The Operating-System Design Dilemma

Clearly, the operating system design must be strongly influenced by the type of use for which the machine is intended. Unfortunately it is often the case with 'general purpose machines' that the type of use cannot easily be identified; a common criticism of many systems is that, in attempting to be all things to all individuals, they end up being totally satisfactory to no-one. [2]

Introduction

Trivial Pursuit in Computer Science

Q: "What is an elephant?"
A: "A mouse with an operating system."

General Purpose System

- being prepared on all eventualities — „Eier legende Wollmilchsau"
  - e.g., enforcing \{ scheduling, protection, security \} in a single- \{ process, program, user \} environment
- optimized towards the most probable and common "standard" use case
  - at the cost of all the cases that deviate from the artificially defined norm
- no (system) function is free of charge — not even a "sleeping beauty"
General Purpose System \(\iff\) General Purpose Function

... **System** provides general services for a broad range of applications

- shows up with a rich set of system functions
  - trying to cover all of the demands stated by the various user programs
- aims at providing users with the best possible compromise
  - there can’t be only one optimal solution to a number of various problems
- follows some sort of black-box model by its (mostly) fixed system interface

... **Function** same as above, but services become attributes of a single function

**General Purpose Function** — `printf(3)`

```
wosch@hawaii 37> uname -sr
Linux hawaii.cs.uni-magdeburg.de 2.2.14 i686
wosch@hawaii 38> echo 'main(){printf("Hello world!\n");}' > hello.c
wosch@hawaii 39> gcc -o hello hello.c; gcc -static -o hello.o
wosch@hawaii 40> hello
Hello world!
wosch@hawaii 41> ls -l hello*
-rwxr-xr-x 1 wosch iws 932099 Dec 1 11:08 hello*
-rw-r--r-- 1 wosch iws 33 Dec 1 11:06 hello.c
-rw-r--r-- 1 wosch iws 908 Dec 1 11:07 hello.o
wosch@hawaii 42> size hello hello.o
text data bss dec hex filename
19566 5064 3340 203966 31cbe hello
29 0 0 29 1d hello.o
```
"General Purpose" Considered Harmful?

- it depends—the interface alone is not always the cause of all evil
  - much more crucial tends to be the function's internal software structure
    - degree of modularization, modul interdependencies, uses relation, . . .
  - black-boxing aims at hiding exactly these internals from the user
    - much in the same way as an abstract data type (ADT) [1]
    - the desired features may be present internally, but they remain hidden
- one might expect puts(3) to be the "streamlined" printf(3) alternative

Where the Shoe Pinches

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Special Purpose Function — puts(3)

```
# Woschhawaii 37> u name -smr
Linux hawaii.cs.uni-magdeburg.de 2.2.14 i686
# Woschhawaii 38> echo 'main(){puts("Hello world!");}' > hello.c
# Woschhawaii 39> gcc -O -c hello.c; gcc -static -o hello hello.o
# Woschhawaii 40> hello
Hello world!
```

```
# Woschhawaii 41> ls -l hello*
-rwxr-xr-x 1 wosch iws 933715 Mar 7 16:16 hello*
-rwxr-xr-x 1 wosch iws 30 Mar 7 16:16 hello.c
-rwxr-xr-x 1 wosch iws 908 Mar 7 16:16 hello.o
```

```
# Woschhawaii 42> size hello hello.o
  text  data   bss  dec  hex filename
195789 5076 3360 204195 31da3 hello
  28   0   0   28   1c hello.o
```

System Architecture

- printf(3) supports formatted I/O in many respects:
  1. assortment of plain data types and sizes
    - int, unsigned, float, char, char*, short, long, double
  2. various kinds of numbering schemes
    - dual, octal, decimal, hexa-decimal
  3. different formats
    - left/right aligned, user-defined field widths
- not every application exploits all these features
  - "Hello World!": a left-aligned character string (char*)
- but nonetheless, every application is charged with all these features —
Where the Shoe Pinches (contd.)

Object Modules

• a single reference to printf(3) entails a number of follow-up references
  – to functions called unconditionally
    + e.g., output of the assembled character buffer using write(2)
  – to functions called conditionally
    + e.g., output of character '-' when displaying a negative int
    + e.g., output of an unsigned after having parsed format '%u'
    + e.g., the option for an int although '%' gets never parsed
  – similar holds for variables, constants, and other addressable units

• “monolithic source modules” of that kind result in overloaded object modules

foo.cc — example of a source-module structure similar to printf(3)

```c
#define LINE_SIZE 64

char line[LINE_SIZE];
int slot;

void write () {
  for (int i = 0; i < LINE_SIZE; i++)
    line[i] = '\0';
  slot = 0;
}

void flushline () {
  write(line, line, slot);
}

void writeln (char c) {
  line[slot++] = c;
}

void putcharacter (char c) {
  if (slot == LINE_SIZE) {
    flushline();
    resetline();
  }
  writeln(c);
}

void putstring (char* line) {
  char c;
  while (*line != '+') putcharacter(c);
}

void putunsigned (unsigned value) {
  if (value / 10) putunsigned(value / 10);
  putcharacter('0' + (value % 10));
}

void putint (int value) {
  if (value < 0) {
    putcharacter('-');
    value = -value;
  }
  putunsigned(value);
}
```

