

THEORY AND PRACTICE OF TEXT EDITORS

-- or --

A Cookbook for an Emacs

by

Craig Alan Finseth

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the

Degree of Bachelor of Science

at the

Massachusetts Institute of Technology

June 1980

[REDACTED]  
Signature of Author.....  
Department of Electrical Engineering and Computer Science, 9 May 1980

Certified by.....  
[REDACTED] Thesis Supervisor

Accepted by.....  
[REDACTED] Chairman, Departmental Committee on Theses

Copyright (c) 1980 by Craig A. Finseth

The author hereby grants to the Massachusetts Institute of Technology  
permission to reproduce and to distribute copies of this document  
in whole or in part.

ARCHIVES  
MASSACHUSETTS INSTITUTE  
OF TECHNOLOGY

1

SEP 3 1980

LIBRARIES

## **Abstract**

Theory and Practice of Text Editors

-- or --

A Cookbook for an Emacs

by  
Craig A. Finseth

Submitted to the Department of Electrical Engineering and Computer Science  
on 9 May 1980 in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the Degree of Bachelor of Science

## **Abstract**

A comprehensive summary of the available technology for implementing text editors. It is written to be a guide for the implementor of a text editor. It does not provide a finished, polished algorithm for any part of a text editor. Rather, it provides a breakdown of the problems involved and discusses the pitfalls and the available tradeoffs to be considered when designing a text editor. Specific reference is made to the relevant tradeoffs for an Emacs-type editor, a character-oriented, extensible display editor.

Thesis Supervisor: David P. Reed  
Title: Assistant Professor of Computer Science and Engineering

## Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Owen Ted Anderson for teaching me a lot of what I know about editors as well as writing one of the most readable programs around.

I would like to thank Bernard S. Greenberg, who supplied some of the algorithms which are presented here.

I would like to thank Richard M. Stallman for creating the original Emacs and for doing most of the development of ITS EMACS.

# Table of Contents

<b>Chapter One: Introduction</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Chapter Two: Memory Management</b>	<b>10</b>
2.1 Data Structures	11
2.2 Marks	14
2.3 Interface Procedures	15
2.4 Buffer Gap	22
2.4.1 Gap Size	26
2.4.2 Multiple Gaps and Why They Don't Work	26
2.4.3 The Hidden Second Gap	27
2.5 Linked Line	28
2.5.1 Storage Comparison	30
2.5.2 Error Recovery Comparison	30
2.6 Multiple Buffers	31
2.7 Paged Virtual Memory	33
2.8 Editing Extremely Large Files	34
2.9 Scratchpad Memory	36
<b>Chapter Three: Incremental Redisplay</b>	<b>38</b>
3.1 Line Wrap	40
3.2 Multiple Windows	41
3.3 Terminal Types	42
3.3.1 TTY and Glass TTY	42
3.3.2 Basic	42
3.3.3 Advanced	43
3.3.4 Memory Mapped	44
3.3.5 Terminal Independent Output	45
3.3.6 Echo Negotiation	47
3.4 Approaches to Redisplay Schemes	47
3.5 The Framer	48
3.6 Redisplay Algorithms	49

3.6.1 The Basic Algorithm	49
3.6.2 The Advanced Algorithm	52
3.6.3 Memory Mapped	55
3.7 Other Details	56
3.7.1 Tabs	56
3.7.2 Control Characters	56
3.7.3 End of the Buffer	57
3.7.4 Between Line Breakout	57
3.7.5 Proportional Spacing and Multiple Fonts	58
3.7.6 Multiple Windows	58
<b>Chapter Four: The Command Loop</b>	<b>59</b>
4.1 Basic Loop: Read, Eval, Print	59
4.1.1 The Philosophy Behind the Basic Loop	60
4.2 Error Recovery	61
4.3 Arguments	63
4.3.1 Prefix Arguments	64
4.3.2 String Arguments	65
4.3.3 Positional Arguments	67
4.4 Rebinding	67
4.4.1 Rebinding Keys	68
4.4.2 Rebinding Functions	69
4.5 Modes	70
4.5.1 Implementing Modes	72
4.6 Kill and UnDo	73
4.7 Implementation Languages	75
4.7.1 TECO	75
4.7.2 Sine	75
4.7.3 Lisp	76
4.7.4 PL/1, C, etc.	76
4.7.5 Fortran, Pascal, etc.	77
<b>Chapter Five: User Interface Hardware</b>	<b>78</b>
5.1 Keyboards	78
5.1.1 Special Function Keys and Other Auxiliary Keys	80
5.1.2 Extra Shift Keys	81

5.2 Graphical Input	81
5.2.1 How It Can Be Used	82
5.2.2 Devices: TSD, Mouse, Tablet, Joystick	82
Chapter Six: The World Outside of Text Editing	85
Appendix A: Annotated Bibliography	88
6.1 Emacs Type Editors	88
6.1.1 ITS EMACS	88
6.1.2 Lisp Machine Zwei	89
6.1.3 Multics Emacs	90
6.1.4 MagicSix TVMacs	91
6.1.5 Other Emacs	91
6.2 Non-Emacs Display Editors	92
6.3 Structure Editors	93
6.4 Other Editors	94
Appendix B: Some Implementations of Emacs Type Editors	97
Appendix C: Partial Emacs Command List	98

## Chapter One

### Introduction

This thesis is intended to answer the question, "What are the important considerations in designing a text editor?" In answering this question, it will provide a reference document for would-be implementors of text editors.

There is a modest amount of literature available which discusses topics related to text editing. Most of the papers are "reference manual"-like because they explain the user interface only. A few of the rest cover the details of a specific implementation of an editor. This thesis will generalize the latter into a document which considers the problems relevant for all text editors.

The primary goal of a text editor is to allow the user to edit text. There are two secondary goals. First is to perform this editing without wasting resources. Second is to give the user a pleasant environment to edit in. The latter requires a good command set, feedback to the users, and quick response to commands.

One way to achieve these goals is by breaking the design of the editor into three parts. The memory management part performs efficient editing of the text. It is essentially a very simple editor in itself. The incremental redisplay part provides feedback to the user. The command set (loop) part translates the user's input into commands to the memory management part. Each part of the structure contributes in its own way towards providing quick response. It is this structure that will be discussed in this thesis. Each chapter of the thesis covers a different part.

## Introduction

The second chapter is memory management (you are reading the first chapter). The basic problem that is addressed is: given that you have a possibly large buffer, how do you structure the storage for it so that trivial operations (e.g., inserting a character and moving around in the buffer) do not require excessive amounts of work? Other problems are: what should the interface to the buffer look like from a program? How do these considerations change when you have multiple buffers and/or virtual memory? In a nutshell, this chapter discusses the cpu time - memory - disk channel tradeoff. This topic is interrelated with the next one.

The third chapter is incremental redisplay. The basic problem here is: given that the user has a reasonable video terminal which you can communicate with over a limited bandwidth channel, how do you change what is displayed on his screen to match the current contents of the buffer? Other problems are: what are reasonable terminals to use? What extra information can you retain to speed up the updating process? This chapter discusses the cpu time - I/O channel usage tradeoff.

The fourth chapter is a discussion of the command loop. What is the basic edit cycle? What sort of errors do you have to recover from? How and why do you dynamically change the editor itself? What are some criteria to use when selecting an implementation language?

The fifth chapter considers user interface hardware. What are desirable ways for the user to interact with the editor? This area includes such things as desirable features in keyboards and how to take advantage of graphical input.

<sup>1</sup>The sixth chapter mentions some other uses for text editors.

Note that MIT Emacs will be used in this thesis whenever a reference to a specific editor is required (for example, when discussing command syntax). This class of editors

## Introduction

will be referred to as "Emacs-type." A specific editor was selected (as opposed to creating another one) specifically to avoid the work of reinventing the wheel. MIT Emacs was selected because of the author's familiarity with it and because several implementations of it have been made, thus providing a wealth of experience with it in different environments.

## Chapter Two

# Memory Management

A copy of the text that is being edited is stored in a buffer. The text appears to the user as a sequence of characters. All editing operations are specified relative to a place in the buffer. This place is called the point and it is always located between two characters (thinking this way eliminated the possibility of some fencepost errors). Each buffer has a set of commands. These commands are called modes. It is the responsibility of the memory management software to support buffers cleanly and efficiently.

It is assumed that the user will be presented with some sort of status display. This display will tell the user such things as the name of the buffer that he is editing, the name of the file that is being edited, and what modes the buffer is in (see section 4.5, page 70 for a discussion of what modes are). The interface to the memory management software includes operations to maintain this auxilliary information.

It is assumed that buffers are stored in the equivalent of main memory while the editing is being done. This means that the buffer is either in main memory (for very small machines), in the address space of the editor (for large address space virtual memory machines), or it can be mapped into the address space (for small address space virtual memory machines). Any of these cases will be assumed to be memory in this thesis. There are two commonly used techniques to manage memory in order to perform the editing efficiently. These techniques are known as buffer gap (store the text as an array of characters) and linked line (store the text as a linked list of lines) and will be

discussed in following sections. Their discussion follows the more theoretical sections which cover the definition of the interface between the main editor and the memory management routines. Further discussion shows how the two schemes perform in a virtual memory environment and when multiple buffers are manipulated. Some closing remarks will be made about scratchpad memory and methods of reclaiming storage.

## 2.1 Data Structures

This section discusses the data needs of an editor. With two exceptions, all of the state of the editor is defined here. Thus, if this information is retained across invocations, you will have the ability to resume editing where you left off. Thus, the amount of work involved with editing can be reduced.

The other place where state information is kept is in the screen manager. The screen manager retains a knowledge of how buffers were displayed. Retaining this information allows the screen to reappear as the user left it. If the information is not retained, the screen manager will have to recalculate the display and this can be somewhat confusing. However, the editor will not lose any functionality if this state is left out.

The World contains the buffers in use by the editor. It is a circular list of BufferDescriptors and an indication of which buffer is the current one. In a PL/I-ish syntax:

## Memory Management

```
declare World,
    CurrentBuffer  pointer,
    BufferChain    pointer;
```

Each buffer descriptor has several types of internal information.

```
declare BufferDescriptor,
    NextChainEntry  pointer,
    BufferName      char(big) varying,
                    Point          location,
                    Length         fixed,
                    Modifiedp     bit(1),
                    FileName      char(big) varying,
                    ModeName      char(big) varying,
                    MarkList      pointer,
                    ModeList      pointer,
                    StorageData   pointer,
                    ScreenData    pointer;
```

NextChainEntry is a mechanism for implementing the circular list of buffers. The list is circular because there is no preferred buffer and it should be possible to get to any buffer with equal ease. BufferName is a way for the user to be able to refer to the buffer.

Point is the current location where editing operations are taking place. It is of the data type location. The representation for this data type is implementation specific. For buffer gap editors, it is an integer, but for linked line editors, it is a (line pointer, offset) pair. Length indicates how long the buffer is in some reasonable unit (usually characters). Modifiedp is a flag which indicates whether the buffer has been modified since it was last written out or read in.

FileName is the name of the file system object which is currently associated with the contents of the buffer. ModeName is way to tell the user what modes are in effect. Typically, each mode will insert its name there as it is invoked. This information is not

## Memory Management

really implicit in the ModeList because there can be invisible modes (for example, autoloaded commands) which use the mode mechanism for invocation but the user does not want to be made explicitly aware of them. See section 4.5, page 70 for a discussion of what modes are.

MarkList is simply a list of marks.

```
declare Mark,
      NextMark      pointer,
      Name          {anything convenient, try small
                     integers},
      WhereItIs     location;
```

Each mark has a pointer to the next one, a name, and a location within the buffer. Note that this list is not circular and it would probably help to keep it sorted by increasing location. The name is a way of distinguishing this mark from any other one associated with this buffer. This name is generated by the Create Mark routine and returned. It can thus be any convenient data type. Small integers will work quite well.

ModeList is a list of procedures to be invoked when this buffer is selected. See section 4.5, page 70 for a more complete discussion.

StorageData is a descriptor block which defines how the contents of the buffer are stored in memory. The nature of this block is dependent upon the memory management algorithm used. ScreenData is a descriptor block which defines how the buffer appears on the user's screen. Its definition will become apparent in the discussion in the next chapter.

### 2.2 Marks

A mark is a named fixed point within a given buffer. A mark always points between the same two characters no matter what has been inserted or deleted around it. Marks are used for several different reasons.

- They remember a specific location for future reference. For example, a command might paginate a file. In this case, a mark would remember where the point was so that the command could return with your location unchanged. Marks, like the point, are between two characters.
- They delimit a portion of text in conjunction with other marks or, more commonly, the point. This portion of text is called the region. This case would be used, for example, in a DeleteRegion command.
- They serve as bounds for iteration. Because they remain invariant when changes are made to the buffer, they can serve as a constant position to "head towards." An example could be the FillParagraph command. This command iterates through the buffer deleting and inserting whitespace (in the process, making each line as long as it can be without going past the right margin) until it reaches the end of the paragraph. A mark is used to remember where the end of the paragraph is. This usage is a variation on the region-delimiting usage, but it is worth noting in itself.

When an insertion is made at a mark there is a question about what to do with the mark (i.e. on which side of the inserted character it should end up). For the most part, the mark should move (i.e. be after the inserted character). However, there are good reasons for having it work the other way and so there are fixed marks, which remain before an inserted character.

An example of using fixed marks is to delimit an insertion. A routine could create both a mark and a fixed mark at the same location. Any inserted text would push the marks apart and end up between them. Thus, it is possible to keep track of what has

been inserted.

## 2.3 Interface Procedures

This section defines the interface between the main part of the editor and the memory management routines. They will be described in terms of their logical function only, leaving out specific implementation details. An example of such a detail is a code variable which is returned and which indicates whether the operation succeeded. Also note that any data types mentioned (e.g. string) are intended to be canonical and no specific implementations are assumed. A <r> after a parameter means that it is returned by the procedure.

There is an important question as to exactly who allocates the data (the buffer descriptors and the buffers themselves). This issue is more language specific in the sense that certain languages specify an answer which must be used whether or not it is the right one. The procedures will be defined as if they own the data. If it is decided that they do not, it is relatively easy to include an extra argument on each procedure call which identifies a descriptor of the object that the procedures are to manipulate.

```
InitWorld  
SaveWorld(FileName)  
LoadWorld(FileName)
```

InitWorld is the basic set-up-housekeeping call. It is called once, upon editor invocation. SaveWorld and LoadWorld implement the state-saving across edit sessions. SaveWorld is used to save the state of the editing session for later resumption. This operation might be quite expensive if it requires explicitly writing out all of the buffers to a large file or it might be very cheap in a virtual memory environment, where all that might be required is to set an external static variable to indicate that the environment is

## Memory Management

consistent. The possibility of multiple saved environments is interesting, but has not been implemented to my knowledge. It seems to be a nice way to work on several of tasks (not in the process management sense) at once.

If you are creating a "stripped down" editor then the save and load world routines will not do anything. They can be put in as stubs if there is a reasonable possibility that the editor will be embellished later.

```
CreateBuffer(BufferName)
DeleteBuffer(BufferName)
SetCurrentBuffer(BufferName)
SetCurrentBufferNext(BufferName <r>)
```

CreateBuffer is given a name and it returns after having created a buffer of that name. If the buffer already exists, it probably should signal an error of some sort to keep from bashing existing information. DeleteBuffer deletes a buffer. If the current buffer is deleted, the default buffer becomes the current one. (The editor is created with one default buffer called "Main" or something like that. It must always exist.)

