Higher-Order Functions

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With thanks to Koen Lindström Claessen

What is a "Higher Order" Function?

A function which takes another function as a parameter.

```
even :: Int -> Bool
even n = n`mod` 2 == 0
```

Examples

map even [1, 2, 3, 4, 5] = [False, True, False, True, False]

filter even [1, 2, 3, 4, 5] = [2, 4]

What is the Type of filter?

filter even [1, 2, 3, 4, 5] = [2, 4]

even :: Int -> Bool

filter :: (Int -> Bool) -> [Int] -> [Int]

A function type can be the type of an argument.

filter :: (a -> Bool) -> [a] -> [a]

Quiz: What is the Type of map?

Example

map even [1, 2, 3, 4, 5] = [False, True, False, True, False]

map also has a polymorphic type -- can you write it down?

Quiz: What is the Type of map?

Example

map even [1, 2, 3, 4, 5] = [False, True, False, True, False]

map :: (a -> b) -> [a] -> [b]

List of results

Any function of one argument

Any list of arguments

Quiz: What is the Definition of map?

Example

map even [1, 2, 3, 4, 5] = [False, True, False, True, False]

map :: (a -> b) -> [a] -> [b]

map = ?

Quiz: What is the Definition of map?

Example

map even [1, 2, 3, 4, 5] = [False, True, False, True, False]

```
map :: (a -> b) -> [a] -> [b]
map f []     = []
map f (x:xs) = f x : map f xs
```

Is this "Just Another Feature"?

NO!!!

- Higher-order functions are the "heart
functional programming!
- A higher-order function can do *much*
order" one, because a part of its behavi
by the caller.
- We can replace *many similar* functions by *one* higher-order function, parameterised on the differences.

Avoid
copy-and-paste
programming

Case Study: Summing a List

```
sum []      = 0
sum (x:xs) = x + sum xs
```

General Idea

Combine the elements of a list using an operator.

Specific to Summing

The operator is +, the base case returns 0.

Case Study: Summing a List

```
sum []     = 0
sum (x:xs) = x + sum xs
```

Replace 0 and + by parameters -- + by a *function*.

```
foldr op z []     = z
foldr op z (x:xs) = x `op` foldr op z xs
```

Case Study: Summing a List

New Definition of sum

```
sum xs = foldr plus 0 xs
   where plus x y = x+y
```

or just…

```
sum xs = foldr (+) 0 xs
```

Just as \`fun\` lets a function be used as an operator,

so (op) lets an operator be used as a function.

Applications

Combining the elements of a list is a *common* operation.

Now, instead of writing a recursive function, we can just use foldr!

```
product xs      = foldr (*) 1 xs
and xs          = foldr (&&) True xs
concat xs       = foldr (++) [] xs
maximum (x:xs)  = foldr max x xs
```

An Intuition About foldr

```
foldr op z []       = z
foldr op z (x:xs) = x `op` foldr op z xs
```

Example

```
foldr op z (a:(b:(c:[]))) = a `op` foldr op z (b:(c:[]))
                          = a `op` (b `op` foldr op z (c:[]))
                          = a `op` (b `op` (c `op` foldr op z []))
                          = a `op` (b `op` (c `op` z))
```

The operator “:” is replaced by `op`, [] is replaced by z.

Quiz

What is

```
foldr (:) [] xs
```

Quiz

What is

foldr (:) [] xs

Replaces ":" by ":", and [] by [] -- *no change*!

The result is equal to xs.

Quiz

What is

```
foldr (:) ys xs
```

Quiz

What is

foldr (:) ys xs

foldr (:) ys (a:(b:(c:[])))

= a:(b:(c:ys))

The result is xs++ys!

xs++ys = foldr (:) ys xs

Quiz

What is

foldr snoc [] xs

where snoc y ys = ys++[y]

Quiz

What is

```
foldr snoc [] xs
  where snoc y ys = ys++[y]
```

```
foldr snoc [] (a:(b:(c:[])))
    = a `snoc` (b `snoc` (c `snoc` []))
    = (([] ++ [c]) ++ [b] ++ [a]
```

The result is reverse xs!

```
reverse xs = foldr snoc [] xs
  where snoc y ys = ys++[y]
```

λ-expressions

```
reverse xs = foldr snoc [] xs
   where snoc y ys = ys++[y]
```

It’s a nuisance to need to define snoc, which we only use once! A λ-expression lets us define it where it is used.

```
reverse xs = foldr (λy ys -> ys++[y]) [] xs
```

On the keyboard:

```
reverse xs = foldr (\y ys -> ys++[y]) [] xs
```

Defining unlines

unlines [“abc”, “def”, “ghi”] = “abc\ndef\nghi\n”

unlines [xs,ys,zs] = xs ++ “\n” ++ (ys ++ “\n” ++ (zs ++ “\n” ++ []))

unlines xss = foldr (λxs ys -> xs++“\n”++ys) [] xss

Just the same as

unlines xss = foldr join [] xss

where join xs ys = xs ++ “\n” ++ ys

Another Useful Pattern

Example: takeLine “abc\ndef” = “abc”

used to define lines.

```
takeLine []                      = []
takeLine (x:xs) | x/=´\n´     = x:takeLine xs
                | otherwise = []
```

General Idea

Take elements from a list while a condition is satisfied.

