
Subject: Re: IDL Help Gone Missing

Posted by [thompson](#) on Wed, 17 Oct 2001 14:52:19 GMT

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"Richard G. French" <rfrench@wellesley.edu> writes:

> At least you got a CD! I've just learned today that both the Mac and
> Alpha versions are now dead - I got e-mail from RSI about the
> demise of the Mac, but they did not inform me of the demise
> of the Alpha. Has anyone else gotten official word that the Alpha
> version is dead? We've invested a lot in these systems!

> Does anyone want to place a bet on what platform is going to be
> the most secure for IDL, or is it a question of slow attrition?
> I want to avoid Linux - too many patches to be applied every few
> minutes - and we can't do our work on Windows - so what flavor
> of Unix box is likely to have IDL on it in five years? Any
> advice?

> Dick French

I am also extremely upset that support has been dropped from Alpha computers, which is what I'm using right now to post this message. I don't use Macs, but I also found them dropping that platform extremely disturbing.

When I write software, it is not meant to be run simply on our own platform, but also for the worldwide solar physics community. A big advantage of IDL has been that it will run on all the platforms that are in use within this community. I wasn't too upset about RSI dropping VMS, even though that platform is still used by some solar physics projects. VMS is obviously dead, and the VMS sites I'm aware of had frozen themselves to older versions of IDL even before that announcement, because of backwards compatibility concerns. However, Alpha workstations are still used by a significant part of this community, and will be for some years to come. As RSI keeps dropping platforms, we as a community will have to consider very carefully whether IDL still meets our needs, or should we move to something which we have more control over.

I particularly didn't appreciate RSI making this announcement just after I put in a maintenance contract for a whole bunch of alpha workstations. Do you think they intentionally waited until after the new government fiscal year began?

In conclusion, I think dropping Alphas was a very short-sighted decision. I intend to write a letter to RSI in the very near future.

William Thompson

Disclaimer: The opinions expressed here are my own, and do not represent NASA or any other organization.