Depending on the implementation language, we may be able to choose in the procedures that are being defined between including a buffer as an explicit parameter or having it implicit by setting an own variable that indicates which buffer is the current buffer. If buffers are changed often, it is worthwhile to include the buffer with each call. If, on the other hand, buffer switching is done infrequently, the overhead involved with setting a current buffer is more than acceptable. My experience has been that buffer switching occurs only rarely and so the extra call is worth it.

SetCurrentBuffer makes buffer BufferName the current one. SetCurrentBufferNext makes the next buffer in the circular list the current one and RETURNS its name in BufferName. This mechanism allows for iterating through all buffers looking for one which meets an arbitrary test.

## Memory Management

Note that most of the above calls are really useful only if you have a multiple buffer implementation of the editor. In a single buffer editor, they are relatively useless and should be used only if there is a reasonable chance of expanding to a multiple buffer editor in the future.

```
SetModified(Flag)
GetModified(Flag <r>)
SetPointA(Location)
SetPointR(Count)
GetPoint(Location <r>)
GetLength(Size <r>)
```

These routines deal with several variables. They allow setting and asking for the point, the current buffer length and the state of the modified flag.

The modified flag provides an indication of whether the buffer has changed. It is set implicitly by any buffer change operation (principally insertion and deletion) and cleared automatically by writing the contents of the buffer to a file. The procedures to set or clear it explicitly are provided as this ability will ordinarily be used by the redisplay code (see section 3.6.2, page 52 for the discussion of what it is used for).

Note that there are two flavors of the SetPoint routine, designated "A" and "R". They both do the same logical operation, but the "A" version interprets its argument as an absolute position within the buffer and the "R" version interprets its argument as an offset relative to the current position of the point. (Negative values indicate a backward offset.) Due to the definition of the location type, the "A" version does not take an integer value as the location and so one usage is not readily simulatable in terms of the other.

```
Insert(String)
Delete(Count)
GetStringA(Location,Length,String <r>)
GetStringR(Count,Length,String <r>)
```

## Memory Management

These routines manipulate and examine the buffer. Insert inserts a string into the buffer at the point. The point is left at the end of the inserted string. Delete removes  $\text{abs}(\text{Count})$  characters from the buffer. (Negative counts delete before the point).

GetString returns the string starting at the specified location and Length characters long. There are both absolute and relative versions of this routine.

Search(String,Location <r>,Flag <r>)	F   B	A   R
FindFirstIn(String,Location <r>,Flag <r>)	F   B	A   R
FindFirstNotIn(String,Location <r>,Flag <r>)	F   B	A   R
LookingAtP(String,Location,Flag <r>)		A   R

There are a total of fourteen routines in this section, but they have been listed in an abbreviated form for convenience. These are search routines and each form can head either forward (F) or backward (B) and with the returned location either absolute (A) or relative (R) to the point.

Note that these routines are not necessary as their action can be readily simulated by using the other defined routines. However, they have been included in the discussion because they are useful and because they are often implemented in the same level as the other memory management routines for having lower level access to the buffer will speed up their execution.

Search looks for the first occurrence of the string in the buffer, starting at the current point and heading in the specified direction. It returns a flag saying whether the string was found and an indication of the string's location. The location returned is the location of the end of the found string (either absolute or relative) in the direction of the search. (For a backward search, the location is the beginning of the actual string.) This definition implies that repeated searches will stop at successive instances of the string.

FindFirstIn searches for the first occurrence of any of the characters in the string.

For example, `FindFirstIn("0123456789",...)` would return the location of the first digit encountered. Like `Search`, it returns a flag as to whether a match was made and the location of the match. Unlike `Search`, the location returned is at the beginning of the match and not the end. Successive applications will thus return the same position. The difference in behavior between `Search` and `FindFirstIn` is a function of their different uses. `FindFirstIn` is used to parse through text slowly, and zero and one character strings must be handled properly. These definitions facilitate that handling. `FindFirstNotIn` works in exactly the same manner as `FindFirstIn` except that it matches on any character not in the string. For example, the following code fragment implements a forward word operation.

```
alphabet="abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz";
FindFirstInFA(alphabet,location,flag);
SetPointA(location);
FindFirstNotInFA(alphabet,location,flag);
```

The first `Find` operation will skip over any non-word characters to the beginning of a word. The next one will skip to the end of the word. (Note that the `alphabet` variable should also have the digits, uppercase, and several special characters in order to work as one would intuitively expect. Note also that the selection of special characters will in general be language-specific. Further, no checks were made for string-not-found, etc. Thus, it is not an example of finished code.)

An alternative way of defining these operations is to have them automatically set the point instead of returning a location. (The flag must still be returned.) If the string was not found, the point would not be moved. The choice of a method of implementing these routines is a matter of taste.

`LookingAtP` has a much more simple definition. It compares `String` against the sequence of characters in the buffer starting at `Location`, returning the true/false answer

## Memory Management

in Flag.

```
GetHpos(Column <r>)
SetHpos(Column)
```

(These routines, like the previous set, are not necessary but useful.) GetHpos returns the column that the point is in, after taking into account tab stops, etc. It does not take into account the screen width as it should not make any difference to the editor how big the terminal is. SetHpos moves the point to the desired column, stopping at the end of a line if it is not long enough. If there is no character at the desired column (due to tab stops), it uses the next higher available column position.

```
SetFileName(FileName)
GetFileName(FileName <r>)
WriteBuffer
ReadBuffer
```

These routines interface between the buffer and the file system. The FileName routines set and return the file object (in general a string--the file name). At the user interface, the editor might implement an intelligent "default and guess" interpretation of the file name so as to make life easier for the user, but doing so does not affect this level of code. This general area is one where system-specific conventions become significant.

WriteBuffer writes the contents of the buffer out to the file name associated with the buffer. Any conversions between internal format and what the file system wants will be done at this time. Also, the buffer modified flag (ModifiedP) will be cleared.

ReadBuffer reads the file into the current buffer. There are two choices about how to do the read operation. Both directions will be discussed along with their ramifications for the other parts of the editor. They are not both implemented because it is desirable to keep the number of primitives to a minimum.

## Memory Management

First, it can replace the contents of the buffer with the contents of the file. If it does so, the buffer modified flag will be cleared automatically. The editor will want to check on what it is replacing. If the previous contents of the buffer have been modified, the user should be asked what to do (e.g., whether he is making a mistake).

Second, it can insert the contents of the file into the contents of the buffer at the point. In this case, the first method can be simulated by explicitly deleting all of the buffer and then reading. The buffer modified flag will have to be manually cleared. The same policy of asking the user what to do with modified buffers should be followed. The advantage behind this method is that it allows the easy implementation of the insert file command. The first method requires the allocation of additional space and then the copying of the data; a luxury that may not be available on smaller systems. This second method is thus preferred.

```
CreateMark(MarkID)
CreateFixedMark(MarkID)
DeleteMark(MarkID)
SetMark(MarkID,Location)
GetMark(MarkID,Location <r>)
CompareLocation(Location1,Location2,Result <r>)
```

These routines manage marks. They allow for creating both ordinary and fixed marks, deleting marks, and setting and evaluating them. Note that except for creating them, there is no difference in usage with these routines between ordinary and fixed marks (although their behavior will, of course, differ).

SetMark merely sets the location of the mark to Location. (A relative version of this routine can be supplied, if desired.) GetMark returns the current location of the mark. It should be used directly and not assigned into a variable as its value can change across some buffer operations. These operations are Insert, Delete and ReadBuffer.

CompareLocation allows the comparison of any two marks or the point and the

## Memory Management

mark to be done without being aware of the specific scheme chosen. It takes two Locations as arguments and returns the sign (+1, 0, -1) of the result of Location1 - Location2.

```
SetModeName(ModeName)
GetModeName(ModeName <r>)
AppendModeList(Procedure)
DeleteModeList(Procedure)
InvokeModeList
```

These routines manage the multiple mode capability. The ModeName is a string which can be displayed to remind the user what is going on. It does not affect anything else.

Append, delete, and invoke operations are all supplied. It is generally bad form to define the modes so that it matters in which order the procedures are called, but there do arise such occasions. Therefore, the procedures should be called in the order that they are appended onto the list. Checks should be made to insure that a procedure is not put on the list more than once. Again, see section 4.5, page 70 for a complete discussion of modes.

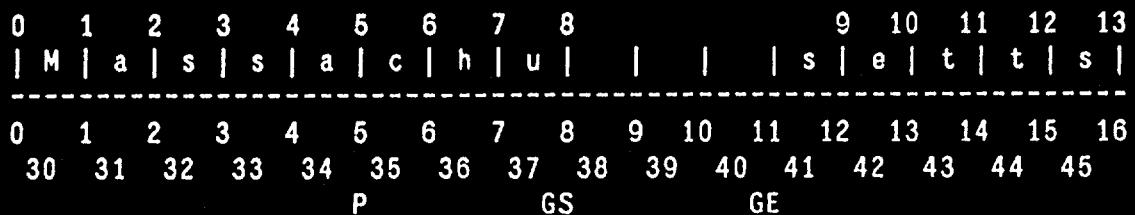
## 2.4 BufferGap

This section discusses the implementation of one of the two ways of implementing the memory management functions.

A buffer gap system stores the text as two contiguous sequences of characters with a (possibly null) gap between them. It thus uses memory efficiently as the gap can be kept small and so a very high percentage of memory can be devoted to actually storing text. Changes are made to the buffer by first moving the gap to the location to be changed and then inserting or deleting characters by changing pointers.

## Memory Management

In more detail, here is an example buffer which contains the word "Massachusetts".



There is a lot of information here which needs explaining. First, the buffer is 13 characters long and it contains no spaces. The blanks between the "u" and the "s" show where the gap is and do not indicate that the memory has spaces stored in it. The point is between the "a" and the "c" at location 5 and is labeled with a "P" in the bottom line (legal values for the point are the numbers from zero to the length of the buffer). There are also three different sets of numbers (coordinate systems) for referring to the contents of the buffer.

First is the user coordinate system. It is displayed above the buffer. The values for it run from 0 to the length of the buffer. As you will note, the gap is "invisible" in this system. The coordinates label the positions between the characters and not the characters themselves. Thought of in this way, the arithmetic is easy. Thought of as labeling the characters, the arithmetic becomes fraught with special cases and ripe for fencepost errors.

Second is the gap coordinate system. It is displayed immediately under the dashed line. The values for it run from 0 to the amount of storage that is available and it, too, labels the positions between the characters (or rather, storage cells). The internal arithmetic of the buffer manager is done in this coordinate system. The start of the gap (labeled "GS" in the bottom line) is at position 8 and the end of the gap (labeled "GE") is at position 11.

Conversion from the user coordinate system to the gap coordinate system is quite

easy. If the location (in the user coordinate system) is before the start of the gap, the values are the same. If the location is after the start of the gap (NOT the end of the gap!), the location in the gap coordinate system is  $(\text{GapEnd} - \text{GapStart}) + \text{the location}$  in the user coordinate system. It is a good idea to isolate this calculation either in a macro or a subroutine in order to enhance readability. Most routines (e.g. Search) will then use the user coordinate system even though they are essentially internal.

The third coordinate system is the storage coordinate system. It is the bottom row of numbers in the diagram. It is the means whereby the underlying storage cells are referenced. It is labeled from  $X$  to  $X + \text{the amount of storage that is available}$ . The origin (the value of  $X$ ) 30 was chosen to be 30 here to help distinguish between the various coordinate systems. Its absolute value makes no difference. Note that it labels the cells themselves and so caution must be taken to avoid fencepost errors.

A buffer gap system has a very low overhead for examining the buffer. The reference (GetChar) comes in in the user coordinate system and the location is converted to the gap coordinate system. The cell is then looked up and the contents returned. Essentially, one compare and a few additions are required. The purpose of the conversions is to make the gap invisible. Note that in no case is any motion of the buffer necessary.

There is more of an overhead associated with inserting or deleting a character. In this case, the gap must be moved so as to be at the point. There are three cases:

1. The gap is at the point already. No motion is necessary.
2. The gap is before the point. The gap must be moved to the point. The characters after the gap but before the point must be moved. Thus, `ConvertUserToGap(Point) - GapEnd` characters must be moved. This quantity is numerically `point - GapStart`.

## Memory Management

3. The gap is after the point. The gap must be moved to the point. The characters after the point but before the gap must be moved. Thus, `GapStart - ConvertUserToGap(Point)` characters must be moved. This quantity is numerically `GapStart - point`.

After the gap has been moved to the point, insertions or deletions can be effected by moving the `GapStart` pointer (or the `GapEnd` pointer--it makes no difference). A deletion is a decrementing of the `GapStart` pointer. An insertion is an incrementing of the `GapStart` pointer followed by placing the inserted character in the storage cell.

Note that after the first insertion or deletion, further such operations can take place with no motion of the gap (it is already in the right place). Further, the point can be moved away and back again with no motion of the gap taking place. Thus, the gap is only moved when an insertion or deletion is about to take place and the last modification was at a different buffer location.

This scheme has a penalty associated with it. The gap does not move very often, but potentially very large amounts of text may have to be shuffled. If a modification is made at the end of a buffer and then one is made at the beginning, the entire contents of the buffer must be moved. (Note, on the other hand, that if a modification is made at the end of a buffer, the beginning is examined, and another modification is made at the end, no motion takes place.) The key question that must be asked when considering this display is, when a modification is about to be made, how far has the point moved since the last modification?

Sidenote Calculation. How far can the point be moved before the shuffling delay becomes noticeable? Assume 1/10 sec. is noticeable and that it is a dedicated system. Assume 1usec, 8 bit wide memory. Assume 10 memory cycles per byte moved (load, store, eight overhead cycles for instructions). Then, 10,000 bytes can be moved with a just noticeable delay.

Because of the locality principle, it seems reasonable to conclude that for

almost any rational buffer size the average distance moved will be less than 10K bytes and so the shuffling delay will not be noticeable.

### 2.4.1 Gap Size

Note that the size of the gap does not affect how long the shuffling will take and so it should be as large as it can be. Typically, it is all of the otherwise unused memory. In that case, when the gap size goes to zero, there is no more room to store text and the buffer is full.

### 2.4.2 Multiple Gaps and Why They Don't Work

Assume that we were still uncomfortable with the shuffling delay and a possible fix was put forth. This fix would be to have, say, ten different gaps spread throughout the buffer. What would the effects be? The idea behind this discussion is to help in understanding the buffer gap system by seeing how it fails.

First, the conversion from the user to the gap coordinate system would be more complicated and take longer. Thus, some ground has been lost. However, this is a small loss on every reference in order to smooth out some large bumps, so it might still be a reasonable thing to do.

Second, the average amount of shuffling will go down, but not by anywhere near a factor of ten. Because of the locality principle, a high percentage of the shuffling is of only a short distance and so cutting out the "long shots" will not have a large effect.

Third, unless the writer is very careful, the gaps will tend to lump together into a fewer number of "larger" gaps. In other words, two or more gaps will meet with the GapEnd pointer for one matching the GapStart pointer for another. There is just as

much overhead in referencing them, but the average amount of shuffling will increase.

On the whole, the extra complexity does not seem to return proportional benefits and so this scheme is not used.

### 2.4.3 The Hidden Second Gap

On two-dimensional memory systems such as Multics, a second gap at the end of the buffer is provided with almost no extra overhead. The key to this gain is that the buffer is not stored in a fixed-size place. Rather, the size of the memory that is holding the buffer can also increase.

The extra overhead is a check to see whether a modification is taking place at the end of the buffer. If so, the modification is made directly with the EndOfAvailableStorage (the buffer runs from X to X + EndOfAvailableStorage) variable serving to note that the change has taken place.

