
Subject: New features for 5.0?

Posted by [rsmith](#) on Fri, 28 Jun 1996 07:00:00 GMT

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If IDL is going to have a new release, here are a few of the features I'd like to see:

1. On DEC machines, support (at least with doubles) values outside of the range 10^{-35} - 10^{35} . This is a huge, huge problem for me.
2. Multiple (ganged) plots on a single page is a great idea. However, the ability to easily go back and overplot would be fantastic. I know it can be done by mucking about with the system variables (I've done it), but better still would be an automatic way to do it.
3. A built-in way to read in ascii table files of any length, without having to know the length in advance. I've written a program to do it (as have at least 5 other people), which I'd be happy to donate. For the beginning user, it'd be a huge convenience.
4. Bring back the old help files as well--admit that the hyperhelp isn't so hot. Yes, I know the old help stuff is still there, accessible via some incantation, but it should be more up-front. Call it "userhelp" or something, but leave it in.

And, finally, the price. It seems to me that RSI is now going after the medical market--which can afford far more cost than, say, the astrophysics market I use IDL for. As a result, we're being priced out of the marketplace. I'm seriously looking at GUILE and GNUIDL as IDL replacements--it seems to me that when they get a little more ready, writing an idl2gnudl converter wouldn't be too hard. Just a thought...IDL is a fine product, but the cost is making it hard to justify.

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Not speaking for NASA, just myself.
