
Subject: Re: Reading in text data

Posted by [davidf](#) on Tue, 08 Aug 2000 07:00:00 GMT

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Brian Reardon (reardonb@my-deja.com) writes:

> I am reading in text data (columns and rows of numbers) and I would
> like to know if there is a more elegant way of doing it. Currently, the
> user must specify how many columns there are. In my case the number of
> columns is manually inserted into the first line of the file like this:
>
> 3
> 0 1 2
> 1 2 3
> 2 3 4
> 3 4 5
> 4 5 6
> 5 6 7
> 6 7 8
> 7 8 9
> 8 9 10
> 9 10 11
>
> The attached procedure reads in the data. Is there a way to read in the
> data such that the user does not have to a priori know how many columns
> there are and such that IDL does not have to reserve a large amount of
> memory for the number of rows?

There are any number of ways to count columns and rows,
as I'm afraid you are about to find out.

But if your data is well-behaved and your taste runs to the totally unsophisticated, you might try the Count_Columns and Count_Rows functions on my anonymous ftp site. For someone who is supposed to be a professional programmer these are laughable. But they seem to work for me more often than not, so I continue to use them. :-)

Count_Columns uses the first line in the file as an example of what follows. Count_Rows just counts until it reaches the end of the file. On most of the files I deal with, this is still orders of magnitude faster than reading the data in a loop.

ftp://www.dfanning.com/pub/dfanning/outgoing/idl_course/count_columns.pro
ftp://www.dfanning.com/pub/dfanning/outgoing/idl_course/count_rows.pro

Cheers,

David

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