



University  
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## Algorithm Animator

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## **Abstract**

For teaching purposes it is useful to be able to animate algorithms and produce a visual representation of how they work. The basic idea is to use a diagrammatic representation of a data structure, for example an array or a tree, and illustrate the algorithm step by step, showing how the data structure is accessed and changed. The aim of this project is to design and implement a system for animating algorithms. There are at least two possible approaches. One is to design and implement a simple programming language in such a way that all programs are animated while being executed. Another is to design and implement an API for animations, so that an existing program (in Java, for example) can be animated by inserting calls to your library. The system should be as general as possible in the sense of supporting a range of styles of algorithm, and should be demonstrated by producing a range of animations of standard algorithms. It would also be useful to be able to capture the animation in a form that can be viewed independently of your system, for example as a sequence of HTML pages or a Flash animation.

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# Contents

<b>1</b>	<b>Introduction</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>2</b>	<b>Design</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>3</b>	<b>Implementation</b>	<b>6</b>
3.1	User Interface . . . . .	6
3.2	Problems Encountered . . . . .	6
3.2.1	Arthur Bigeard . . . . .	6
3.2.2	Alexander Ferguson . . . . .	6
3.2.3	Andrew Gibson . . . . .	6
3.2.4	Gediminas Leikus . . . . .	11
3.2.5	Liam Bell . . . . .	16
<b>4</b>	<b>Evaluation</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>5</b>	<b>Conclusion</b>	<b>18</b>
5.1	Contributions . . . . .	18
5.1.1	Arthur Bigeard . . . . .	18
5.1.2	Alexander Ferguson . . . . .	18
5.1.3	Andrew Gibson . . . . .	18
5.1.4	Gediminas Leikus . . . . .	18
5.1.5	Liam Bell . . . . .	18

# Chapter 1

## Introduction

Alice was beginning to get very tired of sitting by her sister on the bank and of having nothing to do: once or twice she had peeped into the book her sister was reading, but it had no pictures or conversations in it.

Alice opened the door and found that it led into a small passage, not much larger than a rat-hole: she knelt down and looked along the passage into the loveliest garden you ever saw.



Figure 1.1: Behind it was a little door

## **Chapter 2**

# **Design**

The following diagrams (especially figure) illustrate the process...

## Chapter 3

# Implementation

In this chapter, we describe how the implemented the system.

### 3.1 User Interface

Blah blah blah Blah blah blah Blah blah blah Blah blah blah

### 3.2 Problems Encountered

#### 3.2.1 Arthur Bigeard

#### 3.2.2 Alexander Ferguson

#### 3.2.3 Andrew Gibson

#### **The selection of a suitable animation framework**

During the beginning of the project, I was assigned to the research area where I was to examine a suitable graphics framework that could assist the team in building a solid animation API for our end users. During my research, I found there were several popular graphics frameworks for assisting with animation alongside Java applications, typically integrated through the use of compiled classes within a Java archive (.jar).

The range of frameworks proved problematic, given that it was most suitable to select a single framework to build with, otherwise there would be serious inconsistencies between developed applications (as they differ in their functionality) We established a simple set of fundamental criteria for selection as follows:



- The framework should offer a fully functional API, of which can be accessed by our code in order to build animation.
- It should provide some degree of control, so that our own API can display dynamic movement and precision.
- It should be able to be in-cooperated into an integrated development environment (IDE) for group production during the implementation stage.

After careful research, I found three separate candidates for animation production with Java. In order to justify a suitable approach, each framework was considered separately to assess desirable characteristics and identify potential flaws.

### **Timing-Framework:**

The Timing Framework was found on Java.net, a place for Java based libraries and extensions ([2]). It features controlled timing and ease of animation.

