

XIE: An Icon Interface Editor

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1. Introduction

Construction of an interactive graphics application can require a large effort to specify the screen layout. For graphics programs written in Icon [1][2], XIE eases this part of the project by providing an interactive layout tool.

An application built by XIE has two parts: the interface specification and the rest of the program. Both can be contained in the same source file. XIE edits the interface specification; any text editor can maintain the rest.

When XIE edits an existing file, it alters only the interface specification (adding one if necessary) and leaves the rest of the file unmodified. When XIE creates a new file, it writes a complete program by providing a skeletal Icon program to accompany the interface specification. This program simply prints each event (button push, slider movement, or whatever) on standard output, but it can be modified incrementally to produce the actions desired while remaining a functioning program at each stage.

XIE provides a prototyping facility for testing the interface at any time. The interface is built and executed to allow experimentation with the interface. Prototyping is possible regardless of the state of the Icon code in the file being edited.

Applications built by XIE use the WIT library of interface objects [3]. Not all of the capabilities of WIT are supported by XIE; sophisticated applications can call WIT procedures directly to augment the XIE-built interface.

XIE is based largely on the previous X-Icon Interface Builder, XIB [4]. The main difference is that XIE uses compact specifications that can coexist with user source code in the same file. The Icon program library contains a program `uix` for translating an XIB specification into XIE form.

Running XIE

XIE is started by entering the command

`xie [options] filename`

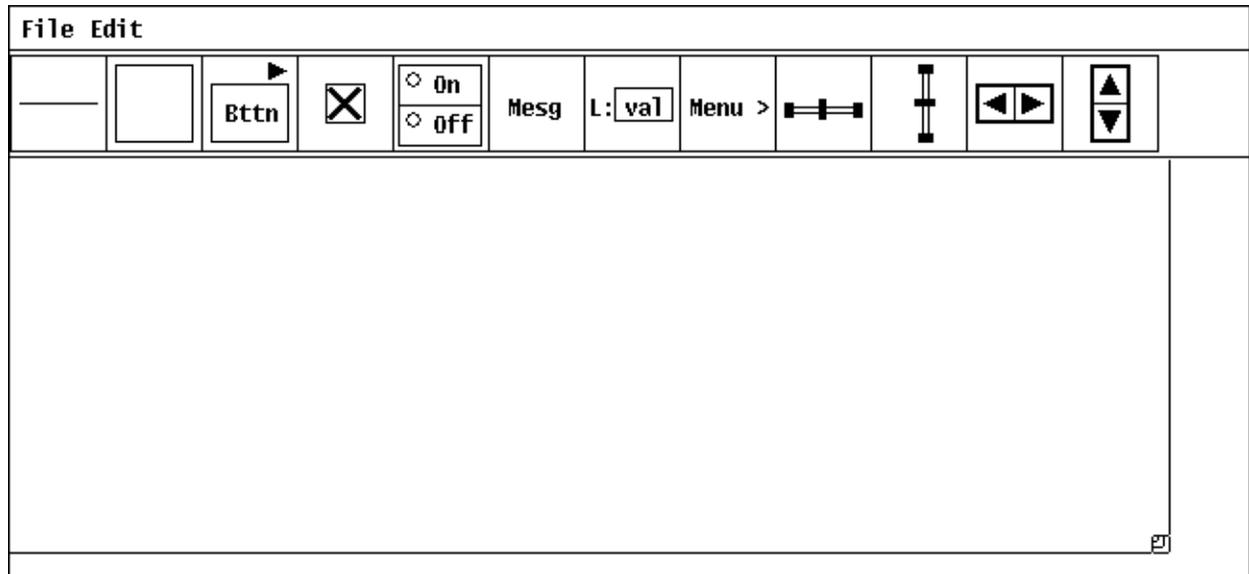
where *filename* is the name of an existing application source file or a new one to be created. If *filename* does not end in `.icn`, that suffix is appended. If *filename* is omitted, XIE uses `app.icn`. XIE accepts the command options supported by the `XWindow` library procedure, of which the most useful are these:

<code>-D display</code>	specify window display
<code>-G [wxh][+x+y]</code>	specify window geometry
<code>-B color</code>	set background color
<code>-F color</code>	set foreground color

Command options affect only to the execution of XIE, not any generated applications.

