Subject: Philosophical Question about NAN
Posted by David Fanning on Mon, 17 Nov 2008 14:58:54 GMT
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Folks,

I've had a couple of run-ins lately with NANs and I wonder why routines like TOTAL and MEAN don't have the NAN keyword set to 1 by default. Why does the user have to set it?

I understand the argument that the NAN capability was added as an afterthought (or more likely when someone standardized the NAN bit pattern), and so the functionality was added as an optional addition that enhanced the function rather than changed it. But really...is there a reason why it is not the default now?

One could argue, I suppose, that having a program stumble over a NAN alerts you to its presence in your data. That is useful, certainly. But, typically, once I add a NAN keyword to my code, I don't know (nor do I or care) if the argument has NANs. Is this lazy programming on my part?

I am just wondering whether not setting the default value of the NAN keyword to 1 on routines like TOTAL, MEAN, et. al is the functional equivalent of not setting the default values of the COLOR and BITS_PER_PIXEL keywords to the PostScript device to something useful by default. That is, an act of negligence on the part of the manufacturer.

What say you?

Cheers,

David
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David Fanning, Ph.D.
Fanning Software Consulting, Inc.
Coyote's Guide to IDL Programming: http://www.dfanning.com/
Sepore ma de ni thui. ("Perhaps thou speakest truth.")