CITS2200 Data Structures and Algorithms

Topic 3

Recursive Data Structures

- Review of recursion: mathematical functions
- Recursive data structures: Stacks and Lists
- Implementing linked stacks in Java
- Java and pointers
- Trees

Reading: Weiss, Chapter 6 and 7

1. Recursion

Powerful technique for solving problems which can be expressed in terms of smaller problems of the same kind.

In the previous lecture we saw recursion in the QuickSort Algorithm:

procedure QUICKSORT(A, p, r)
   if $p < r$
      then $q \leftarrow$ PARTITION(A, p, r)
         QUICKSORT$(A, p, q - 1)$; QUICKSORT$(A, q + 1, r)$

Recursion is:

- powerful — can solve arbitrarily large problems
- concise — code doesn't increase in size with problem
- closely linked to the very important proof technique called *mathematical induction*.
- not necessarily efficient
  - we'll see later that the time taken by this implementation of multiplication increases with approximately the square of the second argument
  - long multiplication taught in school is approximately linear in the number of digits in the second argument

2. Recursive Data Structures

Recursive programs usually operate on *recursive data structures*

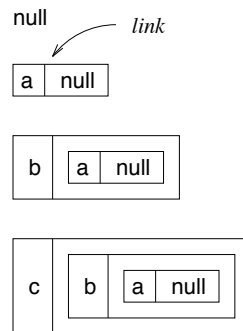$\Rightarrow$ data structure *defined in terms of itself*

2.1 Lists

A *list* may be defined recursively as follows:

- an empty list (or *null list*) is a list
- an item followed by (or *linked to*) a list is a list

Notice that the definition is like a recursive program — it has a base case and a recursive case!

Building a list...

2.2 List ADT

As an *abstract data type*, a list should allow us to:

1. Construct an empty list
2. Insert an element into the list
3. Look at an element in the list
4. Delete an element from the list
5. Move up and down the list

We will specify the List ADT more formally later ...

For now, we will just look at a simpler data structure called a `stack` that allows us to insert, delete, and examine only the first element in the list.

3.   A Stack Class in Java

3.1 The Links

Defined recursively...

```
 // link class for chars
 class Link {

   Object item;          //  the item stored in this link

   Link successor;        //the link stored in this link


   Link (Object c, Link s) { item=c; successor=s}
 }
```
Notice that the constructor makes a new link from an item and an existing link.

3.2 The Linked List

Next we need an object to "hold" the links. We will call this `LinkedStack`.

Contains a variable which is either equal to "`null`" or to the first link (which in turn contains any other links), so it must be of type `Link`...

```
    class LinkedStack {
      Link first;
    }
```

Now the methods...

• **Constructing an empty stack**

```
class LinkedStack {

  Link first;

  LinkedStack () {first = null;}     // constructor
}
```

Conceptually, think of this as assigning a "null object" (an empty stack) to `first`. (Technically it makes `first` a null-reference, but don't worry about this subtlety for now.)

first =   null

first = | a | null |

first = | b | | a | null | |

first = | c | | b | | a | null | | |

• **Adding to the stack**

```
class LinkedStack {
  Link first;
  LinkedStack () {first = null;}

  // insert a char at the front of the list
  void insert (Object o) {first = new Link(o, first);}
}
```
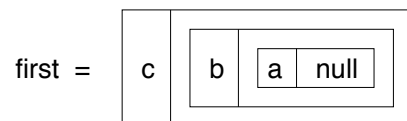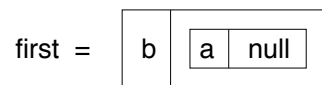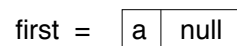
To create the stack shown above, the class that *uses* `LinkedStack`, say `LinkedStackTest`, would include something like. . .

```
LinkedStack myStack;          // myStack is an object
                              // of type LinkedStack
myStack = new LinkedStack();  // call constructor to
                              // create empty stack
myStack.insert('a');
myStack.insert('b');
myStack.insert('c');
```

• **Examining the first item in the Stack**

```
// define a test for the empty stack
boolean isEmpty () {return first == null;}

// if not empty return the first item
Object examine () {if (!isEmpty()) return first.item;}
```

• **Deleting the first item in the stack**

```
void delete () {if (!isEmpty()) first = first.successor;}
```

`first` then refers to the "*tail*" of the list.

Note that we no longer have a reference to the previous first link in the stack (and can never get it back). We haven't really "deleted" it so much as "abandoned" it. Java's automatic *garbage collection* reclaims the space that the first link used.

$\Rightarrow$ This is one of the advantages of Java — in C/C++ we have to reclaim that space with additional code.

