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Subject: Re: Duplicate module names. Was: Object epiphany: ...  
Posted by [Wayne Landsman](#) on Thu, 19 Apr 2001 22:45:36 GMT  
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> You \*must\*  
> pick good, unique names for routines you hope people will use. The  
> shadow scanning utilities in IDLWAVE are an excellent way to explore  
> this issue (IDLWAVE->Routine Info->Routine Shadows). Here are some  
> examples of overlaps:  
>  
> datatype()  
> - JHU [C--] ~/idl/jhu/datatype.pro  
> - NasaLib [C--] ~/idl/nasa/pro/misc/datatype.pro  
>  
> So, both NASA and John's Hopkins libraries define datatype(). They both  
> do the same thing -- return the data type of a passed variable, with a  
> variety of possible formats.

I've recently added a primitive FAQ to the IDL Astronomy Library (<http://idlastro.gsfc.nasa.gov/idlfaq.html>), and in question A8 I try to address the namespace conflicts with programs in other libraries that I know about. Unfortunately, once a name conflict exists, there is no easy solution to fix the problem, unless one of the procedures has much wider usage than the other one. But documenting the name conflicts can at least make it quicker to diagnose any problems.

I know that some users of the Astronomy Library will append an IAL\_ to the start of every procedure to make sure they have no namespace conflicts. But I share with JD a preference for descriptive names without prefixes. (Thankfully, the DOS 8 character limits are ancient history). This does require the additional effort of trying to be aware of the names already in use in the major libraries.

Even more than "calculate.pro", my favorite uninformative (yet popular) procedure name is "convert.pro". ..

--Wayne  
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P.S. The IDL Astronomy Library will be unavailable much of April 20-23 and April 27-30 due to planned power blackouts in our building.

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