

# CS1632, Lecture 15: Property-Based Testing

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# What is Testing?

- Checking *expected behavior* against *observed behavior*
- What we have been doing so far:
  1. Split the set of input values into equivalence classes
  2. Choose a few representative values from each equivalence class
  3. Write test case for those few values... And hope that those few values cover all behavior
- But do they? Are you really confident?

So let's take a sort function

```
public int[] sort(int[] arrToSort) {  
    ...  
}
```

# Possible test cases

- null
- []
- [1]
- [-1]
- [1, 2, 3, 4, 5]
- [5, 4, 3, 2, 1]
- [-9, 7, 2, 0, -14]
- [1, 1, 1, 1, 1, 1]
- [1, 2, 3, 4 ... 99999, 100000, 100001]

# At what point would you be satisfied?

- There is a near infinite number of sequences you could test
- Each sequence is a unique equivalence class! (almost)
  - In the sense that each sequence will take a different execution path
  - Each execution path represents a unique behavior
- Verdict: it's impossible to write enough tests to cover all behavior
- Well.. It's impossible for a human, but can't we auto-generate them?

# Stochastic Testing

- Stochastic testing: testing using randomly generated input values
  - Note: we are still not testing all input values
  - We are just testing a large number of random values hoping good coverage
- Popularly called “monkey testing” (monkey on the typewriter)
  - Not a good analogy: implies no thought is given to generation of input values
  - Testers should give \*a lot\* of thought to how input values are generated
  - Values are generated from a distribution, and distribution affects coverage
  - Testers should choose a distribution most likely to uncover defects

# Stochastic Testing: Problem

- So now we have a set of random auto-generated input values
- How do we auto-generate test cases out of them?
  - We would also need to add expected behavior to the test cases.
  - As in, an output value for each input value.
  - But how do we auto-generate the output value for each input value?
  - Using the tested method? Yes, if you like circular reasoning. But, no.



What if we tested *properties* of the output values instead?

# Property-Based Testing

- Property-Based Testing: testing using properties of output values
  - Does not test output values directly
  - Tests certain properties that must invariably hold in output values
  - These properties are called *invariants*
- Examples of invariants:
  - Program should not crash on input value (obviously)
  - For + operator, if inputs are positive, output must also be positive
  - For + operator, if inputs are negative, output must also be negative
- As you can see, invariants check only a subset of behavior
  - Testing properties of an output is not equivalent to checking its value outright
  - But if you check enough properties, you often can get pretty close



# Going back to our sort() example

- What are the invariants?
  1. Output array is the same size as input array
  2. Every element in input array is in output array
  3. No element not in input array is in output array
  4. Values in output array are always increasing or staying the same
  5. Idempotent - running it again does not change output array
  6. Pure – one call of sort() does not impact the next call of sort() in any way

# Property-Based Testing

- Advantages

- Can check behavior without being provided an expected output value
- Enables stochastic testing
- Leads programmer to think about invariants and better understand code

- Disadvantages

- Checking properties of an output value does not guarantee it is correct
- Hard to use with impure functions where inputs are not clearly specified  
(Hard to come up with invariants when side-effects can change behavior)
- If used with stochastic testing, tests are not repeatable  
(A pass in one test run does not guarantee a pass in the next run)

# QuickCheck

- Presented at ICFP '00 in the paper, “QuickCheck: A Lightweight Tool for Random Testing of Haskell Programs”
- [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/2449938\\_QuickCheck\\_A\\_Lightweight\\_Tool\\_for\\_Random\\_Testing\\_of\\_Haskell\\_Programs](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/2449938_QuickCheck_A_Lightweight_Tool_for_Random_Testing_of_Haskell_Programs)
- More popular in functional programming languages
  - Because all functions in functional programming are pure by definition
  - Pure functions are easier to use property-based testing on
- But becoming more mainstream in other languages too

# Not just used in functional programming!

- Java: junit-quickcheck
- Ruby: rantly
- Scala: scalacheck
- Python: pytest-quickcheck
- Node.js: node-quickcheck
- Clojure: simple-check
- C++: QuickCheck++
- .NET: FsCheck
- Erlang: Erlang/QuickCheck
- *The only one I couldn't find is a version for PHP.*

# What the tester needs to do

- Two simple steps:
  1. Specify the properties of the allowed input
  2. Specify the properties of the output that must hold (invariants)