2. The Palette

Upon startup, XIE presents a large window containing a menu bar, a palette of user interface objects, and a work area or canvas.



The palette contains the following objects:

Lines are provided to decorate the interface; they do not receive events.

Regions are rectangular areas turned over to the application for both input and output purposes. The application can safely draw in these areas and receive uninterpreted events. While there is nothing to prevent an application from drawing anywhere within the window, it is not recommended: The application might distort the display by drawing over WIT objects, and the application will not be informed of end user activities.

Buttons are control devices that are activated by pressing the mouse while over the button. Buttons may appear in many different styles: regular, check box, check box without an outline, circle, and circle without an outline. The default style is regular; this can be changed by selecting a different style from the pop-up menu that appears when the right mouse button is pressed on the button palette image. Selecting a new default updates the palette image to the selected button style and creates button instances thereafter in this new style.

Check Boxes are switch buttons that are marked when *on* and blank when *off*. They differ from check-style buttons in that the size of the check box can be arbitrarily large, and there is no accompanying text.

Radio Buttons are collections of buttons such that exactly one button within the radio button is set at any given time.

Messages are read-only text; they do not receive events.

Text Input Fields gather textual input from the user. They consist of a label and an editable value.

Menus are lists of buttons that appear temporarily on the screen and allow the user to select an item.

Sliders are long rectangular buttons that display scalar values as positions in some range. When the scrollbar is clicked or dragged by the user, a scalar value is increased or decreased. Sliders can be either vertical or horizontal.

Scrollbars are sliders with a proportionally sized thumb capped on top and bottom by arrow buttons. The scrollbar shows the current location of the window or associated device within some virtual area that is larger than available screen space and allows convenient random access; the arrow buttons allow more precise motion. Scrollbars can appear either vertically or horizontally.

Instances of the above objects can be created by pressing the left mouse button upon the desired palette object; this creates an object within the canvas area that then can be dragged into position. Clicking the left mouse button upon an object *selects* the object. Selected objects are drawn with accentuated corners and can be manipulated as follows:

- move** drag left mouse button from object to new destination.
- nudge** press an arrow key (*up, down, left or right*) to move the object by one pixel.
- resize** drag left mouse button upon a corner of the object. The opposite corner is anchored.
- copy** select *copy* from the **edit menu**.
- delete** select *delete* from the **edit menu**.
- front** select *front* from the **edit menu**.
- back** select *back* from the **edit menu**.
- align** select *align vert* or *align horz* from the **edit menu**. This causes the mouse cursor to change to a crosshair; pressing the left mouse button on objects when the cursor is a crosshair aligns them with the selected object (either vertically or horizontally). Pressing the left mouse button on the window background restores the original cursor.
- attributes** press right mouse button to display (and modify) the attributes of the object.

A few notes are in order. Not all objects can be resized. For example, the size of a radio button object is solely determined by the items that make up the radio button. All sizable objects have limits on how *small* they can be, and thus are not drawn smaller than their limits. The size of a scrollbar is constrained such that at any given time the length must be twice the width.

XIE follows the standard X convention in which the upper-left corner of the window is at (0, 0), with the x coordinate increasing to the right and the y coordinate increasing in the downward direction. *Front* and *back* functions are provided to control z-axis ordering of objects. Although it is possible to specify overlapping objects within XIE, it is not recommended.

The size of the generated interface window can be controlled by the *resize icon* that initially appears in lower-right corner of the canvas. This object can be dragged anywhere within the canvas via the left mouse button. Pressing the right mouse button over the object pops-up an attribute sheet describing its current dimensions. If the XIE window is resized such that it is smaller than the interface window, the interface window is automatically made smaller. If an object instance does not fall entirely within the bounds of the interface window, it will appear clipped in the generated program as well. That is, there is no automatic repositioning of objects to fit within the interface window.

