

Lunchtime IDL Seminar

You are all excellent IDL programmers. I want to propose a potentially fun voluntary activity that might help make you even better IDL programmers.

How many times have you seen or used one of your colleagues' IDL programs and wondered "how did they do that?". Or perhaps you've heard about a really fast/optimized way to perform some calculation and your code might benefit from the same technique? I fall squarely into both categories shown above. For example I have wondered...

- How does John rebin large vectors so quickly without loops?
- What are the key ingredients to the architecture of Richard's DataBrowser that allow him to close and regenerate the same plot views?
- What are the secrets behind Yiming's generic, flexible and ubiquitous plot window widget in DCS MSCLICE? How does he zoom using object graphics?

These are just a few of many....I'm sure you have plenty to add to that.

A lot of the tricks and techniques that I use in my code I learned directly from the various DAVE projects. However there are also a number of tricks that I discovered by just noodling around on my own time. I have stumbled across numerous little nuggets when working on "toy" projects at home and many of these tricks have worked their way into my code in my contributions to DAVE. Examples of such projects include (1) a stock market visualization with IDL's built-in forecasting tools (where I found out how to create a re-usable plot window), (2) a widget implementation of the old game called MasterMind (in which I learned how to make a *color-safe* widget program with different colors), and (3) a mortgage calculator (well, I was buying a house at the time so...).

I propose we meet occasionally, perhaps every month, for about 30 minutes or more if desired. An informal lunchtime seminar might be best since it doesn't really infringe on work time and you can eat your lunch during the seminar. Also we should be able to get this to count for some of our annual informal training. The format could include a demonstration of a particular piece of software or code bit and a description of the feature in as much detail as the attendees wish. I think that the software demos of *home projects* (if you do that sort of thing) would make a nice topic. It could also turn into an informal instructional session as well where people can answer each others questions as to how to perform a particular task in IDL. The only item on the agenda would be the name of the presenter and the name of the program or code bit. I will always plan to have a computer/projector system (with IDL naturally) set up in E-100 as well.

Please indicate your interest to me directly (ext. 8135, hallway vote of approval, e-mail). This is strictly a voluntary activity and you are welcome to participate in as little or as much as you wish. I think we have many talented programmers who have enough tricks in their toolkits to share. I know that I would benefit from such an endeavor.

If there is enough interest I would be delighted to volunteer to go first.