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Subject: Re: CDF vs HDF

Posted by [Paul Van Delst\[1\]](#) on Tue, 30 Mar 2004 21:03:01 GMT

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Michael Wallace wrote:

> This isn't an IDL question exactly, but I figured that there are several  
> here who have to deal with these file types. Is there any real  
> difference between CDF and HDF? I have looked at some web pages that  
> describe the differences, but it doesn't mean much to me since I've  
> never delved into either one. The only reason I'm even looking at these  
> file types is that these seem to be the types preferred by the data  
> center we will be working with later on for long-term archival of our  
> data. If it means anything, my core data sets are nothing more than  
> really big arrays. Later on, other data like PNG images may be included.  
>  
> Unless there's some big difference between the two, I'm going to go with  
> the one that's easier to work with in IDL. So, that brings me to the  
> question, is one easier to work with than the other? Or do I flip a  
> coin to determine which one to use?

Oh my goodness... use netCDF. CDF is different from netCDF (I don't know exactly how) but IDL has all the netCDF API stuff built in (it may have the CDF stuff too...I dunno). And netCDF is waaaay easier to use than HDF (IMO). HDF may be more "powerful" but my datasets are like me, nice and simple, and HDF is generally overkill.

netCDF has APIs in just about every flavour of language you could ever want too (Fortran90, C, C++, Java, perl, R, matlab, python, etc etc).

Check out <http://www.unidata.ucar.edu/packages/netcdf/> for more info.

cheers,

paulv

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