

MSDN/SoftLib Index Reader

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Window Layout

Click on the button or field for help:



What is MSDN?

MSDN - Microsoft's Developers Network

Microsoft has released a number of CD-ROMs containing help files and examples on a wide range of topics in Windows programming. Several of them contain very detailed information on the work behind the scenes of Windows, but there are also examples at a beginner's level. If you don't have the money to buy the CD-ROMs, there is a nice solution. Many MSDN files are available through Internet from Microsoft's anonymous ftp-server. To help you find out which files are of interest to you, here is the:

MSDN - The Index/Abstract Reader

The MSDN program is able to display and search the MSDN index file from Microsoft's ftp-server. The complete collection of all MSDN files take up many megabytes in compressed form and more files are added with every new CD-ROM that is distributed. Why downloading all files when you only need some of the files only a few times? Just download the index file and use the MSDN program to decide which files contain the information you want. The next time you import an index file the handy New Files feature shows you exactly what files have been added to the archive. Just try it!

SoftLib - Microsoft's Software Library

Microsoft also makes available patches and new versions of Windows software. Microsoft calls this collection SoftLib. These files are in a different directory at the anonymous ftp-server and are available at COMPUSERVE as well. Microsoft's policy on maintaining the ftp-server is rather obscure. Some files disappear from the MSDN directory and show up in the SoftLib again. Therefore the MSDN program can also handle the SoftLib index file.

Hardware and Software requirement

The MSDN.EXE program has been tested using Windows 3.1. There are no other software requirements. However, you have to have Internet access in some way (not necessarily the computer on which MSDN.EXE runs). The MSDN2DB.EXE program runs on any PC (even a XT/8086) under DOS 3.x and greater.

Installation

Files in the distribution of MSDN

MSDN.EXE	MSDN/SoftLib Index reader for Windows
MSDNBOR.EXE	The same program, now compiled to use Borland's OWL31.DLL and TCLASS31.DLL
<u>MSDN2DB.EXE</u>	DOS tool to convert the index file to dBase 3+ format. Provided as an extra; it is not needed by MSDN.EXE
BWCC.DLL	Borland's Custom Control DLL
BWCC.H	The header file for BWCC.DLL.
MSDN.HLP	This file
README.TXT	

The MSDN distribution contains two versions of the MSDN/SoftLib Index Reader. If you have Borland C++ 3.1 installed on your system, copy MSDNBOR.EXE to MSDN.EXE; it is much smaller in size. The DOS tool MSDN2DB.EXE does not provide extra functionality. It is included as a tool to create the database files independently of the Windows program.

Installation

- Create a directory where the programs and index files should be kept, e.g., C:\MSDN
- Copy the files MSDN.EXE (or MSDNBOR.EXE), MSDN.HLP and (if you're planning to use it) MSDN2DB.EXE to that directory
- Copy the file BWCC.DLL to C:\WINDOWS or C:\WINDOWS\SYSTEM
- Get a copy of the MSDN index file; see [Importing an index file](#), start MSDN and import the index file.

Other files that are used by MSDN.EXE are MSDN.DBF, MSDN.DBT, MSDN.NEW,SOFTLIB.DBF, SOFTLIB.DBT, SOFTLIB.NEW and WHATSNEW.REC. These may not always exist, but if they do, don't delete them! The file BWCC.H is necessary when you want to use BWCC.DLL in your programs; you don't need this file for MSDN.

Warning!

This version of MSDN is incompatible with version 1.0; Microsoft decided to change the format of the index file and the setup of the MSDN directory at the anonymous ftp-server. Do not install MSDN in the MSDN version 1.0 directory before deleting all files in that directory. You also have to get the new index file.

Customizing MSDN

A few parameters can be changed using a file MSDN.INI that is placed in the same directory as MSDN.EXE. Mostly they have to do with the setup at Microsoft's ftp site. Apparently Microsoft lacks a long-term policy on how to maintain the site, which resulted in two major changes of the MSDN directory setup in the last half year. However, there is no cure for a change in the format of the index file (just let me know).

The default values for MSDN.INI entries are:

[AbstractWindow]

Width=<width of MSDN main window>

Width of the Abstract window

Height=<height of MSDN main window>

Height of the Abstract window

[ftp]

Site=ftp.microsoft.com

Name or number of the anonymous ftp-server

Local Directory=

Local directory where the files should go to

MSDN Directory=/Developer/MSDN/CD7/

Directory where the MSDN files reside at the ftp site

SoftLib Directory=/SoftLib/MSLFiles/

Directory where the SoftLib files reside at the ftp site

MSDN2DB.EXE - The DOS tool

Instead of using MSDN.EXE you can also use MSDN2DB.EXE to import the MSDN Index files. Normally there is no need to use the latter; only for specialized purposes I decided to make a DOS version available. It should run on any PC, even an old XT. Type

MSDN2DB -h

for a list of options.

Help Window ALT-H

Shows the contents of this help file.



Importing an index file

ALT-I



Before the MSDN program can be used, an index file has to be read and converted into a set of dBase 3+ files. Both the MSDN and SoftLib index files can be imported. The MSDN index file can be found as at Microsoft's archive site:

<ftp.microsoft.com:/Developer/MSDN/INDEX.zip>

and the SoftLib index file as:

<ftp.microsoft.com:/SoftLib/SLList.txt>

The MSDN index file has to be unzipped first. Pressing the **Import** button brings up the MSDN Index File Dialog. Select the uncompressed index file and its type and the program will start the conversion.

The second time you import an index file the MSDN program also keeps track of the files that were not present in the previous index. Only the  files in the same type of index file (MSDN, SoftLib) are taken into account. There is a special button  that adds these new files to the selection. Just get the index file once in a while and see whether there are some new files that are of interest to you!

