
Subject: IDL help in 8.3

Posted by [Haje Korth](#) on Thu, 02 Jan 2014 18:51:02 GMT

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Hi,
Happy New Year! The help system in 8.3 on Windows drives me absolutely bonkers. Apparently it was decided to no longer include the internal help viewer. Now help is sent to the default web browser which in my case is Chrome. Problem is that tabs are not reused so that calling help 10 times yields 10 tabs cluttering up my browser. I did an extensive web search on reusing tabs without success; the flags for single tab option seem to have been removed. Has anyone solved this major annoyance with Chrome?

Cheers,
Haje

Subject: Re: IDL help in 8.3

Posted by [Bill Nel](#) on Fri, 03 Jan 2014 21:57:34 GMT

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On Thursday, January 2, 2014 1:51:02 PM UTC-5, Haje Korth wrote:

> Happy New Year! The help system in 8.3 on Windows drives me absolutely bonkers.
Apparently it was decided to no longer include the internal help viewer.

Another annoyance: On my Windows 7 system, with IDL's 8.3 Help running in Internet Explorer 9, the search bar under the "Index" tab misbehaves badly -- it hangs for several seconds after each character I type. (Some sort of progressive search gone horribly wrong?) The search bar at the top right seems to work properly.

Subject: Re: IDL help in 8.3

Posted by [markb77](#) on Mon, 06 Jan 2014 08:27:24 GMT

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seriously?? the internal help browser is gone??? WTF! bring it back!!

Subject: Re: IDL help in 8.3

Posted by [amanda.oconnor77](#) on Mon, 06 Jan 2014 20:24:23 GMT

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On Thursday, January 2, 2014 11:51:02 AM UTC-7, Haje Korth wrote:

> Hi,
>

> Happy New Year! The help system in 8.3 on Windows drives me absolutely bonkers.
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default web browser which in my case is Chrome. Problem is that tabs are not reused so that calling help 10 times yields 10 tabs cluttering up my browser. I did an extensive web search on reusing tabs without success; the flags for single tab option seem to have been removed. Has anyone solved this major annoyance with Chrome?

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> Cheers,
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> Haje

Hi Haje, The only work around I have for you at this point is the online help exelisvis.com/docs I know it's not what you want, but it's what I've got, Happy new year!

Amanda

Subject: Re: IDL help in 8.3
Posted by [markb77](#) on Tue, 07 Jan 2014 11:14:44 GMT
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Perhaps leave the old version of IDL 8.2 installed, and simply load the old help browser?

This is such a classic case of "if it ain't broke", don't fix it".

Subject: Re: IDL help in 8.3
Posted by [Haje Korth](#) on Tue, 07 Jan 2014 12:42:26 GMT
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On Monday, January 6, 2014 3:24:23 PM UTC-5, amanda.o...@gmail.com wrote:

> On Thursday, January 2, 2014 11:51:02 AM UTC-7, Haje Korth wrote:

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>> Happy New Year! The help system in 8.3 on Windows drives me absolutely bonkers. Apparently it was decided to no longer include the internal help viewer. Now help is sent to the default web browser which in my case is Chrome. Problem is that tabs are not reused so that calling help 10 times yields 10 tabs cluttering up my browser. I did an extensive web search on reusing tabs without success; the flags for single tab option seem to have been removed. Has anyone solved this major annoyance with Chrome?
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I know it's not what you want, but it's what I've got, Happy new year!
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> Amanda

Amanda: Thanks for the response. I know we have spoken about the online docs and I have actually taken a look at them. They are nice to have, but, as you indicate, they do not solve the problem at hand.

I had some communication with tech support and in the process we filed two bug reports one for reusable tabs (IDL-69009) and one for the selection of the help browser (while the UI offers selection of any browser installed on the system, the help uses the default browser regardless of setting, IDL-69010). I do not know if the wording includes bringing the internal help browser back, but it should. I cannot state often enough that a well-functioning help system is key to usability.

superchromix: If I had to use an old help system it would be that of IDL 6.4. That functionality, especially the search, has yet to be matched by the Eclipse help system.

Cheers,
Haje

Subject: Re: IDL help in 8.3
Posted by [Paul Van Delst\[1\]](#) on Tue, 07 Jan 2014 13:33:03 GMT
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Or maybe "if it needs fixing, don't break it."

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:o)

On 01/07/14 06:14, superchromix wrote:

>
> Perhaps leave the old version of IDL 8.2 installed, and simply load the old help browser?
>
> This is such a classic case of "if it ain't broke", don't fix it".
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Subject: Re: IDL help in 8.3

Posted by [David Fanning](#) on Tue, 07 Jan 2014 14:24:35 GMT

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Haje Korth writes:

> superchromix: If I had to use an old help system it would be that of IDL 6.4. That functionality, especially the search, has yet to be matched by the Eclipse help system.

