Code Quality and Programming Standards

COMSM0086

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Aim of This Lecture

To TRY to make YOU into a better developer !
(beyond just an ordinary 'coder')

Achieved by considering code quality at two levels:

1. Low-level *material* quality of your source code
2. Higher-level *structural* quality of your system

Code Quality

GOOD code is NOT just about "correct operation"
Code may run just fine, but still be BADLY written !

Key questions to ask yourself about your code are:
- How easy is your code for others to understand ?
- How easy is your code for others to change ?
- Does your code support long-term maintenance ?

As a 'coder' you probably don't care about these
As a professional 'developer' you definitely should !

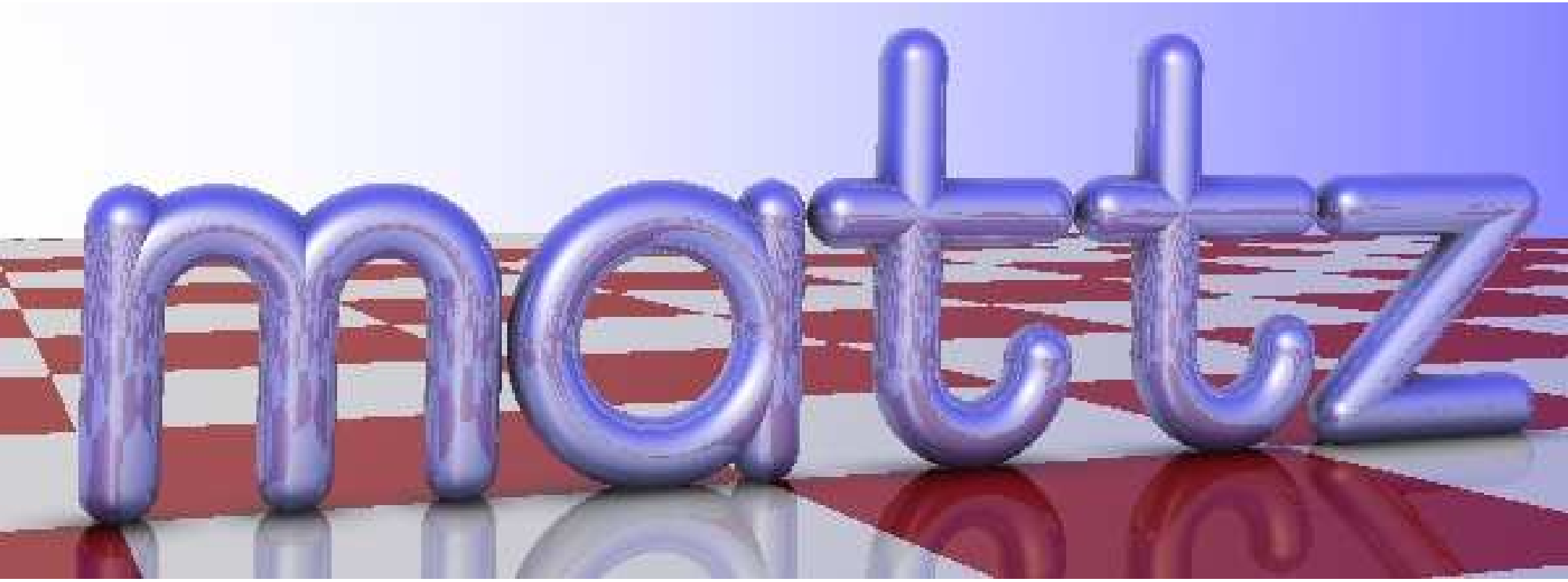
Example Codebase

Let us consider an example application codebase:

- It runs correctly, without errors or failures
- It is fast and efficient in operation
- It exhibits compact and elegant code
- It makes good use of language constructs

