



Test Driven Development of Scientific Models

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Computational and Information Sciences and Technology Office
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Outline



- 1 Motivations
- 2 Testing
- 3 Testing Frameworks
- 4 Test-driven Development (TDD)
- 5 What about numerical software?

Motivation 1: Fear/Stress



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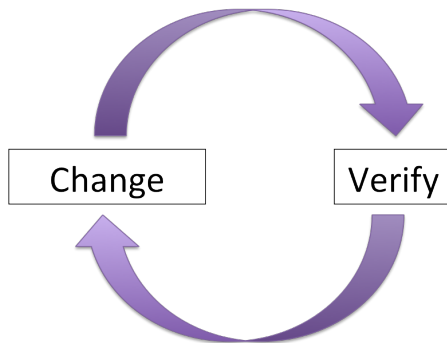
www.cartoonstock.com

Motivation 1: Fear/Stress



Calvin & Hobbes - Bill Waterson

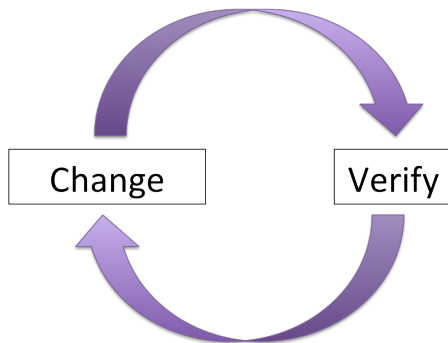
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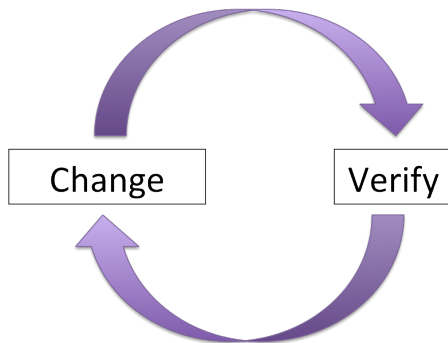
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- **Refactor**



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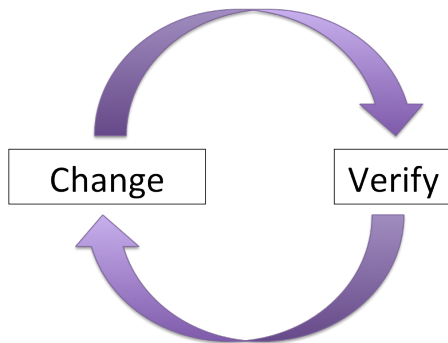


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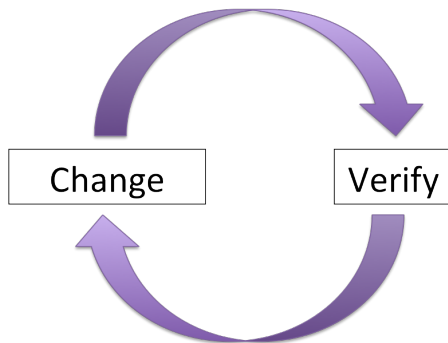


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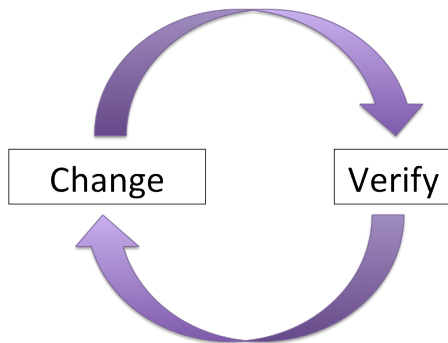


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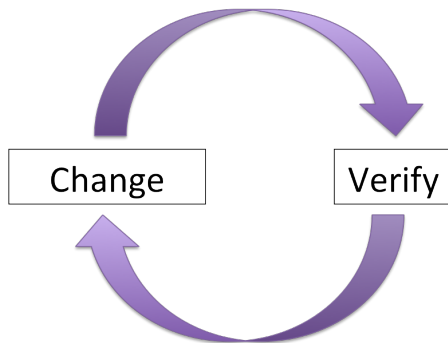


