
Subject: Knew this would happen after Kodac purchased RSI
Posted by [Martin Otte](#) on Tue, 09 Oct 2001 21:26:53 GMT
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Just a note from a lurker who has read this group for many years mainly for the great IDL programing hints and tips.

From previous messages on this group and info on RSI's web page, it looks like version 5.5 will be the last to be supported on Macs at all (either in classic mode or OS X). I had a gut feeling this would happen after Kodac purchased RSI. After I finish my current project, I will now definitely no longer be using IDL.

I already compiled netCDF, vis5D, and NCAR Graphics on OS X, and will be increasingly using these and other open-source programs instead of IDL, especially as OS X and the free X-windows server mature.

Even if you are not a macintosh user, please email your disapproval to info@rsinc.com. My email follows. Does anyone know of an email address at Kodac to send a similar email?

XX XXXXXXXX

Dear Sir,

I am greatly dissapointed at the lack of Macintosh support in future versions of IDL.

I was going to talk my next employer into purchasing linux licenses of IDL for the workstations at work along with a new license for my Macintosh at home, but we will probably no longer be purchasing or using IDL.

One of the best features of IDL was that I could work with the same datasets and IDL programs on our Solaris workstations at work or on my Mac laptop at home or on Windows PC's. This will soon no longer be the case. I'm sure that many other people have chosen IDL because of the ease at which you could swith platforms.

I started using IDL with an old student version for the Mac, and then began using IDL on Sun workstations. While the Macintosh platform may not have your greatest market share, I am sure that many IDL users have used the macintosh version at one time or the other.

As Apple copmputers have matured and now rival expensive workstations in terms of computational power, the Macintosh is a great platform to exploit the features of IDL. With IDL, I could do the same analysis on my home Mac as I could on our expensive workstations at work.

Reading your latest press release, it would seem that IDL version 5.5 will be the last version for the macintosh and no version of IDL for OS X will be available. I understand the difficulty in porting IDL to OS X, and would not be too dissapointed if an OS X version of IDL was delayed indefinitely until the economy improves as long as the "classic" version of IDL for Macintosh was continued.

With the Unix underpinnings of Mac OS X and the availability of free or open-source data-processing, graphing, and visualization software (such as Vis-5D, GRADS, IBM data explorer, NCAR graphics), there are many other alternatives that one has to work interchangeably between Macintosh, linux PCs, and Solaris workstations. IDL will no longer be one of the alternatives that I use.

Sincerely,

Martin Otte
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Subject: Re: Knew this would happen after Kodac purchased RSI
Posted by [Struan Gray](#) on Tue, 23 Oct 2001 14:24:10 GMT
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JD Smith, jdsmith@astro.cornell.edu writes:

- > I post here my private email to RSI concerning
- > their abandoment of Macs and MacOSX, and encourage
- > others to do so, so at least someone will notice the
- > sentiments, and perhaps others will be encouraged to
- > let their feelings be known too. At the very least
- > we can demonstrate that the "only 3 calls or emails"
- > statement is either in error or misleading.

Here's my effort.

I disagree with the first poster, and the title of this thread. I'm sure that RSI can screw up on their own, without orders from Kodak to do so :-)

For me, switching from IDL will be tiresome, but not a life-engulfing process. Ironically, I will probably end up using PCs a lot more than I did, but at least I won't be paying extra over my colleagues for the priviledge.

Struan

Dear RSI,

I recently learned that IDL 5.5 will be the last native version of IDL for the Mac platform. This is very disappointing news, and for me at least negates the few other advantages that IDL has over its competitors. As a direct result of this decision I will not be renewing the maintenance contracts for my Mac or PC licences early next year. I have also shelved the completed grant application I had written for using ION to do web-based teaching of crystallography and solid-state physics.

I am sure that since your announcement you have received plenty of argument that the Mac is still an excellent platform for scientific computing. Ironically, one of the best arguments in its favour was your own press release announcing altivec support. However, one point not generally made is that Macs are still very popular in countries where English is not the first language. Other OSs are catching up, but it is still the case that a Swedish Mac is more Swedish than Swedish Windows or Swedish Unix. More generally, and unlike the other systems whose support you have dropped, the Mac has continuing viability for serious computing into the foreseeable future.

I am not a major user of IDL, having a whopping two licences, plus a run-time licence for a microscope controller from Omicron Vakuumphysik GmbH. However, I have been an active IDL evangelist. The most recent generation of Synchrotron X-ray sources create the sort of multi-dimensional data sets where IDL excels, and I have been asked about IDL more in the last year than in all the previous seven that I have been using it. My most recent success was with a Mac-only department who are now wondering how they go about cancelling their purchase.

There are two main reasons the people I have tried to persuade have not bought your product. The first is that your academic pricing policy is downright stingy. This probably looks like ivory tower whining, but your competitors are much more generous in this respect, so they get our bums on their seats. My colleagues can get Mathematica, Matlab and the National Instruments tools cheaply or for free via university or faculty-wide site licences. IDL costs money that could send a student to a conference. To overcome this objection, IDL needs to offer something the other programs do not have: for me, easy cross-platform code sharing was the single biggest such factor.

The second reason is that RSI is perceived as being a small operator with an uncertain future. Even with Kodak backing and glossy adverts in

New Scientist and Physics Today, IDL is not a mainstream product in the way that Matlab is. It is here that the cross-platform nature of IDL really worked in your favour. It not only made you different, but provided reassurance that any effort put into creating programs would not be wasted. That's gone.

In your public announcements you have stated that the decision to drop IDL for Mac development was a business one. To me, it looks less like a strategic move than a piece of post-facto success-spotting: you are putting all your eggs into the basket which turned out to be most profitable last time round. I am the sort of user who offers you the chance to break into new markets, but I get the feeling that you prefer to be a service company for those few users who have a large number of existing licences. I can understand that desire, but it gives me no reason to use your product, and I shall migrate elsewhere.

Struan Gray

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