Subject: Re: hours since 1-1-1
Posted by James Kuyper on Wed, 27 Jul 2005 04:40:53 GMT
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Mark Hadfield wrote:

...
> Anyway, IDL has the JULDAY function, which calculates time in Julian
> days, ie time since 12:00 hours on 1 Jan 4713BC. (OK, I withdraw my
> comment about 1 Jan 0001 being the silliest ever date-time origin.)

The epoch for the Julian Day system may seem silly, but it was
originally designed for use with ancient historical data. Its of
special interest to astronomers, who are interested in knowing exactly
how long ago an ancient astronomer observed a particular event. 4713 BC
is the year on which three different cycles associated with widely used
ancient calendar systems were all in sync. Of course, nobody was using
any of those calendar systems at that time, it's just a theoretical
connection based upon running those calendar systems backward until the
cycles are in sync. That synchronization makes it easier to calculate
the Julian day for each of those calendar systems, and therefore to
compare dates recorded in each of those systems with each other.