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Subject: Re: Old Timers ??

Posted by [Paul van Delst](#) on Thu, 02 Nov 2000 16:31:30 GMT

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"J.D. Smith" wrote:

>

> Eric Kihn wrote:

>> 2) It's clear this code is simulating a HASH with Arrays, does IDL 5.3 have

>> native hash support of some kind?

>

> 2) No, sadly. The get\_keyword routine probably does a linear search

> through the header line array, looking for "file ID" in this case. This

> is of course just the type of thing hashes were made for. The

> get\_keyword routine I found just uses "where", as you might expect.

> This means not only is the search linear, all elements are considered,

> even after a match is found. It could have been made more efficient in

> IDL 5.4 if array\_equal() had been implemented not just to return true as

> soon as a match is found, but return the index of that match. Oh well.

> Maybe an optional variable will be added to array\_equal for this in

> 5.4.1. (hint)

>

> It is possible to make a better simulation of a hash with a structure,

> but that is somewhat inflexible since adding new keywords (fields) is

> difficult, without copying the whole thing, though create\_struct() can

> do it. Then there is the matter of indexing the structure with a

> variable field (the essence of what hashes do). Possible, but not

> efficient... in fact nearly as inefficient as a "where" on the full

> array. Unfortunately, it's not that easy to write a good hash type that

> scales well for small and large hashes, and doesn't eat too much

> memory.

O.k., following the advice that "he who asks a question is a fool for 5 minutes, he who does not ask a question is a fool forever" I have to ask:

What is a hash?

I have seen the term used before regarding string searches but, being a mostly fortran number crunchy type programmer, I've never been one for searching through strings and what not.

The only dictionary definitions I found were:

1) To chop up meat/potatoes into small pieces

2) To confuse or muddle

3) To stick in one's pipe and smoke it.

:o)

paulv

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