
Subject: .sav format

Posted by [Christopher Florio](#) on Mon, 29 Jan 2007 12:50:59 GMT

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Does anybody know of documentation for the format of .sav files?

Subject: Re: .sav format

Posted by [JD Smith](#) on Mon, 29 Jan 2007 20:49:10 GMT

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On Mon, 29 Jan 2007 12:08:18 -0800, mgalloy@gmail.com wrote:

> Interesting. More poking around at Craig's site, reveals the following
> license for CMSVLIB:
>
> <http://cow.physics.wisc.edu/~craigm/idl/down/LICENSE.RSI>
>
> In particular, note point 5:
>
> ; 5. Allowed use of this software is limited to reading and writing ;
> IDL variable related portions of IDL Save files. It may not be ; used
> as a basis for reverse engineering, or otherwise ; accessing any other
> portions of an IDL save file, including but ; not limited to, those
> portions that encode executable IDL programs.
> ; Such use is in violation of the IDL EULA, and will be prosecuted ;
> to the fullest extent possible by Research Systems, Inc. It is ;
> permissible to read such sections of an IDL save file for the ; sole
> purpose of transferring it without examination or interpretation
> ; to another save file.
>
> So it appears you would need a similar license from ITTVIS for examining
> data .sav files (i.e. directly examining, there is an IDL_Savefile class
> in IDL 6.1 that can do a lot of this for data .sav files anyway) and it is
> strictly forbidden to examine code .sav files.

The license grants "the author of this software, and to all IDL users, a license to use and redistribute this software in source or binary form, subject to the following conditions", so they've already given us the license (restrictive though it may be).

JD

Subject: Re: .sav format

Posted by [Michael Galloy](#) on Mon, 29 Jan 2007 21:01:05 GMT

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On Jan 29, 1:49 pm, JD Smith <jdsm...@as.arizona.edu> wrote:
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To "use and redistribute this software" (i.e. CMSVLIB), but the original poster wanted documentation of the .sav format (presumably so they could write their own software).

-Mike

Subject: Re: .sav format
Posted by [Haje Korth](#) on Tue, 30 Jan 2007 13:21:49 GMT
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Mike,
Here is what I don't understand. In the first part of the notice that is embedded in the sav files says that ANY reverse engineering is prohibited. It does not distinguish between data and code elements. Thus it is my understanding that nobody will ever be legally allowed to develop any routine that messes with the sav file since it would automatically mean that you would have to apply some sort of reverse engineering magic. The second part of the notice says that I need a license for any non-RSI software that reads/writes sav files. Doesn't that mean that anyone applying for such license automatically incriminates himself/herself???

I am a scientist not a lawyer (if I were a lawyer I probably would not use IDL as my tool of the trade) and I don't really understand this legal mumbo jumbo (nor will I ever intend to understand it). Therefore I stay away from using sav files and use any of the other numerous file formats that are cross platform, cross program compatible.

I wonder why Christopher was set on sav files and needed the docs? I guess he never explained, so I may be overlooking something.

Haje

<mgalloy@gmail.com> wrote in message
news:1170101297.922961.279850@q2g2000cwa.googlegroups.com...
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>
> Mike
> --
> www.michaelgalloy.com
>

Subject: Re: .sav format
Posted by [Paolo Grigis](#) on Tue, 30 Jan 2007 15:36:15 GMT
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> IDL_Savefile class in IDL 6.1 that can do a lot of this for data .sav
> files anyway) and it is strictly forbidden to examine code .sav files.

Do we also need a license for doing science? After all we are trying
to reverse-engineer the universe... let's hope the copyright expired
100 years after Galileo's death ;-)

Ciao,
Paolo

>
> Mike
> --
> www.michaelgalloy.com
>

Subject: Re: .sav format
Posted by [Michael Galloy](#) on Tue, 30 Jan 2007 17:40:51 GMT
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On Jan 30, 6:21 am, "Haje Korth" <haje.ko...@nospam.jhuapl.edu> wrote:
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I don't understand that either. Maybe apply for the license before
doing the work? (I'm not a lawyer either.)

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> IDL as my tool of the trade) and I don't really understand this legal mumbo
> jumbo (nor will I ever intend to understand it). Therefore I stay away from
> using sav files and use any of the other numerous file formats that are
> cross platform, cross program compatible.

Yes, I seldom save anything in .sav file formats. IDLdoc has the
ability to examine a .sav file and produce a small report of the

contents, but uses IDL 6.1's IDL_Savefile class to do so.

Mike

--

www.michaelgalloy.com

Subject: Re: .sav format

Posted by [JD Smith](#) on Tue, 30 Jan 2007 17:58:11 GMT

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On Tue, 30 Jan 2007 09:40:51 -0800, mgalloy@gmail.com wrote:

> On Jan 30, 6:21 am, "Haje Korth" <haje.ko...@nospam.jhuapl.edu> wrote:
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> I don't understand that either. Maybe apply for the license before
> doing the work? (I'm not a lawyer either.)

