
Subject: Re: Top 10 for old farts
Posted by [davidf](#) on Fri, 28 Jul 2000 07:00:00 GMT
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Joseph B. Gurman (gurman@gsfc.nasa.gov) writes:

- > So I still propose that as long as there are lower-priced,
- > full-featured student licenses, there should be lower-priced,
- > fewer-featured research associates' licenses. The "pro" license can
- > include all the wonderful features those with time to use them
- > efficiently want.
- >
- > Seriously (once again), it would be nice to be able to pay for a
- > base license, and add on, at extra cost:
- >
- > 1. objects
- >
- > 2. QuickTime support (per codec)
- >
- > 3. other features requiring RSI to pay license fees (GIF?)

I suppose it is inevitable, as IDL grows ever larger, that we begin to pay for add-ons. RSI has already taken this course with DataMiner and the Wavelet Toolkit. But I am dead set against this proposal, Joe.

First of all, objects are integral to the programming language. There will always be a few of us old scientists who find it more pleasurable to write programs than to spend yet one more bleary-eyed night peering through the peep-hole of a telescope. (Maybe this is all done through a computer with IDL programs these days, for all I know.) It would be a shame if people couldn't use the programs we write.

In fact, I haven't written a program for a client in the past year that hasn't included at least one object, and sometimes it's easier to write the whole thing as an object. PSCONFIG, a program on my web page that is widely downloaded and praised by people who use it, is an object program, although I would guess 95% of the people who use it don't know that. Certainly most of the programs I add to my library in the future will be object programs, although I'm not fool enough to tell anyone that, since just the word itself is enough to send shivers up the backs of many IDL users. :-)

I've frankly pretty much given up the idea of writing

an object book because (1) it is so damn hard to write a book, and (2) after going to all that trouble I thought only about a dozen people would buy it. (And I will hear from all 12 today, probably, pleading with me to reconsider, so desperate is the need for decent documentation.)

The lack of good instruction is probably what is holding the adoption of objects back. I know you say you don't need them. The people in my course last week were adamant that they didn't need to know any widget programming, too. But in the end all they cared about was widget programming and increased interactivity with their data. I submit that objects have the same ability to transform how we work with our data.

Yes, there is more up-front cost. And I'm completely sympathetic with those scientists who feel they don't have time to figure it out. If objects are unfamiliar to you, it is just about impossible to learn about them from the material that RSI gives you. But in the end they do more for your science than what you are using now. That must be the bottom line. Someday, inevitably, you are going to be working with objects. Maybe you won't write them. But you sure as heck don't want to pay extra for them, either.

Cheers,

David

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