Specific to takeLine

The condition is that the element is not ´\n´.

Generalising takeLine

```
takeLine []                        = []
takeLine (x:xs) | x/=´\n´          = x : takeLine xs
                | otherwise        = []
```

```
takeWhile p []                     = []
takeWhile p (x:xs) | p x           = x : takeWhile p xs
                   | otherwise     = []
```

New Definition

takeLine xs = takeWhile (λx -> x/=´\n´) xs

or takeLine xs = takeWhile (/=´\n´) xs

Notation: Sections

As a shorthand, an operator with *one* argument stands for a function of the other…

- map (+1) [1,2,3] = [2,3,4]
- filter (<0) [1,-2,3] = [-2]
- takeWhile (0<) [1,-2,3] = [1]

(a+) b = a+b
(+a) b = b+a

Note that expressions like (*2+1) are not allowed.

Write \x -> x*2+1 instead.

Defining lines

We use

- takeWhile p xs -- returns the longest *prefix* of xs whose elements satisfy p.
- dropWhile p xs -- returns the rest of the list.

```
lines []  = []
lines xs = takeWhile (/=´\n´) xs :
                    lines (drop 1 (dropWhile (/=´\n´) xs))
```

General idea	Break a list into segments whose elements share some property.
Specific to lines	The property is: are not newlines.

Quiz: Properties of takeWhile and dropWhile

takeWhile, dropWhile :: (a -> Bool) -> [a] -> [a]

Can you think of a property that connects takeWhile and dropWhile?

Hint: Think of a property that connects take and drop

Use **import** Text.Show.Functions

```
prop_TakeWhile_DropWhile p xs =
  takeWhile p xs ++ dropWhile p xs == (xs :: [Int])
```

Generalising lines

```
segments p [] = []
segments p xs = takeWhile p xs :
                    segments p (drop 1 (dropWhile p xs))
```

Example

segments (>=0) [1,2,3,-1,4,-2,-3,5]

= [[1,2,3], [4], [], [5]]

segments is not a standard function.

lines xs = segments (/=´\n´) xs

Quiz: Comma-Separated Lists

Many Windows programs store data in files as “comma separated lists”, for example

1,2,hello,4

Define commaSep :: String -> [String]

so that commaSep “1,2,hello,4” = [“1”, “2”, “hello”, “4”]

Quiz: Comma-Separated Lists

Many Windows programs store data in files as "comma separated lists", for example

1,2,hello,4

Define commaSep :: String -> [String]

so that commaSep "1,2,hello,4" = ["1", "2", "hello", "4"]

commaSep xs = segments (/=′,′) xs

Defining words

We can *almost* define words using segments -- but

segments (not . isSpace) “a b” = [“a”, “”, “b”]

Function composition
(f . g) x = f (g x)

which is not what we want -- there should be no empty words.

words xs = filter (/=“”) (segments (not . isSpace) xs)

Partial Applications

Haskell has a trick which lets us write down many functions easily. Consider this valid definition:

sum = foldr (+) 0

Foldr was defined with 3 arguments. It's being called with 2.
What's going on?

Partial Applications

sum = foldr (+) 0

Evaluate sum [1,2,3]

= {replacing sum by its definition}

foldr (+) 0 [1,2,3]

= {by the behaviour of foldr}

1 + (2 + (3 + 0))

= 6

Now foldr has the *right* number of arguments!

Partial Applications

Any function may be called with fewer arguments than it was defined with.

The result is a *function* of the remaining arguments.

If f ::Int -> Bool -> Int -> Bool

then f 3 :: Bool -> Int -> Bool

f 3 True :: Int -> Bool

f 3 True 4 :: Bool

Bracketing Function Calls and Types

We say function application "brackets to the left"

function types "bracket to the right"

If f ::Int -> (Bool -> (Int -> Bool))

then f 3 :: Bool -> (Int -> Bool)

(f 3) True :: Int -> Bool

((f 3) True) 4 :: Bool

Functions really take only *one* argument, and return a function expecting more as a result.