I think it was just a way to "grandfather in" Craig's work, which occurred before they had such an explicit policy.

If you, like me, dislike closed and protected data formats (by the DCMA, no less!), do let ITTVIS know. I mean, even Microsoft is being forced to consider "open" XML formats for Word files, by government agencies who refuse to be locked into data types over which they have no control.

The ability to share data and use it in a variety of different ways is fundamental to the progress of science. I use SAV files personally since they are so convenient, but I will not distribute them, and I always assume they have little long-term archival value. That, to me, diminishes the value of IDL and its default file format. Luckily, there are many other types of open, standard formats to choose from (FITS, HDF, etc.). None offer the convenient mapping to IDL variables/pointers/etc., but at least they can be read back in in 20 years.

JD

Subject: Re: .sav format

Posted by [Craig Markwardt](#) on Sun, 04 Feb 2007 07:04:09 GMT

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"mgalloy@gmail.com" <mgalloy@gmail.com> writes:

> On Jan 29, 1:49 pm, JD Smith <jdsm...@as.arizona.edu> wrote:

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> original poster wanted documentation of the .sav format (presumably so
> they could write their own software).

The documentation of the format is unencumbered by any license other than Creative Commons.

Craig

--

Craig B. Markwardt, Ph.D. EMAIL: craigmnet@REMOVEcow.physics.wisc.edu
Astrophysics, IDL, Finance, Derivatives | Remove "net" for better response

Subject: Re: .sav format

Posted by [JD Smith](#) on Mon, 05 Feb 2007 17:58:07 GMT

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On Sun, 04 Feb 2007 02:04:09 -0500, Craig Markwardt wrote:

>

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The "license" does seem to indicate that *anyone* needs permission to create a tool to read .SAV files, whether or not they have agreed to an EULA:

"Non-RSI supplied software that reads or writes files in the IDL Save/Restore format must have a license from Research Systems explicitly granting the right to do so. In this case, the license will be included with the software for your inspection. Please report software that does not have such a license to Research Systems, Inc."

They haven't yet wielded the DMCA hammer, but I don't doubt that they would if they felt it necessary. There is a reverse engineering clause in the DMCA, but I'm not sure to what degree it applies:

<http://cyber.law.harvard.edu/openlaw/DVD/1201.html#f>

I for once don't see the point in so jealously guarding a format: it's a perfect way to ensure it never sees wide use.

JD

Subject: Re: .sav format

Posted by [Haje Korth](#) on Mon, 05 Feb 2007 18:27:47 GMT

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JD,
one reason for guarding the format is obvious. The sav files allow an IDL license to be embedded. If one were to figure out how this is done, one could probably extract that license and inject it into any other sav files. I don't use IDL run time licensing so I don't see much use in this. However such action would clearly illegal and would warrant guarding the format. If the variables were stored in a separate file format than code+license, reverse engineering the variable save files wouldn't be such a delicate issue. My guess is that storing variable data was not the primary reason for creating the sav file format.

Cheers,
Haje

"JD Smith" <jdsmith@as.arizona.edu> wrote in message
news:pan.2007.02.05.17.58.05.570514@as.arizona.edu...
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>

Subject: Re: .sav format
Posted by [JD Smith](#) on Mon, 05 Feb 2007 20:46:12 GMT
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On Mon, 05 Feb 2007 13:27:47 -0500, Haje Korth wrote:

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I don't get it... is there something in the SAV file which enables IDL licenses? Not in any SAV file I've ever made. I thought runtime licenses were just like normal licenses.

JD

Subject: Re: .sav format

Posted by [Haje Korth](#) on Mon, 05 Feb 2007 23:02:36 GMT

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What I was referring to is Embedded licensing, which is produced if you choose "Licensed IDL sav file" in Project options. You need the development kit license for this (I don't have one so for me the option is greyed out). For example, demo.sav has an embedded IDL license. It will run as long as you want (no demo mode timer) without presence of any IDL license.

Embedded licensing has the advantage that you can provide your customer with a product without them having to buy a runtime license. The runtime license is embedded in the sav file itself together with your code. Hope this makes more sense.

"JD Smith" <jdsmith@as.arizona.edu> wrote in message
news:pan.2007.02.05.20.46.12.386954@as.arizona.edu...

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Subject: Re: .sav format
Posted by [David Fanning](#) on Tue, 06 Feb 2007 15:42:11 GMT
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Haje Korth writes:

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> license to be embedded.

