
Subject: Re: FSC_PLOT defaults

Posted by [Paul Van Delst\[1\]](#) on Tue, 21 Dec 2010 15:39:56 GMT

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David Fanning wrote:

> The central theme of my upcoming book is that there is
> no real need for fancy new graphics.

Wha..? Seriously?

I will agree that you can plot everything you need to plot with either direct or function (aka "new") graphics, but the ability to easily manipulate the function graphic result, outside of its creation routine, after it's been created is a huge step forward. And this step is built upon existing tools (object graphics), involving more packaging and interface updates than actual new functionality. I find function graphics way more useful than iTools. Go figure.

I've never been a booster of the ITTVIS development process (we pay lotsa \$\$ for licenses and that's all the ego massaging I'm prepared to dole out), but with function graphics they have, for the first time since v6 (I'm a command line guy who's never been into IDEs so v7 was mostly lost on me), provided an update that earned the cost of the product.

My measure of success is if using new stuff in IDL makes it easier to for me to visualise my data and to communicate its content to others via a plot/surface/whatever.

In that regard, I reckon function graphics beats direct hands down. The effort and time to learn how to use them has paid off (and my knowledge of them is still rudimentary at best).

Since I got v8 installed, I have not written any new code that uses direct graphics. It's all been function graphics.

And I've been happy to do so despite my reservations about picture quality when embedding generated graphics in documents -- word, powerpoint, latex, whatever. (others have posted in c.l.i-p about how to solve that problem too).

There are still some things that need to be addressed[*] but function graphics, for the most part, work the way I expect them to. E.g. I *want* my legends to be associated with the data ... not something added afterwards.

Disclaimer: Various regulations I'm subject to require me to state that the above is an expression of my personal

opinion only and does not represent any official position or policy of my employers (any of 'em)

cheers,

paulv

[*] For a start:

1) better documentation/examples on how to do stuff

2) See #1

3) speed issues when plotting lots and lots of data (also see #1)

4) the ability to copy+paste objects in a graphic (e.g. added annotations/arrows etc)

5) better (i.e. not so 80's looking) properties interface... although that may be a motif/X windows thing on linux.

> That almost everything

> you need is already available to you via traditional graphics

> commands IF you do a few simple things. One of those things

> is write programs that work both on your display and in a

> PostScript file. Of course, it is *possible* to do this

> if one has a black background and one has a white background,

> but if you use color at all (another theme of the book), then

> this is all much harder to do.

>

> Better, I thought, to make everything work the same.

> Even old timers with schizophrenic brains catch onto

> it fairly quickly and realize how easy it is to make things

> work identically in the two different environments. :-)

>

> That said, I've gone to some trouble to make sure these

> routines work "naturally". If you set the background color

> to "black", the drawing routines should draw in white.

> I've just really changed the default background color.

>

> I've no objection to changing the default line thickness

> values, although I have tried to make these commands work

> as normally as possible, even when "normally" sometimes

> means sub-optimally. I really only tried to fix the things

> I thought were obvious defects. (I do set exact axis ranges

> on the FSC_Contour command, but personally, I don't mind

> autoscaling axes on the Plot command most of the time.)

>

> I do note that I *always* change line thicknesses when

> I make a PostScript file, so maybe changing it everywhere

> is not such a bad idea. Let me play with this a little and

> see what I can do. Anything that makes these more useful

> is what I am looking for.

>

> We still have a month or so to experiment before

> they are cast in stone. :-)
>
> Cheers,
>
> David
>
