Subject: Re: Migrate away from idl?
Posted by Mirko.Vukovic[1] on Thu, 19 Nov 2009 22:43:00 GMT
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On Nov 18, 6:29 pm, Brian Larsen <balar...@gmail.com> wrote:
> Hey all,
>
> I have a quick poll for the experts out there. I recently learned
> about (and was wowed) scipy and all the other python stuff that
> basically make it a viable substitute for idl. I am wondering if
> anyone has made the switch (if so why are you still on this usenet?)
> or came away from python or has any advice at all?
>
> Here is a gallery of plots and code from python
matplotlibhttp://matplotlib.sourceforge.net/gallery.html
>
> I am seeing some cool advantages and some disadvantages too, ill list
> a few to try and start a bit of discussion,
>
> Sames:
> array based a = a+1 for arrays
> multiplatform
> command line to test things out
> all the same plots are there (or at least all I do)
>
> +idl:
> I already know it
> code library that I am familiar with
> Coyote's Guide to IDL Programming
>
> +python:
> no licensing fee
> easier scriptable (like into web pages etc)
> interactive plots that make iplot look like 1980
> super easy export of plots to png, pdf, ps whatever even interactively
> from the plot
> seems like its up and coming
>
> Cheers,
>
> Brian
>
> ---------- ----------
> Brian Larsen
> Boston University
> Center for Space Physics

I went for common lisp (CL).

Over the years I got more and more annoyed with the way I was coding in IDL.

Then by chance, for a little project that required recursion, I googled lisp books, and stumbled upon `Practical Common Lisp'. Using it's Ch. 3 (and bits of 4-10), I solved my problem and got hooked.

Mind you, if you are looking for an array based language CL is not for you. Graphics is also not as easy (I have an interface to Gnuplot).

But to me it brought back the fun in programming. Once I figured out its use of various flavors of macros, my programs started looking really cool and readable. Since macros allow you to define language constructs suitable to your problem, the programs become much more readable.

So, now I use it for system tasks, processing xml files, text files, numerics (access to GSL and netlib routines).

However, all of the above is probably nowhere near as user friendly as the mentioned Python interfaces. There is a steep and long learning curve - to me the language looks like having more programming dimensions (symbols, closures, macros) that IDL and similar tools.

Best,

Mirko
