Professor Severance,

I thought you might appreciate hearing about how a fellow classmate and I already found a way to make Python work for us. Stephanie Grimm (who was also in SI 502 for the Winter 2010 semester like me) and I were working on analyzing data from a reference survey that the Art, Architecture, and Engineering Library recently completed. Our data set was relatively large (269 rows with 9 columns of data about reference questions asked), and we obviously didn't want to count through all 269 pieces of data in a column and have to sort it by the various possible parameters. So we kludged together a Python program that searched through a text file (which we pasted in the column of data we wanted to analyze) and created a count of each parameter that appeared (e.g. number of questions answered at the desk/via e-mail/via phone, etc.). Whenever there was a blank line - usually indicating a piece of data that was not filled out - we instructed the program to convert this into the string "unknown" and count that as well. Because of this program, we were able to sort through data and compile statistics for our reference survey report much faster than if we had tried to do it by hand.

So Python does pay off, and I'm glad I had a chance to learn it.

Regards,
--
Benjamin Nanamaker
University Library Associate
Art, Architecture & Engineering Library
The University of Michigan