
Subject: Re: resizing system variable

Posted by [Craig Markwardt](#) on Fri, 21 Dec 2012 04:33:00 GMT

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On Thursday, December 20, 2012 4:44:37 PM UTC-5, astrobo...@gmail.com wrote:

> On Thursday, December 20, 2012 3:28:45 PM UTC-5, Craig Markwardt wrote:

>> It sounds to me you are trying to use a system variable like a common block (i.e. global variable). See if you can rethink how you do it without a system variable, because it will probably come back to bite you.

...

> I have a program that I call in nearly every program I write, that defines about one hundred global variables, such as the date, time, working directory, default color table, etc., using the `defsysv` command. In any given program I'd use only a handful of these, but I wouldn't necessarily know which ones until the program was finished.

>

> Based on David's books, it seems to me that using a common block in such a case would be a real pain.

Actually, I think that David would argue that system variables are inappropriate for use as global variables for exactly the same reason as common blocks. Global variables can pin you down in painful ways when you try to scale/enhance your program.

[Don't tell David I mentioned this, but common blocks are actually more flexible than system variables because common block variables can be redefined - even redimensioned whenever you wish.]

You've got a system that works, I would stick with it now.

When designing a new system, I usually define a structure with all of those quantities and then pass that structure around.

[Actually, if I were designing my IDL library from scratch, I would start with Python. :-]

Craig
