Lecture 12: AST visitors, ad-hoc semantic analysis

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Agenda

- ► Semantic analysis
- ► AST visitors
- ► Ad-hoc semantic analysis, symbol tables
- ► An example

Semantic analysis

- ▶ Parser establishes whether or not the input source is *syntactically* value
- ▶ This does not guarantee that the input is semantically valid
 - \triangleright E.g., int x = "hello";
- ► Semantic analysis:
 - Check that names refer to something valid
 - Check that operations performed are consistent with the source language's semantics

Formal vs. ad-hoc techniques

- ▶ With lexical analysis and parsing, formal techniques are very effective
 - Lexical analysis: regular languages, regular expressions, finite automata
 - ▶ Parsing: context-free grammars, parsing algorithms
- ► Formal approach to semantic analysis: attribute grammars
 - ▶ We will cover these later
 - ► This approach has difficulties
- ► Ad-hoc semantic analysis: write ad-hoc code to check semantic properties
 - Could execute during parsing
 - ► Could execute on a representation of the input source (i.e., the AST)

AST visitors

Doing a computation on a tree

```
// approach 1
void TreeComputation::process_tree(Node *n) {
  switch (n->get tag()) {
  case NODE TAG 1:
    ...code to handle NODE TAG 1...
    ...recursively process children...
    break;
  case NODE TAG 2:
    ...code to handle NODE TAG 2...
    ... recursively process children...
    break;
  ...etc...
```

Doing a computation on a tree

```
// approach 2
void TreeComputation::process tree(Node *n) {
  switch (n->get tag()) {
  case NODE TAG 1:
    visit_node_tag_1(n); // will also process children
    break;
  case NODE_TAG_2:
    visit node tag 2(n); // will also process children
    break;
  ...etc...
```

Observation

- ► Lots of repetitive code
- Second approach is nice in that each kind of tree node is handled by a dedicated function
 - ▶ But the big switch statement is still tedious and error-prone code
- ▶ Also: what if we have multiple tree computations?
 - Potential for duplicated code

Visitor design pattern

- ► Idea: abstract the traversal and dispatching to per-node-type functions into a base class
- ► Derived classes then only need to override the per-node-type member functions as necessary

ASTVisitor

- ► ASTVisitor: a base class for implementations of tree computations on the AST
 - ► Assignment 3: SemanticAnalysis
 - ► Assignment 4: high-level code generation

ASTVisitor

```
class ASTVisitor {
public:
  ASTVisitor();
  virtual ~ASTVisitor():
  virtual void visit(Node *n); // <-- switch statement is here
  virtual void visit_unit(Node *n);
  virtual void visit_variable_declaration(Node *n);
  ...many others...
  virtual void visit_children(Node *n); // <-- recursively visit children</pre>
  virtual void visit_token(Node *n);
};
```

General recursive treewalk

- ➤ The default behavior of each node-specific visit function is to call visit_children
- ► This means that the default behavior of any class derived from ASTVisitor is a general recursive treewalk of the AST
- ▶ Which is why a derived visitor class can just override the visit functions that it actually cares about

Defining a visit function

Note that if you override a node-specific visit function, then it's up to you to decide whether and how to visit children.

Example:

```
void SemanticAnalysis::visit variable declaration(Node *n) {
 // visit the base type
 visit(n->get_kid(1));
  std::shared ptr<Type> base type = n->get kid(1)->get type();
 // iterate through declarators, adding variables
 // to the symbol table
 Node *decl_list = n->get_kid(2);
 for (auto i = decl_list->cbegin(); i != decl_list->cend(); ++i) {
   Node *declarator = *i;
   // ...handle the declarator...
```

Where results go

- ► The most straightforward way to record results is to store them *in the* visited tree node
- For example:
 - ► Store a pointer to a symbol table entry in a node representing a reference to a variable or function
 - ► Store a (shared) pointer to the Type object representing the type of an expression
 - ► Store a boolean value indicating whether or not an expression yields an Ivalue

NodeBase

The purpose of the NodeBase class is to give you a place to define new member variables and member functions for AST nodes.