#### *Advantages:*

- The library is multi-threaded and concurrently safe. This prevents us from having to worry about complex synchronization issues between multiple application threads (as our animation software will utilise several threads for handling graphical changes independently)
- Uses less memory, putting a smaller load on systems with limited memory, allowing more applications to execute at once.
- Offers an extensive API, giving us the ability of more control and functionality over our animations.
- Supportive of Swing and SWT development, for flexibility over a suitable distribution
- Its functionality can produce smooth, complex and controlled animation, useful for providing sufficient detail to our users in an orderly fashion.
- Can be in-cooperated easily into an existing Eclipse project (a solid Java development IDE, which all the team have good knowledge of)

#### *Disadvantages:*

- The API is detailed and complex in areas, which may invoke a steep learning curve.
- Swing examples documented are rather vague, and information given in a relevant PDF chapter is out dated.

### **Java-FX:**

Java-FX was found on the Oracle technology website ([3]) it features UI based accelerated graphics. Its control is timeline based.

#### *Advantages:*

- Like the Timing-Framework, it also uses concurrently safe libraries.
- Potentially less complex to learn, given that Oracle have provided a more comprehensive set of documentation, including video tutorials.

*Disadvantages:*

- Newer libraries are not supported within Eclipse. This isn't useful to us as a team as our preferred development environment is Eclipse. It is more suited to the Netbeans IDE, which we aren't familiar with.
- It is more oriented towards web-based user interface development, typically within business. The goal of our application does not support this business approach, and focuses on the aspects of animation rather than an interactive interface with less emphasis on complex animation techniques.

**Trident:**

Like the Timing-Framework, this was also found as part of a Java.net library development ([4]) its focused entirely on timelines, namely duration and object changes across such durations represented by keyframes.

*Advantages:*

- Supports Swing and SWT development
- Allows multiple timeline events to be run and scheduled at any one time (multiple animations)
- Conceptually, it is straight forward and approachable; timelines represent the course of the animation and the keyframes the alterations to animation objects.

*Disadvantages:*

- Little documentation and not completely approachable as a result.
- It doesn't seem to fully support concurrency as part of its API. To give an example, the code below taken from the documentation section on timelines demonstrates parallel timeline objects competing for shared properties(<http://www.pushing-pixels.org/2009/06/25/trident-part-8-timeline-scenarios.html>)

In both examples 3.1 it can be seen that intrinsic locking is needed because of shared properties between objects. This adds a considerable degree of complexity to the framework, and would inevitably increase development time through the bugs and issues raised from concurrent access. For instance, if two objects were competing for shared animation data, and writing to it simultaneously, this would create unexpected behaviour. We would have to consider thread safe concepts alongside our own application complexity.

To conclude, we felt that the Timing-Framework offered the best and most approachable set of features. It provides multiple, dynamic animation techniques; with an emphasis on the animation itself

```

        synchronized (this.circles) {
            circles.add(circle);
        }
        scenario.addScenarioActor(timeline);
    }
    return scenario;
}...
public void paint(Graphics g) {
    synchronized (this.circles) {
        for (SingleExplosion circle : this.circles) {
            circle.paint(g);...

```

Figure 3.1: Make a description up, Andrew

as supposed to client designed web applications. It is also concurrent, which is hugely important as it draws a significant amount of complexity out the project. The animations we create will have their own threads delegated to tasks within the framework. The precision of control it offers is also an attractive trait, allowing us to build highly tweaked and well performing animations to our end users.

Of course, the Timing-Framework is probably the most complex, but the positives most certainly outweigh the negative aspects. The analysis of these separate frameworks proved to be very useful in that sense, standing out as an important design choice that most likely would of saved us more development time in comparison to the other frameworks.

## Development of Animated Linked Lists

For part of the project I worked on the development of linked lists. I utilised the trigger design that Gediminas created for scheduling animations in a step based fashion, such that the user can step through each part individually. To begin with, I created a linked list class with generic nodes, which would eventually function as objects associated with animations (class of type Rect). I represented the linked list as an array of these generic node objects. There were several problems I encountered when attempting to in-cooperate the step-based animation classes into my own code. It became apparent that some of the step-based algorithms involved with the successfully built Animated-Array class didnt directly translate to my own Animated-Linked-List structure. A step in this sense is represented as a series of animations, as noted before.

