
Subject: Re: Interesting Rant

Posted by [Richard Edgar](#) on Wed, 15 Nov 2006 18:31:27 GMT

[View Forum Message](#) <> [Reply to Message](#)

Earl F. Glynn wrote:

>> Row-major vs column major is a silly point... you just need to know
>> which way the language does it, and that's the end of the matter. And
>> I'd dispute the bit about 'every other language in the history of
>> mankind' too ;-)
>
> Perhaps a bit exaggerated above, but I don't think this is a silly point at
> all, especially when one must switch between programming languages to
> maintain software. Perhaps, I'm wrong, but IDL's arrays seem to be unique,
> and unlike C or FORTRAN.

That's true. And I have been caught on numerous occasions by IDL starting its indices from zero.

> FORTRAN or R: column-major format [nrows, ncolumns], 1-origin

Small point, but Fortran will start indexing from whatever number you tell it. Of course, the default is 1.

> The lack of a standard convention here could easily contribute to
> programming errors, especially if one uses IDL and other programming
> languages. Converting code from other languages could also be problematic
> because of silly mistakes getting subscripts right.

That's true, although since IDL always (?) does bounds-checking, I've usually found my slips get caught pretty fast. That's the only annoyance with this issue I've found. Of course, I have a particular perspective on this.... I'm not doing image processing, and I'm only using IDL to process output from other code, rather than doing significant computation in its own right (hence I consider optimising my IDL programs to be less important, and I generally restrict myself to making sure that something is vectorised). For people who are using IDL to do image processing and number crunching, I can see that the inconsistency would get particularly annoying.

Richard
