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Subject: Re: Hello again, and iTools

Posted by [Michael Galloy](#) on Thu, 08 Mar 2007 22:52:05 GMT

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struang...@cantab.net wrote:

- > In short: are the iTools stable, usable and extendable enough to make
- > it worth my while to learn the whole application framework? Are there
- > any bugs or gotchas that will bite me if I try to build an application
- > more substantial than simple data viewers on top of the iTools base
- > layer? I like the provided viewers, but have found a few bugs down
- > among the details, and I am not yet convinced they are worth the
- > commitment. I can bang together a basic program from my old widgets
- > in short order, but most of what I am currently writing will be used
- > by non-programmers later, and it seems as if a program built around
- > iTools will be safer in the long run.

I think I'm slightly more optimistic about the iTools than most responses so far. (Full disclosure: I used to teach people how to program the iTools when I worked for RSI. So I have spent plenty of time trying to figure out how to do things with the iTools.)

But I still don't think it's for the faint of heart. Programming using them takes a commitment to learning their system. And even though it addresses many of the problems with LiveTools and Insight, in my opinion, it is not a "complete system" for application development yet. What is present right now, has been stable for me. I think the API is consistent and usable (if not complete or completely documented).

Besides writing examples, I have "upgraded" one real application from direct graphics to the iTools and it wasn't too bad. I got a lot of functionality very quickly. The result looks pretty nice, but is definitely slower. All the functionality that I wanted from the iTools was not there. In some cases, I used undocumented features (you get the source code for the iTools) and in other cases I used workarounds that were more or less unpleasant. I won't be looking forward to updating IDL.

In general, if your application is "like iPlot except for..." then programming with the iTools is probably a really fast way to get what you want. If it's not, then the answer is much more complicated.

If that didn't scare you off, I have a few (pretty simple) iTools examples on my website:

<http://michaelgalloy.com/category/idl/itools/>

Mike

