3. Introduction to Spec

This handout explains what the Spec language is for, how to use it effectively, and how it differs from a programming language like C, Pascal, Clu, Java, or Scheme. Spec is very different from these languages, but it is also much simpler. Its meaning is clearer and Spec programs are more succinct and less burdened with trivial details. The handout also introduces the main constructs that are likely to be unfamiliar to a programmer. You will probably find it worthwhile to read it over more than once, until those constructs are familiar.

Spec is a language for writing precise descriptions of digital systems, both sequential and concurrent. In Spec you can write something that differs from a practical implementation (for instance, one written in C) only in minor details of syntax. This sort of thing is usually called a program. Or you can write a very high level description of the behavior of a system, usually called a specification. A good specification is almost always quite different from a good program. You can use Spec to write either one, but not the same style of Spec. The flexibility of the language means that you need to know the purpose of your Spec in order to write it well.

Most people know a lot more about writing programs than about writing specs, so this introduction emphasizes how Spec differs from a programming language and how to use it to write good specs. It does not attempt to be either complete or precise, but other handouts fill these needs. The *Spec Reference Manual* (handout 4) describes the language completely; it gives the syntax of Spec precisely and the semantics informally. *Atomic Semantics of Spec* (handout 9) describes precisely the meaning of an atomic command; here ‘precisely’ means that you should be able to get an unambiguous answer to any question. The section “Non-Atomic Semantics of Spec” in handout 17 on formal concurrency describes the meaning of a non-atomic command.

Spec’s notation for commands, that is, for changing the state, is derived from Edsger Dijkstra guarded commands (E. Dijkstra, *A Discipline of Programming*, Prentice-Hall, 1976) as extended by Greg Nelson (G. Nelson, A generalization of Dijkstra’s calculus, *ACM TOPLAS* **11**, 4, Oct. 1989, pp 517-561). The notation for expressions is derived from mathematics.

This handout starts with a discussion of specifications and how to write them, with many small examples of Spec. Then there is an outline of the Spec language, followed by three extended examples of specs and implementations. At the end are two handy tear-out one-page summaries, one of the language and one of the official POCS strategy for writing specs and implementations.

What is a specification for?

The purpose of a specification is to communicate precisely all the essential facts about the behavior of a system. The important words in this sentence are:

communicate	The spec should tell both the client and the implementer what each needs to know.
precisely	We should be able to prove theorems or compile machine instructions based on the spec.
essential	Unnecessary requirements in the spec may confuse the client or make it more expensive to implement the system.
behavior	We need to know exactly what we mean by the behavior of the system.

Communication

Spec mediates communication between the client of the system and its implementer. One way to view the specification is as a contract between these parties:

> The client agrees to depend only on the system behavior expressed in the spec; in return it can count on the implementation to provide a system that actually does behave as the spec says it should.
>
> The implementer agrees to provide a system that behaves according to the spec; in return it is free to arrange the internals of the system however it likes, and it does not have to deliver anything not laid down in the spec.

Usually the implementer of a spec is a programmer, and the client is another programmer. Usually the implementer of a program is a compiler or a computer, and the client is a programmer.

Behavior

What do we mean by behavior? In real life a spec defines not only the functional behavior of the system, but also its performance, cost, reliability, availability, size, weight, etc. In this course we will deal with these matters informally if at all. The Spec language doesn’t help much with them.

Spec is concerned only with the possible state transitions of the system, on the theory that the possible state transitions tell the complete story of the functional behavior of a digital system. So we make the following definitions:

> A *state* is the values of a set of names (for instance, `x=3, color=red`).
>
> A *history* is a sequence of states such that each pair of adjacent states is a transition of the system (for instance, `x=1; x=2; x=5` is the history if the initial state is `x=1` and the transitions are “if `x = 1` then `x := x + 1`” and “if `x = 2` then `x := 2 * x + 1`”).
>
> A *behavior* is a set of histories (a non-deterministic system can have more than one history).

How can we specify a behavior?

One way to do this is to just write down all the histories in the behavior. For example, if the state just consists of a single integer, we might write

```
 1  1  1  1  1  1  1  1  1  1  1  1  1  1  1  1  1  1
 1  2  1  1  1  1  1  1  1  1  1  1  1  1  1  1  1  1
...
 1  2  1  2  1  2  1  2  1  2  1  2  1  2  1  2  1  2
....
 1  2  3  4  5  1  2  3  1  2  3  4  5  6  7  8  9 10
```

The example reveals two problems with this approach:

- The sequences are long, and there are a lot of them, so it takes a lot of space to write them down. In fact, in most cases of interest the sequences are infinite, so we can't actually write them down.
- It isn't too clear from looking at such a set of sequences what is really going on.

Another description of this set of sequences from which these examples are drawn is "18 integers, each one either `1` or one more than the preceding one." This is concise and understandable, but it is not formal enough either for mathematical reasoning or for directions to a computer.

Precise

In Spec the set of sequences can be described in many ways, for example, by the expression

```
{s: SEQ Int |    s.size = 18
            /\ (ALL i: Int | 0 <= i /\ i < s.size ==>
                             s(i) = 1 \/ (i > 0 /\ s(i) = s(i-1) + 1)) }
```

Here the expression in `{...}` is very close to the usual mathematical notation for defining a set. Read it as "The set of all `s` which are sequences of integers such that `s.size = 18` and ...". Spec sequences are indexed from `0`. The `(ALL ...)` is a universally quantified predicate, and `==>` stands for implication, since Spec uses the more familiar `=>` for 'then' in a guarded command. Throughout Spec the '`|`' symbol separates a declaration of some new names and their types from the scope in which they are meaningful.

