows.

On Wednesday, December 5, 2012 12:28:21 PM UTC-5, santo...@gmail.com wrote:

> David Starbuck and myself (Fernando Santoro) have put together two new Help Articles that describe the IDL Workbench.

>

>

>

> The first article is called "IDL Workbench Guide" and it's based the Workbench chapter of Mark Piper's "Introduction to IDL" course manual. The Help Article also expands on it by adding some new sections and external links, including our YouTube videos. Please, take a look at it here:

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> <http://www.exelisvis.com/Support/HelpArticleDetail/ArticleId /5295.aspx>
>
>
>
> We hope you will find these articles helpful!
>
> Fernando

Subject: Re: Two new IDL Help Articles describing how to use the Workbench are made available now.

Posted by [David Fanning](#) on Thu, 06 Dec 2012 16:57:59 GMT

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Wayne writes:

> Thanks for posting this. I was about to suggest more documentation for the Workbench.
>
> I am a big fan of the workbench (especially working
> with Subversion) but I have to admit that I am still
> clueless about window management. How does one create a new window?

Window menu -> Show View -> Other, etc. etc. They are scattered around a bit randomly. :-)

> When one selects a view, which window does it go into?

Who cares? If you don't like where it goes, just drag it somewhere else by grabbing its tab and moving it. This is, I have to admit, the best part of the Workbench, although it took me most of a day to figure out how the whole thing works!

> For example, I seem to only be able to have the IDL console
> in the bottom right of my four windows.

Click the Console tab and drag it up and drop it on the Project Explored Tab. Now you have it somewhere else! The only place you can't put it, probably, is in the Editor window.

> Can one have two files open at the same time?

Open two files in the text editor. Then click on the tab of one and drag it over the the right-hand edge of the Editor window. You will see an outline. When you release it, you will have two files open in the Editor window at the same time.

> If so, with which file is the outline window associated?

The one that is the "current" one in the Editor window.

> Fortunately, whenever I screw up the windows I know I can
> hit the "Reset Views" button to get me back to my four windows.

This has saved untold numbers of people who try to use key combinations and accidentally delete their Console window! ;-)

Cheers,

David

--

David Fanning, Ph.D.

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Subject: Re: Two new IDL Help Articles describing how to use the Workbench are made available now.

Posted by [David Fanning](#) on Thu, 06 Dec 2012 17:01:06 GMT

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David Fanning writes:

> Who cares? If you don't like where it goes, just drag it
> somewhere else by grabbing its tab and moving it. This is,
> I have to admit, the best part of the Workbench, although
> it took me most of a day to figure out how the whole thing
> works!

By the way, to change the order of multiple views in a window, just drag the tab of the view where you want it. The order in the window will be updated automatically.

Cheers,

David

--

David Fanning, Ph.D.

Fanning Software Consulting, Inc.

Subject: Re: Two new IDL Help Articles describing how to use the Workbench are made available now.

Posted by [lecacheux.alain](#) on Thu, 06 Dec 2012 17:11:43 GMT

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Le mercredi 5 décembre 2012 18:28:21 UTC+1, santo...@gmail.com a écrit :

> David Starbuck and myself (Fernando Santoro) have put together two new Help Articles that describe the IDL Workbench.

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>

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> The first article is called "IDL Workbench Guide" and it's based the Workbench chapter of Mark Piper's "Introduction to IDL" course manual. The Help Article also expands on it by adding some new sections and external links, including our YouTube videos. Please, take a look at it here:

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> We hope you will find these articles helpful!

>

> Fernando

I agree with David Fanning that the IDL Workbench, starting from v7, was not a good idea, as far as you were using IDL on Windows.

Indeed, the v6.4 IDLDE was nearly perfect, because it was a complete and robust EDI, already allowing debugging, project building and profiling. In the same time, it was adapted to simple interactive calculation as well as to build complex programs. The present Workbench, even in v2.8.1, is very heavy, very slow to launch, and even unstable regarding debugger usage. The only plus is SVN (but who is, regularly, really needing it ?). I understand that ITT/Exelis choose Eclipse in order to avoid a new development in giving a decent EDI to Linux and MacOS users. Maybe a bad choice, in any case for Windows users.

alain.

Subject: Re: Two new IDL Help Articles describing how to use the Workbench are made available now.

Posted by [David Fanning](#) on Thu, 06 Dec 2012 17:12:12 GMT

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David Fanning writes:

- > By the way, to change the order of multiple views in a window,
- > just drag the tab of the view where you want it. The order in
- > the window will be updated automatically.

Generally speaking, if you want to create a "new" window, you grab an existing window and drag it to the edge of the workbench or current window, where an outline appears.

Fool around with it for a half-hour or so, until you get the hang of it. Eventually, you can get the windows where you want them. Don't forget where the Reset Views button is! ;-)

Cheers,

David

--

David Fanning, Ph.D.

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Sepore ma de ni thue. ("Perhaps thou speakest truth.")

Subject: Re: Two new IDL Help Articles describing how to use the Workbench are made available now.

