
Subject: Re: Message From RSI VP of Engineering
Posted by [John-David T. Smith](#) on Wed, 17 Oct 2001 04:25:54 GMT
[View Forum Message](#) <> [Reply to Message](#)

Liam Gumley wrote:

>
> "Matthew Powell" <mpowell@rsinc.com> wrote in message
> news:9qhr6c\$3to\$1@news.rsinc.com...
>> As VP of Engineering and IT at Research Systems, I would like to elaborate
>> on the posting from our CEO. I have been monitoring the newsgroups and
>> understand that this is an issue that many of you are very passionate
> about.
>> So, I felt it important to post this message to all of you.
>>
>> As with most issues there is more than meets the eye with our recent
>> announcement regarding our decision not to support Mac OS X. The most
>> important one being that in our desire to be the best scientific
>> visualization package we can be, we had to shed some unprofitable
> platforms
>> in order to focus on the core platforms which make up the bulk of IDL
> sales.
>> Our initial desire was to deliver a fully native OS X solution that
> included
>> native widgets and a redesigned Aqua user interface. Once we realized the
>> costs associated with doing that, we knew we could not support the
> Macintosh
>> platform profitably. Whether we like it or not, in this day and age,
>> profitability is a requirement for which we are held accountable.
>>
>> Now for the good news. In subsequent discussions with Apple they have made
>> us aware of a commercial X-Windows library for OS X. We are in the
> process
>> of evaluating it for use in a native Unix/X-Windows implementation of IDL
>> and ENVI for the Mac OS X platform. This would solve many technical
> issues
>> for us and allow us to continue to support the Macintosh platform both
>> natively and profitably, as it would leverage off our other Unix/X
>> platforms. The only thing this does not accomplish is providing IDL with a
>> new Aqua UI and widget set.
>>
>> While I cannot promise this will be successful and that we can take it to
>> market, we are very encouraged by our early results working with the
>> library. We hope to have some solid results upon which we can base a solid
>> commitment to our customers in the very near future. We certainly
> apologize
>> for any inconvenience this may have caused you and your colleagues and ask
>> that you give us an opportunity to complete our investigation and try to
>> come up with a solution that will meet your needs and retain you as a

>> satisfied customer of RSI.

>

> Any comment from the community on whether this suggestion would meet the
> needs of Mac OS X users? (That is, an OS X version of IDL that uses
> X-Windows for direct/object graphics and user interface). Granted, you don't
> get the fancy Aqua user interface, but do IDL programmers really care, as
> long IDL is running on their Mac? For cross-platform development purposes, I
> would think a more UNIX-like version for the Mac would be a good thing.

Though not an IDL mac-user per say, I would regard this as only a partial solution, not necessarily because the loss of an Aqua interface would inhibit sales (which of course it would) and confuse some users (imagine a Mac person looking at a Unix file-finding dialog -- filter, what filter?), but more importantly, X11 is not a standard component of OSX, but instead has been grafted on after the fact in various ways. RSI would need to bundle X11 with IDL and require running some X11 server, along with a Motif toolkit. This coexistence of the native graphics subsystem with X would probably severely hamper draw speed, both for widgets, and even for images/plots. It also might have some big consequences for OpenGL driven Object Graphics (support for which, as RSI previously bellowed from the hallways, was one of the striking new benefits available with OSX).

So while I think this would be better than *nothing* (and while they're at it, they might as well recompile for LinuxPPC), I believe it falls far short of a drop-in replacement, and would probably end up looking a little cruffy even for us cruft-hardened IDL wonks.

JD