This change has more of an effect that might at first be apparent because a disproportionately high percentage of modifications take place at the end of the buffer. This distortion is due to the fact that most documents, programs, etc. are written from beginning to end and so the new text is inserted at the end of the buffer.

The overhead for this change is low because the check for the end of the buffer was already there. There is no problem of the gaps coalescing because one of them is pegged into place. The gains are not all that great, but neither are the costs and so it is used. This technique is also usable with some implementations of multiple buffers.

## 2.5 Linked Line

The other method of memory management that we will discuss is called linked line. It stores the buffer as a doubly linked list of lines. This method is especially useful with languages such as Lisp which provide memory management facilities within the language.

Each line in the linked list has several pieces of information in its header. Not all of these pieces are required, but they can help greatly in managing the buffer. The pieces of information are:

NextLine	pointer	/*32 bits*/
PreviousLine	pointer	/*32 bits*/
Length	fixed	/*16 bits*/
/*presumably no SINGLE line will be >64K characters*/		
Line	char	/*the line itself*/

optional fields:

AllocatedLength	fixed	/*16 bits*/
Version	fixed	/*32 bits*/
Marks	pointer	/*32 bits*/
TextPtr	pointer	/*32 bits*/

The NextLine and PreviousLine fields implement the doubly linked list. The length field is, clearly, the number of characters in the line. These, along with the line itself, are all that are required in order to implement the linked line scheme. The other fields are a help in making the scheme efficient and some of them are very valuable to include.

The AllocatedLength field indicates how much memory is allocated to storing the line itself. Thus, an allocate/free combination are not required each time a character is inserted or deleted. For example, a memory allocation block size of 16 bytes has been used. AllocatedLength will then be either 0, 16, 32, 48, 64, etc. The allocate/free

## Memory Management

combination is only required every time the line crosses a 16 byte boundary, a considerable savings in overhead.

Allocating memory in 16 byte chunks cuts down significantly on fragmentation. It will almost certainly be possible to run without a compactifying garbage collector. See the discussion of scratchpad memory (section 2.9, page 36) for further information.

The version field is for use by the redisplay code and is an optimization to make it run faster. It will be discussed with the rest of the redisplay process. It serves the purpose of specifying a unique id for the line.

Using integer-valued buffer positions is hard with the linked line scheme. Instead, a (line pointer, offset) pair are used. Marks are then always associated with a line and can thus be merely strung in a list associated with the line that they are on. With this implementation, less time is required to update the marks because only those that are on the line can possibly be changed. Note that there should still be a central listing of all marks in order to facilitate finding any given one and that mark ids should be unique within a buffer.

Finally, instead of storing the text of the line with the header, it can be separately allocated. The TextPtr field is then used to remember where the text is. This ability is especially useful when several places point to the header and properly updating them whenever the line is reallocated is difficult.

In summary, the most useful fields are NextLine, PreviousLine, length, AllocatedLength, and either version or the mark list. These fields can fit within one 16 byte allocation block.

The operation of a linked line scheme is quite straightforward. New lines, when created, are simply spliced into the list at the appropriate place. (Note that no

characters are stored to indicate line breaks). If the new line is in the middle of an existing line, some movement of the text on the end of the old line to the new line is all that is required.

The line itself is stored as a packed array of characters. Inserting or deleting text is done by scrolling the line after the point of modification. Clearly, this scheme is very inefficient with large line lengths.

The reason why the length fields were 16 bits long is not obvious. After all, only rarely will a document have even 256 character lines. But people occasionally edit rather strange things, including object files. One cannot rely on encountering new line characters at reasonable intervals in such files. Thus, the extra size.

### 2.5.1 Storage Comparison

Storage for a linked line scheme is somewhat higher than for buffer gap. A buffer gap scheme requires one or two new line characters per line, and a small amount of fixed storage (GapStart, GapEnd, etc.).

Linked line requires, in a reasonable implementation, one 16 byte block plus an average of 8 bytes lost due to fragmentation for each line. On the other hand, large amounts of text will never have to be moved.

### 2.5.2 Error Recovery Comparison

Recovering from errors (an unexpected program termination, for example) is relatively easy and fail soft in a buffer gap. In general, the start and end of the buffer are findable if a marker is left around the buffer (say, a string of sixteen strange (value 255) bytes) and the buffer is everything between them. The gap can be recovered and

## Memory Management

manually deleted by the user or, if it, too, is filled with a special marker, it can be automatically deleted.

Linked line management is harder to recover. Recovery is greatly aided by erasing freed memory. Basically, you pick a block at random and examine it. If it can be parsed into a header, continue (a careful selection of header formats will help). Otherwise, pick a different block. You can then follow the next and previous pointers and parse them. If this works three or four times in a row, you can be confident that you have a handle on the contents. If a header doesn't parse, it is because it is either a part of a line (either pick again at random or go back one chunk and try again) or a header that was being modified (in which case you are blocked from continuing down that end of the chain). In the latter case, go in the other direction as far as possible. You now have one half of the buffer. Repeat the random guess, but don't pick from memory you already know about. You should get the other half of the buffer. Leave it to the user to put them together again. If the freed blocks are not erased, the chance of finding a valid header that points to erroneous data is very high.

## 2.6 Multiple Buffers

How do buffer gap and linked line schemes implement multiple buffers? There is a variety of choices:

```
intertwining (linked line only)
separate storage for each buffer
    large address space (therefore paged)
        structured
        non structured
    small address space
        special cases
```

Intertwining is an option that is only open to linked line. In this case, all allocation is

## Memory Management

done out of a common pool and so, over time, the buffers tend to "intertwine" (i.e., the lines of one buffer are mixed in with the lines from other buffers in physical memory). Such an approach tends to maximize the density of text and thus make the most efficient use of memory. It also assumes that a large address space is available. (See also the discussion in the next section about paged environments.)

Separate buffer space means that each buffer is allocated out of its own area and that all of a buffer's area is contiguous. Thus, the address space is cut up into separate sections for each buffer.

If a large address space is available, the cutting up can be done one of two ways. If the address space is structured (as in Multics), the operating system takes care of managing such things automatically. If the address space is not structured (as in Vax/VMS), the memory management scheme can reserve fixed regions of the address space for separate buffers, each more than large enough for any reasonable file.

If the address space available is too small to reserve effectively, the memory management scheme will have to keep track of all of the buffers and map them into and out of the available address space as needed. Caution must be taken to avoid requiring that only one buffer be in the address space, as a multiple window editor must be able to scan multiple buffers. In addition, auxilliary buffers will be needed from time to time.

Managing multiple buffers is relatively easy. They are treated as a set of buffers, only one of which can be accessed at a time. See the earlier section on buffer data structures (section 2.1, page 11).

### 2.7 Paged Virtual Memory

How well do the two schemes perform in a paged virtual memory environment?

The buffer gap scheme works very well in general. Its highly compact format allows for accessing large parts of the buffer with only a few pages in memory. Its sequential organization also implies that it has a very good locality of reference and so the nearby pages are heavily referenced and likely to be around.

Its major problem is the large amount of shuffling that must be done in some cases. A move of the whole buffer implies that the whole buffer must be swapped in and--most likely--swapped out again. (A search of the whole buffer also requires this swapping, but the user asked for it and no management scheme can search linearly through memory that is on disk. Therefore, the user should expect lesser response.) If the memory manager is built into the operating system, some interesting hackery can be done with the page table to "move" all of a chunk of memory by one or more pages by moving page table entries. The existence of this example implies that such a function might well be desirable to include in a future set of operating system calls ("insert n pages after page x and scroll through page y"--delete n pages is implicit in this and it only affects part of the address space).

In a tight memory situation, the buffer gap scheme does as well as can be expected. The nearby sections of the buffer will be around because of locality of reference, but anything far away can take a while to get to.

A linked line scheme does not perform as well overall. First, if an intertwining multiple buffer scheme is used, one may as well forget performance in a tight memory situation. The intertwining can use different parts of each page for storing different buffers. Thus, when considering any given buffer, the page size is effectively reduced.

Even in a separated buffer scheme, the data is not as tightly packed overall (the headers and fragmentation) and so some performance is lost. Also, the linked lines can be anywhere in a large portion of memory and so the density of nearby lines can range from good to very low. Finally, even if a desired line happens to be on an in-memory page, in order to get there (via the links), you will probably have to swap in several additional pages and, in the process, may even swap the desired page out!

The primary advantage that linked line has is that it never requires moving large sections of the buffer. Thus, if memory is not tight, the entire buffer can fit in memory and performance will be very good.

### 2.8 Editing Extremely Large Files

Extremely large files come in two flavors. First are files that are so large that reasonable assumptions break down. Such things tend to start happening about 64M bytes or so. At that point, even simple things (e.g. string search) tend to take several minutes to run on a fast processor with the whole file in memory.

Although there are one or two interesting hacks to stay alive, life is simply not bearable when trying to edit such a large unstructured file. The alternative (which large data base people have known about for years) is to structure the file. This alternative is not that unpalatable because an unstructured editor can still be used to edit the subpieces of structure. The other reason why this is not that much of a problem is that there aren't all that many gigantic files to edit. The vast majority of files are much smaller. Gigantic files call for special tools for manipulating them.

The other flavor is more applicable to microprocessors where an extremely large file might be 100K bytes. The reason why it is considered so large is that the disk to store it

## Memory Management

on might be only 50K bytes, or there might only be magnetic tape for permanent storage. Thus, a 100K file would tax the hardware resources severely.

The basic way of dealing with such files is to break them up into chunks and edit the chunks separately (the TECO yank command is an example of this). In general, you can only proceed forward through the file in any given edit session because of the problems involved with the file size changing as the edit progresses. Either a marker byte ( $\uparrow L$  is commonly used) or a character count (not as polite to the user) can be used to determine where the file breaks are to occur. This method requires an input and output file to both be available and open at the same time. A crash preserves the input file and some of the output file. Thus, editing a 100K file requires up to 200K of storage. This is the only method that works on magnetic tape.

The next method allows full access to the file without breaking it up in any way. It requires three files (input, output, and backup) to be open simultaneously. As you proceed through the file, it edits from the input to the output file. However, when you reverse direction, it reads from the output file onto the third, backup file (it does not modify the input file, thus insuring its integrity in the case of a system crash). Note that the data is stored in the backup file in reverse order! Preferably, file i/o is done in blocks and only the order of the blocks needs to be reversed, not the contents of the blocks themselves. When you switch to going forward once again, the backup file is read until it is exhausted and then use of the input file is resumed. This method allows for simulating a very large buffer as the file management can be done invisibly. Thus, the user can edit a 100K file with much less physical memory. Note that the swapping can be slow!

The final method that is available is to simulate demand paging by breaking a buffer gap scheme up so that there are effectively many small buffers. If a buffer should fill

up, it can be split up into two buffers and insertions can continue. No large motion of text is ever required, but memory is lost.

In none of these systems is linked line acceptable. Memory is assumed to be very tight and the overhead of the extra headers is not acceptable.

### 2.9 Scratchpad Memory

Scratchpad memory contains the temporary variables allocated by the editor. Because of the transient nature of these variables, it is allocated and freed often. It is used to hold the buffer descriptors, string variables, and--in the linked line scheme--the buffers themselves. The scratchpad memory management required for text editing is relatively simple, but there are some general considerations that are worth mentioning. There aren't too many buffer descriptors and they are of a well known size so they are easy to manage. The string variables can range from being null to being entire buffers. Thus, they can cause fragmentation quite easily. The linked line formats have already been discussed.

In a large address space system, two buffers worth of address space should be devoted to scratchpad storage (to allow for putting an entire buffer there, which takes one buffer worth, and because space is allocated in integer buffers worth). In a small address space system, large operations are typically done character at a time because memory itself is usually at a premium. Therefore, the amount of scratchpad storage needed can be quite small. In any system where the editor can be dynamically extended (see the Command Loop chapter), scratchpad storage needs can vary dramatically and are not generally predictable in advance.

Allocating memory in chunks helps prevent fragmentation, therefore not usually

## Memory Management

requiring a compactifying garbage collector. If memory becomes badly fragmented, a compaction is required. In a linked line scheme, compaction eliminates the possibility of using the line pointers as unique ids (they change). Such unique ids are used by the redisplay algorithm.

## Chapter Three

### Incremental Redisplay

The most visible part of a screen-oriented text editor is the redisplay process. This is the section of code that keeps the current contents of the buffer accurately displayed on the user's terminal. It has the additional goal of performing this function in such a way that a minimum or near minimum amount of clock time is required in order to fulfill this purpose. Clock time is a combination of transmission time, cpu time, and disk access time which is perceived by the user as the delay from when he enters the command to when the redisplay is finished.

In general, the contents of the buffer will change only a small amount during the basic read command - evaluate it - do redisplay loop. The screen will then only have to be changed by a small amount in order to reflect the changed buffer contents. Hence, the algorithms concentrate on incrementally redisplaying the buffer and the entire process is referred to as incremental redisplay. Fortunately, it turns out that in cases where the buffer is changed drastically, the incrementally-oriented approach to the redisplay process works quite well and so there is no need for multiple algorithms.

Our discussion of the incremental redisplay process assumes a model of the system where the editing is done on a main processor which communicates with a terminal. If the main processor is the same as the terminal, the bandwidth of the communication channel can be thought of as being very high. The incremental redisplay process is an optimization between cpu time and I/O channel time, with a few memory considerations thrown in. The primary constraint is the speed of the I/O channel.

## Incremental Redisplay

Typical speeds that are currently available are 30 characters/second, 120 cps, and 960 cps. There are also memory mapped terminals which run at essentially bus speeds. Equivalent speeds can be derived and run in the 100 to 50,000 cps range.

A typical video terminal has a 24 x 80 character screen. At 30 cps, it will thus take three seconds to print a line and over a minute to refresh the whole screen. At 120 cps, less than one second is required to print a line and about twenty to refresh the screen. At 960 cps, it will take only one or two seconds to refresh the screen. The speed of the communication line greatly affects the amount of optimization that is desired. At 30 cps, even one extra transmitted character is painful to the user, while at 960 cps reprinting entire lines does not take an appreciable amount of time. One dimension of the optimization is thus clear: the importance of optimizing the number of characters sent increases in proportion to the slowness of the communication line.

A user interface issue arises at this point. While it is acceptable from a clock time point of view to reprint entire lines, users do not like to see text which has not changed in the buffer "change" by being reprinted. The flickering that is generated by the reprinting process attracts the user's attention to that text, which is undesirable (the text has not, after all, changed). Thus, avoiding extraneous flickering and movement of text is good. Even with infinitely fast communications and computation, incremental redisplay will still be a desirable feature.

Cpu time must be spent in order to perform these optimizations. If the cpu time that is spent exceeds some small amount of clock time, response will be annoyingly sluggish (and that is not good). It is therefore desirable to minimize the cpu time that is spent on optimizing the redisplay. At this point, the speed of the communication line makes a difference. If the line is slow, extra cpu time can and should be spent (at 30 cps, it is worthwhile to spend up to 30 msec. of cpu time to eliminate one character from

being transmitted (which takes about 30 msec.). However, at higher speeds it is generally not practical to heavily optimize as it can easily take longer to compute the optimizations than to transmit the extra text. This relaxation of the optimization is subject to the user interface constraint outlined above. Memory size constrains the optimization as well. One technique used is storing the entire screen, character by character. This technique works quite well; however, where memory is tight this technique will prove too expensive to implement.

### 3.1 Line Wrap

There are some more pragmatic considerations involved in the design of the redisplay process. The first of these is line wrap.

