
Subject: Re: Top 10 for old farts

Posted by [Paul van Delst](#) on Mon, 31 Jul 2000 07:00:00 GMT

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David Fanning wrote:

>
> Pete Riley (uk2@linuxfan.com) writes:
>
>> Why not replace all the direct graphics calls with object
>> equivalents? You should be able to say:
>>
>> PLOT, findgen(10)
>>
>> and you get an object window (maybe plus the print, modify,etc...options
>> that are in insight). There should have been a transparent migration to
>> object graphics.
>
> This was exactly RSI's original intention. But, alas, things
> don't always go the way we plan. And with object graphics the
> vagaries of programming projects were even more pronounced
> than usual. It was almost as if Coyote himself were put in
> charge of it.
>
> Let me recount the story as I remember it. (Which is to
> say, this may not be how it **really** happened. But it is
> the way I tell the story.)
>

[snip...]

> To make a long and painful story short, it took a LOT
> longer than one year to do the work. In fact, it was
> nearly two years by the time IDL 5.0 left the barn.
> Customers were screaming, maintenance revenue was
> dwindling, new license sales were off as customers
> were waiting for the big new release that was right
> around the corner. And expenses were up sharply as
> more programmers were hired to keep up with the
> larger and larger work load. I think everyone in the
> building was putting in 60+ hour weeks. In short, it
> was one of those really tense, trying times that
> all businesses go through occasionally.

This reads like the classic "bad planning from the start" case study one finds in books about software project management, i.e. how **not** to do it (read ch8 of Steve Maguire's book "Debugging the Development Process". The chapter is titled "That Sinking Feeling" :o). Throwing money and people at a problem when things get tight - sheesh. Is this

still an accepted mode of operation at software houses (anyone see the PBS special on Netscape just before they went open source? My god, wot a zoo.) ?? I realise that there are other pressures on a business but seeing that this type of modus operandi is still kicking makes the rapid movement of people in the software programming/design/engineering industry more understandable.

All that said, I think IDL is still a top-quality product. I remember when I was first looking into getting some sort of data visualisation software, the two choices were IDL or Matlab. Matlab was *so* much cheaper than IDL until you realised you had to buy all these toolkits to achieve the same functionality. After that the only reason Matlab was still competitive (\$\$-wise) was because the uni I worked at had a site license.

> Oh, oh. We were going to go to angry customers and tell
> them "OK, you paid us a lot of maintenance money for
> two years and didn't receive anything for it, but here
> is your great new system. And by the way, it is 10 times
> slower than the old one." It was going to be a hard sell,
> to say the least. :-)

Ahhhhh. When IDL v5 was released, the first thing I did was convert some of my code to use OG. My god was it slow. Also, when I started up Insight I figured that it had to be the showcase of what IDL OG had to offer. That all pretty much turned me off OG - and thus IDL objects - in general. The latter was a bad decision I know, but my "to-do" list kept getting bigger during the 2-week period I spent playing with IDL OG.
:o(

anyway...

paulv

P.S. Who's this Coyote? I guess I should follow the off topic links on DF's website and read about him again (it's been a while).

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