In addition to the tool palette, there are two menus provided that are displayed in response to mouse activities. The first is the **file menu** which provides the following functionality:

- open** loads a saved XIE file.
- save** saves the XIE interface to the current file.
- save as** acts like *save* but prompts for a file name.
- prototype** writes a file with the XIE interface and a skeletal main program, then translates and executes it. (Exit the prototype by typing Q in the window.)
- quit** terminates the XIE session.

The other menu is the **edit menu**, which provides the following functionality:

- copy** makes a copy of the selected object.
- delete** deletes the selected object.
- front** brings the selected object to the front of the canvas.
- back** pushes the selected object to the back of the canvas.

- redraw** redraws the screen.
- clear** deletes all objects.
- align vert** aligns objects with the x-coordinate of the selected object.
- align horz** aligns objects with the y-coordinate of the selected object.

Keyboard shortcuts are indicated on the menus for most items. Holding down the *meta* key and pressing the appropriate character is equivalent to choosing the menu item. (The *meta* key is a special shift key. It is sometimes labeled with a diamond or propeller or the word ALT.) The notation **delete @D** on the edit menu, for example, indicates that *meta-D* is the shortcut for delete.

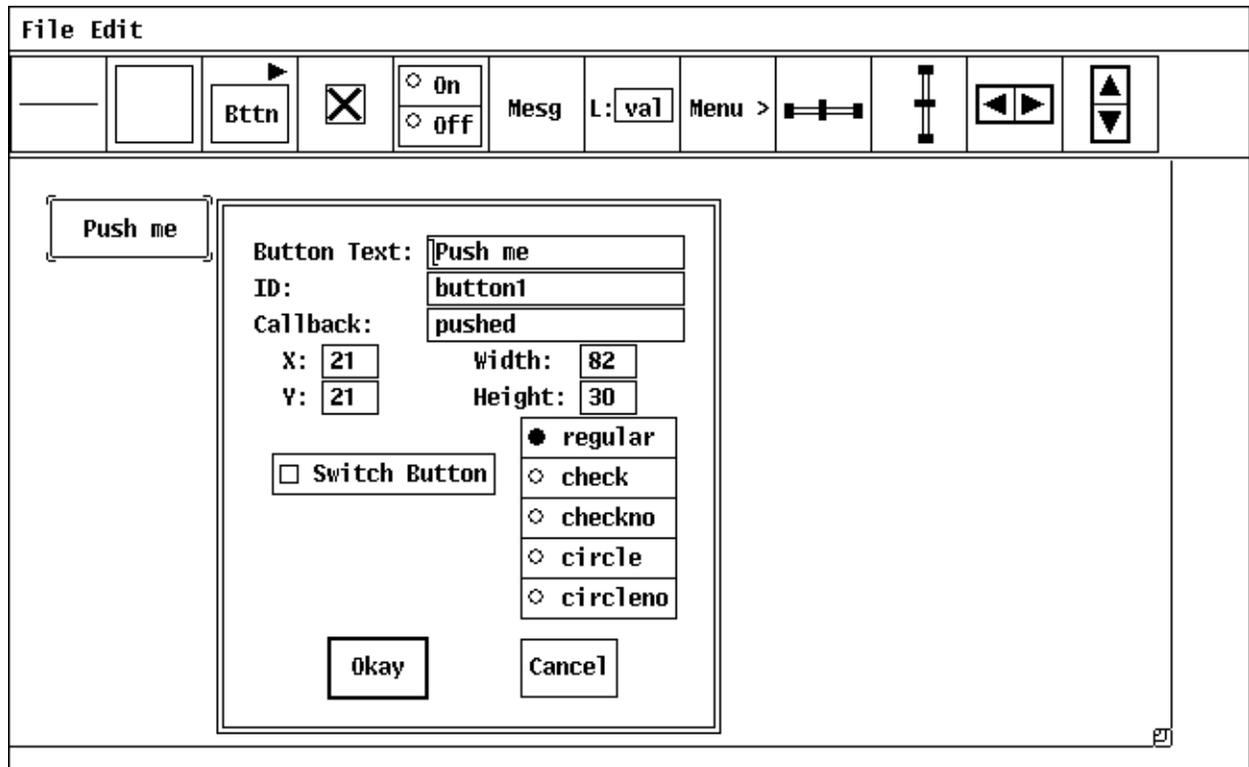
3. Attribute Sheets and Dialogues

XIE displays dialogue boxes to specify attributes, gather information and/or warn the user. The text fields of these pop-up windows can be edited; the tab key is used to move among them.

