

Immutability

Lecture 8

Vocabulary: Accessors & Mutators

- Accessor:
 - A method that reads, but never changes, the (abstract) state of an object
 - Concrete representation may change, so long as change is not visible to client
 - eg Lazy initialization
 - Examples: getter methods, toString
 - Formally: Alters clause does not include "this"
 - recall RESOLVE *functions*
- Mutator:
 - A method that may change the (abstract) state of an object
 - Examples: setter methods
 - Formally: Alters clause includes "this"
 - recall RESOLVE *procedures*
 - Constructors not considered mutators

An Epoch Interface

```
// Math model: (beginning, ending) in Time X Time
// Math def: length = ending - beginning
// Constraint: length > 0
// Initially: constructor (Date t1, Date t2)
// requires t1 isBefore t2
// ensures beginning = t1, ending = t2
public interface Epoch {

    // Returns: beginning
    public Date getStart();

    // Returns: ending
    public Date getEnd();

    // Requires: factor >= 0
    // Alters: this.ending
    // Ensures: length = (1 + #factor) * #length
    public void stretch(float factor);
}
```

Questions

- What is an invariant in general?
 - Ans:
- What is an invariant for Epoch?
 - Ans:
- Why is this an invariant?
 - Ans:

Relying on an Invariant

```
public class CreditCard {

    public BigDecimal interest (BigDecimal balance, Epoch e) {
        long msTime = e.getEnd().getTime();
        msTime = msTime - e.getStart().getTime();
        assert (msTime > 0); //always true

        ... //code to calculate interest on balance
    }

    public BigDecimal forgiveness (Epoch e) {
        Date oldDueDate = e.getEnd();
        e.stretch(0.5);
        assert (oldDueDate.compareTo(e.getEnd()) < 0);
        //oldDueDate < e.ending, always true
    }
}
```

A Fixed Epoch Interface

```
// Math model: (beginning, ending) in Time X Time
// Math def: length = ending - beginning
// Constraint: length > 0
// Initially: constructor (Date t1, Date t2)
// requires t1 isBefore t2
// ensures beginning = t1, ending = t2
public interface FixedEpoch {

    // Returns: beginning
    public Date getStart();

    // Returns: ending
    public Date getEnd();
}
```

A Broken Time Period Class

```
public class Period implements FixedEpoch {
    private Date start;
    private Date end;

    public Period(Date start, Date end) {
        assert (start.compareTo(end) < 0); //start < end

        this.start = start;
        this.end = end;
    }

    public Date getStart() {
        return start;
    }

    public Date getEnd() {
        return end;
    }
}
```

Problem: Aliasing

- ❑ Assignment in constructor creates an alias
 - Client and component both have references to the same Date object
- ❑ Class invariant can be undermined via alias

```
Date t1 = new Date(300);
Date t2 = new Date (500);
Period p = new Period (t1, t2);
t2.setTime(100); //modifies p's rep
```
- ❑ Solution: “defensive copying”
 - Constructor creates a copy of the arguments
 - Copy is used to initialize the private fields
 - Metaphor: ownership

A Better Period Class

```
public class Period implements FixedEpoch {
    private Date start;
    private Date end;

    public Period(Date start, Date end) {
        assert (start.compareTo(end) < 0); //start < end

        this.start = new Date(start.getTime());
        this.end = new Date(end.getTime());
    }

    public Date getStart() {
        return start;
    }

    public Date getEnd() {
        return end;
    }
}
```

Good Practice: Copy First

- ❑ When making a defensive copy of constructor arguments:
 - *First* copy the arguments
 - *Then* check the validity of the parameters
- ❑ Reason: multithreaded code
 - Consider a constructor that checks first, then copies
 - Another thread of execution could change the parameters after they pass the validity check, but before they are copied into the private fields

A Better+1 Period Class

```
public class Period implements FixedEpoch {
    private Date start;
    private Date end;

    public Period(Date start, Date end) {
        this.start = new Date(start.getTime());
        this.end = new Date(end.getTime());

        assert (this.start.compareTo(this.end) < 0);
    }

    public Date getStart() {
        return start;
    }

    public Date getEnd() {
        return end;
    }
}
```

Problem 2: Aliasing (Again)

- ❑ Return value in accessor creates an alias
 - Client can still obtain a reference to the class's internal representation (the private fields)
 - aka “privacy leak”, but really just an alias problem
- ❑ Class invariant can be undermined via alias

```
Date t1 = new Date(300);
Date t2 = new Date (500);
Period p = new Period (t1, t2);
p.getEnd().setTime(100); //modifies p's rep
```
- ❑ Solution: “defensive copying”
 - Accessors create a copy of internal fields
 - Copy is returned to the client

A Better +2 Period Class

```
public class Period implements FixedEpoch {
    private Date start;
    private Date end;

    public Period(Date start, Date end) {
        this.start = new Date(start.getTime());
        this.end = new Date(end.getTime());

        assert (this.start.compareTo(this.end) < 0);
    }

    public Date getStart() {
        return new Date(start.getTime());
    }

    public Date getEnd() {
        return new Date(end.getTime());
    }
}
```

