Subject: Re: Compiling IDL ... ever likey ?
Posted by Ken Knighton on Mon, 22 Jan 1996 08:00:00 GMT
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On the subject of compiling IDL, I thought I would just throw a little gasoline on the fire and see what happens:

Languages that compile to the host machine level are rapidly becoming obsolete and investing programming time into turning a very efficient pseudo-compiled, array oriented language like IDL into a true compiled language is a waste of resources that could be better used to improve other features of IDL. For example: I haven't heard anyone suggesting that JAVA be turned into a compiled language.

Computers are simply getting so fast and memory is getting so cheap and abundant, that a few cycles here and there or a little misuse of memory doesn't matter for the average application. On the other hand, programmers are not getting faster or cheaper; therefore, the payoff is bigger if time is invested in making IDL more programmer friendly.

IMHO, RSI should concentrate on making IDL a terrific application development platform so that serious applications can be developed for mass distribution. What IDL really needs is a very cheap run-time system license for MACs and IBM-clones, an option for compile time type checking, rapid application development tools, cleaner APIs for plotting and widgets, ...

If you need to do a calculation that requires looping and will take a while, and you need to do it over and over, day after day, week after week, then I agree, you need to use fortran or C. If this is the case, then it is worth the time that it will take to write a FORTRAN or C routine to do it and to use CALL_EXTERNAL to interface with IDL.

Sincerely,

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