Attribute Sheets

As various objects are created, it usually is necessary to set attributes to customize the object to suit the needs of the application. The attribute sheet for an object is displayed by pressing the right mouse button upon the object. The editable features of an object are object-specific, but these usually include the x-y location of the object, the name of the object, a procedure to call when the object receives an event, and so forth. The Reference Section, appearing later in this document, describes the editable attributes of each object in particular.

Attribute sheets also contain *Okay* and *Cancel* buttons. Pressing either of these buttons makes the attribute sheet disappear: The Okay button applies changes to the object while the Cancel button does not. There is a double line drawn around the Okay button to indicate that this is the default button of the attribute sheet; the Okay button can be selected by pressing the return key (as an alternative to using the mouse).



If the Okay button is selected XIE checks to ensure that entered values are valid. For example, if there is no value entered into the x-coordinate field, an error window appears describing this error. The error window

disappears when either the *Dismiss* button is selected or the return key is typed. This in turn redisplay the attribute sheet until the error is corrected or the *Cancel* button is selected.

Dialogues

To open, save, or prototype an XIE interface, XIB displays a dialogue box requesting (or verifying) a file name for reading or writing, depending upon the nature of the request. If the *Okay* button is selected and the file name entered does not end in *.icn*, XIE appends the suffix to the value before attempting to access the file. If the file cannot be accessed (for example, the file does not exist for reading or the file cannot be written to), an error window appears describing the problem. The request can be canceled at any time by selecting the *Cancel* button.

4. The Application Interface

XIE supports the development of *event driven* applications where the central program loop is within the WIT library. When the application user manipulates an object on the screen, such as by clicking the mouse over a button, this event generates a *callback* to an Icon procedure associated with the object. The callback procedure for an object is provided separately by the programmer and its name is specified in the object's attribute sheet. The parameters depend on the type of object; details are contained in the reference guide that follows.

The interface specification edited by XIE is an Icon procedure *ui(win,cbk)* that passes a list of object specifications to the WIT library. The optional *win* parameter supplies an existing window on which the interface is to be created; if *win* is either null or a list of arguments for *XWindow()*, a new window is opened, and the new window is assigned to *&window* unless *&window* already has a window value. The optional *cbk* parameter provides a default callback procedure to be used for any object that does not provide one.

The *ui* procedure returns a table of WIT *widgets*. There is a widget for each interface object, indexed in the table by the *id* name from the object's attribute sheet. There is also a *root* widget that is the parent of all others. The user code that calls *ui* passes this root widget to the WIT entry point *GetEvents* to enter the main event loop.

A typical XIB application, then, can be outlined as follows:

```
link vsetup

procedure main (args)
  widgets := ui(args)
  process remaining arguments, open files, etc.
  sophisticated applications might add or modify widgets here
  GetEvents(widgets["root"], evproc)
end

procedure evproc(e) (optional)
  process Icon events not handled by widgets
end

callback procedures
other procedures

XIE interface section (procedure ui)
```

The skeletal procedure generated by XIE for new files follows a similar pattern.

5. Reference Guide

Lines

Lines are provided to decorate the interface. They consist of two coordinates and can be drawn arbitrarily thick. Additionally, they may appear solid or dashed. Lines do not receive events and therefore do not make use of call-back procedures. The attribute sheet of a line, which appears by clicking the right mouse button upon the line object, contains the following editable features:

id	is the name assigned to the object.
line width	specifies the width of the line.
x1	specifies the x-coordinate of endpoint one.
y1	specifies the y-coordinate of endpoint one.
x2	specifies the x-coordinate of endpoint two.
y2	specifies the y-coordinate of endpoint two.
style	specifies whether the line is solid or dashed.

