Procedures and Functions

Procedures have long history as essential programming tool

Low-level view: subroutines let us avoid duplicating frequently-used code

Higher-level view: procedural abstraction lets us divide programs into components with hidden internals

Procedural abstractions are parameterized over values and (sometimes) types

A function is just a procedure that returns a result (or, conversely, a procedure is just a function whose result we don’t care about).
Procedure Activation Data

- Each invocation of procedure is specialized by associated activation data, such as:
  - the actual values corresponding to the formal parameters of the procedure
  - locations allocated for the values of local variables
  - the return address in the caller

- Activation data lives from the time procedure is called until the time it returns.

- If one procedure calls another, directly or indirectly, their activation data must be kept separate, because lifetimes overlap.

  - In particular, each recursive invocation needs new activation data.
Activation Stacks

In most languages, activation data can be stored on a stack, and we speak of pushing and popping activation frames on the stack.

Program:

```c
int f(int x, int y) {
    int z = y+y;
    if (z > 0)
        z = f(z,0);
    return z+y;
}

void main() {
    int w = 10;
    w = f(w,w);
}
```
Calling conventions

- In compiled language implementations, we want to be able to generate the code for procedures separately from the code for their applications.
  - e.g. procedure may live in a pre-compiled library
- Requires a calling convention between caller and callee.
  - e.g. caller places parameter values on the stack in a fixed order, and callee looks for them there.
- In an interpreter, where caller and callee are visible at the same time, it is easy to be imprecise about this, but we will try to build a careful model in the labs.
Procedure Parameter Passing

- When we apply a function in an imperative language, the formal parameters get bound to locations containing values.

- How is this done and which locations are used?

- Do we pass addresses or contents of variables from the caller?

- How do we pass actual values that aren’t variables?

- What does it mean to pass a large value like an array?

- Two main approaches: call-by-value (CBV) and call-by-reference (CBR).

- Also call-by-name/need (CBN).
Call-by-value

- Each actual parameter is evaluated to a value before call.

- On entry to function, each formal parameter is bound to a freshly-allocated location, and the actual parameter value is copied into that location.

  - Much like processing declaration and initialization of a local variable.

- Semantics are just like assignment of actual expression to formal parameter.

- Simple; easy to understand!
Issues with call-by-value

- Updating a formal parameter doesn’t affect actuals in the caller.
- Usually a good thing!
- But sometimes not what we want

```c
void swap(int i, int j) {
    int t;
    t = i; i = j; j = t;
}
...
swap(a[p], a[q]);
```
More issues

• Can be inefficient for large unboxed values, e.g. C structs (records):

```c
typedef struct {double a1, a2, ..., a10;} vector;
double dotp(vector v, vector w) {
    return v.a1 * w.a1 + v.a2 * w.a2 + ... + v.a10 * w.a10;
}
vector v1, v2;
double d = dotp(v1, v2);
```

Call to `dotp` copies 20 doubles
Call-by-reference

- Pass a pointer to the existing **location** of each actual parameter.

- Within function, references to formal parameter are indirected through this pointer — so parameter can be dereferenced to get the value, but can also be updated.

- If actual argument doesn’t have a location (e.g. is an expression `(x+3)`) then either:
  
  - evaluate it into a temporary location and pass address of temporary, or
  
  - treat as an error.
Issues with Call-by-reference

- Now procedures like `swap` work fine!
- Can also return values from procedure by assigning to parameters
- Lots of opportunity for aliasing problems, e.g.

```pascal
PROCEDURE matmult(a,b,c: MATRIX)
  ...
  (* sets c := a * b *)

matmult(a,b,a) (* oops! *)
```

Overwrites parts of argument as it computes result.
Hybrid methods

In Pascal, Ada, and C++, programmer can specify (in the procedure header) for each parameter whether to use CBV or CBR

C always uses CBV, but programmers can take the address of a variable explicitly, and pass that to obtain CBR-like behavior:

```c
swap(int *a, int *b) {
    int t;
    t = *a; *a = *b; *b = t; }
swap (&a[p],&a[q]);
```
Values can be References

- In many modern languages, like Java or Python, both records (objects) and arrays are always boxed, so values of these types are already pointers (or references).

- Thus, even if the language uses CBV, the values that are passed are actually references: calls don’t cause any actual copying of the large values.

- But it is a mistake (which some otherwise good authors make) to say that these languages use “call-by-reference” (If they did, they would be passing a reference to the reference!)
Substitution and macros

One simple way to give semantics to procedure calls is to say they behave “as if” the procedure body were textually substituted for the call, substituting actual parameters for formal ones.

This is very similar to macro-expansion, which really does this substitution (statically). E.g. (in C):

```c
#define swap(x,y) {int t; t = x; x = y; y = t;}
... 
swap(a[p],a[q]);
```

expands to

```c
{int t; t = a[p]; a[p] = a[q]; a[q] = t;}
```
Avoiding capture

- Blind substitution is dangerous!

```c
#define swap(x,y) {int t; t = x; x = y; y = t;}
```

```c
swap(a[t], a[q])
```

expands to

```c
{int t; t = a[t]; a[t] = a[q]; a[q] = t;}
```

Nonsense!

