# Pragmatics of Rust and C++: The implementation of a window manager

Max van Deurzen

June 20, 2021

Technische Universität München

### **Agenda**

#### **Agenda**

- 1. What is *Pragmatics*?
- 2. The Common Objective
- 3. External Dependency Management
- 4. Main Event Loop
- 5. Input Bindings
- 6. Clients
- 7. Results
- 8. Discussion

### **Pragmatics**

**Definition** Pragmatics

#### 1. Syntax

Set of rules that define the *structure* and *composition* of allowable symbols into correct statements or expressions in the language

#### 2. Semantics

The *meaning* of these syntactically valid statements or expressions

#### 3. Pragmatics

"...[T]he third general area of language description, referring to practical aspects of how constructs and features of a language may be used to achieve various objectives."

Robert D. Cameron, 2002

#### 1. **Syntax** (*structure*)

$$x = y * 3;$$

#### 2. Semantics (meaning)

- X
   Location in memory
- y \* 3
   Computation of a value based on an expression
- x = y \* 3;
   Store result of expression evaluation in location in memory

#### 3. **Pragmatics** (purpose)

Which objectives are assignment statements used for?

- Setting up a temporary variable used to swap the values of two variables
- Modifying some part of a compound data structure
- ...

### The Common Objective

#### Case Study: The implementation of a window manager

- System Software
  - Low-level
  - Platform-specific
- Medium to Large-Sized
  - Increased Risk of Code Smells
    - Monolithic classes
    - Global data
    - High interdependence (Coupling)
    - ..
- Event-Driven
  - Reacts to windowing system events
  - Deterministic event dispatch

#### Case Study: The implementation of a window manager

- External Dependency Management
  - Package management
  - Abstracting and decoupling
- Main Event Loop
  - Windowing system events
  - Internal events
  - Event dispatch
- Input Bindings
  - Storing and retrieving callable objects
- Clients
  - Distributed, mutable state

#### Case Study: The implementation of **two** window managers

- Same structure
  - Built on top of the X Window System
    - Library to communicate with the X server as external dependency
- Same behavior
  - ICCCM and EWMH compliant
  - Reparenting, tiling
- Different languages
  - One implemented in C++: WMCPP
  - One implemented in Rust: WMRS

### **External Dependency Management**

#### **External Dependency Management**

Practicalities of working with external code

- 1. Package management
  - Availability of external code
- 2. Decoupling dependencies
  - Maintainability of external code

#### Managing the availability of external code

- The ability to aid the programmer in assuring availability
  - Automatically download and compile source code
  - Built-in version control
  - Conflict detection
- Part of the ecosystem of a language
  - Installed with its compiler or development environment
- A must for any modern programming language

- No official package manager
- Ad hoc package management
  - Third-party package management tools
    - Conan
    - Vcpkg
    - build2
  - Custom configure and build scripts
  - Let the user manage the dependencies themselves (e.g. through their distribution's package manager)
- Example: Make script

```
CXXFLAGS := -std=c++20 -march=native -03
LDFLAGS := `pkg-config --libs x11 xrandr` -flto
SRC_FILES := $(wildcard src/*.cc)
OBJ_FILES := $(patsubst src/%.cc,obj/%.o,${SRC_FILES})
all: ${OBJ_FILES}
    g++ ${OBJ_FILES} ${LDFLAGS} -o bin/wmCPP
Obj/%.o: src/%.cc
    g++ ${CXXFLAGS} -MMD -c $< -o $@</pre>
```

- Cargo, Rust's official package manager
  - Automatically downloads and compiles dependencies
  - A Rust project is a Cargo package
  - A package is a collection of source files plus a manifest file
  - The manifest file describes the package's *meta-information*, *dependencies*, and a set of *target crates*
  - A crate represents a library or binary executable program
- Example: Cargo.toml manifest file

```
[package]
name = "wmRS"
version = "0.1.0"
edition = "2018"
license = "BSD3"
default-run = "core"
description = """
An ICCCM & EWMH compliant X11
reparenting, tiling window manager,
written in Rust
"""
```

```
[lib]
name = "winsys"
path = "src/winsys/mod.rs"
[[bin]]
name = "core"
path = "src/core/main.rs"
[[bin]]
name = "client"
path = "src/client/main.rs"
[dependencies]
x11rb = "0.8.0"
```

