
Subject: Top 10 for old farts

Posted by [Joseph B. Gurman](#) on Fri, 28 Jul 2000 07:00:00 GMT

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In article <MPG.13e947d0f2a8c1bf989b70@news.frii.com>, davidf@dfanning.com (David Fanning) wrote:

Joseph B. Gurman (gurman@gsfc.nasa.gov) writes:

> And I'm very serious about the point above. I may be stuck knowing
> a
> bunch of old farts (not, actually), but maybe one person in twenty
here
> actually uses the object capabilities when given a choice.

Oh, I don't doubt your figures at all. I just think it is a shame, given how easy objects are to use (and I am **not** talking about object graphics now) and how significantly they could change the way your write programs.

But I'm old enough to remember how we had to bring all you old farts, uh, excuse me, scientific programmers, along with widgets, too, so I still hold out hope. :-)

Cheers,

David

David -

I guess you've seen the responses from Mark Hadfield and Luis Alonso on the overhead involved in using objects. A colleague at another institution e-mailed me to say:

I think your views represent those of many of us older folks trying to use IDL. I've messed with objects in IDL enough to realize they will probably destroy what little productivity I seem to have left as a scientist. Just give me the data arrays--hopefully processed into a scientifically useful form--and let me get on with the science part.

(I believe this "older folk" is about 49, or 137 in programmer years.)

The real beauty of IDL for scientists is *_not_* its ability to do everything in the most elegant way possible, but in its capability to do 90% of what we want *_very fast_* and to do more elegant things on a

time-invested basis (e.g. really pretty plots; 3D shaded, rotating surfaces; the ability to save such projections as objects).

For most scientists, at least astronomers, the three things they spend most of their time on are:

1. writing proposals
2. writing proposals
3. writing proposals

Doing research and writing appears sadly comes in fourth; dealing with silly bureaucracies fifth; and exploring the programming capabilities of IDL, perl, tcl, somewhere in the nth category.

And it's the grants we get with our proposals (occasionally) that pay for the IDL licenses.... and maintenance.... and training.... and even ;-) books.

The grants also pay for graduate students' and programmers' time, which can be leisurely (and no doubt worthwhile-ly) spent on object programming in IDL.

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?)

BTW, the two people here (one Ph.D., one graduate student) who do use objects, and use them well, are both on vacation now, so they're not around to contradict me (heh, heh).

Also BTW, I asked only for `_flames_` to be directed to `/dev/null`, as I recall.... and David never flames anyone.

Best,

Joe

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| Joseph B. Gurman, NASA Goddard Space Flight Center, Solar Physics
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