

Notes 4.6: Editing mail with Lotus WordPro or Microsoft Word

Interview by Betsy Kosheff

[Editor's note: This article resides in "Iris Today", the technical Webzine located on the <http://www.notes.net> Web site produced by Iris Associates, the developers of Domino/Notes.]

Among the new integration options in the new Notes 4.6 client is the choice to use either Lotus WordPro or Microsoft Word for Windows as your Notes e-mail editor. Ryan Jansen tells how he modified the Notes Mail template, while Dollie Gansz who made Notes an ActiveX Document Container, explains why this is the next logical evolution of OLE and the continued evolution of Notes as the ultimate container for storing and managing documents of all kinds.

What is an ActiveX Document Container?

Dollie: Well, there's ongoing confusion about terminology, but quite simply, we mean the ability for one application, such as Notes, to serve up another application that supports Microsoft's ActiveX Document technology. ActiveX Document expands on the visual or in-place editing functionality initially provided by OLE 2.0, enabling people working in Notes to use another application, like a word processor, a spreadsheet, or a browser, in place of the Notes editor.

Is this the first time Notes has used ActiveX Document?

Dollie: The first generation of ActiveX Documents came with Notes 4.5 and was used with Web browsers primarily. The new Notes 4.6 client features which enable you to use Internet Explorer as your in-place browser, and WordPro or Word as your in-place mail editor, all use the same ActiveX Document technology with new additions in Notes to extend the capabilities.

What can you do with Word and WordPro as ActiveX Documents?

Ryan: Because Word and WordPro both support Active Doc, you can use them to create mail memos in addition to creating regular Notes memos. So, now you have new menu items called "Create Word Memo" or "Create WordPro Memo," either one of which launches your chosen editor "in-place active" within Notes. In other words, it launches the whole program and you have your own Word features that you know and like, but you stay within Notes and use it for storage, replication, security, etc.



What's unique about Iris' approach to ActiveX Documents?

Ryan: Dollie wrote the underlying code to do the OLE in-place activation and display and I designed the templates to provide the correct fields and values for launching Word or WordPro. The cool thing is, as other applications come to market and support the ActiveX Document interface, we won't need to change the underlying code, we just have to modify the template. The new Microsoft Office document library

templates that ship as part of the Notes 4.6 client use the same technology to allow in-place active use of these applications, too. And, Business Partners and customers can look at our template approach and just copy a lot of it, using many of the same fields and values, just supplementing their own ActiveX Document application.

How does it work from an end user perspective?

Ryan: You can specify in your location profile whether you want to use the Notes 4.6 Rich Text editor, Microsoft Word for Windows 95 or 97, or Lotus WordPro 97. This launches the template needed to use the word processor as mail.

Do you get Notes Mail features like Mail Delivery options and Type Ahead Addressing?

Ryan: Yes. You also get "Save as Draft" and "Send and File." "Save as Draft" means "save but don't send yet" and "Send and file" means send, save, and place in a folder.

What if the recipient doesn't have Word or WordPro?

Ryan: No problem. Notes converts the rich text of the Word/WordPro object and stores it in the standard body field. Users who do not have Word, WordPro (or Notes 4.6) can still read your memos.

So, how is mail different using the Alternate Mail Editor?

Ryan: The new template is just a regular mail template, but there's a new form called Document Memo, which, for the most part looks just like the standard Notes Memo, although the Word or Wordpro layouts take up most of the memo form. You still get the Notes action buttons, but there's also a new little envelope button which takes you the "send to," "copy to," "subject" and "blind copy to" fields, so that you can use and edit them.



What was involved in making Notes an ActiveX Document Container?

Dollie: Basically, it involves implementing or using several new OLE interfaces. Notes doesn't use the Microsoft Foundation Classes (MFCs) to implement OLE, we go directly at the OLE level to implement the interfaces, which is a little more complicated.

How do I know which applications support ActiveX Documents?

Dollie: Well, you're not really supposed to do this, but you can go into your registry and search for DocObject. Applications that support ActiveX Documents register this keyword in the registry.

What do you like about this technology?

Dollie: Well, it's useful to use these alternate editors as full-screen applications. They (Microsoft) are trying to make it so that the object's application is totally in control by taking over the entire window.

Straightforward embedding doesn't give you the whole window, so this is just the next evolution of OLE as a container technology.

Why is Notes such a great container?

Dollie: Because it's already a great information management system with an object store capable of supporting rich objects, a distribution and access model based on replication, an application development environment, security, directory services and so on.

What's your plan for integrating with other ActiveX Document applications?

Dollie: As Ryan stated in What's unique about Iris' approach to ActiveX Document, the basic technology is in place in the code. Only the templates need to change.

Are there any Word or Wordpro functions which are lost that people should be aware of?

Dollie: When you use an alternate mail editor, a copy of the message's contents is also saved as rich text. This is seen by people who are not using the alternate mail editor or by people using earlier versions of Notes. For simple messages, the rich text in these cases is generally an accurate rendition of the original. However, if the original message was more complicated (contained things like embedded objects, tables, etc.) some of this is lost in the rich text version.

ABOUT DOLLIE GANSZ AND RYAN JANSEN

Dollie Gansz joined Iris two years ago, focusing on "OLE, OLE, OLE." She most recently implemented the Notes Release 4.5 support for OCX/ActiveX controls such as the Lotus Components, and is now completing the work needed to make Notes Release 4.6 an ActiveX Document Container.

Ryan Jansen came to Iris from Lotus in June of 1996. For Notes Release 4.6, he enhanced the document library templates to provide ActiveX Document support for Microsoft Office, as well as the alternate mail editor templates for Microsoft Word and Lotus WordPro. In addition, he implemented a number of new mail features like automated personal group creation, and is now working on a new Notes 4.6 server install program.

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