Alternatively, here is a state machine that generates the sequences we want as the successive values of the variable `i`. We specify the transitions of the machine by starting with primitive *assignment commands* and putting them together with a few kinds of compound commands. Each command specifies a set of possible transitions.

```
VAR i, j |
    << i := 1; j := 1 >> ;
    DO << j < 18 => BEGIN i := 1 [] i := i + 1 END; j := j + 1 >> OD
```

Here there is a good deal of new notation, in addition to the familiar semicolons, assignments, and plus signs.

`VAR i, j |` introduces the local variables `i` and `j` with arbitrary values. Because `;` binds more tightly than `|`, the scope of the variables is the rest of the example.

The `<< ... >>` brackets delimit the atomic actions or transitions of the state machine. All the changes inside these brackets happen as one transition of the state machine.

`j < 18 => ...` is a transition that can only happen when `j < 18`. Read it as "if `j < 18` then `...`". The `j < 18` is called a *guard*. If the guard is false, we say that the entire command *fails*.

`i := 1 [] i := i + 1` is a *non-deterministic* transition which can either set `i` to `1` or increment it. Read `[]` as 'or'.

The `BEGIN ... END` brackets are just brackets for commands, like { ... } in C. They are there because `=>` binds more tightly than the `[]` operator inside the brackets; without them the meaning would be "either set `i` to `1` if `j < 18` or increment `i` and `j` unconditionally".

Finally, the `DO ... OD` brackets mean: repeat the `...` transition as long as possible. Eventually `j` becomes `18` and the guard becomes false, so the command inside the `DO ... OD` fails and can no longer happen.

The expression approach is better when it works naturally, as this example suggests, so Spec has lots of facilities for describing values: sequences, sets, and functions as well as integers and booleans. Usually, however, the sequences we want are too complicated to be conveniently described by an expression; a state machine can describe them much more easily.

State machines can be written in many different ways. When each transition involves only simple expressions and changes only a single integer or boolean state variable, we think of the state machine as a program, since we can easily make a computer exhibit this behavior. When there are transitions that change many variables, non-deterministic transitions, big values like sequences or functions, or expressions with quantifiers, we think of the state machine as a specification, since it may be much easier to understand and reason about it, but difficult to make a computer exhibit this behavior. In other words, large atomic actions, non-determinism, and expressions that compute sequences or functions are hard to implement. It may take a good deal of ingenuity to find an implementation that has the same behavior but uses only the small, deterministic atomic actions and simple expressions that are easy for the computer.

Essential

The hardest thing for most people to learn about writing specs is that *a spec is not a program*. A spec defines the behavior of a system, but unlike a program it need not, and usually should not, give any practical method for producing this behavior. Furthermore, it should pin down the behavior of the system only enough to meet the client's needs. Details in the spec that the client doesn't need can only make trouble for the implementer.

The example we just saw is too artificial to illustrate this point. To learn more about the difference between a spec and an implementation consider the following:

```
VAR eps := 10**-8

APROC SquareRoot0(x: Real) -> Real =
    << VAR y : Real | Abs(x - y*y) < eps => RET y >>
```

(Spec as described in the reference manual doesn't have a `Real` data type, but we'll add it for the purpose of this example.)

The combination of `VAR` and `=>` is a very common Spec idiom; read it as "choose a `y` such that `Abs(x - y*y) < eps` and do `RET y`". Why is this the meaning? The `VAR` makes a choice of any `Real` as the value of `y`, but the entire transition on the second line cannot occur unless the guard is true. The result is that the choice is restricted to a value that satisfies the guard.

What can we learn from this example? First, the result of `SquareRoot0(x)` is not determined by the value of `x`; any result whose square is within `eps` of `x` is possible. This is why `SquareRoot0` is written as a procedure rather than a function; the result of a function has to be determined by the arguments and the current state, so that the value of an expression like `f(x) = f(x)` will be `true`. In other words, `SquareRoot0` is non-deterministic.

Why did we write it that way? First of all, there might not be any `Real` (that is, any floating-point number of the kind used to represent `Real`) whose square exactly equals `x`.[1] Second, we may not want to pay for an implementation that gives the closest possible answer. Instead, we may settle for a less accurate answer in the hope of getting the answer faster.

You have to make sure you know what you are doing, though. This spec allows a negative result, which is perhaps not what we really wanted. We could have written:

```
APROC SquareRoot1(x: Real) -> Real =
    << VAR y : Real | y >= 0 /\ Abs(x - y*y) < eps => RET y >>
```

to rule that out. Also, the spec produces no result if `x < 0`, which means that `SquareRoot1(-1)` will fail (see the section on commands for a discussion of failure); probably we would prefer a total function that raises an exception:

```
APROC SquareRoot2(x: Real) -> Real RAISES {undefined} =
    <<     x >= 0 => VAR y : Real | y >= 0 /\ Abs(x - y*y) < eps => RET y
      [*]  RAISE undefined >>
```

The `[*]` is 'else'; it does its second operand iff the first one fails. Exceptions in Spec are much like exceptions in CLU. An exception is contagious: once started by a `RAISE` it causes any containing expression or command to yield the same exception, until it runs into an exception handler (not shown here). The `RAISES` clause of a routine declaration must list all the exceptions that the procedure body can generate, either by `RAISES` or by invoking another routine.

An implementation of this spec would look quite different from the spec itself. Instead of the existential quantifier implied by the `VAR y`, it would have an algorithm for finding `y`, for instance, Newton's method. In the algorithm you would only see operations that have obvious

[1] We could accommodate this fact of life by specifying the closest floating-point number. This would still be non-deterministic in the case that two such numbers are equally close, so if we wanted a deterministic spec we would have to give a rule for choosing one of them, for instance, the smaller.

implementations in terms of the load, store, arithmetic, and test instructions of a computer. Probably the implementation would be deterministic.

