CS 242

Lisp

John Mitchell

Lisp, 1960

- Look at Historical Lisp
  - Perspective
    - Some old ideas seem old
    - Some old ideas seem new
  - Example of elegant, minimalist language
  - Not C: a chance to think differently
  - Many general themes in language design
- Supplementary reading
  - McCarthy, Recursive functions of symbolic expressions and their computation by machine, *Communications of the ACM,* Vol 3, No 4, 1960.

John McCarthy

- Pioneer in AI
  - Formalize common-sense reasoning
- Also
  - Proposed timesharing
  - Mathematical theory
  - ....
- Lisp
  - stems from interest in symbolic computation (math, logic)

Lisp summary

- Many different dialects
  - Lisp 1.5, Maclisp, …, Scheme, …
  - CommonLisp has many additional features
  - This course: a fragment of Lisp 1.5, approximately
    But ignore static/dynamic scope until later in course
- Simple syntax

  (+ 1 2 3)
  (+ (* 2 3) (* 4 5))
  (f x y)

Easy to parse. (Looking ahead: programs as data)

Atoms and Pairs

- Atoms include numbers, indivisible “strings”

  <atom> ::= <smbl> | <number>
  <smbl> ::= <char> | <smbl><char> | <smbl><digit>
  <num> ::= <digit> | <num><digit>
- Dotted pairs
  - Write (A . B) for pair
  - Symbolic expressions, called *S-expressions*:
    <sexp> ::= <atom> | (<sexp> . <sexp>)

Basic Functions

- Functions on atoms and pairs:

  cons car cdr eq atom
- Declarations and control:

  cond lambda define eval quote
- Example

  (lambda (x) (cond ((atom x) x) (T (cons ‘A x))))
  function f(x) = if atom(x) then x else cons(“A”,x)
- Functions with side-effects

  rplaca rplacd set setq

Evaluation of Expressions

- Read-eval-print loop
- Function call (function arg_1 … arg_n)
  - evaluate each of the arguments
  - pass list of argument values to function
- Special forms do not eval all arguments
  - Example (cond (p_1 e_1) … (p_n e_n))
    - proceed from left to right
    - find the first p_i with value true, eval this e_i
  - Example (quote A) does not evaluate A

Examples

(+ 4 5)
  expression with value 9

(+ (+ 1 2) (+ 4 5))
  evaluate 1+2, then 4+5, then 3+9 to get value

(cons (quote A) (quote B))
  pair of atoms A and B

(quote (+ 1 2))
  evaluates to list (+ 1 2)

'(+ 1 2)
  same as (quote (+ 1 2))

McCarthy's 1960 Paper

- Interesting paper with
  - Good language ideas, succinct presentation
  - Some feel for historical context
  - Insight into language design process
- Important concepts
  - Interest in symbolic computation influenced design
  - Use of simple machine model
  - Attention to theoretical considerations
    Recursive function theory, Lambda calculus
  - Various good ideas: Programs as data, garbage collection

Motivation for Lisp

- Advice Taker
  - Process sentences as input, perform logical reasoning
- Symbolic integration, differentiation
  - expression for function --> expression for integral
    (integral '(lambda (x) (times 3 (square x))))
- Motivating application part of good lang design
  - Keep focus on most important goals
  - Eliminate appealing but inessential ideas

Lisp	symbolic computation, logic, experimental prog.
C	Unix operating system
Simula	simulation
PL/1	"kitchen sink", not successful in long run

Execution Model (Abstract Machine)

- Language semantics must be defined
  - Too concrete
    - Programs not portable, tied to specific architecture
    - Prohibit optimization (e.g., C eval order *undefined* in expn)
  - Too abstract
    - Cannot easily estimate running time, space
- Lisp: IBM 704, but only certain ideas …
  - Address, decrement registers -> cells with two parts
  - Garbage collection provides abstract view of memory

Abstract Machine

- Concept of abstract machine:
  - Idealized computer, executes programs directly
  - Capture programmer's mental image of execution
  - Not too concrete, not too abstract
- Examples
  - Fortran
    - Flat register machine; memory arranged as linear array
    - No stacks, no recursion.
  - Algol family
    - Stack machine, contour model of scope, heap storage
  - Smalltalk
    - Objects, communicating by messages.

Theoretical Considerations

- " ... scheme for representing the partial recursive functions of a certain class of symbolic expressions."
- Lisp uses
  - Concept of computable (partial recursive) functions
    - Want to express *all* computable functions
  - Function expressions
    - known from lambda calculus (developed A. Church)
    - lambda calculus equivalent to Turing Machines, but provide useful syntax and computation rules

Innovations in the Design of Lisp

- Expression-oriented
  - function expressions
  - conditional expressions
  - recursive functions
- Abstract view of memory
  - Cells instead of array of numbered locations
  - Garbage collection
- Programs as data
- Higher-order functions

Parts of Speech

- Statement   load 4094 r1
  - Imperative command
  - Alters the contents of previously-accessible memory
- Expression   (x+5)/2
  - Syntactic entity that is evaluated
  - Has a value, need not change accessible memory
  - If it does, has a *side effect*
- Declaration   integer x
  - Introduces new identifier
  - May bind value to identifier, specify type, etc.

