The Software Design Process

CPSC 315 – Programming Studio

Outline

- Challenges in Design
- Design Concepts
- Heuristics
- Practices

Challenges in Design

- A problem that can only be defined by solving it
  - Only after "solving" it do you understand what the needs actually are
  - e.g. Tacoma Narrows bridge design
  - "Plan to throw one away"

Challenges in Design

- Process is Sloppy
  - Mistakes
  - Wrong, dead-end paths
  - Stop when "good enough"
- Tradeoffs and Priorities
  - Determine whether design is good
  - Priorities can change

Challenges in Design

- Restrictions are necessary
  - Constraints improve the result
- Nondeterministic process
  - Not one “right” solution
- A Heuristic process
  - Rules of thumb vs. fixed process
- Emergent
  - Evolve and improve during design, coding

Levels of Design

- Software system as a whole
- Division into subsystems/packages
- Classes within packages
- Data and routines within classes
- Internal routine design

- Work at one level can affect those below *and* above.
- Design can be iterated at each level

Key Design Concepts

- Most Important: Manage Complexity
  - Software already involves conceptual hierarchies, abstraction
  - Goal: minimize how much of a program you have to think about at once
  - Should completely understand the impact of code changes in one area on other areas

Good Design Characteristics

- Minimal complexity

- Favor “simple” over “clever”

Good Design Characteristics

- Minimal complexity
- Ease of maintenance

- Imagine what maintainer of code will want to know
- Be self-explanatory

Good Design Characteristics

- Minimal complexity
- Ease of maintenance
- Loose coupling

- Keep connections between parts of programs minimized
  - Avoid n^2 interactions!
- Abstraction, encapsulation, information hiding

Good Design Characteristics

- Minimal complexity
- Ease of maintenance
- Loose coupling
- Extensibility

- Should be able to add to one part of system without affecting others

Good Design Characteristics

- Minimal complexity
- Ease of maintenance
- Loose coupling
- Extensibility
- Reusability

- Design so code could be “lifted” into a different system
- Good design, even if never reused

Good Design Characteristics

- Minimal complexity
- Ease of maintenance
- Loose coupling
- Extensibility
- Reusability
- High fan-in

- For a given class, have it used by many others
- Indicates good capture of underlying functions

Good Design Characteristics

- Minimal complexity
- Ease of maintenance
- Loose coupling
- Extensibility
- Reusability
- High fan-in
- Low-to-medium fan-out

- Don’t use too many other classes
- Complexity management

Good Design Characteristics

- Minimal complexity
- Ease of maintenance
- Loose coupling
- Extensibility
- Reusability
- High fan-in
- Low-to-medium fan-out
- Portability

- Consider what will happen if moved to another environment

Good Design Characteristics

- Minimal complexity
- Ease of maintenance
- Loose coupling
- Extensibility
- Reusability
- High fan-in
- Low-to-medium fan-out
- Portability
- Leanness

- Don’t add extra parts
- Extra code will need to be tested, reviewed in future changes

Good Design Characteristics

- Minimal complexity
- Ease of maintenance
- Loose coupling
- Extensibility
- Reusability
- High fan-in
- Low-to-medium fan-out
- Portability
- Leanness
- Stratification

- Design so that you don't have to consider beyond the current layer

Good Design Characteristics

- Minimal complexity
- Ease of maintenance
- Loose coupling
- Extensibility
- Reusability
- High fan-in
- Low-to-medium fan-out
- Portability
- Leanness
- Stratification
- Standard Techniques

- Use of common approaches make it easier to follow code later
- Avoid unneeded exotic approaches

Design Heuristics

- Rules-of-thumb
  - "Trials in Trial-and-Error"
- Understand the Problem
- Devise a Plan
- Carry Out the Plan
- Look Back and *Iterate*

