

What happens when applications try to copy text by sending Ctrl+C

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I'm stealing this story from one of my colleagues.

I remember one app from a long time ago that had a feature where you could hit a global short cut key (or something like that) to launch the dictionary. It was also smart in that it would detect the current selected text and immediately search the dictionary for that term.

One day I was running a Perl script that took several hours to run. It was nearly done and for whatever I decided to launch the dictionary. It sent a Ctrl+C to my Perl script and killed it.

And that's why you don't send Ctrl+C to arbitrary applications.

Active Accessibility gives you access to the text under the cursor. There's also a newer interface known as UI Automation which has a handy method called `ITextProvider::GetSelection`. (On the managed side, you have `System.Windows.Automation.TextPattern.GetSelection`.)

Update: Commenter parkrrrr points out the `ITextProvider::GetSelection` is the provider-side interface. The interface for applications wishing to *read* the selected text is `IUIAutomationTextPattern`.

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