Role Playing Game Engine

Version 0.0.1

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Table of Contents

1 About RPGE and obtaining it

1.1 About RPGE and this manual

RPGE is a GNU package, providing an engine for two-dimensional graphical role playing games. It is driven and extended by writing programs in GUILE, a dialect of Scheme. This manual is for RPGE 0.0.1 and aims to document the parts of the workings of RPGE that people using it should know about, the way RPGE is driven using GUILE and how RPGE can be obtained, installed and otherwise used.

1.2 Getting a copy

RPGE can be obtained using anonymous git or from the web. In case you wish to use anonymous git, the following command creates a local copy of the RPGE git repository: `git clone git://git.savannah.nongnu.org/rpge.git`. Those who prefer the web can download a copy of a release from the GNU mirrors, a list of which is kept at `http://www.gnu.org/prep/ftp.html`, or, if necessary, directly from `ftp://ftp.gnu.org` by FTP. Either of these options will allow you to receive a copy of RPGE, but keep in mind that the sources in git will be more current, but probably also buggier than the releases.

1.3 Installation

To install RPGE, your system will, at the time of writing (users of Git are advised to check the file 'README' in the root of the source tree for possibly updated information), need the following:

- An ISO C99-compliant C compiler that does not attempt to link when passed the -c option
- A make program compatible with Makefiles produced by GNU configure scripts
- A UNIX shell to execute GNU configure scripts
- GNU sed
- The SimpleDirectmediaLayer libraries and development files, including the sdl-image and sdl-ttf libraries
- GUILE, including the development files and libraries

If you have the above dependencies, you can install RPGE by moving to the directory containing the source code and running `./configure && make` to build RPGE. Once the build is complete and error-free, RPGE can be installed by running `make install` as a user with administrator privileges.

2 Invoking RPGE

2.1 A summary of command-line options

RPGE is invoked on the command-line using `RPGE` *`options`* in which options is one or more of the following, with their required arguments:

- -v or –version: Prints version information and exits.
- -h or –help: Prints a summary of usage and options and exits.
- -f *file*: Changes the default initialization file handled at startup from .RPGE to *file*

2.2 RPGE initialization files

Once started, RPGE parses command-line options, initializes the libraries it uses and, before entering the frame loop, processes an initialization file. This file, .RPGE by default, contains the names of files containing Scheme code for RPGE to execute, one per line, in sequence. Any lines starting with '#' are ignored.

This facility is used in the sample files to include several common Scheme files. It is advised to use these files, since they provide common interfaces for matters like dealing with events, handling the statistics of mobs and a generic table type. However, it is certainly possible and sometimes useful to replace them. Keep in mind that anything that depends on other files should be loaded after them.

Currently, RPGE executes everything in the config file in the same thread as the main loop. This may change later, perhaps being replaced by waiting until the user tells RPGE he is done loading the state of his application. The reason for this is that it would enable leaving code running from startup. As it stands however, this is unsupported and attempts to make threads from within startup code have thus far failed. Therefore, a user of a user-created application has to load code to process keystrokes himself, a rather suboptimal situation to say the least.

2.3 Caveats

RPGE uses the so-called safe-load procedure to load files mentioned in initialization files. This means that, prior to loading the file, RPGE locks the load-mutex mutex, blocking if another thread has locked it and incrementing the lock count if the current thread has and unlocks it afterwards. Loads do not happen concurrently, even if the main thread could theoretically run a load while a spawned thread is doing one. Since this causes trouble for scripts that run forever, such scripts should execute (unlock-mutex load-mutex) before entering their infinite loops. Not doing so breaks any and all usage of safe-load.

Spawning threads and using any multi-threaded programming technique supported by GUILE is possible in RPGE, but note that usage of threads may require adding (use-modules (ice-9 threads)) to the top of your script. If you wish to run other scripts concurrently with your own, the safest way to do so is to use safe-load in the new thread. The simplest way to do so is `(make-thread safe-load` *`filename`*`)`.

3 RPGE's view of the world

3.1 Overview

In RPGE, a world is essentially a flat, 2-dimensional surface, divided into tiles. These tiles are small, rectangular areas, with configurable widths and heights. On these tiles, objects called mobs can move around in any way they wish, possibly blocked by certain tiles while freely passing over others. These mobs are each rendered as a so-called sprite, a 2-dimensional picture. The picture to render is determined by the file loaded for the mob and its animation status.

