
Subject: idlastro mrdfits and strings

Posted by [Chris Thom](#) on Wed, 11 Nov 2009 20:58:01 GMT

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hi,

i spend a lot of time reading/writing idl structures to fits files using the idlastro library commands mwrfits/mrdfits. I just noticed the following behaviour, and wonder if it's a bug or a feature? If i write a structure to a fits file with mwrfits, and read it back again immediately, all the string tags will be space-padded out to the longest string in that tag. i.e.

```
IDL> foo = replicate({mystrect, strtag:""},3)
IDL> foo[0].strtag = 'ABC'
IDL> foo[1].strtag = 'ABCDEF'
IDL> foo[2].strtag = 'ABCDEFGH'
IDL> help,foo[0].strtag
<Expression>  STRING  = 'ABC   '
IDL> help,foo[1].strtag
<Expression>  STRING  = 'ABCDEF '
IDL> help,foo[2].strtag
<Expression>  STRING  = 'ABCDEFGH'
IDL> mwrfits, foo, 'foo.fits'
IDL> bar = mrdfits('foo.fits',1)
IDL> help,bar[0].strtag
<Expression>  STRING  = 'ABC   '
IDL> help,bar[1].strtag
<Expression>  STRING  = 'ABCDEF '
IDL> help,bar[2].strtag
<Expression>  STRING  = 'ABCDEFGH'
```

I'm not sure if these tags are being padded in the write or the read phase, but it'd be nice if there was a way to trim these tags on read. Or is there some reason this is a bad idea?

The work-around (sprinkling strtrim()s throughout the code) is functional if a little ugly.

cheers
chris