The reason we don't recommend that you modify Node directly is that we might want to give you a new version. Putting your changes in NodeBase means you never need to modify Node.

Propagation of values

- ▶ Propagating values *upwards* in the tree is generally easy, because the parent has links to its children
 - ► Recursively visit children, then make use of computed values stored in them
- Propagating values downwards is more difficult because child nodes don't link back to the parent
- ► Fortunately, upwards tends to be the most natural direction
- ► For the rare cases of propagating values downwards (e.g., for communicating the base type to the code that processes declarators) you might need to write some custom traversal code

Ad-hoc semantic analysis, symbol tables

Semantic analysis, symbol tables

Two of the main concerns of semantic analysis:

- 1. Determine what each name refers to
- 2. Determine a type for each expression

Building symbol tables is the classic approach to performing semantic analysis

Symbol Table = Environment

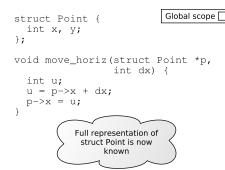
- ► If you're comfortable with the notion of "environment" from the interpreter project, a symbol table is more or less the same thing
 - ► Represents a scope in the program
 - ▶ Stores information about what names in that scope refer to
 - ► Can have a "parent" representing the enclosing scope
- ➤ The main difference is that Environment kept track of a runtime value for each name, while SymbolTable will keep track of information about a variable, function, or data type

Symbol class

```
// represents one symbol table entry
class Symbol {
private:
  SymbolKind m_kind;
  std::string m_name;
  std::shared_ptr<Type> m_type;
  SymbolTable *m_symtab;
  bool m_is_defined;
public:
  // constructor, member functions...
};
```

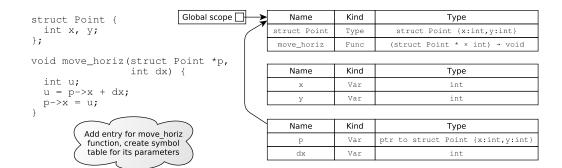
```
Global scope
                                                   Name
                                                               Kind
                                                                                   Type
struct Point {
  int x, y;
                                                struct Point
                                                               Type
                                                                                struct { }
};
void move_horiz(struct Point *p,
                   int dx) {
                                                    Name
                                                               Kind
                                                                                   Type
  int u;
  u = p -> x + dx;
  p->x = u;
          Create entry and symbol
          table for the struct Point
                data type
```

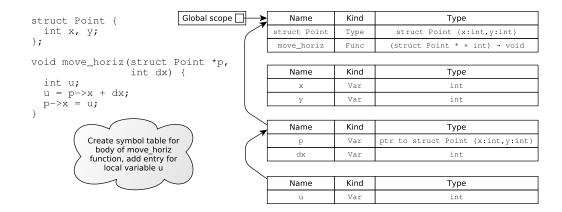
```
Global scope
                                                    Name
                                                                Kind
                                                                                     Type
struct Point {
  int x, y;
                                                 struct Point
                                                                               struct Point { }
                                                                Type
};
void move_horiz(struct Point *p,
                   int dx) {
                                                     Name
                                                                Kind
                                                                                     Type
  int u;
                                                                Var
                                                                                     int
                                                      Х
  u = p -> x + dx;
                                                                                     int
                                                                Var
  p->x = u;
            Entries for members of
            struct Point are added
             to its symbol table
```

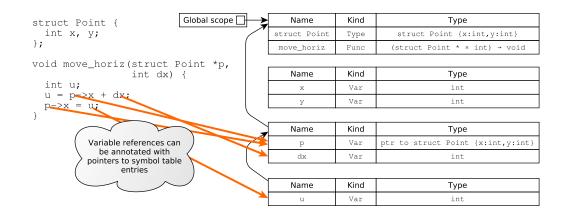


>	Name	Kind	Туре
	struct Point	Type	struct Point{x:int,y:int}

Name	Kind	Туре
х	Var	int
У	Var	int







An example

An example

```
int sq(int *p) {
   int x;
   x = *p;
}
int main(void) {
   int a;
   a = 3;
   sq(&a);
   return a;
}
```

