Subject: Re: Array indexing "Feature"
Posted by David Fanning on Wed, 12 Dec 2001 22:12:24 GMT
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Andrew Cool (andrew.cool@dsto.defence.gov.au) writes:

> One of my colleagues has noted something apparently screwy in the
> indexing of
> arrays.
>
> e.g. a = indgen(10)
> print, a(9) -> you get 9
> print, a(10) -> you get an error, as expected for a zero-based
> index
>
> but if you access the array with the index as a vector, it seems to
> truncate the index to the maximum allowable:
>
> print, a([10]) -> you get 9
> print, a([666]) -> you get 9
>
> Similarly:
>
> print, a(-1) -> you get an error
> print, a([-1]) -> you get 0
>
> This feature holds good for IDL 5.2 and 5.4 on OpenVMS and for 5.5 on
> Windows.
>
> Where, Oh where in the manuals does it describe this?

This has been a feature of IDL since about IDL 0.5, or thereabouts.

I first encountered it in about 1988 in some chapters
Ray Sterner of JHUAPL was putting together for a book about
IDL. He found it incredibly useful for array bound error
checking. But I don't think I have ever read about it in any
documentation. My guess is that after the IDL 1.0
documentation was finished, and RSI had hired a real
technical writer, that he could never figure out
a way to explain the situation that didn't sound
really lame. So he just left it out. :-)

Cheers,

David
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