Where the Shoe Pinches (contd.)

foo.{cc,o}

```sh
vorsch@hawiki 42$ g++ -W -fno-rtti -fno-exceptions -fno-inline -c foo.cc
vorsch@hawiki 42$ nm -r foo.o
      U
      0000000 t gcc_compile.
      0000000 B line
      0000000 T resetline_Fv
      0000004 T flushline_Fv
      000000c T writeln_Fv
      0000040 B slot
      0000048 T putcharacter_Fv
      0000080 T putstring_Fv
      00000a0 T putunsigned_Fv
      00000ec T putnumber_F1
vorsch@hawiki 42$ size foo.o
  text  data  bss  dec  hex filename
  270     0     0  0x1b8  0x172 foo.o
```

Binder

• the usual case is to consider an entire object module as binding unit
  – not the actually referenced functions/objects of that particular module
  – the consequence is a larger memory footprint → p. 14

• static binding can benefit from the output generated by a compiler
  – many compilers leave a .size assembler pseudo-instruction → p. 16
  – many assemblers and/or linkers don’t make capital out of this

• dynamic binding seems to be the solution to these problems, if any
  – but at which other costs? — even this (nice) feature is not for free!
Where the Shoe Pinches (contd.)

- the output of gcc ... -S foo.cc?
  - .size leaves the actual object size
  - ... to be kept in the symbol table
  - ... to be used by the linker
  - ... to extract putstring()

- not every compiler does like this
  - not every assembler notices .size
  - not every linker binds selectively

- tools that do not work always properly

Compiler

- a compile-time option such as "-fdismember" would be nice to have
  - to cut a single (monolithic) source module into pieces of compilation units
  - each of which being the source-code representation of a binding unit
  - to create object modules which, likewise, export a single reference only
  - thus to outwit the binder and link only the truly referenced parts
  - to archive (possibly many) "slim" object modules in a library

- an extensive local data and control flow analysis alone is not enough
  - functions unreachable inside a source module may be reachable from outside

- a global analysis is not always feasible — and wouldn't solve our problem

Where the Shoe Pinches (contd.)

- a problem lies in the overloaded and monolithic interface of printf(3)
  - an actual parameter decides upon which of the many operations to perform
  - a format-string interpreter fetches instructions and reads their operands
  - references to functions implementing the instructions are hard encoded

- moreover, printf(3) is not a programming-language but a library concept
  - thus, static format-string analysis becomes not the compiler's task
  - consequently, unused functions cannot be eliminated at compile-time

- an integrated programming system looks nice — but is not everybody's darling

Where the Shoe Pinches (contd.)

- ostrem provides specialized operations
  - by overloading operator "<<"

Programming Language

- users see a function set to choose from
  - "ostrem& operator << (const char *s)" and "endl" is all one needs
  - other operators are not used, not referenced and, hence, need not be linked
  - the question is whether or not ostrem makes up a single compilation unit

- at a first glance object-orientation or C++ is really the right way to go

#include <iostream.h>

void main () {
  cout << "Hello world!" << endl;
}
An Omnipresent Problem

- the printf(3) and iostream.h examples are no exceptions
  - existing software-development tools leave much to be desired
  - nonetheless is “user-friendly” software exceedingly required

- a highly modular and application-oriented software structure is needed
  - beginning at the “drawing-board” where the software design takes place
  - ending on the spot where the software implementation is been carried out

- certain software-engineering principles must be applied (more) consequently

That's the State of the Art

- operating systems provide nice features for optimized storage management
  - virtual memory enables the execution of incomplete programs, i.e., the programs must not necessarily be entirely present in main memory to be executed. A program's memory footprint varies with the size of the process's working set (of pages).

  - shared libraries work similar. In addition, their use leads to a significant reduction of the disk-memory space occupied by the executable programs.

- but these are only good for higher-level (system) software abstractions
  - what's about the virtual-memory or shared-library system itself?
  - what's about device driver, process management, scheduling etc.?

- lower-level (system) software cannot always make a profit from it!

An Operating-System Problem?

- no...
  - it’s a general problem concerning all kinds of software :-(

- . . . but operating systems are highly sensitive to software deficiencies
  - they generally are of functionally high complexity
  - they come up with a durability that lies in the order of decades
  - they are often expected to show a broad applicability

- operating systems are key technology — in the past, present, and future
**Preventive Measures**

- the design and development of an operating system as a program family
  - establishment of a many-layered functional hierarchy
  - creation of a manufacture of "standardized" (reusable) units
  - construction of a rich set of small and simple modules

- a careful use of object orientation in the implementation process
  - composition of abstract data types by means of classes
  - use of inheritance to promote the functional enrichment of the system
  - thriftiness in the employment of late-binding

- understand application programs as final operating-system specializations

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**Bibliography**


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**Application-Oriented Operating Systems**

Some users may require only a subset of services or features that other users need. These *less demanding* users may demand that they are not be forced to pay for the resources consumed by the unneeded features. [3]