DocServer 1.1b5

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Comments, questions and suggestions are welcome!

Background

DocServer provides on-line documentation for Frontier script writers.

Each new release of DocServer also includes a new Frontier install file for DocServer, containing commands for DocServer's shared menus, and scripts that connect Frontier scripts to the Apple Events implemented by DocServer.

We also include a Frontier script that can make it easy to install the new version of DocServer. This script, called Installer, copies the new version of DocServer over the older version in your UserLand Utilities folder. Then it runs the new DocServer.Frontier install file to install the new shared menu and scripts table. Finally, it opens the DocServer folder within the UserLand Utilities folder, making it easy for you to check that the new version of DocServer has been installed.

We do not ship new versions of the DocServer Database file with each new revsision of DocServer. Updates to that file are often part of other uploads -- for example, when we ship new verbs for Frontier we also include DocServer source text explaining the new verb. Or when a developer ships a Frontier-compatible application, they often include DocServer source text as part of the shipment.

However, we do include the DocServer Test Text file which contains the docs for five Frontier verbs. It serves as an example of the kind of on-line documentation that ships with Frontier. To load this file into DocServer, just double-click on it in the Finder or use the Load Text File command in DocServer's File menu to import the text.

DocServer 1.1b5 -- 4/17/92 DW

UserTalk Source Text file included in this release

Several problems were reported – previously this was a separate upload. Until we get all the glitches worked out, we're going to keep including this file.

That said -- there were reports of not being able to select the minus operator from the See Also menu. Got it! The See Also text was using an ASCII 208 to represent a minus. I did a global replace of the 208's to the ASCII code for normal minus, 45. Problem solved.

Also, the verb name part of several constructs was more complex than it should be, for example, the docs for fileloop were fileloop … in. It's prettier, but it screws up the See Also menu, which invariably refers to just plain fileloop. So I edited the verb names so they are all a single word. Please report any subsequent problems.

Note: you may want to delete the following old versions of these verbs. Included in 1.0b5's shared menu is a new command in the Misc menu that deletes a verb page. Be sure to load the new version of DocServer.Frontier. The pages that are now obsolete are:

1. fileloop … in
2. case … else
3. for … to
4. if … else
5. [] and . (period, or dot)

Improvement in DocServer.deleteVerb Apple Event

In 1.1b4 if you deleted the verb that was currently displayed in the DocServer window, the window would continue to display the newly defunct verb doc. In 1.1b5 it first tries to move to the previous verb, if it can't do that it moves to the next verb. If it was the last verb in the database we leave the display alone. If this annoys you, just close the window.

Scrolling bug nabbed

In 1.1b4 if you scrolled a longish verb page down, then moved to the next page, the new page would be scrolled by the same amount as the previous page. This isn't what you want, and in some cases it led to an inconsistent scrollbar. In 1.1b5, moving to the next verb resets the scroll bar correctly and scrolls to the top of the new page.

Check in SeeAlso menu

Did you notice this one? What kind of sense does it make to have one item in the SeeAlso menu being checked? It makes none. So in version 1.1b5 all the items in the SeeAlso menu are always not-checked.

A Nice Touch

After you load a text file, either thru the File menu command or thru the Apple Event, DocServer 1.1b5 displays the page of the first verb loaded.

DocServer 1.1b4 -- 4/14/92 DW

DocServer Handles 'odoc' Apple Event Intelligently

Earlier versions of DocServer weren't very intelligent with the 'odoc' Apple Event. 1.1b4 allows you to load in DocServer source text either by double-clicking on the file, or by dragging a text file onto the DocServer icon.

Implication: if you're a developer shipping a DocServer source text file with your application, you should set the file's creator ID to 'DOCS' so that the user can double-click on the file to load the source text. You can use Frontier's file.setCreator built-in verb to quickly set the creator ID.

Subtle Database "Problem" Smashed

Some people reported this one as a bug, but it actually was a feature or a design flaw at worst. If you loaded some DocServer source text for a verb that was already documented in the database, and the new documentation omitted one of the sections, the omitted section would survive the update. So for example, if the author of the docs decided to delete the Notes section, it would not go away when the new source text was loaded.

