
Subject: Re: Commons, Was: can i place a job advert
Posted by [Richard Younger](#) on Mon, 26 Nov 2001 19:21:53 GMT
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Paul van Delst wrote:

>

> Well, my comment was meant to try to get those that swear profusely
> that common blocks are a Bad Thing to explain why. I place common
> blocks in the same category as GOTO statements - if used incorrectly
> they can lead to unbelievably bad source code that may or may not
> work.

Well, the snooty Computer Science answer to this is that common blocks or global data completely separate the context of the data from its content. Similarly, with GOTOs, it's easy to separate the context of one snippet of code from another. When you have a global variable, you (the indefinite you, which could actually include someone else :-)) have no real idea what sort of code is using that data. I think the idea of prohibiting them is to remove the chore and responsibility of keeping track of the context from anyone else (or any other process of yours) that wanders along. It's a Good Thing(tm) when the programming system you use discourages methodologies that tend to cause confusion and mistakes.

Admittedly, common blocks have some features apart from purely global data that discourage errors. They have to be specifically invoked, can't be resized (upwards), and usually IDL projects aren't so big that one person can't keep track of a set of well controlled commons. The examples given why commons in IDL specifically are bad seem to involve doing multiple things at the same time, or with multiple copies of the same program running.

For myself, I seem to get along nicely without commons. Instead, I generally use objects, which can carry lots of data implicitly while still keeping them in context for many routines. The only application I have thought seriously about using common blocks is a global hardware lock on some I/O hardware. Even then, I could use a file, since I don't need to access the lock often. I don't do nearly as much heavy-duty object graphics (I'm still in line to buy that book when it comes out, David!) or widgeting as many on this group, though.

Mind you, I'm not supporting banning commons as dogma, but I think there are enough general objections to them to ask people to think a bit before they rush out and use them everywhere they can.

Best,
Rich

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Richard Younger
