
Subject: Re: IDL 5.4 Stability

Posted by [Liam E. Gumley](#) on Fri, 10 Nov 2000 08:00:00 GMT

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Med Bennett wrote:

> Well, I'm still using 5.0.2, circa mid 1997. It's hard to know what the
> "best" version for one's particular feature needs and stability is. Maybe we
> should have a vote as to what the best version of IDL is, taking into account
> both features and stability. Since I haven't (I hate to admit it) gotten into
> object graphics yet, I don't consider that functionality to be important
> right now.

My experience with writing IMDISP

(<http://cimss.ssec.wisc.edu/~gumley/imdisp.html>) taught me it can be frustrating when you try to support multiple versions of IDL (IMDISP supports IDL 5.0-5.4). Little things keep creeping in which make it harder to write version-independent code. For example, the SIZE function keywords `n_dimensions`, `dimensions`, `type`, `tname`, and `n_elements` introduced in IDL 5.2 make it much easier to determine array information. Decomposed color handling is also much improved in IDL 5.2, as is the PRINTER device support. Also, once I made the switch to square-bracket array syntax, I could never go back to the pre-5.0 parentheses.

For my work-related programming, which is mostly done on UNIX boxes, I use IDL 5.3 routinely and find it to be reliable, stable, and worry-free. The transition from IDL 5.1 to 5.2 to 5.3 over the last few years was painless AFAIK for all IDL users on these systems. I have installed IDL 5.4 on a couple of NT PCs and it works fine, but we need to decide how to handle GIF images before we can upgrade our UNIX systems to 5.4.

Cheers,

Liam.

<http://cimss.ssec.wisc.edu/~gumley>
