Subject: Re: variable number of colors available on screen
Posted by David Foster on Mon, 24 Feb 1997 08:00:00 GMT
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Geir Willy Rogde wrote:
>
> When starting idl I get different number of available colors each time.

> Is it possible forcing idl to use 256 colors?
> (I'm on a Unix-workstation.)

You can use an entry like the following in a user's ~/.Xdefaults file or the system Xdefaults file (/usr/openwin/lib/Xdefaults for Solaris 2.X):

```
idl.colors 256
```

The manual suggests that you can also use the following:

```
WINDOW, COLORS=256, /PIXMAP    ; Before any other windows
WDELETE                        ;  are created!
```

which explicitly tells IDL to allocate 256 colors. If enough colors aren't available, it will use a private colormap. This may be your only alternative if you _need_ 256 colors; however, you will have the problem of "color flashing" as input focus changes from IDL to other programs on the screen.

If you can live with fewer colors, you can use a lower number to avoid using the private colormap. You can also specify a negative number to tell IDL to allocate all but the specified number of colors, leaving some for other applications:

```
WINDOW, COLORS=-8, /PIXMAP     ; Leaves 8 colors unallocated
WDELETE
```

You can put these commands in your "idl_startup" file.

The documentation is not clear as to whether this same behavior is achieved using "idl.colors" in the Xdefaults file. It simply states that you can use it to set the number of colors used by IDL. You might want to give it a try. Anyone know if this works?

Having only 100 to 150 colors seems pretty low. Do you have any applications that are grabbing up colors? (One common culprit is Netscape...you can start it with "netscape -install" to avoid this.

Programs written in IDL should not count on there being a constant

number of colors available. You can use !D.N_COLORS or !D.TABLE_SIZE
(don't remember the distinction, someone please remind us) to allow
your programs to account for the number of colors available.

Hope this is useful.

Dave

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