#### Managing the maintainability of external code

- The ability to decouple own code from external code
  - Changes to own code don't affect interface with external code
  - Changes to external code only affect inerface with external code
- When external code changes:
  - Only interface with external code needs to be recompiled
- When own code changes:
  - Only own code needs to be recompiled

#### Decouple window manager from windowing system

- 1. Hide the connection with the windowing system behind an interface
  - Provide abstraction and encapsulation
  - Describe common behavior
  - Usage is agnostic of concrete implementation
- 2. Implement the interface for each targeted windowing system
  - X Window System
  - Wayland
  - Desktop Window Manager (Windows)
  - Quartz Compositor (macOS)
  - ...
- 3. Have the window management logic call into the interface

## 1. Hide the connection with the windowing system behind a trait

• Zero-overhead collection of methods "What you don't use, you don't pay for [Stroustrup, 1994]. And further: What you do use, you couldn't hand code any better."

Bjarne Stroustrup

- Comparable to, but not the same as, the concept of an OOP interface
  - Implementation does not require changes to the implementor
    - Traits can be implemented on external code
    - No ambiguity when two implemented traits share method name and prototype
- Can define stateless default implementations

### 1. Hide the connection with the windowing system behind a trait

- No inheritance, only implementation
  - No downcasting or reference casting
- Declared for some (at declare-time) unknown type Self
  - When implemented Self becomes the implementing type
- Example: WMRS's Connection trait:

```
pub trait Connection {
    fn step(&self) -> Option<Event>;
    fn move_window(&self, window: Window, pos: Pos);
    fn resize_window(&self, window: Window, dim: Dim);
    fn close_window(&self, window: Window);
    // ...
}
```

#### 2. Implement the trait for each targeted windowing system

• Example: WMRS's XConnection structure:

```
use x11rb::connection;
pub struct XConnection<'xconn, XConn: connection::Connection> {
    xconn: &'xconn XConn,
    // ...
}
impl<'xconn, XConn: connection::Connection> Connection
    for XConnection<'xconn, XConn>
{
    fn step(&self) -> Option<Event> { /* ... */ }
    // ...
}
```

- x11rb: Rust library to interact with the X Window System
  - External dependency
  - Rust bindings to interact with the X server

#### 3. Have the window management logic call into the interface

• Example: WMRS's core window manager logic:

```
pub struct Model<'model> {
  conn: &'model mut dyn Connection,
  // ...
}
```

- Polymorphism to abstract away from the concrete implementation
- Model contains a reference to some Connection implementor
- The trait methods of this implementor are called where needed
  - Static dispatch
    - Concrete method to call is baked into the binary
  - Dynamic dispatch
    - Concrete method to call is looked up at runtime

#### Static dispatch

- Concrete method to call is baked into the binary
  - Monomorphization at compile time
  - Generic code is converted into "specific" code
  - One version for each concrete type used as generic argument
  - Size of concrete type is always known
- No additional time overhead at runtime
- Example: WMRS's Cycle structure:

```
pub struct Cycle<T>
where
    T: Identify + Debug,
{ /* ... */ }
impl<T> Cycle<T>
where
    T: Identify + Debug,
{ /* ... */ }
impl<T> Cycle<T>
where
    T: Identify + Debug,
{ /* ... */ }
}
pub struct Model<'model> {
    // ...
workspaces: Cycle<Workspace>,
    // ...
}

pub struct Workspace {
    clients: Cycle<Window>,
{ /* ... */ }
}
```

#### Dynamic dispatch

- Concrete method to call is looked up at runtime
- Trait objects keep instances abstract until concretization is required
  - Opaque value of a type that implements some set of traits
  - Until further inspection, concrete type is unknown
  - Dynamically sized: size of underlying concrete type is not known up front
- Under the hood, 2 pointers:
  - 1 pointer to data
  - 1 pointer to virtual method table (vtable)
- Virtual method table points to that object's concrete method implementations

