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Subject: Re: modifying itools (ivolume)  
Posted by [Rick Towler](#) on Mon, 24 Nov 2003 20:28:39 GMT  
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"David Fanning" wrote in message...

O.K. David, I will finally bite.

> I don't know, as I've said before in this newsgroup,  
> who these tools are written for.

Do you remember when you started using IDL? I don't know how it was sold to you, but I remember being sold by the visualization capabilities. "You can plot your data with one simple command!" And 15 other calls to add a legend and colorbar and text that you then had to twiddle with for 20 minutes to get just right... But it still was an impressive tool and compared to the competition it was (IMO) superior.

Obviously you aren't hanging around the University of Colorado campus too much these days. At the UW, a war is being waged by software companies for the hearts and minds of students. Insightful, Mathworks, RSI, Wolfram, Microsoft, SAS, ESRI... The battle to grow the user base is here. And today, when I try to sell a new student on IDL, it isn't so simple:

Rick> O.K., you read in some data, you have your PLOT there,  
now add a few XYOUTS... there! Now hit F5.

Student> Cool! But that title needs to be moved a bit,  
and the legend... I'll just use my mouse...

Student> What is wrong, the title isn't moving.

Rick> Go back to your program. Change this to 0.63 and  
that to 0.925. Compile. Run.

Student> Well that is a bit better... But what about that...  
And why can't I use the mouse?

Haje> Why does the text look like crap?

Student> And why are the colors all funny?

Student> Why is it all screwed up when I print it?

Student> Forget this. I am going to use <insert easier  
to use application name here>

There are a number of applications that do basic scientific viz easier/quicker than IDL. IDL is still a very powerful visualization package but most of it is out of reach for the new/casual IDL user. The same user RSI is trying to recruit to it's army of loyalists.

Enter iTools.

So while I can't answer your question from RSI's perspective, I see the iTools specifically targeted at the new or casual IDL user. Give them a

reason to keep using IDL and investing time in learning the language. As that investment grows, so does RSI's revenue.

I also think it is too early to debate whether or not the iTools will ultimately deliver on this goal. I am cautiously optimistic, but that is just my personality :)

So bash iTools if you must, but make sure you view them from a few different angles before you let loose.

-Rick

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