Chapter 8

Getting Help

This chapter describes how to obtain information about Prism and Connection Machine commands, languages, and libraries. To learn:

- **How to obtain help about Prism**, see Section 8.1.
- **How to obtain CM on-line documentation,** see Section 8.2.
- **How to send electronic mail about Prism,** see Section 8.3.
- **How to join the Prism mailing list,** see Section 8.4.

8.1 Getting Help

There are several ways in which you can get help in Prism:

- The **Help** menu in the menu bar provides help on several major topics. It includes the Help Index, which gives in-depth information about all aspects of Prism. See Section 8.1.2.
- The **Help** selection in menus and the **Help** button in windows and dialog boxes provide instructions for using these screen areas. Pressing the **F1** key in a window or dialog box also displays a help screen.
- Command-line help provides information about commands you can issue from the command window.

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8.1.1 Using the Help System

The Prism help system uses the WorldView viewing software also used in Thinking Machines Corporation's CMview on-line documentation system.

The most important thing to keep in mind when using the help system is that this symbol:

is a *link marker*. Click your left mouse button twice, rapidly, on this marker in a help screen to display more information about a topic. Typically, following the link displays the section of the on-line *Prism User's Guide* or *Prism Reference Manual* where the topic is discussed.

The first time you left-click on a **Help** button or choose the **Help** selection from a menu, there will be a short delay as the WorldView application starts up. The response to subsequent help requests during a Prism session should be much faster. When closing a help window, choose **Close** from the window's **File** menu. If you choose **Exit**, you close the WorldView application, and Prism will have to restart it when you make a subsequent help request.

The **Help** selection in the menu bar of any help window provides general information on using the WorldView application. Here are some specific points to keep in mind:

- You can use WorldView's full-text searching capability to search through the help system for a word or phrase. Choose **Full-Text Query** from the **Search** menu in the menu bar of any help window.
- The figures of some Prism windows may not appear entirely clear in help windows. Choose the **Zoom** or **Zoom Box** selection from the **View** menu of a help window to increase the magnification of all or part of the figure.

8.1.2 Choosing Selections from the Help Menu

The **Help** menu provides information in a variety of ways:

- Choose **Index** to display an index of entries. Double-click on a entry's link marker to display the section of the *Prism User's Guide* in which the entry is discussed.

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- Choose **Using Help** to display an overview of the Help system.
- Choose **Release Notes** to display release notes for the current version of Prism. (You should be sure to read the release notes before using Prism, to find out about last-minute information that doesn't get into the documentation.)
- Choose **Overview** to display an overview of the features of Prism.
- Choose **Glossary** to display a list of terms used in Prism. You can click on a term to find out more information about it.
- Choose **Commands Reference** to display a list of Prism commands. You can double-click on a command's link marker to obtain its reference description.
- Choose **Tutorial** to display a tutorial that will teach you the basics about Prism.

8.1.3 Getting Help on Using the Mouse

Some Prism windows include an icon of a mouse:

Click on this icon to display information about using the mouse in the window.

8.1.4 Obtaining Help from the Command Window

Use the **`help`** command to obtain help from the command window. Issuing the command

```
help commands
```

displays a list of Prism commands and editing key combinations. Issuing **`help`** with the name of a command as an argument displays help on that command. Issuing **`help`** with no arguments displays a brief message about how to use command-line help.

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8.2 Obtaining On-Line Documentation

This section discusses how to obtain on-line documentation about CM commands, languages, and libraries within graphical Prism.

Prism offers interfaces to several kinds of on-line documentation:

- the CMview collection of on-line CM manuals
- UNIX-style manual pages
- release notes
- bug-update files

See Section A.4 for a discussion of how to obtain on-line documentation from commands-only Prism.

8.2.1 Viewing CM Documents

Prism provides an interface to CMview, Thinking Machines Corporation's on-line documentation system. Using CMview, you can display any Connection Machine manual in the most recent collection of manuals, and do full-text searches across this entire collection.

To start up CMview, choose **Online Doc** from the **Doc** menu. In a few moments, you will see the CMview Welcome screen. You can then:

- Double-click on **Getting Started** to learn how to use CMview.
- Double-click on **Manuals** to display a list of Connection Machine manuals, with hyperlinks to their tables of contents.
- Choose **Full-Text Query** from the **Search** menu in the CMview menu bar to do a search.

Note that CMview uses the same viewing software as the Prism help system. However, they contain separate collections of documents.

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8.2.2 Viewing Manual Pages

To obtain a manual page, choose the **Man Pages** selection from the **Doc** menu. This brings up **xman**, a standard X program for viewing manual pages; **xman** operates independently of Prism.

Help for **xman** appears in the **xman** window, as shown in Figure 36. Basically, you can search for a manual page by choosing **Search** from the **xman Options** menu. You can use **xman** to view any UNIX manual pages available on your system, not just those related to the CM.

NOTE: If **xman** is not available on your system, you will not be able to use this feature.

