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Subject: Re: Anyone used FastDL?

Posted by [David Fanning](#) on Mon, 18 Dec 2006 19:10:08 GMT

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Mike writes:

> There have been occasional marketing messages regarding a product  
> called FastDL in this news group, but I have not seen any posts from  
> people who've used it. Has anyone out there used this product? Does  
> anyone have an opinion strong enough to recommend it or not?

I haven't seen this final product, so I can't say much about it, but I have worked with these folks in the past. I know they are technically competent and very bright. I expect this product does exactly what they say it does. I wouldn't hesitate to check it out.

Cheers,

David

--

David Fanning, Ph.D.

Fanning Software Consulting, Inc.

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

Sepore ma de ni thui. ("Perhaps thou speakest truth.")

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Subject: Re: Anyone used FastDL?

Posted by [Richard French](#) on Tue, 19 Dec 2006 00:00:25 GMT

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It seems to me that IDL is going the way of MATLAB - you start paying (quite a bit) for extra features. Do you want reliable numerical routines? Pay for IDL Analyst. Do you want to do parallel processing? Pay (quite a bit) for FastDL. These extras are actually quite expensive, and in some cases it is hard to know what is really going to be useful until you fork over the dough and try it out.

Dick French

On 12/18/06 2:10 PM, in article MPG.1ff0957c2553eafd989e56@news.frii.com, "David Fanning" <[news@dfanning.com](mailto:news@dfanning.com)> wrote:

> Mike writes:

>

>> There have been occasional marketing messages regarding a product  
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>> anyone have an opinion strong enough to recommend it or not?  
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> Cheers,  
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> David

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Subject: Re: Anyone used FastDL?

Posted by [David Fanning](#) on Tue, 19 Dec 2006 00:12:32 GMT

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Richard G. French writes:

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> a bit) for extra features. Do you want reliable numerical routines? Pay for  
> IDL Analyst. Do you want to do parallel processing? Pay (quite a bit) for  
> FastDL. These extras are actually quite expensive, and in some cases it is  
> hard to know what is really going to be useful until you fork over the dough  
> and try it out.

Well, it's not a mom and pop shop anymore, that's for sure. But the FastDL guys are part of the high-end physics community, where you don't just start your IDL program and go get a cup of coffee. You start your program and go teach a class, get a haircut, stop at Starbucks, etc. Those guys are pretty clear they could use something like this. :-)

Cheers,

David

--

David Fanning, Ph.D.

Fanning Software Consulting, Inc.

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

Sepore ma de ni thui. ("Perhaps thou speakest truth.")

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Subject: Re: Anyone used FastDL?

Posted by [Rick Towler](#) on Tue, 19 Dec 2006 01:06:13 GMT

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Richard G. French wrote:

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> FastDL. These extras are actually quite expensive, and in some cases it is  
> hard to know what is really going to be useful until you fork over the dough  
> and try it out.

That's an unfair comparison. Have you done an IDL vs. MATLAB pricing comparison lately? Compared to MATLAB, IDL delivers some serious value.

And while I haven't asked in a while, RS-err ITTVIS has always been very generous in providing trial licenses to their products. So I'm sure if you wanted to try IDL Analyst you could, free of charge.

-Rick

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Subject: Re: Anyone used FastDL?

Posted by [Richard French](#) on Tue, 19 Dec 2006 01:50:57 GMT

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I'm still a big fan of IDL, Rick, but \$3000 for an educational license for FastDL for an 8 CPU cluster + \$450/yr maintenance is not small change. I'll follow your suggestion and find out about a trial FastDL license. I don't have any experience in parallel processing programming, and I have no doubt that the devil is in the details in how much of an improvement one can really get. What's unclear to me at this point is how much harder it would be for me to develop my own communication links between separate IDL processes on different CPUS than to rewrite the code using FastDL to do more or less the same thing. Here is where having some substantial examples coded in different ways would really help. For example, if I have 100 images to process using identical code, it would not be that hard to start 8 IDL processes on different CPUS and have each one grab the next available image. I'm not sure how much more than this TaskDL does for this kind of operation. Of course, doing parallel processing a finer level of things (milDL) is a different story, and here I know that I have a lot to learn.

Dick

On 12/18/06 8:06 PM, in article em7dqu\$bm6\$1@news.nems.noaa.gov, "Rick Towler" <rick.towler@nomail.noaa.gov> wrote:

> That's an unfair comparison. Have you done an IDL vs. MATLAB pricing  
> comparison lately? Compared to MATLAB, IDL delivers some serious value.  
> And while I haven't asked in a while, RS-err ITTVIS has always been

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> -Rick  
>

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Subject: Re: Anyone used FastDL?  
Posted by [Robbie](#) on Tue, 19 Dec 2006 10:35:02 GMT  
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A few points I'd like to clarify:

I don't think that ITTVIS is setting the benchmark for these expensive prices. The price of FastDL and IDL Analyst are more likely based on the original prices that TechX and Visual Numerics charged. ITTVIS is really just passing on the cost.

There are many ways to achieve clustered computing and none of them are cheap so far as time or money is concerned. Most solutions involve copious amounts of recoding. Even a simple batch processing script (like you suggest) over several computers can end quickly in a train wreck. I've done some preliminary work on network semaphores and I'm hoping to find a solution to avoid colliding batch processes.

A better example of this kind of behavior is IDLffDICOMex, IDLExportBridge and IDLDataMiner. My understanding is that these products are wholly owned by ITTVIS. I think that releasing them as pricey add ons stagnates the language. Customers are expected to recode their DICOM applications when they upgrade from IDLffDICOM to IDLffDICOMex. Customers are expected to fiddle with musical sav files until IDLDataMiner becomes absolutely necessary. It's bad for the customer and it's bad for the language.

Robbie

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Subject: Re: Anyone used FastDL?  
Posted by [ronn](#) on Tue, 19 Dec 2006 23:31:46 GMT  
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Mike,

There is another alternative to FastDL and that is my interface to PVM from Oak Ridge. The link is here:

<http://www.kilvarock.com/software/idltopvm.htm>

PVM itself is free and runs on windows and \*nix, as does my interface.  
Plus the cost of my code is an order of magnitude less :)

-Ronn

Ronn Kling

KRS, inc.

email: r...@rlkling.com

Use these books to upgrade your IDL skills.

"Application Development with IDL"

"Calling C from IDL, Using DLM's to extend your IDL code". SECOND  
EDITION includes C++ and debugging!

"Power Graphics with IDL, A Beginner's Guide to Object Graphics",

<http://www.kilvarock.com>

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