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Subject: Re: linking programs/ procedures  
Posted by [Richard G. French](#) on Fri, 28 Apr 2000 07:00:00 GMT  
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I've found another use for the much-maligned '@' symbol.  
I often have a program that has the form:

```
; define a bunch of specific variables, such as
datafile='saturn.dat'
images_to_plot=[2,4,6,7]
; ***** END OF USER INPUT *****
;
;
; now do operations that make use of USER input
; blah
; blah
; blah
```

I like to separate the specific user input from the generic commands,  
but  
keep them as a MAIN routine so that I have access to all of the  
variables  
when I am done.

For example, When I generate figures for a publication, I like to have a  
separate procedure  
file for each figure - one that takes NO interactive input and simply  
makes the  
damn plot the right way - guaranteed. SO, I might do something like  
this:

```
; figure1.pro
datafile='saturn.dat'
images_to_plot=[2,4,6,7]
; ***** END OF USER INPUT *****
@main_program_commands_that_produce_a_plot.pro
end
```

```
; figure2.pro
datafile='mars.dat'
images_to_plot=[0,3,4]
; ***** END OF USER INPUT *****
@main_program_commands_that_produce_a_plot.pro
end
```

This makes the 'driver' files very short, and it guarantees that  
the generic plotting routine is the same for all of the plots.

One of the reason I have not gotten into object graphics and the other fancy interactive stuff is that, when all is said and done, and I have a plot I like, I want to be able to generate it again without having to do any user interaction - I want a file of commands that reproduce the plot exactly, and which are easily changed if I want to use a different data file, for example.

I'd be curious to know if others out there are similarly stubborn about wanting to have command files that are guaranteed to make a SPECIFIC figure for a publication. It is most of what I end up using IDL for.

Dick French

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