Question: Does that sound like high quality code ?

```c
#include <stdio.h>
typedef double f;f H=.5,Y=.66,S=-1,I,y=-111;extern"C"{f cos(f),pow(f
,f),atan2(f,f);}struct v{f x,y,z;v(f a=0,f b=0,f c=0):x(a),y(b),z(c)
{}f operator%(v r){return x*r.x+y*r.y+z*r.z;}v operator+(v r){return
v(x+r.x,y+r.y,z+r.z);}v operator*(f s){return v(x*s,y*s,z*s);}}W(1,1
,1),P,C,M;f U(f a){return a<0?0:a>1?1:a;}v _(v t){return t*pow(t%t,-
H);}f Q(v c){M=P+c*S;f d=M%M;return d<I?C=c,I=d:0;}f D(v p){I=99;P=p
;f l,u,t;v k;for(const char*b="BCJB@bJBHbJCE[FLL_A[FLMCA[CCTT`T";*b;
++b){k.x+=*b/4&15;int o=*b&3,a=*++b&7;k.y=*b/8&7;v d(o%2*a,o/2*a);!o
?l=a/4%2*-3.14,u=a/2%2*3.14,d=p+k*-H,t=atan2(d.y,d.x),t=t<l?l:t>u?u:
t,Q(k*H+v(cos(t),cos(t-1.57))*(a%2*H+1)):Q(k+d*U((p+k*S)%d/(d%d)));}
return M=Q(v(p.x,-.9,p.z))?(int(p.x+64)^int(p.z+64))/8&1?Y:W:v(Y,Y,1
),pow(I,H)-.45;}v R(v o,v d,f z){for(f u=0,l=1,i=0,a=1;u<97;u+=l=D(o
+d*u))if(l<.01){v p=M,n=_(P+C*S),L=_(v(S,1,2));for(o=o+d*u;++i<6;a-=
U(i/3-D(o+n*i*.3))/pow(2,i));p=p*(U(n%L)*H*Y+Y)*a;p=z?p*Y+R(o+n*.1,d
+n*-2*(d%n),z-1)*H*Y:p;u=pow(U(n%_(L+d*S)),40);return p+p*-u+W*u;}z=
d.z*d.z;return v(z,z,1);} int main(){for(puts("P6 600 220 255");++y<
110;)for(f x=-301;P=R(v(-2,4,25),_(_(v(5,0,2))*++x+_(v(-2,73))*-y+v(
301,-59,-735)),2)*255,x<300;putchar(P.z))putchar(P.x),putchar(P.y);}
```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Some Practical Guidelines for Code Quality

Method and Variable Naming

The names we choose for methods and variables
Can have a significant impact on understandability

How readable is code if the variables are: a, b, c ?
(Consider the Ray Tracer code for example !)

Everyone has own idea of what makes a good name
Organisations will have own conventions & standards

Here are the "OOP with Java" naming conventions...

Naming Conventions

Unsurprisingly...

Variable names should describe the data they hold

Method names should describe action they perform

Anything less than 5 chars is probably too short

Anything greater than 20 chars is getting a bit long

Single words are typically not enough to do the job

I favour Verb/Subject pairs as names for methods...

Examples of Good Method Names

```
getSurname

setAge

initaliseDataArray

drawNodes

findStringMatches
```

Bad Method Names

```
go
set
calculate
evaluate
enable
```

Accepted "Standard" Terms

Sometimes single words _may_ be acceptable
IF they are standard terms from the domain
OR they are self-evident in their own right:

`run, draw, clone, delete, multiply, connect, filter`

But why take the risk ?
Does it really hurt to use compound names ?
You can only improve understandability

Method Complexity

'Divide and Conquer' is an often touted strategy...
Split up complex code into simple sub-procedures
(and sub-sub-procedures)

Avoid massive, hard-to-understand methods
Particularly with complex loop & decision structures
These can be VERY hard to understand (and change)

Big improvements in understandability can be
achieved by "farming out" code to suitable methods

Simple "Farming Out" Example

Consider a method to check if two numbers are "close"

(e.g. 1 and 2 are close, 1 and 8 are not)

A first attempt might look something like this:

(had to use "naughty" var names to fit code onto slide)

```
int a = int(random(0, 10));
int b = int(random(0, 10));
System.out.println("Numbers are " + a + " and " + b);
if (((a>b)&&((a-b)<2)) || ((a<b)&&((b-a)<2)) || (a==b)) {
  System.out.println("They are close");
}
else System.out.println("They are NOT close");
```

A Simpler, Clearer Solution (?)

```
{
  int firstAge = int(random(0, 10));
  int secondAge = int(random(0, 10));
  System.out.println("Ages are " + firstAge + " and " + secondAge);
  if (differenceBetween(firstAge, secondAge) < 2) {
    System.out.println("They are close");
  }
  else System.out.println("They are NOT close");
}

int differenceBetween(int a, int b)
{
  if (a>b) return a-b;
  else return b-a;
}
```

Minimising Complexity

To minimise complexity, you should try to avoid:

- Very long lines (stretching off side of screen)
- Long methods (stretching off bottom of screen)
- Methods with many parameters (doing too much)
- Deep indentation (many levels of IFs and loops)

Metrics exist to measure control flow complexity
'Cyclomatic Complexity' is one such metric:
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cyclomatic_complexity

Elegance and Replication

Code should be elegant, versatile and minimal

Nice if we can get 1 method to do the job of 20 !