Another way to write these specs is as functions that return the set of possible answers. Thus

```
FUNC SquareRoots1(x: Real) -> SET Real =
    RET {y : Real | y >= 0 /\ Abs(x - y*y) < eps}
```

Note that the form inside the `{...}` set constructor is the same as the guard on the `RET`. To get a single result you can use the set's `choose` method: `SquareRoots1(2).choose`.[2]

In the next section we give an outline of the Spec language. Following that are three extended examples of specs and implementations for fairly realistic systems. At the end is a one-page summary of the language.

[2] `r := SquareRoots1(x).choose` (using the function) is almost the same as `r := SquareRoot1(x)` (using the procedure). The difference is that because `choose` is a function it always returns the same element (even though we don't know in advance which one) when given the same set, and hence when `SquareRoots1` is given the same argument. The procedure, on the other hand, is non-deterministic and can return different values on successive calls.

An outline of the Spec language

The Spec language has two main parts:

- An *expression* describes how to compute a result (a value or an exception) as a function of other values: either literal constants or the current values of state variables.
- A *command* describes possible transitions of the state variables. Another way of saying this is that a command is a relation on states: it allows a transition from `s1` to `s2` iff it relates `s1` to `s2`.

Both are based on the *state*, which in Spec is a mapping from names to values. The names are called state variables or simply variables: in the sequence example above they are `i` and `j`. Actually a command relates states to *outcomes*; an outcome is either a state (a normal outcome) or a state together with an exception (an exceptional outcome).

There are two kinds of commands:

- An *atomic* command describes a set of possible transitions, or equivalently, a set of pairs of states. For instance, the command `<< i := i + 1 >>` describes the transitions `i=1→i=2`, `i=2→i=3`, etc. (Actually, many transitions are summarized by `i=1→i=2`, for instance, `(i=1, j=1)→(i=2, j=1)` and `(i=1, j=15)→(i=2, j=15)`). If a command allows more than one transition from a given state we say it is non-deterministic. For instance, on page 3 the command `BEGIN i := 1 [] i := i + 1 END` allows the transitions `i=2→i=1` and `i=2→i=3`.
- A *non-atomic* command describes a set of sequences of states (by contrast with the set of pairs for an atomic command). More on this below.

A sequential program, in which we are only interested in the initial and final states, can be described by an atomic command.

The meaning of an expression, which is a function from states to values (or exceptions), is much simpler than the meaning of an atomic command, which is a relation between states, for two reasons:

- The expression yields a single value rather than an entire state.
- The expression yields at most one value, whereas a non-deterministic command can yield many final states.

A atomic command is still simple, much simpler than a non-atomic command, because:

- Taken in isolation, the meaning of a non-atomic command is a relation between an initial state and a history. Again, many histories can stem from a single initial state.
- The meaning of the composition of two non-atomic commands is not any simple combination of their relations, such as the union, because the commands can interact if they share any variables that change.

These considerations lead us to describe the meaning of a non-atomic command by breaking it down into its atomic subcommands and connecting these up with a new state variable called a program counter. The details are somewhat complicated; they are sketched in the discussion of atomicity below, and described in handout 17 on formal concurrency.

The moral of all this is that you should use the simpler parts of the language as much as possible: expressions rather than atomic commands, and atomic commands rather than non-atomic ones. To encourage this style, Spec has a lot of syntax and built-in types and functions that make it easy to write expressions clearly and concisely. You can write many things in a single Spec expression that would require a number of C statements, or even a loop. Of course, an implementation with a lot of concurrency will necessarily have more non-atomic commands, but this complication should be put off as long as possible.

Organizing the program

In addition to the expressions and commands that are the core of the language, Spec has four other mechanisms that are useful for organizing your program and making it easier to understand.

- A *routine* is a named computation with parameters, in other words, an abstraction of the computation. Parameters are passed by value. There are four kinds of routine:

  A *function* (defined with `FUNC`) is an abstraction of an expression.

  An *atomic procedure* (defined with `APROC`) is an abstraction of an atomic command.

  A general procedure (defined with `PROC`) is an abstraction of a non-atomic command.

  A *thread* (defined with `THREAD`) is the way to introduce concurrency.

- A *type* is a highly stylized assertion about the set of values that a name or expression can assume. A type is also a convenient way to group and name a collection of routines, called its *methods*, that operate on values in that set.
- An *exception* is a way to report an unusual outcome.
- A *module* is a way to structure the name space into a two-level hierarchy. An identifier `i` declared in a module `m` has the name `m.i` throughout the program. A *class* is a module that can be instantiated many times to create many objects.

A Spec program is some global declarations of variables, routines, types, and exceptions, plus a set of modules each of which declares some variables, routines, types, and exceptions.

The next two sections describe things about Spec's expressions and commands that may be new to you. It doesn't answer every question about Spec; for those answers, read the reference manual and the handouts on Spec semantics. There is a one-page summary at the end of this handout.

Expressions, types, and functions

Expressions are for computing functions of the state. A Spec expression is a constant, a variable, or an invocation of a function on an argument that is some sub-expression. The values of these expressions are the constant, the current value of the variable, or the value of the function at the value of the argument. There are no side-effects; those are the province of commands. There is quite a bit of syntactic sugar for function invocations. An expression may be undefined in a state; if a simple command evaluates an undefined expression, the command fails (see below).

A Spec type defines two things:

A set of values; we say that a value *has* the type if it's in the set. The sets are not disjoint.

A set of functions called the *methods* of the type. There is convenient syntax `v.m` for invoking method `m` on a value `v` of the type.

