
Subject: Cool and Bizzare error in IDL 5.2.1

Posted by [R.G. Stockwell](#) on Tue, 20 Jun 2000 07:00:00 GMT

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Well, I've spent the last hour or so tracking down an error, and finally found the culprit. Check out the result of the following commands

```
IDL> help,current_mean
CURRENT_MEAN  DOUBLE  =  -1.0853418
IDL> help,newmean
CURRENT_MEAN  DOUBLE  =  -1.0853418
```

I have two variables, `current_mean` and `newmean`. There are no pointers used, and the code is very straightforward (just iteratively calculating the mean).

Note how `IDL>help,newmean` give the result of `current_mean`, is that weird or what??

The error is that when `newmean` was calculated, `current_mean` was being modified.

The code fragment that demonstrates this is:

```
print,'current mean: ',current_mean
newmean = (current_mean*npoints+newpoint)/(npoints+1)
print,'current mean: ',current_mean
```

And the resulting output is:

```
current mean:  -1.0853418
current mean:  -0.13970473
```

I'm not sure how I was able to do this, but if it's repeatable, I think I smell some obfuscated IDL code in my future!

better get back to work, I just thought it was cool. If any one can explain this, I'd be interested to hear it. But I'm guessing it will be difficult to reproduce.

Cheers,
bob
