
Subject: Modern IDL Comments

Posted by [David Fanning](#) on Mon, 10 Oct 2011 20:29:24 GMT

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Folks,

A lot of people ask me, "What in the world do you do on that long flight to Australia!?" I normally give the same lame answer, "I watch 3-4 really, really dumb movies while trying to get some sleep."

But, this time I did something more productive. I read Mike Galloy's very interesting and helpful book, Modern IDL, cover to cover. What a pleasure!

Mike advises users already familiar with IDL to skip the first six chapters if they like. I'm glad I didn't! I almost learned more there than in the rest of the chapters. Mike and I have had very different experiences with IDL, have used it in different ways, and I found it refreshing and interesting to read Mike's lucid explanations of this different approach. I found myself making notes almost every time I turned the page.

The book covers a lot of ground, and I found myself often aware of problems and dangers that he must by necessity skip or gloss over if he planned to write a book that could be held in the hand (not to mention carried in a flight bag). But, still, there was an impressive amount of explanatory material that made difficult subjects at least seem approachable. His explanation of iTools, for example, made them almost seem comprehensible, although he provided little detail (correctly, in my opinion!) in this section. And surely his three pages of text and an index entry for the BLAS_AXPY function in IDL will be found in no other IDL book published anywhere in the world! ;-)

This book is obviously not aimed at the novice IDL user, but for those of us who have been around the block a few times, it will open the eyes to new possibilities and a fresh way of thinking. Very well done, and a valuable contribution of the growing IDL literature.

Thanks, Mike!

Cheers,

David

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Coyote's Guide to IDL Programming: <http://www.dfanning.com/>

Sepore ma de ni thue. ("Perhaps thos speakest truth.")