The Complete Program

```
import CITS2200.*;            // Use a package of
                             // exceptions defined elsewhere.
/**
 * A basic recursive stack.
 */

public class LinkedStack {
  /**
   * Reference to the first link in the stack, or null if
   * the stack is empty.
   */
  private Link first;      // Private - users cannot access
                           // this directly.
```

```
/**
 * Create an empty stack.
 */
public LinkedStack() {first = null;}   // The constructor.

/**
 * Test whether the stack is empty.
 * @return true if the stack is empty, false otherwise
 */
public boolean isEmpty () {return first == null;}

/**
 * Insert an item at the front of the stack.
 * @param o the Object to insert
 */
public void insert (Object o) {first = new Link(o, first);}
```

```
/**
 * Examine the first item in the stack.
 * @return the first item in the stack
 * @exception Underflow if the stack is empty
 */
public Object examine () throws Underflow {
  if (!isEmpty()) return first.item;
  else throw new Underflow("examining empty list");
}
        // Underflow is an example of an exception that
        // occurs (or is ''thrown'') if the list is empty.
/**
 * Delete the first item in the stack.
 * @exception Underflow if the stack is empty
 */
public void delete () throws Underflow {
  if (!isEmpty())  first = first.successor;
  else throw new Underflow("deleting from empty list");
}
```

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```
        // Many classes provide a string representation
        // of the data, for example for printing,
        // defined by a method called ''toString()''.
  /**
   * construct a string representation of the stack
   * @return the string representation
   */
  public String toString () {
    Link cursor = first;
    String s = "";
    while (cursor != null) {
      s = s + cursor.item;
      cursor = cursor.successor;
    }
    return s;
  }
}
```

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4. Java and Pointers

Conceptually, the successor of a stack *is* a stack.

One of the great things about Java (and other suitable object oriented languages) is that the program closely reflects this "theoretical" concept — from a programmer's point-of-view the successor of a Link *is* a Link.

Internally, however, all instance variables act as *references*, or "*pointers*", to the actual data.

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Therefore, a list that looks conceptually like
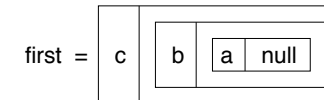
internally looks more like

For simplicity of drawing, we will often use the latter type of diagram for representing recursive data structures.

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5. Data Abstraction

The above class provides:

- data, and instructions to access it
- "higher-level" role of the program

We specified our stack so that we always added, examined and deleted at the front of a sequence.
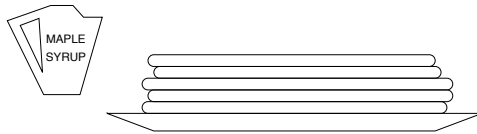
Operations on a stack:

1. Create an empty stack
2. Test whether the stack is empty
3. Add (*push*) a new element on the top
4. Examine (*peek* at) the top element
5. Delete (*pop*) the top element

We could change these operations slightly so that we always examined and deleted from the front of the sequence, but added at the back of the sequence.

This is just what a *queue*, or *FIFO* (first-in, first-out buffer), does!
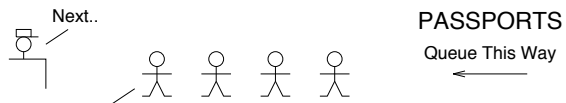
In general, the operations on a queue include:

1. Create an empty queue
2. Test whether the queue is empty
3. Add (*enqueue*) a new latest element
4. Examine the earliest element
5. Delete (*dequeue*) the earliest element

6. Specifying ADTs

We saw in Topic 1 that ADTs consist of a set of operations on a set of data values. We can *specify* ADTs by listing the operations (or *methods*).

The lists of operations on the previous pages are very informal and not sufficient for writing code. For example

    2. Test whether the queue is empty

doesn't tell us the name of the method, what arguments it is called with, what is returned, and whether it can throw an exception.

In these notes, we will specify ADTs by providing at least:

- the *name* of each operation
- example *parameters* (the implementation may use different parameter names, but will have the same number, type and order)
- an explanation of *what the operation does* — in particular, any constraints on or changes to the parameters, changes to the ADT instance on which the method operates, what is returned, and any exceptions thrown

Thus, a Queue ADT might be specified by the following operations:

1. *Queue()*: create an empty queue
2. *isEmpty()*: return `true` if the queue is empty, `false` otherwise
3. *enqueue(e)*: e is added as the last item in the queue
4. *examine()*: return the first item in the queue, or throw an exception if the queue is empty
5. *dequeue()*: remove and return the first item in the queue, or throw an exception if the queue is empty

Similarly, the specification of a Stack ADT:

1. *Stack()*: create an empty stack
2. *isEmpty()*: return `true` if the stack is empty, `false` otherwise
3. *push(e)*: item e is pushed onto the top of the stack
4. *peek()*: return the item on the top of the stack, or throw an exception if the stack is empty
5. *pop()*: remove and return the item on the top of the stack, or throw an exception if the stack is empty

Note: The use of upper and lowercase in method names should follow the rules described in the document *Java Programming Conventions*.

7. Summary

Recursive data structures:

- can be arbitrarily large

- support recursive programs

- are a fundamental part of computer science — they will appear again and again
  in this and other units

$\Rightarrow$ You need to understand them. If not, seek help!

We will see many in this unit, including more on lists and trees.