Subject: Re: Good programming practices and commercial development with IDL
Posted by David Fanning on Fri, 22 Oct 2010 12:56:40 GMT

medd writes:

> -IDL has bugs, most other programming languages don't

Oh, give me a break. Unless it's moribund, all
programming languages (and programs, for that
matter) have bugs. IDL has more than I'd like
it to, certainly, but I doubt it's unique in
this regard.

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: Good programming practices and commercial development with IDL
Posted by medd on Fri, 22 Oct 2010 13:10:54 GMT

You are right, sorry for that ;)

Maybe I should phrase it this way: when I programmed in C++ or Java, I
never found a bug in the language/compiler itself - but admittedly
there are. In IDL it is, as you write, more than I'd like.

On Oct 22, 2:56 pm, David Fanning <n...@dfanning.com> wrote:
> medd writes:
>> -IDL has bugs, most other programming languages don't
>
> Oh, give me a break. Unless it's moribund, all
> programming languages (and programs, for that
> matter) have bugs. IDL has more than I'd like
> it to, certainly, but I doubt it's unique in
> this regard.
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> Cheers,

>
> David
>
> --
> David Fanning, Ph.D.
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Subject: Re: Good programming practices and commercial development with IDL
Posted by Foldy Lajos on Fri, 22 Oct 2010 13:48:26 GMT

On Fri, 22 Oct 2010, medd wrote:

> You are right, sorry for that ;)
>
> Maybe I should phrase it this way: when I programmed in C++ or Java, I
> never found a bug in the language/compiler itself - but admittedly
> there are. In IDL it is, as you write, more than I'd like.
>

GCC's bugzilla has more than 40000 entries.
I don't know the number for IDL :-)

regards,
Lajos

Subject: Re: Good programming practices and commercial development with IDL
Posted by medd on Fri, 22 Oct 2010 13:52:59 GMT

On Oct 22, 3:48 pm, FÖLDY Lajos <fo...@rmki.kfki.hu> wrote:
> On Fri, 22 Oct 2010, medd wrote:
>> You are right, sorry for that ;)
>
>> Maybe I should phrase it this way: when I programmed in C++ or Java, I
>> never found a bug in the language/compiler itself - but admittedly
>> there are. In IDL it is, as you write, more than I'd like.
>
> GCC's bugzilla has more than 40000 entries.
> I don't know the number for IDL :-)
>
> regards,
> Lajos

Ok ok, I really retire the last point from the list, please forget it! :)

Subject: Re: Good programming practices and commercial development with IDL
Posted by David Fanning on Fri, 22 Oct 2010 14:20:19 GMT

medd writes:

> Do you think it is crazy to go with IDL?

Not entirely, no. :-)

> Do you know of other companies which have done this?

Yes. Some successfully. Some not so much.

If I were going to build a commercial application,
especially in medical imaging, I don't think the
cost of a run-time license bundled with the software
would hold me back. Thrown into the mix with the
cost of the imaging machine, it's chump change.

If I were building a commercial application, I would
want it to *look* like a commercial application. So,
if I were doing this, I'd make sure the damn thing ran
on Windows computers. You put a Motif application on
a Macintosh and you are asking for ridicule.

There are minor annoyances. For example, if you
put a file name into a Dialog_Pickfile, it comes
up showing only half the file name. It's all there,
just not visible to the user. That's not exactly
commercial-software friendly, but it doesn't seem
to bother anyone. At least I haven't been able to
convince anyone to fix it for the past couple of
years.

I think time-to-market with IDL software would
be a lot faster than with other software. But
sometimes the race doesn't go to the swift.

So, I think it's a mixed bag. I think IDL makes
perfect sense when you are building advanced
research tools, to be used by researchers who
can maybe tolerate more nuance in the way tools

work and look. In the hands of a medical
technician... Hard to say. It could well depend
more on the skill of the carpenter than the
shape of the tool.

Cheers,

David

--
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Subject: Re: Good programming practices and commercial development with IDL
Posted by David Fanning on Fri, 22 Oct 2010 14:26:22 GMT

David Fanning writes:

> If I were building a commercial application, I would
> want it to *look* like a commercial application. So,
> if I were doing this, I'd make sure the damn thing ran
> on Windows computers. You put a Motif application on
> a Macintosh and you are asking for ridicule.

I forgot to mention that I just heard last night
about a VERY big IDL shop that is migrating their
very large IDL application to JAVA, primarily
because of the better GUI interface. Most of their
customers use Linux and Mac computers. That is
not a good sign. :-(

Cheers,

David

--
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Subject: Re: Good programming practices and commercial development with IDL
Posted by medd on Fri, 22 Oct 2010 14:47:30 GMT
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> If I were going to build a commercial application,
> especially in medical imaging, I don't think the
> cost of a run-time license bundled with the software
> would hold me back. Thrown into the mix with the
> cost of the imaging machine, it's chump change.

Right, the clients need software and will buy it because it is a
marginal cost as compared to the imaging machine. The problem there is
the competition. If the competition sells a similar software for
2,000$ less, clients will tend to pick them.

The software should work on different OS (Win and Unix, eventually
also Mac). I agree about the doubts regarding the user interface...
this is a major concern for me.

> Yes. Some successfully. Some not so much.

Is there a list of IDL commercial software available? As you say, the
users won't be researchers, and their tolerance is lower.

