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Subject: Re: IDL alternatives?

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

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In article <3qh748\$kc2@nntp.Stanford.EDU>, zowie@banneker.stanford.edu (Craig DeForest) writes:

> Well, I got tired of buggy behavior from my old copy of IDL (3.5.0 for  
> Ultrix) (it's dumping core again), and called RSI to get a price on  
> the update to 4.0. I've been using IDL for about six months, enough  
> time to be excited by the functionality, and horrified at the 1970s  
> programmer interface.

I am probably opening myself up for a resounding flaming, but I just could not help myself . . .

I read in various places (Mr. DeForest's above posting being one) about how IDL's API is so-o-o-o horrible. I do not understand this. To me, IDL seems like a Fortran 90 - Pascal morph, with dynamic typing, automatic variables, automatic garbage collection and a useful event-driven paradigm all thrown in the mix.

OK, so maybe you have to specify a continuation character, but in C you have to suffix lines with a ';'. To be honest, I would rather put a '\$' at the end of the few lines I continue than put a ';' at the end of nearly every line. But here I am digressing. (Let's not get started on RSI's business practices.)

My point being : it aint LISP, it aint object-oriented, but it does well (mostly) what it was designed to do.

But maybe I am in the dark about this whole 1970's interface (I have only been programming since 1989), and I am always open to change. So if you (or another API slammer) could show tangible evidence that IDL's programming interface is a lava lamp or mood ring compared to C's video-conferencing or big-house-with-no-backyard, I will take back all that I have said, and jump on [insert language X here]'s bandwagon.

Charles

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Charles Cavanaugh		"Words are very unnecessary, they can only do harm"
cavanaugh@ncar.ucar.edu		- Depeche Mode
NCAR Boulder, CO, USA		"Facts all come with points of view"
My opinions		- Talking Heads

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