
Subject: Re: IDL User Group Meeting Huge Success
Posted by [Mort Canty](#) on Fri, 17 Oct 2008 08:17:04 GMT
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It's morning here in Germany, David, so I get to be the first to thank you for a great summary.

Best

Mort

David Fanning schrieb:

> Folks,
>
> I thought you might like an update on today's IDL User Group
> meeting in Boulder. What a HUGE success! Kudo's to Harold Cline,
> Bill Okubo, and all the fine folks at ITTVIS for a wonderful
> day of exciting and stimulating presentations.
>
> The festivities actually started yesterday, when a dozen or
> so "early testers" of the new IDL 7.1 Workbench were invited
> to do a series of exercises in front of the IDL engineering
> staff. I was one of the "testers", and boy did they get
> an earful about my ideas for iTools! But not once was I
> told, "Now, hang on, Fanning, you are WAY out of line!"
> Instead, everyone wrote down my suggestions and seemed
> genuinely interested in those things that irritate the hell
> out of me about iTools.
>
> I can't tell you how unprecedented and refreshing this approach
> seemed to me. Imagine listening to what your customers like
> and don't like about your product. It was great. And after
> I finished ranting, I felt like I was heard, and--even more
> important to me--that the folks at ITTVIS really cared. I can't
> say I've converted into a big fan of the direction IDL is
> moving in, but I will say I am impressed with the people
> currently running the show at ITTVIS. I think they are
> doing some very, very important things right. So much so,
> that I've even decided to give iTools another chance. (Not
> that I have much choice, but I've signed an agreement not
> to give away any secrets. :-)
>
> Today was jam-packed with presentations, all of them
> excellent. Goodness, people do some interesting things
> with IDL! But even better than that was seeing in person
> some of my friends from this newsgroup. Ken Bowman was
> there, and Mark Buie. Kelly Dean, who is here occasionally,
> and with whom I have carried on numerous e-mail conversations

> over the years. Amara Grap of IDL Wavelets fame was there.
> Ronn Kling and Rob Dimeo, two of the best students I ever
> had in IDL classes were there, with IDL programs that put
> mine to shame. Vince Hradil, the young man who appears to be
> taking over my place on this newsgroup flew in from Chicago for
> the day, and I am happy to report you are going to be in good hands
> for a long time to come. David Stern even showed up, looking
> for a job, I guess, what with the current economic crisis
> playing havoc with all the money he made selling RSI.
>
> Lots and lots of fun.
>
> I'm going to be short-changing a lot of people here, but
> here were some of the outstanding highlights for me.
>
> Rob Dimeo has some amazing quantum mechanical visualizations
> that he runs in real-time on a honking Dell computer, that he
> claims is faster than the fastest Supercomputer in 1990. It
> was an impressive (if back-breaking to carry around in an
> airport) computer. Peter Messmer continues to up the performance
> of GPULib, using graphical processors to increase computationally
> expensive operations from 20-100%.
>
> Richard Azuah's presentation of how it took him only 3+ years
> to write an iTools application (6 months before he could write
> a line of code, I heard him say, as he basically had to re-write
> the entire set of documentation) not only confirmed everything
> I believe about iTools, but pushed it into the nightmare category.
> Richard is the only person I know, outside of ITTVIS, who has
> ever successfully written an iTool application, and my hat is
> off to him. I think we will all be writing iTool applications
> now that he has forged the way. ;-)
>
> (It was probably not a coincidence that when I asked an ITTVIS
> sales rep how IDL sales were fairing he said the real gain had
> been in software consulting. Yeah, I guess...)
>
> Ronn Kling demonstrated some amazingly good software for fitting
> ellipses in 2, 3, or N-dimensions(!), and *extremely* fast
> software for telling if a point (or, actually, as he demonstrated,
> MANY points) are inside a 2D polygon or 3D polyhedra or not. Very,
> very slick, but not surprising if you get one of Ronn's Christmas
> Cards every year. (I'm not clear where you can find these, whether
> on Ronn's web page or in the IDL Contrib Library on the ITTVIS
> web page. Maybe he can clear that up. I know I want to use these
> programs.)
>
> Finally, the absolute highlight for me was Eduardo Iturrate

> demonstrating how to use his Revolution IDL program. This
> program was mentioned here a year or so ago, but didn't make
> much of a splash at the time. It allows the user to quickly
> build a 3D graphics scene from stock "templates". Then, and
> this is the best point, you can save the IDL object graphics
> code to a file.
>
> I thought it was a neat idea at the time, and I downloaded
> it, but I was busy at the time and didn't follow up too much.
> I am *definitely* giving this program another look! OK, Eduardo
> is a master at the little keyboard short-cuts you need to know
> to move around in this program effectively, but this was the
> most amazing, spectacular demo of IDL functionality I have
> ever seen.
>
> The best thing about it is that it solves the number one
> problem with object graphics: it takes a DAMN long time to
> get even one object coded up, and there are at least 1000
> ways to do it wrong. With at least 999 of those ways, you
> see absolutely nothing on your display. So it is massively
> frustrating to learn how to code object graphics. (Ok, Ronn
> Kling's book Power Graphics in IDL helps. A lot.) But
> with this program, you can add an object in about 10 seconds,
> and 2 seconds later, you are looking at the IDL code that
> does it right! This will squash the object graphics learning
> curve practically flat.
>
> I came home *really* jazzed about writing IDL object
> graphics programs again for the first time in a LONG time.
> This program is named perfectly. It could cause a revolution
> in your IDL programming. It is available on the ITTVIS
> User Contrib web page.
>
> Alright, I've left a lot of good things out, but you
> get the idea. ITTVIS is hoping they can get this going
> on an annual basis. I can tell you this, I am not going
> to ever miss one. This was terrific. Hats off to the
> great crew at ITTVIS for putting on a most productive day.
>
> Cheers,
>
> David
>
