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Subject: Re: IDL alternatives?

Posted by [patterso](#) on Wed, 31 May 1995 07:00:00 GMT

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Charles Cavanaugh (cavanaugh@uars1.acd.ucar.edu) wrote:

: I will grant you that lack of an executable creator tool is a major deficit, but  
: it is my opinion that of all the other deficits you mentioned, none are problems  
: for competent, thorough programmers and engineers.

I agree. But not everybody using IDL is a trained programmer.  
Tools like these would help.

: Maintaining poorly written  
: code is a problem in every language, and nothing (again in my opinion) specific  
: to IDL makes this problem worse.

Agree. But some of the most powerful features of IDL  
also allow you to write bad code very easily if  
you are not careful. I wasn't trying to single out IDL in  
this respect. I know it is easy to write bad code in C or  
whatever language.

: And as far as a lack of an integrated environment,  
: this is almost a given in the UNIX world.

I love these sorts of comments :) I moved into Unix from VMS and  
when I complain that I miss some of the integrated tools that  
VMS had, I always get "that's the way it is in Unix" answers.  
Just because they don't exist, doesn't mean there isn't a need  
for them. Your Fortran 90 and Lisp examples show that :)  
(But I don't want to start any "my OS is better than  
your OS" flame wars here)

: IDL is also the best tool I've ever used for fast data-visualization prototyping. I have  
: used Fortran and NCAR Graphics, but what took me a day with those languages takes me  
: only a few hours with IDL.

Agreed. But because it is so easy to quickly develop applications,  
it also means that many "quick hacks" become part of bigger and  
bigger programs. I would guess that most IDL applications  
are not developed under strict software control, etc, but just  
"grow".

: Sorry about my long diatribe, but I'm still not convinced that IDL is the black  
: sheep of the computer language family.

I don't think IDL is the black sheep either. But I don't necessarily agree that because it has the same short-comings as other languages, that these short-comings should be accepted.

At the very least, I think IDL needs a more useful debugging environment.

Tim Patterson

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