

Class 32: Why LISP?

Held: Wednesday, 20 April 2011

Summary: Today we consider reasons that people love (and hate) Lisp.

Related Pages:

- EBoard.
- Reading: McCarthy, J. (1978). History of LISP. *ACM SIGPLAN Notices* 13(8), pp. 217-223. DOI=<http://doi.acm.org/10.1145/960118.808387>.

Notes:

- Reading for Friday: McCarthy, John. (1960). Recursive Functions of Symbolic Expressions and Their Computation by Machine, Part I. *Communications of the ACM* 3(4), pp. 184-195. DOI=<http://doi.acm.org/10.1145/367177.367199>.
- Due to prereg and College committee work, I need folks to sign up for appointments. Times at <http://www.cs.grinnell.edu/~rebelsky/Schedule/signup.2011S.txt>. Signup via email.
- EC for Ginsburg convo, Thursday.
- EC for open discussion with Jane Ginsburg, Thursday, 9:00-10:30 in Mears Cottage.
- EC for open discussion with Jane Ginsburg, Thursday, 2:30-4:00 in Mears Cottage.
- No CS Extras this week. (What do you think of the prospective title of “Bites and Bits”?)
- EC for Friday’s CS Table.

Overview:

- Why LISP?
- Why not LISP?
- Graham’s differences: Then and Now
- Other issues.

Why Lisp?

- Sam’s claim: People who program in LISP are wild fanatics
 - Well, at least wild fanatics about the language.
- What makes people fanatic about LISP (and Scheme)?
 - *Question to be answered by students and Sam in class.*

Why Not Lisp?

- Sam's other claim: People who don't program in LISP are often significantly dismissive of LISP.
- What are the weaknesses of LISP that might offset some of those strengths?
 - *Question to be answered by students and Sam in class.*

What Made Lisp Different?

- Graham claims that LISP was significantly different than other languages of the time.
 - *What do you see as important differences?*

What Makes LISP Different?

- Graham claims that LISP remains significantly different than most other languages (other than LISP variants).
 - *What do you see as important differences?*