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Subject: New Binary Data I/O Tools

Posted by [Liam Gumley](#) on Thu, 30 Sep 1999 07:00:00 GMT

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I've just posted a couple of new procedures (BINWRITE and BINREAD) which allow I/O of arrays in IDL using a simple, portable binary format, e.g.

Write array(s) to a portable output file:

```
a = dist(256)
b = bindgen(100)
openw, lun, 'test.dat', /get_lun
binwrite, lun, a
binwrite, lun, b
free_lun, lun
```

Read array(s) from the above input file:

```
openr, lun, 'test.dat', /get_lun
binread, lun, c, header=header
binread, lun, d
free_lun, lun
print, header
help, c, d
```

The advantage of these routines is that they provide a way to write binary data that can be read back easily in IDL, or other environments (FORTRAN, C, Matlab etc.), on any host platform without using SAVE, XDR, or Standard Data Formats. The SAVE and XDR formats in IDL are useful in certain cases, but they produce files which can be difficult to read in other environments. Standard formats like CDF, netCDF, or HDF get around this problem, but they require the user to learn a new API, which can sometimes be a bit daunting.

You can find BINWRITE and BINREAD, and a description of the format, at <http://cimss.ssec.wisc.edu/~gumley/binarytools.html>

Cheers,  
Liam.

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