Subject: Greek Symbols in Plot Annotations
Posted by David Fanning on Sun, 10 Jan 2010 15:51:37 GMT
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Folks,

I had occasion this week to want to use the Greek symbol mu in a plot annotation. And since I am all about device-independent programs, I wanted to write my code in such a way that the mu showed up on my display *and* in my PostScript file. This turned out to be surprisingly difficult to do and took a whole lot more time to figure out than I expected it to. (The Coyote web page was hopeless. Who runs things over there!?)

I think most of the difficulty comes because the information you need seems to be scattered throughout the IDL on-line help and is not particularly easy to find without some specialized knowledge of IDL fonts. Plus, this version of the on-line help (the 12th in the last four years?) is missing those helpful tabs that used to keep me organized.

Anyway, once I pulled all the information I needed to write a device-independent program together, the code was ugly as sin and offended my delicate sensibilities. You can see what I mean in this article:

http://www.dfanning.com/ps_tips/greeksym.html

To solve this problem, I wrote a small program that can return all 24 of the letters in the Greek alphabet in lowercase or uppercase versions, and in a device-independent way. The program assumes you use Hershey fonts (FONT=-1) on your display, and either hardware fonts (FONT=0) or True-Type fonts (FONT=1) when you are writing a PostScript file. It also assumes you have turned ISOLATIN1 encoding on for the PostScript device. All of these conditions are met for me just by using the PS_START/PS_END routines from the Coyote Library, so I don't even think about it.

You can find the Greek program here:

http://www.dfanning.com/programs/greek.pro

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.")
