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Subject: Re: Question about IDL books

Posted by [Benjamin Hornberger](#) on Tue, 07 Feb 2006 19:21:51 GMT

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pimpk24@hotmail.com wrote:

- > I was wondering if the books on idl out there - specifically David
- > Fanning's and Liam Gumley" present most of their information from the
- > perspective of using the GUI developers environment or the Command
- > line to run IDL.
- >
- > I use the command line / Unix to run IDL on a mac, and would thus
- > prefer more examples of how to do things in this environment.
- >
- > Any insight appreciated
- >

To add a "neutral" person's opinion: I think both books are fine for beginners (in IDL and pretty much also in programming). As was mentioned before, Liam's book is more structured, while David's is more tutorial / how-to style.

I'm not sure what you mean by "GUI developer's environment". If you mean the GUI builder, none of the books covers it, but most people advise against using it anyway. If you mean the IDL development environment vs. the Unix command line, none of the books makes much of a difference because it's not necessary. The IDLDE includes a command line which behaves like the naked command line, and most of the stuff around is just for convenience for the people who prefer clicking the mouse rather than typing a command.

Both books concentrate on command-line / procedural IDL use for the most part and cover GUI development in the end (anyway, you should know how to use IDL on the command line before trying to build a GUI). As for GUI development, I think Liam's intro is easier to understand for the beginner, but David includes more of the little tips and tricks which come in handy from time to time.

My group owns both books, and I found both of them useful for learning IDL. Now I don't need them much any more. For advanced IDL programming, Ronn Kling's books are quite good (and pretty much the only ones out there as far as I know).

Hope that helps,  
Benjamin

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