Posted by [David Fanning](#) on Thu, 06 Dec 2012 17:17:29 GMT

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alx writes:

- > I agree with David Fanning that the IDL Workbench, starting from v7, was not a good idea, as far as you were using IDL on Windows.

I'm not sure I said exactly that, although I do agree that for most of my needs the IDL 6.4 Workbench was nearly perfect. It was certainly stable and it did

most of what I needed it to do.

But, I really don't mind the newer Eclipse Workbench.
And I LOVE that I can work on LINUX machines and feel
completely and utterly comfortable in IDL. *That* didn't
used to happen!

Of course, if it worked properly, it would be an
advantage. I still often work in IDL 7 for this
very reason. But, I guess 6.4 is in the distant past.

Cheers,

David

--

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Subject: Re: Two new IDL Help Articles describing how to use the Workbench are
made available now.

Posted by [Fabzi](#) on Thu, 06 Dec 2012 17:26:21 GMT

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Hi Alain,

As a recent IDL user and linux fan I cannot comment on IDL 6.4. But I
agree that the workbench is heavy, and I found the IDL7* workbench more
stable and more effective than IDL8*.

However, I am using SVN on a regular (daily? hourly?) basis and would
not want to use an external tool than the eclipse workbench for it, this
would be too tiring.

Fabien

On 12/06/2012 06:11 PM, alx wrote:

Subject: Re: Two new IDL Help Articles describing how to use the Workbench are
made available now.

Posted by [David Fanning](#) on Thu, 06 Dec 2012 17:42:20 GMT

Fab writes:

- > As a recent IDL user and linux fan I cannot comment on IDL 6.4. But I
- > agree that the workbench is heavy, and I found the IDL7* workbench more
- > stable and more effective than IDL8*.
- > However, I am using SVN on a regular (daily? hourly?) basis and would
- > not want to use an external tool than the eclipse workbench for it, this
- > would be too tiring.

I use TortoiseSVN on my Windows machines (outside the Workbench) and I love it. (I just use the already existing SVN client on my LINUX machines.) I don't find it tiring. What I do find tiring is carping at people to update their Coyote Library once in awhile on their own machines. :-)

Cheers,

David

--

David Fanning, Ph.D.

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Sepore ma de ni thue. ("Perhaps thou speakest truth.")

Subject: Re: Two new IDL Help Articles describing how to use the Workbench are made available now.

Posted by [lecacheux.alain](#) on Thu, 06 Dec 2012 18:11:32 GMT

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Le jeudi 6 décembre 2012 18:42:20 UTC+1, David Fanning a écrit :

- > Fab writes:
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- >
- >> As a recent IDL user and linux fan I cannot comment on IDL 6.4. But I
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- >> agree that the workbench is heavy, and I found the IDL7* workbench more
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> Cheers,
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> David
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> David Fanning, Ph.D.
>
> Fanning Software Consulting, Inc.
>
> Coyote's Guide to IDL Programming: <http://www.dfanning.com/>
>
> Sepore ma de ni thue. ("Perhaps thou speakest truth.")

David and Fabien,

I certainly do not want to go back to 6.4 ! The IDL Workbench is there and we must now use it. I would find it quite usable, when Exelis will have i) improved the corresponding documentation (the new articles which are the subject of this thread are a promising step in this direction), ii) fixed the unstable behaviour of the Workbench while debugging or restarting from error. This unstability may lead, - as already mentioned in previous threads -, to a full reset or even a cold restart of IDL with, of course, the penalty of some editing or data loss.

That is, in my opinion, more important than SVN capability or any other gadget.

alain.

Subject: Re: Two new IDL Help Articles describing how to use the Workbench are made available now.

Posted by [wlandsman](#) on Thu, 06 Dec 2012 18:18:51 GMT

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OK thanks, got it working. I feel a little bit like I did in 1993 (an old-timer story) when I was shown this new thing called the World Wide Web. I thought it would never catch on because the toolbar didn't provide enough navigation capability. I didn't realize that there were links embedded in the displayed page itself that one could click on! --Wayne

On Thursday, December 6, 2012 12:12:12 PM UTC-5, David Fanning wrote:

> David Fanning writes:

>

> Generally speaking, if you want to create a "new" window,

>

> you grab an existing window and drag it to the edge of

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> Cheers,

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> David

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> David Fanning, Ph.D.

>

> Fanning Software Consulting, Inc.

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Subject: Re: Two new IDL Help Articles describing how to use the Workbench are made available now.

Posted by [santorofer](#) on Thu, 06 Dec 2012 18:54:34 GMT

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On Wednesday, December 5, 2012 12:09:10 PM UTC-7, David Fanning wrote:

> The problem is that the "why" question is not answered
> in the articles. Why, for example, would someone want to
> create a project? (My answer is, you don't, but maybe
> yours would be different.) Still, I would explain why
> I couldn't live without the Project Explorer, and why
> it is a great idea to put your files in there, even
> if you DON'T want them in your Workspace location.

Thank you very much David for your feedback.

There are several "Why" questions in your post and I was wondering if other users in this thread also think that those "why" questions should be addressed somewhere else? I can see that some of them are already being discussed here.

Thank you everybody for your feedback on those two articles!.

Cheers!,
Fernando