Spec is strongly typed. This means that you are supposed to declare the types of your variables, just as you do in Pascal or CLU. In return the language defines a type for every expression[3] and ensures that the value of the expression always has that type. In particular, the value of a variable always has the declared type. You should think of a type declaration as a stylized comment that has a precise meaning and could be checked mechanically.

If `Foo` is a type, you can omit it in a declaration of the identifiers `foo, foo1, foo'` etc. Thus

```
VAR int1, bool2, char'' | ...
```

is short for

```
VAR int1: Int, bool2: Bool, char'': Char | ...
```

Spec has the usual types: `Int`, `Nat` (non-negative `Int`), `Bool`, functions, sets, records, tuples, and variable-length arrays called sequences. A sequence is a function whose domain is `{0, 1, ..., n-1}` for some `n`. In addition to the usual functions like `"+"` and `"\/"`, Spec also has some less usual operations on these types, which are valuable when you want to suppress implementation detail: constructors and combinations.

You can make a type with fewer values using `SUCHTHAT`. For example,

```
TYPE T = Int SUCHTHAT (\ i: Int | 0 <= i /\ i <= 4)
```

has the value set `{0, 1, 2, 3, 4}`. Here the `(\ ...)` is a lambda expression that defines a function from `Int` to `Bool`, and a value has type `T` if it's an `Int` and the function maps it to `true`.

Section 5 of the reference manual describes expressions and lists all the built-in operators. You should read the list, which also gives their precedence and has pointers to explanations of their meaning. Section 4 describes the types. Section 9 defines the built-in methods for sequences, sets, and functions; you should read it over so that you know the vocabulary.

[3] Note that a value may have many types, but a variable or an expression has exactly one type: for a variable, it's the declared type, and for a complex expression it's the result type of the top-level function in the expression.

Constructors

Constructors for functions, sets, and sequences make it easy to toss large values around. For instance, you can describe a database as a function `db` from names to data records with two fields:

```
TYPE DB = (String -> Entry)
TYPE Entry = [salary: Int, birthdate: Int]
VAR db := DB{}
```

Here `db` is initialized using a function constructor whose value is a function undefined everywhere. The type can be omitted in a variable declaration when the variable is initialized; it is taken to be the type of the initializing expression. The type can also be omitted when it is the upper case version of the variable name, `DB` in this example.

Now you can make an entry with

```
db := db{ "Smith" -> Entry{salary := 23000, birthdate := 1955} }
```

using another function constructor. The value of the constructor is a function that is the same as `db` except at the argument `"Smith"`, where it has the value `Entry{...}`, which is a record constructor. The assignment could also be written

```
db("Smith") := Entry{salary := 23000, birthdate := 1955}
```

which changes the value of the `db` function at `"Smith"` without changing it anywhere else. This is actually a shorthand for the previous assignment. You can omit the field names if you like, so that

```
db("Smith") := Entry{23000, 1955}
```

has the same meaning as the previous assignment. Obviously this shorthand is less readable and more error-prone, so use it with discretion. Another way to write this assignment is

```
db("Smith").salary := 23000; db("Smith").birthdate := 1955
```

The set of names in the database can be expressed by a set constructor. It is just

```
{n: String | db!n},
```

in other words, the set of all the strings for which the `db` function is defined ('`!`' is the 'is-defined' operator; that is, `f!x` is true iff `f` is defined at `x`). Read this "the set of strings `n` such that `db!n`". You can also write it as `db.dom`, the domain of `db`; section 9 of the reference manual defines lots of useful built in methods for functions, sets, and sequences. It's important to realize that you can freely use large (possibly infinite) values such as the `db` function. You are writing a specification, and you don't need to worry about whether the compiler is clever enough to turn an expensive-looking manipulation of a large object into a cheap incremental update. That's the implementer's problem (so you may have to worry about whether she is clever enough).

If we wanted the set of lengths of the names, we would write

```
{n: String | db!n | n.size}
```

This three part set constructor contains `i` if and only if there exists an `n` such that `db!n` and `i = n.size`. So `{n: String | db!n}` is short for `{n: String | db!n | n}`. You can introduce more than one name, in which case the third part defaults to the last name. For example, if we represent a directed graph by a function on pairs of nodes that returns `true` when there's an edge from the first to the second, then

```
{n1: Node, n2: Node | graph(n1, n2) | n2}
```

is the set of nodes that are the target of an edge, and the "`| n2`" could be omitted.

Following standard mathematical notation, you can also write

```
{f :IN openFiles | f.modified}
```
to get the set of all open, modified files. This is equivalent to
```
{f: File | f IN openFiles /\ f.modified}
```
because if s is a `SET T`, then `IN s` is a type whose values are the `T`'s in `s`; in fact, it's the type `T SUCHTHAT (\ t | t IN s)`. This form also works for sequences, where the second operand of `:IN` provides the ordering. So if s is a sequence of integers, `{x :IN s | x > 0}` is the positive ones, `{x :IN s | x > 0 | x * x}` is the squares of the positive ones, and `{x :IN s | | x * x}` is the squares of all the integers, because an omitted predicate defaults to `true`.[4]

To get sequences that are more complicated you can use sequence generators with `BY` and `WHILE`.
```
{i := 1 BY i + 1 WHILE i <= 5 | true | i}
```
is `{1, 2, 3, 4, 5}`; the second and third parts could be omitted. This is just like the "for" construction in C. An omitted `WHILE` defaults to `true`, and an omitted `:=` defaults to an arbitrary choice for the initial value. If you write several generators, each variable gets a new value for each value produced, but the second and later variables are initialized first. So to get the sums of successive pairs of elements of `s`, write
```
{x := s BY x.tail WHILE x.size > 1 | | x(0) + x(1)}
```
To get the sequence of partial sums of `s`, write (eliding `| | sum` at the end)
```
{x :IN s, sum := 0 BY sum + x}
```
Taking `last` of this would give the sum of the elements of `s`. To get a sequence whose elements are reversed from those of `s`, write
```
{x :IN s, rev := {} BY {x} + rev}.last
```
To get the sequence `{f(e), f2(e), ..., fn(e)}`, write
```
{i :IN 1 .. n, iter := e BY f(iter)}
```
This uses the `..` operator; `i .. j` is the sequence `{i, i+1, ..., j-1, j}`.