(Especially if it is a fraction of the size of those 20)

Achieved by "factoring out" common functionality

Placing that common code in an often-called method

This attitude to programming often referred to as

'DRY' (Don't Repeat Yourself)

Some "WET" code

```
public void processCommand(String action, Unit unit)
{
   if(action.equals("add")) {
      System.out.println("ID of student to add ?");
      String id = System.in.readline();
      Student student = cohort.getStudent(id);
      unit.addStudent(student);
   }
   else if(action.equals("remove")) {
      System.out.println("ID of student to remove ?");
      String id = System.in.readline();
      Student student = cohort.getStudent(id);
      unit.removeStudent(student);
   }
}
```

DRYer equivalent

```
System.out.println("ID of student to "+ action +" ?");
String id = System.in.readline();
Student student = cohort.getStudent(id);
if(action.equals("add")) unit.addStudent(student);
if(action.equals("remove")) unit.removeStudent(student);
```

This seems like a trivial improvement to make
The question is, why do we still see such WET code !
(Probably due to lack of time - rather than ability)

Redundant Code

Whilst we are on the subject of redundant code
What about code that is never actually used at all ?

Happens from time-to-time during evolutionary dev
Trying out some ideas in an experimental method
But never actually calling this from main program

This is fine, but just be careful not to submit it !
It's easy for checkers to detect this kind of thing ;o)

Higher Level Structural Considerations

Structural Cohesion

Classes should be 'cohesive':

"A logical & coherent cluster of data & behaviour"

Our aim is to create classes with a clear purpose

Is

"a tumble dryer...

that also makes coffee"

cohesive ?

Loose Coupling

Classes should also be distinct and independent

You should avoid tight coupling between objects

Cyclic Dependency

It's good to have a clear allocation of responsibility

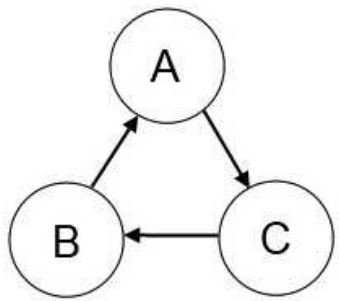
Like management structures in an organisation

Everyone knows who is responsible for what

(when things go wrong we know who to blame ;o)

It is best NOT to have cyclic loops in these structures

What if your boss was managed by your subordinate !



Problems with Cyclic Dependencies

Responsibility for features is not clearly defined
Maintainer has to cycle round the code searching

Often a sign of arbitrary allocation of responsibility
Developer doesn't have a clear structure in mind
Implements a feature inside inappropriate class

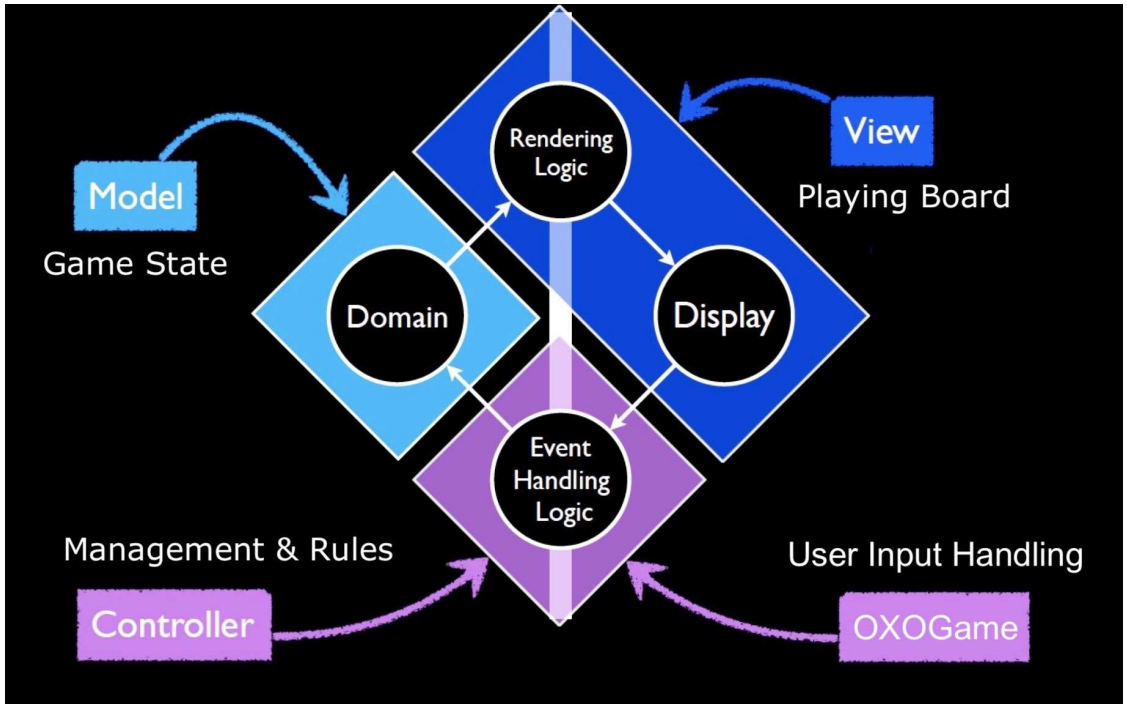
Cyclic loops are also a type of tight coupling
(which we have talked about previously)

In case you were wondering...

