

Authored several functional specifications for Lotus products - the last one for the multimedia-enhanced version of 1-2-3 for Windows, their flagship product. The primary purpose of this type of specification is to communicate within the product team: to provide an unambiguous description of the products behaviors, to capture the decision rationale behind the feature set, and to indicate future evolution of the product.

The secondary purpose of this type of specification is to communicate the concept and features of the product outside the product team. The marketing, quality assurance, sales, customer support, and international development teams use this information to create their plans to market, test, sell, support and translate the product.

About Bubble Help

Description

Bubble Help is the first level of Help available to the OpRock user and provides the briefest amount of information. Successive levels, such as online Help and online Books, provide progressively larger amounts of information

Purpose and Audience

Bubble Help tersely explains the use of the selected control, command, or dialog box option. Bubble Help supports the new Windows user who is unfamiliar with a graphical user interface. A curious user who is not currently engaged in completing a task, but who is browsing and investigating the features and functions available will use Bubble Help.

Bubble Help also supports the user who in mid task needs a quick reminder about which control, command, or option to use. For experimental users who like to teach themselves by trial and error, Bubble Help may provide all the documentation they need.

Usage Model

- Bubble Help is a mode that a user turns on or off with a Help command, a keypress, by choosing the Bubble Help icon, or by choosing Bubble Help in the Product Map. The mode the user chooses remains set until the user changes it. The default mode for Bubble Help is on.
- When Bubble Help mode is on and the user places the mouse pointer over a hot spot, a bubble opens. The bubble remains visible until the user moves the mouse pointer away from the hot spot.
- Rockport is active when Bubble Help is active. Users can show bubbles as they use Rockport. A user does not have to set up a situation (such as pull down a menu or open a dialog box) and then go back and turn on Bubble Help.
- Bubbles are nonsticky. One bubble at a time is visible; the screen will not be filled with bubbles.
- Bubble Help has context sensitive links to the online Help system. To show the corresponding Help topic, the user presses a key, which might be identified in the Bubble text.

Content

- For a Windows control, Bubble Help identifies the control and describes what it does and how to use it.
- For a Rockport control; which includes items in the control panel, mode and status indicators, window splitter, and icons; Bubble Help identifies the control and explains its purpose and use.
- For a command, Bubble Help expands the description in the long prompt and as necessary, provides enough information to distinguish the selected command from similar commands.
- For a dialog box option, Bubble Help explains what information to enter and as appropriate, describes the syntax, valid entries, and the relationship to or distinction from other options on the dialog box.
- Bubble Help may include an indicator about how to obtain more Help.

Open Issues

- Using F1 to launch Windoc from Bubble Help may sometimes cause ambiguity about which Help topic to show.

Consider the situation where Bubble Help is active, a dialog box is open, the cursor is not inside the dialog box, and the user presses F1. Does the user want Help about the dialog box, which is the active window, or about the item under the cursor, which has Bubble Help open?

The first choice is to use a unique key (maybe CONTROL-F1) to launch Windoc from Bubble Help.

The second choice is to use F1 to launch Windoc from Bubble Help and for Help topics for bubbles to preempt Help topics for commands or dialog boxes.

The third choice is to use F1 to launch Windoc and for Help topics for commands and dialog box options to preempt Help topics for bubbles.