Subject: Re: variables in common blocks
Posted by David Fanning on Fri, 04 May 2007 15:16:10 GMT
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Lasse Clausen writes:

- > Ok. I'll describe what I am using common blocks for: Whatever day
- > during the week, I am doing one of the following:
- > 1) read data
- > 2) process data
- > 3) plot data
- > Since there are many different ways to process or plot data, it is
- > nice to read the data into common blocks, so that when I decide to
- > process or plot the data differently, I do not have to read it in
- > again.

>

- > If you have an easy solution on how to avoid common blocks, shoot. And
- > why are common blocks bad? Is it the same reason "goto" statements are
- > bad?

Oh, oh. *I* didn't want to get into it. I just wanted to light the fire. :-(

OK, there is *nothing* inherently evil about either Common blocks or GOTO statements. Both have a purpose, and I have used both (I think, although I can't remember a specific instance of either).

But what generally makes both Common blocks and GOTO statements pernicious is how easy it is for inexperienced programmers to substitute them for clear thinking and well-written programs. The program I have been working on for several weeks was brought to me because it is nearly impossible for two "expert" users to get the program to run the same way twice in a row, or--sometimes--to even run at all. It depends entirely on what order things are done and the current phase of the moon. Mostly, this is because of the indiscriminate use of Common blocks, and the fact that the left hand doesn't always know what the right hand is doing.

If I saw a COMMON block in a program written by JD Smith or Craig Markwardt, I probably wouldn't even think twice. But when I open an e-mail and there is someone pleading for "help" and I see Common blocks, I head straight for the liquor cabinet.

Cheers,

David

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Coyote's Guide to IDL Programming: http://www.dfanning.com/
Sepore ma de ni thui. ("Perhaps thou speakest truth.")