> And finally, with this proliferation of "almost-IDL" clones (FL, IDL,
> ANA, Yorick), I have to wonder why everybody has to re-invent the
> wheel (see above).  I see the GDL people meticulously toiling over
> basic functionality, and it makes me wonder: wouldn't it have been
> better to write an IDL-to-{Python,Ruby,Perl} translator, and get the
> existing well tested script environment for free?  And not only that,
> but Python for science seem about to really take off.  An infusion of
> well-tested IDL libraries into that community might be enough
> cross-fertilization to really get a non-proprietary version of an
> IDL-like language going strong.

Python has been set to "take off" in the astronomy field for about 8
years, and it just hasn't really happened.  In my view, it's just
inertia.  It took RSI 30 years to get to where they are, and they have
built up an impressively large (if ungainly and not exactly stylish)
bag of tricks.  Since their recent emphasis has been in areas where
most astronomy people I know don't have too much interest (point and
click data exploration), things may change in the next 5 years.  That
said, most people in this field are increasing their use of IDL now
(since prices have come down from quasi-unreasonable for the small
researcher).

JD