Subject: Re: java vs. IDL
Posted by vern.stark on Tue, 07 Nov 2000 08:00:00 GMT
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I have over 15 years of IDL experience and have also done a limited
amount of Java over the past few years.   IDL has an excellent base of
software you can tap into to do math, plotting, image manipulation, etc.
It's also easy to code GUIs once you get the hang of it. In IDL, I can sit
down with a text file full of data and have it plotted in a matter of
minutes. The last time I tried to do that in Java, I found the file I/O
very limited. Just reading in and parsing the data from the text file was a
pain.

   We've also found IDL excellent for software prototyping. In a few
months we put together a GUI application that does a lot of file I/O, image
manipulation, and handling of user input via GUIs. It started out as
roughly 10,000 lines of code and we've been adding to it and tweaking it and
it's grown to roughly 20,000 lines of code. We've toyed with the idea of
porting this GUI application to Java, but have stayed with IDL since it has
all the functionality we need and has served us very well so far in the
development of this application. The IDL library really facilitates image
manipulation, equation solving, plotting, etc. It would probably take a lot
more than 20,000 lines of Java code to have the same functionality.

   In short, the functionality of IDL allows one to quickly analyze and
visualize data or do software prototyping. We feel we can get our data
analysis done and our software prototypes up and running faster in IDL than
we could in Java. If your goal is data analysis or software prototyping, IDL
is hard to beat. If your goal is to have a nice piece of object oriented
code, you might choose Java. At the risk of stereotyping, I'd sum it up by
suggesting that if you're a data analyst you'll probably prefer IDL and if
you're a computer scientist you may prefer Java.

Vern

<reardonb@my-deja.com> wrote in message news:8tuodt$g0m$1@nnrp1.deja.com...
> Lately I have been learning java to address a number of modeling issues
> where I work. I have also been playing around with IDL for about 3
> years. I do not claim to be a master of either. It seems to me,
> however, that Java offers many of the same features that IDL offers
> (cross platform operability, a constantly growing library of functions,
> easy to implement gui's) along with some definate advantages (it's
> free, it's easier to learn, larger user/programmer base, completely OO)
> It makes me wonder whether IDL will be able to hold its own in a Java
> world. Could anyone out there with experience in both languages care to
> spectulate or at least enlighten me as to why IDL will always have a
> niche?

> Thanks.
> Brian Reardon
>
>
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