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Subject: Re: Examine "Saved" IDL procedures now too!  
Posted by [David Fanning](#) on Wed, 27 Mar 2002 04:08:52 GMT  
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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.

I've known that Craig has had the ability to re-constitute IDL save files into procedures and functions for some time now. But I'm sorry he made the news public. I've known Craig for a long time through this newsgroup and via e-mail. He has always been the most ethical and positive person with respect to RSI. (His only quirk, as far as I know, is holding on to a copy of IDL 4.0.) I'm certain he has his reasons for making this announcement and releasing information regarding IDL save files. I haven't talked to him about this, nor do I know what his reasons are.

I am not one of those IDL consultants who is affected by this decision. I was a long and early advocate of open software, primarily because I first saw it (when I worked for RSI) as an opportunity to sell more software, and later because it enabled me to sell more books and consulting, which is where the real money comes from, such as it is. I've never sold a single IDL save file in the 10+ years I've been doing this kind of work.

But I have to admit when I read the announcement the other day I was awfully conflicted. One the one hand I can see the value of being able to open up IDL save files. On the other hand, those folks who wrote ENVI have done some amazing work. I think they deserve to have that work proprietary, if that is what they want. I know I'm always annoyed to learn that someone is photocopying my book. It happens, I know. But it is stealing--if that is not too harsh a word--someone's intellectual toil, too. (I seem to have a similar conversation every month or so with my children with regard to music available on the Internet. Yes, someone

always seems to get obscenely rich when they only know three chords, but it is intellectual property all the same.)

So, when the announcement was made I felt so badly I didn't even go download the darn thing. It took me three days to get over my ethical qualms about really wanting to have a peak at a couple of things in ENVI. By then, of course, the critical piece of software had been removed. I've made several discrete inquiries about whether someone or other had it, but honestly, I can't find anyone who has downloaded it. I'm not sure what that has to say about our little community, but it cheers me up nonetheless.

No one, as far as I know, thought the IDL save file format was the 128-bit encryption method to beat all others. It was just a convenient way to keep a couple of things to yourself. I'm sorry to see it compromised.

Cheers,

David

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Coyote's Guide to IDL Programming: <http://www.dfanning.com/>

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