

Class 16: Recursion with Files

Held: Wednesday, 20 September 2006

Summary: Today we continue to explore files, particularly how one recurses over files.

Related Pages:

- EBoard.
- Lab: Files.
- Reading: Files.

Notes:

- Although I have not finished grading HW16, we will go over some key issues. You may want to look at `unriffle.ss` and `index-of.ss`.
- Don't forget tomorrow's convocation.

Overview:

- About files.
- Key file operations.
- File recursion.
- Lab.

Why Use Files?

- As I hope you've figured out by now, it is possible (although not necessarily easy) to use Scheme to do "anything" you can do on the computer.
- Two similar things that you often want to do are to save data to files and to recover data from files.
- Why?
 - So that data can last a long time.
 - So that you can deal with more data than you can easily enter by hand.
 - So that you can write a word processor.
 - ...
- As you might guess, you can do both activities with Scheme.

Ports

- Rather than dealing directly with files, Scheme adds a layer of abstraction called a *port*.
- Each port is associated with something that can be used for input or output.
 - That thing can be a file.
 - That thing can also be the keyboard (for input), the screen (for output), or a network connection.

- Why do we have ports?
 - So that the process of writing anywhere (or reading anywhere) is the same; our code doesn't need to change.
 - So that we can read from the same file more than once simultaneously and not get lost about where we are in the file.
- To create a port that corresponds to a file that you want to read from, use `(open-input-file file-name)`.
- To create a port that corresponds to a file that you want to write to, use `(open-output-file file-name)`.
- You can read from input ports with `(read port)`
- You can write to ports with
 - `(newline port)`
 - `(write value port)`
 - `(display value port)`
- When you're done with an input port, use `(close-input-port port)`
- When you're done with an output port, use `(close-output-port port)`
- What does `read` do when there's nothing left in the file? It returns a special value (which DrScheme displays as `#<eof>`).
- You can tell that that value indicates the end of the file with `eof-object?`

Processing Files Recursively

- Since files often contain an unpredictable amount of information, we typically process files recursively.
- You may recall that the pattern for recursion is

```
(define recursive-proc
  (lambda (val)
    (if (base-case-test)
        (base-case val)
        (combine (partof val)
                  (recursive-proc (simplify val))))))
```

- For files, the base-case-test is almost always

```
(eof-object? (peek-char input-port))
```

- The `simplify` is a bit more indirect. When we read a character or value from a file, we have gotten closer to the end of the file.
- Hence, the form is often

```
(define recursive-proc
  (lambda (input-port other-params)
    (if (eof-object? (peek-char input-port))
        (close-and-return input-port (base-case other-params))
        (combine (read input-port)
                  (recursive-proc input-port other-params)))))
(define close-and-return
  (lambda (input-port return-value)
    (close input-port)
    return-value))
```

- For writing to a file, the recursion looks a bit more typical. That is, it depends on what we're recursing over.

Lab

- Continue the lab on files.
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