
Subject: Re: IDL 8.1 is a Piece of Work

Posted by [BLesht](#) on Wed, 19 Oct 2011 15:40:23 GMT

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Ditto that - also random hangs that require a forced quit on a Mac.
8.0 runs the same code with no problem. Sigh...

On Oct 19, 10:06 am, David Fanning <n...@dfanning.com> wrote:

> Folks,
>
> Have I mentioned that IDL 8.1 is a piece of work!?
>
> This morning, I have IDL 8.1 running, along with the
> IDL 8.1 on-line help, and a browser. When I type a
> command in the IDL window that is *suppose* to summon
> a widget program to the display, no widget program
> appears. Instead, my browser window is popped to the
> front of my IDL window with what looks like Japanese
> characters in the browser title bar!
>
> For God's sake!!
>
> I mention this now because this weirdness is completely
> reproducible at the moment, unlike other intermittent
> oddities that continue to plague me with this miserable
> excuse for software.
>
> Yesterday, for example, as I was developing some
> map projection software, I noticed that about
> every 5th or 6th time I would run the program that
> no graphics window would appear. No errors or anything
> like that. Just no response whatsoever. If I issued
> a Window command, then a window would appear and all
> would act normally until another 5 or 6 minutes would
> pass.
>
> Very, very strange and irritating behavior. :-(
>
> Cheers,
>
> David
>
> --
> David Fanning, Ph.D.
> Fanning Software Consulting, Inc.
> Coyote's Guide to IDL Programming:<http://www.idlcoyote.com/>
> Sepore ma de ni thui. ("Perhaps thou speakest truth.")

Subject: Re: IDL 8.1 is a Piece of Work

Posted by [Paul Van Delst\[1\]](#) on Wed, 19 Oct 2011 16:19:36 GMT

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I know nothing about the windows environment, and I don't use the IDE, so your IDL experience may be normal (anyone? anyone?)

But maybe your computer has a virus? Or something.

Regardless, while I empathise with your frustration, I sure do appreciate the effort you're expending to exercise the function graphics routines and, just as importantly, document that effort.

cheers,

paulv

p.s. So, um, are ITTVIS paying you yet for this testing of IDL in the field? :o)

David Fanning wrote:

> Folks,

>

> Have I mentioned that IDL 8.1 is a piece of work!?

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> David
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Subject: Re: IDL 8.1 is a Piece of Work
Posted by [David Fanning](#) on Wed, 19 Oct 2011 16:41:38 GMT
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Paul van Delst writes:

> I know nothing about the windows environment, and I don't use the IDE, so your IDL
experience may be normal (anyone?
> anyone?)
>
> But maybe your computer has a virus? Or something.

Or, something. :-(

I suspect this problem is the same problem that
causes the WShow command to occasionally cycle through
all the applications open on the machine. (The WShow
command worked about a third of the time while I was
teaching last week. This is the most it has *ever* worked,
so there is some improvement there, for whatever reason.)

> Regardless, while I empathise with your frustration, I sure do appreciate the effort you're
expending to exercise the
> function graphics routines and, just as importantly, document that effort.

Well, sometimes I describe myself as a Luddite, but
in truth I think my record shows that I am usually
an early adaptor of new technology. I just usually
prefer that the new technology improves my life
instead of making it more frustrating. I was a little
late to this bandwagon because I couldn't get IDL 8.0
to run on my computer at all. I guess running badly
is also an improvement. :-)

> p.s. So, um, are ITTVIS paying you yet for this testing of IDL in the
field? :o)

Yeah, hundreds of thousands of dollars. I'll soon be rich. ;-)

Cheers,

David

P.S. Let's just say if they offered me some kind of a retirement package, I would be sorely tempted. :-)

--

David Fanning, Ph.D.

Fanning Software Consulting, Inc.

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

Subject: Re: IDL 8.1 is a Piece of Work

Posted by [Matt Francis](#) on Wed, 19 Oct 2011 21:36:20 GMT

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We use IDL 7.1 using the IDLDE for development on windows and Linux and then in batch mode for near real time data processing and visualisation. One of my colleagues attended your training course last week in Melbourne and mentioned all the nice features that IDL 8.1 has, such as list and hashes which I've hacked up implementations of as custom objects in 7.1 (which is therefore constrained by the horrible custom object syntax and memory mismanagement).

So my question is should we move to 8.1 or stay put, given the problems people are reporting? We don't do anything too fancy visualisation wise, just static 2d plots and maps, so we don't need to sit and the bleeding edge of fancy interactive graphics, if that is what causes the most problems.

Subject: Re: IDL 8.1 is a Piece of Work

Posted by [David Fanning](#) on Wed, 19 Oct 2011 22:43:20 GMT

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Beaker writes:

> So my question is should we move to 8.1 or stay put, given the
> problems people are reporting? We don't do anything too fancy
> visualisation wise, just static 2d plots and maps, so we don't need to
> sit and the bleeding edge of fancy interactive graphics, if that is
> what causes the most problems.