The importing of an index file can also be done by MSDN2DB.EXE.

MSDN/SoftLib Index file

Select the uncompressed index file from Microsoft's archive site. See [Importing an index file](#) on how to get this index file.

Warning!

You have to specify the type of index file that will be imported. The default is to import a *MSDN* index file. Select the *SoftLib* button to import a SoftLib index. There is no error checking on the validity of the index file!



Viewing the abstract ALT-A

Opens an additional window with the abstract describing the contents of the file. SoftLib files do not have an abstract.



Searching the database

ALT-F

Brings up the **Search Dialog** to add files to the selection that match given keywords.

Search MSDN Database

Description

Last Revision

to

June 1994

Abstract

☒ Replace Current Selection

OK

Cancel

Help

Description

Specify a string that should be present in the **Description** that is also shown in the selection box. If this entry is empty, it will not be used.

Latest Revision

Search for files that were last revised in the given interval. When one of the fields is blank, that limit is not used. Since SoftLib files do not have a revision date, the SoftLib database is not searched when one of the fields is not empty.

Latest Revision

The value of this field is controled by the two scroll bars adjacent to the text field. The scrollbar to the left sets the month, the one to the right changes the year. The field can be made empty by selecting the month before January.

Set the Month

This scroll bar sets the month. Press the lower arrow to scroll towards December; the upper arrow scrolls towards January. Selecting the month before January makes the field empty.

Set the Year

This scroll bar sets the year, ranging from 1980 to 2099. The upper arrow scrolls towards 1980, the lower to 2099.

Abstract

Specify a string that should be present in the **Abstract**. If this entry is empty, it will not be used. Searching the abstracts is considerably slower than searching keywords or descriptions.


Replace Current Selection

When checked, the current selection is cleared before the search is made. Otherwise the records found by the search operation are added to the current selection.



What's New - New files


ALT-N

Adds the new files to the selection. For a description of **new files**, see the  import button.



Clearing the selection

ALT-R

Clears the selection box. The selection box is automatically cleared when the  button is pressed.



Removing files

ALT-D

Removes the highlighted files from the selection.



Copying to the clipboard ALT-C

Copies the current selection to the clipboard as ftp commands. The text can be pasted in an ftp application or text editor (e.g., NOTEPAD) and looks like:

```
open ftp.microsoft.com
binary
lcd localdir
get subdir/file file
...
bye
```

If the computer where you are running does not have Internet access, paste the text into a text file (e.g., ftp.get) and execute the command

```
ftp < ftp.get
```

to retrieve the selection from Microsoft's archive site. Make sure the ftp-program can login into **ftp.microsoft.com** without needing a password; for Unix machines this can be achieved by creating a .netrc file in your home directory that contains the line:

```
machine ftp.microsoft.com user anonymous password <your E-mail address>
```

See also [Customizing MSDN](#) on how to change the ftp-site and directories used to build the ftp script.

Exit ALT-X

Exits the program.

Name

The name of the file that is highlighted in the Selection Box. The Selection Box allows multiple files to be highlighted; only the most recently selected file will be shown.

Description

A short description of the contents of the highlighted file.

Windows Version

While importing an index file, MSDN or MSDN2DB tries to determine for which version of Windows this file is intended. The reference to the earliest version of Windows is shown in this field:

3.0	Windows 3.0
3.1	Windows 3.1
32	Win32
Chicago	Chicago (successor of Windows 3.1)
NT	Windows NT

Compiler

While importing an index file, MSDN or MSDN2DB tries to determine what special software is needed for this file. First, a reference to a compiler is searched for, then for other programs. When the search is unsuccessful, a C compiler is assumed. Note that a Visual C++ compiler does not mean that the example cannot be run using a standard C compiler. In order of precedence:

Compiler	Program	Mentioned in abstract
Excel	Microsoft Excel	Excel
Word	MS Word for Windows	Word
FoxPro	Microsoft FoxPro	FoxPro
Access	Microsoft Access	Access
Visual Basic	Visual Basic	Visual B
Visual C++	Visual C++	Visual C
MSC + MFC	Microsoft C++ plus MFC	C++, Foundation
C	Unknown	

Latest Revision

The **Revision** field shows the date of the creation or last revision of the file. The revision date is extracted from the abstract. When no date can be found, the creation date of the database file is used instead.

The files from SoftLib do not have a revision date. Instead a rather obscure number is displayed that identifies the file uniquely. This number is not used by MSDN nor Microsoft's ftp-server.

Category

The **Category** field shows from which index the file was taken. Although for each type (MSDN, SoftLib) a separate database is maintained, the MSDN program displays them simultaneously.

Selection Box

The **Selection Box** shows the current selection of files. The selection can be manipulated by pressing:



Add files by searching the database



Add the new files (selection box is cleared)



Remove the highlighted files from the selection



Clear the selection box

Note that the selection box is not automatically cleared. Only a limited number of files can be shown due to limitations of Windows' listbox class. No check is made to verify that files are left out.

What's new in this version?

Version 2.0

Released: June 1994

- Changed the database format to reflect Microsoft's new format of the MSDN index file (thanks guys!).
- Added support for importing the SoftLib index file.
- Parameters related to Microsoft's ftp site are read from a .ini file.

Version 1.1

Released: No.

- Fixed a bug that crashed MSDN when attempting to copy a large selection to the clipboard.
- Added an option to the Search dialog to clear the selection.

Version 1.0

Released: April 1994

- The first version of MSDN.

Copyright

The programs MSDN.EXE, MSDNBOR.EXE, MSDN2DB.EXE and the help file MSDN.HLP are copyrighted:

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All suggestions, remarks and bug reports are welcome; send them preferably to the internet address.