Although the editor is editing a one-dimensional stream of text, this text must be placed on a two-dimensional screen in such a way that the user can understand it. There should be no constraints made by the redisplay process on the length of lines. Additionally, there are no commands to "position the screen" or anything of the sort. **IT IS THE RESPONSIBILITY OF THE REDISPLAY PROCESS TO HAVE THE SCREEN SHOW MEANINGFUL INFORMATION AT ALL TIMES.** The user has almost no control over this function at all, and should not need to. If commands have to be entered in order to obtain feedback, those are commands that are not doing productive editing.

There are two different ways to handle very long lines. One way is to have these lines be clipped at the right hand edge of the screen and then have some indication that the clipping is occurring. The other is to wrap the lines to the next line (i.e., the text that does not fit on one screen line is placed on the next). The first method is

acceptable, but not very well human-engineered. Typing text in the middle of a line causes the line to spill and visually lose characters. This losing of characters causes uncertainty in the user's mind about what exactly is happening. In addition, it is never possible to see a long line in its entirety.

The second method is slightly less "clean" when displayed on a screen as wrapped lines will be around, but it does not suffer from either of the above problems. Inserting text might cause a line to wrap (an annoying process) but no text vanishes. Also, long lines are always visible. Finally, wrapped lines are usually only a temporary phenomenon, because most people prefer line widths in the 65-80 character range and this range fits on most terminals. Thus, the wrapped lines appear mainly during editing and will normally go away. Note that it is during the editing process that users most want the feedback. Thus, the line-wrapping method seems to be the best one to use.

In any method, care must be taken to make sure that the pathological case of very long lines works properly. Although rare, non-text (e.g., object code) files are sometimes examined with the editor. These files generally do not break up into reasonable-sized screen lines (a newline indicator might not occur for two or three thousand characters in an object file). Thus, a single line of text might more than fill up the screen. Provisions must be made in the redisplay code to allow the screen to nonetheless be positioned into the middle of such a line.

### 3.2 Multiple Windows

It is useful to be able to see more than one buffer (or different parts of the same buffer) simultaneously. For example, you can then examine documentation while writing a procedure call. In general, it is not too difficult to set up the redisplay to

perform this multiple windowing. The few necessary details will be mentioned in the discussion of the algorithms themselves. Care must be taken that modifications made while in one window are reflected in any other appropriate windows.

### 3.3 Terminal Types

The redisplay process is the way to communicate to the user. It also has a strong interest in taking advantage of whatever features are supplied by the terminal in order to reduce the time taken for a redisplay. This section will undertake a brief discussion of the various classes of terminals available and how various features affect the redisplay process.

#### 3.3.1 TTY and Glass TTY

A TTY is a canonical printing terminal. Printing terminals have the property that what is once written can never be unwritten. A glass TTY is the same as a TTY except that it uses a screen instead of paper. It has no random cursor positioning. Incremental redisplay for such a terminal usually maintains a VERY small window (e.g., one line) on the buffer and either echos only newly typed text or else consistently redisplays that small window. Once a user is familiar with a display editor, however, it is possible--in a crunch--to use it from a terminal of this type. This is not generally a pleasant way to work.

#### 3.3.2 Basic

A basic terminal has, as a bare minimum, some sort of cursor positioning. It will generally also have clear to end of line (put blanks on the screen from the cursor to the end of the line that it is on) and clear to end of screen (ditto, but to the end of the

screen) functions. These functions can be simulated, if necessary, by sending spaces and newlines. A typical example of a basic terminal is the DEC VT52.

Such terminals are quite usable at higher speeds (960 cps) but usability deteriorates rapidly as the speed decreases. It requires patience to use them at 120 cps and a dedication bordering on insanity to use them at 30 cps. Terminals which do not have clear to end of line are even worse.

### 3.3.3 Advanced

Advanced terminals have all of the features of basic terminals along with editing features such as insert/delete line and/or character. These features can significantly reduce communication time for common operations. Typical terminals in this category are the HDS Concept 100, the Teleray 1061, and the DEC VT100.

These terminals are, of course, quite usable at 960 cps and similar speeds. Due to the reduced need for communication line bandwidth, at lower speeds they are more usable for editing than anything else. At 120 cps, editing text is relatively painless, but merely examining text takes place at a quite slow speed. At 30 cps, even editing is barely acceptable.

There is a subtle difference among some of the advanced terminals. The VT100 supports a scroll window (move lines x through y up/down n lines) feature while the 1061 supports insert/delete lines. Scroll window is more pleasing to see when there is some stationary text being displayed at the bottom of the screen. With insert/delete line, the appropriate number of lines must be deleted and then inserted; the text at the bottom thus jumps. Scroll window does the whole thing as one operation and does not cause the bottom to jump.

The C100 has an interesting feature. It is a fully windowed terminal and thus all operations can be confined to only affect a designated area on the screen. Insert/delete line operations thus do not cause the bottom text to jump and it is even possible to have two windows side by side as the clear to end of line operation does not affect the text in the adjoining window. The window management software thus has much more flexibility in what can be done while remaining within reasonable transmission time constraints.

### 3.3.4 Memory Mapped

This section covers a wide range of terminals. Their common characteristic is that the entire screen can be read or written at near bus speeds. Typically, this means that the terminal is "built in" to the computer that is running the text editor. In addition, this computer is often a dedicated one, running only one user's processes. Examples of this type of terminal are the Knight TVs (at the MIT AI lab), the Lisp Machine displays, and the wide variety of memory mapped displays available for microprocessors.

The use of memory mapped terminals has several implications for the redisplay process. First, many of the advanced features are typically not available. However, the terminal I/O is so fast that they can be emulated very quickly. Second, it is possible in some cases to use the screen memory as the only copy of the screen. Thus, if reading from the screen does not cause flicker (but writing does), the screen can be read and the incremental redisplay process will run and compare the buffer against it, changing it only when necessary. Finally, if you can write to the screen without flicker, the redisplay process merely boils down to copying the buffer into the screen as doing so is always faster than comparing. Any memory mapped terminal which has a slow access time should be thought of as a basic terminal for the purpose of redisplay algorithms.

### 3.3.5 Terminal Independent Output

A full discussion of this topic is beyond the scope of this thesis. [Linhart] (see the bibliography) discusses this problem more fully. In essence, the problem is that every terminal manufacturer has decided on a different set of features and ways of accessing these features. What must be done to solve the problem is to specify a set of routines which can be called which isolate these differences, as well as a way of selecting among different sets of such routines as the terminal changes.

Some systems already have a solution to this problem and interfacing the editor to that solution is the best way out. For the most part (such solutions are RARE), the person who writes the editor will effectively create one. As will be mentioned later, the text editor might very well become the de facto solution to the problem. Other programs would merely output to editor buffers and the editor's redisplay code would take care of the rest.

The following set of routines will allow terminal independent I/O for most terminals. They allow full access to the capabilities of TTYs and basic terminals. They will not allow full access to the capabilities of advanced terminals, but they will get you somewhere. Memory mapped terminals usually use a totally different I/O package anyway and so they are not considered.

Basic I/O:

```
GetChar(Character <r>)
PutChar(Character)
InputWaiting(Number <r>)
Init(Terminal Type)
Fini
```

The first three routines are capable of handling all input and output associated with a full duplex stream device. End of record marks (e.g., new lines) are transmitted as

## Incremental Redisplay

characters. The first two routines get and put raw characters (no translation or checking of any sort is done) and the other one tells you of the state of the buffer. InputWaiting tells you if the user has typed anything that you haven't read yet. If he has, you can read it before calling the redisplay. If the input is coming from a file, InputWaiting will tell you the number of characters left in the file. This interface is a general stream oriented interface. These routines update the internally known cursor position to correspond to the new one (i.e., increment by one for the most part on output). Init sets the terminal type and initializes the terminal to a reasonable state (e.g., do not echo input). Fini undoes whatever init did so as to leave the terminal in some reasonable state for general system use (e.g., not raw I/O, echo input, etc.)

### Basic Terminal Control:

```
MoveCursor(x,y)
CLEOL
CLEOS
```

MoveCursor knows where the cursor is and figures out the fastest way of getting it to (x,y). CLEOL sends a command to the terminal to clear from the current position to the end of the line and CLEOS clears to the end of the screen.

### Advanced Terminal Control:

```
Insert(String)
Delete(Number)
InsertLines(Number)
DeleteLines(Number)
```

Insert takes String and figures out the most reasonable way of inserting it. Delete deletes characters on the current line. The Insert/Delete Lines routines deal with lines on the screen. In all cases, Number can be either positive or negative and a positive number signifies to the right or below of the cursor, respectively.

### 3.3.6 Echo Negotiation

Echo negotiation was devised for the Multics system and is a protocol for use by multi-node networks which can cut down on response time by reducing communications overhead. It is useful in an environment where the user's terminal is a one node and the computer which is running the text editor is at another. In such an environment, it can take a long time to send a character back and forth (and it takes nearly the same time to send many).

Echo negotiation can only be used when the point is at the end of a line. The editor can download the front end processor (the node closest to the terminal) with a list of approved characters. As long as the user types only those characters and does not reach the end of a screen line (necessitating a wrap), the front end can safely echo the input characters to the terminal and buffer the input text. When any non-approved character is typed (or the line fills up), the editor is invoked to process the echoed text (the number of already echoed characters is returned to the editor) and the additional character. See section 3.6.2, page 53 to see how this protocol affects the redisplay algorithm.

## 3.4 Approaches to Redisplay Schemes

There have been two major approaches to performing redisplay. The first is for the routines which are invoked by the user to tell the redisplay code exactly what they did (e.g., "I deleted 5 characters from here"). This approach is not a very clean one and it is prone to error. This is an especially important consideration because we would like to encourage novice users to write their own commands. The extra effort of getting the redisplay correct might make this an impractical goal.

## Incremental Redisplay

The second approach has been to have the redisplay know nothing about what has occurred. It must rescan the buffer and decide what has and has not changed for itself. This process requires a copy of the screen and can be expensive in cpu time. This algorithm will be presented first because of its relative simplicity.

There is a compromise between these two approaches which seems to solve all of the problems. This compromise is to have the memory management software communicate with the redisplay software. User routines know nothing of this communication and cannot cause bugs in it. On the other hand, the cpu time require for a redisplay is somewhat reduced and is more spread out and so it is not as noticeable. Extra memory is required to handle the communication, but in some cases, the screen representation can be discarded and so the net result could be a memory gain. It is this compromise that is the heart of the "modern" redisplay and it is the other one to be presented.

## 3.5 The Framer

The framer is the part of the redisplay that decides what will appear on your screen. In the stable state, there are two different approaches used.

First, the TopOfScreen and BottomOfScreen marks are kept around. As long as the point stays within these marks, we expect that the point will remain on the screen. Thus, the top of the screen can be assumed to be in the proper place and the redisplay algorithm can be started directly. If it does not (the redisplay code detects this error and generates a FramerError), the framer runs again, but uses the next approach.

Second, if the point is outside of the screen marks, it is simplest to assume that the entire screen will be changed. Thus, the framer wants to recenter the point on the screen. It can start by counting back  $\langle \text{screen height} \rangle / 2$  lines. Assuming that there are

no wrapped lines, this method would work fine. At this point, the framer checks this assumption (that there are no wrapped lines) by counting forward character by character, keeping track of how many lines are actually used along with the intermediate results. If there are no wrapped lines, the new guess will work fine. If there are wrapped lines, it will look at the intermediate results and decide how many lines to throw away to leave you approximately centered. If the advanced redisplay algorithm is used, these intermediate results should be recorded as they might be needed.

If all the lines have to be thrown away (i.e., the current line is VERY long), the third and most desperate mode must be used. Here, the framer figures out, character by character, where each character on the current line is. It then decides how many characters to move back before starting the redisplay, while staying within the same line.

### 3.6 Redisplay Algorithms

Here are presented the two major redisplay algorithms and an discussion of how to adapt these algorithms for memory mapped terminals. These algorithms will not go into every detail (or even most of them) as doing so would inundate the description with too much detail. This detail is discussed in later sections.

#### 3.6.1 The Basic Algorithm

```
call Framer;           /* TopOfScreen is a mark returned by
                        the framer */
BufLoc = TopOfScreen;  /* loop over the whole screen */
do Row=1 while(Row <= HeightOfScreen);
```

## Incremental Redisplay

```
do Col=1 while(Col <= WidthOfScreen);

    /* found a NewLine char */
    if Buffer(BufLoc)=NewLine
        then do;
            /* is the rest of the line blank? */
            do i=Col to WidthOfScreen;
                if Screen(i,Row) ^= " "
                    then do;
                        /* if not, make it so by
                           sending a CLEOL at the
                           non-blank */
                        call MoveCursor(i,Row);
                        call CLEOL;
                        do j=i to WidthOfScreen;
                            Screen(j,Row)=" ";
                        end;
                        leave;
                    end;
            end;
            BufLoc = BufLoc + 1;
            /* move to next line */
            Row = Row + 1;
            Col = 1;
            leave;
        end;

        /* no NewLine, so has there been a
           change in the buffer? */
        if Screen(Col,Row) ^= Buffer(BufLoc)
            then do;
                /* if so, change the screen
                   to match */
                call MoveCursor(Col,Row);
                call PutChar(Buffer(BufLoc));
                Screen(Col,Row)=Buffer(BufLoc);
            end;
            BufLoc = BufLoc + 1;
            Col = Col + 1;
            /* save the (x,y) of the point so
               that we can put the cursor there later */
            if BufLoc=Point
                then do;
                    PointX = Col;
                    PointY = Row;
                end;
            end;
            Row = Row + 1;
            Col = 1;
        end.
```

## Incremental Redisplay

```
/* framer missed--it almost never happens */
if BufLoc < Point
    then call FramerError;
EndOfScreen = BufLoc;
call MoveCursor(PointX,PointY);
```

This algorithm is quite straightforward. It first calls the framer to match the top of the screen with some point in the buffer. It then iterates through the buffer and the screen simultaneously, matching characters as it goes. As long as the character on the screen matches the character in the buffer, no action is taken. When there is a discrepancy, the cursor is moved to that position by means of the MoveCursor routine, the changed character is printed, and the screen array is updated. If the line gets to be too long, it is wrapped automatically. If a NewLine character is encountered, the rest of the line is checked to make sure that it is all blanks. If not, blanks are put there. Finally, a note is made of where in the buffer the end of the screen falls.

This is your basic, garden variety redisplay algorithm. It will work on any terminal that supports cursor positioning (the CLEOL call can be faked by sending spaces). It will work quite well on anything running at 480 cps or over. Its only memory requirements are an array large enough to hold the screen (typically 1920 characters). The only interaction between the redisplay algorithm and the memory management system is two marks. Finally, it is not told anything about what changes were made and so it figures everything out for itself each time it is called. There can thus be a cpu time penalty associated with this algorithm that might make it slow enough to be painful. The next section describes with an algorithm which gets around this penalty.

A complete redisplay can be generated quite easily using this algorithm. The GenerateNewDisplay routine will set the cursor to home and then clear the screen and the internal screen array. It then calls the incremental redisplay routine. The incremental redisplay routine will simply do its normal job, which in this case implies

## Incremental Redisplay

sending all of the non-blank characters to the terminal. The NewDisplay routine must also remember to send such things as status displays, which are not sent during an ordinary redisplay.

A status display is text that is kept on the screen but is not often changed. For example, the Emacs status display has the editor name, the mode name, the current buffer name, and the file name displayed on a line near the bottom of the screen. Ordinarily, the redisplay code ignores this section of the screen.