In the future, this model could be expanded to allow any number of concurrent 'worlds' on a single RPGE instance, something that could be especially useful if RPGE were ever networked. At present though, there is only one world and parallel universes are merely science-fiction.

3.2 Tiles

RPGE tiles need a little more discussion, since they have some interesting properties that users may want to be aware of. First, all tiles in the tilegrid are independent. Changing the data of a single tile does not change the data of the others, with one important exception. The one exception is that changing the image data used by a tile directly (something only possible through either runtime reloading of images or modifying the RPGE source, there is no API function) changes the image data used by all tiles using the image of the same filename and index.

Second, RPGE differentiates between the various directions a mob arrives at a tile from. For example, if a mob is moving right when it hits a blocking tile, that tile will only block if the BLOCK_LEFT flag is set. Similarly, for a mob arriving at any tile, the blocking flag for the corresponding edge is checked.

Third, RPGE has the facilities in place to differentiate between two types of mobs (dubbed 'ground' and 'air' mobs) and block none, one or both of those. However, these flags are unused at the time of writing.

Fourth, though tilegrids can be changed at runtime, one has to be relatively careful when doing so, due to an implementation quirk of RPGE. RPGE preprocesses the specifics of which tiles will block a mob throughout its movement, wherefore moving a mob over a rather long distance while changing the tilegrid may result in invalidating the preprocessing , which RPGE will not change. For example, a mob may stop at a tile that used to be blocking even though that tile was changed to not block. Among several techniques to deal with this are modifying RPGE to get rid of this quirk, changing the tilegrid only while no mobs are moving and taking care to not move mobs over great distances.

3.3 Mobs

Mobs, like tiles, have some interesting properties. The most important of these is the ability to add any data you want to any mob you want. This data, dubbed the 'mob user data ', can be queried and set from GUILE. By default, it is the empty list marker and protected from the garbage collector. Since RPGE only allows a single GUILE value of user data

for every mob, it is recommended to fill this space with a list, table or other compound data structure so you can put arbitrarily large amounts of data in this space. The example statistics system and other systems that work with mob user data will presume this data is a table. It is also worth noting that the default mob bootstrap procedure sets this data to an empty table.

This bootstrap procedure is another property of mobs that users can use to enhance mobs. Since systems using mob user data may need initialization, RPGE provides this procedure, which is called by the GUILE procedure make-mob only, not by the primitive create-mob, to set the initial value of this data. The procedure may however do any arbitrary amount of processing or data creation, as long as it takes a single argument representing the mob being created.

Closer to the C side of things, mobs are currently considered as wide and as high as a single tile. Therefore, RPGE will render sprites of SPRITE_WIDTH width and SPRITE_HEIGHT height, both of those macros being equal to the respective dimensions of tiles. When determining what sprite to render, RPGE looks up the image data associated with the image index given in the mob (images are loaded globally in RPGE, to save space) and takes a rect of the specified width and height, starting at a starting point determined by the current animation of the mob. Animations are laid out horizontally in the image data, being right next to each other and SPRITE_WIDTH wide each. Individual frames of a certain animation are in its column, right below each other with no padding. Essentially, RPGE treats the image data as a frame grid, indexed in the horizontal direction by the index of the mob's current animation and in the vertical direction by the index of the mob's current frame. Animations can loop automatically if that is desired.

In addition to being animated, mobs can move. RPGE provides two primitives for making mobs move, the generic move-mob which immediately changes the direction and movement of a mob, regardless of any current velocity. Since this is not very practical if you want mobs to move along a path specified by keying it in asynchronously, RPGE natively supports queueing up movements, which is done using mob-add-movement. If the mob is not moving, this procedure has the same effect as move-mob. Otherwise, the movement is queued up in a FIFO buffer, the first element of which is started when the mob is done with its current movement, and so on. This buffer is not cleared by calls to move-mob. If mobs collide however, the buffer is instantly cleared on both colliding mobs. The rationale behind this is that RPGE should wait for users to issue new commands, since a collision implicitly is a result of being unable to execute movement commands.

Finally, mobs support RPGE's event mechanism, which is currently hardly being used. In the future, this could be used to send an event whenever a mob completes a motion or, more generally, changes its motion. This would be useful for animation purposes.