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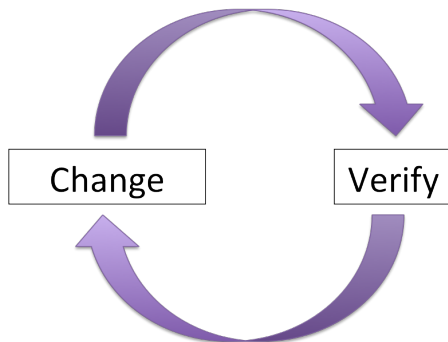


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What is the latency of verification for large scientific models?

Some observations about human behavior:



- Risk of defects scales with magnitude of change per iteration
- Development time per iteration will be comparable to verification time

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Conclusion:

Productivity is a nonlinear function of the cost of verification!

Motivation 3: The Limelight



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- ▶ Adaptation/mitigation strategies easily exceed \$100 trillion¹

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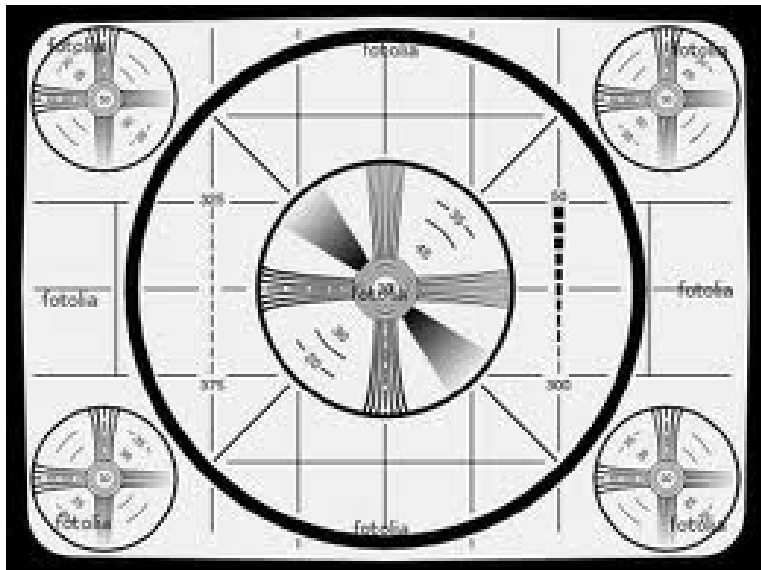
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 - ★ Those which change results below detection threshold

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Collection of tests that constrain system



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- Decreases risk from change
- **Inexpensive compared to application (ideally)**



Do you write legacy code?



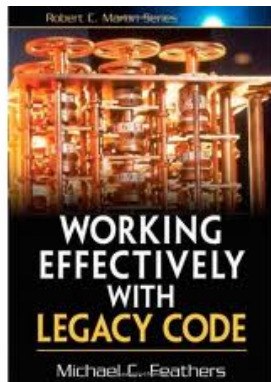
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“The main thing that distinguishes legacy code from non-legacy code is tests, or rather a lack of tests.”

Michael Feathers

Working Effectively with Legacy Code



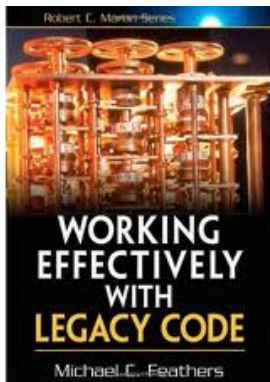
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"Fear is the path to the dark side. Fear leads to anger. Anger leads to hate. Hate leads to suffering." - Yoda



starwars.wikia.com

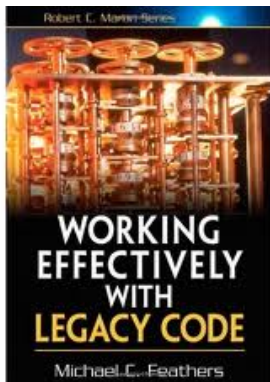
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Working Effectively with Legacy Code



- Lack of tests leads to fear of introducing subtle bugs and/or changing things inadvertently.
- Also is a barrier to involving pure software engineers in the development of our models.

