
Subject: Postscript font usage

Posted by [Mark Fardal](#) on Thu, 12 Apr 2001 16:33:50 GMT

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Hi,

I have a somewhat open-ended question. I'm wondering: how many of you use Postscript fonts in your direct graphics work? What are your experiences with it?

Advantages of Postscript fonts: aesthetics, and more importantly legibility. In so many talks, the speaker rambles on about a plot for five minutes in front of a bemused squinting audience, until someone finally gets the courage to ask, "excuse me, what are the axes?" That tends not to happen with postscript fonts.

It is a little bit of a trick to use special symbols (like the "sun" symbol in astronomy). You have to get the fonts, digest the files for IDL, load them, access them properly, and then make sure they're loaded into the output file so they'll print. But it does work in the end.

Disadvantages of Postscript fonts: lots of problems in the current implementation. That's not to say there aren't workarounds, but it can be a pain. (I am using version 5.2.1L, but I believe at least some of these problems persist in later versions.) For example :

The placement bug: putting symbols from user-defined fonts screws up the calculation of string length. This means your titles are offset if you use special symbols.

The font-switching bug: it is not possible to use more than one user-defined font at a time. If you only need one special symbol that's fine. If you need more it can be trouble.

The clipping bug: postscript text is not clipped no matter what you have set the clipping to.

The scientific notation bug: using Times-Roman at least, scientific notation uses a raised dot instead of an "x". Try plot, [0,1.e9] to see what I mean. Looks rather silly. (My preferred workaround is never to use values that require scientific notation in a linear plot.)

Anybody else have comments or problems? RSI is planning to roll version 5.5 out (sometime this summer?), and it would be nice if they

would get PS fonts in order before then. It would probably help if we could identify all the things they need to fix.

thanks,
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