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Subject: Re: Interesting Rant

Posted by [Richard Edgar](#) on Tue, 14 Nov 2006 19:13:14 GMT

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Paul van Delst wrote:

>> Someone sent me a link to this interesting IDL rant this morning:

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>> <http://www.sccs.swarthmore.edu/users/07/sstvnc2/research/stupid.html>

>

> Hee hee. I thought it was pretty funny. I probably would've done

> something similar back when I was one of dem young whippersnappers

> (well, I would've if anything but Fortran was available....)

>

> Apart from the fact that some of the info was just wrong, the rant shows

> the writers lack of experience with programming languages in general. To

> say nothing of exiting college and entering the real world where being

> able to distinguish and effectively handle the differences between the

> the way things *should* be and the way they actually *are* are a

> definite plus.

If I were to write my list of IDL annoyances, I think mine would be somewhat different to this.

I'd comment that the first one, about 7/2 vs 7/2.0 is a place where I'd say that IDL definitely does the right thing. And comment 12 about comparisons contradicts the first comment (and seems to show a lack of understanding of floating point arithmetic).

Row-major vs column major is a silly point... you just need to know which way the language does it, and that's the end of the matter. And I'd dispute the bit about 'every other language in the history of mankind' too ;-)

There is some basis for the comments about the 'compiler' and need for recompilation. I'd say that this is due to a bit of bad nomenclature on IDL's part, since IDL is more an interpreted than a compiled language.

The complaint about inconsistency in how variables are passed to routines is fair enough. ISTR my encounter with this was based on passing a structure vs. passing elements of the structure. However, the passing method is irrelevant. All I should have to do is declare whether I intend to modify the variables or not, and whether they should be defined on entry. Something like INTENT(IN), INTENT(OUT) and INTENT(INOUT) would be ideal ;-)

Richard

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