Subject: Re: Introducing FL
Posted by George N. White III on Tue, 04 Apr 2006 23:28:05 GMT
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On Tue, 4 Apr 2006, Paul Van Delst wrote:

> Y.T. wrote:
> [...]
>> At my place of employ I can get Matlab for free (i.e. site-license) but
>> I'd be horribly worthless with Matlab because I'd be spending my time
>> re-re-relearning when and where to place a comma or a semicolon and
>> what was the syntax for a linear fit again? So I use GDL, because that
>> allows me to get something *done*. As in *now*.
>
> That, of course, is very important but....
>>
>> (I work for a federally funded research facility and you, the
>> tax-payer, are expending my salary. Do you really think you're getting
>> your money's worth out of the deal if I spend my time learning this
>> years fad-language?)
>
> Yes, actually (being a taxpayer who also happens to work at a federally
> funded research facility). Learning new programming languages is not unlike
> learning new spoken languages (except easier IMO). It broadens one's horizon
> to make different solution methodologies available. In some cases they may
> help your work, others not. I would be a foolish taxpayer if I expected you
> to not expend time learning new stuff that may make your job easier and more
> efficient. And, of course, there's the "personal improvement" aspect -- ya
> gotta be happy at what you do. :o)
>
> paulv
>
> p.s. I would love to get a matlab site license - even though I barely know
> enough matlab for the "hello world" chestnut. Until then, learning Ruby and
> Python while I wait for Fortran2003 compilers will have to do. :o)

I also work at a government funded research facility where we have had Matlab longer than we have had IDL (since the days when Cleve Moler worked for Ardent). I have coded a number of core algorithms we use in both Matlab and IDL as a sort of crib sheet for post-docs (many have worked with Matlab, few with IDL). For my work, Matlab suffers in comparison to IDL because (like S+) it encourages you to use doubles, but (unlike S+) it lacks missing value support which is important for the things I do where doubles are appropriate. If I needed sparse arrays I wouldn't mind the doubles so much, but these days I'm more interested in finding tools that support the OpenEXR 16-bit floating pt. format.

All these languages handle 75-80% of the problems I have without

straining. Where they differ is in the interests of the user community and in the ability to handle the other 20-25% of the problems without asking for money to upgrade my hardware.

--
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