
Subject: Re: IDL, GDL, copyright, EULAs and such
Posted by [Haje Korth](#) on Wed, 06 Jul 2005 19:50:32 GMT
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I don't get the point: Why use GDL if you already have a licensed copy of IDL. I see GDL as an alternative solutions for people who cannot cough up the \$\$\$ for the in my opinion overprized IDL license fees. Since you already own IDL, just ignore the fact that it does way more than your brain can handle and live happily ever after. :-)

Haje

PS: You could ask a lawyer to check into that for you, but they are overprized too and the IDL license may seem cheap compared to your legal fees.

"Y.T." <ytyourclothes@p.zapto.org> wrote in message
news:1120669967.155972.166240@g14g2000cwa.googlegroups.com.. .
> So I've been playing around with GDL, simply because I like IDL. I like
> GDL's focus on the essentials - I wouldn't mind widget-tools, but I
> consider them a luxury, really. And if GDL never acquires the
> incomprehensible object junk of IDL, it'll be too soon.
>
> However much of the power of IDL lies in the library, of course - and
> thus GDL's weakness lies in the lack of that library.
>
> For now, I figure, there shouldn't be a problem with my re-using the
> routines from my valid, legal IDL installation -- it is just a massive
> pain when such an essential tool like "linfit" is unavailable. So I
> copy it from my /usr/local/rsi to a local GDL-directory. No big deal.
>
> Or is it a big deal? The routine is copyrighted by RSI, no? Am I
> allowed to use it on a program like GDL that is quite blatantly
> intended to be a free replacement for IDL? Can I use my idl/lib
> routines as long as I have a functioning IDL installation? Do I have to
> stop using them as soon as my license expires? But the license is only
> for IDL, no? That's why the hasp-thingee only protects use of the
> binary, right? So the library should be considered "acquired" and still
> be allowed to be used with GDL even in the absence of a working IDL.
> No? Yes?
>
> The longer I think about it the less sure I am that running GDL might
> not be in violation of the "reverse engineering" clause in the IDL
> license agreement or some such -- except that that would only apply to
> people who actually have a valid installation of IDL since only those
> would ever have agreed to that license.
>

> And the IDL license actually never spells out what the "software"
> really is that is being licensed -- whether it is IDL itself or also
> the contents of idl/lib/*
>
> Since I'm already pretty confused by the whole notion of "intellectual
> property" (and much more so on the 'net) I figure I'll throw this out
> as an open-ended question -- can I continue to use basic, trivial
> functions like "poly.pro" or "factorial.pro" with GDL after IDL has
> expired? How about more complex stuff? Why or why not? What's the
> status of the routines that were originally from NR?
>
> I'm just baffled.
>
>
> cordially
>
>
> Y.T.
>
> --
> Remove YourClothes before you email me.
>

Subject: Re: IDL, GDL, copyright, EULAs and such
Posted by [Y.T.](#) on Wed, 06 Jul 2005 20:45:19 GMT
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Haje Korth wrote:

> I don't get the point: Why use GDL if you already have a licensed copy of
> IDL. I see GDL as an alternative solutions for people who cannot cough up
> the \$\$\$ for the in my opinion overprized IDL license fees.

Exactly. :)

This includes people who have a valid license now which is bound to expire at some point in the near future; people who are about to change employers and aren't sure the new employer is going to cough up the dough for IDL; and people who have no chance of being able to afford a license privately for themselves but would like to tinker with data at home. And even people who are tired of having to convince their IT people that they should pay money every couple years to renew their IDL license "when you can do all this in PAW"...

> PS: You could ask a lawyer to check into that for you, but they are
> overprized too and the IDL license may seem cheap compared to your legal
> fees.

I'm not really under the impression that lawyers understand the online intellectual property jungle any better than laymen.

At this point I wasn't really looking for an expensive certifiable answer anyways - I was trying to get a bit of a reading on how real people feel about these things.

A linear fit, for example, is something I've written back on my Atari-800: it's not exactly a patentable algorithm. NR published a fortran version of the algorithm. RSI implemented it in IDL, cited NR in the header as a source and then slapped the following two lines on it:

```
; Copyright (c) 1994-2001, Research Systems, Inc. All rights reserved.  
;   Unauthorized reproduction prohibited.
```

But what does that really mean? I can't hand this to someone else? Can't make it public? Can't copy it to a subdirectory of my own to use in GDL? What's actually covered under "fair use" these days?

