

COMP 210, Spring 2002

Lecture 13: Files, Directories, Folders, and all that ...

Reminders

- Half homework due Wednesday
- Exams handed back today

Review

1. We looked at parent-centric family trees.

Brief Reflection and Philosophical Interlude

In defining family trees, we looked first at a simple, child-centric model. We learned to answer some questions with it. We expanded it to include information not originally part of our model. We discovered that some questions could not be answered from the child-centric model (such as **number-of-descendants**). We formulated another kind of family tree—the parent-centric model. We used it to answer some questions that could not be answered from child-centric trees. (**count-members** is **number-of-descendants** + 1.)

This is the reality of developing computer programs. We propose a model, work with it long enough to discover its shortcomings, and refine it to create a new model. Sometimes, we will propose simple extensions of the existing model; at other times, we will completely discard our earlier models.

From the perspective of programming patterns, we saw a new pattern in the final model for parent-centric family trees—mutually recursive data definitions. The recursion in the data definition is, **of course**, reflected in the template and in the code. You should expect the homework for this week to include mutually recursive programs.

Another Recursive Structure

Let's consider another recursive kind of information that computers model on a daily basis. What about the user interface to a file system? (For the purposes of COMP 210, a file system is just the collection of *files* that reside on the *non-volatile storage* of a *digital computer system*. The notion of files should be familiar to most of you. Note, however, that we haven't seen files in our dealings with DrScheme, except as a place to store some Scheme code between sessions with the Doctor.

File systems are created, manipulated, and destroyed by computer programs—in most cases, the operating system of the computer. What sort of objects do you find in a file system? A typical file system has files (of course) and directories that hold files. A simple model for the file system might represent files by their names (**symbols** in Scheme), and directories as lists of their contents. Can a directory contain a directory? (For you Mac users, think folders.) How deeply can you nest directories (folders)? [Several famous operating systems placed arbitrary limits on the depth of nesting in the file system, using the justification that "no one would need more than k levels of directories." In reality, these limits usually came from using poor, non-recursive models to represent the name space of the file system.]

```
;; a file is a symbol
;; a directory is one of
;; -- empty, or
;; -- (cons f r) where f is a file & r is a directory, or
;; -- (cons f r) where f & r are both directories.
;; [ Since we can use cons, no define-struct is needed.]
```

Of course, the template for programs that manipulate files and directories follows from these data definitions.

```
(define (f a-file ... ) ... )

(define (g a-dir ...)
  (cond
    [(empty? a-dir) ...]
    [(file? (first a-dir))
     ... (f (first a-dir)) ... (g (rest a-dir)) ... ]
    [else ... ]
  )
)
```

What's this? Try "symbol?" since we didn't define a file structure.

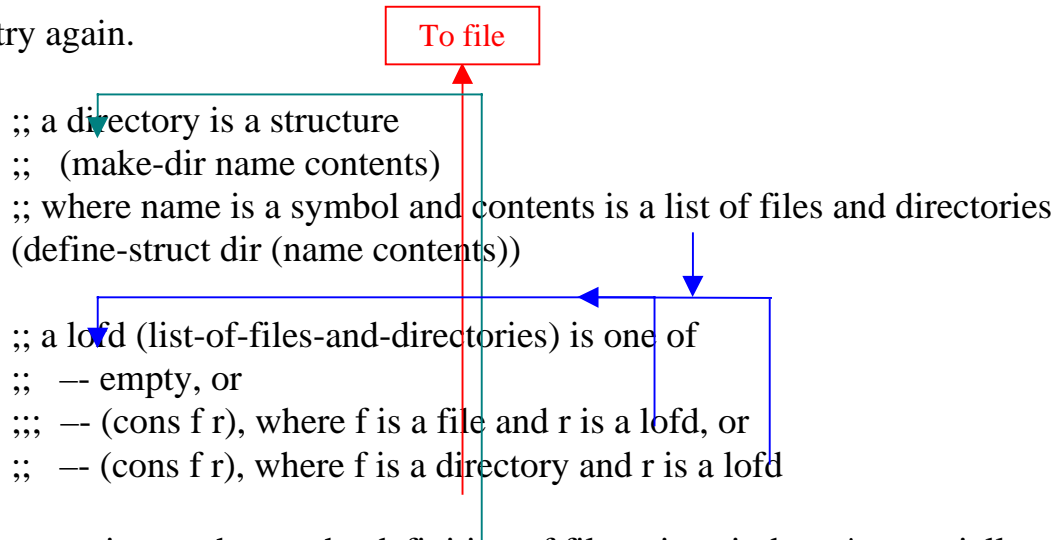
```

[(cons? (first a-dir))
 ... (g (first a-dir)) ... (g (rest a-dir)) ...]
))

```

We could use this to write programs. First, however, we should ask if it is adequate. For example, what is a directory's name? Oooops. The model is not sophisticated enough to allow us to name directories or folders, so it is clearly unusable. (Even though it has the right basic structure.

Let's try again.



We're not going to change the definition of files, since it doesn't materially impact the structure of files and directories. In the homework assignment, you will do this.

The template for this set of data definitions:

```
(define (f a-file) ... )

(define (g a-dir ...)
  (... (dir-name a-dir) ... (h (dir-contents a-dir) ..) ... )

(define (h a-lofd ...)
  (cond
    [(empty? a-lofd) ...]
    [(symbol? (first a-lofd))
     ... (f (first a-lofd)) ... (h (rest a-lofd)) ... ]
    [(dir? (first a-lofd))
     ... (g (first a-lofd)) ... (h (rest a-lofd)) ...]
  ))
```

Write the program **count-files** which consumes a directory and returns the number of files in that directory tree.