#### Dynamic dispatch

ullet Example: WMRS's XConnection's xconn reference:

```
use x11rb::connection;
pub struct XConnection<'xconn, XConn: connection::Connection> {
    xconn: &'xconn XConn,
    // ...
}
```

• Example: WMRS's conn trait object:

```
pub struct Model<'model> {
   conn: &'model mut dyn Connection,
   // ...
}
```

#### Dynamic dispatch

• Example: WMRS's XConnection's xconn reference:

```
use x11rb::connection;
pub struct XConnection<'xconn, XConn: connection::Connection> {
    xconn: &'xconn XConn,
    //...
}
• Example: WMRS's conn trait object:
```

```
pub struct Model<'model> {
    conn: &'model mut dyn Connection,
    // ...
}
```

## 1. Hide the connection with the windowing system behind an abstract class

- Abstract type that cannot be implemented, only derived
- Establish common denominator between types
- Can define stateful default implementations
- Same as OOP interface when it only contains pure virtual methods
  - No associated inline logic
  - Must be implemented by inheriting subclasses
- Derived class concrete method invocation *only* through dynamic dispatch

## 1. Hide the connection with the windowing system behind an abstract class

• Example: WMCPP's Connection abstract class interface:

```
class Connection
{
public:
    virtual ~Connection() {}
    virtual Event step() = 0;
    virtual void move_window(Window, Pos) = 0;
    virtual void resize_window(Window, Dim) = 0;
    virtual void close_window(Window) = 0;
    // ...
};
```

- Connection contains at least 1 virtual method
  - Connection is an abstract class
- Connection has 0 inline method implementations
  - Connection is a proper OOP interface

## 1. Hide the connection with the windowing system behind an abstract class

- Pure virtual methods can be defined to be called statically
- Example: WMCPP's Connection's implementation:

```
#include "connection.hh"
#include "log.hh"
void
Connection::close_window(Window window)
{
    Logger::log_info("Closing 0x%#08x.", window);
}
// ...
```

## 2. Derive the abstract class for each targeted windowing system

• Example: WMCPP's XConnection derived class:

```
#include "connection.hh"
extern "C" {
#include <X11/Xlib.h>
// ...
}
class XConnection final: public Connection
{
public:
    void close_window(Window window) override {
        Connection::close_window(window); // non-virtual call
        // ...
}
// ...
};
```

- <X11/...>: Xlib library to interact with the X Window System
  - External dependency

#### 3. Have the window management logic call into the interface

• Example: WMCPP's core window manager logic:

```
#include "connection.hh"
class Model final
{
public:
    Model(Connection& conn): conn(conn) { /* ... */ }
    // ...
private:
    Connection& conn;
    // ...
};
```

- Polymorphism to abstract away from the concrete implementation
- Model contains a reference to some Connection implementor
- The overridden methods of this implementor are dynamically called where needed

#### Additional C++ external dependency management difficulties:

- Problem: double inclusion
- Possible solution: header guards
  - Preprocessor directives
  - Include idempotence
  - Not fail-safe
  - Hard-to-trace symbol collision errors
  - #pragma once as unofficial solution
- Problem: includes are non-commutative
- Possible solution: none
- Rust's *module* system does not have these issues

#### Rust traits vs C++ abstract classes

- Abstract classes: inheritance
  - 1. Describe common behavior
  - 2. Code reuse
  - 3. Polymorphism
- Traits: implementation
  - 1. Describe common behavior
  - 2. Code reuse with **generics**: abstraction over different types
  - Polymorphism with trait bounds: constraints on these type abstractions

### Main Event Loop

#### Main Event Loop

#### Three core stages:

- 1. Listen for windowing system events
  - Block until an event has been generated
- 2. Create windowing system agnostic event abstraction
  - Extract and bundle concrete information into abstract window manager consumable
- 3. Delegate work to different parts of the program
  - Perform window management actions based on the type of the concrete event

