

Class 29: Vectors

Held: Friday, 13 October 2006

Summary: Today we consider vectors, which serve as alternates to lists. Vectors differ from lists in three primary ways: vectors have fixed size, vectors are indexed, and vectors are mutable.

Related Pages:

- EBoard.
- Lab: Vectors.
- Reading: Vectors.

Due

- Project 1 Writeup.

Notes:

- No homework during break. No reading for Monday. No coding for Tuesday. Nothing.
- Be careful: Friday the 13th falls on a Friday today.

Overview:

- Problems with lists.
- A solution: Vectors.
- Lab.

List Deficiencies

- Now that we've worked with lists for a while, we've identified some things that make lists inappropriate for some situations.
 - Lists are *expensive* to use; to find the length of a list or to access an element late in the list, you need to cdr down the list.
 - Lists are *fixed*; you can't easily change an element of a list.
- At the same time, there are some advantages to lists:
 - Lists are *dynamic*; it is easy to grow and shrink a list.
 - Lists are *inherently recursive*; the type is defined recursively.
 - Lists are *simple*; you can build almost every list operation through just a few basic operations (car, cdr, null, and null?).

An Alternative: Vectors

- Vectors provide an alternative to lists.
- They have two primary advantages:
 - Vectors are *indexed*: You can quickly access elements by number.
 - Vectors are *mutable*: You can change the elements of a vector.
- In order to obtain these benefits, vectors lack some key features of lists. In particular,
 - Vectors are *static*: Once you've created a vector, you cannot change its length.
- Some key vector procedures:
 - `(vector val1 ... valn)`: Create a vector
 - `(make-vector length val)`: Make a vector of specified length, with duplicates of *val* as the contents.
 - `(vector-ref vector position)`: Extract a value from a vector.
 - `(vector-set! vector position newvalue)`: Change an element of a vector.

Lab

- Do the lab.

Copyright © 2006 Samuel A. Rebelsky. This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 2.5 License. To view a copy of this license, visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/2.5/> or send a letter to Creative Commons, 543 Howard Street, 5th Floor, San Francisco, California, 94105, USA.