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Subject: IDL authors - get cracking!

Posted by [Richard French](#) on Tue, 19 Aug 2003 13:04:30 GMT

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I've just installed IDL6.0 and I've spent a day reading the iTools documentation. There's clearly a lot to learn. What I have not found in the documentation from RSI are:

1) simple tutorials that go through a full example of using each of the iTools on a specific set of data and illustrate the full cycle of events from starting things off to saving the results in a file. I have in mind something like a training session an hour long on each iTool so that you can be given a particular task: "Make a nice plot of this ascii data file and save it as a postscript file, with the following axis labels and legends", for example. If such tutorials already exist, I missed something, and would appreciate it if someone would point out where they are.

2) Similar tutorials for developing iTool applications. I've read the iTool Developer's Guide, which has throughout comments such as "This example is just to show you how incredibly easy it is to develop an iTool application", but I am still having trouble figuring out how to put all of the code fragments together into a real working example. I admit that I have never written an IDL object program, and I am willing to believe that using iTools is, as RSI puts it, a "gentle introduction" to OOP. However, I could certainly benefit from a simple example that includes all the steps from beginning to end of making a new iTool or modifying one that exists.

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.

While we're on the subject of iTools, I'd like to hear comments from those of you who have succeeded in figuring out how to use them productively. What cool things can you do? What features are missing?

Thanks! and let us know the publication dates of these new books, David, Liam, and Ron, so that we can put in our orders now.

Dick French

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