Subject: Re: IDL 5.2 GUI Builder Tutorial ?
Posted by Karl Young on Fri, 21 May 1999 07:00:00 GMT
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>

Ok, ok, you win David; I'll buy the book ! And all just because I was tired
of having buttons jump around my interface everytime I tried to add a table
(which I can never figure out how to format correctly). For you graphics
wizards I'll remind you that there are two kinds of people in the world -
those who love widget programming and those who are thouroughly disgusted
with all this visual fluff and only put up with it because the jerk who uses
their program freezes at the command line (I'll let you guess which type I
am; hint: as great as David's classes are I think fell asleep during the
widget part :-)

>
>
> The problem with the GUI Builder is that it is just
> that--a GUI Builder...

> ... your $*&^@ boss, who couldn't pour piss out of a boot if the
> directions were written on the sole...

David there's always such value added in any interaction with you !

>

Uncle !

-- KY

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Subject: Re: IDL 5.2 GUI Builder Tutorial ?
Posted by davidf on Fri, 21 May 1999 07:00:00 GMT
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Bill B. (wbiagiot@suffolk.lib.ny.us) writes:

> Wow - bad day?

Yes. The boss informed me that I had set a deadline of
the end of June for this &^%$@& book! :-(

Cheers,

David

--
David Fanning, Ph.D.
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In article <MPG.11af0de4659f2d9897b3@news.frii.com>,
  davidf@dfanning.com (David Fanning) wrote:
> .
> .
> .
> But, whoops! You forgot you wanted the user to
> be able to apply the FOO procedure, or your $*&^@
> boss, who couldn't pour piss out of a boot if the
> directions were written on the sole, doesn't like
> the interface design, or whatever it is. But you
> have to make a design change.
>
> .
> .
> .

Wow - bad day?

- Bill B.

--== Sent via Deja.com http://www.deja.com/ ==--
---Share what you know. Learn what you don't.---

Karl Young (kyoung@itsa.ucsf.edu) writes:

> In my style of always looking for a quick fix I was wondering if anyone
> knew of any kind of tutorial on the GUI builder in IDL 5.2. From some
> brief fiddling it looks reasonably easy to use but I'd like to see a
> couple of simple examples of building an interface and filling in the
> code so's to get started on the right foot. I'd be amazed if David
> didn't have something up his sleeve but I haven't scoured his web page
> very thouroughly lately. Thanks for any tips (including any advice to
> stay away from the GUI builder ...)

The problem with the GUI Builder is that it is just
that--a GUI Builder. No one I know builds GUI's just
for the fun of it. Most people build applications. The
GUI Builder is decidedly NOT an application builder,
although I think this is RSI's intention for it,
eventually.

So, to give you an example. You open the thing up and
build your nice interface. The API is slick, very Visual
Basic looking, and quite easy to use. Your expectations
are rising. Although it is not *exactly* WYSIWYG, it's
pretty darn close and better than what you might have
expected if you had tried to build an application builder
on your own with IDL's widgets. :-)

Finally, you get something that looks pretty good and
your hit the button that generates the actually IDL
code. Cool! Although it uses Stein Vidar's-preferred
method of a huge big event handler, I've been down this
road too and can't fault RSI for making this choice.

But, of course, the code doesn't *do* anything. All the
event handlers are stubbed out "shells", there are no
positional or keyword parameters defined to get data into
the program, no provision for passing information around
in the widget program, etc. Oh, oh. Bad news here. You
are going to have to learn some widget programming anyway
or you aren't going to be able to get any but the
very simplest programs to work!

Now, leave aside the handicap of having to work with
code you didn't exactly write. We have all been
down *that* road and no one wants to be reminded of it.
Forge ahead to actually adding some code so that the

program does something useful.

Hey. Not too bad! Things are cooking now.

But, whoops! You forgot you wanted the user to
be able to apply the FOO procedure, or your $*&^@
boss, who couldn't pour piss out of a boot if the
directions were written on the sole, doesn't like
the interface design, or whatever it is. But you
have to make a design change.

Now you have a bit of a problem.

If you go back to the GUI-Builder, you are going
to lose all that work you just went to adding code
that actually makes your program work, because the
GUI-Builder doesn't know about (or even care about,
if you really want the truth) how many hours you
have spent slaving over a hot computer.

