Subject: Re: IDL vs Yorick?
Posted by hcp on Mon, 07 Oct 2002 10:19:16 GMT

In article <3D9EEC29.A4C32728@astro.lu.se>, Ralf Flicker <ralf@astro.lu.se> writes:
|> At the risk of reiterating an old debate (if there was one), I
|> would like to hear people's opinions about [...] Yorick.
   [snip a few tests showing Yorick to be _more_ efficient than IDL]
|> I hope you don't mind rehashing the issue)

What me? No indeed -- I'm always game to re-hash this one. (See
http://www.met.ed.ac.uk/~hcp/idletc.html)

The observation that Yorick is faster than IDL is an intersting one, given
that the author of Yorick says in the Yorick FAQ:

"The commercial IDL interpreter is the only product I have seen which does
any operation faster than Yorick -- it's array indexing operations are
about 40% faster than Yorick's (see ./Yorick/include/test1.i). I don't
know how Stern does it."

For many purposes I really liked Yorick. I _particularly_ liked the way
the plots are zoomable and the way the postscript output is almost exactly
like the on-screen appearance. [Maybe IDL's object graphics are better than
direct graphics in this respect -- I have never learned object graphics.]

I didn't like Yorick's command line -- it has no editing facilities. You
can get these by running it inside Emacs, however.

Nowadays I'm using R (http://www.R-project.org) a lot instead of Yorick,
mainly because it has HDF5 support. However it is a lot slower than
Yorick or IDL for many purposes.

Neither R nor Yorick has built-in geographical mapping. This is a Really
Big Issue for us and the main reason why we have not (yet) told RSI where to
stuff their pricing scheme.

The "fourth man" to be considered is octave (http://www.octave.org/).
This does have HDF5 support and the crap (gnuplot) graphics get slightly
less crap if you go to the trouble to build it with plplot
(http://plplot.sourceforge.net/) support. However, I have not yet played
with octave enough to get a feel for how solid it is.

Hopefully, this kind of discussion will encourage RSI to drop their prices,
but they seem to have the Microsoft mentality of jacking the prices up and

hoping that their customers are too comfortable to look for alternatives.
Right now, we might be................

Hugh the Free Software Zealot

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