### 3.6.2 The Advanced Algorithm

The advanced redisplay algorithm serves two vastly different purposes. First, it provides a way of efficiently taking advantage of the insert/delete line/character functions which are supplied with some terminals. Second, it provides a low cpu overhead way of performing a redisplay on basic terminals.

The basic idea used by this algorithm is to assign a unique id to each buffer line that appears on the screen. Note that a buffer line can take up more than one line on the screen by wrapping. Just to make sure that the definitions are clear, here they are: a buffer line (BufferLine) is either the text between two newline characters (in the buffer gap memory management scheme) or the text in one element of the line list (in the linked line scheme). A screen line (ScreenLine) is a horizontal row of characters on the user's display.

The unique id can be in any form. One method is to use a 32 bit counter and increment it each time any line is changed. After the change is made, the line is assigned the current value of the counter. If it is changed again, it gets the new value of the counter. The assignment can be made in an otherwise unused part of the header

## Incremental Redisplay

(for linked line) or in a special mark (for buffer gap). In a linked line scheme, the pointer to the line can serve as a unique id.

These unique ids only have to exist for lines that appear on the screen. Thus, the buffer gap scheme only has a few of these special marks that must be maintained. The special marks are placed at the beginning of each line that appears on the screen. They contain a version number for the line as well as the location of the mark.

The memory management scheme is responsible for maintaining this extra information. Thus, it and the redisplay code can interact heavily and the specific redisplay process chosen will affect the internal structure of the memory management scheme.

There are two flags that can be kept by the memory management software which will aid the redisplay process. First is the buffer modified flag. This flag is usually kept anyway so that the editor can detect when the buffer has been modified. (The details of manipulating it were discussed with the interface routines in section 2.1, page 11.) If it has not been set, the redisplay code knows that it generally will not have to do anything except move the cursor. If the point is still on the screen (remember that we have beginning and end of screen marks), its position on the screen can be calculated with much less effort than is required for a full redisplay. If the flag has been set, a full redisplay is required and the flag will be reset (the editor proper ORs this flag in with a private flag (`Modifiedp`; mentioned in the buffer data structure descriptions) in order to properly remember whether the buffer has been modified).

Another flag (which has not been mentioned before) can significantly reduce redisplay computation in some cases. Assuming that you are located at the end of a `BufferLine`, it tells you whether or not any operation other than inserting a character

## Incremental Redisplay

has been done. If the flag says not, all that the redisplay has to do is output the one character (after checking for wrap, etc.). A significant amount of time can be saved this way, but it is most useful with a negotiated echo protocol (see section 3.3.6, page 47). The exact interface to this flag will not be defined.

The redisplay algorithm itself starts by trying to find a match between the BufferLines and the ScreenLines by using unique ids. The unique ids are compared, line by line. If they match, no work needs to be done and the redisplay proceeds to the next line. If they don't, it can be for one of three reasons:

- An additional line (or lines) was inserted between the two ScreenLines. This condition is detected by comparing the ScreenLine unique id with all of the BufferLine's unique ids and finding a match. (Remember that the ScreenLines are what the BufferLines were one redisplay iteration ago.) We thus have the situation where we used to have A,B and now have A,<junk>,B. Clearly, the most reasonable assumption is that <junk> has been inserted. We thus count how big <junk> (the framer has already calculated this information) is and tell the terminal to insert the appropriate number of lines. (Before you do this, however, you must first delete the same number of lines from the end of the window in order to keep from losing the text at the bottom of the screen.)
- A line (or lines) was deleted. This is detected by comparing the BufferLine unique id with all of the ScreenLine's unique ids and finding a match. We thus have A,B,C becoming A,C. We delete the appropriate number of lines and then insert them again at the bottom of the window.
- The line was modified. This is detected by not finding either of the above matches. At this point, we switch to intra-line work and do the following:

\*Do a string compare starting from the beginning of each line (the BufferLine and the ScreenLine) and see how much they have in common. (If this says the whole line matches, no more work has to be done.) For example, if the ScreenLine is "abedef" and the BufferLine is "abxdef", they have two characters in common from the start.

\*Do the same thing starting from the end. The example strings have three characters in common from the end.

\*Compare the line lengths. If the two lines are the same length, you only need to rewrite the changed part (e.g., two characters were interchanged). In the example strings, the lengths are the same (6). This optimization can be done even on a basic terminal. If the two lines are not the same length (for example, the ScreenLine is "abcdef" and the BufferLine is "abxyzdef"), rewrite as much of the portion between the common text sections as possible ("x") and then either insert or delete the required number of characters (in this case, insert two blanks) and finish writing the modified text ("yz"). Remember that if there is no common text at the end and the BufferLine is shorter than the ScreenLine, a CLEOL call is appropriate.

\*Wrapped lines can pose a problem. There may be no end common text, and yet an insert or delete character operation might be the appropriate one. (If the screen width is six characters, the ScreenLine is "abcdef", and the BufferLine is "abcxdef". Here, the BufferLine will ultimately become two ScreenLines, "abcxde" and "F".) This case is detected by having no end common portion and noticing that the line wraps. A more complicated matching process can detect the situation and appropriate action can be taken.

### 3.6.3 Memory Mapped

Redisplay for memory mapped terminals boils down to one of three cases. Each case is relatively simple.

1. Reading from and writing to the screen cause flicker. The solution is to use the basic terminal redisplay scheme.
2. Reading does not cause flicker but writing does. The solution is to use the basic terminal redisplay scheme, but use the actual screen memory for storing the screen array.

3. Neither reading or writing cause flicker. On each redisplay cycle, merely copy the buffer into screen memory, not forgetting to process new lines, etc., as needed.

### 3.7 Other Details

There are a number of other details that must be carefully watched when writing redisplays. None of them are particularly worrisome in themselves, but they collectively clutter the algorithms a great deal. The problems that they pose will be described and they are each simple enough that specific solution algorithms are not required.

#### 3.7.1 Tabs

It helps to think of a tab character in a buffer as a cursor control command saying, "think of me a N blanks, where N is the number of columns to the next tab stop." Thus, whenever you see a tab you want to figure out what N is, and then check to see that the next N columns are blanks, increment the cursor by N, etc. Tab stops can be set in an array (for arbitrary placement of tabs) or set every C columns. In a one origin numbering system, tabs set every C columns are set at positions 1, C+1, 2C+1, 3C+1, ... For example, when C=8, tabs are in columns 1, 9, 17, 25, 33, etc. Again, assuming a one-origin system, the equation for N is:

$$N = C - \text{mod}(X-1, C)$$

(X is the column position.)

#### 3.7.2 Control Characters

In general, only the new line character(s) and tabs are interpreted; other control characters are displayed in some reasonable printing representation. One popular

## Incremental Redisplay

representation is " $\uparrow$ " followed by the character whose ASCII value is <control char> + 64. The character control-a is thus printed as  $\uparrow A$ . (The ASCII DEL character, 127, can be printed as  $\uparrow ?$ .) This convention has been followed in this thesis. When displaying control characters, you must remember that while the character itself is only one character, it displays in a two character wide sequence. In addition, it is the actual displayed sequence that is stored in the screen array (e.g., " $\uparrow$ " and "A", not " $\uparrow A$ "). Care must be taken to insure that control characters can wrap properly across line boundaries (e.g., the " $\uparrow$ " at the end of one line and the "A" at the beginning of the next).

### 3.7.3 End of the Buffer

If the entire buffer fits on the screen, you will run out of buffer before you run out of screen. Thus, whenever BufLoc is incremented, a check should be made against the buffer length. If you do run out of buffer, remember to finish blanking the rest of the screen if it needs it.

### 3.7.4 Between Line Breakout

The redisplay process does not have to run to completion before editing resumes. Instead, it can get to a convenient spot (in the basic algorithm, almost any spot will do; in advanced algorithm, stop after finishing a line) and check the input buffers. If more input has arrived, it can abort the redisplay and process the input. Remember that the purpose of redisplay is to provide feedback to the user. If he has already typed something, he does not need feedback immediately. (However, if you can give it to him in a way that does not slow him up, do so.)

### 3.7.5 Proportional Spacing and Multiple Fonts

Displaying text in a proportional spaced font is not too difficult. Instead of assuming that each character has a width of one, the width can vary and it must be looked up each time it is needed.

Displaying multiple fonts implies receiving a command to switch fonts at some time during the redisplay process. These commands can be stored in the buffer (in which case they are interpreted and not displayed just like NewLines) or in some other structure.

### 3.7.6 Multiple Windows

There is a database somewhere which describes what windows (i.e., what part of which buffers) are to appear on the screen. One way to perform redisplay with multiple windows is to call the incremental redisplay routine and pass it as an argument each window descriptor in turn. Another way is more suitable for use with the advanced algorithm and it involves having a separate descriptor for each line of the display (i.e., the same database sorted backwards as well). This descriptor tells you where to get each line from.

If a row of dashes ("-----") or any other character string is used as a visual separator between windows, it can be implemented as an additional buffer/window combination and no special casing is required for the redisplay code.

## Chapter Four

# The Command Loop

This command loop is the part of the editor that actually implements the logic of the editor. It is responsible for reading in commands, executing them, and "printing" the results. In the process of executing them, it must accept arguments and bind the input characters to functions. This chapter will discuss the command loop. It will also discuss some distantly related issues: the tradeoffs between kill buffers and an undo function, the provisions for recovering from errors, and considerations for selecting implementation languages.

### 4.1 Basic Loop: Read, Eval, Print

The basic loop is:

```
do while(TRUE);
    call GetChar(Char);
    call Eval(Char);
    if abort
        then leave;
    if InputWaiting() = 0
        then call IncrementalRedisplay;
end;
```

Note the two details that have been added to what was mentioned in the section heading. First, an abort flag is checked to see whether we are supposed to exit the edit session. This flag is set by the Eval routine. Eval works by invoking a function which was specified by the input character. This function's only result is the change in the state of the editor (e.g., an "x" has been inserted). The "printing" (actually, an

## The Command Loop

incremental redisplay to the screen) is done only if the user has not typed in anything more to be processed.

### 4.1.1 The Philosophy Behind the Basic Loop

The basic loop as described puts the fewest restrictions on the user interface that can be managed. Each character, in its raw form, is mapped to a procedure which is in turn evaluated. Any arbitrary syntax and semantics can be implemented with this base.

In theory, a syntax of commands being words (e.g., "delete", "move", etc.) could be implemented in this structure by having either a large number of dispatch tables (and thus implementing a symbol state table architecture) or a procedure which parses the syntax of the command via conditional statements. For reasons which will be stated, this syntax is not generally implemented.

Consider the thought that every character that is typed at the keyboard causes a function to be executed. The first conclusion that results is that it is silly to type "insert x" or anything like that when you want "x" to be inserted. As this is a very common operation, it makes more sense to bind the key "x" to the InsertX function. (Actually, it is probably bound to SelfInsert, a function which looks at how it was invoked--the input character--to determine what to insert).

Now, all of the straight, printing, ASCII characters have been taken and bound to SelfInsert. (While there are a large number of special characters that are not often typed, leaving them in consideration does not materially affect the conclusions.) The remaining things that can be entered from an ASCII keyboard are the control characters, the delete key, and the break key. These could be bound to functions that implement a complex syntax, but why bother? It is not too difficult to learn even a large number of key bindings, so let us bind the control keys directly to useful

## The Command Loop

functions. For example,  $\uparrow F$  could be ForwardCharacter,  $\uparrow D$  could be DeleteCharacter, etc.

33 functions are not enough for even the commonly used functions. Thus, some of the keys should be bound to functions which rebind the dispatch table. For each of these rebinding functions, 128 new functions are made available (there is no reason for the printing characters in them to be bound to SelfInsert). Note that the break key is not used in this scheme as it is hard to work with (it does not have an ASCII value).

Thus, even though we began with a structure for the command loop that did not to impose any constraints on the syntax of commands (and thus was as general as possible), we arrived at a specific syntax for commands. This syntax is to bind the printing characters to SelfInsert, bind the control characters to a mixture of useful functions and rebinders, and to have about three or four alternate dispatch tables (enough to supply many hundreds of commands). Thus, commands are rarely more than two keystrokes long. The price that is paid for this brevity is a longer lead time in learning to use the editor effectively.

(Note that most of the increased lead time in learning the editor is NOT from the brief commands, but because there are more commands to learn. Given a "conventional" editor (e.g. DEC's SOS) and an equivalent subset of an Emacs-type editor, novice users will learn the subset of the Emacs-type editor faster.)

## 4.2 Error Recovery

Errors come in two flavors. There are internal errors which are in the editor itself (e.g., a subscript out of range) and external errors which are caused by the user (e.g., attempt to delete off the end of the buffer). There is also a non-error, the normal exit,

## The Command Loop

which will be treated as an error in this discussion. These errors will, in general, be indicated both from within the editor and from the outside world (the operating system).

The first category to be considered will be internal errors. These errors cause an immediate exit to the operating system with no questions asked and no delays tolerated. They will be internally generated by such things as arithmetic overflows and bad subscripts. (While the editor might catch and process some of these, it will not generally process them all.) They can also be generated externally and often are (e.g., process switching). The factor in common is that they are unpredictable and the state of the editor should remain exactly intact. The user should also be able to signal such an error to abort out of the editor. He might want to do this because of a problem with the editor itself (e.g., infinite loop) or because he wants to do something else. This signalling is usually done with the help of the operating system. In any case, the precise state of the editor should be retained so that it can be resumed exactly where it left off. Most operating systems have some facility for doing this; they differ principally in the freedom of action that they allow before losing the state. This freedom ranges from nothing to doing arbitrarily many other things.

At the user's discretion, the editor should be restartable either from exactly where it left off or at a safe restart point. This point is ordinarily a portion of the editor which recovers the buffers and other current state and then resumes the command loop.

External errors are principally user errors. The action ordinarily taken is the printing of an error message and a return to command level. The implementation of this level of recovery is built in to the procedures which implement the commands.

There is a variation of external errors which are generated manually by the user.

## The Command Loop

Typically, these involve backing out of an undesired state (e.g., the unwanted invoking of a dispatch table rebinding or aborting an undesired argument). The bell character (ASCII  $\text{\textasciitilde}G$ ) has often been used for this purpose. In this case, the procedures will know that a bell has been typed and will implement the backout protocol.

Finally, provisions to exit the editor must be made. This is ordinarily by means of an abort flag of some sort as can be seen in the previous code fragment. Note that various other uses might be multiplexed onto this abort flag, signifying varying levels of "exiting." For example, one level could be used by buffer switching in order to rebind the dispatch tables (see the section on later in this chapter).

Ordinary exiting involves several types of processing. The editor might ask the user what to do with buffers that have been modified but not written out. If, as is ordinarily assumed, the state of the editor is preserved across invocations, the state must be saved. If not, it must be sure that all memory is deallocated. Finally, the user's environment should be restored as it was found. This implies such varied things as cleaning up the stack, closing files, deallocating unneeded storage, and resetting terminal parameters.

## 4.3 Arguments

Arguments are specified by the user to modify the behavior of a function. The Emacs argument mechanism will be described as an example of three diverse ways in which arguments are obtained.

There are three standard argument types. First are prefix arguments. These are invoked by a string of functions (which are in turn invoked by characters typed before the "actual" command) and are an example of using the key/function binding to implement a more complicated syntax. Next are string arguments. When obtaining a

## The Command Loop

string argument, the editor is invoked recursively on an argument buffer and upon return from the recursive invocation the contents of that buffer are given to the requesting procedure. Last are positional arguments. These are the internal variables of the editor.

### 4.3.1 Prefix Arguments

Prefix arguments are entered before the command whose behavior they are modifying, thus, their interpretation must not depend upon the command. Emacs limits these to numeric values.