# Example junit-quickcheck tests

```
@Property public void testConcat(String s1, String s2) {  
    assertEquals(s1.length() + s2.length(),  
                 (s1 + s2).length());  
}  
  
@Property public void testSqrt(@InRange(minInt=0) int n)  
{  
    if(n > 1) assertTrue(n > sqrt(n));  
}
```

- `@Property`: a property-based test, so multiple random values are passed in
- `@InRange`: constrains range of input values to those acceptable to `sqrt()`

# Write the junit-quickcheck test for sort()

```
@Property public void testSort(int[] arr) {  
    int[] result = sort(arr);  
    assertEquals(arr.length, result.length);  
    ...  
}
```

Then sit back with a beverage of your choice

- QuickCheck then runs randomized test cases for us!



# COMPUTER – DOING HARD WORK!

[17, 19, 1] -> [1, 17, 19] OK

[-9, -100] -> [-100, -9] OK

[8, 2, 987, 287, 201] -> [2, 8, 201, 287, 987] OK

[101, 20, 32, -4] -> [-4, 20, 32, 101] OK

[115] -> [115] OK

[2, -9, -9, 1, 2] -> [-9, -9, 1, 2, 2] OK

[8, 3, 0, 4] -> [0, 3, 4, 8] OK

[17, 1009, -2, 413] -> [-2, 17, 413, 1009] OK

[12, 12, 1, 17, -100] -> [-100, 1, 12, 12, 17] OK

[] -> [] OK

...

YOU –  
lying on  
beach  
taking  
foot selfies!



# This is what it sounds like when Invariants fail

[17, 19, 1] -> [1, 17, 19] OK  
[-9, -100] -> [-100, -9] OK  
[8, 2, 987, 287, 201] -> [2, 8, 201, 287, 987] OK  
[101, 20, 32, -4] -> [-4, 20, 32, 101] OK  
[115] -> [115] OK  
[2, -9, -9, 1, 2] -> [-9, -9, 1, 2, 2] OK  
[8, 3, 0, 4] -> [0, 3, 4, 8] OK  
[17, 1009, -2, 413] -> [-2, 17, 413, 1009] OK  
[12, 12, 1, 17, -100] -> [-100, 1, 12, 12, 17] OK  
**[9, 0, -6, -5, 14] -> [0, -6, -5, 9, 14] FAIL**  
[] -> [] OK

# Shrinking

[9, 0, -6, -5, 14] -> [0, -6, -5, 9, 14] FAIL

[9, 0, -6] -> [0, -6, 9] FAIL

[-6, -5, 14] -> [-6, -5, 14] OK

[9, 0] -> [0, 9] OK

[0, -6] -> [0, -6] FAIL

[0] -> [0] OK

[-6] -> [-6] OK

Shrunk Failure: [0, -6] -> [0, -6]

# Shrinking

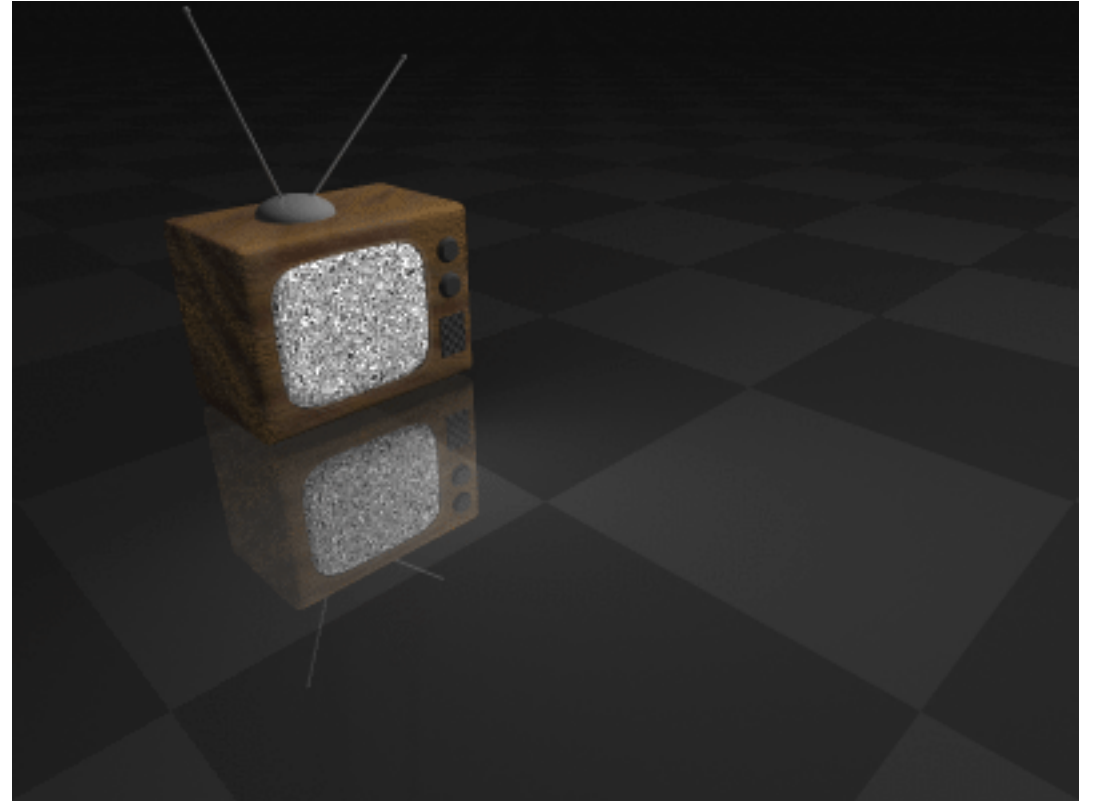
- Finds the smallest possible failure
- Helps track down actual issue
- A “toy” failure is a great thing to add to a defect report

