Subject: Re: Is ANA dead?
Posted by hcp on Thu, 18 Oct 2001 09:17:54 GMT

Given the existence of this thread and the parallel one
"Any cross-platform IDL alternatives?" I'm going to boringly re-direct
everyone to the list I keep of free alternatives to IDL that I keep [1] at
http://www.met.ed.ac.uk/~hcp/idletc.html

It doesn't mention anyting that hasn't already been hashed over already,
but I can confirm the general feeling that R and Yorick are the most
useful alternatives. Of course, neither is anything like a direct
replacement. As I see it, the pros and cons are as follows -- I also list
some "features" which are neither clear pros nor cons, but should be
taken into consideration.

 R
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  Pros
  -----
* Actively cross-patform
* Developing fast
* large group of developers
* good system for add-on packages and linking C/Fortran code
* Huge number of plotting and statistics features
* HDF5 support (http://www.met.ed.ac.uk/~hcp/hdf5_1.4.7.tar.gz)

  Cons
  ----
* Slow to execute (compared to IDL and Yorick)
* No geographical maps
* Image processing and display limited.
* NetCDF support poor (only works with very old files)

  Features
  ----
* GPL license
* Linguistically unique, with an odour of lisp.

Yorick
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  Pros
  ----
* fast execution (almost as good as IDL)
* zoomable plots
* NetCDF support

* A one-man effort: clear and simple design philosophy.

  Cons
  ----
* A one-man effort: development is slow.
* No HDF5 support
* Mostly for Unix (I think there are Mac/Doze ports but I don't know
  how actively they are used)

  Features
  ----
* rather old-fashioned (static) C/Fortran linking. It works OK, though.
* Lingustically like C with array operations -- the latter are more flexible
  and well-thought-out than in IDL.
* BSD-like license

Anyway, I hope this is of help to someone! I'm using R at the moment, mainly for
the HDF5 support. (Hello, RSI! HDF5! Sometime before 2004 would be good :-))

All the best

Hugh

[1] "Maintain" is too strong a word.

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