Ordinarily, commands will have an internal variable available to them named something like "argument" and it will have a value of one. Prefix arguments allow the user to change that value to any other positive or negative integer.

Arguments are used for two different purposes. First is to specify a repeat count for a command. Thus,  $\langle 12 \rangle \uparrow F$  would go forward twelve characters (assume the  $\uparrow F$  key is bound to the ForwardChar function). The other use is to tell a command to use an alternate value for a parameter. If FillParagraph was bound to  $\uparrow P$ , then  $\langle 65 \rangle \uparrow P$  might say to, for this time only, use 65 as the desired width of the paragraph after it is filled. Alternatively, it might say to reset the default value of the right hand margin to 65 and then use that value. It is useful to provide a predicate to allow procedures to determine whether an argument has been given. This allows them to differentiate the default argument of one from the user entering one as the argument value.

Emacs uses  $\uparrow U$  as the universal – argument function. It can be used in either of two ways.  $\uparrow U \uparrow F$  means to go forward four characters. Adding another  $\uparrow U$  means to multiply the current argument by four. Thus,  $\uparrow U \uparrow U \uparrow U \uparrow F$  means to go forward 64 characters. The factor of four was selected because five is too large (1, 5, 25, 125 goes

## The Command Loop

up too fast) and, while three might have better spacing (1, 3, 9, 27, 81, 243), the powers of four are known by all people who are likely to be around computers.

The other use is more complicated.  $\uparrow U 1 2 \uparrow F$  means to go forward twelve characters.  $\uparrow U - 1 4 7 \uparrow A$  means to give  $\uparrow A$  an argument of -147. The  $\uparrow U$  in this case serves as an "escape" to logically rebind the 0-9 and - keys.

On some terminals, there are two sets of numeric keys (one set that sends the ASCII "0" - "9" codes and another that is labeled with digits but sends different codes) to generate "numbers" than simply sending the appropriate ASCII codes. In this case, these "other numbers" can be bound directly to argument generating functions and the initial  $\uparrow U$  is not needed.

### 4.3.2 String Arguments

String arguments are specifically requested by a procedure. A prompt is displayed and the user enters the value of the argument. The procedure uses this value in any way it desires.

One way to implement such a way of entering arguments is to create an argument buffer in a new window, display a prompt, and call the editor recursively with that as the current buffer. By following this scheme, the full power of the editor is available to correct typing mistakes or otherwise make the entry process easier.

When implementing any argument entry scheme, there are three things to take into account. First, the key or key sequence used to indicate that the entry process is over should be able to vary depending upon who is asking for the argument.  $\uparrow M (<cr>)$  and  $\uparrow [ (<esc>)$  are both commonly used as delimiters. Second, there should be a clean way to abort out of the argument entry process ( $\uparrow G$  is commonly used for this purpose). In

## The Command Loop

this case, the calling procedure should be told about the abort in order for it to terminate gracefully. (Most of the routines that ask for arguments do all of the asking at once and then proceed to do a large amount of work (e.g., ReadFile). Thus, aborting out of the argument entry process effectively aborts out of the command. Aborting cannot be done cleanly if commands are written to get an argument, do some work, get another argument, etc.) Finally, null arguments (the user enters only the delimiter character) can be used to cut down on typing errors if the procedures supply some reasonable default values.

Here are some examples of using string arguments:

SearchString: Ask for a string and look for it in the buffer. If the user enters a null string, use the same string that he searched for before.

ReadFile: Ask for a string and, using it as a filename, read the file into the buffer. If the user enters a null string, use the current filename associated with the buffer.

ChangeBuffer: Ask for a string and, using it as a buffername, make that buffer the current one. If the user enters a null string, use the buffer that he was in last (i.e., the one that he was in before the one that he is in now).

Note that SearchString typically uses ↑[ (<esc>) as the delimiter while ReadFile and ChangeBuffer typically use ↑M (<cr>). In order to help the user, it is nice to automatically remind him which delimiter is being asked for. Here are some example prompts:

```
Search String(<esc>):
Input File Name(<cr>)  (Default is >u>fin>test):
Buffer Name(<cr>)  (Default is foo):
```

Note that some prompts helped the user by reminding him of the default value.

While all of the examples asked for and wanted a character string, this might not

## The Command Loop

always be the case. It is quite practical to use this method to enter numeric values. The requesting procedure merely has to convert the read-in character string to a numeric value.

### 4.3.3 Positional Arguments

Positional arguments are not directly specifiable by the user. They are the internal variables that are used in the editor. Such variables include both those required by the editor (e.g., the length of the buffer, the locations of the point and the mark, etc.) and those which have a specialized purpose (e.g., the current value of the right hand margin, the tab spacing, etc.).

Often these values are used in unusual ways. For example, the horizontal position (column) of the point can often be a more pleasant way of specifying a value than entering a number. The user can indicate that "this is where I want the right margin to be" instead of having to count characters to get a number. The user indicates this value by using other commands (e.g., ForwardChar, ForwardWord) to move the point to the desired location. See also section 5.2, page 81 for information about how graphical input devices (mice, tablets, touch sensitive displays) affect positional arguments.

## 4.4 Rebinding

Rebinding is a name for the act of changing at run time what a key or procedure does. The distinction between the two (keys and functions) is important. Changing the binding of a key means that when that key is typed, the new procedure (the one that is now bound to the key) will be executed instead of the old one. Changing the binding of a procedure means that whenever that procedure is invoked, the new version will be

## The Command Loop

executed instead of the old one. This change affects not only any keys bound to that procedure but also any internal references to it.

There are two levels of rebinding functions. Level I rebinding is when the new procedure must be known before invoking the editor. Level II rebinding is when the new procedure can be defined after the editor is invoked. Unless otherwise stated, level II rebinding is assumed.

To a first approximation, editors that are written in compiled languages (e.g., PL/I) can only change the key bindings and interpreted editors (those written in, say, Lisp) can change both bindings. Dynamic linking, however, allows both bindings to change in compiled editors and so this distinction is not always a proper one to make.

### 4.4.1 Rebinding Keys

The process of key rebinding is a relatively simple one and it is done essentially the same way in all implementations. A set of dispatch tables is used to map keys (represented by their ASCII values) to their respective functions.

In languages such as Lisp and PL/I, the table can contain the procedures themselves. In less powerful languages such as Fortran and Pascal, the dispatch table branches to a different part of the same routine that contains the table. There, the procedure call is made. In languages that supply it, a case statement can be used instead of the n-way branch.

None of these procedures have any formal parameters, and so they can all be invoked with the same calling sequence. Thus, the Lisp and PI/I direct invocations can work properly. Note also that simple commands do not have to have a separate procedure assigned to them, but the code to execute them can be placed in-line in place

## The Command Loop

of a call (where the case statement equivalent is used). Doing this substitution loses some potential flexibility.

### 4.4.2 Rebinding Functions

Level II function rebinding is ordinarily a language-supplied feature and so it will not be discussed in depth. Two comments will, however, be made on how to simulate it.

If the underlying operating system has dynamic linking (e.g., Multics), a procedure may be rebound at run time. Dynamic linking is a way of linking procedures together in which the actual link is not made until the procedure is about to be executed. At that time, the procedure is located in the file system and brought into memory. The link may either be left alone, in which case the next call will have the procedure re-located (a relatively expensive process) or it may be snapped. Snapping a link implies converting the general call instruction (which is kept in a special, writable part of the program) into a call instruction to the appropriate address. If a link is snapped, it must be explicitly unsnapped before any re-locating is done.

If the operating system does not support dynamic linking, the editor writer might choose to simulate it manually. Such a process is complex and some thought will have to be given to exactly how desirable rebinding functions is. The process is tantamount to explicit overlaying.

This all has a straightforward bearing on rebinding functions. Rebinding a function involves changing the definition of the procedure that is invoked by referencing it. What has been discussed are ways of changing such a procedure definition. Note that if the code to execute a function is inserted in-line in the basic editor, it cannot be rebound by any of these methods.

## The Command Loop

If dynamic linking is not available and is unfeasible to simulate, there is still one way out. This way will only provide level I rebinding. Instead of just using one dispatch table which indicates a procedure to be called directly, use two. The first table maps from keys to the operation to be performed (e.g., ↑F is mapped to moving forward one character). The second table maps from the operation to be performed to a procedure to perform it (e.g., moving forward one character is mapped to ForwardChar).

### 4.5 Modes

Modes are collections of rebindings which are done all at once. They can either be done automatically or can be explicitly asked for by the user.

An example of an automatically loaded mode might be PL/I mode. This mode will automatically be loaded whenever a file whose name ends in ".pl1" is read into a buffer. Such a mode might do several things. It might rebind the internal variable that identifies which characters are legal in tokens (i.e., variable names) to also include the "\$" and underscore characters which can occur within PL/I names. This change would make the ForwardWord function treat a PL/I variable name as a word. The mode might also rebind the ";" key to be an electric semicolon (i.e., finishing one statement would cause it to automatically indent properly for the next one).

The process of autoloading is related to automatically loaded modes. The trigger is the main difference. In autoloading, the trigger is completely internal. An example could be the set of S-expression hacking commands. Although they are defined at all times, the code for them is not necessarily a part of the editor. Instead, when any of the commands is invoked, they are autoloaded into the editor and the command is executed.

## The Command Loop

An example of a user requested mode would be auto fill mode. This mode rebinds the space character to one that checks to see if you are typing past the right margin. If you are, it breaks the line up to fit within the right margin. It also inserts the space.

A printing terminal mode would use function rebinding. It would be loaded automatically whenever the editor is used from a printing terminal instead of a display. It might rebind the `SelfInsert` function (which is used by all of the 95 printing keys) to one that prints the character that it is inserting on the terminal (and then inserts it). In this case the definition of the function changed and so function rebinding is called for. Note that this change is global over all buffers and so it is not readily simulatable by changing the bindings of keys to operations.

The function rebindings that are commonly done by an editor are known in advance and so they can be done by any implementation (see the preceding section for a discussion of the difficulties involved in function rebinding). Fully dynamic rebinding (the new definition of the procedure is not known until run time) is desirable for several reasons.

- Debugging is greatly eased if the trial-and-error cycle time is reduced by not having to compile and link the whole editor each time. Instead, only one function has to be recompiled and linked. (In languages such as Lisp, it is more accurate to say compiled/linked as the two operations are synonymous.)
- Space savings are achieved if unneeded modes and autoloaded single functions are not brought into memory until asked for.
- If the editor is implemented in an interpreted language (see the next section) users can develop their own functions relatively easily. Such "sideline" development is advantageous because it allows many people to develop useful code and so the editor can be specialized in many more ways than any reasonable support group could ever implement on their own. It

## The Command Loop

also encourages tailoring the editor to a user's own taste and so his productivity is enhanced.

### 4.5.1 Implementing Modes

Modes are on a per buffer basis and so provision must be made for changing these bindings as buffers are switched. The general technique for doing this is to have a set of default bindings and a set of current ones. When a buffer switch is made, the default bindings are copied to the current ones and then a series of procedures are run which modify the set of current bindings to be the correct ones for the modes that are active on this buffer.

A different approach would be to have a separate environment for each buffer which is created with the buffer, is modified as modes are added, and is never thrown away. This approach leads to efficiency problems because of the large amount of storage overhead associated with each buffer.

Sidenote Calculation: Assume that there are two dispatch tables of 128 commands each and that each entry is four bytes (big enough for an address). This leads to 1K bytes just for the dispatch tables per buffer. In addition, you have another 1K bytes for a default table to use when creating a new buffer. With a current/default dispatch table scheme, you have 2K bytes per editor and so you are always as efficient and better in the case where you have more than one buffer. Procedural storage overhead is essentially the same. In one case, you invoke the state building procedure once (but in general cannot undefine the procedure) and in the other case, you invoke it with each buffer switch. It does, on the other hand, take longer to switch buffers but the incremental time is usually minimal.

There is an important flexibility tradeoff. With a mode list and the associated default/current dispatch tables, it is possible to remove a mode from a buffer. If each buffer has its own dispatch table which is incrementally changed whenever a new mode

is added, it is not generally possible to undo such changes. Note that while the dispatch tables were used as an example, it is by no means the only variable whose value may change on a per-buffer basis.

### 4.6 Kill and Undo

An Emacs maintains a kill ring which is a place where all significant chunks of deleted text get placed. (Those deleted with G-d and <del> do not get saved.) There are commands to push and pop things from the current spot in the ring and to rotate the ring so that different text is at the current spot. Typically, a maximum of ten or so items are kept in the kill ring.

Moves and copies of text are done with this ring. Thus, there is a mechanism by which the user can recover accidentally deleted text. This type of error is the most harmful one that can occur as it involves losing information.

The InterLisp system (and others) provides a more general undo facility. Invoking this facility will cause the system to "undo" whatever it was that you just did (for one command only; a second "undo" will undo the first one). In order to implement this facility, the system must keep track of everything that you do and what its effects were.

While this general purpose facility has good applications, it is not clear that a text editor is one of them. There are three basic areas where undo applies to text editing. These are: moving around in text, deleting text, and file i/o. The Emacs approach and the undo approach will be compared for each of these.

Moving around in text is simply solving the problem "I am at x and I want to be at y." The Emacs solution involves translating this difference into a sequence of

## The Command Loop

commands to move the point from z to y. If a mistake is made in the process of implementing the solution, the problem is merely restated to "I am at x' and I want to be at y" and it is re-solved. The undo solution differs by detecting the error (i.e., deviation from the intended solution), saying "undo" to put you back on the original path, and proceeding. Ordinarily this difference in the two solutions is not very great.

If the accidentally typed command is one that moves you a great deal (e.g., move to the beginning of the buffer), it is not always easy to recover with the Emacs solution because you might not remember exactly where you were. Emacs solves this by having the large movement commands set the mark to where you were. Thus, an interchange point and mark sequence will recover from the error.

The undo actually helps less in the text deletion case. There, the "canonical" undo will only recover the last command and, hence, the last delete operation. There is no provision for deleting something, moving somewhere else, and undeleting it. Nor is there a provision for recording multiple deletions. Thus, the Emacs approach is more flexible.

Finally is the case of file i/o. Different implementations of Emacs will do different things but the basic idea is to let the user do what he wants. Obvious things will be checked (the file was modified by someone else since it was read in, for example) and such things as deletions will be double checked with the user but no recovery will be provided. On the other hand, not all systems can support the overhead of the multiple copies of a file that would be required by undo, nor are there always ways to manage these extra files conveniently. (The DEC TOPS-20 operating system does do a reasonable job at this, but it is far from perfect.)

The basic conclusion is that while an undo facility is nice, it is not all that useful in

the context of an Emacs type text editor.

### 4.7 Implementation Languages

The language that the editor is implemented in can greatly affect the ease of writing, maintaining, and extending it. Some brief comments will be made about several classes of programming languages which might be considered as implementation languages.

#### 4.7.1 TECO

(This discussion refers to MIT TECO and not the TECO which is supported by DEC on several of its machines. MIT TECO is much more powerful.) TECO is a text editor. Its command language is so powerful that it is usable to write other programs in. It is tailored for writing text applications and so would seem a good choice. It has two major problems:

- It is the only language less readable than APL. A listing of a TECO program more resembles transmission line noise than readable text. Thus, maintenance is a problem.
- Its only implementation is on the PDP-10/DEC 20 series of computers. Implementations on other machines involve asking the question of what you write the TECO in.

