
Subject: Re: Calling Help Files

Posted by [davidf](#) on Fri, 16 Jan 1998 08:00:00 GMT

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Kerstin Voigt (voigt@dlr.de) writes:

- > does anybody know, how I can call a self created help file from within IDL
- > 5.0?
- > They have the standard Microsoft *.hlp-format (PC environment).

To create an "authentic" IDL help file requires that you have a particular help file compiler, I believe. But since I always have a WWW browser open anyway, I've found it convenient to use HTML help for my IDL procedures. I simply use the template.pro file to create a template for my programs. (It uses the ";" and ";" convention to delineate a section of code used for comments.)

Then I just use the MK_HTML_HELP routine from the IDL library to construct an HTML file from my IDL procedures and functions. It is all done in one step. This, for example, is what I use to build the help files for the program files on my web page.

Cheers,

David

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Subject: Re: Calling Help Files

Posted by [rivers](#) on Sat, 17 Jan 1998 08:00:00 GMT

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In article <01bd2281\$29a2c2a0\$256af781@kat37t.ia.kp.dlr.de>, "Kerstin Voigt" <voigt@dlr.de> writes:

- > Hi,
- >
- > does anybody know, how I can call a self created help file from within IDL
- > 5.0?
- > They have the standard Microsoft *.hlp-format (PC environment).

If you have a standard Microsoft .hlp file then it is very easy to call it from within IDL. Do it as follows:

```
IDL> spawn, "start my_help_file.hlp"
```

This may look strange, so let me explain how it works. The "start" command means that your help will run as a separate process, so the IDL "spawn" command will return immediately. The fact that you are "starting" a file, rather than a program, takes advantage of the Windows file type/application association feature. When you "start" a .hlp file it automatically runs whatever application is associated with .hlp files. If your Windows system is configured correctly this will work fine.

Of course, this also works for other file types, for example "http". The following IDL command will start your default browser (e.g. Netscape or Internet Explorer, depending upon how you have set things up on your system) and display RSI's home page:

```
IDL> spawn, "start http://www.rsinc.com"
```

The nice thing about this is that it will start your browser if it is not already running, but if it is already running it will simply display this new URL. I find this a very convenient way to display help information, e.g.

```
IDL> spawn, "start http://www.mysite.edu/IDL/my_help_file#my_topic"
```

Note that some Windows systems I have seen do not have a default browser correctly configured. Internet Explorer offers an option to let you make it your default browser. If you select this it will configure things correctly. If you want to use Netscape, and it is not configured correctly, go into the NT Explorer View/Folder Options/File Types menu and select "URL Hypertext Transfer Protocol". Select Edit/Open/Edit, set "Application to use ..." to be the full path to Netscape, select "Use DDE" and "DDE Message"="%1" Application=Netscape, Topic=WWW_OpenURL.

Cheers,
Mark

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Subject: Re: Calling Help Files

Posted by [David Foster](#) on Wed, 21 Jan 1998 08:00:00 GMT

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David Fanning wrote:

>

> Kerstin Voigt (voigt@dlr.de) writes:

>

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> to build the help files for the program files on my web page.

>

I guess I am just plain primitive, but my help files are plain
ascii files, with a .doc extension. They are placed in the directories
where the .pro files live, and I use my program LHELP.PRO to display
them (easy interface, search capability, and can view .pro files as
well). No snazzy hypertext links or fancy fonts, but works quite well.

If you're interested you can download LHELP.PRO and supporting routines
via anonymous ftp:

bial8.ucsd.edu pub/software/idl/share/Lhelp/lhelp.tar.gz

Dave

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