
Subject: GIF compression support in ImageMagick
Posted by [Mark Hadfield](#) on Tue, 13 Mar 2001 21:22:22 GMT
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Yes, this is related (marginally) to IDL.

In the discussion on the lack of GIF support in IDL 5.4 a month or two ago, I said that ImageMagick (<http://www.imagemagick.org/>) was a good tool for creating GIFs. Although I have used ImageMagick for years I don't create GIFs very often. And I failed to notice that some time recently the following comment has appeared in the README:

--enable-lzw (configuration switch)

Unisys reportedly claims a patent on the algorithm supporting LZW compression (e.g. used by GIF and TIFF). To avoid possibly infringing on this patent, support for LZW is disabled by default. With LZW support, GIF files written by ImageMagick will be much larger than expected

This explains the enormous increase in size when I converted some files from PNG to GIF the other day!

So ImageMagick is not a good tool for creating GIFs (unless you go to some trouble to enable LZW compression) and IDL is not the only organisation abandoning GIF because of patent issues.

All the more reason to BURN ALL GIFS, I say.

BTW, ImageMagick can still **read** compressed GIFs.

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