Regions

Regions are rectangular areas. The application can safely draw in these areas and receive uninterpreted events. The attribute sheet of a region contains the following editable features:

id	is the name assigned to the object.
callback	specifies the procedure to call when the region receives an event. If no procedure is specified the event is essentially ignored.
x	specifies the x-coordinate of the upper-left corner of the region.
y	specifies the y-coordinate of the upper-left corner of the region.
width	specifies the width of the region.
height	specifies the height of the region.
line width	specifies the thickness of the region outline. If zero, the region is not outlined.

Regions differ from other user interface objects in that the events sent to the region's callback procedure are uninterpreted. This provides the application with flexibility. The signature of the callback is as follows:

procedure region_cb(wit, e, x, y)

where *wit* is the WIT object that XIE created, *e* is the Icon event code, and *x* and *y* are the mouse coordinates (relative to the upper-left corner of the region) at the time of the event. The coordinate (0, 0), then, refers to the upper-left corner of the region.

Regions also differ from other objects in that they receive an initial callback after all objects have been created but before any user-generated events occur. This allows the application to, for example, display an image within the region that the end user can then manipulate. The event code passed to the callback is the **resize** event as defined within Icon.

Buttons

Buttons are control devices that are activated by pressing the mouse while over the button. They may appear in many different styles: regular, check box, check box without an outline, circle, and circle without an outline. They can also be created as a switch or toggle in which the button maintains a state of either *on* or *off*. The attribute sheet of a button contains the following editable features:

text	is the label of the button. This may be an empty string.
id	is the name assigned to the object.

callback	specifies the procedure to call when the button receives an event. If no procedure is specified the event is essentially ignored.
x	specifies the x-coordinate of the upper-left corner of the button.
y	specifies the y-coordinate of the upper-left corner of the button.
width	specifies the width of the button.
height	specifies the height of the button.
switch	specifies whether the button is a switch button. Switch (or toggle) buttons maintain a state of <i>on</i> or <i>off</i> , as opposed to regular buttons.
style	specifies the look of the button. Currently, five varying styles are supported: regular, check box, check box-no outline, circle, and circle-no outline.

The callback procedure associated with a button is called when the mouse is pressed *and released* while over the button. If the mouse is released while off of the button, no event is sent to the application. The signature of button callbacks is as follows:

procedure button_cb(wit, value)

where **wit** is the actual WIT button object created by XIE and **value** is the current value of the button. A regular button does not maintain a state and therefore its value is insignificant. However, if the button is a switch, the button does maintain a state. A non-null value indicates that the button is set or on, while a null value indicates that the button is off.

XIE creates WIT button objects such that the **id** field of the WIT object is the label of the button. Thus the same callback procedure can be used for various buttons: it can determine which button was pressed by accessing the **wit.id** value.

Check Boxes

Check boxes are switch buttons that are marked when *on* and blank when *off*. They differ from check-style buttons in that the size of the check box can be arbitrarily large, and there is no accompanying text. The attribute sheet of a check box contains the following editable features:

id	is the name assigned to the object.
callback	specifies the procedure to call when the check box receives an event. If no procedure is specified the event is essentially ignored.
x	specifies the x-coordinate of the upper-left corner of the check box.
y	specifies the y-coordinate of the upper-left corner of the check box.
size	specifies the length and width of the check box.

The callback procedure associated with a check box is called when the mouse is pressed *and released* while over the box. If the mouse is released while off of the box, no event is sent to the application. The signature of check box callbacks is as follows:

procedure check_box_cb(wit, value)

where **wit** is the actual WIT check box object created by XIE and **value** is the current value of the check box. A non-null value indicates that the check box is set or on, while a null value indicates that it is off.

Radio Buttons

Radio Buttons are collections of buttons in which exactly one button is set at any given time; an exception is the initial configuration in which no buttons are set. Selecting one button automatically unsets the previously highlighted button in the group. The attribute sheet of a radio button contains the following editable features:

id	is the name assigned to the object.
callback	specifies the procedure to call when the radio button receives an event. If no procedure is specified the event is essentially ignored.

- x** specifies the x-coordinate of the upper-left corner of the radio button.
- y** specifies the y-coordinate of the upper-left corner of the radio button.

The attribute sheet also contains *insert* and *delete* buttons. These are used to dynamically alter the number of entries in the radio button. Pressing on the insert button pops open a window querying the number of items to insert and where the insertion should take place. The default is to insert one item at the end of the list. Pressing on the delete button pops open a window querying the range of items to delete. The default is to delete the last item of the list.

