
Subject: Re: nCDF_Browser Updated to Support HDF Files
Posted by [Kenneth P. Bowman](#) on Thu, 26 Feb 2009 18:46:57 GMT
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In article <MPG.240f1272d46c515b98a626@news.giganews.com>,
David Fanning <news@dfanning.com> wrote:

> I would point out, too, that sorting out what is inside
> an HDF file when you don't know much about it (the usual
> case, I think), is not a trivial task. Presumably the
> HDF_BROWSER code that comes with IDL can do it, but that
> code isn't exposed to us mortals, so we can't see how it
> is done. Reading the documentation, which is just about
> the only alternative available to us, is a fool's errand.

To oversimplify, HDF was created by programmers for scientists,
while netCDF was created by scientists who program. To see the
difference, simply count the number of HDF* and NCDF* routines
in IDL.

That's why I always use netCDF, when possible.

Admittedly, netCDF is not designed to handle irregular meshes,
for example. But for the vast majority of data sets, which
can be stored reasonably efficiently as multi-dimensional arrays,
netCDF is much easier to use. I actually teach netCDF to
beginners, but would not attempt to do so with HDF.

Cheers, Ken
