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Subject: Re: Object epiphany: A new way of building widget applications  
Posted by [Mark Hadfield](#) on Wed, 04 Apr 2001 23:18:04 GMT  
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"JD Smith" <jdsmith@astro.cornell.edu> wrote in message  
news:3ACBA2EF.493F496F@astro.cornell.edu...

> Martin Schultz wrote:

>>

>> With almost a week delay, I finally get around to release the first  
>> version of a new class of IDL objects: the MGS\_GUIObject hierarchy.

>

> I think it only fair to let people know that I tend to shy away from  
> distributed code with people's initials in the name. I know, it sounds  
> stupid, but I'm not sure I'm the only one. It seems to be a reasonably  
> common practice here (Craig, you listening?), but one which I think  
> might be best to avoid, for the following reasons:

As one of the pioneers of this trend (he says modestly) may I present the  
opposing viewpoint:

It's namespace management, pure and simple. It's desirable because IDL lacks  
built-in facilities.

> 1. It conveys a sense of ownership or heavy expectations that are  
> perhaps unjustified, and not intended. (Can I \*change\* such a routine,  
> should I feel guilty, etc...).

Well, it's not \*meant\* to convey this.

> 2. It takes up space in a name which could perfectly well have been  
> used for more descriptive characters.

Unfortunate, but true.

> 3. If the routine/class/function/widget name following, e.g., JDS, is  
> so ambiguous as to require the initials to discriminate it from another  
> of the same name, either the routine/class/function/widget isn't that  
> useful, or its name is entirely too inspecific.

Didn't you have a "queue" & a "stack" class on your WWW page? Well. someone  
did. I have written a stack class too. I call it "mgh\_stack". It's a fairly  
inspecific class, so I give it a suitably inspecific name and add my  
initials on the front. What should I call it,  
"this\_is\_a\_different\_stack\_from\_jds\_one"? Or  
"general\_purpose\_stack\_with\_whizzy\_get\_and\_put\_methods"?

> And the way I think  
> about it, since IDL doesn't do any shadow checking (but cf. idlwave!),

> the \*best\* routine with a given generic name will rise to the top.

The one that rises to the top is somewhat unpredictable. (Well, strictly speaking it's predictable because you can control your PATH, though I have noticed recently that Windows 2000 expands path entries preceded by + in \*reverse\* alphabetical order, which caused me some grief.) The thing is, I don't remember exactly what is where on my PATH and I don't like relying on the search order. I have been bitten by duplicated routine names a number of times: CALDAT and CREATE\_STRUCT are two I can remember.

> 4. The author(s) can always be found in a proper documentation header.

Sure, but it's not about claiming ownership, it's about namespace management.

But hey, there's room for all points of view. If you don't prepend your initials and I do, then our routine names will never clash.

Is there any other MGH out there?

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