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Subject: Top 10 IDL Requests

Posted by [davidf](#) on Sun, 16 Jul 2000 07:00:00 GMT

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Hi Folks,

I was teaching an IDL course at RSI this past week and had the opportunity to do a bit of intelligence work on behalf of this newsgroup at the annual RSI picnic on Thursday. Besides the usual volleyball and Frisbee, some of us sat around and talked shop. Sigh...

I'll get a life later, but I thought you might like to know the IDL 5.4 beta is do to go out in the next week or so and they are signing up testers. If you would like to participate, you can contact the IDL beta program at [idl\\_beta@rsinc.com](mailto:idl_beta@rsinc.com).

I would especially encourage those of you who want more math functionality in IDL to do so, because that seems to be one of the themes of this release. Apparently the new math guy they hired recently has been busy. I think Craig in particular should have a look at the new curve fitting routines.

There are other things that should warm the heart of any regular IDL newsgroup reader. For example, a completely rewritten SPAWN command for Windows will be warmly embraced. Not only can you now get the results of the spawned command back (the way you have always been able to in UNIX), but you can also use the NOSHELL keyword to avoid the ugly DOS window popping up all the time. And J.D. will appreciate the new relaxed structure rules that will allow anonymous structures (with similar fields) to be concatenated.

And, as often happens, the biggest changes under the hood get short--shrif in the marketing hype. But the fact that the Windows version of IDL now supports LARGE data files meant a four-month effort to work-around Microsoft's very restricted I/O layer. But this will be a godsend for those of you working with those 40 GByte image files. :-)

One of the people I ran into at the picnic was the new VP of Software Engineering. After we were introduced and it was pointed out that I was, uh, the person who wrote "that book about IDL" the VP gave me his e-mail

and phone extension and encouraged me to submit my top 10 IDL requests to him personally.

Wow! You don't get an opportunity like this every day. :-)

Not wanting to hog the spotlight, however, I thought I'd have a little contest and see what the rest of you want. I've already reserved the top spot for taking the Table Widget out in the field behind RSI and shooting it, but I'm open to suggestions after that.

I do feel strongly that the TV command could be made a whole lot smarter. I find I can't even use it anymore if I want to write device/version/decomposed\_state independent code. Certainly you can use my TVIMAGE or Liam's IMDISP program, but shouldn't something as simple as this be built into IDL? And please, God, don't EVER take my 24-bit image though a color table, no matter what silly thing I've done to the color decomposition state. :-(

(One thing that seems obvious from reading the list of new features in IDL 5.4 is that in today's employment marketplace it is futile to assign good engineers to fixing old technology. They will just go down the street and work for someone else doing something a whole lot sexier for twice as much money. It's reality I guess, but it seems a shame too. RSI is certainly not the only software company suffering from the current state of affairs.)

So, here is the deal. If you feel inclined to submit a couple of ideas to this newsgroup, I will collect them and submit them personally to the VP. I'll even follow up and make sure he has, uh, read them. :-)

Please restrict yourself to a paragraph or so about why you think your suggestion is a good idea. Suggestions can either be fixes to something currently in IDL, or requests for future capabilities. Items that make it to the top of the list will be written with some wit, intelligence, and humor. Items at the bottom of the list will be written with a lot of whining. I reserve the right to edit submissions if I think it is unintelligible to the average computer dolt.

That's it! No prizes or anything. Just a chance to be heard by someone who can maybe make a difference. In today's world, that's about all we can ask. :-)

Cheers,

David

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David Fanning, Ph.D.

Fanning Software Consulting

Phone: 970-221-0438 E-Mail: [davidf@dfanning.com](mailto:davidf@dfanning.com)

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

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