
Subject: Re: IDL authors - get cracking!

Posted by [David Fanning](#) on Tue, 19 Aug 2003 14:30:28 GMT

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Richard G. French writes:

- > David Fanning, Liam Gumley, and Ron Kling have all written great IDL guides
- > that show how to do such things in plain old IDL. I'd be happy to pay for
- > new editions of these books that include examples for 'the rest of us' who
- > have never done OOP, who have listened patiently to David's comments
- > "EVERYTHING is EASY when you use objects!" but have not yet been convinced.
- > If iTools really does make OOP a lot easier, and is a true improvement on
- > LiveTools (which I always found too slow to be useful), then I'm willing to
- > contribute to the wealth of this trio of illustrious authors, or others, who
- > will take the time to show us how to take advantage of these new
- > capabilities.

I can't speak for the final version of iTools. I've just returned from a short vacation and haven't yet installed the official version of IDL 6.0, but I'm afraid I'm going to have to defer all questions to Liam and Ronn. In fact, I'm embarrassed to say that even though I have written a LOT of object programs I find the whole iTool system really, really difficult to understand.

I'm sure this has nothing to do with iTools, and everything to do with me, but I'm embarrassed to say it took me the better part of a week just to figure out how to change the color table of an image with `ilimage`. As for the rest of it, well... I'm not sure I have enough brain cells left after a week of hiking at high elevations to really figure out how it all works.

I can't figure out who the iTool system is written for. Clearly RSI is totally committed to object graphics. Maybe that is justified. In any case, I think that train is rolling and it will be hard to stop. And maybe there are a whole lot more users than I believe there are who will be satisfied with the functionality of the out-of-the-box iTools themselves. But how many of RSI's users will take the next step and build a tool of their own?

I think the number of people in the IDL community with the wherewithal to do this is a pretty short list. And before I saw the iTool system I would have bet some pretty big money I would have been on it. But clearly this system is going to pass me by. Unless someone is willing to offer me big money to learn it, I just don't think I can muster either the time or interest on my own.

I think, frankly, that *most* of the people on the list who are going to work with this software already work for RSI. I think it must be a system built for them to build applications with. And in that context, it probably does make sense. It is, truly, a slick system.

It is clear to me that someone spent a LOT of time thinking about this, and a LOT of time building what we have so far. (And I am sure more is coming.) If you can figure out how it works (and I am not sure this is entirely possible from the documentation I have seen so far [NOT, I remind you, the official release]), then I think it will be an access point for building substantial object graphics applications.

I just don't think this system is meant for the programmer/scientists who make up (I should think) the bulk of RSI's customer base. But I guess time will tell. :-)

Cheers,

David

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