The callback procedure associated with a radio button is called whenever one of its buttons is pressed (and the release takes place while over the button). If the mouse is released while off of the button, no event is sent to the application. The signature of radio button callbacks is as follows:

procedure radio_button_cb(wit, value)

where *wit* is the actual WIT radio button object created by XIE and *value* is the current value of the radio button. The value of the radio button is the label of the currently highlighted button.

Messages

Messages consist of read-only text. They do not receive events and therefore do not have callbacks associated with them. The attribute sheet of a message contains the following editable features:

- text** is the text to display on the screen.
- id** is the name assigned to the object.
- x** specifies the x-coordinate of the upper-left corner of the message.
- y** specifies the y-coordinate of the upper-left corner of the message.

Text Input Fields

Text input fields are used to gather textual input from the user of the application. They consist of a label and a value; the value is editable and can accept a limited number of characters, as specified by the *max value length* attribute. The attribute sheet of a text input field contains the following editable features:

- label** is the label of the text input field.
- value** is the default value of the text input field.
- id** is the name assigned to the object.
- callback** specifies the procedure to call when the text input field receives an event (which happens when the return key is pressed and the text input field has the focus). If no procedure is specified the event is essentially ignored.
- x** specifies the x-coordinate of the upper-left corner of the text input field.
- y** specifies the y-coordinate of the upper-left corner of the text input field.
- max value length** specifies the maximum number of characters that the value can contain.

The callback procedure associated with a text input field is called whenever the return key is pressed. The signature of text input field callbacks is as follows:

procedure text_cb(wit, value)

where *wit* is the actual WIT text object created by XIE and *value* is the current value of the text input field. The value of the object is the entered text string.

Menus

Menus are lists of buttons that appear temporarily on the screen and allow the user to select one item from a list; they can contain an arbitrary nesting of submenus. A menu appears when its *menu button* is pressed. A menu button is simply the visual representation of the menu that is visible when the menu is not active. Defining a menu therefore involves two parts: defining the text and position of the menu button, and defining the menu that is displayed as the result of pressing on the menu button. The attribute sheet of a menu provides the means to define the menu with submenus and choices. The editable features of a menu are as follows:

title	is the label that appears on the menu button.
id	is the name assigned to the object.
callback	specifies the procedure to call when a menu item is selected. If no procedure is specified the event is essentially ignored.
x	specifies the x-coordinate of the upper-left corner of the menu button.
y	specifies the y-coordinate of the upper-left corner of the menu button.

The attribute sheet also contains *insert* and *delete* buttons. These are used to dynamically alter the number of entries in the menu. Pressing on the insert button pops open a window querying the number of items to insert and where the insertion should take place. The default is to insert one item at the end of the list. Pressing on the delete button pops open a window querying the range of items to delete. The default is to delete the last item of the list.

When an item is added to a menu, a blank text field along with two buttons appear on the attribute sheet. The text field is used to define the label of the menu item, and the two buttons are used to define whether the menu item is a menu choice or a submenu. If the new item is to be a menu choice, all that needs to be done is to give the choice a label. If the new item is to be a submenu, mark the submenu box and click on the submenu button which will pop open a new window in which to define the submenu. XIE allows arbitrary nesting of submenus.

If a menu item is defined as a submenu, and then later the item is marked as a menu choice, this essentially deletes the predefined submenu (and all of its choices and submenus).

Once a menu has been defined, it can be viewed within XIE by pressing the middle mouse button on the menu button. This allows the appearance and behavior of the menu to be simulated without fully prototyping the interface. Pressing the right mouse button on the menu button again displays the attribute sheet of the menu object, providing a quick edit/simulation cycle.

The callback procedure associated with a menu is called when the menu has been displayed and the mouse is released while over one of its choices. The signature of menu callbacks is as follows:

procedure menu_cb(wit, value)

where *wit* is the actual WIT menu object created by XIE and *value* is a list of labels defining the menu path of the selected choice. For example, if the menu has *open* and *close* as its choices and *open* is selected, ["open"] will be the *value* passed to the callback. If the menu has *font* as a submenu label and *Helvetica* as a choice within the submenu, then ["font", "Helvetica"] will be the *value* if *Helvetica* is selected. Thus choice names need not be unique across the entire menu, they can be distinguished by their path strings.

