Subject: Re: IDL & iTools used as post-processor for other commercial software
Posted by Kenneth P. Bowman on Tue, 03 Oct 2006 02:19:20 GMT
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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.

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.

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