Computer Programming: Skills & Concepts (CP1)
Recursion and flags

16th November, 2010

Today's lecture

- Recursion: functions that call themselves
- Flags: binary variables that take note of state in loops
- Recursive version of MergeSort

Computing Factorial

Task: write a function that computes factorial

$$n! = \begin{cases} n \times (n-1)! & \text{if } n > 1 \\ 1 & \text{if } n = 1 \end{cases}$$

Factorial with `for` loop

```
int factorial( int n ) {
  int fact = 1;
  for( int i=2; i<=n; i++ ) {
    fact = fact * i;
  }
  return fact;
}
```

Nothing new here...

Factorial with recursion

```
int factorial( int n ) {
  if (n<=1)
    return 1;
  return n * factorial(n-1);
}
```

The function `factorial` calls itself!

Execution of recursion

```
factorial(5)
    return 5 * factorial(4);
               return 4 * factorial(3);
                          return 3 * factorial(2);
                                     return 2 * factorial(1);
                                                return 1;
                                     return 2 * 1;
                          return 3 * 2
               return 4 * 6
    return 5 * 24
120
```


Fibonacci numbers

The Fibonacci numbers are the sequence 0, 1, 1, 2, 3, 5, 8, 13, 21, ...

$$F(n) = \begin{cases} F(n-1) + F(n-2) & \text{if } n > 1 \\ 1 & \text{if } n = 1 \\ 0 & \text{if } n = 0 \end{cases}$$

$\frac{F(n+1)}{F(n)}$ converges to the **golden ratio** 1.618034.

Recursive computation of Fibonacci numbers

```
int fibonacci( int n ) {
  if (n==0)
    return 0;
  if (n==1)
    return 1;
  return fibonacci( n-1 ) + fibonacci( n - 2 );
}
```

- How many function calls does it roughly take to compute `fibonacci(10)` or `fibonacci(100)`?
- Could this be done faster?

Detecting events in a loop

We often loop through an array to string to detect a single event:

```
#define FOUND 1
#define NOT_FOUND 0
char word[20] = "abracadabra!";

for(int i=0; word[i] != '\0'; i++) {
  if (word[i] == 'c')
    return FOUND;
}
return NOT_FOUND;
```

Here we use the trick of exiting a function at different places. This may not always be possible.

Flags

Use of a flag:

```
#define FOUND 1
#define NOT_FOUND 0

char word[20] = "abracadabra!";

int flag = NOT_FOUND;
for(int i=0; word[i] != '\0'; i++) {
  if (word[i] == 'c')
    flag = FOUND;
}
```


Multiple flags

```
#define FOUND 1
#define NOT_FOUND 0

char word[20] = "abracadabra!";

int flag_c = NOT_FOUND;
int flag_q = NOT_FOUND;
for(int i=0; word[i] != '\0'; i++) {
  if (word[i] == 'c')
    flag_c = FOUND;
  else if (word[i] == 'q')
    flag_q = FOUND;
}
```


Finding the longest streak

Input: String that encodes wins (`W`) and losses (`L`)

```
char word[20] = "WLWWWLLWLLLLWW";
char flag = 'X';  int length = 0, longest = 0;
for(int i=0; word[i] != '\0'; i++) {
  if (word[i] == flag) {
    length++;
    if (length > longest) longest = length;
  }
  else {
    length = 1;
    flag = word[i]; // indicates if tracking wins or losses
} }
printf("longest streak is %d games.\n",longest);
```

MergeSort through recursion

- Previously we saw a "bottom-up" version of MergeSort.
- Typical implementation of MergeSort is *recursive*:
  - `merge` function is *identical* -
    takes two sorted arrays and creates the "merge" of those arrays
  - "top-down" implementation -
    The sort of the array `key` *is the result of sorting each half of* `key` *and then* `merge`-ing *those two sorted subarrays*

This "declarative" way of thinking about a problem is often the best way of coming up with a recursive algorithm.

recursive `mergesort`

```
void mergesort(int key[], int n){
  int j, *w;
  if (n>1) {
    w = calloc(n, sizeof(int));  /* space for temporary array */
    assert (w != NULL);
    j = n/2;
    mergesort(key, j);
    mergesort(key+j, n-j);
    merge(key, key+j, w, j, n-j);
    for (j = 0; j < n; ++j)
      key[j] = w[j];
    free(w);       /* Free up dynamic memory no longer in use. */
  }
}
```

- *simpler* than before
- I *thought* it would be slower than before (not really)

Office hours

For weeks 9, 10, 11, in *Informatics Forum*, IF 5.16 (Mary's office)

- Wednesday, 11am-12
- Thursday, 10am-11am
- *responsive mode* (ie, you bring the questions)

Start Wednesday 17th November.
Finish Thursday 2nd December.