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History of patterns

Who invented patterns? That’s a good, but not a very accurate, question. Design patterns aren’t obscure, sophisticated concepts—quite the opposite. Patterns are typical solutions to common problems in object-oriented design. When a solution gets repeated over and over in various projects, someone eventually puts a name to it and describes the solution in detail. That’s basically how a pattern gets discovered.

The concept of patterns was first described by Christopher Alexander in **A Pattern Language: Towns, Buildings, Construction**. The book describes a “language” for designing the urban environment. The units of this language are patterns. They may describe how high windows should be, how many levels a building should have, how large green areas in a neighborhood are supposed to be, and so on.

The idea was picked up by four authors: Erich Gamma, John Vlissides, Ralph Johnson, and Richard Helm. In 1994, they published **Design Patterns: Elements of Reusable Object-Oriented Software**, in which they applied the concept of design patterns to programming. The book featured 23 patterns solving various problems of object-oriented design and became a best-seller very quickly. Due to its lengthy name, people started to call it “the book by the gang of four” which was soon shortened to simply “the GoF book”.

Since then, dozens of other object-oriented patterns have been discovered. The “pattern approach” became very popular in other programming fields, so lots of other patterns now exist outside of object-oriented design as well.

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