As long as nobody looks at my harddisk, obviously there's no problem here anywhere. But lets say I tinker with GDL and write some kind of groundbreaking stock-trading software or some kind of super-accurate prediction code for earthquakes -- something that makes me rich enough to become a worthy target for litigation and famous enough for all the litigators to know that I exist. At that point I'd rather not have RSI thugs kick down my door and demand all my money because I did my linear fits with a routine that had their copyright in the header.

And if I then say "I was using a licensed copy of IDL on my employer's computer", my employer is going to demand my money instead.

But if I were to implement my linear fit by myself from scratch, it would look very much like RSI's, of course. Especially now that I've seen their code. How many different ways are there, really, to do this?

Then again, maybe there's no problem with the library code as long as I didn't use their actual IDL binary(?)

Ah, the vagaries of writing code in the 21st century...

cordially

Y.T.

--

Remove YourClothes before you email me.

Subject: Re: IDL, GDL, copyright, EULAs and such
Posted by [Edd Edmondson](#) on Wed, 06 Jul 2005 21:02:09 GMT
[View Forum Message](#) <> [Reply to Message](#)

Haje Korth <haje.korth@jhuapl.edu> wrote:

> I don't get the point: Why use GDL if you already have a licensed copy of
> IDL. I see GDL as an alternative solutions for people who cannot cough up
> the \$\$\$ for the in my opinion overprized IDL license fees. Since you already
> own IDL, just ignore the fact that it does way more than your brain can
> handle and live happily ever after. :-)

That is not the point of the G in GDL, even if the project was created because some group of people could not afford the \$\$\$.

I could sell GDL for more money than IDL sells for, although I'd likely not sell many copies as anyone else able to get their hands on it, including my own customers could resell it at any price. It is that which makes GDL inexpensive above anything else, and that's a side effect of the real purpose of GPL'd software.

The real strength of GDL being free is that I can change it. I could fix any bugs in it, and I could add features as I wish and do almost anything with it I choose. So, whilst there may not currently be reasons to use GDL over IDL if you own the latter, that isn't necessarily true in the future, and indeed in rare cases may not even be true now.

--

Edd

Subject: Re: IDL, GDL, copyright, EULAs and such
Posted by [Paul Van Delst\[1\]](#) on Wed, 06 Jul 2005 22:19:50 GMT
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Y.T. wrote:

> A linear fit, for example, is something I've written back on my
> Atari-800: it's not exactly a patentable algorithm. NR published a
> fortran version of the algorithm. RSI implemented it in IDL, cited NR
> in the header as a source and then slapped the following two lines on
> it:
>
> ; Copyright (c) 1994-2001, Research Systems, Inc. All rights reserved.

> ; Unauthorized reproduction prohibited.

I think the business end of the above two lines is

"Unauthorized reproduction prohibited"

That's a pretty generic statement and one could make the argument that if you have the source code

on a machine that doesn't contain an IDL license you have reproduced it with no authorization from

RSI. Why not ask them? At least then you'll no longer have to rationalise -- you'll know what the company line is.

From the "Installing and Licensing IDL 6.0" pdf:

<quote>

The IDL^{1/2}, ION Script", and ION Java" software programs and the accompanying procedures, functions, and documentation described herein are sold under license agreement. Their use, duplication, and disclosure are subject to the restrictions stated in the license agreement. Research Systems, Inc., reserves the right to make changes to this document at any time and without notice.

</quote>

Note the terms "accompanying procedures, functions, and documentation". That seems pretty clear to

me (although I couldn't find a copy of the license agreement itself.)

> But if I were to implement my linear fit by myself from scratch, it
> would look very much like RSI's, of course. Especially now that I've
> seen their code. How many different ways are there, really, to do this?

But would you do it in the IDL/GDL language? Why not link in a precompiled library and use a GDL

wrapper that has the same interface as the IDL version? It'll probably be faster and there are scads

of available libraries/source codes to pick from.... just visit www.netlib.org. Bypass the IDL library code altogether.

> Then again, maybe there's no problem with the library code as long as I
> didn't use their actual IDL binary(?)

That's not how I read the copyright statement above.

> Ah, the vagaries of writing code in the 21st century...

But, you wouldn't be writing the code. You'd be copying it. (And RSI might equate "copying" with "stealing" -- especially when the IDL product ship quantities start to drop..... :o)

paulv

--

Paul van Delst
CIMSS @ NOAA/NCEP/EMC

Subject: Re: IDL, GDL, copyright, EULAs and such
Posted by [Ken Mankoff](#) on Thu, 07 Jul 2005 00:21:15 GMT
[View Forum Message](#) <> [Reply to Message](#)

On Wed, 6 Jul 2005, Y.T. wrote:

> ; Copyright (c) 1994-2001, Research Systems, Inc. All rights reserved.
> ; Unauthorized reproduction prohibited.