#### 4.7.2 Sine

Sine is a Lisp-like language tailored for text applications. Its only implementation to date is on Interdata 7/32 (or Perkin-Elmer 3200) minicomputers running the MagicSix operating system developed at MIT. It is interesting because it is a language tailored for implementing editors. It is a example of an "ideal" implementation language.

## The Command Loop

[Anderson] discusses this language in detail.

Sine is composed of two parts. Sine source code is assembled into a compact format. This object code is then interpreted. It allows function rebinding and other such niceties and the interpreter implements such things as memory management and screen redisplay automatically. Thus, the resulting editor is nicely structured, with "irrelevant" details hidden away.

### 4.7.3 Lisp

Lisp is probably the best choice, if it is available. The Lisp must, however, have string operations in order to run with any efficiency. It is best suited for the linked line form of memory management because of its view of memory management. Lisp provides a nice interpretive language for escaping into to easily write complicated editing macros. It also is quite readable and maintainable. It also provides function rebinding. Some Lisps have compilers whose code can run very fast, so speed need not be a problem.

### 4.7.4 PL/I, C, etc.

PL/I, C, and other such "systems languages" are widely available in reasonably efficient implementations. They allow the straightforward manipulation of complicated data structures and yet remain generally readable. They specifically support containment of detail by independently compiling several related routines and their internal data structures.

As a specific example of the latter, it is possible to write a buffer management abstraction in which the only visible parts are the entry points. The specific method chosen to represent the buffer remains well hidden.

#### 4.7.5 Fortran, Pascal, etc.

Fortran, Pascal, and other such languages are the least acceptable (except, of course, for assembler). In general, one must either simulate a missing basic feature (e.g., Fortran and If-Then-Else) or circumvent a "feature" (e.g., Pascal and multiple entry points to procedures) in order to do useful work in such languages.

## Chapter Five

# User Interface Hardware

The only way for a user to interact with the text editor specifically or the containing operating system generally is by means of the keyboard/screen combination. The chapter on Incremental Redisplay discusses the use of the screen in detail. This discussion is on the keyboard part of the combination.

### 5.1 Keyboards

The keyboard is the primary means of interacting with the system. In most cases, it is the only way of doing so. Many thousands of characters will be entered in the course of a normal working session. Thus, the keyboard should be tailored for the ease of typing characters. While the previous statement might seem trite, there are a large number of keyboards on the market which are not very good at all for entering characters. Here is a discussion of the various keyboard features and why they are or are not desirable:

N-KEY ROLLOVER is a highly desirable feature. Having it means that you don't have to let go of one key before striking the next. The codes for the keys that you did strike will be sent out only once and in the proper order. (The "n" means that this rollover operations will occur even though every key on the keyboard has been hit.) The basic premise behind n-key rollover is that you will not hit the same key twice in a row. Instead, you will hit a different key first and the reach for that key will naturally pull your finger off of the initial one. However, the timing requirements are quite loose

about exactly when your finger has to come off of the first key. Thus, typing errors are reduced. Note that n-key rollover is of no help in typing double letters. Note also that shift keys and the control key are handled specially and are not subject to rollover.

AUTO-REPEAT has both good and bad sides to it. It is useful on a system which does not supply such things in software but its drawbacks (leaning on a key can be deadly) makes it out of place on a system with a sophisticated editor. (If you want a row of ".","s, just type " $\uparrow U\ 80\ .$ ".)

TOUCH-TYPABILITY is the single most critical feature. It is simply the ability to type the useful characters without moving your fingers from the standard touch-typing position (the "asdf" and "jkl;" keys). As more and more people who use keyboards are touch typists and can thus type at a reasonable clip, they should not be slowed down by having to physically reach their hands out of the basic position. It can take one or two SECONDS to locate and type an out-of-the-way key. (The row above the digits is out-of-the-way, as are numeric key pads and cursor control keys.) One second is from three to ten characters of time (30 - 100 words per minute). Thus, it takes less time in general to type a four or five character command from the basic keyboard than to type one "special" key.

Because of the desire for touch-typability, it is worth at least considering doing away with such keys as "shift lock." They are rarely, if ever, used and the keyboard space that they occupy is in high demand.

Other things which keyboard manufacturers have done can be deadly. Two examples are illustrative. First, the timing on the shift keys can be blown. The result of doing so is that when "Foo" is desired, "FOo," "fOo," and "foo" are more likely to result. The other example is having a small "sweet spot" on each key. Missing this

"sweet spot" will cause both the desired and the adjoining key to fire. Thus, striking "i" can cause "io" to be sent.

More generally, the packaging of a keyboard can be important. Sharp edges near the keyboard or too tightly packed keys can cause errors and fatigue.

### 5.1.1 Special Function Keys and Other Auxiliary Keys

Keyboard manufacturers seem to have decided that a plethora of special keys is more useful than a more general approach. Thus, you can get "insert line" or "cursor up" or--gasp--"PF1". These keys, when pressed, will either do the function that they name, do something totally random, or send a (usually pre-defined) sequence of characters to the computer. For reasons that have been covered already, having the terminal do the named functions is a losing approach. Having them send pre-defined sequences of characters is not much more useful. For example, the "cursor up" key might send `↑[ E` and your editor has this sequence bound to `MoveToEndOfSentence`. Note that this problem exists even though the editor is fully extensible (i.e., it is not an acceptable solution to rebind the `↑[ E` command in the editor to `MoveUpLine`) because the user might still want to use the `↑[ E` command for its original purpose. This problem can be avoided if the keys are down loadable with a sequence of characters to send. Thus, the editor can tell the "cursor up" key to send, say, `↑P`.

Aside from the problems of compatibility with whatever software is being run, the placement of the keys is the worst problem. As has just been stated, keys that are off to one side take too long to hit. Thus, typing is slowed down considerably.

There is yet one more problem. Additional keys are not free and so the number of them that you want to pay for is limited. However, it is desirable to have the ability to specify a large number of functions (i.e., have a large number of codes that can be

## User Interface Hardware

specified by the user). The number of special keys required grows linearly with the number of codes.

### 5.1.2 Extra Shift Keys

A more general solution is to provide extra shift keys. These are keys that modify the actions of the other keys. "Shift" and "control" are the two most common examples of such keys. The Teleray 1061 terminal has a "meta" key as an option. This key sets the top (128) bit of the character that is specified. There are thus 256 codes that can be specified instead of the usual 128 from a full ASCII keyboard.

The number of extra shift keys required grows as the log of the number of codes. Thus, 512, 1024, and even 2048 code keyboards are conceivable.

Finding room on the basic keyboard for these extra shift keys is not easy. That is one reason why the removal of the "shift lock" key was suggested earlier. These keys must be on the basic keyboard in order to preserve touch-typability. (It does not take noticeably longer to type the shifted version of a key than the non-shifted version.) The Knight keyboards in use at the MIT Artificial Intelligence Laboratory have several shift keys. They are, unfortunately, located far enough away from the basic keyboard to prevent touch-typability.

## 5.2 Graphical Input

Another way of interacting with a computer is by means of a graphical input device. The advantage of a graphical input device is that it can reduce the number of commands needed. Such a device is used for pointing at sections of the screen. It is thus possible to specify items there without having to specify the numerical address of

the location or a command string to move you there.

### 5.2.1 How It Can Be Used

A graphical input device is used by thinking of the screen as one menu with the device pointing to one entry. A cursor of some sort is used to provide feedback about which menu item is currently selected. There are usually one or more "flags" that can be specified conveniently from the device. These flags provide control information. One flag is special and it provides "Z-axis" information.

The basic loop is to track the device with the cursor. When the Z-axis flag is entered, the currently selected action is taken. The screen is logically broken up into two or more sections. One section has the text that is being edited. Moving the cursor here provides a convenient way to move the point around; typing a character could cause it to be inserted wherever the cursor is. Other logical screens can specify menus of possible actions to select from. It is thus a very sophisticated and general way of specifying a position as an argument to a function.

The desired logical screen can be selected by means of the flags or, where the number of flags is limited, by physical position of the cursor on the screen. The Lisp Machine editor and Xerox PARC's Bravo editor both use graphical input devices heavily.

### 5.2.2 Devices: TSD, Mouse, Tablet, Joystick

There are several types of devices that are either available commercially or experimentally. They shall be discussed in order of usability.

A Touch Sensitive Display (TSD) is just what it sounds like. The screen is covered

## User Interface Hardware

with a special transparent material that you touch with your finger and it reports the absolute x,y coordinates of where you touched. No "flags" are available until someone can figure out how to track your finger as it brushes the surface as well as when you press more firmly (creating a Z-axis touch). It is the nicest of the devices, although obtaining feedback is hard because your finger covers the most interesting part of the screen.

A mouse is a small box with wheels. It reports the relative movement that you give it (i.e., "he moved me n units up and m units left") as opposed to absolute coordinates ("I am at position x,y"). It can have several flags. It moves along the floor, table, books, legs, or anything else.

A tablet is an absolute version of a mouse (actually, it came first). It can be run with an electronically detected puck (a small box) or a pen. A physical tablet is required for detection and it is usually about 15" x 15" x 1/2". The absolute coordinates are relative to the tablet. There can be several flags for a puck; a pen usually only has Z-axis reporting.

A joystick is a small stick mounted on a couple of potentiometers. It can report either absolute position, first derivative (relative movement) or second derivative. As it is moved small distances, getting good resolution and avoiding "stickiness" and "jumpiness" are hard. It is generally not as nice to use as the others. Flags are usually by means of regular keyboard keys.

Finally, an imaginary but useful device should be considered. That device is a foot-operated mouse. Using your feet rather than your hand to operate the mouse solves one of most nagging problems of any of these devices, which is that your hands must leave the keyboard with the usual and aforementioned results.

## User Interface Hardware

These devices all assume a high bandwidth connection to some computer. Such a connection is not practical over, say, 30 cps phone lines. What must be done in that case is to have the device report to the terminal, which moves the cursor around and reports when a flag has been hit. Thus, it is possible to supply the immediate feedback that is necessary. A 30 cps connection would be quite satisfactory for this operation (but probably not satisfactory for the screen refresh that would follow, say, a the selection of a menu).

## Chapter Six

### The World Outside of Text Editing

Text editors have been used for many things besides editing text and, in the future, they will undoubtedly be used for more diverse things. Here are some examples:

A text editor can be the primary interface to a mail system. Messages can be composed by editing a buffer and sent with a special command. Mail can be read and managed by reading it into a buffer and having special commands to perform such operations as move to the next message and summarize all messages. Having the full power of a text editor available can make such things as undeleting an accidentally deleted message or copying the text of a message that is being replied to quite easy to implement.

A text editor can be the primary interface to the operating system. Command lines can be edited with the full power of the editor before being evaluated. The past record of interaction can be kept and parts of it examined or re-used in new command lines. If the operating system does not have support for advanced terminals, a display editor can offer its interface for use by other programs. Other programs would then take advantage of the terminal independence of the editor. Alternatively, other programs would insert their output into a buffer and the editor would become an entire terminal management system.

A text editor can be used by a debugger. Multiple buffers and multiple windows can be used to examine (perhaps multiple) source files, interact with the debugger, and see the output/input of the program as it runs. In addition, a debugger might take over an

## The World Outside of Text Editing

extra window or two to do such things as constantly show selected variables.

A text editor can be an interface to a complicated file. For example, an indexed sequential file can be updated by providing editor commands to read and write entries (adding or deleting them can be managed as well). Within the entry, the full power of the editor is available for editing it.

A text editor can provide a smooth interface to the file system. A directory can be read by the editor and "edited" by the user. Files can be deleted or otherwise changed in a smooth manner by merely moving to the file name and giving a command (e.g., "delete").

(All of the preceding are currently subsystems within Multics Emacs. They are enthusiastically accepted by the user community.)

A text editor can be used to examine and--when absolutely necessary--modify object files. It can thus replace various patching programs.

A text editor is an integral part of a word processing system. Such systems often have features like automatic pagination and continual justification (the document in general and the current paragraph in particular are constantly kept right justified by rejustification after each modification). These features exist in the ALTO editor Bravo, written at Xerox PARC as well as a number of the word processing packages supplied currently for micro computers.

A text editor can deal with proportionately spaced fonts as well as fixed width ones. (The redisplay gets a lot more complex.)

The editor can be interfaced with the compiler to incrementally compile and/or check a program. Here, the principle of "sticky compiling" must be introduced.

## The World Outside of Text Editing

Assume that a program has been properly compiled. Now, change a statement by deleting a few characters and inserting a few others. The editor/compiler combination should not give an error message even though the program has been temporarily illegal. Rather, it should be quiet until you have either finished entering the new statement or it is clear that you are making a mistake. (Deciding when you have made a mistake can be hard.) The editor/compiler combination is generally also interfaced with a debugger. This trio supplies the essence of an integrated program development system.

In summary, a text editor can be used for a wide variety of things besides editing text. Taking the intended use into account when designing a new system can provide useful feedback and new constraints on the design of the system as a whole.

# Appendix A

## Annotated Bibliography

This bibliography includes many different types of documents. Some of the documents are user manuals for various editors. Others of them describe the implementation of specific editors. Still others discuss language tradeoffs or input/output system interfaces.

They are grouped by the type of editor that they refer to. Each entry is annotated to help place it in perspective. Documents that are marked with "\*" are especially valuable or interesting.

### 6.1 Emacs Type Editors

There are four principal implementations of Emacs type editors and there are enough documents to justify their separate listing.

#### 6.1.1 ITS EMACS

Ciccarelli, Eugene  
An Introduction to the EMACS Editor  
MIT Artificial Intelligence Laboratory, MIT AI Lab Memo #447,  
Cambridge, Massachusetts  
January 1978

A primer on the editor's user interface.

\*Stallman, Richard M.  
EMACS: The Extensible, Customizable, Self-Documenting, Display  
Editor

MIT Artificial Intelligence Laboratory, AI Memo #519,

Cambridge, Massachusetts

June 1979

Provides arguments for the Emacs philosophy.

Stallman, Richard M.

Structured Editing with a Lisp

letter in Surveyor's Forum (includes a response by Sanderwall)

Computing Surveys, vol 10 #4, page 505

December 1978

This is a response to the Sanderwall paper (referenced later).

On-line Documentation

MIT-AI: .TECO.; TECORD >

A more detailed command list for TECO

MIT-AI: .TECO.; TECO PRIMER

A primer for TECO

MIT-AI: EMACS; EMACS CHART

A four page command list for Emacs

MIT-AI: EMACS; EMACS GUIDE

A detailed user interface manual

MIT-AI: EMACS; EMACS ORDER

A more detailed command list for Emacs

### 6.1.2 Lisp Machine Zwei

\*Weinreb, Daniel L. & Moon, David

The Lisp Machine Manual

MIT Artificial Intelligence Laboratory, Cambridge, Massachusetts

January 1979

The user interface for Zwei.

Weinreb, Daniel L.

A Real-Time Display-Oriented Editor for the Lisp Machine

S.B. Thesis, MIT Electrical Engineering and Computer Science

Department, Cambridge, Massachusetts

January 1979

How Zwei works internally.

### 6.1.3 Multics Emacs

Greenberg, Bernard S.  
Emacs Extension Writer's Guide  
Order #CJ52, Honeywell Information Systems, Inc.  
(In publication)

How to write extensions.

Greenberg, Bernard S.  
Emacs Text Editor User's Guide  
Order #CH27, Honeywell Information Systems, Inc.  
December 1979

The user interface.