Subject: Re: Good programming practices and commercial development with IDL
Posted by Paul Van Delst[1] on Fri, 22 Oct 2010 14:48:06 GMT
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David Fanning wrote:
> David Fanning writes:
>
>> If I were building a commercial application, I would
>> want it to *look* like a commercial application. So,
>> if I were doing this, I'd make sure the damn thing ran
>> on Windows computers. You put a Motif application on
>> a Macintosh and you are asking for ridicule.
>
> I forgot to mention that I just heard last night
> about a VERY big IDL shop that is migrating their
> very large IDL application to JAVA, primarily
> because of the better GUI interface. Most of their
> customers use Linux and Mac computers. That is
> not a good sign. :-(

There are IDL shops? All that comes to mind are either guvmint entities (e.g. NASA, NOAA and the like) or their
associated contractors.

I've obviously been living in DC for too long.... unfortunately one tends to develop a Ptolemaic view of the world
'round here. :o)   (Or should I emote :o(?)

cheers,

paulv

Subject: Re: Good programming practices and commercial development with IDL
Posted by David Fanning on Fri, 22 Oct 2010 14:52:32 GMT
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medd writes:

> Right, the clients need software and will buy it because it is a
> marginal cost as compared to the imaging machine. The problem there is
> the competition. If the competition sells a similar software for
> 2,000$ less, clients will tend to pick them.

I don't find this argument compelling, especially
when it comes to high-end software. I think people making
these kinds of decisions *weigh* price, but I don't think
it is their most important criteria. Support, I would
think, is MUCH more important to them.

> Is there a list of IDL commercial software available?

I'd ask your ITTVIS sales rep. They probably want to
get the good news out. :-)

Cheers,

David

--
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Subject: Re: Good programming practices and commercial development with IDL
Posted by David Fanning on Fri, 22 Oct 2010 15:13:16 GMT
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David Fanning writes:

> I don't find this argument compelling, especially
> when it comes to high-end software. I think people making
> these kinds of decisions *weigh* price, but I don't think
> it is their most important criteria. Support, I would
> think, is MUCH more important to them.

Just to give a personal example. I don't care how
much IDL cost me. It does what I want it to do, and
I like it a lot. It is a great general purpose
scientific programming language.

What pushes me in the direction of Python is shelling
out generally small (but increasing!) amounts of money
year after year in support costs without getting anything
significantly meaningful to me in return.

I'm happy to see the direction IDL graphics are going
in, for example, but I'm not happy about spending my
time debugging them (with crippled debugging tools,
I might add!). I would be a great deal happier, however,
if some of the numerous bug reports I have submitted
over the years were addressed. I mean, really, how
hard is it to make NLEVELS actually produce
N levels in a contour plot! Or make TV smart enough to
know the difference between an 8-bit display and a 24-bit
display, or a 2D image and a 24-bit image!

Hell, hire an old guy and turn him lose on this old
stuff that people actually use every day. That would
make a lot of people happy. :-)

Cheers,

David

--
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Subject: Re: Good programming practices and commercial development with IDL
Posted by medd on Fri, 22 Oct 2010 17:48:06 GMT
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> David Fanning writes:
>> I don't find this argument compelling, especially
>> when it comes to high-end software. I think people making
>> these kinds of decisions *weigh* price, but I don't think
>> it is their most important criteria. Support, I would
>> think, is MUCH more important to them.

You are totally right, the price is only part of the equation. And
support is critical. I also hope and believe that a future client
would choose us even if we are a bit more expensive.

But if I could develop the same commercial software in the same time
with Python, I would have 2,000$ more of benefit per client. Moreover,
I would need significantly less money from my pocket to set up the
start-up... For some reason, cost matters much more when the money
comes from your wallet as compared to when it comes from research
grants or from the budget of a large company.

> Just to give a personal example. I don't care how
> much IDL cost me. It does what I want it to do, and
> I like it a lot. It is a great general purpose
> scientific programming language.

I also agree, IDL is a great scientific programming language and I
also like it despite its eventual bugs.

My question was rather about developing commercial applications. The
requirements there change a lot... I am really uncertain about this
decision, and it might significantly change the chances of success for
the company.

Subject: Re: Good programming practices and commercial development with IDL
Posted by David Fanning on Fri, 22 Oct 2010 17:54:41 GMT
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medd writes:

> My question was rather about developing commercial applications. The
> requirements there change a lot... I am really uncertain about this
> decision, and it might significantly change the chances of success for
> the company.

All I'm saying is that if you are going to hitch your
wagon to ITTVIS, you might want to stick a package of
Tums in your pocket. I think they are headed again in
the right direction. Whether they will realize they
need a simpler implementation of their new graphics

objects before it's too late is another question.
It may be a bumpy ride. :-)

Cheers,

David

--
David Fanning, Ph.D.
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Subject: Re: Good programming practices and commercial development with IDL
Posted by Mark[1] on Tue, 26 Oct 2010 23:00:21 GMT
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On Oct 23, 6:48 am, medd <med...@googlemail.com> wrote:
>
> I also agree, IDL is a great scientific programming language and I
> also like it despite its eventual bugs.
>
> My question was rather about developing commercial applications. The
> requirements there change a lot... I am really uncertain about this
> decision, and it might significantly change the chances of success for
> the company.

Yes, it's a difficult decision. You're not going to get useful advice
from roll-your-own scientists like me. You're going to get slightly
more useful advice from someone like David Fanning who writes code for
other people. (He seems a bit undecided.) The people in the best
position to give you this advice (but who may not want to give it) are
those who've done something similar to what you're planning. Are there
any? If not, perhaps that tells you something.