Think about the levels of automation we achieved, starting from the beginning of the semester!

1. Write and execute tests (manual testing)
2. Write tests, let computer execute
3. Write *invariants*, let computer write tests and execute
  - With shrinking, will even try to track down the problem!

# Fuzz Testing

Fuzz (*noun*): a blurred effect



# Fuzz Testing

- A form of stochastic testing with a focus on “byte stream” inputs
- Idea: feed program with “fuzzy” or “noisy” byte streams and see if it
  - Exposes a defect (most commonly a system crash)
  - Exposes a security vulnerability
- A byte stream can be as varied as ...
  - An input file to an image viewer or video player
  - A network packet to a web server
  - JavaScript code interpreted by a web browser
  - A configuration file for a program



# Fuzz Testing is not Dumb Testing

- Fuzz testing may sound like stupid testing
  - Generate some random static and force feed it to your program until it fails!
- But you will never be effective this way
  - In fact, you have to even more careful how you generate inputs
  - A byte stream is a complex form of input that leads to complex behavior
  - Unlike a simple integer input where all behavior can be covered relatively easily

# Why completely random input is ineffective

- Suppose we are testing a web browser
- Here is our test plan:
  1. Generate a set of randomized strings and store them into HTML files
  2. See if any of the HTML files crashes the web browser
- Is this the best way to test the robustness of our browser? **Why (not)?**
- I vote for NO
  - A browser starts by first checking the integrity of the HTML file (e.g. has necessary tags such as <html>, is structured correctly, etc ...)
  - 99.99% of the randomized files will fail the initial check
  - 99.99% of the randomized files will achieve very **poor code coverage**
- We need a way to generate inputs with minimal integrity and structure

# A Smarter Algorithm for Fuzz Testing

- New test plan for web browser
  1. Collect a sample of existing HTML files (called the *corpus*)
  2. “Fuzz” HTML files in *corpus* to create new variants and add to *corpus*
  3. See if any file in the *corpus* crashes the web browser; If not, loop back to 2
- Steps to “fuzz” an HTML file
  1. Parse the HTML file
  2. Mutate parts of parse tree with new values
    - Optionally from a dictionary; dictionary contains HTML tag names etc.
  3. Regenerate HTML file from parse tree and test on web browser
  4. Only add to *corpus* if the new HTML file increases code coverage
- Stop expanding *corpus* if sufficient code coverage is achieved

# References

- “Fuzzing with Code Fragments” (USENIX Security 2012)
  - <https://www.usenix.org/system/files/conference/usenixsecurity12/sec12-final73.pdf>
  - Fuzz testing found 105 security vulnerabilities on Firefox JavaScript engine
- libFuzzer: an LLVM compiler library for coverage-guided fuzz testing
  - <https://llvm.org/docs/LibFuzzer.html>
  - Still experimental but can be used with any language handled by clang  
(`clang -fsanitize=fuzzer your_app.c`)

Now Please Read Textbook Chapter 18