Yes, I often pine for good ol' IDL 6.4. IDL 7 offered support for 24-bit PostScript output, which has been extremely helpful. And the IDLDE interface, despite the fact that it changes on you with every update, is helpful for those of us who can't train our fingers to use EMACS. I don't think I use anything from IDL 8.

Did anyone provide a reason for getting rid of the help browser?

Cheers,

David

--

David Fanning, Ph.D.

Fanning Software Consulting, Inc.

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

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

Subject: Re: IDL help in 8.3

Posted by [Haje Korth](#) on Tue, 07 Jan 2014 15:08:45 GMT

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On Tuesday, January 7, 2014 9:24:35 AM UTC-5, David Fanning wrote:

> Haje Korth writes:

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

I was not told why the internal help is no longer present, but, in fairness, I also did not ask. Maybe we get a developer to comment? :-)

Cheers,
Haje

Subject: Re: IDL help in 8.3
Posted by [wlandsman](#) on Tue, 07 Jan 2014 16:05:42 GMT
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For what its worth, I never call help from the command line or IDLDE prompt, or even using the idlhelp command. Instead I have a button on my browser pointing to the IDL help, e.g. on my Mac it points to

file:///Applications/exelis/idl83/help/online_help/IDL/idl.htm

I like the IDL 8.3 help which seems to have new and easier search methods than IDL 8.2 did. On the other hand it also seems a bit slower. --Wayne

On Tuesday, January 7, 2014 10:08:45 AM UTC-5, Haje Korth wrote:

> On Tuesday, January 7, 2014 9:24:35 AM UTC-5, David Fanning wrote:

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>> Haje Korth writes:

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Subject: Re: IDL help in 8.3

Posted by [chris_torrence@NOSPAM](#) on Wed, 08 Jan 2014 23:39:21 GMT

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Okay, I'll bite. The main problem we ran into was finding a reliable web browser that was HTML5 compliant and was cross platform. On Windows we limped along for a couple of releases using the built-in Internet Explorer web package, just embedded within our own application. On Mac we were using Webkit, again embedded within an app. On Linux & Solaris there wasn't a good solution, so we used the web browser.

It was just getting too expensive (development-wise) to roll our own help application on every platform. I'd rather put the development resources into features like implied print or the dynamic equation plots.

I don't know if it's any consolation, but it also took me a while to adjust to the new world order. I would find myself with 5 tabs open to the IDL help, each one to a different topic. However, what I found was that tabs are cheap - now, when I'm using IDL, if I want help, I just do "?fft", look up what I need, then just close that tab. Or you could do as Wayne suggests and just keep it open in the web browser.

I'm sorry that *once again* we have changed the IDL help system, but I hope that you will be able to adjust quickly, and maybe even find some benefit...

Hope this explanation helps.

-Chris

ExelisVIS

p.s. if you are having actual troubles with viewing the help, be sure to contact Tech Support! It's all standard HTML5, so it should work in any modern browser such as Chrome, Safari, or Firefox.

Subject: Re: IDL help in 8.3

Posted by [Phillip Bitzer](#) on Thu, 09 Jan 2014 03:41:02 GMT

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I'll jump in as well. My method is similar to Wayne's, but I use the online help.

I've added this as a search engine in Chrome, using a keyword of IDL:
<http://exelisvis.com/docs/dosearch.html?query=%s>

So, I open a new tab, type "idl fft" and there's my help.

For whatever reason, I have never used the internal help in IDL 8 (although I admit I loved it in 7).

Subject: Re: IDL help in 8.3

Posted by [Haje Korth](#) on Fri, 10 Jan 2014 00:02:28 GMT

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Hi Chris,

Thanks for biting and your response. I was not aware that continuing to provide the internal help browser is so costly. I am somewhat ignorant about this but from your response I gather that the old internal help browser from v8.2.3 is not html 5 compliant so that you could not simple reuse the old code. SO I respect your decision to discontinue development on the internal help browser.

I am hoping though that you will be able to fix the problem I bugged regarding the selection of the web browser. I would like to define firefox as my help browser even though it is not the default browser on the system. In that way I do not junk up the standard tabs I have open on the default browser for other every day work purposes. And if it gets really messy, I can just restart the help-dedicated browser. (The help itself displays just fine in Chrome, so readability is not the reason why I want to use a different web browser.)

Cheers,
Haje

On Wednesday, January 8, 2014 6:39:21 PM UTC-5, Chris Torrence wrote:

> Okay, I'll bite. The main problem we ran into was finding a reliable web browser that was HTML5 compliant and was cross platform. On Windows we limped along for a couple of releases using the built-in Internet Explorer web package, just embedded within our own application. On Mac we were using Webkit, again embedded within an app. On Linux & Solaris there wasn't a good solution, so we used the web browser.

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