Sliders

Sliders are long rectangular buttons that display one or more scalar values as positions within a range. When the sidebar is clicked or dragged by the user, a scalar value is increased or decreased. Sliders can appear either vertically or horizontally. The attribute sheet of a slider contains the following editable features:

id	is the name assigned to the object.
callback	specifies the procedure to call when the slider receives an event. If no procedure is specified the event is essentially ignored.
filter	filters out some of the events sent to the slider, if set. This corresponds to the non-continuous mode as described below.
left/top	specifies the left value of the range for horizontal sliders or the top value of the range for vertical sliders. This can be a positive or negative value of type integer or real.
right/bottom	specifies the right value of the range for horizontal sliders or the bottom value of the range for vertical sliders. This can be a positive or negative value of type integer or real.
x	specifies the x-coordinate of the upper-left corner of the slider.
y	specifies the y-coordinate of the upper-left corner of the slider.

- length** specifies the length of the slider.
- width** specifies the width of the slider.

The application can control the number of events passed to the slider. In *continuous* mode, the slider receives events as the slidebar is pressed, dragged, and released. In *non-continuous* mode, the slider receives a single event indicating the resulting value of the press-drag-release sequence. The slidebar can also be moved to a new location by clicking anywhere within the slider region. In both modes, this results in the generation of a single event. The signature of slider callbacks is as follows:

procedure slider_cb(wit, value)

where **wit** is the actual WIT slider object created by XIE and **value** is the current numeric value of the slider.

Scrollbars

Scrollbars are sliders with a proportionally sized thumb capped on top and bottom by arrow buttons. The slidebar shows the current location of the window or associated device within some domain that is larger than available screen space and allows convenient random access; the arrow buttons allow more precise motion. Scrollbars can appear either vertically or horizontally. The attribute sheet of a scrollbar contains the following editable features:

- id** is the name assigned to the object.
- callback** specifies the procedure to call when the scrollbar receives an event. If no procedure is specified the event is essentially ignored.
- filter** filters out some of the events sent to the scrollbar, if set. This corresponds to the non-continuous mode as described below.
- left/top** specifies the left value of the range for horizontal scrollbars or the top value of the range for vertical scrollbars. This can be a positive or negative value of type integer or real.
- right/bottom** specifies the right value of the range for horizontal scrollbars or the bottom value of the range for vertical scrollbars. This can be a positive or negative value of type integer or real.
- x** specifies the x-coordinate of the upper-left corner of the scrollbar.
- y** specifies the y-coordinate of the upper-left corner of the scrollbar.
- length** specifies the length of the scrollbar.
- width** specifies the width of the scrollbar.

The application can control the number of events passed to the scrollbar. In *continuous* mode, the scrollbar receives events as the slidebar is pressed, dragged, and released. In *non-continuous* mode, the scrollbar receives a single event indicating the resulting value of the press-drag-release sequence. The slidebar can also be moved to a new location by clicking anywhere within the scrollbar region. In both modes this results in the generation of a single event. Additionally, the scrollbar is called when the increment/decrement buttons are pressed. The signature of scrollbar callbacks is as follows:

procedure scrollbar_cb(wit, value)

where **wit** is the actual WIT scrollbar object created by XIE and **value** is the current numeric value of the scrollbar.

6. Converting XIB Applications

XIE's predecessor was the X-Icon Interface Builder, XIB. It functioned similarly but created files in a different format. The Icon library program `uix` translates the specifications contained in an XIB application, prototype, or specification file into XIE form. `uix` takes a single command argument naming its input file; if no argument is supplied, it reads standard input. The generated XIE application is written to standard output.

The output from `uix` is a functional prototype application that contains all the objects (buttons, sliders, etc.) from the input file but none of the user Icon code. This must be added manually. Note that the newly generated `ui` procedure returns a *table* of widgets rather than just the root widget returned in XIB applications.

7. Acknowledgements

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