I think the more obvious reason is that ENVI consists
of IDL save files. :-)

Cheers,

David

--

David Fanning, Ph.D.
Fanning Software Consulting, Inc.
Coyote's Guide to IDL Programming: <http://www.dfanning.com/>

Subject: Re: .sav format
Posted by [Guillermo](#) on Tue, 06 Feb 2007 19:04:09 GMT
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On Feb 6, 8:42 am, David Fanning <d...@dfanning.com> wrote:

> I think the more obvious reason is that ENVI consists
> of IDL save files. :-)

Hold on! Excuse my ignorance, but do this thread and the thing of the
'reverse engineering' mean that anyone having the right tools (eg. the
company proprietary of the language) can retrieve the source code from
a code.sav file?? Sounds scary...

Guillermo

--

Guillermo Castilla (PhD)
Foothills Facility for Remote Sensing and GIS
Earth Science Building, room 904
2500 University Dr. NW
Calgary, AB T2N 1N4
<http://homepages.ucalgary.ca/~gcastill>

Subject: Re: .sav format
Posted by [Haje Korth](#) on Tue, 06 Feb 2007 20:00:47 GMT
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Sure the idl code can be recovered, just like you can disassemble any executable file. You won't recover the variables names but you can see the logic of the code. The question is more whether its worth the effort. I would be curious in seeing how it's done but asking myself whether I would waste my time on it, the answer is absolutely NO. What's the sense? Even the ENVI routines are in the end just implementations of publicly available algorithms.

"Guillermo" <gcastill@ucalgary.ca> wrote in message
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>
> --
> Guillermo Castilla (PhD)
> Foothills Facility for Remote Sensing and GIS
> Earth Science Building, room 904
> 2500 University Dr. NW
> Calgary, AB T2N 1N4
> <http://homepages.ucalgary.ca/~gcastill>
>

Subject: Re: .sav format
Posted by [JD Smith](#) on Tue, 06 Feb 2007 23:44:29 GMT

On Tue, 06 Feb 2007 15:00:47 -0500, Haje Korth wrote:

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> news:1170788649.657637.173590@l53g2000cwa.googlegroups.com...
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> algorithms.

I wouldn't be so sure. Long ago I used to run IDLSPEC, an IDL benchmark site. To ensure people didn't "game the system" I added a little checksum to the data, and distributed the routine in a .sav to prevent peeking. I got an email one day with this section of the code as I had written it, line by line (well, different capitalization and block elements, but anyway). It's in there. Variable names, function calls, etc.

Does anyone aside from ITTVIS use .SAV as some form of proprietary binary distribution channel? It's sad that all this protectiveness of their "compiled binary" format may limit the utility of .SAV as a binary data format.

JD

Subject: Re: .sav format
Posted by [JD Smith](#) on Tue, 06 Feb 2007 23:45:39 GMT
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Aha, thanks. The IDLVM has pretty well killed that business model, yes?

JD

Subject: Re: .sav format

Posted by [Haje Korth](#) on Wed, 07 Feb 2007 13:10:08 GMT

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JD,

That depends on what functionality your code relies on. The VM has some restrictions such as the EXECUTE function not working. If your code is not affected by the restrictions and the VM splash screen does not represent an eye sore to you, the VM has indeed replaced embedded or runtime license. I personally do not know anyone working with embedded licensing.

Cheers,
Haje

"JD Smith" <jdsmith@as.arizona.edu> wrote in message
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> explicitly granting the right to do so. In this case, the license

> will be included with the software for your inspection. Please

> report software that does not have such a license to

> Research Systems, Inc."

J.D., RSI can claim whatever it wants, but legally they have no control over users who do not hold an IDL license.

> They haven't yet wielded the DMCA hammer, but I don't doubt that they
> would if they felt it necessary. There is a reverse engineering clause
> in the DMCA, but I'm not sure to what degree it applies:

Since IDL save files (with data only) are not encrypted or scrambled in any way, they are not covered by the anti-circumvention provisions of the DMCA. Furthermore, since the data is (presumably) *your own*, you have your own authority to grant permission to extract the

information from the file.

- > I for once don't see the point in so jealously guarding a format: it's a
- > perfect way to ensure it never sees wide use.

A good point!
Craig

--

Craig B. Markwardt, Ph.D. EMAIL: craigmnet@REMOVEcow.physics.wisc.edu
Astrophysics, IDL, Finance, Derivatives | Remove "net" for better response

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- > waste my time on it, the answer is absolutely NO. What's the sense? Even the
- > ENVI routines are in the end just implementations of publicly available
- > algorithms.

It can be done. I did it. I had a legit reason at the time, which was to recover some routines whose source I had lost... but then it became a challenge in its own right. The format was not particularly difficult to decipher: it was almost a direct translation of IDL structure into a byte-code format, with special records that described variables, commons, etc. However, since then, I am led to believe that RSI has encrypted save-files with code (although I haven't checked).

Craig

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Craig B. Markwardt, Ph.D. EMAIL: craigmnet@REMOVEcow.physics.wisc.edu
Astrophysics, IDL, Finance, Derivatives | Remove "net" for better response
