



Help is for You

By Judy Bragg

As the Technical Writer for HYPACK, Inc., my primary responsibility has been to keep the HYPACK® User Manual and Help files updated. At times, it's a challenge to keep up with all of the changes implemented by 6 or 8 programmers, but I enjoy learning new things and helping people along in their daily challenges.

I'm sure you can imagine that, just as the technology for your HYPACK® projects changes and your skills improve, so it is in the world of technical communication. Over the past year, I've converted our documentation to a new, more powerful authoring tool that helps me to generate the existing documentation more efficiently and provides me with some additional tools. The learning curve has been steep, but I am approaching the point at which I can begin thinking about what other kinds of reference materials might be useful to you folks in the field.

- **Full Manual:** We have a manual that covers every module included in the HYPACK® software package. If you choose, you can print it from the PDF files found on your install CD or on our website.
- **Context-Sensitive Help Files:** Most of the information from the User Manual is included in the Help files. It is designed to open to the topics describing the program from which you called it. It seems that, even though the exact answer to your question may not be found in the topic that you see first, you have been able to find the required information without much difficulty.

I'm in the process of working to improve the help navigation to make it even easier than it was in the 2009 Help. I guess we'll all see how that turns out!

- **Quick Start Manuals:** These help the novice user by presenting only what is important to get the project setup, configure the most basic hardware properly, and collect data. It omits advanced features and post-processing. Quick Starts are generally sub-sets of the information covered in the full manual and focus on one user group (for example, single beam surveyors, multibeam surveyors, or dredgers). We have had these in the past, but they have been awkward to maintain. Maintenance is no longer such an issue and the content of the new QuickStarts should be better. They are currently in process.

My next question is, "What other forms of documentation would be useful for our users?". Well, for the next several months, I could ponder, dream and create what I think you could use, but totally miss the mark. I'd much rather be sure that, whatever format and content I work on, it will help *you*. There are lots of interesting tools and technologies out there for me to learn and work with, but this is about *you* and what would be most helpful to *you*.

So *here's your opportunity!* The following are a few ideas I've had (mostly aimed at the "newbie user"), but if there are others that you would find particularly useful, *now is the time to make your needs and requests known!* I can't promise I can provide everything that anyone requests, but if I have multiple, similar requests, I would definitely take that into consideration!

- **Cue Sheets:** For the Intermediate-level users who don't need all of the details, but who may find brief reminders useful.
- **Interactive tutorials:** Our training presentations are a great start, but these might guide our novice users through a few more examples, as they attempt to apply what they've learned in the presentations.

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- **Webinars:** Many of you have attended our training seminars, but travel time and expenses add up. I have attended several webinars for Tech. Writers and have found myself wondering if there are users who might be better served by a series of short, online training sessions. Online sessions could never cover as much material at once as we do in live sessions, but shorter, more focused sessions could be beneficial too.

Please send your feedback to judy@hypack.com.