Subject: Numerical Recipes Article
Posted by Wayne Landsman on Mon, 03 Nov 1997 08:00:00 GMT
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There is a very engaging article by William Press and Saul Teukolsky titled "Numerical Recipes: Does this Paradigm have a Future?" in the September/October issue of "Computers in Physics" magazine. The article may be of interest to IDL users, both because "Numerical Recipes" is the main math library within IDL, and because the authors use examples of IDL coding in their article. In one example, they compare a "sort and select" algorithm, as coded in Fortran 77, Fortran 90, Mathematica, and IDL. The IDL code clearly wins out in terms of readability and simplicity -- they call it "almost crystaline in its clarity". On the other hand, the criticize IDL for its lack of "scalability" -- code that works with small arrays, may not work with large arrays, because of speed or memory limitations.

Other interesting sections include a discussion of why they haven't released a version of "Numerical Recipes" for C++, and their effective reply to the professional numerical analysts who criticize them for not using state of the art techniques.

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