Excuses, excuses ...



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<http://java.dzone.com/articles/unit-test-excuses>

- James Sugrue

- **Numeric/scientific code cannot be tested, because ...**

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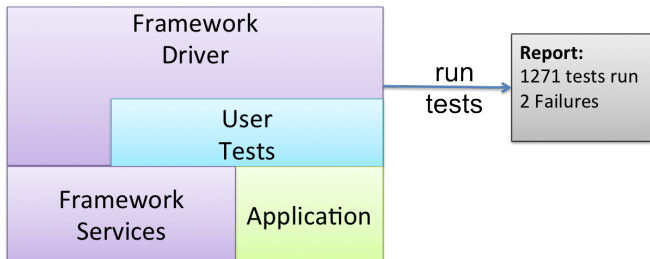
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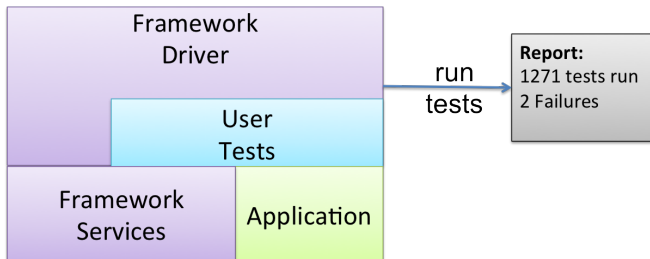


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Testing Frameworks



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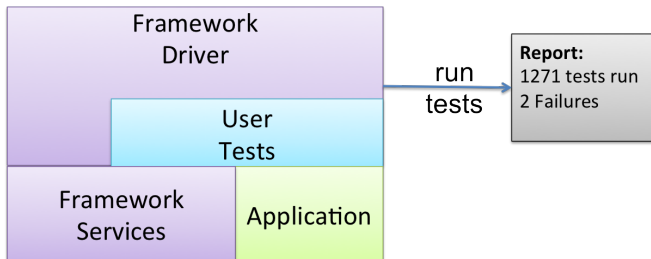


- Key services

- ▶ Provide methods to succinctly express expected values

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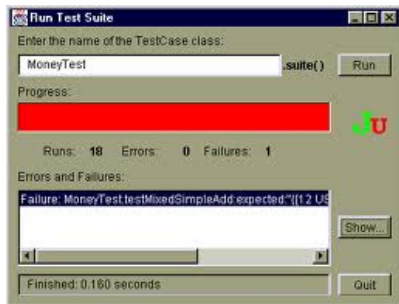
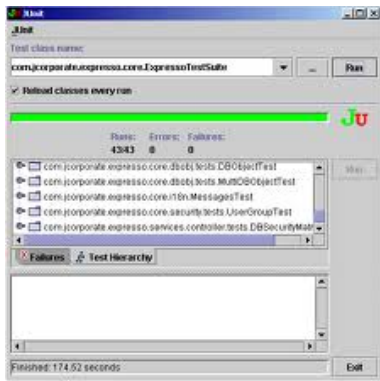
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 - ▶ Register test procedures with framework
 - ▶ Execute test procedures, and summarize success/failure
- Generally specific/customized to programming language (xUnit)
 - ▶ Java (JUnit)
 - ▶ Python (pyUnit)
 - ▶ C++ (cxxUnit, cppUnit)
 - ▶ Fortran (FRUIT, FUNIT, **pFUnit**)

Frameworks are often integrated within IDEs for even greater ease of use:



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Today I am here to sell you something ...





