Subject: Re: Best platform for IDL 6.2?
Posted by Richard French on Wed, 16 Nov 2005 02:54:55 GMT

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On 11/15/05 9:33 PM, in article MPG.1de4485574f9d83c9896b6@news.frii.com,
"David Fanning" <david@dfanning.com> wrote:

> Bas writes:
>
>> I was curious what platform seems to be the best for running IDL. I
>> have read some of the topics and it seems some platforms have problems.
>>
>> Currently I run a Apple with OS10.4. I was thinking of upgrading to a
>> Sun or SGI workstation. I just wanted some opinions and any
>> experiences you have had with IDL on your platforms.
>

I have both a Sun and a Mac, my work is mostly IDL-related, and I vastly
prefer the Mac to the Sun. I should say that I have to maintain the machines
myself. Upgrading the OS on the Sun workstation is a several-day chore,
keeping up with security patches has been a nightmare (downloading a patch
kit sounds easy, but not when you get lots of error messages objecting to
inconsistent previous versions of patches that have been dutifully
installed), and the machine is no faster than my G5. OS upgrades on the Mac,
while not painless, are much easier to perform. Software libraries on the
Sun vary from OS version to OS version, and this has been a nightmare for us
when we try to share code from one researcher to another when we are using
different versions of the Sun OS.

For our work, it is important to be able to do UNIX stuff along side of PC
applications, such as Word, PowerPoint, Excel, etc. I tried mightily to
install the Sun clones of these but failed miserably. On the Mac platform,
you can use the native PC/Mac versions of these programs alongside of the
unix applications.

A significant fraction of our research team has migrated all of our C and
Fortran routines from our separate Sun workstations to the Mac, and we do
our Matlab and IDL work on Macs as well.

Having said this, I have found some IDL quirks on the Mac that have been
annoying. I've managed to work my way around all of them so far, although
David probably has a broader range of Mac experience with all of the classes
he teaches and the more varied set of IDL routines he has written.

Simply put, I think you need to look at the whole package of what you want

your machine to do, rather than how IDL deals with things, unless you know of a specific bug that would drive you crazy when using the Mac.

FWIW, I don't use fancy screen savers, an iPod, or any glitzy gizmos on my Mac, although I do like the keyboard! - what I like best about it is that I can use Unix right along with other applications, and that I can maintain it reasonably easily by myself.

Dick French

Dick French