
Subject: Question about IDL books

Posted by [pimpk24](#) on Sun, 05 Feb 2006 17:44:28 GMT

[View Forum Message](#) <> [Reply to Message](#)

I was wondering if the books on idl out there - specifically David Fanning's and Liam Gumley" present most of their information from the perspective of using the GUI developers environment or the Command line to run IDL.

I use the command line / Unix to run IDL on a mac, and would thus prefer more examples of how to do things in this environment.

Any insight appreciated

Subject: Re: Question about IDL books

Posted by [David Fanning](#) on Sun, 05 Feb 2006 20:01:46 GMT

[View Forum Message](#) <> [Reply to Message](#)

pimpk24@hotmail.com writes:

- > I was wondering if the books on idl out there - specifically David
- > Fanning's and Liam Gumley" present most of their information from the
- > perspective of using the GUI developers environment or the Command
- > line to run IDL.
- >
- > I use the command line / Unix to run IDL on a mac, and would thus
- > prefer more examples of how to do things in this environment.
- >
- > Any insight appreciated

This question is totally irrelevant to both books, as far as I can tell. We both try to write books for IDL users. I don't speak for Liam, but I could care less what machine you run IDL on. I'm a big fan of machine AND device independent code. :-)

Cheers,

David

P.S. And don't even get me *started* on the GUI-builder, if that's what is motivating your question. You won't learn how to use that from me. :-)

--

David Fanning, Ph.D.
Fanning Software Consulting, Inc.

Subject: Re: Question about IDL books

Posted by [pimpk24](#) on Sun, 05 Feb 2006 21:18:00 GMT

[View Forum Message](#) <> [Reply to Message](#)

I was not really referring to the machine as much as the command vs. GUI way to run IDL- it seems like alot of the examples and info in the manuals are for using the GUI builder which I do not care for.

Subject: Re: Question about IDL books

Posted by [David Fanning](#) on Sun, 05 Feb 2006 21:40:50 GMT

[View Forum Message](#) <> [Reply to Message](#)

pimpk24@hotmail.com writes:

> I was not really referring to the machine as much as the command vs.
> GUI way to run IDL- it seems like alot of the examples and info in the
> manuals are for using the GUI builder which I do not care for.

Humm. I don't think I've ever run into any examples in the manuals that are for the GUI builder, to tell you the truth. Can you give me an example of what you have in mind?

Every example I've even seen is meant to be typed at an IDL command line, or put into an IDL program. Doing either of those two things on any platform is exactly the same.

Cheers,

David

--

David Fanning, Ph.D.

Fanning Software Consulting, Inc.

Coyote's Guide to IDL Programming: <http://www.dfanning.com/>

Subject: Re: Question about IDL books

Posted by [David Fanning](#) on Sun, 05 Feb 2006 21:52:34 GMT

[View Forum Message](#) <> [Reply to Message](#)

pimpk24@hotmail.com writes:

- > I was not really referring to the machine as much as the command vs.
- > GUI way to run IDL- it seems like alot of the examples and info in the
- > manuals are for using the GUI builder which I do not care for.

Maybe you mean you don't like to use programs that use a GUI interface to interact with the program. I suggest, if this is the case, that you investigate GDL, the GNU IDL. It is free, doesn't have widgets, and runs exclusively from the command line. You could probably find a set of IDL 3.0 manuals around in someone's closet and you would be set. It would be like stepping back into the 1970s. Don't forget those bell-bottom polyester pants! :-)

Cheers,

David

--

David Fanning, Ph.D.

Fanning Software Consulting, Inc.

Coyote's Guide to IDL Programming: <http://www.dfanning.com/>

Subject: Re: Question about IDL books

Posted by [Peter Clinch](#) on Mon, 06 Feb 2006 10:03:22 GMT

[View Forum Message](#) <> [Reply to Message](#)

David Fanning wrote:

- > This question is totally irrelevant to both books, as
- > far as I can tell.

How about the new one, David? ;-)

Just wondering what the status is: I'd faxed off your non-disclosure back in January before I disappeared on a ski holiday but haven't heard anything else since getting back 3 weeks ago... did you end up with a bigger choice of beta-testers, or are you (dare I suggest such a thing) just a little behind, or ditched the idea?

regards, Pete.