The intention of my Animated-Linked-List class was to offer specific algorithmic operations associated with linked list data structures. The issue I encountered was attempting to implement a suitable algorithm to locate and remove all instances of a specific node in the list. Addressing the step-based approach for this algorithm, it was required that the deletion of each found copy of the node was represented as a step. Initially, I developed the algorithm which directly removed the found occurrence from the list of objects.

This proved to be problematic. Once executed, the animation would display the deleted node to the user, before they have even stepped through the animation and eventually reached the deletion of the found node. The early implementation of the problem highlights this issue (3.2).

```

while(node.getNext() != null && !(node.getData().getLabel().equals(i))){
    prev = node; //pointer to previous node
    setColor(count,Color.RED,"Changing color to red");
    setColor(count,Color.BLUE,"Changing color to blue");
    node = node.getNext();
    count++;
}
anim.setColor(count,Color.GREEN,"Changing color to green");
anim.setColor(count,Color.WHITE,"Changing color to white");
(**) prev.setNext(node.getNext()); //joins the pointer for the prev element a
(**) rect_list.removeNode(node); //removes this node

```

Figure 3.2: Make a description up, Andrew

```

if (steps.get(currentStep).getChanges().get(0).getType() == "deleteNode") {
    Node<Rect> p = steps.get(currentStep).getChanges().get(0).getNodeReference
    rect_list.removeNode(p, p.getNext(),rectSpace(rectSize()));
}

```

Figure 3.3: Make a description up, Andrew

This section of code (3.2) represents a linear scan across each of the lists pointers, until the required node is found. When a node is found, it is highlighted, and subsequently deleted. The last two lines indicated by (\*\*) in this piece of code highlight the issue. Although the overall method for locating and removing a node is represented as a step, the changes made directly to the linked list object (represented here as rectlist) are not stored in any structures that allow the user to step through. Hence, when the application is executed, these adjustments are already displayed to the user.

To solve this issue, Gediminas and I proposed a solution that represented the main deletion operation as a single change within the method. In this way, the method would still be represented as a step (with its collection of animations) but the change class would allow us to log the deletion, so that we can obtain it and handle the deletion where necessary.

It simply involved omitting the problematic lines above (\*\*), and substituting a change to represent a deletion, with a reference to the object that is requested to be deleted. Once these changes were logged, the stepForward method allowed us to catch the corresponding change log at the appropriate time during the animation. A string comparison is done on the change log list and once it is found, the operations are then done on the linked list in order to display the deletion to the user. The code below shows part of the stepForward() method. The change deleteNode is added after a node is requested to be deleted in the removal method, and I implemented a separate method in the linked list class to handle the deletion of the specific node with reference p. The string deleteNode is caught at the appropriate time, given that the ordering of the steps is consistent in the application (3.3).

Another issue encountered involved the sequencing of steps, where the deletion of the node was not shown when cycling through steps. Gediminas successfully provided a solution to this rather complex problem, which involved maintaining the correct ordering in the animation:

Our application calls methods when executed, and generates a list of steps (each of which has their own set of animations). To ensure the correct ordering of steps, a counter is incremented whenever a

step is created in the program, so that when the user is stepping through, the correct step is executed next in the list sequence. The step is created when a method is called (removal in this case), and is to be represented as an animated sequence of some form. A step is then added to the list of steps once the method returns.

Originally when called the removal method would increment this `currentStep` value, change the colour of the current node to indicate it is to be deleted, and finally change its colour to match the background to indicate deletion. Other methods were called inside of the removal method where they themselves incremented this counter. This caused inconsistencies in the ordering.

