
Subject: Re: contouring algorithm

Posted by [davidf](#) on Fri, 13 Jun 1997 07:00:00 GMT

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Joerg Frauendiener writes:

- > I am wondering whether it is possible to obtain some information about
- > the algorithms used in the various routines that come with IDL. I am
- > especially interested in the algorithm used in the CONTOUR procedure. I
- > would like to know how the points are determined through which the
- > contours are drawn and also how accurate they are.

Take my word for it, Joerg, you really **don't** want to know this.

I doubt that there is anything much harder to do than to get a computer to draw contours through a data set. There are probably 100 "right" ways to do it, all giving completely different results. If you get bogged down in this morass, you may never again see the light of day.

My advice is to always keep in mind that graphical visualizations are abstractions of the real data, not the real data itself. This way to don't get attached to the visualizations and begin to think they are "real". Check your results against the real data, always, and maintain a sense of healthy skepticism about everything you "see". This applies as much to surface plots as to contour plots.

Cheers,

David

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Coyote's Guide to IDL Programming: <http://www.dfanning.com>

IDL 5 Reports: <http://www.dfanning.com/documents/anomaly5.html>