Combinations

A combination is a way to combine the elements of a sequence or set into a single value using an infix operator, which must be associative, must have an identity, and must be commutative if it is applied to a set. You write "operator : sequence or set". Thus
```
+ : (SEQ String){"He", "l", "lo"} = "He" + "l" + "lo" = "Hello"
```
because + on sequences is concatenation, and
```
+ : {I :IN 1 .. 4 | | i**2} = 1 + 4 + 9 + 16 = 30
```

Existential and universal quantifiers make it easy to describe properties without explaining how to test for them in a practical way. For instance, a predicate that is `true` iff the sequence `s` is sorted is
```
(ALL i :IN 1 .. s.size-1   | s(i-1) <= s(i))
```
This is a common idiom; read it as
"for all `i` in `1 .. s.size-1`, `s(i-1) <= s(i)`".
This could also be written
```
(ALL i :IN (s.dom - {0}) | s(i-1) <= s(i))
```
since `s.dom` is the domain of the function `s`, which is the non-negative integers `< s.size`.

[4] In the sequence form, `IN s` is not a type but a special construct; treating it as a type would throw away the essential ordering information.

Because a universal quantification is just the conjunction of its predicate for all the values of the bound variables, it is simply a combination using `/\` as the operator:
```
(ALL    i | Predicate(i)) = /\ : {i | Predicate(i)}
```
Similarly, an existential quantification is just a similar disjunction, hence a combination using `\/` as the operator:
```
(EXISTS i | Predicate(i)) = \/ : {i | Predicate(i)}
```
Spec has the redundant `ALL` and `EXISTS` notations because they are familiar.

If you want to get your hands on a value that satisfies an existential quantifier, you can construct the set of such values and use the `choose` method to pick out one of them:
```
{i | Predicate(i)}.choose
```
This is deterministic: `choose` always returns the same value given the same set (a necessary property for it to be a function). It is undefined if the set is empty, which is the case in the example if no `i` satisfies `Predicate`.

The `VAR` command described in the next section on commands is another form of existential quantification that lets you get your hands on the value, but it is non-deterministic.

Functions

Like everything (except types), functions are ordinary values in Spec. Given a function, you can use a function constructor to make another one that is the same except at a particular argument, as in the `DB` example above. Another example is `f{x -> 0}`, which is the same as `f` except that it is 0 at `x`. If you have never seen a construction like this one, think about it for a minute. Suppose you had to implement it. If `f` is represented as a table of (argument, result) pairs, the implementation will be easy. If `f` is represented by code that computes the result, the implementation is less obvious, but you can make a new piece of code that says
```
(\ y: Int | ( (y = x) => 0 [*] f(y) ))
```
Here `'\'` is 'lambda', and the subexpression `( (y = x) => 0 [*] f(y) )` is a conditional, modeled on the conditional commands we saw in the first section; its value is `0` if `y = x` and `f(y)` otherwise, so we have changed `f` just at `0`, as desired. If the else clause `[*] f(y)` is omitted, the condition is undefined if `y # x`. Of course in a running program you probably wouldn't want to construct new functions very often, so a piece of Spec that is intended to be close to a practical implementation must use function constructors carefully.

Functions can return functions as results. Thus `A->B->C` is the type of a function that takes an `A` and returns a function of type `B->C`, which in turn takes a `B` and returns a `C`. If `f` has this type, then `f(a)` has type `B->C`, and `f(a)(b)` has type `C`. Compare this with `(A, B)->C`, the type of a function which takes an `A` and a `B` and returns a `C`. If `g` has this type, `g(a)` doesn't type-check, and `g(a, b)` has type `C`. Obviously `f` and `g` are closely related, but they are not the same.

You can define your own functions either by lambda expressions like the one above, or more generally by function declarations like this one
```
FUNC NewF(y: Int) -> Int = RET ( (y = x) => 0 [*] f(y) )
```
The value of this `NewF` is the same as the value of the lambda expression. To avoid some redundancy in the language, the meaning of the function is defined by a command in which `RET` sub-commands specify the value of the function. The command might be syntactically non-deterministic (for instance, it might contain `VAR` or `[]`), but it must specify at most one result

value for any argument value; if it specifies no result values for an argument or more than one value, the function is undefined there. If you need a full-blown command in a function constructor, you can write it with `LAMBDA` instead of `\`:

```
(LAMBDA (y: Int) -> Int = RET ( (y = x) => 0 [*] f(y) ))
```

