
Subject: Re: IDL, GDL, copyright, EULAs and such
Posted by [Paul Van Delst\[1\]](#) on Wed, 06 Jul 2005 22:19:50 GMT
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Y.T. wrote:

> A linear fit, for example, is something I've written back on my
> Atari-800: it's not exactly a patentable algorithm. NR published a
> fortran version of the algorithm. RSI implemented it in IDL, cited NR
> in the header as a source and then slapped the following two lines on
> it:
>
> ; Copyright (c) 1994-2001, Research Systems, Inc. All rights reserved.
> ; Unauthorized reproduction prohibited.

I think the business end of the above two lines is

"Unauthorized reproduction prohibited"

That's a pretty generic statement and one could make the argument that if you have the source code

on a machine that doesn't contain an IDL license you have reproduced it with no authorization from

RSI. Why not ask them? At least then you'll no longer have to rationalise -- you'll know what the company line is.

From the "Installing and Licensing IDL 6.0" pdf:

<quote>

The IDL[®] 1/2, ION Script[™], and ION Java[™] software programs and the accompanying procedures, functions, and documentation described herein are sold under license agreement. Their use, duplication, and disclosure are subject to the restrictions stated in the license agreement. Research Systems, Inc., reserves the right to make changes to this document at any time and without notice.

</quote>

Note the terms "accompanying procedures, functions, and documentation". That seems pretty clear to

me (although I couldn't find a copy of the license agreement itself.)

> But if I were to implement my linear fit by myself from scratch, it
> would look very much like RSI's, of course. Especially now that I've
> seen their code. How many different ways are there, really, to do this?

But would you do it in the IDL/GDL language? Why not link in a precompiled library and use a GDL

wrapper that has the same interface as the IDL version? It'll probably be faster and there are scads

of available libraries/source codes to pick from.... just visit www.netlib.org. Bypass the IDL library code altogether.

> Then again, maybe there's no problem with the library code as long as I
> didn't use their actual IDL binary(?)

That's not how I read the copyright statement above.

> Ah, the vagaries of writing code in the 21st century...

But, you wouldn't be writing the code. You'd be copying it. (And RSI might equate "copying" with "stealing" -- especially when the IDL product ship quantities start to drop..... :o)

paulv

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Paul van Delst
CIMSS @ NOAA/NCEP/EMC
