

COMP3141

Software System Design and Implementation

Property Based Testing; Lazy Evaluation

Liam O'Connor
CSE, UNSW (and Data61)
Term 2 2019

Free Properties

Haskell already ensures certain properties automatically with its language design and type system.

- 1 Memory is accessed where and when it is safe and permitted to be accessed (*memory safety*).
- 2 Values of a certain static type will actually have that type at run time.
- 3 Programs that are well-typed will not lead to undefined behaviour (*type safety*).
- 4 All functions are *pure*: Programs won't have side effects not declared in the type. (*purely functional programming*)

⇒ Most of our properties focus on the *logic of our program*.

Logical Properties

We have already seen a few examples of logical properties.

Example (Properties)

- ① reverse is an *involution*: `reverse (reverse xs) == xs`
- ② right identity for `(++)`: `xs ++ [] == xs`
- ③ transitivity of `(>)`: $(a > b) \wedge (b > c) \Rightarrow (a > c)$

The set of **properties that capture all of our requirements** for our program is called the ***functional correctness specification*** of our software.

This defines what it means for software to be *correct*.

Proofs

Last week we saw some *proof methods* for Haskell programs. We could **prove** that our implementation meets its functional correctness specification.

Such proofs certainly offer a high degree of assurance, but:

- Proofs must make some assumptions about the environment and the semantics of the software.
- Proof complexity grows with implementation complexity, sometimes drastically.
- If software is **incorrect**, a proof attempt might simply become stuck: we do not always get constructive negative feedback.
- Proofs can be labour and time intensive (\$\$\$), or require highly specialised knowledge (\$\$\$).

Testing

Compared to proofs:

- Tests typically run the actual program, so requires fewer assumptions about the language semantics or operating environment.
- Test complexity does not grow with implementation complexity, so long as the specification is unchanged.
- Incorrect software when tested leads to immediate, debuggable counterexamples.
- Testing is typically cheaper and faster than proving.
- Tests care about **efficiency** and **computability**, unlike proofs.

We **lose** some assurance, but **gain** some convenience (\$\$\$).

Property Based Testing



Key idea: Generate random input values, and test properties by running them.

Example (QuickCheck Property)

```
prop_reverseApp xs ys =  
  reverse (xs ++ ys) == reverse ys ++ reverse xs
```

Haskell's *QuickCheck* is the first library ever invented for property-based testing. The concept has since been ported to Erlang, Scheme, Common Lisp, Perl, Python, Ruby, Java, Scala, F#, OCaml, Standard ML, C and C++.

PBT vs. Unit Testing

- Properties are more compact than unit tests, and describe more cases.

⇒ Less testing code

- Property-based testing heavily depends on test data generation:

- Random inputs may not be as informative as hand-crafted inputs

⇒ use shrinking

- Random inputs may not cover all necessary corner cases:

⇒ use a coverage checker

- Random inputs must be generated for user-defined types:

⇒ QuickCheck includes functions to build custom generators

- By increasing the number of random inputs, we improve code coverage in PBT.



Test Data Generation

Data which can be generated randomly is represented by the following type class:

```
class Arbitrary a where
  arbitrary :: Gen a    -- more on this later
  shrink    :: a -> [a]
```

Most of the types we have seen so far implement Arbitrary.

Shrinking

The `shrink` function is for when test cases fail. If a given input `x` fails, QuickCheck will try all inputs in `shrink x`; repeating the process until the smallest possible input is found.

Testable Types

The type of the quickCheck function is:

-- more on IO later

```
quickCheck :: (Testable a) => a -> IO ()
```

The `Testable` type class is the class of things that can be converted into properties. This includes:

- `Bool` values
- QuickCheck's built-in Property type
- Any function from an Arbitrary input to a Testable output:

```
instance (Arbitrary i, Testable o)  
=> Testable (i -> o) ...
```

Thus the type `[Int] -> [Int] -> Bool` (as used earlier) is `Testable`.

Simple example

Is this function reflexive?

```
divisible :: Integer -> Integer -> Bool
divisible x y = x `mod` y == 0
```

```
prop_refl :: Integer -> Bool
prop_refl x = divisible x x
```

- **Encode pre-conditions** with the (\Rightarrow) operator:

```
prop_refl :: Integer -> Property
prop_refl x = x > 0 ==> divisible x x
```

(but may generate a lot of spurious cases)

- or **select different generators** with modifier newtypes.

```
prop_refl :: Positive Integer -> Bool
prop_refl (Positive x) = divisible x x
```

(but may require you to define custom generators)

Words and Inverses

Example (Inverses)

```
words    :: String -> [String]
unwords  :: [String] -> String
```

We might expect `unwords` to be the inverse of `words` and vice versa. Let's find out!

Lessons: Properties aren't always what you expect!

Merge Sort

Example (Merge Sort)

Recall **merge sort**, the sorting algorithm that is reliably $\mathcal{O}(n \log n)$ time complexity.

- If the list is empty or one element, return that list.
- Otherwise, we:
 - 1 Split the input list into two sublists.
 - 2 Recursively sort the two sublists.
 - 3 Merge the two sorted sublists into one sorted list in linear time.