#### 1. Listen for windowing system events

- 1. Concrete Connection's external dependency generates events
  - Input events
  - Map notification events
  - ...
- 2. Convert windowing system specific event information into higher-level event abstraction
  - Decouple windowing system event from window manager event
- 3. Connection::step method propagates event abstraction up to window manager logic
  - WMRS: fn step(&self) -> Option<Event>;
  - WMCPP: Event step();

#### 2. Create windowing system agnostic event enum

- Definition of a type by enumerating its variants
- Encodes meaning
  - Associated integer called discriminant
  - Tagged union
- May attach data
  - Data can be directly associated with a variant
- Size as large as its largest variant
- Example: WMRS's Event enumeration:

```
pub enum Event {
    Mouse { event: MouseEvent },
    Key { event: KeyEvent },
    CloseRequest { window: Window },
    ScreenChange,
    // ...
}
```

#### 2. Create windowing system agnostic event <a href="std::variant">std::variant</a>

- Definition of a type by enumerating its alternatives
- Type-safe tagged union class template
- Encodes meaning
- Contains data
  - Data can only *indirectly* be associated with an alternative
  - Strong type alias required for same-type alternatives
- Size as large as its largest variant
- Example: WMRS's Event enumeration:

```
typedef std::variant
std::monostate,
Mouse,
Key,
CloseRequest,
ScreenChange,
// ...
> Event:
struct Mouse { MouseEvent event; };
struct Key { KeyEvent event; };
struct CloseRequest { Window window; };
struct ScreenChange {};
// ...
> Event:
```

 $\label{eq:wmRS: wmCPP: wmCPP: fn step(&self) -> Option<Event>; Event step();} \\$ 

```
WMRS:
fn step(&self) -> Option<Event>;

pub enum Event {
    Mouse { event: MouseEvent },
    Key { event: KeyEvent },
    CloseRequest { window: Window },
    ScreenChange,
    // ...
}
```

```
WMCPP:
Event step();

typedef std::variant<
    std::monostate,
    Mouse,
    Key,
    CloseRequest,
    ScreenChange,
    // ...
> Event;
```

- match on specific type of event
  - Call appropriate handler
  - Pass encoded information to handler
- Example: WMRS's main event loop:

```
while self.running {
    if let Some(event) = self.conn.step() {
        match event {
            Event::Mouse { event, }
                => self.handle_mouse(event, /*...*/),
            Event::Key { keycode, }
                => self.handle_key(keycode, /*...*/),
            Event::CloseRequest { window, }
                => self.handle_close(window),
            Event::ScreenChange
                => self.handle_screen_change().
            // ...
```

• Example: WMRS's main event loop:

```
while self.running {
   if let Some(event) = self.conn.step() {
        // ...
   }
}
```

Equivalent to:

- Visit the alternatives in std::variant using std::visit
  - Visitor object implementing function-call operator overloads
  - std::variant instance to visit

• Example: WMCPP's visitor object:

```
struct EventVisitor
{
    EventVisitor(Model& model): model(model) {}

    void operator()(std::monostate) {}

    void operator()(Mouse event) { model.handle_mouse(event); }

    void operator()(Key event) { model.handle_key(event); }

    void operator()(CloseRequest event) { model.handle_close(event); }

    void operator()(ScreenChange) { model.handle_screen_change(); }

    // ...

private:
    Model& model;
} event_visitor = EventVisitor(*this);
```

• Example: WMCPP's visitor object:

```
struct EventVisitor
{
    EventVisitor(Model& model): model(model) {}
    void operator()(std::monostate) {}
    // ...
private:
    Model& model;
} event_visitor = EventVisitor(*this);
```

- Implicit "no valid event" encoding
- Analogous to no-op event

• Example: WMCPP's main event loop:

```
while (running)
   std::visit(event_visitor, conn.step());
```

- 1. Retrieve generated event from windowing system connection
- 2. Rely on visitor to deduce type of event
- 3. Call associated handler

- Rust and C++ achieve desired behavior
- Visiting tagged unions in C++ is more verbose, less clear in communicating intent
- Difference worsens as more complex (or pattern-reliant) situations arise

Input Bindings

### Input Bindings

- Bind functionality to sets of peripheral input states
  - Mouse bindings
  - Keyboard bindings
  - Sensors
  - ...
- Hardware and platform dependent
  - Initiated by the connection with the windowing system
- Concrete input information to abstract window manager events
  - Mouse event variant
  - Key event variant
  - ..