--

Peter Clinch

Medical Physics IT Officer

Tel 44 1382 660111 ext. 33637 Univ. of Dundee, Ninewells Hospital

Fax 44 1382 640177 Dundee DD1 9SY Scotland UK

Subject: Re: Question about IDL books

Posted by [David Fanning](#) on Mon, 06 Feb 2006 14:21:50 GMT

[View Forum Message](#) <> [Reply to Message](#)

Peter Clinch writes:

- > How about the new one, David? ;-)
- >
- > Just wondering what the status is: I'd faxed off your non-disclosure
- > back in January before I disappeared on a ski holiday but haven't heard
- > anything else since getting back 3 weeks ago... did you end up with a
- > bigger choice of beta-testers, or are you (dare I suggest such a thing)
- > just a little behind, or ditched the idea?

Alas, writing a book and making a living are nearly mutually exclusive propositions. Those tuition bills weigh heavily. :-(

But I haven't abandoned the idea yet.

Cheers,

David

--

David Fanning, Ph.D.

Fanning Software Consulting, Inc.

Coyote's Guide to IDL Programming: <http://www.dfanning.com/>

Subject: Re: Question about IDL books

Posted by [pimpk24](#) on Tue, 07 Feb 2006 17:30:09 GMT

[View Forum Message](#) <> [Reply to Message](#)

Hi david,

is your book written in a way that caters to people totally new to idl,
or does it presume some knowledge in order to get the most out of it?

and the same for Liam's (if you know)

thanks...

Subject: Re: Question about IDL books

Posted by [liamgumley](#) on Tue, 07 Feb 2006 17:34:25 GMT

[View Forum Message](#) <> [Reply to Message](#)

Speaking for my book (Practical IDL Programming), I think it's fair to say that Chapters 1-8 concentrate on using IDL and developing and running IDL applications from the command line. However, Chapter 9 provides a detailed guide to developing a GUI application.

Cheers,

Liam.

Practical IDL Programming

<http://www.gumley.com/>

Subject: Re: Question about IDL books

Posted by [liamgumley](#) on Tue, 07 Feb 2006 17:36:43 GMT

[View Forum Message](#) <> [Reply to Message](#)

My book assumes a basic knowledge of procedural programming, but it does not assume any prior knowledge of IDL. That said, I have heard of people who had their first introduction to programming in any language from my book.

Subject: Re: Question about IDL books

Posted by [David Fanning](#) on Tue, 07 Feb 2006 17:38:23 GMT

[View Forum Message](#) <> [Reply to Message](#)

pimpk24@hotmail.com writes:

- > is your book written in a way that caters to people totally new to idl,
- > or does it presume some knowledge in order to get the most out of it?
- >
- > and the same for Liam's (if you know)

My book caters to people totally new to IDL, but probably familiar with some programming language. It is not an "intro to programming" book. (If you are interested in something like this, I can recommend Ken Bowmann's new book, An Introduction to Programming with IDL.) I've used my book for years in all my introductory and intermediate IDL classes.

Liam's book is better written if you like a structured approach to programming. I'm too impatient for long discussions about "data types". "See it, do it," is my motto. :-)

Cheers,

David

--

David Fanning, Ph.D.

Fanning Software Consulting, Inc.

Coyote's Guide to IDL Programming: <http://www.dfanning.com/>

Subject: Re: Question about IDL books

Posted by [Benjamin Hornberger](#) on Tue, 07 Feb 2006 19:21:51 GMT

[View Forum Message](#) <> [Reply to Message](#)

pimpk24@hotmail.com wrote:

- > I was wondering if the books on idl out there - specifically David
- > Fanning's and Liam Gumley" present most of their information from the
- > perspective of using the GUI developers environment or the Command
- > line to run IDL.
- >
- > I use the command line / Unix to run IDL on a mac, and would thus
- > prefer more examples of how to do things in this environment.
- >
- > Any insight appreciated
- >

To add a "neutral" person's opinion: I think both books are fine for beginners (in IDL and pretty much also in programming). As was mentioned before, Liam's book is more structured, while David's is more tutorial / how-to style.

I'm not sure what you mean by "GUI developer's environment". If you mean the GUI builder, none of the books covers it, but most people advise against using it anyway. If you mean the IDL development environment vs. the Unix command line, none of the books makes much of a difference because it's not necessary. The IDLDE includes a command line which behaves like the naked command line, and most of the stuff around is just for convenience for the people who prefer clicking the mouse rather than typing a command.

Both books concentrate on command-line / procedural IDL use for the most part and cover GUI development in the end (anyway, you should know how to use IDL on the command line before trying to build a GUI). As for GUI development, I think Liam's intro is easier to understand for the beginner, but David includes more of the little tips and tricks which come in handy from time to time.

My group owns both books, and I found both of them useful for learning IDL. Now I don't need them much any more. For advanced IDL programming,

Ronn Kling's books are quite good (and pretty much the only ones out there as far as I know).

Hope that helps,
Benjamin
