
Subject: Musing on IDL's Future Direction
Posted by [David Fanning](#) on Sun, 16 Nov 2008 16:40:33 GMT
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Folks,

Jumping through more hoops to create both display and PostScript output this morning got me thinking about our old Top 10 list. I was surprised to see we started that in July 2000. Whoa! It seems like only yesterday.

There were 159 posts in that thread, and a lot of good ideas. Just browsing through them now, I found, well, one that was implemented. We now have the COMPLEMENT keyword in the Where function. You could count that as progress, I suppose. (There may have been more, but after a couple of pages I was too depressed to read further.)

I am not unmindful of the fact that IDL is a lot of things to a lot of users, and that one person's nonsense is another person's essential feature, but really...

If ITTVIS could just spare one engineer for six months or so to work on a couple of things that were important to research users of IDL it would make a tremendous difference to a lot of people. I've had two e-mails *this morning* from people confused about the PostScript device, and it is not an unusual morning.

There is too much cynicism showing in this newsgroup lately to risk another Top 10 List. (And, given the success of our last campaign, maybe it would be better from a psychological point of view to start a Bottom 10 List. More chance of it getting implemented, probably. But I digress, and in completely the wrong direction!)

I guess my point is this. There are a lot of people, myself included, who use and are extremely happy with what I have come to think of as IDL's "old" features. Line plots, image display, good ol' direct graphics, sent to a PostScript file for nice output. We could be made happy and a LOT less cynical, I think, if along with the bright new gewgaws someone threw in a lagniappe of a PostScript device that worked the way it was suppose to work in this day and age.

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.")

Subject: Re: Musing on IDL's Future Direction

Posted by [Kenneth P. Bowman](#) on Mon, 17 Nov 2008 15:22:54 GMT

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In article <MPG.2389fae938231b9398a531@news.giganews.com>,
David Fanning <news@dfanning.com> wrote:

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> months or so to work on a couple of things that
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> two e-mails *this morning* from people confused about
> the PostScript device, and it is not an unusual morning.

Because I missed the ITTVIS presentation about future IDL
improvements at the recent User Group meeting, I had a look
at the online presentation

<http://www.ittvis.com/portals/0/pdfs/idl/uc/idl71idlUG.pdf>

There are only two things listed that are of interest to me:

1. 64-bit version for OS X (already implemented in 7.0.4).
2. iTools enhancements with better programmatic control of iTools. This is welcome but not a real high priority for me, as I only use iTools for a few specialized tasks.

Nothing else on the time line is compelling, although I see how
some things could be useful for other users.

Apple is devoting an entire major release (upcoming OS X 10.6) to fixing
and updating underlying software (making things 64-bit, rewriting for
current software standards, improving performance), not adding new features.
OS X is pretty good as is, but any efforts to improve software *quality*,
as opposed to expanding the feature set, are always welcome, IMHO.

Perhaps ITTVIS could spend at least a minor release fixing as many

of those under-the-hood things that drive us crazy as they can.

Ken Bowman

Subject: Re: Musing on IDL's Future Direction
Posted by [pgrigis](#) on Mon, 17 Nov 2008 15:57:09 GMT
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David Fanning wrote:

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- > PostScript output this morning got me thinking about
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I guess that the Department of Homemade Security does not use PostScript because it is not encrypted and therefore unsafe and dangerous!

Ciao,
Paolo

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> be made happy and a LOT less cynical, I think, if
> along with the bright new gewgaws someone threw in a
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> David
>
> --
> David Fanning, Ph.D.
> Fanning Software Consulting, Inc.
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> Sepore ma de ni thui. ("Perhaps thou speakest truth.")

Subject: Re: Musing on IDL's Future Direction
Posted by [Craig Markwardt](#) on Tue, 18 Nov 2008 05:18:33 GMT
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On Nov 16, 11:40 am, David Fanning <n...@dfanning.com> wrote:

> I guess my point is this. There are a lot of people,
> myself included, who use and are extremely happy with
> what I have come to think of as IDL's "old" features.
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> lagniappe of a PostScript device that worked the way
> it was suppose to work in this day and age.

Yep, a better postscript driver would be nice. Actually I was developing a new device driver to replace X/Postscript, but... it was hard!

Subject: Re: Musing on IDL's Future Direction

Posted by [Mirko.Vukovic\[1\]](#) on Tue, 18 Nov 2008 13:21:02 GMT

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On Nov 18, 12:18 am, Craig Markwardt <cbmarkwa...@gmail.com> wrote:

> On Nov 16, 11:40 am, David Fanning <n...@dfanning.com> wrote:

>

>> I guess my point is this. There are a lot of people,
>> myself included, who use and are extremely happy with
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> Yep, a better postscript driver would be nice. Actually I was
> developing a new device driver to replace X/Postscript, but... it was
> hard!

I don't even upgrade my IDL. That is how exciting I find the new releases.

But that may point to my age. Do the younger folks actually appreciate the new features more?

Mirko

Subject: Re: Musing on IDL's Future Direction

Posted by [Craig Markwardt](#) on Tue, 18 Nov 2008 15:52:57 GMT

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On Nov 18, 8:21 am, Mirko <Mirko.Vuko...@gmail.com> wrote:

> On Nov 18, 12:18 am, Craig Markwardt <cbmarkwa...@gmail.com> wrote:

>

>> On Nov 16, 11:40 am, David Fanning <n...@dfanning.com> wrote:

>

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>> hard!
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> I don't even upgrade my IDL. That is how exciting I find the new
> releases.
>
> But that may point to my age. Do the younger folks actually
> appreciate the new features more?

People apparently joke about me using old versions of IDL [*]. The truth is, when I have a version that works, I stick with it. Nothing frustrates me more than an application that wants to self-update itself every day.

New features in IDL are fairly useless to me, because they are *new*. My stuff often needs to run on IDL 5.x, but also IDL 7.x. It would be not-so-useful to take advantage of new features in that kind of environment. And is object graphics really that useful anyway?

Craig

[*] - by people, I mean David Fanning. Anyway, I usually run IDL 6.3 these days which is not too ancient.

Subject: Re: Musing on IDL's Future Direction
Posted by [David Fanning](#) on Tue, 18 Nov 2008 16:08:02 GMT
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Craig Markwardt writes:

> People apparently joke about me using old versions of IDL [*]. The
> truth is, when I have a version that works, I stick with it. Nothing
> frustrates me more than an application that wants to self-update
> itself every day.

I am *definitely* coming around to this way of thinking. ;-)

Cheers,

David

P.S. And let's just say the worst culprit is iTunes! 184 MBytes, or whatever it is, about every three days. Enough!!

--

David Fanning, Ph.D.

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