Algorithms

Algorithms are a familiar idea. Our goal is to learn to specify them right so someone or something else can do the work.

Previous Algorithms

Algorithm, a precise, systematic method to produce a specified result

• We have seen algorithms already...
  • Placeholder technique is an algorithm with an easy specification:
    longStringWithShortStringInIt ← placeholder
    ShortString ← ε
    placeholder ← longStringWithShortStringInit

Not every process is an algorithm -- debugging

Properties of Algorithms

For an algorithm to be well specified it must have ...

• Inputs specified
• Outputs specified
• Definiteness
• Effectiveness
• Finiteness

Programs vs Algorithms

A program is an algorithm specialized to a particular situation

• Algorithm:
  longStringWithShortStringInIt ← placeholder
  ShortString ← ε
  placeholder ← longStringWithShortStringInit

• Program:
  ↓↓ ← #
  ↓ ← ε
  # ← ↓↓

Alphabetize CDs

1. Define Artist_of to refer to the group name
2. Pick Alpha: Decide which end of rack is to be start of alphabetic sequence, and call the first slot alpha
3. Pick Beta: Call the slot next to alpha, beta
4. Exchange: If Artist_of the CD in the alpha slot is later in the alphabet than the Artist_of the CD in the beta slot, interchange the CDs, otherwise continue on
5. More Betas?: If a slot follows beta slot, begin calling it the beta slot and go to step 4, otherwise continue on
6. More Alphas?: If two slots follow the alpha slot, begin calling the next one the alpha slot and the one following it the beta slot; go to step 4; otherwise stop

Flow Chart

Start
1. Define Artist_of CD in alpha slot later than Artist_of CD in beta slot
2. Select starting end; name it alpha
3. Call beta the slot adjacent to alpha
4. Is there a slot following the beta slot?
5. Interchange CDs in alpha & beta
6. Are there 2 slots following alpha?
7. Advance alpha to next slot & slot after it beta
8. Interchange CDs in alpha & beta
9. Begin calling next slot beta
10. Stop
Demonstration

Abstraction

Abstraction means removing an idea or process form a situation.

Beta sweep -- while alpha points to a fixed slot, beta sweeps through slots following alpha, interchanging as necessary.

The beta sweep is a concept removed based on our understanding of the operation of the algorithm.

Flow Chart

The Beta Sweep

By abstracting we can analyze parts of an algorithm...

* The beta sweep has 4 properties:
  * Exhaustive -- it considers all CDs after alpha
  * Non-redundant -- no slot pair is checked twice
  * Progressive -- the alphabetically earliest CD considered so far is always in the alpha slot
  * Effective -- at completion, the alphabetically earliest CD from alpha to end is in alpha slot

These properties apply only to Alphabetize CDs.

Alpha Sweep

The alpha sweep...

Process of sweeping through all of the CDs (but the last) performing the beta sweep

* Exhaustive -- considers all but last CD
* Non-redundant -- a slot is alpha only once
* Progressive -- when beta sweep completes the alphabetically next CD in alpha
* Complete -- when beta sweep is done the last slot's CD is later than next to last slot
* Effective -- the alpha sweep alphabetizes

Summary

We figure out most algorithms on our own, abstracting from specific cases.
Also we abstract parts of an algorithm or program to understand them.

* Thinking of how the program works and reasoning about its properties allows us to know why an algorithm works ... and then we can let the computer do it.
In Sunday’s Paper...

Google Bombing: To sabotage Google’s page-rank system

Google

Ask Google for ‘miserable failure’

George W Bush?

The most highly ranked Web page for words ‘miserable failure’ is George Bush?

Sample Query

What’s Happening?

Many pages make their anchor text ‘miserable failure’ and make the anchor link to the Bush biography

Google trusts anchor text in the page rank calculation