\*Greenberg, Bernard S.  
"Multics Emacs: an Experiment in Computer Interaction"  
Proceedings, Fourth Annual Honeywell Software Conference,  
Honeywell Information Systems  
March 1980

A summary of MEPAP (referenced below).  
Also, MIT-AI: BSG; NMEPAP >

Greenberg, Bernard S.  
Read-Time Editing on Multics  
Multics Technical Bulletin #373  
Honeywell Information Systems, Inc., Cambridge, Massachusetts  
April 1978

On-Line Documentation:

(by Greenberg, Bernard S.)

MIT-AI: BSG; LMEPAP >

Why Lisp was chosen for the implementation  
language

\* MIT-AI: BSG; MEPAP >

A detailed history of Emacs in general and the  
Multics implementation in specific.

Very valuable.

MIT-AI: BSG; R4V >

A proposal for a terminal independent video  
terminal support package.

MIT-AI: BSG; TTYWIN >

A look at the good and bad features of video  
terminals.

### 6.1.4 MagicSix TVMacs

\*Anderson, Owen Ted  
The Design and Implementation of a Display-Oriented Editor  
Writing System  
S.B. Thesis, MIT Physics Department, Cambridge, Massachusetts  
January 1979

How TVMacs works internally. It concentrates on describing not the editor itself but rather the implementations language: SINE.

Linhart, Jason T.  
Dynamic Multi-Window Terminal Management for the MagicSix  
Operating System  
S.B. Thesis, MIT Electrical Engineering and Computer Science  
Department, Cambridge, Massachusetts  
June 1980

A video terminal management system. Contains many useful comments on terminal independence and redisplay problems.

### 6.1.5 Other Emacs

This section covers editors which have the same general user interface as an Emacs (e.g., screen-oriented, similar key bindings) but are not extensible or otherwise fall noticeably short of the Emacs philosophy.

Finseth, Craig A.  
VINE Primer  
Texas Instruments, Inc., Central Research Laboratories, Systems  
and Information Sciences Laboratory, Dallas, Texas  
August 1979

User interface manual for the complete novice.

Schiller, Jeffrey I.  
TORES: The Text ORiented Editing System  
revised from S.B. Thesis, MIT Electrical Engineering and  
Computer Science Department, Cambridge, Massachusetts  
June 1979

On-Line Documentation

CMU-10A: fine.{mss prt}[s200mk50]  
User manual for FINE, running at Carnegie-Mellon  
University. Written by Mike Kazar.

## 6.2 Non-Emacs Display Editors

Bilofsky, Walter  
The CRT Text Editor NED -- Introduction and Reference Manual  
Rand Corporation, R-2176-ARPA  
December 1977

Irons, E. T. & Djourup, F. M.  
A CRT Editing System  
Communications of the ACM, vol. 15 #1, page 16  
January 1972

Joy, William  
Ex Reference Manual; Version 2.0  
Computer Science Division, Dept of Electrical Engineering and  
Computer Science, University of California at Berkeley  
April 1979

Joy, William  
An Introduction to Display Editing with Vi  
Computer Science Division, Dept of Electrical Engineering and  
Computer Science, University of California at Berkeley  
April 1979

Kanerva, Pentti  
TGVUID: A User's Guide to TEC/DATAMEDIA TV-Edit  
Stanford University, Institute for Mathematical Studies in  
the Social Sciences  
1973

Kelly, Jeanne  
A Guide to NED: A New On-Line Computer Editor  
The Rand Corporation, R-2000-ARPA  
July 1977

Kernighan, Brian W.

A Tutorial Introduction to the ED Text Editor  
Technical Report, Bell Laboratories, Murray Hill, New Jersey  
1978

MacLeod, I. A.  
Design and Implementation of a Display-Oriented Text Editor  
Software Practice and Experience, vol. 7 #6, page 771  
November 1977

Weiner, P., et. al.  
The Yale Editor "E": A CRT Based Editing System  
Yale Computer Science Research Report 19  
April 1973

Seybold, Patricia B.  
TYMSHARE's AUGMENT -- Heraldng a New Era, The Seybold  
Report on Word Processing  
Vol. 1, No. 9, 16pp, ISSN: 0160-9572, Seybold Publications, Inc.,  
Box 644, Media, Pennsylvania 19063  
October 1978

On-Line Documentation:  
SAIL: E.ALS[UP,DOC]  
User manual again. Stanford University.

### 6.3 Structure Editors

Ackland, Gillian M., et al  
UCSD Pascal Version 1.5 (Reference Manual)  
Institute for Information Systems, University of  
California at San Diego

Donzeau-Gouge, V.; Huet, G.; Kahn, G.; Lang, B.; & Levy, J.J.  
A Structure Oriented Program Editor: A First Step Towards  
Computer Assisted Programming  
Res. Rep. 114, IRIA, Paris  
April 1975

Teitelbaum, R. T.  
The Cornell Program Synthesizer: A Microcomputer

Implementation of PL/CS  
Technical Report TR 79-370, Department of Computer Science,  
Cornell University, Ithaca, New York

## 6.4 Other Editors

Benjamin, Arthur J.  
An Extensible Editor for a Small Machine With Disk Storage  
Communications of the ACM, vol. 15 #8, page 742  
August 1972

Talks about an editor for the IBM 1130 written in Fortran.  
Not extensible at all.

Bourne, S. R.  
A Design for a Text Editor  
Software Practice and Experience, vol 1, page 73  
January 1971

User manual

Cecil, Moll & Rinde  
TRIX AC: A Set of General Purpose Text Editing Commands  
Lawrence Livermore Laboratory UCID 30040  
March 1977

Deutsch, L. Peter & Lampson, Butler W.  
An On-Line Editor  
Communications of the ACM, vol. 10 #12, page 793  
December 1967

QED user manual

Fraser, Christopher W.  
A Compact, Portable CRT-Based Editor  
Software Practice and Experience, vol. 9 #2, page 121  
February 1970

Front end to a line editor.

Fraser, Christopher W.

A Generalized Text Editor  
Communications of the ACM, vol. 23 #3, page 154  
March 1980

Applying text editors to non-text objects.

Hansen, W. J.  
Creation of Hierarchic Text with a Computer Display  
Ph.D. Thesis, Stanford University  
June 1971

Kai, Joyce Moore  
A Text Editor Design  
Department of Computer Science, Univ of Ill at Urbana-Champaign,  
Urbana, Illinois  
July 1974

Describes both internals and externals on the editor. However,  
the design is a poor one.

Kernighan, Brian W. & Plauger, P. J.  
Software Tools  
Addison-Wesley, Reading, Massachusetts  
1976

This book has a chapter which leads you by the hand in  
implementing a simple line editor in RatFor.

\*Roberts, Teresa L.  
Evaluation of Computer Text Editors  
Systems Sciences Laboratory, Xerox PARC  
November 1979

A comparative evaluation of four text editors. Quite well done.  
Unfortunately, it does not include Emacs (it uses DEC TECO  
instead).

Sanderwall, Erik  
Programming in the Interactive Environment: the Lisp Experience  
Computing Surveys, vol. 10 #1, page 35  
March 1978

Talks about the editor for InterLisp.

Sneeringer, James  
User-Interface Design for Text Editing: A Case Study  
Software Practice and Experience, Vol 8, page 543  
1978

User manual and a discussion of user interface concepts.

Teitelman, Warren  
InterLisp Reference Manual  
Xerox Palo Alto Research Center, Palo Alto, California  
October 1978

How to use the InterLisp (non-display) structure editor.

van Dam, Andries & Rice, David E.  
On-Line Text Editing: A Survey  
Computing Surveys, Vol. 3 #3, p. 93  
September 1971

Contains a general introduction to the problems of text  
editing. Out-dated technology, though.

## Appendix B

### Some Implementations of Emacs Type Editors

This is a partial list and is intended to provide a general guide and not a comprehensive list.

Name	System	Implementation Language
TECO	ITS	Midas
<b>Full Emacs</b>		
EMACS	ITS	TECO
Emacs	Multics	Lisp
Emacs	Tops-20	TECO
TVMacs	MagicSix	Sine
Zwei	Lisp Machine	Lisp
<b>Partial Emacs</b>		
FINE	Tops-10	Bliss
MINCE	CP/M	C
otv	MagicSix	PL/1
Tores	UNIX	C
VINE	VAX/VMS	Fortran

## Appendix C

### Partial Emacs Command List

This list is of the command set that is generally common to all of the full Emacses. Specific command bindings can and do vary from implementation to implementation. This list is not complete, nor can it be as commands are constantly being added and changed.

Command designations reflect both the name and the manner in which they are entered. For example, the C-f command is named "control f" and it is entered by typing the ↑F character. Most of the C- commands can be given directly from an ASCII keyboard. Escapes are provided for those that are not. The M-a command is named "meta a" and it is entered from an ASCII keyboard by typing the <esc> key and then the command. Thus, M-a is given by typing <esc> a and M-C-a (or C-M-a) by typing <esc> ↑A.

C-@	place the mark at the point
C-a	move to the beginning of the current line
C-b	move backward one character
C-c	a prefix for control-meta commands. see below
C-d	delete the following character
C-e	move to the end of the current line
C-f	move forward one character
C-g	abort: abort execution of the current command and return to the edit loop
C-h	same as C-b
C-i	insert <tab>
C-j	insert <newline>; insert <tab>
C-k	delete the text to the end of the current line; if at the end of the line, delete the newline character; push deleted text onto the kill buffer
C-l	rebuild the display from scratch
C-m	insert <newline>
C-n	move down one line staying in as nearly the same

horizontal position as possible

C-o insert <newline>; move backward one character

C-p move up one line staying in as nearly  
the same horizontal position as possible

C-q insert the following character as typed

C-r search for a string before the point;  
see C-s for details

C-s search for a string after the point.  
There are lots of things that you can do  
typing characters builds up the search string

<del> deletes the previous character

C-s search for the next occurrence of the string

C-r search for the previous occurrence

C-g abort

<alt> terminate search; if the string is null, the  
previous string is used

C-t interchange the characters on each side of the point,  
leaving the point after the second one; if at  
the end of a line, interchange the previous  
two characters

C-u universal argument.  
There are two forms  
C-u C-u ... <command> do <command> 4, 16, 64, 256, ...  
times depending upon the number of C-us.  
C-u <integer> <command> do <command> <integer> times.  
(e.g., C-u 3 5 C-f means to C-f 35 times)

C-v move the bottom of the current screen to the top of the  
screen

C-w delete the text between the point and the mark; push  
the deleted text onto the kill buffer

C-x a prefix for control-x commands. see below

C-y copy the top item from the kill buffer to the point;  
place the mark at the beginning of the  
block and the point at the end

C-z return to superior

C-[ a prefix for meta commands. see below

C-\ a prefix for meta commands. see below

C-] a prefix for control commands. See this list

C-\_

!"#\$%&'()\*+,.-./ insert themselves

0123456789

::;<=>?@

A..Z

[ ]+\_

a..z

{|}~

bs,back space  
same as C-h

tab same as C-i

lf,line feed  
same as C-j

cr,carriage return,return  
same as C-m

esc,escape  
same as C-[ (the <alt> key)

del,delete,rubout  
delete the previous character

C-<alt> you are now typing at whatever is running the editor

C-% ask for the old string, then the new one and replace  
all occurrences of the old with the new

C-/ give help

C-< place mark at the beginning of the buffer

C-> place mark at the end of the buffer

C-? give help

C-x C-b print a list of all buffers and associated information

C-x C-d display the current directory

C-x C-f ask for the name of a file and read it into a buffer  
whose name is derived from the filename; if  
there is a conflict with an existing  
buffer, you are asked for a name to use

C-x C-i indent the region

C-x C-l convert the region to lower case

C-x C-o delete the blank lines around the  
point

C-x C-p move to the top of the current screen; place the mark  
at the end of the current screen

C-x C-r ask for the name of a file and read it into the  
current buffer

C-x C-s write out current buffer to the current filename if it  
has been modified

C-x C-u convert the region to upper case

C-x C-w ask for the name of a file and write the buffer to  
that file

C-x C-x exchange point and mark

C-x 1 use one window

C-x 2 use two windows

C-x 3 use two windows and stay in the first

C-x = print where you are in the buffer

C-x A ask for the name of a buffer; append the region to that  
buffer

C-x B ask for the name of a buffer and put you there  
 C-x D edit directory  
 C-x F set the fill column to the horizontal position  
 C-x I run INFO  
 C-x M send mail  
 C-x O in two window mode go to other window  
 C-x R read mail  
 C-x ↑ grow window by  
 C-x a same as C-x A  
 C-x b same as C-x B  
 C-x d same as C-x D  
 C-x f same as C-x F  
 C-x i same as C-x I  
 C-x m same as C-x M  
 C-x o same as C-x O  
 C-x r same as C-x R  
  
 M-"  
 ditto. copy the word directly above onto this line  
 M-%  
 QueryReplace. ask for an old string and a new string  
 At each occurrence of the old string, it  
 is displayed and you are asked for a command  
 <sp> replace and go on  
 <del> don't replace and go on  
 . replace and wait  
 : replace and exit  
 <alt> exit  
 ↑ return to previous old string (jump to mark)  
 C-w delete old string and enter C-r recursively  
 C-r normal edit, but recursively invoked  
 C-l redisplay screen  
 ! do not ask any more  
 M-( insert "()" ; leave point between them  
 M-< move to the beginning of the current buffer  
 M-> move to the end of the current buffer  
 M-? help  
 M-A move to the beginning of the current sentence  
 M-B move backward one word  
 M-C capitalize the following word  
 M-D delete the following word; push deleted text onto  
     the kill buffer  
 M-E move to the end of the current sentence  
 M-F move forward one word  
 M-G fill text in the region  
 M-H move to the beginning of the current paragraph;  
     place the mark at the end of the  
     current paragraph  
 M-L convert the following word to lower case  
 M-Q fill the current paragraph (make each line as long  
     as possible); C-u M-Q means do justify  
     (same, but make right margin even)

M-S center the current line on the screen  
 M-T interchange the adjoining words, leaving the point  
             after the right hand word  
 M-U convert the following word to upper case  
 M-V move the top of the current screen to the bottom of  
       the screen  
 M-W push a copy of the region onto the kill buffer  
 M-X ExecuteCommand  
 M-Y (after C-Y) delete yanked text and yank previous  
       kill buffer entry

M-[ move to the beginning of the current paragraph  
 M-\ delete the <sp> and <tab>s around the point  
 M-] move to the end of the current paragraph

M-a same as M-A  
 M-b same as M-B  
 M-c same as M-C  
 M-d same as M-D  
 M-e same as M-E  
 M-f same as M-F  
 M-g same as M-G  
 M-h same as M-H  
 M-l same as M-L  
 M-q same as M-Q  
 M-s same as M-S  
 M-t same as M-T  
 M-u same as M-U  
 M-v same as M-V  
 M-w same as M-W  
 M-x same as M-X  
 M-y same as M-Y

M-<del> delete the previous word; push deleted text onto the  
       kill buffer

C-M-) move up one level of list structure backward  
 C-M-( move up one level of list structure forward  
 C-M-A move to the beginning of the current defun  
 C-M-B move backward one Sexpression  
 C-M-E move to the end of the current defun  
 C-M-F move forward one Sexpression  
 C-M-G format the current Sexpression  
 C-M-H move to the beginning of the current Sexpression;  
       place the mark at its end  
 C-M-K delete the following Sexpression; push the  
       deleted text onto the kill buffer  
 C-M-O move the rest of this line vertically down,  
       inserting <tab>s and <sp>s as needed  
 C-M-T interchange the adjoining Sexpressions, leaving the  
       point after the following sexprssion

C-M-W the following delete-and-push will be part of the  
current entry in the kill buffer

C-M-<del> delete the preceding S-expression; push  
the deleted text onto the kill buffer