
Subject: Re: IDL on the Net (ION)

Posted by [Michael Wallace](#) on Wed, 15 Dec 2004 07:27:21 GMT

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> Sure. Hang in there and thanks in advance for the additional
> information. We'll figure something out...

This won't help your current situation, but just thought I'd offer up a couple of spare cents and some lessons learned when we tried to work with ION-Java. At one time we were planning on using ION-Java because at the time we knew of no other way to get dynamic IDL online. The first drawback, before trying to work things through the tunnel broker, is that we are a strictly JSP/Servlet shop. Applets should be avoided like the plague! ;-) Needless to say, ION-Java has this fascination about being applet only, so it was hard to try to fit pieces into our servlet paradigm.

We did try to force ION-Java into our holes and we eventually got some things working, but it was always a hassle. We gave up on ION-Java and instead have the web server spawn off IDL processes to execute the little IDL tasks (typically making plots) we need. I wrote up some Java classes to handle transmitting data to IDL via shared memory and creation of the IDL process. Once the IDL process completes, we just serve the file(s) IDL created back up to the user on the web site.

The nice things about this approach:

- 1.) No extra servers/ports to worry about/configure
- 2.) No extra ION-Java licenses
- 2a.) You only need a single IDL license on the web server
- 3.) Pretty fast* (at least faster than our experiences using ION-Java)

* In doing some small tests (~50,000 X/Y pairs plotted), I could send numbers from Java to IDL via shared memory and have a basic plot done in just a couple seconds. An equivalent plot through ION-Java seemed to take many long seconds.

The only drawback I know of is if you really need to have Java applets, there's really not much choice in the matter. There's probably a way to work directly with IDL from an applet, but I'd guess that it'd be a lot more pain than it's worth to get past all of the security restrictions and such. If you're not required to have applets, you'll save yourself a lot of pain just by communicating with IDL directly. At least that was our experience.

-Mike