4 Communication in RPGE

In RPGE, there are two kinds of communication, being communication between RPGE itself and the scripts running in it and communication between the scripts themselves. The latter type of communication can be handled in any way the users want, just like in any multithreaded program. Communication between RPGE and the engine is not so freeform, but is similar to communication in GTK, Xlib or a similar system.

This communication is handled by so-called events, which live on things called 'eventstacks'. Regardless of the specific stack, events themselves are simple messages, basically consisting of something to identify the particular type of message and whatever the user should know about it.

Another property of eventstacks one should be aware of is that they need to be opened before usage. Once opened, it is guaranteed that the user receives any event that arrives after the stack was opened. A stack without users does not accumulate any events at all. Regardless of this last property, it is advised to add any useful event to the appropriate stack, even if users are not guaranteed.

Stacks themselves live in RPGE, being assigned to either a certain object or just being global. There is currently one global stack and every single mob has a stack of its own. Global stacks should be used for events that are not related to anything that has a stack of its own and is a single object, for example a collision between two mobs or a keypress. Stacks assigned to the object are for events related to the object exclusively, for example an event sent when a mob moves across a tile boundary.

Appendix A API Reference

This section describes the entire RPGE GUILE API, all the way from primitives to the stuff implemented in the examples that are part of the RPGE distribution.

A.1 Primitives

Primitives related to mobs:

- `(create-mob` *`x y sprite`*`)`:

  Creates a mob on the tilegrid at point (*x*,*y*). Note that *x* and *y* are tile coordinates, not pixel coordinates. The mob is rendered using *sprite*, specified as a string containing the filename of the sprite to be loaded. Animation data and the like are defaulted to zero.

- `(move-mob` *`mob x y frames`*`)`:

  Move *mob*, over *frames* frames, *x* tiles to the right and *y* tiles down. This modifies the movement data of the mob, canceling any current movement.

- `(add-mob-movement` *`mob x y frames`*`)`:

  Queue up the movement that would be done by the mob if move-mob was called with the same arguments. Queued up movements are executed in order once the mob is done moving.

- `(set-mob-animation` *`mob animation start target framesbetween loop`*`)`:

  Animate *mob*, using animation *animation*, starting at frame *start*, ending at frame *target*, changing to the next frame every *framesbetween* frames. If *loop* is true, the animation loops until stopped. Note that frames and animations are specified by indices, which start at zero.

- `(stop-mob-animation` *`mob`*`)`

  Immediately stop the animation of *mob* in its current state.

- `(get-mob-data` *`mob`*`)`

  Returns the piece of global data associated with *mob*.

- `(set-mob-data` *`mob value`*`)`

  Set the piece of global data associated with *mob* to *value*.

- `(open-mob-events` *`mob`*`)`

  Open the eventstack of *mob* and return the user index associated with this action.

- `(get-mob-event` *`mob user`*`)`

  Get the next event on *mob* for *user*, in which *user* is an index returned by open-mob-events.

- `(close-mob-evetns` *`mob user`*`)`

  Close the eventstack on *mob* for *user*, indicating that *user* does not want to receive any new events on this stack.

- `(destroy-mob` *`mob`*`)`

  Destroy *mob*.

Primitives related to tiles and grids thereof:

- `(create-tile sprite clipping-rect blocking)`

  Creates a tile, using *sprite* as the filename to load a sprite from, *clipping-rect* as a list representing a rectangular clipping area, containing the part of the sprite image that should be used for rendering, and *blocking* as an identifier indicating which mobs are blocked. The types of blocking RPGE currently checks for are block-<direction>, where direction is left, right up or down. The particular direction indicates the edge the mob to be blocked hits, i.e. a tile with block-right for *blocking* blocks mobs attempting to cross its right edge. There is a single combined constant combining all four directions, conveniently named block-all-directions. Other variations can be obtained by simply adding individual constants.
- `(init-tilegrid width height)`

  Resets the main tilegrid to a new grid of dimensions *width* and *height*. This should be called once, when initializing the game map. Note that the tilegrid created by this procedure does not have any tiles set and all tiles should be set manually.
- `(set-tile x y tile)`

  Sets the tile at (x,y) to *tile*.
- `(set-all-tiles tile)`

  Sets all tiles to *tile*.

Primitives related to windows:

- `(create-window width height x y sprite spritewidth spriteheight)`

  Creates a window *width* pixels wide and *height* pixels high, with its top-left corner at (x,y) (in pixel coordinates). The window is filled with a rectangular tile, *spritewidth* pixels wide and *spriteheight* pixels wide, taken from the image file *sprite*. Note that the tile is hardwired to have its top-left corner at (0,0).
- `(remove-window window)`

  Destroys *window*.