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- Tests written by separate team (black box testing)
- Tests written *after* implementation



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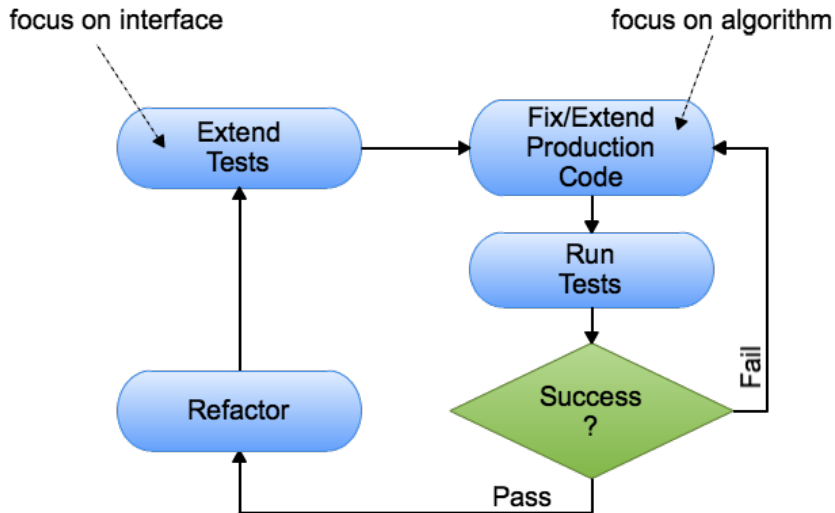
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New paradigm - Test-driven development (TDD)

- Developers write the tests (white box testing)
- Tests written *before* production code
- *Enabled by emergence of strong unit testing frameworks*

The TDD cycle



Benefits of TDD



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- **High quality implementation?**
 - ▶ Emphasis on interfaces
 - ▶ Testable code is cleaner code.

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- Stability - issues that occur after long integrations
- Emergent properties of coupled systems (including stability)



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- Error estimates are seldom available for complex algorithms
- Best case scenario is usually some asymptotic form with unknown leading coefficient!

TDD techniques in presence of numerical error



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- 1 Approximation

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- 2 Nonlinearity - use tailored synthetic inputs:
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- 3 Composition/iteration: test steps in isolation:
 - ▶ Allows choice of tailored synthetic inputs at *each* step
 - ▶ Test iteration *logic* not *accumulation*

Example - testing layers in isolation



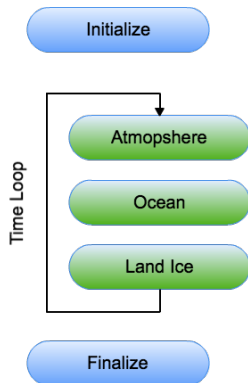
Consider the main loop of a climate model:

Do test

- Proper # of iterations
- Pieces called in correct order
- Passing of data between components

Do NOT test

- Calculations inside components



Easier with *objects* than with procedures.

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But still use high level analytic solutions as tests when available!

TDD and irreducible complexity



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 - ▶ Unit tests use tailored inputs
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 - ▶ Models *couple* many components/algorithms \Rightarrow exponential complexity
 - ▶ Tests are *decoupled* \Rightarrow linear complexity

TDD and emergent properties



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- TDD generally does not directly address such issues
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- At the very least, TDD can reduce the frequency with which one must perform long integrations



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- Solution: bootstrapping
 - ▶ Use initial TDD solution as unit test for optimized implementation
 - ▶ Maintain *both* implementations (and tests)



- TDD was created for developing *new* code, and does not directly speak to testing legacy code.
- Best practice for incorporating new functionality:
 - ▶ Avoid *wedging* new logic directly into existing large procedure
 - ▶ Use TDD to develop separate facility for new computation
 - ▶ Just *call* the new procedure from the large legacy procedure
- Refactoring
 - ▶ Use unit tests to constrain existing behavior
 - ▶ Very difficult for large procedures
 - ▶ Try to find small pieces to pull out into new procedures



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- TDD can be applied to scientific models
- Tool support exists (unabashed plug for pFUnit tutorial)
- Cost/benefit analysis for numerical software needs further study

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Test-Driven Development: By Example - Kent Beck