Heap Heap Hooray: Improving memory management

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Team

- Tyler Gutowski (member)
- Trevor Schiff (member)
- Dr. Ryan Stansifer (faculty advisor, client)

Meetings

- Wednesday, 30 August: Discuss and better understand project idea

Goal

- Develop runtime garbage collector (GC)
- Determine optimal GC algorithm(s)
- Integrate with MiniJava compiler developed as part of Compiler Theory course
    - “MiniJava” refers to a simple, but non-trivial subset of Java

Motivation

- MiniJava runtime does not offer automatic memory management
  - GC is not a required part of the Compiler Theory course
  - “New” operator exists, but user is responsible for lifetime of allocation
- As MiniJava is a subset of Java, memory cannot be manually freed
  - No “delete” operator exists
  - Without GC, all heap allocations are permanent
  - Losing reference means losing memory block forever

Key Features

- Automated memory management in MiniJava
  - “Garbage collection”
- No effort required by the user
  - GC will be part of compiler runtime

Technical Challenges

- Understand and implement GC algorithm(s)
- Learn how to integrate GC with MiniJava runtime
- Determine data/algorithm set for GC performance testing

Milestone 1

1. Literature Review
    - Analyse *The Garbage Collection Handbook* (Richard Jones, et. al) to understand GC architecture and algorithms
    - Evaluate strengths and weaknesses of different approaches to GC
    - Examine open-source projects to see real-world examples
2. Requirements Gathering
    - Define project objectives, scope
    - Determine metrics for testing
3. Feasibility
    - Assess project feasibility
    - Identify prospective project challenges
4. Design
    - Select algorithm for GC implementation
    - Develop high-level design and create design documents

Milestone 2

1. Architecture
    - Establish strategy for integration with compiler and runtime
    - Finalize architecture and validate with prototype
2. Tools and Setup
    - Select/setup development tools and environment
    - Select/setup project management tools, such as version control
    - Establish testing framework
3. Coding Phase
    - Begin implementation of GC core components
    - Implement debugging tools
    - Test and demo core components

Milestone 3

1. Coding Phase (cont.)
    - Implement identification and marking
    - Integrate memory management with compiler and runtime
2. Testing and Demoing
    - Address memory leaks
    - Demo added functionality
    - Demo project to the customer