We say that `t` has been captured by the declaration in the macro block.
One solution is to note that names of local variables are not important, e.g. we can rename to

\{int u; u = a[t]; a[t] = a[q]; a[q] = u;\}

Call-by-name can be thought of as “substitution with renaming where necessary”

On real machines, CBN is implemented by passing to the function the AST for actual argument + values of its free variables

This makes CBN much less efficient to implement than CBV or CBR. (We may see more later.)
Call-by-need

A very useful feature of call-by-name is that arguments are evaluated only if needed

```haskell
foo x y = if x > 0 then x else y
```

foo 1 (factorial 1000000)

As a further refinement, “pure” functional languages typically use call-by-need (or lazy) evaluation, in which arguments are evaluated at most once:

```haskell
foo x y = if x > 0 then x else y * y
```

foo (-1) (factorial 1000000)

avoids expensive computation

avoids expensive recomputation
Iteration into Recursion

Any iteration can be written as a recursion, e.g.

```
while (c) {e}
```

Scala

is equivalent to

```
def f(b:Boolean):Unit =
  if (b) {
    e;
    f(c)
  }

f(c)
```

assuming the variables used by `c` and `e` are in scope.
Recursion into iteration?

- When can we do the converse?

- A recursion can be rewritten as an iteration (without needing any extra storage) whenever all the recursive calls are in tail position.

  - Call in tail position iff it is the last thing performed by the caller before it itself returns.

- This rewrite is often worthwhile, in order to avoid pushing a stack activation frame for each recursive call (lowers total stack needed and eliminates push/pop time).

- A decent compiler can turn tail-calls into iterations automatically. This is essential for functional languages, which use recursion heavily, but is useful even for imperative ones.
Scala list tail-call examples

```scala
def find (y:Int,xs:List[Int]):Boolean = xs match {
  case Nil => false
  case (x::xs1) => (x == y) || find(y,xs1) // tail-recursive
}

def length (xs:List[Int]):Int = xs match {
  case Nil => 0
  case (_::xs1) => 1 + length(xs1)  // not tail-recursive
}

def length_tr (xs:List[Int]):Int = {
  // use an auxiliary function with an accumulating parameter
  def f (xs:List[Int],len:Int):Int = xs match {
    case Nil => len
    case (_::xs1) => f(xs1,len+1)  // tail-recursive
  }
  f(xs,0)
}
```

A decent compiler can turn tail-calls into iterations, thus saving the cost of pushing an activation frame on the stack. This is essential for functional languages, and useful even for imperative ones.
Systematic Removal of Recursion

- But what about general (non-tail) recursion?
- One way to get a better appreciation for how recursion is implemented is to see what is required to get rid of it
- Additional explicitly-allocated memory space is needed!
typedef struct tree *Tree;
struct tree {
    int value;
    Tree left, right;
};

void printtree(Tree t) {
    if (t) {
        print(t->value);
        printtree(t->left);
        printtree(t->right);
    }
}

(Adapted from R. Sedgewick, *Algorithms*, 2nd ed.)
Remove **tail-recursion**.

```c
void printtree(Tree t) {
    top:
    if (t) {
        print(t->value);
        printtree(t->left);
        t = t->right;
        goto top;
    }
}
```
**STEP 2**

Use explicit stack to replace non-tail recursion. Simulate behavior of compiler by pushing local variables and return address onto the stack **before** call and popping them back off the stack **after** call.

Assume this stack interface, specialized to use Tree as the stack element type.

```c
Stack empty;
void push(Stack s, Tree t);
Tree pop(Stack s);
bool isEmpty(Stack s);
```
Here there is only one local variable \((t)\) and the return address is always the same, so there’s no need to save it.

```c
void printtree(Tree t) {
    Stack s = empty;

    top:
        if (t) {
            print(t->value);
            push(s,t);
            t = t->left;
            goto top;
        }
        if (!(isEmpty(s))) {
            t = pop(s);
            goto retaddr;
        }
}
```

```c
retaddr:
        t = t->right;
        goto top;
        goto top;
    }
    if (!isEmpty(s)) {
        t = pop(s);
        goto retaddr;
    }
}
```
Simplify by:

- Rearranging to avoid the retaddr label.
- Pushing right child instead of parent on stack.
- Replacing first goto with a while loop.

```c
void printtree(Tree t) {
    Stack s = empty;
    top:
    while (t) {
        print(t->value);
        push(s,t->right);
        t = t->left;
    }
    if (!(isEmpty(s))) {
        t = pop(s);
        goto top;
    }
}
```
Rearrange some more to replace outer `goto` with another `while` loop.

(This is slightly wasteful, since an extra `push`, `stackempty` check and `pop` are performed on root node.)

```c
void printtree(Tree t) {
    Stack s = empty;
push(s,t);
    while(!(isEmpty(s))) {
        t = pop(s);
        while (t) {
            print(t->value);
push(s,t->right);
        }
        t = t->left;
    }
}
```
A more symmetric version can be obtained by pushing and popping the left children too.

Compare this to the original recursive program.

```c
void printtree(Tree t) {
    Stack s = empty;
    push(s,t);
    while(!isEmpty(s)) {
        t = pop(s);
        if (t) {
            print(t->value);
            push(s,t->right);
            push(s,t->left);
        }
    }
}
```
We can also test for empty subtrees before we push them on the stack rather than after popping them.

```c
void printtree(Tree t) {
    Stack s = empty;
    if (t) {
        push(s, t);
        while(!(isEmpty(s))) {
            t = pop(s);
            print(t->value);
            if (t->right)
                push(s,t->right);
            if (t->left)
                push(s,t->left);
        }
    }
}
```