Font-related primitives:

- `(open-font filename size)`

  Opens the font referenced by *filename*, with a font size of *size*.
- `(close-font font)`

  Closes *font*.

Text-related primitives:

- `(make-text x y text font red green blue)`

  Create floating text at pixel coordinates (x,y), rendering *text*, using *font*. The text is rendered in the color specified by *red*,*green* and *blue*, where each variable represents the intensity of the color that is its namesake, on a scale from 0 to 255, inclusive.
- `(destroy-text text)`

  Destroy *text*.

Primitives controlling the main camera:

- `(get-camera-x)`

- `(get-camera-y)`

  These return the x and y-coordinates, respectively, of the main camera, in tile coordinates.
- `(set-camera-x` *x*`)`
- `(set-camera-y` *y*`)`

  Set the coordinates of the main camera, in tile coordinates.

Global miscellaneous primitives:

- `(get-global-data)`

  Returns the current value of the global data stored inside RPGE.
- `(set-global-data` *value*`)`

  Sets the current value of the global data, while protecting it from the garbage collector. This should be called with something like a list or a table, so it can be shared across scripts. The default scripts set this to a table and store data in that.
- `(open-global-events)`

  Opens the global eventstack, returning a user index.
- `(get-global-event` *user*`)`

  Returns the next global event in line for *user*.
- `(close-global-events` *user*`)`

  Closes the global eventstack for *user*.
- `(get-argv)`

  Gets the current argument vector of the thread, roughly presumed to be equal to the 'arguments' the script was 'called' with.
- `(load-with-argv` *script arglist*`)`

  Execute *script* in the current thread, passing it *arglist* as its arguments.
- `(safe-load` *script*`)`

  Load *script* safely, that is, avoid crashes due to concurrent load starts and ends.

A.2 Scheme-level APIs

In addition to the primitives defined by the RPGE core, the default RPGE initialization file loads several files that define many Scheme functions for use with RPGE. Usually, these are meant to provide functionality that the developers felt shouldn't be 'hardcoded' in RPGE and can be replaced by an equivalent built on either GUILE itself or a combination of GUILE and the RPGE primitives described in the previous section.

In the default initialization file, files are ordered in such a way that, at the very least, they will be loaded after their dependencies have been loaded. Therefore, if you replace files, it is recommended to check if files loaded after the deleted file will still load and the functions they define will still run. For example, not loading table.guile , which is referenced at the very start of the default initialization file, will break most functions in files loaded later, with the exception of utils.guile, which does not use any tables at all.

This section lists the APIs in the order in which they are loaded by default, roughly the order in which they depend on each other.

Table API (defined in table.guile):

- `(init-table)` Returns a fresh, initialized table.
- `(table? table)` Returns #t if *table* looks like a table. This function is not perfectly accurate.
- `(add-to-table table key value)` Returns *table*, with *key* bound to *value*. This does not modify the original *table*.
- `(add-to-table! table key value)` Returns *table*, modified to include *key* bound to *value*.
- `(get-from-table table key)` Returns the value *key* is bound to in *table*.
- `(set-in-table! table key value)` Bind *key* to *value* in *table*,modifying it. Returns 'error if *key* is not bound in *table*.
- `(multi-key-find-with-list table keylist)` Returns the value bound to the keylist in *table*. Essentially, for a list of length n, this returns the value bound to the successive members of the list in *table* and n-1 sub tables. On error, this returns '() if a table does not contain the right key and 'error if one of the sub tables is not a table.
- `(multi-key-find table . keys)` The same as the above, but using the rest argument keys as the key list.
- `(multi-key-add! table keylist value)` Using the same conventions for sub tables as the above two functions, add *value* to a subtable of *table*.
- `(multi-key-set! table keylist value)` Using the same sub table conventions, modify the value in a subtable of *table*, setting it to *value*.
- `(remove-from-table! table key)` Modifies *table*, removing the binding of *key*.

Key binding API (defined in keys.scm):

- `(bind-key key proc)` Add a new binding, binding *key* to *proc*, where *proc* is a procedure of no arguments.
- `(get-binding key)` Get the procedure bound to *key*, or '() if none can be found.
- `(remove-binding key)` Undo the current binding to *key*.

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Version 1.2, November 2002

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