
Subject: Re: Returning a struct containing variable-length arrays

Posted by [Nigel Wade](#) on Wed, 17 Sep 2008 08:46:41 GMT

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franzpx125 wrote:

```
> Hi!
>
> Within my DLM, I need to return a struct containing two arrays but the
> length of the arrays is known only at run-time. Which is the correct
> way to write the DLM code? I think I have to use IDL_MAX_ARRAY_DIM and
> I defined:
>
> static IDL_MEMINT my_tags_dims[] = { 1, IDL_MAX_ARRAY_DIM };
>
> static IDL_STRUCT_TAG_DEF my_tags[] = {
>   { "X", my_tags_dims, (void *) IDL_TYP_DOUBLE },
>   { "Y", my_tags_dims, (void *) IDL_TYP_DOUBLE },
>   { 0 }
> };
>
> but I don't know how to fill the fields of this struct. Any help?
>
> Thanks,
> Brun Francesco
```

You basically have two choices depending on whether you want to use your own memory storage allocated by your DLM code to hold the structure data, or have IDL allocate its own memory and copy the values into that. Each method has its own set of advantages and caveats/gotchas.

If you use your own memory allocation then that memory has to persist after the DLM routine returns. This either means it has to be declared static (but since you want to use variable length arrays this isn't possible) or allocated by malloc. Using this method means that you are responsible for freeing the memory when IDL has finished with it. If it is simple throw away code which will only be used occasionally, and the function isn't called many times, and doesn't allocate much memory, you can ignore this but you *will* have a memory leak. To cure this you need to implement the callback routine, a function pointer to this is passed into the IDL_ImportArray function so that it can free whatever memory you allocate.

If you create an IDL struct using your own memory then you don't have to worry about copying the data into the structure. If you use IDL_MakeStruct so that IDL allocates the storage (and handles de-allocation) then you do have to copy the data into that memory. This is a little tricky.

In the first case, allocating your own storage, the sequence is to first

determine how much storage is required. Then you set your dimensions arrays appropriately. Next you create the structure with `IDL_MakeStruct` and finally import your data into the structure using `IDL_ImportArray`. You are responsible for writing a callback function to free this memory when IDL has finished with the variable.

To get IDL to handle the allocation the first two steps are the same. Then, rather than importing your own data you use `IDL_MakeTempStruct` to create a IDL temporary variable (which you can pass back to IDL). The tricky part is determining where to put your data. To do this you can use the function `IDL_StructTagInfoByName`, which returns the byte offset into the struct where the data for that tag is located. Then it's a case of some hairy pointer manipulation to write the data into the structure.

--

Nigel Wade
