
Subject: unsolicited endorsement of Fanning's book
Posted by [raouldukey](#) on Wed, 19 Jan 2000 08:00:00 GMT
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When I first started grad school, I was giving a programming project, and handed a copy of IDL to do it in. Up to that point, my programming experience was.....limited. I still remember struggling with IDL to do a relatively simple task. No one else in my department worked with IDL, so I was basically on my own, with the helpful IDL user manual and reference guides to guide me on my path of IDL enlightenment.

A couple of years later, and I am still struggling with IDL. While my problems seem bigger, they all stem from the basic problem of my never understanding the basic philosophy of IDL. The user manual just never seemed to explain it to me, and just seemed to have holes where the basic concepts should have been. Perhaps the necessary information is there, and I just never understood it. *shrug*

I decided to look around the web and see what resources were available, and found the massive astronomy library of useful routines. I then stumbled upon this newsgroup, which has been very helpful (thanks everyone!), if answering me directly or when I am just lurking. The most impressive part of the newsgroup was this Fanning character, who seemed not to have a real job, as he could spend his day answering everyone's questions.

Anyway, I checked out his site, and since most of his answers on this newsgroup seemed helpful, I bought a copy of his book. Good move on my part. I highly recommend this book, especially to people like me that are still struggling with IDL and understanding why it sometimes does what you want, and sometimes it does whatever the hell it wants to do (Deterministic?yeah right). In the first month of my owning the book, my IDL programming skills increased by at least a factor of 3. Ok....I realize that 3 times a very small number is still close to zero, but it makes me feel better. Anyway, I figure that the book deserves at least a recommendation here. The only way that I would have liked the book more is if I hadn't had to pay for it.

Oh yea....I have never met David, and he didn't exchange anything with me for this endorsement (although a free copy of the next edition would be a nice gesture....)

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