Find Real-World Objects

- Standard Object-Oriented approach
- Identify objects and their attributes
- Determine what can be done to each object
- Determine what each object is allowed to do to other objects
- Determine the parts of each object that will be visible to other objects (public/private)
- Define each object's public interface

Form Consistent Abstractions

- View concepts in the aggregate
  - "Car" rather than "engine, body, wheels, etc."
- Identify common attributes
  - Form base class
- Focus on interface rather than implementation
- Form abstractions at all levels
  - Car, Engine, Piston

Inheritance

- Inherit *when helpful*
  - When there are common features

Information Hiding

- Interface should reveal little about inner workings
  - Example: Assign ID numbers
    - Assignment algorithm could be hidden
    - ID number could be typed
  - Encapsulate Implementation Details
- Don't set interface based on what's easiest to use
  - Tends to expose too much of interior
- Think about "What needs to be hidden"

More on Information Hiding

- Two main advantages
  - Easier to comprehend complexity
  - Localized effects allow local changes
- Issues:
  - Circular dependencies
    - A->B->A
  - Global data (or too-large classes)
  - Performance penalties
    - Valid, but less important, at least at first

Identify Areas Likely to Change

- Anticipate Change
  - Identify items that seem likely to change
  - Separate these items into their own class
  - Limit connections to that class, or create interface that's unlikely to change
- Examples of main potential problems:

Business Rules, Hardware Dependencies, Input/Output, Nonstandard language features, status variables, difficult design/coding areas

Keep Coupling Loose

- Relations to other classes/routines
- Small Size
  - Fewer parameters, methods
- Visible
  - Avoid interactions via global variables
- Flexible
  - Don't add unnecessary dependencies
  - e.g. using method that's not unique to the class it belongs to

Kinds of Coupling

- Data-parameter (good)
  - Data passed through parameter lists
  - Primitive data types
- Simple-object (good)
  - Module instantiates that object
- Object-parameter (so-so)
  - Object 1 requires Object 2 to pass an Object 3
- Semantic (bad)
  - One object makes use of semantic information about the inner workings of another

Examples of Semantic Coupling

- Module 1 passes control flag to Module 2
  - Can be OK if control flag is typed
- Module 2 uses global data that Module 1 modifies
- Module 2 relies on knowledge that Module 1 calls initialize internally, so it doesn't call it
- Module 1 passes Object to Module 2, but only initializes the parts of Object it knows Module 2 needs
- Module 1 passes a Base Object, but Module 2 knows it is actually a Derived Object, so it typecasts and calls methods unique to the derived object

Design Patterns

- *Design Patterns*, by “Gang of Four” (Gamma, Helm, Johnson, Vlissides)
- Common software problems and solutions that fall into patterns
- Provide ready-made abstractions
- Provide design alternatives
- Streamline communication among designers

More on Design Patterns

- Given common names
  - e.g. “Bridge” – builds an interface and an implementation in such a way that either can vary without the other varying
- Could go into much more on this

Other Heuristics

- Strong Cohesion
  - All routines support the main purpose
- Build Hierarchies
  - Manage complexity by pushing details away
- Formalize Class Contracts
  - Clearly specify what is needed/provided
- Assign Responsibilities
  - Ask what each object should be responsible for

More Heuristics

- Design for Test
  - Consider how you will test it from the start
- Avoid Failure
  - Think of ways it could fail
- Choose Binding Time Consciously
  - When should you set values to variables
- Make Central Points of Control
  - Fewer places to look -> easier changes

More Heuristics

- Consider Using Brute Force
  - Especially for early iteration
  - Working is better than non-working
- Draw Diagrams
- Keep Design Modular
  - Black Boxes

Design Practices (we may return to these)

- Iterate – Select the best of several attempts
- Decompose in several different ways
- Top Down vs. Bottom Up
- Prototype
- Collaborate: Have others review your design either formally or informally
- Design until implementation seems obvious
  - Balance between “Too Much” and “Not Enough”
- Capture Design Work
  - Design documents