### Input Bindings

#### Three-step process:

- 1. Establish abstract notion of input
  - Convert concrete input states to abstract input events
    - Mouse input abstractions, keyboard input abstractions, ...
    - Windowing system specifics to window manager abstractions
- 2. Map input to window management actions
  - Input abstractions to closures
- 3. Retrieve and perform window management actions

• Example: WMRS's mouse input abstractions:

```
#[derive(Clone, Copy, PartialEq, Eq, Hash)]
pub enum MouseEventKind { Press, Release, Motion, }
#[derive(Clone, Copy, PartialEq, Eq, Hash)]
pub enum Button { Left, Middle, Right, ScrollUp, /* ... */ }
#[repr(u8)]
#[derive(Clone, Copy, PartialEq, Eq, Hash)]
pub enum Modifier {
    Ctrl = 1 << 0.
    Shift = 1 << 1,
    Super = 1 \ll 2.
   Alt = 1 << 3.
   // ...
// ...
```

• Example: WMRS's mouse input abstractions (cont.):

```
// ...
#[derive(PartialEq, Eq)]
pub struct MouseInput {
    pub button: Button,
    pub modifiers: HashSet<Modifier>,
}
#[derive(PartialEq, Eq, Hash)]
pub struct MouseEvent {
    pub kind: MouseEventKind,
    pub input: MouseInput,
    pub window: Option<Window>,
}
```

• Example: WMCPP's mouse input abstractions:

```
enum class MouseEventKind { Press, Release, Motion };
enum class Button { Left, Middle, Right, ScrollUp, /* ... */ };
enum Modifier {
   Ctrl = 1 << 0,
   Shift = 1 << 1,
   Super = 1 << 2,
   Alt = 1 << 3,
   // ...
};
// ...</pre>
```

• Example: WMCPP's mouse input abstractions (cont.):

```
// ...
struct MouseInput final {
    Button button,
    std::unordered_set<Modifier> modifiers,
};
struct MouseEvent final {
    MouseEventKind kind,
    MouseInput input,
    Option<Window> window,
};
```

```
pub type MouseAction = Box<
    dyn FnMut(&mut Model<'_>, Option<Window>) -> bool
>;
// ...
```

- Box<T>: store value of type T on the heap
  - Constant size: pointer to heap address
- FnMut: closure trait that describes calling of function that mutates state
  - dyn FnMut(...): trait object (dynamic dispatch)
  - Hooks into main window manager logic
  - Operates on clicked-on window (if any)

```
#[derive(PartialEq, Eq)]
pub struct MouseInput {
    pub button: Button,
    pub modifiers: HashSet<Modifier>,
}
pub type MouseBindings = HashMap<
    MouseInput, MouseAction
>;
```

- MouseInput used as key to HashMap
  - PartialEq and Eq
  - Hash

```
#[derive(PartialEq, Eq)]
pub struct MouseInput {
    pub button: Button,
    pub modifiers: HashSet<Modifier>,
}
pub type MouseBindings = HashMap<
    MouseInput, MouseAction
>;
```

- MouseInput used as key to HashMap
  - PartialEq and Eq (\#[derive(PartialEq, Eq)])
  - Hash (not automatically derivable)

```
#[derive(Clone, Copy, PartialEq, Eq, Hash)]
pub enum Button { Left, Middle, Right, ScrollUp, /* ... */ }
#[derive(PartialEq, Eq)]
pub struct MouseInput {
    pub button: Button,
    pub modifiers: HashSet<Modifier>,
}
```

- Hash (not automatically derivable)
  - HashSet not automatically derivable
  - Manual implementation

• Example: WMRS's MouseInput's Hash implementation:

```
#[derive(PartialEq, Eq)]
pub struct MouseInput {
    pub button: Button,
    pub modifiers: HashSet<Modifier>,
}
impl Hash for MouseInput {
    fn hash<H: Hasher>(&self, state: &mut H) {
        self.button.hash(state);
        self.modifiers.iter()
            .fold(@u8, acc, &m acc | m as u8)
            .hash(state);
    }
}
```

