CS 251 Fall 2019
Principles of Programming Languages
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WELLESLEY

Currying and Partial Application

and other tasty closure recipes

https://cs.wellesley.edu/~cs251/f19/

More idioms for closures

- Function composition
- Currying and partial application
- Callbacks (e.g., reactive programming, later)
- Functions as data representation (later)

Function composition

```
fun compose (f,g) = fn x => f (g x)
```

Closure "remembers" `f` and `g`

```
: ('b -> 'c) * ('a -> 'b) -> ('a -> 'c)
```

REPL prints something equivalent

ML standard library provides infix operator `o`

```
fun sqrt_of_abs i = Math.sqrt(Real.fromInt(abs i))
fun sqrt_of_abs i = (Math.sqrt o Real.fromInt o abs) i
val sqrt_of_abs = Math.sqrt o Real.fromInt o abs
```

Right to left.

Pipelines (left-to-right composition)

"Pipelines" of functions are common in functional programming.

```
infix |>
fun x |> f = f x

fun sqrt_of_abs i =
   i |> abs |> Real.fromInt |> Math.sqrt
```

(F#, Microsoft's ML flavor, defines this by default)

Currying

- Every ML function takes exactly one argument
- Previously encoded *n* arguments via one *n*-tuple
- Another way:
  Take one argument and return a function that takes another argument and…
  – Called "currying" after logician Haskell Curry

Example

```
val sorted3 = fn x => fn y => fn z =>
                z >= y andalso y >= x

val t1 = ((sorted3 7) 9) 11
```

- Calling `(sorted3 7)` returns a closure with:
  – Code `fn y => fn z => z >= y andalso y >= x`
  – Environment binds `x` to `7`
- Calling *that* closure on `9` returns a closure with:
  – Code `fn z => z >= y andalso y >= x`
  – Environment binds `x` to `7`, `y` to `9`
- Calling *that* closure on `11` returns `true`

Function application is left-associative

```
val sorted3 = fn x => fn y => fn z =>
                z >= y andalso y >= x

val t1 = ((sorted3 7) 9) 11
```

`e1 e2 e3 e4`

means

`(((e1 e2) e3) e4)`

```
val t1 = sorted3 7 9 11
```

Callers can just think
"multi-argument function with spaces instead of a tuple expression"
Does not interchange with tupled version.

Function definitions are sugar (again)

```
val sorted3 = fn x => fn y => fn z =>
                z >= y andalso y >= x

val t1 = ((sorted3 7) 9) 11
```

`fun f p1 p2 p3 … = e`

desugars to

`fun f p1 = fn p2 => fn p3 => … => e`

```
fun sorted3 x y z = z >= y andalso y >= x
```

Callees can just think
"multi-argument function with spaces instead of a tuple pattern"
Does not interchange with tupled version.

Final version

```
fun sorted3 x y z = z >= y andalso y >= x

val t1 = sorted3 7 9 11
```

As elegant syntactic sugar (fewer characters than tupling) for:

```
val sorted3 = fn x => fn y => fn z =>
                  z >= y andalso y >= x

val t1 = ((sorted3 7) 9) 11
```

Function application is left-associative.

Types are right-associative:

`sorted3 : int -> int -> int -> bool`

means

`sorted3 : int -> (int -> (int -> bool))`

Curried foldl

```
fun foldl f acc xs =
    case xs of
      []     => acc
    | x::xs' => foldl f (f(x,acc)) xs'

fun sum xs = foldl (fn (x,y) => x+y) 0 xs
```


Partial Application

```
fun foldl f acc xs =
    case xs of
      []     => acc
    | x::xs' => foldl f (f(acc,x)) xs'

fun sum_inferior xs = foldl (fn (x,y) => x+y) 0 xs

val sum = foldl (fn (x,y) => x+y) 0
```

`foldl (fn (x,y) => x+y) 0`
evaluates to a closure that, when called with a list `xs`, evaluates the case-expression with:

- `f` bound to the result of `foldl (fn (x,y) => x+y)`
- `acc` bound to 0

Unnecessary function wrapping

```
fun f x = g x   (* bad  *)
val f = g       (* good *)

(* bad  *)
fun sum_inferior xs = fold (fn (x,y) => x+y) 0 xs

(* good *)
val sum = fold (fn (x,y) => x+y) 0

(* best? *)
val sum = fold (op+) 0
```

Treat infix operator as normal function.

Iterators and partial application

```
fun exists predicate xs =
    case xs of
      []      => false
    | x::xs' => predicate x
                orelse exists predicate xs'

val no = exists (fn x => x=7) [4,11,23]
val hasZero = exists (fn x => x=0)
```

For this reason, ML library functions of this form are usually curried

- `List.map`, `List.filter`, `List.foldl`, ...

The Value Restriction ☹

If you use partial application to *create a polymorphic function*, it may not work due to the value restriction

- Warning about "type vars not generalized"
  - And won't let you call the function
- This should surprise you; you did nothing wrong ☺ but you still must change your code.
- See the code for workarounds
- Can discuss a bit more when discussing type inference

More combining functions

- What if you want to curry a tupled function or vice-versa?
- What if a function's arguments are in the wrong order for the partial application you want?

Naturally, it is easy to write higher-order wrapper functions

- And their types are neat logical formulas

```
fun other_curry1 f = fn x => fn y => f y x
fun other_curry2 f x y = f y x
fun curry f x y = f (x,y)
fun uncurry f (x,y) = f x y
```