Dear NetPosters:

 I was going to follow up to another post but I can't figure out
how to use this newsreader. I've got a few (many) things I want to get
off my chest before the day gets started.

 First: I believe the version management from RSI is extremely
shoddy. This last change to v3.1 is only the latest incarnation. It
is absolutely not done in the software world to deprecate functions and/or
make major changes in existing functions in the space of a minor version
change, leaving the user-base high and dry. In fact, real software
software developers (e.g. StatSci) leave deprecated functions around for
years, perhaps forever, and have a section in the manuals for them.

 I feel that developments in IDL are not user-base driven, in fact
I can't divine their motivation sometimes. Specifically, I think this
round of dealing with the contours is more like a way of coming up with
quick fixes to deal with a barrage of user demands. I might suggest that
RSI open up the process and establish some sort of feedback mechanism so
that big chunks such as contouring could be dealt with right. There are
other programs around that do really nice contours (I have references),
and these concepts could be put in. I for one am willing to carry on
e-mail (not Usenet) correspondence to this end.

 I think that IDL-Notes should go a bit lighter on tooting their
own horn. There actually is life after marriage if it should come to that
(I found that out). Dealing with these problems is more like a relapse
for a chronic degenerative disease, a more serious problem in my opinion.

 I've run into similar problems with phone support, but being as how
I was going through a jerk phase, I was bugging them (demo problems, etc.) but
they let me know about it. I had a job a while back on telephone support
for a software shop, it's tough and I was no damn good at it, but anyway..

 IDL, at first glance at the demo to the unitiated does seem loose,
especially to the Macintosh-trained eye. Once when the demo script hung
and I had to manually close the window, the comment was, "is IDL always
buggy like this?". Of course you readers and I know how easy it is to
write Macintosh programs but the widgets aren't tight in IDL (this may also
be the OpenWindows, Motif, etc.). We really need Macintosh drawing/image
tools a la Image-NIH. Has anyone used LIKEN?

 The version management has seemed to disintegrate since v1.0 --> v2.x.
It seems like the v2.x --> v3.0 step was not a major version change, on the

same order as v1.0 --> v2.0. They should have bumped the subversions. The
v3.0 --> v3.1 step seems like a sleazy way to get people into a higher level
of service (cost) and realizing that people don't buy .0 versions. Come on,
we're more sophisticated than that. BTW, I'm not objecting to the cost of
IDL. I wish I could help them out more, but I'm under my own constraints.

 I just don't think that software development tracks and management
cost problems should be too intertwined. Software such as this _is_ the
user-base, I think a more open approach to costs and developments would
be welcomed by the community. At this point, let's see a 1, 2, or 5-year
plan. I've always thought IDL was hot, ever since I bought into it in 1985
on a MicroVax. I used to think I was the only one using it (I was the big
expert), now I don't have time for such foolishness.

 OK, what do you think? Hey, RSI: keep it small, local, responsive.
Don't sell out to the big marketers, we forgive you for being harried.

    Love,

    Phil Turet