The step list is designed to execute the (`currentStep+1`) element in the list, by triggering it and causing it to run. In the current system, here is how the execution would have affected the ordering:

### 3.2.4 Gediminas Leikus

#### Separating animations into steps and making continuous animations

The group decided to use Java for our project, because we were all familiar with it and because it was the language our client suggested us to use. We had left the decision of choosing the animation tools to Andrew Gibson and Alexander Ferguson. For the reasons stated in this document (reference), they decided to choose the Timing Framework [2].

Andrew had an example (3.4) ready, which had multiple rectangles created from an array moving back and forth, had buttons allowing us to stop the animation, resume it or delete one of the rectangles. He also added comments into the sample code, just so it would be easier for us to familiarize with the tool.

While this was a good initial step, we did not have any obvious way to implement Steps, in a sense where multiple Animations could be assigned to one step and we could navigate through these steps back and forth. Therefore both Andrew and Arthur Bigeard started looking into it.

Andrew had no real suggestions and Arthurs prototype implementation seemed:

- too complex (a swap of 2 rectangles was over 50 lines long 3.5)
- impractical to use (it didnt have any way to step back and forth through the animation)
- it had a performance overhead (all Animator objects were running continuously, until the whole animation was stopped)

It had a few good points though:

- it was done on a low level (so the how-to part was obvious if you understood the code)
- it was not storing too much information (thus it did not really have a memory overhead).

But this was not what we wanted the most important thing for us was the stepping back and forth functionality. Therefore I started looking into it as well.

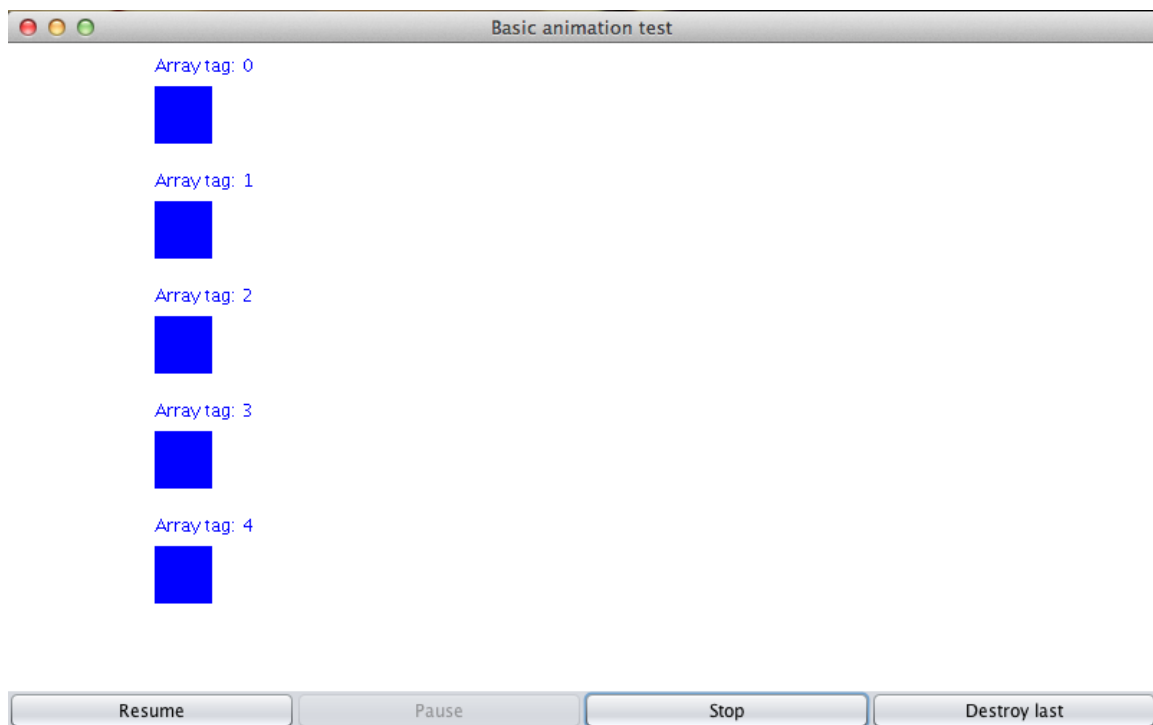


Figure 3.4: The first demonstration, produced by Andrew

During my research of the Timing Framework I found out that we could add triggers, which would start an animation, to a button or to another animation, which would start another animation when it stops or starts running [1]. Thus, triggers seemed like a great tool for linking multiple animations into one Step, linking steps and making a continuous animation.

