CSC 324: Principles of Programming Languages

Procedural Language Design Issues

Procedural Language Design Issues

Procedures: A Control Abstraction

- A block of code that can be called (imperative)
- A lambda expression (functional)
- A horn clause (logic programming)

Procedures modularize program structure

Components of a Procedure

1. Name
2. Formal parameters, optionally with types
   - **parameter** (formal parameter)
     Local variable whose value is received from caller
   - **argument** (actual parameter)
     The info passed from caller to callee
3. Body, which is a syntactic construct in the language:
   - Block, i.e., declarations and statements
   - Expression
   - Conjunction of terms
4. Optional result, optionally with a type

Procedure Implementation Issues

The general notion of a procedure leaves a number of points unspecified:

- How to pass parameters when the procedure is called
- How to maintain local state and control information
- How to access non-local names within a procedure body

Parameter Passing

Matching arguments with parameters:

1. Positional association:
   - Arguments are associated with parameters left to right
2. Keyword association:
   - Arguments are given tags, eg:

```
procedure plot (x,y:  real; penup:
boolean)
...
plot(0.0, 0.0, penup=>true)
plot(penup=>true, x=>0.0, y=>0.0)
```


Parameter Passing

3. Optional arguments:
   - E.g., C printf(. . .)
   - Extra arguments are packaged into some structure
   - Passed to special parameter

Passing Modes

How to treat arguments (pass-by-x/call-by-x):

1. Pass by value
   (Java, C, C++, Pascal, Ada, Scheme, Algol68)
2. Pass by result
   (Ada)
3. Pass by value-result
   (some Fortrans, Ada)
4. Pass by reference
   (Java objects, C++ with `&`, some Fortrans, Pascal with `var`, COBOL)
5. Pass by name
   (Algol 60)

Example for Passing Modes

```
{ c : array[1..10] of integer;
  m,n integer;
  procedure r (i , j : integer ) begin
      i := i + 1;
      j := j + 2
    end r;
  ...
  m := 2;
  n := 3;
  r(m,n);          // call 1
  write m, n ;     // print 1

  m := 2;
  c[1] := 1;
  c[2] := 4;
  c[3] := 8;
  r(m,c[m]);                // call 2
  write m,c[1],c[2],c[3];  // print 2
}
```

Pass by Value

- Initial values of parameters copied from current values of arguments
- Final values of parameters are "lost" at return time (like local variables).
- Example:

```
at call 1:  i = 2  j = 3
print 1:
at call 2:  i = 2  j = 4
print 2:
```

- Benefit: Arguments protected from changes in procedure.
- Problem: Requires copying of values: costs time and space, especially for large aggregates.

Pass by Result

- No initial values of parameters
- Final values of parameters are copied back to arguments
- Example: does not work, as written

⇒ For **output** values only. Used to indicate that a parameter is intended solely for returning a result.

Pass by Result (Example)

Suppose proc `r` initializes `i` and `j` to 0:

- `call 1:`
  - final values of `i` and `j`:
  - `m` and `n` are set to:
- `print 1:`
- `call 2:` more problematic
  - final values of `i` and `j`:
  - which element of `c` is modified, `c[1]` or `c[2]`?
- `print 2:`
  - If `c[1]` is modified:
  - If `c[2]` is modified:

Problems with Pass by Result

- Requires copying of values: costs time and space, especially for large aggregates. (Cf. Call by value.)
- What if the argument is not a variable?
  E.g., `r(1, 2);`
- What if a variable is used twice in the argument list?
  E.g., `r(m, m);`
- What about calculations to determine locations of arguments?
  E.g., which `c[m]`?

Pass by Value-Result

- Initial values of parameters copied from current values of arguments
- Final values of parameters copied back to arguments

⇒ Combines functionality of pass by value and pass by result for **same** parameter.

Pass by Value-Result (Example)

- `call 1:`
  - initial: i = j =
  - final: i = j =
  - return: `m` and `n` set to:
- `print 1:`
- `call 2:`
  - initial: i = j =
  - final: i = j =
  - return: which element of `c` is modified, `c[2]` or `c[3]`?
- `print 2:`
  - if `c[2]` is modified:
  - if `c[3]` is modified:

Further Specifying Pass by Result

With pass by result or pass by value-result, order of assignments and address computations is important.

Options:

1. Perform return address computations at call time:

   On second return:

   `m` set to 3; `c[2]` set to 6

   `print 2:`

Further Specifying Pass by Result (cont'd)

2. Perform return address computations at return time:

   (a) Before any assignments:

   On second return: same as above, but might not be if procedure has side-effects

   (b) Just before that assignment, in order:

   On second return:

   `m` set to 3; `c[3]` set to 6

   `print 2:`

Pass by Reference

- Formal parameters are pointers to the actual parameters (arguments).
- Address computations are performed at procedure call.
- Changes to the formal parameters are thus changes to the actual parameters.

Pass by Reference (Example)

- `call 1:`
  - initial: i = j =
  - final: i = j =
  - return: `m`, `n` are:
- `print 1:`
- `call 2:`
  - initial: i = j =
  - final: i = j =
  - return: `m`, `c[2]` are:
- `print 2:`

Pass by Reference

- Benefit: No copying for variables
- Problem: allow redefinition of expressions and constants?
- Problem: Leads to **aliasing**
  - two or more visible names for same location
  - can cause side effects not visible from code itself

Aliasing

```
{ y : integer ;
  procedure p ( x : integer ) begin
    x := x + 1;
    x := x + y
  end p;
  ...
  y := 2;
  p(y);
  write y
}
```

Aliasing

Pass by Reference:

- The identifiers `x` and `y` refer to the same location in call of `p`.
- Result of "`write y`"?

Pass by Value-Result:

- The identifiers `x` and `y` refer to different locations in call of `p`.
- Result of "`write y`"?

More Aliasing

```
{ i, j, k : integer ;
  procedure q ( a, b : integer ) begin
    a := i * b;
    b := i * b;
  end q;
  ...
  i := 2; j := 3; k := 4;
  q(i,j);
  q(k,k);
}
```

- First call has global-formal aliases:
  - `a` and `i`
- Second call has formal-formal alias:
  - `a` and `b`

Pass by Name

- A "name" for the argument is passed in to procedure
- Like textual substitution of argument in procedure
- Thus address computations are done whenever parameter is used
- Like pass-by-reference for scalar parameters

Pass by Name (Example)

- Example:
  - `call 1: m`, `n` set to:
  - `print 1:`
  - `call 2: m`, `c[m]` set to:
  - `print 2:`
- Benefit: same as pass by reference
- Problems: Inefficient, requires a *thunk*:
  - essentially a little program is passed that represents the argument
  - evaluates argument in caller's environment

Summary of Parameter Passing Modes

- Pass by value
- Pass by result
- Pass by value-result
- Pass by reference
- Pass by name