Subject: Re: How does IDL do ...
Posted by davis on Sat, 10 May 1997 07:00:00 GMT
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On Fri, 02 May 1997 09:16:48 -0500, Liam Gumley <liam.gumley@ssec.wisc.edu>
wrote:
> Absolutely - don't try and sell IDL on the speed of execution - just
> tell people it's as fast as FORTRAN. Sell it on the basis of much faster
> development time (once you're up the learning curve a little bit).

While I agree that IDL reduces development time, it does not always
result in code that is as fast as FORTRAN. It is only (nearly) as
fast as FORTRAN if you are able to vectorize all operations. However,
if some function does not vectorize and it is called many times, the
resulting code can run many times slower than FORTRAN. For example,
an early version of the MARX AXAF simulator was written in IDL.
Unfortunately, it was not possible to vectorize one or two critical
pieces of the code (using the IDL 3.0 intrinsics; perhaps 5.0 provides
the necessary intrinsic functions to permit complete vectorization).
When the simulator was converted to C, it became about 20 times
faster.

Nevertheless, IDL (as well as freely available software such as
SciLab, RLab, and Octave) seem to be good protyping tools and allow
one to get useful work done without too much programming effort.

--John