Designing with Higher-Order Functions

- Break the problem down into a series of small steps, each of which can be programmed using an existing higher-order function.
- Gradually “massage” the input closer to the desired output.
- Compose together all the massaging functions to get the result.

Example: Counting Words

Input

A string representing a text containing many words. For example

“hello clouds hello sky”

Output

A string listing the words in order, along with how many times each word occurred.

“clouds: 1\nhello: 2\nsky: 1”

clouds: 1
hello: 2
sky: 1

Step 1: Breaking Input into Words

“hello clouds\nhello sky”

words

[“hello”, “clouds”, “hello”, “sky”]

Step 2: Sorting the Words

[“hello”, “clouds”, “hello”, “sky”]

sort

[“clouds”, “hello”, “hello”, “sky”]

Digression: The groupBy Function

groupBy :: (a -> a -> Bool) -> [a] -> [[a]]

groupBy p xs -- breaks xs into segments [x1,x2…], such that p x1 xi is True for each xi in the segment.

groupBy (<) [3,2,4,1,5] = [[3], [2,4], [1,5]]

groupBy (==) “hello” = [“h”, “e”, “ll”, “o”]

Step 3: Grouping Equal Words

[“clouds”, “hello”, “hello”, “sky”]

groupBy (==)

[[“clouds”], [“hello”, “hello”], [“sky”]]

Step 4: Counting Each Group

[[“clouds”], [“hello”, “hello”], [“sky”]]

map (\ws -> (head ws, length ws))

[(“clouds”,1), (“hello”, 2), (“sky”,1)]

Step 5: Formatting Each Group

[("clouds",1), ("hello", 2), ("sky",1)]

map (\(w,n) -> w++":" ++show n)

["clouds: 1", "hello: 2", "sky: 1"]

Step 6: Combining the Lines

[“clouds: 1”, “hello: 2”, “sky: 1”]

unlines

“clouds: 1\nhello: 2\nsky: 1\n”

clouds: 1
hello: 2
sky: 1

The Complete Definition

```
countWords :: String -> String
countWords = unlines
              . map (\(w,n) -> w++":"++show n)
              . map (\ws -> (head ws, length ws))
              . groupBy (==)
              . sort
              . words
```

very common
coding pattern

Quiz: A property of Map

```
map :: (a -> b) -> [a] -> [b]
```

Can you think of a property that merges two consecutive uses of map?

```
map f (map g xs)  ==  ??
```

```
prop_MapMap :: (Int -> Int) -> (Int -> Int) -> [Int] -> Bool
prop_MapMap f g xs =
  map f (map g xs) == map (f . g) xs
```

The Optimized Definition

```
countWords :: String -> String
countWords = unlines
           . map (\ws -> head ws ++ ":" ++ show (length ws))
           . groupBy (==)
           . sort
           . words
```

List Comprehensions

- List comprehensions are a different notation for **map** and **filter**
- [x * 2 | x <- xs]
  - map (*2) xs
- [x | x <- xs, x >= 3]
  - filter (>= 3) xs
- [x `div` 2 | x <- xs, even x]
  - map (`div` 2) (filter even xs)

List Comprehensions (2)

- More complicated list comprehensions also involve **concat**
- Example: [x + y | x <- xs, y <- ys]
  - Quiz: How to define using map and concat?

```
concat (map (\x -> map (x+) ys) xs)
```

concatMap

- concat (map f xs) is a very common expression
  - concatMap :: (a -> [b]) -> [a] -> [b]
- Quiz: How to define filter with concatMap?

filter p = concatMap (\x -> **if** p x **then** [x] **else** [])

Where Do Higher-Order Functions Come From?

- We observe that a similar pattern recurs several times, and define a function to avoid repeating it.

- Higher-order functions let us abstract patterns that are *not exactly the same*, e.g. Use + in one place and * in another.

- **Basic idea**: name common code patterns, so we can use them without repeating them.

Must I Learn All the Standard Functions?

Yes and No…

•**No**, because they are just defined in Haskell. You can reinvent any you find you need.

•**Yes**, because they capture very frequent patterns; learning them lets you solve many problems with great ease.

”Stand on the shoulders of giants!”

Lessons

Avoid
copy-and-paste
programming!

- Higher-order functions take functions as parameters, making them *flexible* and useful in very many situations.
- By writing higher-order functions to capture common patterns, we can reduce the work of programming dramatically.
- λ-expressions, partial applications, and sections help us create functions to pass as parameters, without a separate definition.
- Haskell provides many useful higher-order functions; break problems into small parts, each of which can be solved by an existing function.

Reading

Chapter 6 in Learn You a Haskell