Subject: Re: controlling plot appearance (was "line graph problems")
Posted by Paul van Delst on Tue, 27 Mar 2001 15:04:13 GMT

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Martin Schultz wrote:
>
> Paul van Delst wrote:
>>
>> Yeah, but recently I have come to the conclusion that IDL is not mature enough to allow me
>> absolute control in a simple, intuitive way of plot properties (note that the qualifier
>> "simple" eliminates OG :o) as opposed to some other proprietary plotting package (like,
>> for e.g., Grapher or Surfer).
>
> You speak "out of my heart" here. And this is exactly the reason why
> David went ahead recently to develop a graphical tool to set up plot
> properties. Since it concentrates on getting the correct values for
> the myriad of plot keywords, it is not necessarily more "intuitive"
> than these, but at least you get "instant gratification" in that you
> can see what effect a keyword setting has. But if you are a little
> more "anal" in the ay things should look (this is a quote from several
> posts of David), there is really no way around messing with character
> sizes and positions - and here, IDL (at least in direct graphics) does
> a rather lousy job in providing the user with reasonable defaults or
> an easy reference frame.

I agree wholeheartedly. I really don't see the problem with providing keywords in the PLOT
command to allow uses to shift the axis labels and tick mark labels using even normalised
coordinates. Would that be hard to do in IDL? If so, why? (These are questions directed
"out there", not targeted at you in particular, Martin). Why can't I do something like:

PLOT, x, y, YTITLE = 'My Y Data', YTITLE_SHIFT = [-0.1, 0.0]

to bump the ytitle *from it's default position which I don't want to have to calculate* to
the left by 0.1 normalised units but keeping it centered vertically?

I don't want to have to use a GUI to make a plot. That's one of the reasons I stopped
using Grapher (for pub quality plots) and moved entirely to IDL. Now that Grapher has a
script language (like Surfer) I may have to revisit that option (but probably not since
Golden software only runs on windoze platforms...at least last time I looked).

> Now, I haven't looked to what
> extent object graphics is going this way, but I fear that - at least
> up to version 5.4 - it has not become easier to tightly control the
> plot appearance if you use object graphics.

Maybe not - I don't use OG so I can't really say. However, it does appear from other's
posts here that the properties available for setting/changing is quite broad. But, and for
me at least this is a big but, if I can't create a plot in one or two lines of code then

forget it. I want to look at my data, not set up models, and views, and coordinate conversions and what not. PLOT, x, y is the simplicity I'm looking for.

paulv

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Paul van Delst   A little learning is a dangerous thing;
CIMSS @ NOAA/NCEP   Drink deep, or taste not the Pierian spring;
Ph: (301)763-8000 x7274 There shallow draughts intoxicate the brain,
Fax:(301)763-8545   And drinking largely sobers us again.
paul.vandelst@noaa.gov   Alexander Pope.