I still wanted to find a way to make a change of a rectangle (or any other object) property easy to manage. Looking through the Demos I also found that I could use Targets and PropertySetters to do this in just a few lines of code 3.6, which seemed great. But it only allowed us to change a property, which was numerical (like coordinates or colors) it didnt allow us to change all the properties of the object, like the labels of rectangles. To solve this issue, I researched further and found that we can create a class, which would implement a TimingTarget interface and its begin(), end(), repeat() and reverse() methods. Therefore, to solve the issue of changing the labels of rectangles I created a new class called ChangeLabel, which implemented a TimingTarget interface, its begin(), end(), repeat() and reverse() methods, and added a change of String variable just inside its begin method. This approach seemed great, because:

- we can change any property of an object or do pretty much anything when that TimingTarget is called
- it is attached to each Animator object, so we do not have to worry about storing the TimingTargets anywhere
- it is efficient performance wise, because these TimingTargets are only executed, when the Animator object is
- it is easy to use, implement and understand

```

public void timingEvent(Animator source, double fraction){
    boolean done = false;
    if(anArr.getToDo().size() > 0){
        Step[] steps = new Step[anArr.getToDo().peek().length];
        System.arraycopy(anArr.getToDo().peek(), 0, steps, 0, steps.length);

        for(int i = 0; i < steps.length; i++){
            Rectangle rect = rect_list[steps[i].getIndex()].getRec();
            double x = steps[i].getX();
            double y = steps[i].getY();
            double stepX = rect.getX();
            double stepY = rect.getY();
            if(y != stepY){
                if(Math.abs(x - stepX) < 50){
                    if(y > stepY){
                        rect_list[steps[i].getIndex()].getRec().x += 1;
                    }
                    else{
                        rect_list[steps[i].getIndex()].getRec().x -= 1;
                    }
                }
                else{
                    if(y > stepY){
                        rect_list[steps[i].getIndex()].getRec().y += 1;
                    }
                    else{
                        rect_list[steps[i].getIndex()].getRec().y -= 1;
                    }
                }
            }
            else{
                if(x > stepX){
                    rect_list[steps[i].getIndex()].getRec().x += 1;
                }
                else{
                    rect_list[steps[i].getIndex()].getRec().x -= 1;
                }
            }
            if(y == stepY && x == stepX){
                done = true;
                anArr.getToDo().poll();
                anArr.getDone().add(steps);
                break;
            }
        }
        repaint();
    }
}

```

Figure 3.5: Arthur example code making an animated change in coordinates

```
s.addAnimator(new Animator.Builder().setDuration(time, TimeUnit.MILLISECONDS)
    .build(), nextBtn);

s.getLastAnimator().addTarget(PropertySetter.getTarget(rect_list.get(b),
    "currentX", rect_list.get(b).getRec().x, rect_list.get(a).getRec().x));}
```

Figure 3.6: My example code making an animated change in coordinates

Therefore, the end result of my prototype was:

- a list of steps
- an array of rectangles and their coordinates at each step
- an ability to either step back and forth through the animation by using buttons or see a continuous animation (and it was either that or that)

After looking through both my and Arthurs prototypes, we decided to merge the good parts of each: we kept most of my prototype, but reduced the amount of data stored for each Step, in particular, we made it so it would only store the details of the changed object before the change, rather than the details of all the objects.

