Inputting and Outputting Data with Labels, Text Fields, and Combo Boxes

Radio buttons, check boxes, and pop-up buttons let the user choose from a fixed list of choices. However, many times a program may need to request data that won’t fit easily into a limited number of choices, such as asking for the user’s name.

To accept data, a program needs to let the user type in data. To display data, a program can use a text field or a label. A label basically can display only text, but a text field can display text or allow the user to type in text. With a text field, users can type in any type of data such as text or numbers.

For even greater flexibility, you can use a combo box, which lets the user type in data or select from a list of choices, just like a pop-up button. By using a text field, label, or combo box, your user interface can display information and accept data to use.

Using Labels

A label serves two purposes. First, it can display static information to the user, such as listing short instructions explaining the purpose of other user interface objects. For example, if your program displays a text field, the user may have no idea what type of information your program expects to receive in that text field. However, if you put a label next to that text field and display the word “Name” in that label, it becomes clear what type of information the user needs to type into that text field.

Labels can also be used to display information to the user, such as a warning. For example, if the user types in an incorrect password, a label can display a message telling the user what happened. When you need to display static or changing information, you can use a label.
Adding a Label to Your User Interface

A label is useful for displaying text on the user interface, such as instructions to the user or brief descriptions of what other controls might do, such as a label that identifies a slider for adjusting the volume. To create a label, follow these steps:

1. Double-click the .xib user interface file that contains the window to which you want to add a label. Interface Builder appears.

2. Choose Tools ➤ Library to display the Library window.

3. Scroll through the Object Library and look for the Label object, as shown in Figure 18–1.

Figure 18–1. The Label object in the Object Library