

Class 33: The Design of LISP

Held: Friday, 22 April 2011

Summary: Today we consider McCarthy's groundbreaking 1960 paper, "Recursive Functions of Symbolic Expressions and Their Computation by Machine, Part I", particularly the S-expressions and the eval function.

Related Pages:

- EBoard.
- Reading: 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>.

Notes:

- Reading for Monday: Graham, Paul. (2002). The Roots of Lisp.
- I may be changing the topic for next Wednesday's class to macros.
- No more homework this semester! (Yes, I know I promised you "implement LISP", I think I'd rather not add to your workload.)
- Reminder: Projects start a week from today.
- Congratulations to the two new CS Phi Beta Kappans: Jordan Shkolnick and Charles Fratz.
- 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 today's CS Table.

Overview:

- Summary of the Paper.
- S-Expressions, S-Functions, and M-Expressions.
- Eval.
- Other Topics.

Summary

- What is McCarthy's thesis (does he have a thesis)?
- What seem to be the main contributions of this paper?

S-things and M-things

- What are S-expressions?
- What are M-expressions?
- What are S-functions?
- What does McCarthy say about their relationships?

The eval Function

- What is it supposed to do?
- How does it work?
- (We'll start to replicate it in Scheme.)

Other Topics

- How does the syntax seem to have changed?
- The eval procedure, as designed, is dynamically scoped rather than statically scoped.
 - What does that mean?
 - How can we well?
- How does the garbage collection system work?