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Subject: Re: Origin of IDL

Posted by [Joseph B. Gorman](#) on Wed, 30 Aug 2000 04:38:23 GMT

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In article <MPG.14142c9b23fb9527989c03@news.frii.com>, davidf@dfanning.com (David Fanning) wrote:

> David Fanning (davidf@dfanning.com) writes:

>

>>

>>> So, is IDL an unique language or is it developed from another??

>>

>> IDL is based on FORTRAN. Or, wait a minute, maybe it was

>> BASIC. No, I remember now, it was definitely APL. Or,

>> something like that. :-)

>

> Let's just say if you work with it for a while, it \*seems\*

> like a really unique language. :-)

>

> Cheers,

>

> David

Lo, in the beginning there was darkness, and David Stern said, "Let there be AE." And David knew PL/1 and APL and FORTRAN, and he looked upon AE and saw that it was good. And there was morning and there was evening on the first day.

On the second day, David Stern said, "Let there be SOL." And lo, it too, was terribly cool.

On the third day, David Stern said, "Let there be IDL." As to whether it is gnarly, there is a Usenet group to decide thereof.

\*\*\*\*

AE was used originally to analyze data from an Atmospheric Explorer satellite, and SOL, to analyze data from Orbiting Solar Observatory 8 (c. 1975). David Stern developed both while working for the Laboratory for Atmospheres and Space Physics at the University of Colorado. He then got the entrepreneurial itch, and formed RSI. The first version of IDL I saw (for RSX-11 on PDP-11's) was in late 1979. It had a lot in common with SOL.

If anyone knows the prehistory of AE, we can probably regard it as apocryphal and write reams of commentary on it.

