
Subject: Re: Introducing FL

Posted by [JD Smith](#) on Tue, 04 Apr 2006 19:38:05 GMT

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> I use IDL now because we have a large base of IDL code and it
> would be a pain to translate it all to python or anything else.
> While I appreciate IDL's capabilities, I often cringe as I
> reinvent something that python has had built in for years. On
> the other hand, I cheer as I see RSI slowly adding features that
> most other languages have always had (see for, example,
> `command_line_args` and persistent command line history that appear
> in IDL 6.2). For basic usability and libraries, IDL just doesn't
> stack up. For specialized libraries and graphics, IDL is great
> (iTools aside, that is!).
>
> It looks like Python-IDL may be a wonderful way to mix the two,
> but I'm a little afraid to try IDL widgets with it (well, ok, a
> lot afraid!)

So it's not really a replacement, since it requires a functioning IDL
(or GDL?) around to communicate with.

There are two basic issues at hand, as Craig has been arguing:

1. Is it feasible to replicate even a small fraction of all the
MATH/WIDGET/OBJECT/GRAPHICS/3D/MAPPING/NUMERIC routines which RSI
has included in IDL?
2. Even if it is feasible, is it a good idea?

I tend to think the answer to both of these is "No", which puts me
squarely in the camp of migration rather than replication. If, as
Craig opines, we could create an IDL->XXX translator which works most
of the time, and allows legacy code like AstroLib to function
perfectly well, then we've managed some fraction of the battle. The
rest of the battle is to get functional replacements for most of those
weird little corners of IDL that none of us uses everyday, but every
one of us have used with great effect and amazement on rare occasion.

JD
