
Subject: Appending to Shapefile Woes

Posted by [DavidF\[1\]](#) on Thu, 23 Aug 2012 21:49:19 GMT

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Folks,

Since I wasted a couple of good hours on this today, I thought I would note it for posterity. I have a new program, cgShapePointFile, that can write a shapefile filled with one or more points as individual entities. An arbitrary number of attributes can be associated with the points.

There was no trouble creating the initial file, but I wanted to be able to append points to this file, as needed. I ran into a interesting problem that took a while to solve. I was opening the file initially like this:

```
shapefile = Obj_New('IDLffShape', filename, /UPDATE, ENTITY_TYPE=1)
```

The UPDATE keyword opens the file for writing, and the ENTITY_TYPE keyword opens it for point data. But, alas, if you open the file like this when you are trying to append to the file, the "entities" in the file get wiped out! When you try to find out how many entities are in the file (so you can get the entity index for the appended entities right), the file always reports zero entities!

The secret is to remove the ENTITY_TYPE keyword if you want to append entities to the file:

```
; Open the shapefile for writing point data.  
IF appending THEN BEGIN  
    shapefile = Obj_New('IDLffShape', filename, /UPDATE)  
ENDIF ELSE BEGIN  
    shapefile = Obj_New('IDLffShape', filename, /UPDATE, ENTITY_TYPE=1)  
ENDELSE
```

I didn't find this documented anywhere, obviously. :-)

Cheers,

David
