
Subject: Re: Interesting Rant

Posted by [greg michael](#) on Wed, 15 Nov 2006 15:03:17 GMT

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I've used IDL for about three years - I think that makes me a relatively new user, at least in IDL history. In my early experience with it, I was frequently frustrated by its incoherent design - especially the completely arbitrary (and awful) naming of built-in procedures (also that strange comma/bracket distinction for functions/procedures). But these are really only cosmetic things - once you've written something in a dozen lines that took a hundred in another language, there's no turning back.

The complaints about IDL loops seem to me to have missed the point - my old hoards of triple-nested loops with the inevitable bugs to be fixed around the end conditions have disappeared forever. You don't have to think about individual elements **ever**, until you want one. This is the single reason for me that makes it better than any other language I've used.

It's true the graphics are either ugly or awkward, and there are atrociously deficient functions like `read_ascii()` lying around, but with some experience you can overcome these, and the benefits of the array handling easily make it worth it. I like very much that you can make platform-independent code, too. Would be nice, of course, if a new version turns up one day with plots that look decent. Will have to come eventually - if not in IDL, then the next language. I'm not a dinosaur - I'd change to something better, but I haven't seen it yet.

regards,
Greg