You can compose two functions with the `*` operator, writing `f * g`. This means to apply `f` first and then `g`. It is often useful when `f` is a sequence (remember that a `SEQ T` is a function from `{0, 1, ..., size-1}` to `T`), since the result is a sequence with every element of `f` mapped by `g`. So:

```
(0 .. 4) * {\ i: Int | i*i} = (SEQ Int){0, 1, 4, 9, 16}
```

since `0 .. 4 = {0, 1, 2, 3, 4}` because `Int` has a method `..` with the obvious meaning: `i .. j = {i, i+1, ..., j-1, j}`. In the section on constructors we saw another way to write

```
(0 .. 4) * {\ i: Int | i*i},
```

as

```
{i :IN 0 .. 4 | | i*i}.
```

This is more convenient when the mapping function is defined by an expression, as it is here, but it's less convenient if the mapping function already has a name. Then it's shorter and clearer to write

```
(0 .. 4) * factorial
```

rather than

```
{i :IN 0 .. 4 | | factorial(i)}.
```

Methods

Methods are a convenient way of packaging up some functions with a type so that the functions can be applied to values of that type concisely and without mentioning the type itself. Look at the definitions in section 9 of the *Spec Reference Manual*, which give methods for the built-in types `SEQ T`, `SET T`, and `T->U`. If `s` is a `SEQ T`, `s.head` is `Sequence[T].Head(s)`, which is just `s(0)` (which is undefined if `s` is empty). You can see that it's shorter to write `s.head`.[5]

You can define your own methods by using `WITH`. For instance, consider

```
TYPE Complex = [re: Real, im: Real] WITH {"+":=Add, mag:=Mag}
```

`Add` and `Mag` are ordinary Spec functions that you must define, but you can now invoke them on a `c` which is `Complex` by writing `c + c'` and `c.mag`, which mean `Add(c, c')` and `Mag(c)`. You can use existing operator symbols or make up your own; see section 3 of the reference manual for lexical rules. You can also write `Complex."+"` and `Complex.mag` to denote the functions `Add` and `Mag`; this may be convenient if `Complex` was declared in a different module. Using `Add` as a method does not make it private, hidden, static, local, or anything funny like that.

When you nest `WITH` the methods pile up in the obvious way. Thus

```
TYPE MoreComplex = Complex WITH {"-":=Sub, mag:=Mag2}
```

has an additional method `"-"`, the same `"+"` as `Complex`, and a different `mag`. Many people call this 'inheritance' and 'overriding'.

[5] Of course, `s(0)` is shorter still, but that's an accident; there is no similar alternative for `s.tail`.

Commands

Commands are for changing the state. Spec has a few simple commands, and seven operators for combining commands into bigger ones. The main simple commands are assignment and routine invocation. There are also simple commands to raise an exception, to return a function result, and to `SKIP`, that is, do nothing. If a simple command evaluates an undefined expression, it fails (see below).

The operators on commands are:

- A conditional operator: `predicate => command`, read "if `predicate` then `command`". The predicate is called a *guard*.
- Choice operators: `c1 [] c2` and `c1 [*] c2`, read 'or' and 'else'.
- Sequencing operators: `c1 ; c2` and `c1 EXCEPT handler`. The `handler` is a special form of conditional command: `exception => command`.
- Variable introduction: `VAR id: T | command`, read "choose `id` of type `T` such that `command` doesn't fail".
- Loops: `DO command OD`.

Section 6 of the reference manual describes commands. *Atomic Semantics of Spec* gives a precise account of their semantics. It explains that the meaning of a command is a *relation* between a state and an outcome (a state plus an optional exception), that is, a set of possible state-to-outcome transitions.

Conditionals and choice

The figure below (copied from Nelson's paper) illustrates conditionals and choice with some very simple examples. Here is how they work:

The command

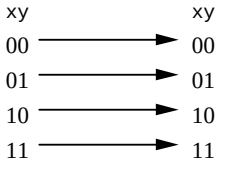
```
P => Q
```

means to do `Q` if `P` is true. If `P` is false this command fails; in other words, it has no outcome. More precisely, if `s` is a state in which `P` is false or undefined, this command does not relate `s` to any outcome.

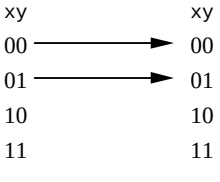
What good is such a command? One possibility is that `P` will be true some time in the future, and then the command will have an outcome and allow a transition. Of course this can only happen in a concurrent program, where there is something else going on that can make `P` true. Even if there's no concurrency, there might be an alternative to this command. For instance, it might appear in the larger command

```
      P  => Q
[]    P' => Q'
```

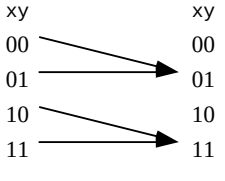
in which you read `[]` as 'or'. This fails only if each of `P` and `P'` is false or undefined. If both are true (as in the `00` state in the south-west corner of the figure), it means to do either `Q` or `Q'`; the choice is non-deterministic. If `P'` is `~ P` then they are never both false, and if `P` is defined this command is equivalent to



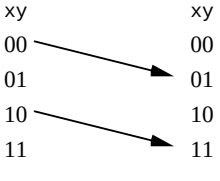
SKIP



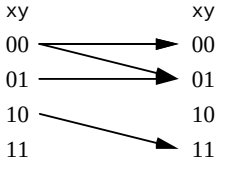
x = 0 => SKIP
(partial)



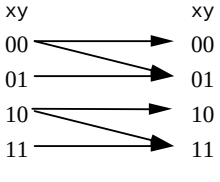
y := 1



y = 0 => y := 1
(partial)



x = 0 => SKIP
[] y = 0 => y := 1
(partial, non-deterministic)



SKIP
[] y = 0 => y := 1
(non-deterministic)

Combining commands

```
    P => Q
[*] Q'
```

in which you read `[*]` as ‘else’. On the other hand, if `P` is undefined the two commands differ, because the first one fails (since neither guard can be evaluated), while the second does `Q'`.

