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.

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- 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. :-)

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- 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. >

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- 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

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> 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 is 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,
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> David