Subject: Re: status of HDF5 *writing* support in IDL
Posted by Michael Wallace on Tue, 27 Apr 2004 22:02:46 GMT

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> I don't usually stir the turd and I have to admit that I while I may
> disagree on certain points, I respect the direction that RSI has taken IDL.
> My mistake was to assume that since support for reading HDF5 files was added
> in 5.6, that writing support would be soon to follow.

Don't get me wrong, IDL does do a lot of things right and is good for
analysis and visualization. My frustrations with it are mainly because
I come from the programming ranks rather than the scientific and I've
gotten very use to features that most other languages provide. Also,
I've been tasked with the job of shoehorning IDL into places where it
doesn't fit so well. For people who want to do things interactively,
it's great... maybe that's why it's _Interactive_ Data Language.
However, 99% of the things I need to do with it are in the
non-interactive realm. And most of these non-interactive features are
missing. Anyways....

>> As far as HDF5 writing goes, RSI did not mention it at all in their last
>> newsletter (http://www.rsinc.com/newsletter/#idlbeta) which listed some
>> of the new features in IDL 6.1. The only thing I know to do is get the
>> HDF5 C library and write a DLM for the functions you need. Why RSI
>> can't do this themselves is beyond me.
>
>
> I have looked into this, and I also looked into the Java versions in hopes
> of using the IDL->Java bridge but the former would be a project unto itself
> and the latter approach is plagued by a lack of documentation/examples on
> the IDL side.

Another thing to consider is that the Java version is simply a wrapper
around the C version. So, you will still have C code with which to
deal. The IDL-Java bridge is a lot easier to set up than a DLM, however
and I have the bridge set up on my box and have been able to use it
quite successfully. I even managed to get the thing to work on a
Macintosh! I was pretty proud of myself since I only touch a Macintosh
about once every few months or so. Anyway, the bridge is pretty easy to
configure (only one conf file) and it only takes one IDL command to
start up Java and one more IDL command to create a Java object.

> Have you considered implementing your own home grown anti-aliasing routines
> to smooth out those direct graphics fonts (if it is in fact the jaggies that
> you despise). I posted some example code a while back...

Right now I don't have the time to implement my own anti-aliasing.
Really, it's just an aesthetic issue, so it's not that important -- just

a little IDL pet peeve. In fact, I'd be happy just using hardware
fonts. However, the problem with them is that the letters can only be
printed in their normal orientation. I haven't bothered writing
anything which would print letters at some non-zero angle to the horizontal.

-Mike