
Subject: Version control for IDL software

Posted by [Richard French](#) on Sat, 19 Nov 2005 20:39:08 GMT

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I'm working with several students on the development of a set of data analysis tools in IDL, and I'd like to use some sort of version control for the IDL software. The programs reside on an OSX server but are accessible from a variety of other Mac machines. I'm running IDL under Mac OSX.

I'd appreciate hearing from UNIX folks about the relative merits of CVS and RCS, or other approaches, to keeping track of versions of procedures and functions that are called from other IDL routines, or if this is even possible within the CVS/RCS paradigm.

If these tools don't do the job, I'd like advice on other ways to make sure that I have a record of the exact versions of program files called by a given large IDL program. I'm less worried about two users editing the same file at the same time, and more concerned with coming up with a sensible scheme whereby we can 'freeze' a given version of a routine and feel fairly confident that we know which version is used at any given time.

What I've done in the past is to use a version number in the name of the procedure or function - for example:

```
Pro complicated_procedure_v2,arg1,arg2  
End
```

which would then be called from another program as
complicated_procedure_V2, arg1,arg2

However, I don't bump up the version number very often, and it can be a nuisance to change other code to call this new version of the program.

Another approach might be to adopt a convention whereby every function or procedure that I write in the future has a VERSION keyword that would let me determine what version is being used during a given run of the code. This seems a bit clumsy but perhaps some of you have adopted this or a better scheme.

What makes life a bit complicated is that lots of my routines call other utility routines from nifty libraries contributed by many of you folks.
