

Principles and properties	Structures
✓ Versatility	✓ Module
Conceptual integrity	Dependency
✓ Independently changeable	Process
Automatic propagation	Data access
Buildability	
✓ Growth accommodation	
✓ Entropy resistance	

CHAPTER ELEVEN

GNU Emacs: Creeping Featurism Is a Strength

Jim Blandy

I use Emacs, which might be thought of as a thermonuclear word processor. It was created by Richard Stallman; enough said. It is written in Lisp, which is the only computer language that is beautiful. It is colossal, and yet it only edits straight ASCII text files, which is to say, no fonts, no boldface, no underlining.... If you are a professional writer—i.e., if someone else is getting paid to worry about how your words are formatted and printed—Emacs outshines all other editing software in approximately the same way that the noonday sun does the stars. It is not just bigger and brighter; it simply makes everything else vanish.

—Neal Stephenson

THE GNU EMACS TEXT EDITOR IS UNMATCHED IN ITS NOTORIETY. Its proponents swear nothing else comes close, and are oddly resistant to the charms of more modern alternatives. Its detractors call it obscure, complex, and outdated compared to more widely used development environments, such as Microsoft's Visual Studio. Even its fans blame their wrist injuries on its contorted keyboard command set.