Subject: Re: General info question for newbie
Posted by David Fanning on Mon, 01 Oct 2001 17:56:37 GMT
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Chris (bumblebelly75@hotmail.com) writes:

> Having dl'd the IDL 5.4 demo and played around a bit, I wondered how
> this would help me in a GIS environment and what advantages it would
> hold over a regular programming language?

IDL and a GIS environment are two mostly different things,
it seems to me, with the occasional overlap. If you are
a GIS type person, the advantages of IDL would be
(I should think) to expand your notions of how data might
be used to create information. And specifically, how
remotely sensed data might be used to create information.

> The opinion seems to be that
> there is less coding involved, but how much less?

Compared to what? To C programming? A lot less.
To Visual Basic programming? Not so much less.

> And how hard is it
> to learn what is essentially a new language?

Any new language is hard to learn. How long would
it take you to learn Spanish? If you were moving
to Spain in three months and your livelihood depended
on speaking the language, you might learn it faster
than if you just wanted to whisper romantic poems
by Pablo Neruda in your sweetheart's ear in Pablo's
native language. I've been working with IDL for 12+
years. I'm still learning it. :-)

Cheers,

David

--
David W. Fanning, Ph.D.
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Phone: 970-221-0438, E-mail: david@dfanning.com
Coyote's Guide to IDL Programming: http://www.dfanning.com/
Toll-Free IDL Book Orders: 1-888-461-0155

Subject: Re: General info question for newbie
Posted by Paul van Delst on Mon, 01 Oct 2001 18:03:48 GMT
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Chris wrote:
>
> Just a quick question:
>
> Having dl'd the IDL 5.4 demo and played around a bit, I wondered how
> this would help me in a GIS environment and what advantages it would
> hold over a regular programming language?

Well, that depends on what you want to do. (And, btw, why don't you consider IDL a "regular programming language"?) Also, if no else in your field and/or department/job/whatever is using IDL, it's probably not a good choice - unless you're the type of fellow who will eventually convince a goodly proportion of people you work with that IDL is the ant's pants and they should use it. (I have seen that happen.)

> The opinion seems to be that
> there is less coding involved,

In IDL? Less coding? My experience is indifferent in this respect. E.g. in my IDL functions/procedure I have the check the correct dimensionality of the arguments as well as size since there is no type decalrations as such in IDL. In F90, for example, I know the input array dimensions are correct (otherwise the code wouldn't compile), I just have to check the sizes.

When it comes to (direct) graphics, there's no question that IDL involves less coding. Can't get much simpler than:

IDL> PLOT, x, y

Also, a big plus/speedup for me in using IDL is (apart from the graphics) the command line. I can easily test code without having to write a test program.

> And how hard is it
> to learn what is essentially a new language?

Not essentially - it IS a new language. With a bunch of neato features and associated idiosyncracies just like any other programming language/environment. I get the distinct impression you think of IDL only a few lines above "toy" on the "Neat Things to do with your Computer" list.

As to learning curve - well, that depends on how keen you are. :o)

paulv

--
Paul van Delst   Religious and cultural

Subject: Re: General info question for newbie
Posted by David Fanning on Mon, 01 Oct 2001 18:20:25 GMT
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> If you were moving
> to Spain in three months and your livelihood depended
> on speaking the language, you might learn it faster
> than if you just wanted to whisper romantic poems
> by Pablo Neruda in your sweetheart's ear in Pablo's
> native language.

In answer to a couple of private e-mails I have
just received, I learned "Yo te quiero, mi amor."
faster than you might have imagined. But I was 18
then and *extremely* motivated. :-)

Cheers,

David

--
David W. Fanning, Ph.D.
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Subject: Re: General info question for newbie
Posted by bumblebelly75 on Mon, 01 Oct 2001 21:43:20 GMT
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Many thanks for your comments
My manager spotted an advert for IDL in New Scientist and thought it
might be of use for our projects, so she wanted me to assess its
suitability before splashing out ï¿½900 for it!
Cheers for your help guys,

Chris

Subject: Re: General info question for newbie
Posted by Pavel A. Romashkin on Mon, 01 Oct 2001 21:47:47 GMT
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Chris wrote:

>
> Many thanks for your comments
> My manager spotted an advert for IDL in New Scientist and thought it
> might be of use for our projects, so she wanted me to assess its
> suitability before splashing out ï¿½900 for it!

Oh, absolutely, it'll be worth every penny. And, to help you get
started, there is a company called Fanning Consulting
(http://www.dfanning.com/) that will bring you right up to speed almost
for free (on those price scales) :-)
Cheers,
Pavel