Subject: Re: IDL & iTools used as post-processor for other commercial software
Posted by mvukovic on Tue, 03 Oct 2006 14:56:38 GMT
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Kenneth P. Bowman wrote:
> In article <452189d6$1_2@marge.ic.sunysb.edu>,
> Benjamin Hornberger <benjamin.hornberger@stonybrook.edu> wrote:
>
>> To add some support for the poor guys at ITTVIS: I fully back Mirko's
>> statement -- not perfect but miles ahead of direct graphics commands to
>>   quickly create a graphic, do some *interactive* adjustments, add
>> annotations, print directly from the screen (with page preview!), and
>> save it in an editable form.
>>
>> The lack of acceptance for iTools in this group sometimes sounds to me
>> like the "can't teach an old dog new tricks" problem :-). Ok, everybody
>> has their own preferences, but I recommend everybody to give it a try.
>
> Actually, I am finding the iTools to be quite handy, but I can't say I
> love them (yet). They are very cool for doing 3-D interactive graphics.
>
> Off the top of my head, here is my current list of gotchas with iTools:
>
> 1. Despite several tries, I have never been able to produce any usable
> PostScript graphics from an iTool (either to a printer or a file). My
> only option is to capture really big bitmap files. Yuck. This is OK
> for giving talks, but not for published graphics. This is still a deal
> breaker, in my opinion.
>

I don't use post-script anymore since I started using iTools. They
produce decent (not as perfect) output for inclusion in other
documents. And that was the main reason why I used post-script before

> 2. Manipulating iTools programmatically is not too hard. What is hard
> is figuring what it is *possible* to do. I find myself doing
> trial-and-error pattern matching on the list of iTool IDs in the iTool
> hierarchy hoping that I am looking for the right keyword. The keywords
> often don't match the labels in the parameter lists.

I have not ventured there yet.
>
> 3. Many things are still obscure. If you start out with iMap, you can
> specify the GRID_UNITS keyword. But if you want to add a map to an
> existing iTool and do things in degrees? I'm still at the bottom of the
> learning curve on that one.
>
> 4. If my z-coordinate decreases upward (e.g., atmospheric pressure), I

> have to add a light at the *bottom* of the display in order to light the
> *top* of an isosurface. I suppose there is some logic to this based on
> the direction of the normals to the surface, but it is not user friendly.
>
> Cheers, Ken Bowman

I like the fact that in iTools the data is stored with the plot. So,
if weeks later, I want to tweak the plot, I open the file, and the data
is there.

What I miss in IDL (and what is present in spreadsheets) is the fact
that once I quit the IDL session, the whole history of how I went from
raw data to the plot is gone.

While I dislike Excel and the likes, they combine the raw data, the
processing and the output all in one file. In this day of cheap disk
space, all the extra stored stuff is not too bad. Of course, there are
data sets that are just too huge for such type of processing.

I think an environment like VIP (I have never used it), combined with
iTool-type-plots would fit the bill of an integrated data processing
environment.

Mirko