I wrote this newsgroup on April 8 of this year asking the exact same question. The thread is here:

http://groups-beta.google.com/group/comp.lang.idl-pvwave/browse_thread/thread/c7427292e352938c/9df63979178d7896?q=mankoff&rnum=27#9df63979178d7896

I also sent the question to RSI and got a reply from them:

> FYI, Just in case anyone else has a similar question:
>
> I got a reply from RSI. They said that as an RSI customer with a
> valid/current license, pretty much anything I do with their demo
> is authorized.

While this does not answer your question, their wording implies that once your license expires you do not maintain the rights to their libraries.

But I think if you look around

<http://www.astro.washington.edu/deutsch/idl/htmlhelp/>

You'll find that almost all the IDL code has been duplicated by someone else somewhere else. You are probably allowed to use that. And the above site has posted the IDL 4.0.1 libraries on the web for anyone to see...

-k.

--

<http://spacebit.dyndns.org/>

Subject: Re: IDL, GDL, copyright, EULAs and such
Posted by [Chris Lee](#) on Thu, 07 Jul 2005 07:41:28 GMT
[View Forum Message](#) <> [Reply to Message](#)

In article <1120669967.155972.166240@g14g2000cwa.googlegroups.com>, "Y.T."
<ytyourclothes@p.zapto.org> wrote:

>
> essential tool like "linfit" is unavailable. So I copy it from my

There's a free version of linfit at
<http://www.astro.washington.edu/deutsch-bin/getpro/library37.html?LINFIT>

it's not the same as the IDL version, so you'd need to work it into a
function, and add the keywords that the IDL version makes available

> an open-ended question -- can I continue to use basic, trivial functions
> like "poly.pro" or "factorial.pro" with GDL after IDL has expired? How

factorial is written (I know, I wrote it :) It should be fully compatible
with the IDL version. It, and a few other library functions live in
the gdl/src/pro directory, in case you haven't found them.

POLY is something like

```
function poly,x,c
```

```
nc=n_elements(c)  
p=0*x  
for i=nc-1,1L,-1 do p=(p+c[i])*x  
p=p+c[0]  
return p
```

```
end
```

Chris.

Subject: Re: IDL, GDL, copyright, EULAs and such
Posted by [Y.T.](#) on Wed, 13 Jul 2005 17:40:18 GMT
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> But I think if you look around
> <http://www.astro.washington.edu/deutsch/idl/htmlhelp/>
>
> You'll find that almost all the IDL code has been duplicated by
> someone else somewhere else. You are probably allowed to use that.

Maybe someone needs to start collecting these things and compile them into a "free idl-alike .pro library". The value of something like GDL would really increase drastically through this.

And earlier, Christopher Lee wrote:

- > There's a free version of linfit at
- > <http://www.astro.washington.edu/deutsch-bin/getpro/library37.html?LINFIT>
- >
- > it's not the same as the IDL version, so you'd need to work it into a
- > function, and add the keywords that the IDL version makes available

Not to sound ungrateful, but that's kinda pointless. I can write my own version of linfit (and everything else in the IDL library). If I have to write scads of code to make a trivial algorithm work, then I might as well implement the whole thing myself.

The point was that there's already an existing library that has it all inside - the IDL library. Up until recently, RSI could be rather cavalier about sharing this around as the library files are pretty nigh useless without a working installation of IDL. So they put all their license-enforcement efforts into the binary and didn't fuss when/where people shared .pro-files around.

But these days, the library suddenly attains value by itself as the binary core can be replaced (to better and better degree) with GDL.

Some of this is very intimately linked to IDL and it's workings -- like all the windowing/widget stuff. But for myself I don't need those things -- all *my* routines that need complex user-interactions have been talking to ports for the last five years or so where the user can pick things up with his/her favorite web-browser (which doesn't even have to run on the same computer).

But there's other routines, and linfit is an obvious example, that are not in the least married to IDL - but who's well-defined (by RSI) interface still expedites software development. We can all start writing our own versions, but then my programs would either become non-portable or otherwise lumbering hunks of re-re-re-duplicated code.

The longer I think about it, the more I realize that the ability to replicate (copy? re-write? cobble together from various places? reverse-engineer? mimic? which of these is legal these days under the RSI license?) the library is going to be the thing that'll make GDL stand or fall.

just some thoughts...

cordially

Y.T.

