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XE "Overview"§Overview

Having developed a few in-house windows applications I found the need to write associated help files. Writing these is nothing short of a pain, so I looked around for third party solutions to simplify this process and found none suitable, hence CreateHelp! was written.

CreateHelp! automates all the laborious cross referencing of hypertext jumps and allows for easy conversion of a 'text' document to a hypertext document.

To write HLP files you need a rich text formatted document that uses special footnote references to identify each topic or 'page' and hidden text to reference hypertext jumps and pop-ups (definitions).

The special footnotes and character formatting used are as follows:

footnote	#	Context string	A name (containing no spaces) which uniquely identifies the 'page', allowing for hypertext jumps and definitions
footnote	\$	Title	A title for the 'page'
footnote	+	Browse Sequence no.	Sets the order in which 'pages' are viewed when using the << and >> buttons
footnote	K	Keyword	Sets the keywords that are listed in the search dialog box (when the Show Topics button is pressed the titles of related 'pages' are shown)

Double Underlined Text Indicates a 'page' that can be jumped to

Single Underlined Text Indicates a definition or pop-up (these are generally further explanations of terms used)

Hidden Text The context ID name of a 'page' that is to be referenced by a definition or jump

CreateHelp! allows for all this information to be entered into dialog boxes that then automatically formats the text appropriately and references the necessary jumps etc.

This is done using two WinWord documents, the first is the main body of the HLP file and has the standard DOC extension and the second contains all the definition context IDs that are use for the pop-ups, this has the extension DFN. At compilation time these two files are saved as rich text format documents with the extensions RTF and DEF respectively.

The final file created and maintained by CreateHelp! is the HPJ file. This is a text file (similar to an INI file) which is used by the help compiler (HCxx) to determine all the compilation options etc.

XE "Installation"§ Installation

The archive CHxxx.ZIP should contain the following files:

C_HELP!.DOT MANUAL.DOC

C_HELP!.HLP README.TXT

C_HELP!.DOT should be unpacked into your WinWord directory, or the directory in which your templates are stored, C_HELP!.HLP can be placed in either your Windows or WinWord directory. MANUAL.DOC and README.TXT can be anywhere you wish, but you are strongly advised to take a peek at README.TXT as it contains the last minute release notes.

Getting Started

To setup CreateHelp! for the first time: From WinWord select FILE NEW then the template C_HELP! which should appear in your list of available templates (if not see *Installation* above). You are then prompted for the setup options (see below) which determine the location of all the project files etc.

On starting any new project (i.e. by FILE NEW, C_HELP!) you are asked for a project name, and your first project is no exception. The project name must be a DOS standard file name with no extension. CreateHelp! gives all the project files the same name with their own various extensions (explained later)

That's it you ready to start writing your first help file.

Select INSERT NEW CONTEXT from the menus or from the toolbar. You are presented with a dialog box prompting you for a *Title*, *Context ID*, *Browse Sequence Number* and associated *Keywords* with options of *Auto Context*, *Auto Insert Title* and *Use Title as Keyword*.

Auto Context will automatically set a context ID based on the first two words of the *Title* (thus Table of Contents would become TABLE_OF).

Auto Insert Title will insert the Title into the document using the font set in setup options.

Use Title as Keyword will add the Title to the list of Keywords.

Having completed this dialog box the footnotes are then inserted and you are returned to the main editing window of your document. You will then be asked if this is the contents page, this then sets the CONTENTS section of the HPJ file. (If you answer NO you will be asked again after every new context ID until the contents page is defined.)

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That's basically it! The sections *The Toolbar* and *The Menus* will explain further all the features available with CreateHelp!

XE "Setup Options"§Setup Options

The following options must be set:

Project Path	is where all the project files are stored; DOC, DFN, HPJ and RTF & DEF
Graphics Path	sets the BMROOT option in the HPJ file. It is where most of you graphics files are stored, if they are not then INSERT PICTURE, REFERENCED PICTURE will insert the full path to the graphic.
Help Compiler	gives you the choice of using HC30, HC31 or HCP
Compiler Path	the path where HCxx resides
SHED Installed	YES/NO as to whether SHED.EXE is installed
SHED Path (the MS hypergraphics editor)	the path to SHED.EXE
Title Font	the font used for all the new 'page' titles Only supports font, points, bold, italic and color
Body Text	the font used for the main body of the file Only supports font, points, bold, italic and color
Definition Titles	the font used for the definition (pop-up) title Only supports font, points, bold, italic and color
Definition Body	the font used for the main body of the definition Only supports font, points, bold, italic and color

