LittleApp to BigApp

CSE 403, Spring 2004
Software Engineering

http://www.cs.washington.edu/education/courses/403/04sp/

Readings and References

- Chapter 19, Designing for Change, Rapid Development, McConnell
- Perfection and Simplicity, Taste and Aesthetics, and Designing Distributed Systems, from A Conversation with Ken Arnold, by Bill Venners

From LittleApp to BigApp

- LittleApp prototypes can show that the basic concepts are workable
- Likely open issues
  - Correctness - dummy data
  - Completeness - inflexible sources, usability
  - Robustness - frustrating response to errors
  - Style - design, generalization, documentation

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<tr>
<th>Program</th>
<th>Programming System</th>
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<td>LittleApp</td>
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<td>interfaces, system integration</td>
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<td>generalization, testing, documentation, maintenance</td>
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Design issues

- Interfaces
  » What are the defined interfaces?
  » Which fundamental decisions cannot be changed and still use the same architecture?

- Modules
  » What are the major modules using those interfaces?
  » Can fundamental design decisions in one module be changed without affecting the other modules?

- Documentation

Designing for Change

- Change happens
  » underlying technology changes, a performance goal is not met, new requirements are levied
  » perhaps the product is a success and lives for a decade or two!

- A successful design
  » hides the implementation decisions
  » can change locally without causing ripples throughout the entire structure

Not a single tool, but an approach

- Identify areas likely to change
- Use information hiding to conceal the design decisions
- Develop a change plan
- Define families of programs
- Use object-oriented design

What might change?

- Hardware for sure - many possible platforms
- File formats - how many graphics formats?
- Inputs and outputs, user’s natural language
- Non-standard language features, libraries
- Features that are difficult to implement (AWT)
- Global variables
- Specific data structures and abstract data types
- Business rules, sequence of actions
- Requirements that were excluded, new features
Implementation is not just a detail

- What is important to keep in mind when you are designing a distributed system?
  » A distributed system, in the sense in which I take any interest, means a system in which the failure of an unknown computer can screw you.
  » Failure is the defining difference between distributed and local programming, so you have to design distributed systems with the expectation of failure.

from Designing Distributed Systems, A Conversation with Ken Arnold, by Bill Venners

Develop a change plan

- Use abstract interfaces first, then classes
- Never use hardcoded literals
- Use late binding strategies
  » dynamic allocation of data structures
  » let the data structure tell you how big it is
- Use table driven strategies
  » property files, registries
  » configuration editors and tools (gcc config …)

More change plan

- Don’t duplicate code or state
  » put it in a single method and call it when needed
- Keep the methods and classes simple and cohesive
  » easier to reuse or use in a new way
- Avoid coupling
- Keep the general purpose layers free of implementation leakage from below

Define families of programs

- What are the change vectors?
- If your product is a success, where will it go next?
  » international? - language, currency, measurement
  » system scale? - cell, PDA, desktop browser, server
  » product distribution? - corporate, personal retail, educational, ad supported, free “lite”
- Think about the minimal subset of functions needed in all versions and how to present it
Perfection and Simplicity

- I once heard you say there is no such thing as a perfect design. Could you clarify what you meant by that?
- There is no such thing as a perfect design for a couple of reasons.
  - All designs take place in context ... who will be using your design? ... if you try to create a perfect design you will expend a huge amount of effort ... then there's the problem of predicting the future.
- The best that people can reasonably hope for is to put forth an appropriate amount of effort and get a good design that is sufficient.

from Perfection and Simplicity, A Conversation with Ken Arnold, by Bill Venners

Now build it!

- Bad design leads you down the wrong road
- Bad construction takes you down a road full of potholes and bone-jarring problems
- Good construction techniques
  - help build in quality the first time
  - avoid having to back up and start over
  - provide good visibility on how it’s going without using made-up numbers
    - “we’re 96% done”

Some construction fundamentals

- Agreed-on coding standards
  - naming, layout, documentation
- Data-related concepts
  - scope, persistence, binding times
- Control-related
  - complexity, control structures, exceptions
- Errors and exceptions
  - assertions, defining and handling exceptions

More construction fundamentals

- Integration strategies
  - Unit-testing and debugging
  - Build and packaging practices
- Code tuning and performance measurement
- Programming tools
  - editors, IDE, interoperability
  - group work support tools (email, change visibility)
  - source code revision management
  - bug tracking