MVC pattern is NOT an example of cyclic dependency

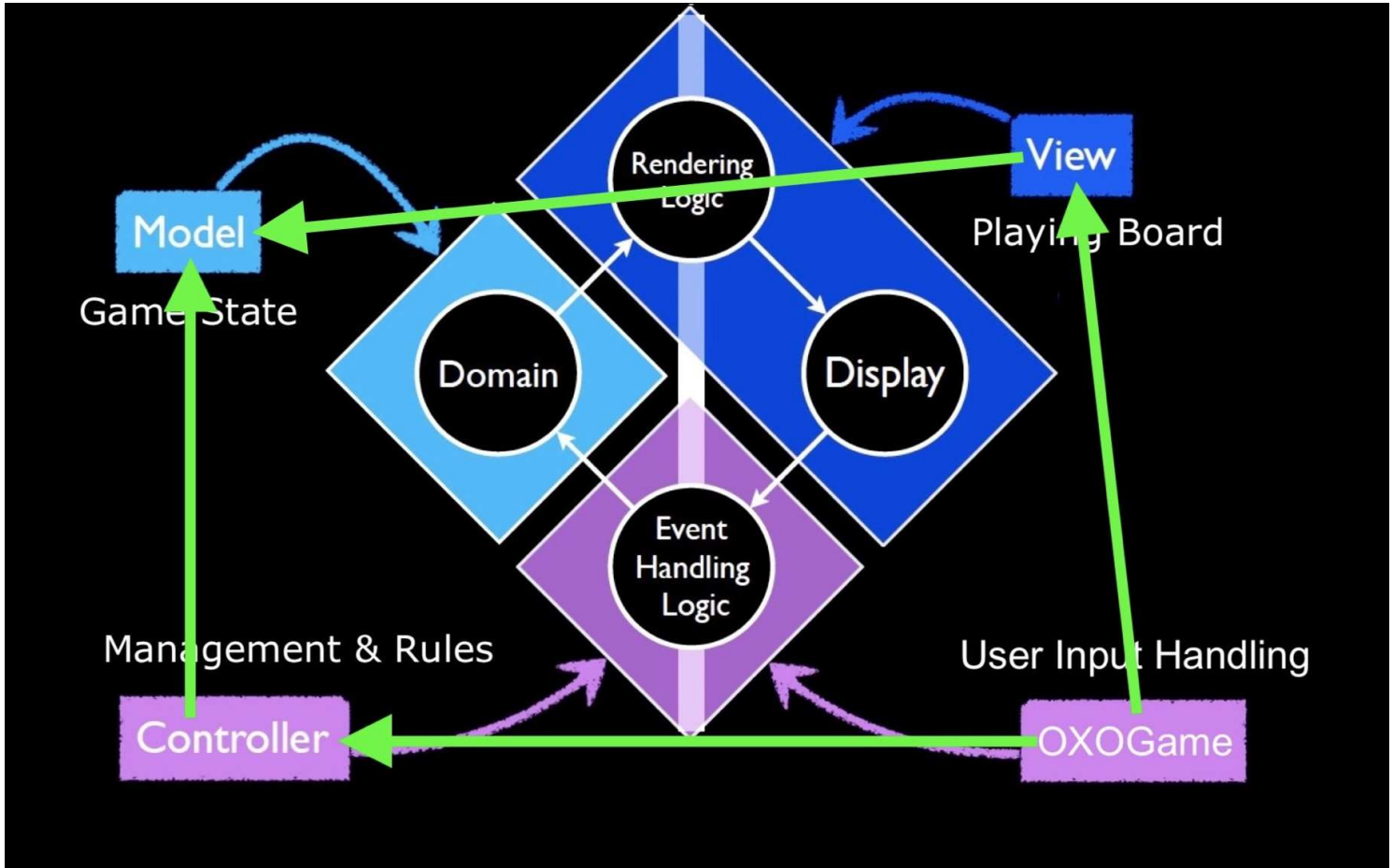
Dependency is based on the pattern of method calls

The "loop" indicates flow of data, not dependency



Pattern of Dependency

No cycles - dependencies lead towards 'Model'



Why is this important ?

You might be wondering why all of this is important
We aren't covering these topics "just for interest"

It is important that you adopt professional practices
We expect you to apply such principles in your work

To encourage you, quality is part of unit assessment
Marking criteria target all the topics covered today

Might be an idea to start practicing these now
(some they are second nature by the assessment)