Function Expressions

- Example:

  (lambda (*parameters*) (*function_body*))
- Syntax comes from lambda calculus:

  λf. λx. f (f x)

  (lambda (f) (lambda (x) (f (f x))))

Function expression defines a function but does not give a name to it.

```
( (lambda (f) (lambda (x) (f (f x))))
   (lambda (y) (+ 2 y)))
)
```

Conditional Expressions in Lisp

- Generalized if-then-else

  (cond (p_1 e_1) (p_2 e_2) … (p_n e_n))
  - Evaluate conditions p_1 … p_n left to right
  - If p_i is first condition true, then evaluate e_i
  - Value of e_i is value of expression

  Undefined if no p_i true, or

  p_1 … p_i false and p_{i+1} undefined, or

  relevant p_i true and e_i undefined

Conditional statements in assembler

Conditional expressions apparently new in Lisp

Examples

(cond ((<2 1) 2) ((<1 2) 1))

has value 1

(cond ((<2 1) 2) ((<3 2) 3))

is undefined

(cond (diverge 1) (true 0))

is undefined, where diverge is undefined

(cond (true 0) (diverge 1))

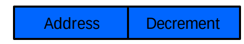
has value 0

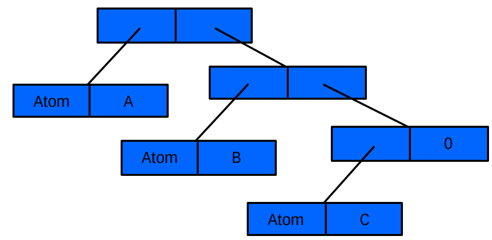
Strictness

- An operator or expression form is *strict* if it can have a value only if all operands or subexpressions have a value.
- Lisp cond is not strict, but addition is strict
  - (cond (true 1) (diverge 0))
  - (+ e_1 e_2)

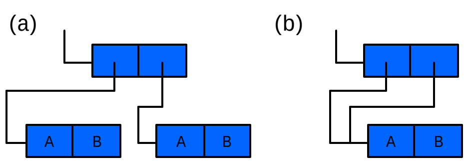
Lisp Memory Model

- Cons cells
- Atoms and lists represented by cells





Sharing



- Both structures could be printed as (A.B).(A.B)
- Which is result of evaluating

  (cons (cons ‘A ‘B) (cons ‘A ‘B)) ?

Garbage Collection

- Garbage:

  At a given point in the execution of a program *P*, a memory location *m* is *garbage* if no continued execution of *P* from this point can access location *m*.
- Garbage Collection:
  - Detect garbage during program execution
  - GC invoked when more memory is needed
  - Decision made by run-time system, not program

This is can be very convenient. Example: in building text-formatting program, ~40% of programmer time on memory management.

Examples

(car (cons (e_1) (e_2)))

Cells created in evaluation of e_2 may be garbage, unless shared by e_1 or other parts of program

((lambda (x) (car (cons (… x…) (… x …)))
'(Big Mess))

The car and cdr of this cons cell may point to overlapping structures.

Mark-and-Sweep Algorithm

- Assume tag bits associated with data
- Need list of heap locations named by program
- Algorithm:
  - Set all tag bits to 0.
  - Start from each location used directly in the program. Follow all links, changing tag bit to 1
  - Place all cells with tag = 0 on free list

Why Garbage Collection in Lisp?

- McCarthy's paper says that this is "more convenient for the programmer than a system in which he has to keep track of and erase unwanted lists."
- Does this reasoning apply equally well to C?
- Is garbage collection "more appropriate" for Lisp than C? Why?

Programs As Data

- Programs and data have same representation
- Eval function used to evaluate contents of list
- Example: substitute x for y in z and evaluate

```
(define substitute (lambda (x y z)
   (cond  ((atom z) (cond ((eq z y) x ) (T z)))
          (T  (cons (substitute x y (car z))
                    (substitute x y (cdr z))))))
(define substitute-and-eval
     (lambda (x y z) (eval (substitute x y z))))
```

Recursive Functions

- Want expression for function f such that

  (f x) = (cond ((eq x 0) 0) (true (+ x (f (- x 1)))))
- Try

  (lambda (x) (cond ((eq x 0) 0) (true (+ x (f (- x 1))))))

  but f in function body is not defined.
- McCarthy's 1960 solution was operator "label"

```
(label f
   (lambda (x) (cond ((eq x 0) 0) (true (+ x (f (- x 1)))))))
```

Higher-Order Functions

- Function that either
  - takes a function as an argument
  - returns a function as a result
- Example: function composition

```
(define compose
   (lambda (f g) (lambda (x) (f (g x)))))
```

- Example: maplist

```
(define maplist (f x)
   (cond ((null x) nil)
         (true (cons (f (car x)) (maplist f (cdr x))))))
```

Efficiency and Side-Effects

- Pure Lisp: no side effects
- Additional operations added for "efficiency"

  (rplaca x y) replace car of cell x with y

  (rplacd x y) replace cdr of cell x with y
- What does "efficiency" mean here?
  - Is (rplaca x y) faster than (cons y (cdr x)) ?
  - Is faster always better?

Summary: Contributions of Lisp

- Successful language
  - symbolic computation, experimental programming
- Specific language ideas
  - Expression-oriented: functions and recursion
  - Lists as basic data structures
  - Programs as data, with universal function `eval`
  - Stack implementation of recursion via "public pushdown list"
  - Idea of garbage collection.

Announcements

- Exam conflicts – send email to cs242@cs
  - If you are taking cs244a, we'll work something out
- Homework graders - email to cs242@cs
- Topic suggestions received
  - Closures and recursion, actors
  - Perl
  - Generic programming – types in module interfaces
    - Boost Concept Checking Library
  - Cross-language interoperability (Corba vs COM)
  - OCaml, C#, .Net