

Re: Programmer's unpaid overtime.

Source: <http://coding.derkeiler.com/Archive/General/comp.programming/2003-12/0760.html>

From: Programmer Dude (*Chris_at_Sonnack.com*)

Date: 12/09/03

Date: Tue, 09 Dec 2003 14:09:54 -0600

Calum wrote:

I'm answering as I read, so someone may have already addressed this...

> *I have not been following this thread very carefully. Is the task*
> *to search a document for a word? You do it by indexing the*
> *document, he does it by a simple search?*

Not exactly. Last year+, Ed dropped by to tout the advantages of a language like VB over C. Discussion led to, "Well, prove your point. Let's see some code."

To demonstrate the imagined superiority of VB over C, Ed used an existing VB function—just a string tokenizer—he had and made an ill-advised attempt to render it in C to illustrate just why C is so bad.

Unfortunately, Ed's C ability turned out to be more rust than metal, and his code was universally reviled. When he presented his VB code, that, too, was not received with the adoration Ed expected.

In fact, his C program contained crashable errors of coding (an error I believe to be mainly a typo, since he did it correctly in another spot, but his writing style was—IMO—so opaque that it was hard to spot the error) AS WELL AS serious errors in the design and how it handled data.

His VB program worked better (VB is harder to crash!), but also turned out to have errors of design such that it does not handle tokenizing a string correctly. I'll ask you the question I've asked Ed repeatedly (with no acknowledgement):

How many comma-delimited tokens *should* be in:

"Well,, This, Is, Fun,"

Ed's VB "PowerString" class would say five. (I say six.)

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(Actually, the answer depends on delimiter compression...if you are compressing delimiters, the answers are four and five.)

Anyway, I re-wrote Ed's C code—for which he never forgave me—spotted the errors and presented two corrected versions. Also several C versions using different designs. I also whipped up a couple VB examples, and my VB examples blew the doors off his VB class (yet had the exact same functionality).

So, basic task was just a string tokenizer. One COULD pass an entire document for tokenizing. Distinguishing features were: ability to specify a set of delimiter tokens, ability to specify delimiter compression or not, and not parsing the string until a token in the unparsed part was requested.

>> *I have an essentially verbal, and some may say verbose, understanding of the problem. [...]*
>>
>> *This is because without knowing it, they are engaged in a postmodern attack on language itself, far more serious than the attack neoconservatives think is being made.*
>
> *They are probably objecting to excessive verbiage (aka waffle).*
> *Why use a hundred words when ten will do?*

Speaking only for myself, my only perception of Ed's verbosity is that he uses it as a smoke screen to disguise his lack of real understanding. You know the old saying, "If you can't dazzle'm with brilliance, baffle'm with BS." Ed's a baffler.

This has been demonstrated over and over. Just check out his little performance with regard to NP-complete.

What he's never caught on to is that people *here* aren't fooled by that sort of song-n-dance. When you really *do* understand something, it's very obvious to you when someone else doesn't.

> *You object to jargon? This is one of the main objections "artists" have of "scientists". They claim that scientists deliberately obfuscate their work in order to perpetuate their "superiority".*

An the scientists, in turn, think a lot of that artistic talk about motion and mood is just as exclusive.

ALL groups have a language of "shorthand" lexical icons they use to make communication efficient and accurate.

But it is exclusionary *ONLY* to the extent a newbie is unwilling to learn it. IME, most groups welcome newbies with a genuine interest in joining.

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- > *Artists feel left out simply because they do not have the*
- > *background to fully appreciate an exchange between scientists,*
- > *and are doubly frustrated since scientists can usually follow*
- > *the gist of what artists are talking about.*

Only because the artists are linked more heavily to everyday human experience, I think. Compare that to archeologists and other "everyday" scientists, and I think you'll find a match.

When you really start getting into leading edge art or science, I think you'll find both groups have a language and concept set all their own. And needfully so!

- >> *Chris Sonnack presented some interesting numbers. But I have no*
- >> *way of auditing those numbers. He may have made some stupid error.*
- >
- > *But surely you could ask him for the source code instead of*
- > *attacking him?*

And, indeed, such were provided when those numbers were first posted. They can easily be provided again.

- >> *"My code is simple: you code is [way too] complex" is narcissism*
- >> *pure and simple.*
- >
- > *Striving for simplicity is not narcism. An overly complicated*
- > *solution is probably slower and contains more bugs, and takes*
- > *longer to write and maintain. Programmers should strive for*
- > *simplicity.*

Indeed!! Isn't simplicity a primary criterion of the Engineering ineffable "Elegance"?

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