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Subject: Re: Introducing FL

Posted by [mmiller3](#) on Tue, 04 Apr 2006 15:08:23 GMT

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>>>> > "Y" == Y T <ytyourclothes@p.zapto.org> writes:

> You're aware of PyDL, aren't you?

Be carefull with the capitalization and overlap between TLAs and  
MLA - especailly when talking about "IDL".

There is PyDL, as in Python Interface Declaration Language  
([www.prescod.net/pytypes](http://www.prescod.net/pytypes)) which is a different sort of IDL.

There is PyDL, as in a plotting package inspired by the plot  
routine in RSI's IDL ([vingilot.org/pydl](http://vingilot.org/pydl)).

There is also a link on the PyDL page to pyIDL. It says it is  
based on PyDL "for IDL embedding in python, and has more  
functionality." At that page  
([www.its.caltech.edu/~mmckerns/software.html](http://www.its.caltech.edu/~mmckerns/software.html)), it says pyIDL is  
"based on Andrew McMurry's python-IDL"

Python-IDL ([www.astro.uio.no/~mcmurry/python-idl](http://www.astro.uio.no/~mcmurry/python-idl)) actually looks  
somewhat promising. It provides a python module that lets python  
code interact with an IDL session, as in

```
>>> import idl
>>> idl.ex('print, 1')
1
>>> idl.ex("a = 'Hello'")
>>> print idl.var.a
Hello
>>> print idl.fn.strlen("Hello")
5
```

> (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?)

As a (mostly) federally funded researcher, I had to learn IDL  
when I moved to the medical field where it is the norm. In my  
previous incarnation, python was by far the better choice because  
it is 1) open source, and 2) much more capable.

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!)

Mike

P.S. As I typed this, I discovered that iTools can be mistyped as iTrolls ;O

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