Subject: Re: Examine "Saved" IDL procedures now too!
Posted by craigmnet on Wed, 27 Mar 2002 11:41:57 GMT
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David Fanning <david@dfanning.com> wrote in message
news:<MPG.170af3c1b3928797989852@news.frii.com>...
> Paul van Delst (paul.vandelst@noaa.gov) writes:
>
>> All the above is purely my badly informed personal opinion. :o)
>
> I haven't weighted in on this yet because--Lord knows--I
> keep a high enough profile around here and I've learned that
> it almost never does me any good to take a stand on a
> controversial issue. But I've been getting some private
> e-mail wondering what I think about all of this, so I thought
> I should come public.

Hi David and the rest of the newsgroup.

Thanks for your viewpoint. Allow me to weigh in, and also to say where things stand now.

The files which allow to translate IDL code in the save format to a human readable form have been removed, and won't be returned. [The crucial file was removed on Friday after a polite request from one employee at RSI.] For the handful of people that did download it, none of them received a fully functional version as downloaded.

I have to say that if RSI really believes that it can rely on its "save" format to hide code, then it is probably mistaken. In particular, the requirement to store both commercial products, and users' original code, in the same format means that they worked a compromise. A compromise that makes it difficult for users to get at their own data, but also leaves the security of commercial code questionable. My guess is that this will change in the future. [I have no inside information on this.] This whole issue is aggravated by the stratified price points at which the IDL and associated products sell.

I am not convinced at the moral level of the argument that we should be "protected" from the algorithms in the software that we purchase. Algorithms are one thing that cannot be copyrighted. As David said in his own email, he ended up being curious about a few things in ENVI. :-)

I figured that there would be some controversy over the issue, but I had not anticipated the level of "polarization" that occurred on the newsgroup. Let me apologize to people who felt their livelihood

threatened. I also did not anticipate the swiftness of RSI/Kodak's response, nor the level to which it escalated. The amount of payoff for this one little program is small compared to the burden that was ultimately thrust at me, so I capitulated.

I know a few people have tried to support me in emails to Richard Cooke, the CEO of RSI. Thanks, but it's time to move on to other things. Let me say that overall Mr. Cooke has been appreciative and understanding of the other work I, and others in the community, have done with IDL, and wanted to encourage it (with more than just words). There may be some dialog there to explore.

To the everyday user, the IDL save format has gotten no more or less useful, or secure. Save files are still a convenient and fast way to save data and procedures, and for the foreseeable future the CMSVLIB library for "save" formatted *data* remains online.

Yours,
Craig

[Posting from Google at the moment. Not sure if the "cow" news connection has been shut down because of this or not.]
