

# ESI's Computer-Based MWAPI Reference and Tutorial

*by Gardner S. Trask III*

Often when trying to learn a new technology, users either have no place to turn, or are swamped with so many sources that it is hard to know where to start. Many times, it is a case of feast or famine.

With everyone clamoring about M Technology's new Windowing API (MWAPI), where does an M professional with little or no graphical-user-interface experience turn for information and instruction? Educational Systems, Inc., may have just the products for you. ESI has developed two new computer-based products under its M Learning Series to aid novices and experts alike. Thankfully, these new products are neither a rehash of the MWAPI X11/SC11/TG4/WG6/93-32, nor based on a specific vendor's implementation of the MWAPI. While these other sources have their place and audience, they are not quite appropriate for M professionals who simply are seeking information about windowizing in general, as well as an introduction to the features of the MWAPI.

## MWAPI Tutorial

ESI's MWAPI Tutorial provides vendor-independent instruction on general GUI/windowing issues as well as the new MWAPI. By using Microsoft Help file facilities, users are able to take advantage of the hypertext facilities to jump from lesson to lesson under MS Windows.

The tutorial provides a comprehensive introduction to GUI concepts and the MWAPI commands. This step-by-step process starts by defining basic terms and concepts, then demonstrates how to build basic windows, gadgets, and menus. This leads to a complete demonstration of the development of a fully functional windows application with a variety of gadgets, menus, timers, event callbacks and error-handling. This course is peppered with code examples to demonstrate and reinforce covered topics. All of this combines to provide an impressive tutelage on the MWAPI and its capabilities.

As required, I ran this tutorial under Microsoft Windows (3.1). The loading was seamless and quick, the navigation is sharp and responsive. Users should note, however, that this tutorial is not interactive in the sense that it provides an MWAPI platform on which to test. The intended audience for the tutorial is programmers who have an MWAPI implementation available. But even if you don't have your own MWAPI, this is an invaluable guide to the functions and capabilities of the MWAPI.

My only concern was having to switch windows often between the tutorial and my implementation in order to see the example code and then type. I tested all examples under a Beta version of DTM 2.0 and they all worked as described. One other issue is the loss of sleep due to the great time I had

tweaking each example (like endless FOR loops to randomize the color, position, and size of the windows and gadgets), but we can't blame ESI for that, can we?

I recommend this tutorial as an excellent tool for M developers new to the windowing game.

## The MWAPI Reference

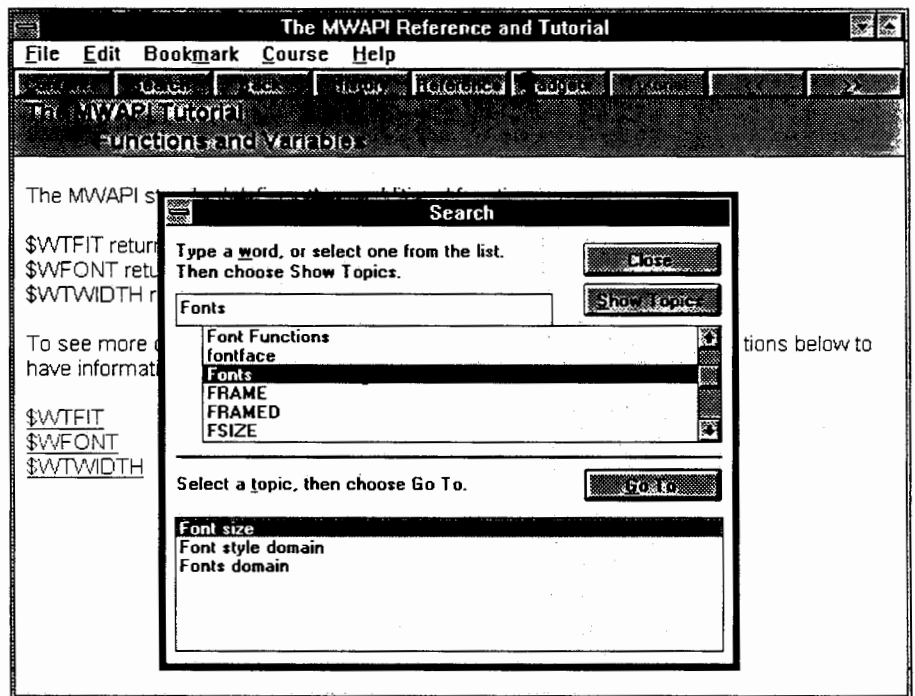
Though a bit more technical and not quite as flashy as its tutorial partner, the MWAPI Reference is nonetheless an important tool that is sure to be used repeatedly. The Reference, also provided under MS Windows, allows quick access and hyper-jumping to the specific technical area requested.

ESI has done a fine job of using tables of contents, extended referencing, and "How Do I . . . ?" options to design a comprehensive tool. Since it sits in a background window during development, the Reference is sure to be used with the same frequency as a spell-checker or program manager. Not just a rewrite of the M Windowing API MDC (MUMPS Development Committee) document, the tool also refers to vendor-specific extensions, as well as advanced topics on event-handling, error-trapping, debugging, and portability issues.

Other than perhaps adding some examples at each component definition, I can't find a single reason not to make this a permanent part of my development library.

I have struggled to educate myself on GUI and MWAPI issues and I can only wonder how much faster I would have accomplished my task if I had had these products earlier. These products will put you leaps ahead on the learning curve. **M**

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This replica shows a sample ESI MWAPI Reference and Tutorial screen.

## New Releases from Vendors

**Antrim Corporation** (Plano, TX) previewed its new information management solution for laboratories within multifacility medical communities at the 1994 Annual Healthcare Information and Management Systems Conference held in Phoenix. Called **Answers:Multisite**, the new product release offers multiple ordering and performing site capabilities for complex medical organizations that share information yet retain site-specific flexibility. With this addition, Antrim now supports more than 850 applications. Answers systems run on **Digital Equipment Corporation's VAX, Alpha AXP, DECStation, PC platforms, and IBM RISC System 6000**. Contact Robbie Dennis-Hollis, Antrim Corporation, 12th

floor, 101 East Park Blvd., Plano, TX 75074. Phone: 214-422-1022; fax: 214-516-3460.

**Arnet Corporation** (Nashville, TN) has a new *Connect Direct* catalog available, offering third-party networking products tested and approved by Arnet Labs. *Connect Direct* has products from such vendors as Alta, AMR, CITRIX, CTI, Esker, GCOM, MiLAN, Motorola UDS, Orion Systems, Retix, and Xircom. The new service should help meet product and support needs of resellers and corporate end users. The catalog is available by calling 800-377-6686, or by faxing 800-377-8848.

At the MUG-UK meeting in Dublin, **Sheehan Computer Services Ltd** launched its new product, **eMAnate**, a software tool that integrates M host systems with Windows or DOS applications on PCs. With eMAnate, M applications on host computers can drive such standards as word processors, DTP, spreadsheets, and presentation graphics without user intervention. The software combines terminal and network connections with M Technology utilities to link Windows programs and automated DOS calls that give interactive control of PCs. It allows GUI application control even in non-GUI versions of M and reduces the screen-handling task. Contact Dan Sheehan, Sheehan Computer Services Ltd, Suite 4, Octagon Court, High Wycombe, Bucks HP11 2HS, England. Phone: 011-0494-472430, fax: 011-0494-463040. **M**