If you make a *new* design, you are going to have
to save the file under a different name, cut and
paste all the useful bits from the old program into
the new one, finally re-name the new program, etc.
Doesn't sound like productive programming time to
me. And how many errors do you think you will
introduce in the cut and paste operations?

Alright. So forget that. You're sticking to the program
that works. But guess what? You can't use the GUI-Builder
now. Because the GUI-Builder builds GUIs and now *you*
are building applications. Something else, entirely.

And here is more bad news. You are going to have to
make your design modifications onto a GUI program
scaffold that was decidedly a compromise to begin with.
That means that it wasn't written from the get-go
with the notion that it might actually have to be
changed. (To my mind this means it was designed by
a computer scientist rather than a scientist who
uses a computer, but never mind about that.) So
now you have to know about widget programming AND
you are saddled with a program you didn't write
and wasn't designed in the way you would have designed
it were you writing it from scratch yourself.

And all of a sudden, the notion of a GUI-Builder,
which seemed like it was going to save you loads of

time and effort, feels like a stone around your
neck and you feel yourself sinking into that
programming quagmire faster and faster.

My suggestion? Pay the $75, get the book, and
learn how to write a widget program the right way
to begin with. Besides lining my pocket, you'll
thank me every way to Sunday every time you want
to add a new feature to your program. :-)

Cheers,

David

P.S. The above description of the GUI-Builder is my
personal (and probably biased) opinion and has absolutely
nothing whatsoever to do with anything else. Including,
some might argue, the facts of the case. I strongly
recommend you try the GUI-Builder yourself and form
your own opinions. :-)

--
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Subject: Re: IDL 5.2 GUI Builder Tutorial ?
Posted by Karl Young on Wed, 26 May 1999 07:00:00 GMT
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Jonas wrote:

> well, being a total newbie to widget programming (started out last sunday
> actually), I found the GUI-builder to be an easy way to get a graphic
> sceleton to start with...

Good point. I talked to a friend yesterday, Scott Clafflin, who is an
experienced IDL programmer who also found the GUI-builder useful. Scott's
situation is a lot like mine; we do quite a bit of IDL programming but only have
to design an interface every once in a while (and in my case with extreme
reluctance !). Between bouts with interface design I forget virtually everything
I "learned" so I essentially feel like I'm starting from scratch (I at least can
copy my old horrible widget code, but that just institutionalizes my sloppy
attempts to hurry up and be done with interface design). In a similar situation
Scott said that despite the fact that he could only use the GUI-builder on the

first pass, and that he had to hack a lot of the generated code, it still saved
him some time on the front end. So despite the fact that experts like David
sneer at we widget challenged weaklings, I'm now convinced that the GUI-builder
has its place.

-- KY

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Subject: Re: IDL 5.2 GUI Builder Tutorial ?
Posted by davidf on Wed, 26 May 1999 07:00:00 GMT
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Jonas (jonas_2@hotmail.com) writes:

> I found the GUI-builder to be an easy way to get a graphic
> sceleton to start with. ... (from which I can get
> some hints on how to type my own widget code in the future)

Oh, dear. :-(

Cheers,

David

P.S. If you want hints, I can suggest a few other places
that might be more helpful. :-)

--
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Subject: Re: IDL 5.2 GUI Builder Tutorial ?

well, being a total newbie to widget programming (started out last sunday
actually), I found the GUI-builder to be an easy way to get a graphic
sceleton to start with. But, I guess, from there it is up to my programming
skills (which by the way aren't very developed) to get these graphics to do
sometheing useful.
Even though I have to do the event programming myself, i saved a few hours
of typing the first basic widget definition code... (from which I can get
some hints on how to type my own widget code in the future)

By the way, isn't this the first try from RSI to officially serve us with a
GUI-builder? I guess they keep an eye on this group and can pick up a few of
these comments to the next version... 'cause there will come a more
developed version, I'm sure...
Okey, one can allways argue that they should have presented a more complete
version from the beginning, but that's the way it allways is, or?

As I said, I am a total newbie to widgets (and half a newbie to IDL), but I
found use for the GUI-builder when getting started.
Then there are allways those experienced programmers that already know all
the syntax definitions, and they will most probably (as we heard...) not
find any greater use of this version of the GUI-builder... but the
"complete" next version maybe'll be something for them as well...

see'ya
Jonas

_____
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