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Subject: NetCDF Attribute Inquiry

Posted by [Alex Schuster](#) on Tue, 20 Mar 2001 16:56:31 GMT

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Hi!

I am reading NetCDF files. I do not know for sure which of the attributes are really stored in the file, so I use `NCDF_ATTINQ()` to check before.

With missing attributes, there are two problems:

1) I always get a message like that:

% `NCDF_ATTINQ`: Attribute inquiry failed, name "something" already in use.

This doesn't look good, but I can live with that. No idea why it it tells me that the name is already being used, because it is not.

2) This one is worse: sometimes the result structure of `NCDF_ATTINQ()` does not have a datatype of 'UNKNOWN', but of 'BYTE'. With a random length. Another `NCDF_ATTINQ()` gives a different result. Any idea what's happening here?

My workaround so far is the usage of this function:

```
function attribute_there, id, varid, name
result = ncdf_atting( id, varid, name )
if ( result.datatype ne 'UNKNOWN' $
and result.length gt 0 $
and result.length lt 1000 ) then begin
  result = ncdf_atting( id, varid, name )
  if ( result.datatype ne 'UNKNOWN' $
and result.length gt 0 $
and result.length lt 1000 ) then begin
    return, 1
  endif
endif
return, 0
end
```

I check two times, and I also check for not-too-crazy length fields. I guess this will work most of the time, but it's not perfect and will fail some time.

Alex

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