XXIII. Class Design

What is Class Design?

Types of Design Classes

Class Specifications and Interfaces
Components, Sub-Systems and Packages
Cohesion and Coupling
Designing Associations
Integrity Constraints

Class Design

Within the context of architectural design, class design:
- Produces full definitions of classes, associations, algorithms and interfaces of operations;
- Adds classes that will be useful during implementation;
- Defines object interactions and object lifetimes in terms of interaction and state diagrams;
- Optimizes data structures and algorithms.

Input/Output for Class Design

- The input is assumed to consist of:
  - Use cases that describe functional requirements;
  - also sequence, state/activity diagrams that describe the use cases in more detail;
  - Class diagrams that describe the kinds of things the information system will be managing information about.
- The outputs of class design are:
  - Class packages which describe the overall software architecture of the new system;
  - Supporting sequence, state/activity diagrams that give additional details about the design.

Types of Design Classes

Most classes defined during requirements analysis represent objects about which information will be stored in the system database.

Assuming a 4-tier layered architecture, we distinguish four types of classes:
- Persistent database classes (D), correspond to application classes and describe what will be stored persistently in the system database;
- Entity classes (E) represent in-memory, run-time data structures for persistent database classes;
- Boundary classes (B) specify interface functions;
- Control classes (C) specify business logic functions.

Class Specifications

- Attribute signature
  name: `:` type-expr `=` init-value `{`property-string`}`

- Operation signature
  Operation name: `(param-list)`: return-type-expr

- Object Visibility
  - Public -- feature directly accessible by any class;
  - Private -- feature may only be used by the class that includes it;
  - Protected -- feature maybe used by either the class that includes it or by a subclass of that class;

An Example Database Class

```
<database>>
BankAccount
+open(accountName: String): Boolean
+credit(amount: Money): Boolean
+debit(amount: Money): Boolean
+viewBalance(): Money
+getBalance(newBalance: Money)
+setAccountName(newName: String)
+getAccountName(): String
```
An Example Entity Class

Notes: Customer objects are created by accessing the CustomerDB and BankAccounts part of the database to build a single Customer object which collects all account information about a customer.

An Example Control Class

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An Example Boundary Class

Look at examples of view and control classes from the previous section.

Class Interfaces

- An interface is a group of externally visible (public) operations.
- An interface is like a class, but contains no internal structure, has no attributes, no associations and no implementation of its operations.
- The realizes relationship indicates that the target class supports at least the operations listed in the interface.

Class Design

- So, a class design consists of a set of packages which contain classes and other packages, and which represent components or sub-systems.
- The grouping of classes into packages may be done from several different points of view:
  - By architectural tier -- Boundary, Control, Entity, Database;
  - By functional relationship -- MVC;
  - By authorship -- who designed what;
  - ...

Cohesion and Coupling

Criteria for good sub-system/package design:

- Coupling measures the degree of interconnectedness between design classes/components/sub-systems/packages.
- The degree of coupling is reflected by the number of links a class has, and by the degree of interaction the class has with other classes.
- Low coupling is preferable in a design for many good reasons, e.g., easier to understand and modify the design.
- Cohesion, on the other hand, measures the degree to which an element (class/component/sub-system/package) contributes to a single purpose.
- Of course, we want a highly cohesive design.
Minimizing Coupling

- **Interaction coupling**
  - Measures number of message types and the number of parameters passed with these message types;
  - Should be kept to a minimum in order to reduce the possibility of changes rippling through interfaces;

- **Inheritance coupling**
  - Degree to which a subclass actually needs the features it inherits;
  - A subclass with unnecessary attributes or operations is more complex than it needs to be.

Maximizing Cohesion

- **Operation cohesion**
  - Measures degree to which an operation focuses on a single functional requirement;
  - Good design produces highly cohesive operations, each of which deals with a single functional requirement;

- **Class cohesion**
  - Degree to which a class is focused on a single requirement.

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Liskov Substitution Principle

- In class hierarchies, it should be possible to treat a specialized object as if it were a base object.

More Design Principles

- **Clarity** — A design should be easy to understand.
- **Do not over-design** — Developers are tempted to produce designs that may not only satisfy current requirements but may also be capable of supporting a wide range of future requirements.
- **Inheritance hierarchies** — Not too deep nor too shallow!
- **Keep messages and operations simple** — Limit number of parameters; specify operations in one page.
- **Design volatility** — A good design should be stable in response to change in requirements; enforcing encapsulation is a key factor in producing stable systems.
- **Design by delegation** — A complex object should be decomposed into component objects forming a composition or aggregation.

Designing Associations

- Each association needs to be analysed to determine whether it should be a one-way or a two-way association.
- Depending on multiplicities, we may use collection classes (e.g., lists).
- Need to ask questions about object visibility:
  - does object A need to know object B’s object-id?
  - does it need to communicate to third-party objects the object-id?
Designing Associations
One-to-One, One Way

- Owner needs to send messages to Car; not vice versa.
- Association may be implemented by placing an attribute to hold the identifier for the Car class in Owner objects.

Association may be implemented by placing an attribute to hold the identifier for the Car class in Owner objects.

Designing Associations: One-to-Many, One-Way

- The Advert object identifiers could be held in a simple one-dimensional array in the Campaign object, but program code would have to be written to manipulate the array.

Collection Classes

These are classes whose instances are lists, bags, or sets. Collection classes are useful for one-to-many associations.

Integrity Constraints

- We'll discuss three types of integrity constraints (...there are many others....)
- Referential Integrity ensures that an object identifier mentioned in one object actually refers to an object that exists.
- Dependency Integrity ensures that attribute dependencies are maintained, where one attribute may be calculated from other attributes.
- Domain Integrity ensures that attributes only hold permissible values.

Referential Integrity

- A Campaign must have a CreativeStaff instance as its manager.
- What happens if the manager is deleted?
- Referential integrity is maintained by ensuring that the deletion of a CreativeStaff object that is a campaign manager always involves allocating a new campaign manager.

Dependency Constraints: Derived Attributes

- The value of a derived attribute may be calculated from other attributes.
- For example, total advertising cost can be calculated by summing individual advert costs and storing value in the attribute totalAdvertCost in the Campaign class or by re-calculating every time it is required.
- However, whenever the cost of an advert changes, or an advert is added to/removed from a campaign the totalAdvertCost attribute has to be adjusted.
- This can be done by sending message adjustCost() to the Campaign object.
**Constraints Between Associations**

- Enforced by placing a check in `assignChair()` to confirm that the `Employee` object identifier passed as a parameter is already in the collection class of committee members.

**Designing Operations**

- Determine the best algorithm for the required function.
- Factors constraining algorithm design:
  - The cost of implementation;
  - Performance constraints;
  - Requirements for accuracy;
  - The capabilities of the chosen platform.
- Factors to be considered when choosing among alternative algorithm designs:
  - The computational complexity of candidates;
  - Ease of implementation and understandability;
  - Flexibility;
  - Fine-tuning the object model.