Subject: Re: Linux Question
Posted by Paul Van Delst[1] on Wed, 16 Feb 2005 23:28:23 GMT
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David Fanning wrote:
> 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.

Ah, I know what you mean. When I first came ot the US ('93) I was amazed at the number of graduate students (in science fields) that didn't know how computers worked and had never programmed at all. How can that be?!? Bizarre. Didn't everybody learn about registers, CPUs, ALUs, Math Coprocessors, etc. in their Experimental Methods classes?

Even now, I know people than can do fully polarimetric scattering and radiative transfer calculations in their head but bugger me if they can understand floating point numbers (so 0.1 isn't really 0.1? Huh?) I thought everbody learned that stuff.

> It's not just ESO. It's every place I have been lately.

yeah, I know -- my comment was mostly mucking about (apologies to all the ESO folks that read this newsgroup :o)

> It's what happens, frankly, when you start teaching
> intelligent design in science classes.

uh oh... watch it. If there's one Enlightenment idea that never made it across the pond, that's it. All followups to talk.origins.....

> 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.

Maybe it's because writing code/getting results is *too* easy nowadays? (Thanks, IDL. Sheesh. :o) And maybe the ease of writing code that produces copious amounts of data contributes to the generation of errors too subtle to stand out?

Anyway.....

paulv

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Paul van Delst
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