Both `c1 [] c2` and `c1 [*] c2` fail only if *both* `c1` and `c2` fail. If you think of a Spec program operationally (that is, as executing one command after another), this means that if the execution makes some choice that leads to failure later on, it must ‘back-track’ and try the other alternatives until it finds a set of choices that succeed. For instance, no matter what `x` is, after

```
    y = 0 => x := x - 1; x < y => x := 1
[]  y > 0 => x := 3    ; x < y => x := 2
[*] SKIP
```


if `y = 0` initially, `x = 1` afterwards, if `y > 3` initially, `x = 2` afterwards, and otherwise `x` is unchanged. If you think of it relationally, `c1 [] c2` has all the transitions of `c1` (there are none if `c1` fails, several if it is non-deterministic) as well as all the transitions of `c2`. Both failure and non-determinism can arise from deep inside a complex command, not just from a top-level `[]` or `VAR`.

The precedence rules for commands are

`EXCEPT`	binds tightest
`;`	next
`=> |`	next (for the right operand; the left side is an expression or delimited by `VAR`)
`[][*]`	bind least tightly.

These rules minimize the need for parentheses, which are written around commands in the ugly form `BEGIN ... END` or the slightly prettier form `IF ... FI`; the two forms have the same meaning, but as a matter of style, the latter should only be used around guarded commands. So, for example,

```
P => Q; R
```

is the same as

```
P => BEGIN Q; R END
```

and means to do `Q` followed by `R` if `P` is true. To guard only `Q` with `P` you must write

```
IF P => Q [*] SKIP FI; R
```

which means to do `Q` if `P` is true, and then to do `R`. The `[*] SKIP` ensures that the command before the `";"` does not fail, which would prevent `R` from getting done. Without the `[*] SKIP`, that is in

```
IF P => Q FI; R
```

if `P` is false the `IF ... FI` fails, so there is no possible outcome from which `R` can be done and the whole thing fails. Thus `IF P => Q FI; R` has the same meaning as `P => BEGIN Q; R END`, which is a bit surprising.

Sequencing

A `c1 ; c2` command means just what you think it does: first `c1`, then `c2`. The command `c1 ; c2` gets you from state `s1` to state `s2` if there is an intermediate state `s` such that `c1` gets you from `s1` to `s` and `c2` gets you from `s` to `s2`. In other words, its relation is the composition of the relations for `c1` and `c2`; sometimes `';'` is called ‘sequential composition’. If `c1` produces an exception, the composite command ignores `c2` and produces that exception.

A `c1 EXCEPT ex => c2` command is just like `c1 ; c2` except that it treats the exception `ex` the other way around: if `c1` produces the exception `ex` then it goes on to `c2`, but if `c1` produces a normal outcome (or any other exception), the composite command ignores `c2` and produces that outcome.

Variable introduction

`VAR` gives you more dramatic non-determinism than `[]`. The most common use is in the idiom

```
VAR x: T | P(x) => Q
```

which is read “choose some `x` of type `T` such that `P(x)`, and do `Q`”. It fails if there is no `x` for which `P(x)` is true and `Q` succeeds. If you just write

```
VAR x: T | Q
```

then VAR acts like ordinary variable declaration, giving an arbitrary initial value to x.

Variable introduction is an alternative to existential quantification that lets you get your hands on the bound variable. For instance, you can write

```
IF  VAR n: Int, x: Int, y: Int, z: Int |
    (n > 2 /\ x**n + y**n = z**n) => out := n
[*] out := 0
FI
```

which is read: choose integers n, x, y, z such that n > 2 and $x^n + y^n = z^n$, and assign n to out; if there are no such integers, assign 0 to out.[6] The command before the [*] succeeds iff

```
(EXISTS n: Int, x: Int, y: Int, z: Int | n > 2 /\ x**n + y**n = z**n),
```

but if we wrote that in a guard there would be no way to set out to one of the n's that exist. We could also write

```
VAR s := { n: Int, x: Int, y: Int, z: Int
         | n > 2 /\ x**n + y**n = z**n
         | (n, x, y, z)}
```

to construct the set of all solutions to the equation. Then if s # {}, s.choose yields a tuple (n, x, y, z) with the desired property.

You can use VAR to describe all the transitions to a state that has an arbitrary relation R to the current state: VAR s' | R(s, s') => s := s' if there is only one state variable s.

The precedence of | is higher than [], which means that you can string together different VAR commands with [] or [*], but if you want several alternatives within a VAR you have to use BEGIN ... END or IF ... FI. Thus

```
    VAR x: T | P(x) => Q
[]  R => S
```

is parsed the way it is indented and is the same as

```
    BEGIN VAR x: T | P(x) => Q END
[]  BEGIN R => S END
```

but you must write the brackets in

```
VAR x: T |
    IF P(x) => Q
    [] R(x) => S
    FI
```

which might be formatted more concisely as

```
VAR x: T |
    IF  P(x) => Q
    []  R(x) => S FI
```

or even

```
VAR x: T | IF P(x) => Q [] R(x) => S FI
```

You are supposed to indent your programs to make it clear how they are parsed.

[6] A correctness proof for an implementation of this spec defied the best efforts of mathematicians between Fermat's time and 1993.

Loops

You can always write a recursive routine, but often a loop is clearer . In Spec you use DO ... OD for this. These are brackets, and the command inside is repeated as long as it succeeds. When it fails, the repetition is over and the DO ... OD is complete. The most common form is

```
DO P => Q OD
```

which is read "while P is true do Q". After this command, P must be false. If the command inside the DO ... OD succeeds forever, the outcome is a looping exception that cannot be handled. Note that this is not the same as a failure, which simply means no outcome at all.

