Subject: Modular programming in IDL....trouble
Posted by gotwols on Thu, 02 Jun 1994 20:31:08 GMT
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As a long time user of IDL (10 years) I have access to a large number of routines that are used over and over again. Lately however something disconcerting has started to happen. A program which was working yesterday suddenly stops working. Usually this can be traced to the fact that a new function has been added to the library that has the same name as an array in one of the routines being called. In brief then, the problem is a clash between function names and array names.

The C language has a very elegant solution to the name clash problem: All arrays are indicated with square brackets, eg. a[i], whereas all functions have round brackets, eg. work(arg). Short of rewriting IDL (and PV-WAVE), I can think of no work around for this problem other than the trivial one of giving all functions names that are guaranteed not to clash with the arrays, say by prefixing the function name with an underscore or something. After a decade of development this is not a very good solution since it would require massive changes to the code in the JHU/APL library as well as still leaving the problem unsolved for code imported from other users.

Does anyone have a suggestion on how to cope with this problem? If left unsolved it severely limits the modularity and reusability of all IDL and PV-WAVE code.

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