This feature dates back to the origins of DocServer. It was originally coded to be a name and address database, and this would allow selective updating of some fields in a batch update mode. It clearly doesn't apply to verb documentation – so we smashed the problem by removing the feature. We deallocate all the linked fields of a verb record before doing the update, forcing every field to change, and empty fields will be represented by no text.

Controversy over See Alsos in the Window is Resolved

In the notes for 1.1b3, we asked for feedback on whether the See Alsos should remain displayed in the window. We got feedback (thank you!). The vote was overwhelming that they should stay. So they stay. Example of a good reason: if you decide to print out a DocServer page you want to see the See Alsos. Good point.

Empty History Items Disabled

When you first start up DocServer, the History menu is mostly blank. Blank menu items are now disabled.

Bugfix -- Option-Select in History and SeeAlso Menus

If you option-selected a menu item that wasn't defined in the Frontier object database, Frontier would come to the front but no window would be displayed. In 1.1b4, we modified the script that's sent to Frontier to check first to see if the name is defined, and just beep the speaker if it isn't defined. Frontier does not come to the front in this case.

Bugfix -- Zooming constrained to Macintosh desktop

In the 1.1b3 release if you zoomed a window when a longish verb was displayed, the bottom of the window could end up off the bottom of your desktop. In 1.1b4 we implement a much smarter method of zooming that constrains the window to within 10 pixels of each edge of your desktop.

DocServer Needs an Icon

Before we go "golden" on version 1.1 of DocServer -- the program and its database and its text files need icons. Are there any great icon designers out there willing to kick in some of their design work for this free program?

Some ideas: a book on the desert (following Frontier's colorful wild-west theme park icons) or a cowboy on a horse reading a book? Don't ask me -- I just write software.

Post your icons at GO USERLAND on CompuServe or the UserLand Discussion Board on AppleLink. The winners will receive our eternal gratitude, or their name in the About Box, or readme text, whichever is most appropriate, or one of our famous virtual gold keychains. Or would you like a free copy of Frontier 1.0? Let's see your icons!

DocServer 1.1b3 -- 4/12/92 DW

Smart Zooming

In previous versions of DocServer, clicking on the window's zoom box would fill the entire screen. We now use a much smarter method.

The width of the window is unchanged by this operation. The height of the window is changed so that all the text in the current verb is displayed, if this is possible.

To use this capability, establish a comfortable window width by manually resizing the window. If you get to a long piece of text, click on the zoom box to view as much as possible. Or if you end up with a lot of white space at the bottom of the window, make the window smaller by clicking on the zoom box.

SeeAlso Menu

We added another menu to DocServer's menu bar -- the SeeAlso menu. Each item in this menu contains one of the See Also items from the current verb's See Also section. Select the item from the menu to automatically jump to the doc page for that verb. The menu is disabled if there are no See Alsos for the current verb, this makes it easy to tell if there's any point going to the menu.

Extra bonus: if you hold down the option key while selecting the item, an Apple Event is sent to Frontier to open the object database cell indicated by the name of the item. This can be useful if you want to see how a specific verb is implemented.

We still display the SeeAlso section of the verb page. Any feedback on this? Strong feelings one way or the other?

History Menu

The History menu, like the SeeAlso menu contains a list of verbs -- in this case, they are the last nine verbs you have visited using DocServer. As you navigate thru the database, this list is maintained. When we need a new "slot" in the menu, we throw out the least recently visited page. The current item is checked. To jump to one of these verbs, select the menu item, or use cmd-1 thru cmd-9. As with the SeeAlso menu, if you hold down the option key and select the verb, the corresponding cell in the Frontier object database is opened.

DocServer 1.1b2 -- 2/27/92 DW

Added a new verb -- DocServer.deleteVerb. It takes one parameter, the name of the verb to be deleted. Tested the verb by deleting every verb in the database, and running DocServer.validate several times during the process.

Also fixed up DocServer's dialogs so they are consistent with Frontier.

DocServer 1.1b1 -- 1/20/92 DW

Added a new command in DocServer's Frontier menu -- Paste Into Frontier.

It grabs the syntax string for the verb currently displayed in DocServer's window and pastes it into the frontmost Frontier window.

To implement this, we added another IAC message to DocServer, jump to DocServer.getCurrentVerb.