As I mentioned to Steven Teleki, I had completed this assignment about a year and half ago when I was applying for a position at Cognitive Scale. At the time the explanation of how I arrived at my design decisions was not a part of the assignment. I will now attempt to explain those design decisions. Thankfully I included sufficient comments that a quick review of the code reminded me of how the code works.

I chose to write the code in Python. I was becoming more comfortable with it having used it for about a year and a half. I also wanted the practice.

I saw that the printing of the field was going to be one of the challenging portions of the exercise especially as the space ship moves around and also when a mine that is on the edge of the field is detonated. The field would constantly be expanding and contracting with each movement and potentially with a detonation of a mine.

The first decision was how to represent the field, the spaceship, and the mines. My first inclination was to have a multidimensional list for the field where I imported the supplied field directly into the NxM list. This would combine the field and the mines. This was good, I had combined two of the elements, and printing would be trivial. However, this would force me to add and delete entire rows or columns from the array as the spaceship made movements within the field, and potentially whenever mines were destroyed. That sounded like more trouble than it was worth.

So, I tried to boil down the problem to what I really needed to track. What I came up with was:

1. Number of rows and number of columns (2 integers)
2. The location of the mines (n tuples)
   1. During printing of a field, any location that didn’t correspond with a mine would be treated as empty space
3. I didn’t need to track anything about the spacecraft other than its position, which is co-located with the center of the field.
   1. The center of the field could be deduced from the dimensions provided in 1) and 2) and therefore there was no need to create a separate entity representing the spacecraft.

With these conclusions, I decided to combine the field the mines and spacecraft into a single class ‘Field’ with two integers and a storage container for n tuples. Excellent, I am now storing only the things I care about thus reducing my memory footprint, and I don’t have to deal with adding and removing rows and columns from a multidimensional list.

The coordinates for the mines would need to be stored as a pair of values and would need to ne searchable. A natural choice was a dictionary:

dict<key: (x,y); value: char>

Even though the center of the field could always be deduced by the dimensions of the field, I decided it would be clearer in the code to refer directly to the center coordinates, so I included as member objects ‘center\_x’ and ‘center\_y’.

The constructor for the class Field could take a list of lines read from the Field file provided as input to the program. I can parse each row and find the location of all the mines, the number of columns would the longest line and the number of rows would the number of lines in the file.

**Maintaining the Center of the Field**

I next needed to figure out the field expansion and contraction algorithms so that I could correctly print the field, placing the ship at the center and printing only the minimum size field.

This has to be done by example:

Ship Movement

1. For the following field

. A .

. . .

B . C

When we move north, we must “add” two rows to the top side

. . .

. . .

. A .

. . .

B . C

1. However, if the field looks like this (the southernmost mine is one row inside the trailing edge):

. . .

. A .

. . .

B . C

. . .

When we move north, we can “subtract” one row from the bottom and “add” one row to the top.

. . .

. . .

. A .

. . .

B . C

1. And finally, for:

. A .

. . .

B . C

. . .

. . .

After moving north:

. A .

. . .

B . C

So it seems like the algorithm has something to do with how far a mine is from the trailing edge.

Ship Destroys a Mine:

1. Starting position:

. A . . .

B . . . .

. . . C .

Ship fires alpha pattern (destroying A and C). The one empty row on the top has a matching empty row on bottom. They can both be trimmed. However the left and write margins are cannot be trimmed because there is not an equal number of columns that can be removed.

B . . . .

1. Starting position:

. A . . .

B . . . .

. . C . .

Ship fires gamma pattern (destroying A and C). The field can’t be trimmed from any of it’s four sides.

. A . . .

B . . . .

. . . . .

1. Starting position:

A . .

. . .

. . .

Ship fires alpha pattern. (Special condition) There are no mines left, therefore number of columns and number of rows = 1.

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So after a fire pattern is executed the, the “margins” of the field may be able to be trimmed, as long as you can trim an equal amount from top and bottom -OR- from the left and right.