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Subject: Re: IDL vs AWK input

Posted by [David Fanning](#) on Tue, 19 Nov 2002 23:02:54 GMT

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Jason Quinn (jason\_quinn@yahoo.com) writes:

> <IDL RANT ON>  
> Wouldn't IDL be a trillion times better if it handled reading input in  
> a style similar to awk, i.e. using \$1, \$2, etc., for reading in  
> columns? IDL seems overdependant on format codes and the number of  
> lines in a file. Also I'm sick of asking people how to do something  
> simple with file input/output and instead of them telling me how to do  
> it \*in IDL\* they direct me to some Joe Blow's webpage with a script  
> that does it. I don't want some guy's script, I want to know how to do  
> it in IDL. Am I a troll? No. I'm just fed-up with IDL's wacky syntax  
> and half-baked feel and I needed to vent. IDL feels like a shaky house  
> of cards. I know the way to do the things above, EOF, etc., but my  
> point is that it's a poorly designed language. As a casual user, I  
> basically need to relearn it every month or two because I've forgotten  
> it in the meantime. The language is difficult to remember because it  
> makes no sense.  
> <IDL RANT OFF>

For what it's worth, I feel like this too, sometimes.

Yesterday, for example, I wanted to read a file of numbers that has NaNs scattered through-out. I got

"Can't read string with F format."

Say what? Sigh... Go look up READS for the thousandth time, at least.

But on the other hand, I get just as wigged out at Microsoft trying to read my mind. "Wait a minute, hold on there, I didn't want to format the whole damn paper that way!"

There is a middle ground somewhere (and I don't think it's Matlab, either, after reading a few of their m files). At least with IDL if you've done the same damn thing five times, you have probably written a little program to do it. (Or, at least you should have.) Now, if you had only had sense enough at the time to document it... :-(

Cheers,

David

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David W. Fanning, Ph.D.  
Fanning Software Consulting, Inc.  
Phone: 970-221-0438, E-mail: david@dfanning.com  
Coyote's Guide to IDL Programming: <http://www.dfanning.com/>  
Toll-Free IDL Book Orders: 1-888-461-0155

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Subject: Re: IDL vs AWK input  
Posted by [cees](#) on Wed, 20 Nov 2002 09:18:49 GMT  
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Jason Quinn wrote:

- > <IDL RANT ON>
- > Wouldn't IDL be a trillion times better if it handled reading input in
- > a style similar to awk, i.e. using \$1, \$2, etc., for reading in
- > columns? IDL seems overdependant on format codes and the number of
- > lines in a file. Also I'm sick of asking people

So are they probably. Why don't you read the manual or try google instead ???

how to do something

- > simple with file input/output and instead of them telling me how to do
- > it \*in IDL\* they direct me to some Joe Blow's webpage with a script
- > that does it. I don't want some guy's script, I want to know how to do
- > it in IDL.

So learn it. And stop whining!

Am I a troll? No. I'm just fed-up with IDL's wacky syntax

- > and half-baked feel and I needed to vent. IDL feels like a shaky house
- > of cards. I know the way to do the things above, EOF, etc., but my
- > point is that it's a poorly designed language.

SOLUTION: quit using it. There are alternatives IDL doesn't have a monopoly, so you're free to try something else.

As a casual user, I

- > basically need to relearn it every month or two because I've forgotten
- > it in the meantime.

Ah, but you do remember to switch on the computer ???

The language is difficult to remember because it

- > makes no sense.

SOLUTION: write your own programming language. (That always makes sense to you.)

> <IDL RANT OFF>  
>  
> Jason

Cees

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Subject: Re: IDL vs AWK input  
Posted by [jason\\_quinn](#) on Thu, 21 Nov 2002 16:04:57 GMT  
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cees <cees00@hotmail.com> wrote in message news:<arfk49\$muc\$1@voyager.cistron.net>...  
>  
> SOLUTION: quit using it. There are alternatives IDL doesn't have a  
> monopoly, so you're free to try something else.

I thought I'd respond to this point that you made. I know the benefits of IDL (fast), that's why our group uses it. A key word in the last sentence is 'group', which makes your "quit using it" solution unfeasable.

Jason

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