XE "The ToolBar"§The Toolbar

Insert New Context	inserts a page break followed by footnote references for context ID, title, browse sequence and keywords, though context ID is all that MUST be provided
Insert Title	inserts a footnote reference for the context ID's title, the cursor can be in any part of the section for this to work. This is unnecessary if the title has set in with Insert New Context
Insert Browse Sequence	inserts a footnote reference for the context ID's browse sequence. The cursor can be in any part of the section for this to work. This is unnecessary if the browse sequence number has been set with Insert New Context
Insert Keyword	inserts a footnote reference for the context ID's keywords. The cursor can be in any part of the section for this to work. This is unnecessary if the keywords have been set with Insert New Context
Insert Definition	enables a definition to be entered into the DFN file and referenced to the selected text. Text must be selected for this to work
Insert Jump	enables a jump to be referenced to the selected text. Text must be selected for this to work
Insert Picture	as per regular Insert Picture however after the file has been selected options are given to insert it as a bitmap or an opaque reference; either justified left, right or with text. Selecting the latter allows for the insertion of hypergraphics and makes for a smaller HLP file size
μ § Launch SHED	launches SHED.EXE (the Microsoft Hypergraphics editor - if installed)
Tools Spelling	as per usual
Launch Help	launches the HLP files associated with the current project. This will generate an error unless the project has been compiled or if the file has been re-compiled since last loaded by WinHelp
Compile Help	uses HCxx to compile your current project into a HLP file

XE "The Menu"§The Menu

The menus that are changed or added in CreateHelp! are as follows:

File Close project	closes both the DOC file (prompting you to save changes) and the DFN file (again prompting you to save changes) for the current project
Edit Find & Insert Jump or Def	similar to Edit Find normally used in WinWord, however you are given the option to reference a jump or definition reference to the found text. This is useful for referencing multiple occurrences of a certain word or phrase
Edit HPJ	sets the HPJ file options
View Errorlog	opens the Errorlog as defined in the ERRORLOG section of the HPJ file. Generates an error unless the file has been compiled
Insert Picture	as per regular Insert Picture however after the file has been selected options are given to insert as a bitmap or an opaque reference. Selecting the latter allows for the insertion of hypergraphics and makes for a smaller HLP file size
Insert New Context	creates a new context section. At the same time the title, browse sequence and keywords may be entered for the given context ID
Insert Title	inserts a footnote reference for the title into the current section. This is not necessary if it was entered with Insert New Context
Insert Browse Sequence	inserts a footnote reference for the browse sequence into the current section. This is not necessary if it was entered with Insert New Context
Insert Keyword	inserts a footnote reference for the keywords into the current section. This is not necessary if they were entered with Insert New Context
Insert Jump	prompts for a context ID to set the selected text as a jump. The AutoContext feature is used to 'guess' the context ID or allows for a search of all available context IDs (can be slow)
Insert Definition	inserts a definition for the selected text in the DFN file. This also uses the AutoContext feature.
Tools Launch Help	launches the HLP file associated with the current project. This will generate an error unless the project has been compiled or if the file has been re-compiled since last loaded by WinHelp
Tools Compile Help	launches HCxx to compile the current project. As this is a shell out to DOS you may require a PIF file for HCxx. On returning to WinWord you are given the options to load the error file generated by HCxx and/or to launch the newly compiled HLP file
Tools Launch SHED	launches the MS Hypergraphics editor (if installed)
Tools Setup CreateHelp!	runs through all the setup options for CreateHelp!
Help CreateHelp! Index	launches the CreateHelp! HLP file

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Help About

shows the About dialog box - registration status, version number etc.

Help Register

allows the entry of registration details to remove the nag messages

The HPJ File

The HPJ file is the project file specifying as the compilation options. Those that are directly editable from within CreateHelp! are as follows:

ROOT	the location of the DEF and RTF files. Beware of changing this, its better to change it via Setup Options
BMROOT	this is the location of the graphics.
ERRORLOG	the error file that HCxx writes after compilation
TITLE	what is displayed in the title bar when the HLP file is run
CONTENTS	the Context ID of the contents page. It is jumped to when the CONTENTS button is pressed
ICON	defines the ICO file for your HLP file. This must include the full path
WARNING	1, 2 or 3 - the warning level that HCxx generates
REPORT	ON or OFF, whether or not HCxx reports errors
COMPRESS	this option causes HCxx to compress the HLP file but can slow the compression process down considerably. Leave this set to OFF until the HLP file is debugged and then re-compile using the HIGH option

Obtaining the Tools

The files HCxx and SHED.EXE are included with the Windows SDK, Visual Basic Professional Edition (versions 1.0 and 2.0) and probably in a few other SDKs. However those of you that don't have these products needn't dismay. Both files are available from library 16 in the WINSDK forum on Compuserv.

At time of writing the most recent versions were:

HCP.ZIP 11 01/93

SHED.ZIP 10 01/93

Writing help files

A Windows HLP file is a hypertext document which allows users to quickly jump from subject to subject and view definitions of unfamiliar terms in a pop-up window.