--

Remove YourClothes before you email me.

Subject: Re: IDL, GDL, copyright, EULAs and such
Posted by [Ken Mankoff](#) on Wed, 13 Jul 2005 19:26:28 GMT
[View Forum Message](#) <> [Reply to Message](#)

On Wed, 13 Jul 2005, Y.T. wrote:

>> But I think if you look around
>> <http://www.astro.washington.edu/deutsch/idl/htmlhelp/>
>>
>> You'll find that almost all the IDL code has been duplicated by
>> someone else somewhere else. You are probably allowed to use
>> that.
>
> Maybe someone needs to start collecting these things and compile
> them into a "free idl-alike .pro library". The value of something
> like GDL would really increase drastically through this.

Umm... did you follow the above link? Doesn't that constitute a
"collection"?

-k.

Subject: Re: IDL, GDL, copyright, EULAs and such
Posted by [m_schellens](#) on Thu, 14 Jul 2005 15:00:42 GMT
[View Forum Message](#) <> [Reply to Message](#)

Y.T. wrote:

>> But I think if you look around
>> <http://www.astro.washington.edu/deutsch/idl/htmlhelp/>
>>
>> You'll find that almost all the IDL code has been duplicated by
>> someone else somewhere else. You are probably allowed to use that.
>
> Maybe someone needs to start collecting these things and compile them
> into a "free idl-alike .pro library". The value of something like GDL
> would really increase drastically through this.

Well, that is already on the way. As Chris already pointed out:

Several routines which come with GDL are written in GDL (src/pro subdirectory).

> And earlier, Christopher Lee wrote:
>> There's a free version of linfit at
>> <http://www.astro.washington.edu/deutsch-bin/getpro/library37.html?LINFIT>
>>
>> it's not the same as the IDL version, so you'd need to work it into a
>> function, and add the keywords that the IDL version makes available
>
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> version of linfit (and everything else in the IDL library). If I have
> to write scads of code to make a trivial algorithm work, then I might
> as well implement the whole thing myself.
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> The point was that there's already an existing library that has it all
> inside - the IDL library. Up until recently, RSI could be rather
> cavalier about sharing this around as the library files are pretty nigh
> useless without a working installation of IDL. So they put all their
> license-enforcement efforts into the binary and didn't fuss when/where
> people shared .pro-files around.

It is their code. If visible (.pro) or not (IDL binary).
I would treat it the same way.

from another post:

> As long as nobody looks at my harddisk, obviously there's no problem
> here anywhere. But lets say I tinker with GDL and write some kind of
> groundbreaking stock-trading software or some kind of super-accurate
> prediction code for earthquakes -- something that makes me rich enough
> to become a worthy target for litigation and famous enough for all the
> litigators to know that I exist. At that point I'd rather not have RSI
> thugs kick down my door and demand all my money because I did my linear
> fits with a routine that had their copyright in the header.

Not being an expert for law as well to me it is pretty obvious that
you cannot use IDL's code and distribute it with GDL applications.

But if an algorithm is that obvious you can use it of course.
Just write it yourself and don't copy it.
It will look different. Even if it is similar: I think nobody could
convince a judge that you should pay anything because you used
similar code, especially if a subroutine is almost trivial.
But if you use the *same* code it might be different.

- > But these days, the library suddenly attains value by itself as the
- > binary core can be replaced (to better and better degree) with GDL.
- >
- > Some of this is very intimately linked to IDL and it's workings -- like
- > all the windowing/widget stuff. But for myself I don't need those
- > things -- all *my* routines that need complex user-interactions have
- > been talking to ports for the last five years or so where the user can
- > pick things up with his/her favorite web-browser (which doesn't even
- > have to run on the same computer).
- >
- > But there's other routines, and linfit is an obvious example, that are
- > not in the least married to IDL - but who's well-defined (by RSI)
- > interface still expedites software development. We can all start
- > writing our own versions, but then my programs would either become
- > non-portable or otherwise lumbering hunks of re-re-re-duplicated code.

Therefore put the routines you wrote in/for GDL under the GPL and contribute them.

The more people do the quicker the library gets filled.

- > The longer I think about it, the more I realize that the ability to
- > replicate (copy? re-write? cobble together from various places?
- > reverse-engineer? mimick? which of these is legal these days under the
- > RSI license?) the library is going to be the thing that'll make GDL
- > stand or fall.

You are right. But it is not about the IDL library only but the internal (C++) routines as well or even more. And thats is what the developers and me mainly work on.

Join in!

Cheers,
marc