

Assignment Project Exam Help

COMP914

Software System Design and Implementation

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Property Based Testing; Lazy Evaluation

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Free Properties

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

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

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

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Logical Properties

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We have already seen a few examples of logical properties.

Example (Properties)

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

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

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

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Proofs

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

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

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

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Testing

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Compared to proofs

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

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

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Property Based Testing

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

Example (QuickCheck Property)

```
prop_reverse pp xs ys =  
  reverse (xs ++ ys) == reverse ys ++ reverse xs
```

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

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PBT vs. Unit Testing

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- Properties are more compact than unit tests, and describe more cases.
⇒ Less testing code
- Property-based testing heavily depends on test data generation:
 - Random inputs may not be as informative as hand-crafted inputs
⇒ use shrinking
 - Random inputs may not cover all necessary corner cases:
⇒ use a coverage checker
 - Random inputs must be generated for user-defined types.
⇒ QuickCheck includes functions to build custom generators
- By increasing the number of random inputs, we improve code coverage in PBT.

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Test Data Generation

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

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

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

Shrinking

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

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Testable Types

The type of the quickCheck function is:

-- more on IO later

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

The Testable type class is the class of things that can be converted into properties.

This includes:

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

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

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

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Simple example

Is this function reflexive?

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

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

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

```
prop_refl :: Integer -> Property
prop_refl x = x > 0 ==> divisible x x
-- (but may generate a lot of spurious cases)
```

- or select different generators with modifier newtypes.

```
prop_refl :: Positive Integer -> Bool
prop_refl (Positive x) = divisible x x
-- (but may require you to define custom generators)
```

Words and Inverses

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Example (Inverses)

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

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

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Lessons: Properties aren't always what you expect!

Merge Sort

Example (Merge Sort)

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

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

Applying our bottom up design, let's posit:

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

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

Split

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

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

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

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

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Merge

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

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

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

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Overall

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

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

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

We can prove this as a consequence of the previous specifications which we tested.

We can also just write **integration** properties that test the composition of these functions together.

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Redundant Properties

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

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

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

What are some redundant properties of mergesort?

Test Quality

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How good are your tests?

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

Coverage checkers are useful tools to partially quantify this.

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Types of Coverage

Branch/Decision Coverage

All conditional branches executed?

Function Coverage

All functions executed?

Entry/Exit Coverage

All function calls
executed?

Statement/Expression Coverage

All expressions executed?

Path Coverage

All behaviours executed?
very hard!

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Haskell Program Coverage

Haskell Program Coverage (or `hpc`) is a GHC-bundled tool to measure function, branch and expression coverage.

Let's try it out!

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

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

Sum to n

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

This crashes when given a large number. Why?

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Sum to n , redux

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

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

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

```
sumTo = sumTo' 0
```

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

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

Lazy Evaluation

Haskell is lazily evaluated, also called call-by-need.
This means that expressions are only evaluated when they are **needed** to compute a result for the user.

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

```
sumTo' :: Integer -> Integer -> Integer
sumTo' !a 0 = a
sumTo' !a n = sumTo' (n-1) (r-1)
sumTo' :: Integer -> Integer -> Integer
sumTo' a 0 = a
sumTo' a n = let a' = a + n in a' `seq` sumTo' a' (n-1)
```

Advantages

Lazy Evaluation has many advantages:

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

Problem

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

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

Infinite Data Structures

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

```
ones = 1 : ones
```

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

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

--or

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

How about fibonacci numbers?

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


Homework

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- 1 First programming exercise is due on Wednesday.
- 2 Second exercise is now out, due the following Wednesday.
- 3 Last week's quiz is due on Friday. Make sure you submit your answers.
- 4 This week's quiz is also up, due the following Friday.

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