• Example: WMRS's MouseInput's Hash implementation:

- <H: Hasher>: hashing function's logic
  - Streaming hasher
  - State changes as data is being hashed
  - Final state is hashed value

• Example: Adding a mouse binding:

```
let mut mouse bindings = HashMap::new():
mouse_bindings.insert(
    MouseInput {
        button: Button::Middle,
        modifiers: {
            let mut modifiers = HashSet::with capacity(2):
            modifiers.insert(Modifier::Ctrl);
            modifiers.insert(Modifier::Super):
            modifiers
        },
    Box::new(|model: &mut Model, win: Option<Window>| -> bool {
        if let Some(window) = win {
            model.set_floating_window(window);
            true
    })
);
```

# 2. Map input to window management actions in a std::unordered\_map

```
typedef
    std::function<void(Model&)>
        KeyAction;

typedef
    std::function<bool(Model&, std::optional<Window>)>
        MouseAction;

typedef
    std::unordered_map<KeyInput, KeyAction>
        KeyBindings;

typedef
    std::unordered_map<MouseInput, MouseAction>
        MouseBindings;
```

# 2. Map input to window management actions in a std::unordered\_map

```
typedef
   std::function<bool(Model&, std::optional<Window>)>
   MouseAction;
// ...
```

- Box<T>: store value of type T on the heap
  - Constant size: pointer to heap address
- FnMut: closure trait that describes calling of function that mutates state
  - dyn FnMut(...): trait object (dynamic dispatch)
  - Hooks into main window manager logic
  - Operates on clicked-on window (if any)

## 2. Map input to window management actions in a std::unordered\_map

```
#[derive(PartialEq, Eq)]
pub struct MouseInput {
    pub button: Button,
    pub modifiers: HashSet<Modifier>,
}
pub type MouseBindings = std::unordered_map<
    MouseInput, MouseAction
>;
```

- MouseInput used as key to std::unordered\_map
  - PartialEq and Eq
  - Hash

## 2. Map input to window management actions in a std::unordered\_map

```
#[derive(PartialEq, Eq)]
pub struct MouseInput {
    pub button: Button,
    pub modifiers: HashSet<Modifier>,
}
pub type MouseBindings = std::unordered_map<
    MouseInput, MouseAction
>;
```

- MouseInput used as key to std::unordered\_map
  - PartialEq and Eq (\#[derive(PartialEq, Eq)])
  - Hash (not automatically derivable)

# 2. Map input to window management actions in a std::unordered\_map

```
#[derive(Clone, Copy, PartialEq, Eq, Hash)]
pub enum Button { Left, Middle, Right, ScrollUp, /* ... */ }
#[derive(PartialEq, Eq)]
pub struct MouseInput {
   pub button: Button,
   pub modifiers: HashSet<Modifier>,
}
```

- Hash (not automatically derivable)
  - HashSet not automatically derivable
  - Manual implementation

## 2. Map input to window management actions in a std::unordered\_map

• Example: WMCPP's MouseInput's Hash implementation:

## 2. Map input to window management actions in a std::unordered\_map

• Example: WMCPP's MouseInput's Hash implementation:

- <H: Hasher>: hashing function's logic
  - Streaming hasher
  - State changes as data is being hashed
  - Final state is hashed value

## 2. Map input to window management actions in a std::unordered\_map

• Example: Adding a mouse binding:

```
let mut mouse_bindings = std::unordered_map::new();
mouse_bindings.insert(
    MouseInput {
        button: Button::Middle,
        modifiers: {
            let mut modifiers = HashSet::with_capacitv(2);
            modifiers.insert(Modifier::Ctrl);
            modifiers.insert(Modifier::Super);
            modifiers
        },
    Box::new(|model: &mut Model, win: Option<Window>| -> bool {
        if let Some(window) = win {
            model.set floating window(window):
            true
    })
);
```

## Clients

### **Second Frame**

Hello, world!