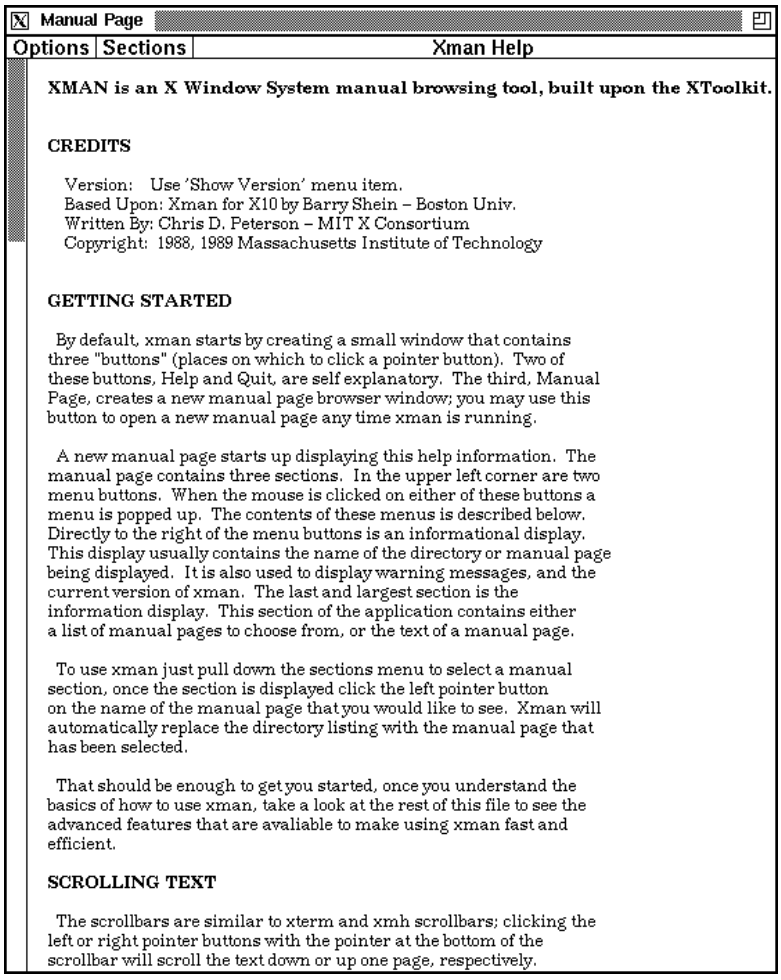

Figure 36. The xman window.

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8.2.3 Viewing Release Notes and Bug-Update Files

Thinking Machines provides monthly bug-update files for each of its products; these files contain information about newly reported, outstanding, and fixed bugs for the product. It also provides on-line versions of the release notes for its products.

To view a bug-update file, choose **Bug Updates** from the **Doc** menu. A window will appear; the files available at your site should be listed in the **Bug Update Files** list in this window. Check with your system administrator if this list is empty, or if the file you are interested in is missing (the files may have been installed in a different location from that specified when Prism was installed).

To dispay a file, left-click on its name in the list, then click on **OK**. Or simply double-click, rapidly, on the name. The file will appear in your default editor. (Use the **Customize** utility to change this editor; see Section 9.3.2.)

The procedure for viewing release notes is the same. Choose **Release Notes** from the **Doc** menu to display a window that contains a list of Release Note files. Click on the filename, then click on **OK** to display the file in your default editor.

NOTE: Release notes on Prism itself are also available by selecting **Release Notes** in the **Help** menu, as described in Section 8.1.2.

8.3 Sending Electronic Mail about Prism

You can send electronic mail about Prism to Thinking Machines Corporation. We encourage you to write us and let us know what is wrong (or right!) with Prism, or to get an answer to a question.

From the menu bar: Choose the **Email** selection from the **Utilities** menu.

From the command window: Issue the **`email`** command on the command line.

In each case, Prism displays a window containing an editor. The edit buffer contains the last few Prism error messages, along with instructions on how to send the contents of the buffer — basically, you just save the buffer in the usual way before quitting the editor; the mail is sent automatically. Simply

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quit the editor if you decide not to send us mail. You can use the **Customize** utility to determine which editor Prism displays; see Section 9.3.2.

We put the last few error messages into the buffer as a convenience, in case you are sending us information about a possible bug. Feel free to add more information, or to delete the error messages and write us about something else entirely.

If you want to talk about Prism more informally with other users, we encourage you to join the **`prism-talk@think.com`** mailing list, as described below.

8.4 The Prism Mailing List

Thinking Machines maintains a mailing list, **`prism-talk@think.com`**, where Prism users can discuss how to get the most out of the Prism programming environment. If you have comments, questions, or insights about Prism, we urge you to join this list and share them with others.

Prism developers may monitor this list and, at their discretion, participate in discussions, but they are not obligated to do so. For this reason, bug reports should not be sent to this list. If you want to ensure a prompt, official response to your mail, use the Prism **Email** feature, or contact your Applications Engineer or Thinking Machines' Customer Support group directly.

To join this list, simply send e-mail to **`prism-talk-request@think.com`**.

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