Broken graphics routines is about half the problem.

The other half of the problem seems to be the Workbench.
If you use the command line to do non-graphical things,
IDL 8.1 might please you.

Certainly lists and hashes are useful. The object
syntax is fabulous. Lists and hashes have been
implemented in the IDL language and exist for
earlier versions of the language. (I use my LinkedList
object for many "listy" things, and Craig Markwardt
has a very useful hash object.) As far as I know,
there are no "memory" issues with either. They
understand how to clean themselves up properly.

I won't be able to use lists and hashes for another
couple of years or so, just because of the kind of
work I do, but if you are not keen to share your
software and/or everyone you know is using a recent
version of IDL, then I say go for it.

ITTVIS claims the graphics system is "95% working",
but I seem to run into that other 5% every time I
try to do something useful. I have made a line plot
(sans legend, of course) that works properly. For
my purposes, I would say the graphics system is
95% broken. I guess your mileage may vary, because
I run into people who say they love the graphics
routines. They probably aren't as anal about
how things look as I am. :-)

If you do decide to upgrade to IDL 8.1, be sure
to purchase the three year maintenance support
contract at the same time. I have a feeling you
are **really** going to need it. ;-)

Cheers,

David

--

David Fanning, Ph.D.

Fanning Software Consulting, Inc.

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

Subject: Re: IDL 8.1 is a Piece of Work

Posted by [lecacheux.alain](#) on Thu, 20 Oct 2011 08:43:54 GMT

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On 20 oct, 00:43, David Fanning <n...@dfanning.com> wrote:

> Beaker writes:

>> So my question is should we move to 8.1 or stay put, given the
>> problems people are reporting? We don't do anything too fancy
>> visualisation wise, just static 2d plots and maps, so we don't need to
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> how things look as I am. :-)

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> Cheers,

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As a constant user of IDL since IDL v2, I would like to both reinforce and a little bit attenuate what David is saying.

IDL is an extremely powerful, efficient and elegant tool for doing calculation, data processing or data visualization in science (maybe the most powerful among those presently available). Partly because of the clever properties of the IDL language (continuously improved), partly due to the robustness of the IDL engine even in case of massive data processing (I never seen any crash of IDL before v7, except when there was some strong programming fault made by the user). Therefore, the future of IDL should be guaranteed.

Now, from v7 and especially with v8, we encounter two surprising weaknesses:

- 1) the new IDE, - the so called Workbench -, which relies on the Eclipse freeware, and replaces (for MS-Windows users only) a native, perfectly working IDE (available since v3). The Workbench clearly suffers from several internal bugs, mainly regarding memory allocation, which preclude, at the moment, any "professional" use of it. The IDL engine itself does not seem to be in fault; the problem likely lies in the implementation within Eclipse or in Eclipse itself. The(se) bug(s) hopefully will be corrected by ITTVIS in the next IDL versions.
 - 2) the introduction of a new way for doing interactive graphics, which is only at "95% working" (ITTVIS saying) and certainly at 0.001% documented ! I am pretty sure that NG is a clever step towards an easier (interactive) use of IDL graphic objects, following other unsuccessful tentatives like LiveTools, ITools, etc... But NG was delivered by ITTVIS with a number of remaining and particularly frustrating inconsistencies or bugs. For example the fact, described by David, that resizing a window may desorganize this window content ! Or that labels go everywhere when axis scale are set as logarithmic... Many correcting recipes (brightly revealed by Mark Piper in his webseminars) are impossible to be conceived by a common user alone, because of the absence of documentation. In other words, I think that NG was introduced by ITTVIS too early, in a finalization state which, at the moment, rules out its use in any real programming application. But, once more, except in these two particular points, IDL 8.1 is actually a very valuable tool, with many improvements with respect to earlier versions !
- alain.

Subject: Re: IDL 8.1 is a Piece of Work
Posted by [Paul Van Delst\[1\]](#) on Thu, 20 Oct 2011 18:02:39 GMT

Hello,

David Fanning wrote:

- > ITTVIS claims the graphics system is "95% working",
- > but I seem to run into that other 5% every time I
- > try to do something useful.

Maybe it's a different 5% each time....

:oD

cheers,

paulv

Subject: Re: IDL 8.1 is a Piece of Work

Posted by [David Fanning](#) on Thu, 20 Oct 2011 18:11:10 GMT

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Paul van Delst writes:

- > Maybe it's a different 5% each time....

This may be the truth!!

The problem I am working on this morning does a fair bit of overplotting of data on a line plot. And, I swear to God, every time I run the program I am getting a different result with extraneous lines drawn at apparently random locations! Sometimes the data shows up and sometimes it doesn't. I haven't been able to make heads or tails of it so far.

Cheers,

David

--

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