Subject: Re: Announcing GDL 0.7, now with PLOT command
Posted by George N. White III on Sun, 14 Mar 2004 18:49:17 GMT
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On Tue, 2 Mar 2004, H C Pumphrey wrote:

> I shall begin testing GDL on some real-world code .... roll on contour!
> And remember that a few years ago, the main implementation of S was S-Plus,
> while R was a toy. R has now taken much of S-Plus's mindshare. OTOH, octave
> has stagnated as a clone of a very old version of Matlab. Which will be the
> main implementation of IDL five years' time: RSI's or GDL?

There have been open-source APL and J interpreters, but my impression is that commercial interpreters are more widely used.

Octave wasn't just a clone, it introduced some ideas (structures) that became part of real Matlab. Now Matlab has incorported ideas from octave and many other extensions to the orginal language. R addressed fundamental problems with S-Plus in student lab environments on multi-user machines (it allowed you to limit the memory a user could allocate so one user couldn't monopolize all the resources of a large server). I suspect this meant that a large number of S-Plus users ported software to R for use in courses and then found it suitable for "every day" use.

I started using R for statistical summaries and reports because it has excellent support for dealing with missing values as well as the statistical tools. Recently I've been doing more things in R because they can be used by more people than if they are done in IDL, but GDL could reverse that trend.

The grad students and recent PhD's I encounter generally have experience with Matlab. A few have used R and a very few have used IDL. GDL would need some compelling advantage to get it into eduational institutions before it can have the level of success of R.

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