Applying our bottom up design, let's posit:

```
split :: [a] -> ([a], [a])
```

```
merge :: (Ord a) => [a] -> [a] -> [a]
```

Split

```
split :: [a] -> ([a], [a])
```

What is a good **specification** of split?

- Each element of the input list occurs in one of the two output lists, the same number of times.
- The two output lists consist only of elements from the input list.

Because of its usefulness later, we'll define this in terms of a **permutation** predicate.

Merge

```
merge :: (Ord a) => [a] -> [a] -> [a]
```

What is a good **specification** of merge?

- Each element of the output list occurs in one of the two input lists, the same number of times.
- The two input lists consist solely of elements from the output list.
- **Important:** If the input lists are sorted, then the output list is sorted.

Overall

```
mergesort :: (Ord a) => [a] -> [a]
```

What is a good **specification** of mergesort?

- The output list is sorted.
- The output list is a permutation of the input list.

We can prove this as a consequence of the previous specifications which we tested. Do this if time permits.

We can also just write **integration** properties that test the composition of these functions together. Also do this if time permits.

Redundant Properties

Some properties are technically **redundant** (i.e. implied by other properties in the specification), but there is some value in testing them anyway:

- They may be **more efficient** than full functional correctness tests, consuming less computing resources to test.
- They may be more **fine-grained** to give better test coverage than random inputs for full functional correctness tests.
- They provide a good **sanity check** to the full functional correctness properties.
- Sometimes full functional correctness is **not easily computable** but tests of weaker properties are.

These redundant properties include **unit tests**. We can (and should) combine both approaches!

What are some redundant properties of mergesort?

Test Quality

How good are your tests?

- Have you checked that every special case works correctly?
- Is all code exercised in the tests?
- Even if all code is exercised, is it exercised in all contexts?

Coverage checkers are useful tools to partially quantify this.

Types of Coverage



Branch/Decision Coverage

All conditional branches executed?

Function Coverage

All functions executed?

Entry/Exit Coverage

All function calls
executed?

Statement/Expression Coverage

All expressions executed?

Path Coverage

All behaviours executed?
very hard!

Haskell Program Coverage

Haskell Program Coverage (or `hpc`) is a GHC-bundled tool to measure function, branch and expression coverage.
Let's try it out!

For Stack: Build with the `--coverage` flag, execute binary, produce visualisations with `stack hpc report`.

For Cabal: Build with the `--enable-coverage` flag, execute binary, produce visualisations with `hpc report`.



Sum to n

```
sumTo :: Integer -> Integer
sumTo 0 = 0
sumTo n = sumTo (n-1) + n
```

This crashes when given a large number. Why?

Sum to n , redux

```
sumTo' :: Integer -> Integer -> Integer
```

```
sumTo' a 0 = a
```

```
sumTo' a n = sumTo' (a+n) (n-1)
```

```
sumTo = sumTo' 0
```

This **still** crashes when given a large number. **Why?**

This is called a **space leak**, and is one of the main drawbacks of Haskell's **lazy evaluation** method.

Lazy Evaluation

Haskell is **lazily evaluated**, also called **call-by-need**.

This means that expressions are only evaluated when they are **needed** to compute a result for the user.

We can force the previous program to evaluate its accumulator by using a **bang pattern**, or the primitive operation `seq`:

```
sumTo' :: Integer -> Integer -> Integer
```

```
sumTo' !a 0 = a
```

```
sumTo' !a n = sumTo' (a+n) (n-1)
```

```
sumTo' :: Integer -> Integer -> Integer
```

```
sumTo' a 0 = a
```

```
sumTo' a n = let a' = a + n in a' `seq` sumTo' a' (n-1)
```

Advantages

Lazy Evaluation has many advantages:

- It enables **equational reasoning** even in the presence of partial functions and non-termination.
- It allows functions to be **decomposed** without sacrificing efficiency, for example: `minimum = head . sort` is, depending on sorting algorithm, possibly $\mathcal{O}(n)$. John Hughes demonstrates $\alpha\beta$ pruning from AI as a larger example.¹
- It allows for **circular programming and infinite data structures**, which allow us to express more things as **pure functions**.

Problem

In **one** pass over a list, replace every element of the list with its maximum.

¹J. Hughes, "Why Functional Programming Matters", Comp. J., 1989

Infinite Data Structures

Laziness lets us define data structures that extend infinitely. Lists are a common example, but it also applies to trees or any user-defined data type:

```
ones = 1 : ones
```

Many functions such as take, drop, head, tail, filter and map work fine on infinite lists!

```
naturals = 0 : map (1+) naturals
```

--or

```
naturals = map sum (inits ones)
```

How about fibonacci numbers?

```
fibs = 1:1:zipWith (+) fibs (tail fibs)
```


Homework

- ➊ Next programming exercise is due in a week.
- ➋ Last week's quiz is due this Friday. Make sure you submit your answers.
- ➌ This week's quiz is also up, due the following Friday.