On Thu, 20 Nov 2003, JD Smith wrote:

> The reality is IDL has little exposure to Linux distribution internals
> -- it's fairly self-contained.

Some IDL apps use the X-server, which in my experience has been the
biggest source of instability, mainly because new systems tend to come
with hardware that is too new for the software to be fully debugged, but
I gather that some cheap 2rd party boards using name-brand chips cheat
on certain specs to cut costs and are simply not up to demanding
applications.

> It does link to glibc, which is
> certainly a point of exposure to the distribution, and the
> loader/linker libs, which are very stable (by definition). It uses
> gcc in a minor way with MAKE_DLM, but otherwise has little reliance on
> the actual flavor of Linux it is being run on. I'd recommend that RSI
> just defines the basic standards, e.g. glibc>2.3.2, gcc> 2.9.x,
> ELF-binary format support, etc., and compiles a list of distributions
> which meet those standards. It should be a fairly large list. The
> support issues might be more problematic, but I think this is the
> correct way forward. The Linux Standard Base project might also be
> interesting: http://www.linuxbase.org/.

Within a given distro, not all video hardware has robust X servers.
Would the support issues be reduced if, in addition to the above
basic standards, RSI compiled a list of support graphics hardware
and X servers?

If companies like RSI find it too hard to support all linux versions
that satisify certain basic standards, then it is time for the academic
community to organize a distribution targetted at the needs of
science and specifically tuned to serve as a platform for IDL, matlab,
commercial compilers, data aquisition hardware, etc. This could be
handled by contracting with a commercial vendor under the guidance of
a working group with reps from the above vendors and the user community.
I can envison the day when such a linux distro is part of your society
membership (and included on the DVD that contains the monthly newsletter).

It would be much simpler if we all went out and purchased Apple machines.

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