Paul Van Delst writes:

> This problem reflects more on the lack of intuition/general intelligence of the end users
> than linux.

Oh, don't even get me started on this depressing topic.

When I first started teaching IDL classes I estimated
about a third of the people taking a class would probably
not be successful using it. That number these days is
considerably higher. Well over 50% it seems to me,
and some days it seems much higher than that.

It's not really a matter of intelligence. Most of the
people in an IDL class have advanced degrees in physical
sciences. It is something else, and I can't really put my
finger on it. (I used to think it was because they were forced
to use LINUX computers, but now I know better.) They
don't understand programming at all. They don't really
know what a variable is, they don't know how to type
a program, they don't understand how windows work on
their computers. Really basic stuff I would have thought
you learned as a physical science undergraduate. But
if so, they have forgotten a lot of it.

My wife bears the brunt of this usually, but I don't
know how these people do their jobs! But it is clear
to me that IDL is not going to be of much help.
I feel sad about it most of the time. I really don't
know what to do about it.

> If I recall, DF's Munich Adventure was at some sort of observatory? ESO,
> right? Now, astronomer types can be a strange lot, but I reckon he (DF) has embellished a
> bit here for the sake of a good anecdote.

Have you *EVER* known me to embellish an anecdote. I think not!! :-)

> If not, it sounds like the hiring practices at
> ESO need, uh, some review.

It's not just ESO. It's every place I have been lately.
It's what happens, frankly, when you start teaching
intelligent design in science classes. Or maybe
what happens when you let Computer Scientists

teach computer programming classes, I'm not sure.
But someone, somewhere is not getting the message
across. And scientific programming is suffering
because of it.

Cheers,

David

P.S. Let's just say I would be thinking about putting a lot of money
(if I had any) in Chinese software companies. :-)

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