pydoc — Online Help for Modules

Purpose: Generates help for Python modules and classes from the code.

The pydoc module imports a Python module and uses the contents to generate help text at runtime. The output includes docstrings for any objects that have them, and all of the classes, methods, and functions of the module are described.

Plain Text Help

Running pydoc as a command line program and passing the name of a module produces help text for the module and its contents on the console, using a pager program if one is configured. For example, to see the help text for the atexit module, run `pydoc atexit`.

```
$ pydoc atexit

Help on built-in module atexit:

NAME
    atexit - allow programmer to define multiple exit functions
to be executed upon normal program termination.

DESCRIPTION
    Two public functions, register and unregister, are defined.

FUNCTIONS
    register(...)
        register(func, *args, **kwargs) -> func

        Register a function to be executed upon normal program
termination

            func - function to be called at exit
            args - optional arguments to pass to func
            kwargs - optional keyword arguments to pass to func

            func is returned to facilitate usage as a decorator.

    unregister(...)
        unregister(func) -> None

        Unregister an exit function which was previously
registered using
        atexit.register

            func - function to be unregistered

FILE
    (built-in)
```

HTML Help

pydoc will also generate HTML output, either writing a static file to a local directory or starting a web server to browse documentation online.

```
$ pydoc -w atexit
```

Creates `atexit.html` in the current directory.

```
$ pydoc -p 5000
Server ready at http://localhost:5000/
Server commands: [b]rowser, [q]uit
server> q
```

```
Server stopped
```

Starts a web server listening at `http://localhost:5000/`. The server generates documentation on the fly as you browse. Use the `b` command to open a browser window automatically, and `q` to stop the server.

Interactive Help

pydoc also adds a function `help()` to the `__builtins__` so the same information can be accessed from the Python interpreter prompt.

```
$ python

Python 3.5.2 (v3.5.2:4def2a2901a5, Jun 26 2016, 10:47:25)
[GCC 4.2.1 (Apple Inc. build 5666) (dot 3)] on darwin
Type "help", "copyright", "credits" or "license" for more
information.
>>> help('atexit')
Help on module atexit:

NAME
    atexit - allow programmer to define multiple exit functions
to be executed upon normal program termination.

...
```

See also

- Standard library documentation for pydoc
- `inspect` – The inspect module can be used to retrieve the docstrings for an object programmatically.

Developer Tools

doctest — Testing Through Documentation

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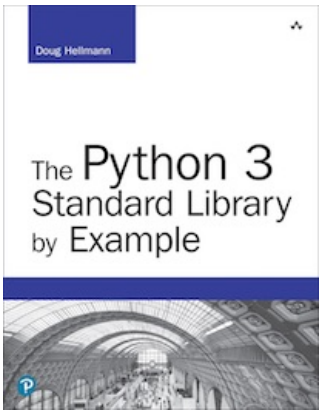

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The output from all the example programs from PyMOTW-3 has been generated with Python 3.7.1, unless otherwise noted. Some of the features described here may not be available in earlier versions of Python.

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