Good Practice: Defensive Copies

- ❑ Always make defensive copies *when needed*
 - Problem: Aliases undermine the privacy of a field
 - Solution: Prevent aliases to fields
- ❑ Typical examples
 - Parameters in constructors and mutators
 - Return value from any method
- ❑ Note: There are *some* types of fields for which aliasing is never a concern!
 - Fields that are primitive (eg int, float)
 - Fields that are enumerations (eg Suit, Colors)
 - Fields that are... (next slide)

Immutability

- ❑ An immutable object is one whose (abstract) value can never change
 - Constructor allows initialization to different values
 - No mutator methods
- ❑ Why would we want such a thing?
- ❑ Because aliasing an immutable is safe!
 - Having multiple references to the same immutable is indistinguishable from having multiple references to different immutables that have the same value
 - Defensive copies of immutables are not required!

How to Write an Immutable Interf.

- ❑ Do not provide mutators
 - Check alters clause of all methods

How to Write an Immutable Class

- ❑ Implement an (immutable) interface
 - Result: no mutators
 - You do that anyway, right?
- ❑ Make all fields private
 - You do that anyway, right?
- ❑ Ensure exclusive access to any *mutable objects* referred to by fields
 - Rule: If the class has fields that refer to mutable objects
 1. Make defensive copies of parameters in constructors and methods
 2. Make defensive copies for return values from methods
 - Defensive copies not needed for fields that are primitive, enumerations, or refer to immutable objects

Examples

- ❑ Period
 - Has fields that refer to mutables (Date)
 - Needs defensive copies
- ❑ String
 - Lots of methods look like they could be mutators
 - ❑ eg toUpperCase(), substring(int,int), replace(char,char)
 - But these methods actually return a String

```
String str = new String("Hello there");
str.toUpperCase();
System.out.println(str); //surprise
```
- ❑ Wrapper classes
 - Integer, Long, Float, etc...

Good Practice: Immutable Idioms

- ❑ Declare all fields to be final
 - Guarantees immutability for primitives
 - Underkill: For reference types, final is no help
 - ❑ Still considered an idiom that signals *intent* to write an immutable class
 - Overkill: Only *abstract state* needs to be immutable
 - ❑ Concrete state (ie fields) can change so long as client-view of object is unchanged
- ❑ Declare class to be “final”
 - We will talk about what this qualifier means for classes later

A Better + 3 Period Class

```
public final class Period implements FixedEpoch {
    private final Date start;
    private final Date end;

    public Period(Date start, Date end) {
        this.start = new Date(start.getTime());
        this.end = new Date(end.getTime());

        assert (this.start.compareTo(this.end) < 0);
    }

    public Date getStart() {
        return new Date(start.getTime());
    }

    public Date getEnd() {
        return new Date(end.getTime());
    }
}
```

Wrapper Classes

- ❑ Every primitive type has a corresponding wrapper class
 - Integer, Long, Float, Double, ...
- ❑ The classes are immutable
 - So no aliasing worries
- ❑ Do not provide a zero-argument constructor
- ❑ Do provide useful static constants
 - Integer.MAX_VALUE, Integer.MIN_VALUE
- ❑ Do provide useful methods
 - Converting from *String* to *primitive*: parseInt()
 - ❑ int i = Integer.parseInt("33342");
 - Converting from *primitive* to *String*: toString()
 - ❑ String str = Double.toString(123.99);

Boxing and Unboxing

- ❑ Boxing: primitive --> wrapper
 - Integer integerObject = new Integer(42);
- ❑ Unboxing: wrapper --> primitive
 - int i = integerObject.intValue();
- ❑ Java does this *automatically* for you
 - Double price = 499.99; //auto-box
 - price = price + 19.90; //auto-unbox then box
 - But be very careful...
 - Integer i = new Integer(2);
 - Integer j = new Integer(2);
 - assert (i >= j); //success (unboxing)
 - assert (i <= j); //success (unboxing)
 - assert (i == j); //failure! (no unboxing)

Supplemental Reading

- ❑ Bloch's "Effective Java"
 - Item 15: Minimize mutability
 - Item 39: Make defensive copies when needed
- ❑ IBM developerWorks paper
 - "Java theory and practice: To mutate or not to mutate?"
 - <http://www.ibm.com/developerworks/java/library/j-jtp02183.html>

Summary

- ❑ Defensive copying
 - Copy constructor arguments (reference types)
 - Return only copies of fields (reference types)
- ❑ Immutable interfaces and classes
 - Each instance represents a distinct value
 - No mutators: no methods alter "this"
 - ❑ Methods can return a new instance
 - Defensive copying of mutable fields
- ❑ Examples of immutables
 - String
 - Wrapper classes (Integer, Long, Float...)
- ❑ Auto-boxing / auto-unboxing