Programming Paradigms

(Lectures on High-performance Computing for Economists VII)

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January 27, 2022

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Programming Approaches
• A paradigm is the preferred approach to programming that a language supports.

• Main paradigms in scientific computation (many others for other fields):
  1. Imperative.
  2. Structured.
  3. Procedural.
  4. Object-Oriented.
  5. Functional.
• Multi-paradigm languages: C++, introduction a few years go of $\lambda$-calculus features.

• Different problems are better suited to different paradigms.

• You can always “speak” with an accent.

• Idiomatic programming.
Imperative, structured, and procedural
Imperative

• Oldest approach.

• Closest to the actual mechanical behavior of a computer ⇒ original imperative languages were abstractions of assembly language.

• A program is a list of instructions that change a memory state until desired end state is achieved.

• Useful for quite simple programs.

• Difficult to scale.

• Soon it led to spaghetti code.
• *Go To Statement Considered Harmful*, by Edsger Dijkstra in 1968.

• Structured program theorem (Böhm-Jacopini): sequencing, selection, and iteration are sufficient to express any computable function.

• Hence, structured: subroutines/functions, block structures, and loops, and tests.

• This is paradigm you are likely to be most familiar with.
• Evolution of structured programming.

• Divide the code in procedures: routines, subroutines, modules methods, or functions.

• Advantages:
  1. Division of work.
  2. Debugging and testing.
  4. Reusability.
OOP
Object-oriented programming I

- Predecessors in the late 1950s and 1960s in the LISP and Simula communities.

- 1970s: Smalltalk from the Xerox PARC.

- Large impact on software industry.

- Complemented with other tools such as design patterns or UML.

- Partial support in several languages: structures in C (and structs in older versions of MATLAB).

- Slower adoption in scientific and HPC.

- But now even Fortran has OO support.
Object-oriented programming II

• Object: a composition of nouns (numbers, strings, or variables) and verbs (functions).

• Class: a definition of an object.

• Analogy with functional analysis in math.

• Object receive messages, processes data, and sends messages to other objects.
Object-orientated programming: basic properties

- Encapsulation.
- Inheritance.
- Polymorphism.
- Overloading.
- Abstraction penalty.
Example in Matlab

- Class *household*.
- We create the file *household.m*.
- We run *Example Use Class.m*.
- Public, private, and protected properties and methods.
Functional Programming
Functional programming

- Nearly as old as imperative programming.
- Created by John McCarthy with LISP (list processing) in the late 1950s.
- Many important innovations that have been deeply influential.
- Always admired in academia but with little practical use (except in Artificial Intelligence).
Theoretical foundation

- Inspired by Alonzo Church’s $\lambda$-calculus from the 1930s.
- Minimal construction of “abstractions” (functions) and substitutions (applications).
- Lambda Calculus is Turing Complete: we can write a solution to any problem that can be solved by a computer.
- John McCarthy is able to implement it in a practical way.
- Robin Milner creates ML in the early 1970’s.
Why functional programming?

- Recent revival of interest.
- Often functional programs are:
  1. Easier to read.
  2. Easier to debug and maintain.
  3. Easier to parallelize.
- Useful features:
  1. Hindley–Milner type system.
  2. Lazy evaluation.
  3. Closures.
Main idea

• All computations are implemented through functions: functions are first-class citizens.

• Main building blocks:
  1. Immutability: no variables gets changed (no side effects). In some sense, there are no variables.
  2. Recursions.
  3. Curried functions.
• How do we interact then?

  1. Pure functional languages (like Haskell): only limited side changes allowed (for example, I/O) and tightly enforced to prevent leakage.

  2. Impure functional languages (like OCaml or F#): side changes allowed at the discretion of the programmer.

• Loops get substituted by recursion.

• We can implement many insights from functional programming even in standard languages such as C++ or Matlab.
Functional languages

- Main languages:

  1. Mathematica.
  2. Common Lisp/Scheme/Clojure.
  3. Standard ML/Calm/OCalm/F#.
  4. Haskell.
  5. Erlang/Elixir.