The only issue left then, was the ability to have both step-by-step and continuous animations and allow the user to switch between them at any point of time, but this was not a big issue, since I just used a similar approach I used with ChangeLabel class:

1. I created a new class, called ContinuousAnimation, which was also implementing the TimingTarget interface
2. introduced a boolean variable called continuousAnimation, which was keeping record of whether the animation was in step-by-step or continuous mode
3. made it so that the begin method in ContinuousAnimation would execute different actions according to the boolean continuousAnimation variable value:
  - If true, Trigger the next Step
  - If false, do nothing

## Refactoring

Our first common implementation that we were using for development was coupled too much with AnimatedArray data structure and was not flexible at all. This became obvious, when we started implementing our AnimatedLinkedList. When we wanted to make our API to animate an AnimatedLinkedList instead of AnimatedArray, we had to change multiple classes, including Rect, ContinuousAnimation and ChangeLabel 3.7. This was due to no polymorphism in our design.

After doing our Professional Software Development 3 (PSD3) D7 deliverable (which was implementation of an Internship Management System we were designing the entire first semester), I



```

27     @Override
28     public void begin(Animator source) {
29         // TODO Auto-generated method stub
30         if (reference instanceof Rect) {
31             ((Rect)reference).setLabel(labelTo);
32         } else if (reference instanceof AnimatedArray) {
33             AnimatedArray.setInfo(labelTo);
34         }
35         AnimatedArray.panel.repaint();
36     }
37

```

Figure 3.7: ChangeLabel begin method dependency on AnimatedArray

have learned how to structure software better and how we can split code into components in Java. Therefore it was time for refactoring.

One of the first things I did was to create a separate package for each data structure. This led to 4 additional packages being created:

- AnimatedArray
- AnimatedBinaryTree
- AnimatedDataStructure
- AnimatedLinkedList

Each package is supposed to keep classes relevant only to its data structure, apart from AnimatedDataStructure package, which keeps classes that are relevant to all data structures.

I also completely separated the GUI from the rest of the code and created a class called setupGUI.

The next thing I did was to create a public interface AnimatedDataStructure, which is how we solved the issue I mentioned in the first paragraph. Rect, ContinuousAnimation, ChangeLabel and setupGUI are all expecting an AnimatedDataStructure variable now and all data structures are just implementing this interface. Therefore it does not matter which data structure we use, the common classes (which are in AnimatedDataStructure package) work for all of them. The interface itself also brought common method names and some structure. Another good thing is that now, we only need to change 2 things in the Main class if we want to work with a different data structure: the data structure class name and then the constructor method call 3.8. This did bring in some repetitive methods, like getNextButton(), which are being repeated in all data structures, but could be solved by introducing another abstract class, which would be implementing the AnimatedDataStructure interface and have all of these repetitive methods and then making all data structure classes extend this new abstract class.

All of the above solutions introduced basic polymorphism to our software and solved quite a lot of development issues as well as made it easier to develop and manage the code for future developers

11	11	public class Main {
12	12	
13		- private static AnimatedLinkedList anim;
	13	+ private static AnimatedArray anim;
14	14	public static int time = 200;
15	15	
16	16	public static void main(String[] args) {
17	17	int[] arr = {4,3,8,1,2,12};
18		- anim = new AnimatedLinkedList(arr);
	18	+ anim = new AnimatedArray(arr);

Figure 3.8: Changing animation to animate a different data structure

(if there are going to be any). While doing all of the above, parts of unnecessary code were removed or changed as well.

### 3.2.5 Liam Bell

## **Chapter 4**

# **Evaluation**

We evaluated the project by...

# **Chapter 5**

## **Conclusion**

ASD

### **5.1 Contributions**

#### **5.1.1 Arthur Bigeard**

#### **5.1.2 Alexander Ferguson**

#### **5.1.3 Andrew Gibson**

#### **5.1.4 Gediminas Leikus**

#### **5.1.5 Liam Bell**

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