
Subject: Re: I want to know more about IDL
Posted by [davidf](#) on Sun, 18 Jan 1998 08:00:00 GMT
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Fabrice Laussy (laussy@nat.fr) writes:

- > I have a friend of mine who is using IDL for calculation in physic,
- > where she has opportunity to use such powerful tool as is Mathematica.
- > I wonder if she's not loosing her time learning IDL (because she's
- > just starting with it) instead of mastering other more famous
- > languages, used everywhere.

Whether you are wasting your time or not probably depends on what you want to do and what kind of tools you already have and know how to use. IDL is not a particularly hard language to learn how to use. And it is significantly easier to learn than a some of the more "famous languages". Where IDL excels, I think, is in how easy it is to "play" with your data, try things, experiment. An awful lot on insight comes to people while they are just noodling around at the IDL command line.

And while Mathematica is certainly a powerful tool, it seems to be better at a different class of problems than those typically being solved by IDL users. In my experience, Mathematica is more an adjunct to IDL than it is a competitor.

One good way to learn about IDL is to look at the numerous web pages devoted to IDL. You will find information that is appropriate for everyone from beginning to advanced IDL users. You will find quite a bit information on my web page, listed below. Links will guide you to other information.

- > So in order to have a precise idea about
- > it, I would like to know a bit more about IDL, and I think the best
- > way to start is this list (but I begin to be afraid as I've seen the
- > flame-atmosphere about just this book!

Gosh, that was the first flame I can remember in this newsgroup in many, many months. I think it was brought on by me getting a little sloppy and by Joe having a particularly bad day. I don't think anyone will flame you. :-)

Cheers,

David

David Fanning, Ph.D.

Fanning Software Consulting
E-Mail: davidf@dfanning.com
Phone: 970-221-0438
Coyote's Guide to IDL Programming: <http://www.dfanning.com/>
