Performance optimization vs satisficing (was Language Oriented Programming)

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- *From*: JXStern <JXSternChangeX2R@xxxxxxx>
- *Date*: Fri, 22 Jul 2005 15:31:57 GMT

On Thu, 21 Jul 2005 16:05:20 GMT, "H. S. Lahman"
<h.lahman@xxxxxxxxxxx> wrote:
>> I think I disagree with this somewhat, as I have my own, my very own,
>> theory (think the old Monty Python routine) that computation is more a
>> unipolar constructive enterprise than a mapping, but that's another
>> rant. The use of the term "optimization" sort of jumped out at me
>> here, aren't we satisficed if it at least works, isn't optimization
>> sort of a secondary issue?
>
>It depends on the subject matter. I spent two decades in R−T/E working
>on megabuck machines where the hardware was an order of magnitude faster
>than the computer feeding it and the customer wants throughput for that
>investment. I spent another decade solving np−Complete problems on
>machines that were too small. So from my perspective performance is
>often as important as correctness in practice.

Well, I hear you, but even so.

><hot button>
>Years ago Djikstra wrote a piece for one of the professional rags
>bewailing code bloat and downgrading performance. (Anyone remember when
>one could run a spreadsheet on an Apple II, whose cycle rate was
>measured in KHz, with 128 Kb of memory and a 700 Kb floppy disk?) At
>the time I thought he was, once again, ahead of his time. Moore's Law
>has lulled a lot of the industry into believing that performance
>problems can be solved by waiting for next month's bigger and better
>machine.

Microsoft has been a leading offender here. The year I graduated
college, IBM mainframe (core, 2 microsecond) memory was a nice, round
one million dollars (that's about $4m in current dollars) per
megabyte, for a 2 MIP 370/168 that might support a hundred TSO and CMS
users on 2741 Selectric and 327x green (or color!) channel−connected
CRTs that cost about 2x what PCs cost. Girl friend employed there was
assigned to enhance IMS performance running in an average sized 256KB
(kilobyte) partition. Ah yes, those were the days!

>IT has been particularly affected because disk access time has not

>dropped as quickly as CPU cycles/sec have grown so the traditional I/O
>bottleneck has just gotten worse and softw