Every 'page' in a HLP file must have a unique name (containing no spaces) to identify it. This is known as a *Context ID*. Every 'page' may also be given a *Title*, this is a real name for the 'page'. For example this page would have a *context ID* of WRITING_HELP and a *Title* of 'Writing help files - explained'

The two other features of a help file are *Keywords* and *Browse Sequence number*. *Keywords* are words which are shown when the SEARCH button is pressed and each page can have many *keywords* associated with it. This page may have the *keywords* - Writing help files, Help files explained, Explanation of how to write help files, etc. So the more *keywords* associated with any page, the easier it is for the user to find the relevant topic. The *Browse Sequence number* is like a page number, it controls the order in which 'pages' are viewed when the user presses the << and >> buttons. They have the advantage that they do not have to be consecutive, so, the first page can be 000, the second 005 and so on, because of this 'pages' can be written in any order, as long as the browse sequence is defined. It is a good practice to use multiples of 5 because if you find that a page has to be added later it can be given the number 002 without having to re-number all the other pages.

Using this manual as an example, the procedure to write a help file would be as follows

From WinWord select FILE NEW and then select the template C_HELP! You are asked for setup info as described in getting started and then a project name. The project name must be 8 characters or less with no extension, so, let's call this TEST. CreateHelp! does a bit of housework and then leaves you in the main document window. You are ready to start your first page (generally the contents page)

From the menus or toolbar, select INSERT NEW CONTEXT, fill the dialog box in as follows:

Title	Table of Contents	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Auto Insert Title
Context ID	CONTENTS	<input type="checkbox"/> Auto Context
Browse sequence	000	
Keywords	Contents; Index	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Use Title as Keyword

(keywords are separated by a semi-colon)

CreateHelp! now creates a new 'page' and inserts the title. You are then asked if this is the contents page so answer YES.

Now add a few entries for the contents page:

- Overview
- Installation...
- Writing help files

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Now the next 'page', INSERT NEW CONTEXT and the dialog box is as follows

Title	Writing help files	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Auto Insert Title
Context ID		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Auto Context
Browse sequence	035		
Keywords	Help files explained	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Use Title as Keyword

Enter some text for the Writing help files page:

A Windows HLP file is a hypertext document which allows users to quickly jump from subject to subject and to view definitions of unfamiliar terms in a pop-up window.

Every 'page' in a HLP file...

Now lets reference a jump. Select the text Writing help files on the contents page and select INSERT JUMP from the menus or 'J' on the toolbar. A dialog box asks the context ID you wish to associate with the text and suggests WRITING_HELP. Click on OK - all the character formatting is done, referencing Writing help files on the contents page to the context ID WRITING_HELP

To reference a definition, select the text HLP on the Writing help files page and from the menus INSERT DEFINITION or 'D' on the toolbar A dialog box asks the context ID you wish to associate with the text and suggests HLP_DEF. Click on OK and a second dialog box asks for the definition of HLP, type a definition such as - these are the help format files used by WinHelp and select OK. This definition is then inserted into the DFN file and you are returned to the main DOC file.

To reference the same definition select the second occurrence of HLP and INSERT DEFINITION again. The dialog box again suggests HLP_DEF and we know that this is the context ID we wish to reference to, so click OK. The second dialog box asks for a definition for the text HLP again, as this is already defined click on CANCEL. The text HLP is now referenced to an existing context ID and all the character formatting is done automatically.

Congratulations! you've written your first help file. Now all that needs to be done is to compile it. Select TOOLS HELP COMPILE from the menus or the happy face from the toolbar. CreateHelp! will shell out to DOS and run the help compiler selected in the setup options. You may see the message box "Compilation Complete! Open the Errorfile?" prematurely. Wait for the return from DOS and answer NO (Hopefully no errors have been generated) You are then asked if you wish to launch the newly created help file, well, do you?

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This being a simple help file there's not much that can be done with it, but clicking on Writing help files should jump you to that 'page' and clicking on either occurrence of HLP should bring up a pop-up defining what a HLP file is. Click on the SEARCH button and you should see listed the five keywords you've defined, namely, Contents, Table of Contents, Help files explained, Index and Writing help files. Finally you can use the << and >> buttons to navigate from page to page (between both pages).

That's it! The rest is down to you, good luck and if you do continue to use CreateHelp!....REGISTER!

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Registration

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If you continue to use this product after a reasonable trial period then please register it.

The Benefits

The 10 minute Nag messages will be removed immediately upon registration
You will be advised of updates and other products available

The Cost

UK£20.00

US\$40.00

Payable by Cheque or banker's draft. If not drawn on a UK bank these will be subject to a delay while funds clear (upto about 3 weeks)

Contacting the Author

By eMail @ Compuserv 100111,3452

By Snail Mail @ Nic Barnes, CHC, 27 West Park, London SE9 4RZ, ENGLAND

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The shareware system and the continued availability of quality shareware products depend on your willingness to register and pay for the shareware you use. It's the registration fees you pay which allow authors to support and continue to develop our products. Please show your support for shareware by registering those programs you actually use.

Registration Form

I have found CreateHelp! useful and wish to continue to use it.

I enclose payment of UK£20.00 / US\$40.00* made payable to Nic Barnes
*delete as applicable

Name:

Title:

Company:

Address:

City, State

Zip/Post Code

Country

eMail address

Where did you obtain this product from?

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 CHC
 27 West Park
 London SE9 4RZ
 ENGLAND