For example, you can zero all the elements of a sequence s with

```
VAR i := 0 | DO i < s.size => s(i) := 0; i - := 1 OD
```

or the simpler form (which also avoids fixing the order of the assignments)

```
DO VAR i | s(i) # 0 => s(i) := 0 OD
```

This is another common idiom: keep choosing an i as long as you can find one that satisfies some predicate. Since s is only defined for i between 0 and s.size-1, the guarded command fails for any other choice of i. The loop terminates, since the s(i) := 0 definitely reduces the number of i's for which the guard is true. But although this is a good example of a loop, it is bad style; you should have used a sequence method or function composition:

```
s := S.fill(0, s.size)
```

or

```
s := {x :IN s | | 0}
```

(a sequence just like s except that every element is mapped to 0), remembering that Spec makes it easy to throw around big things. Don't write a loop when a constructor will do, because the loop is more complicated to think about. Even if you are writing an implementation, you still shouldn't use a loop here, because it's quite clear how to write C code for the constructor.

To zero all the elements of s that satisfy some predicate P you can write

```
DO VAR i: Int | (s(i) # 0 /\ P(s(i))) => s(i) := 0 OD
```

Again, you can avoid the loop by using a sequence constructor and a conditional expression

```
s := {x :IN s | | (P(x) => 0 [*] x) }
```

Atomicity

Each <<...>> command is atomic. It defines a single transition, which includes moving the program counter (which is part of the state) from before to after the command. If a command is not inside <<...>>, it is atomic only if there's no reasonable way to split it up: SKIP, HAVOC, RET, RAISE. Here are the reasonable ways to split up the other commands:

- An assignment has one internal program counter value, between evaluating the right hand side expression and changing the left hand side variable.
- A guarded command likewise has one, between evaluating the predicate and the rest of the command.
- An invocation has one after evaluating the arguments and before the body of the routine, and another after the body of the routine and before the next transition of the invoking command.

Note that evaluating an expression is always atomic.

Modules and names

Spec's modules are very conventional. Mostly they are for organizing the name space of a large program into a two-level hierarchy: `module.id`. It's good practice to declare everything except a few names of global significance inside a module. You can also declare `CONST`'s, just like `VAR`'s.

```
MODULE foo EXPORT i, j, Fact =

CONST c := 1

VAR i := 0
    j := 1

FUNC Fact(n: Int) -> Int =
    IF   n <= 1 => RET 1
    [*] RET n * Fact(n - 1)
    FI

END foo
```

You can declare an identifier `id` outside of a module, in which case you can refer to it as `id` everywhere; this is short for `Global.id`, so `Global` behaves much like an extra module. If you declare `id` at the top level in module `m`, `id` is short for `m.id` inside of `m`. If you include it in `m`'s `EXPORT` clause, you can refer to it as `m.id` everywhere. All these names are in the *global* state and are shared among all the atomic actions of the program. By contrast, names introduced by a declaration inside a routine are in the *local* state and are accessible only within their scope.

The purpose of the `EXPORT` clause is to define the external interface of a module. This is important because module `T` implements module `S` iff `T`'s behavior at its external interface is a subset of `S`'s behavior at its external interface.

The other feature of modules is that they can be parameterized by types in the same style as CLU clusters. The memory systems modules in handout 5 are examples of this.

You can also declare a class, which is a module that can be instantiated many times. The `Obj` class produces a global `Obj` type that has as its methods the exported identifiers of the class plus a `new` procedure that returns a new, initialized instance of the class. It also produces a `ObjMod` module that contains the declaration of the `Obj` type, the code for the methods, and a state variable indexed by `Obj` that holds the state records of the objects. For example:

```
CLASS Stat EXPORT add, mean, variance, reset =

VAR  n          :  Int := 0
     sum        :  Int := 0
     sumsq      :  Int := 0

PROC add(i: Int) = n + := 1; sum + := i; sumsq + := i**2
FUNC mean() -> Int = RET sum/n
FUNC variance() -> Int = RET sumsq/n – self.mean**2
PROC reset() = n := 0; sum := 0; sumsq := 0

END Stat
```

Then you can write


```
VAR s: Stat | s := s.new(); s.add(x); s.add(y); print(s.variance)
```

In abstraction functions and invariants we also write `obj.n` for field `n` in `obj`'s state.

Section 7 of the reference manual deals with modules. Section 8 summarizes all the uses of names and the scope rules. Section 9 gives several modules used to define abstract data types.

This completes the language summary; for more details and greater precision consult the reference manual. The rest of this handout consists of three extended examples of specifications and implementations written in Spec: topological sort, editor buffers, and a simple window system.

Example: Topological sort

Suppose we have a directed graph whose `n+1` vertexes are labeled by the integers `0 .. n`, represented in the standard way by a relation `g`; `g(v1, v2)` is true if `v2` is a successor of `v1`, that is, if there is an edge from `v1` to `v2`. We want a topological sort of the vertexes, that is, a sequence that is a permutation of `0 .. n` in which `v2` follows `v1` whenever `v2` is a successor of `v1`. Of course this possible only if the graph is acyclic.

```
MODULE TopologicalSort EXPORT V, G, Q, TopSort =

TYPE V = IN 0 .. n                                  % Vertex
     G = (V, V) -> Bool                             % Graph
     Q = SEQ V

PROC TopSort(g) -> Q RAISES {cyclic} =
     IF   VAR q | q IN (0 .. n).perms /\ IsTSorted(q, g)  => RET q
     [*] RAISE cyclic                               % g must be cyclic
     FI

FUNC IsTSorted(q, g) -> Bool =
% Not tsorted if v2 precedes v1 in q but is also a child
     RET ~ (EXISTS v1 :IN q.dom, v2 :IN q.dom | v2 < v1 /\ g(q(v1), q(v2))

END TopologicalSort
```

Note that this solution checks for a cyclic graph. It allows any topologically sorted result that is a permutation of the vertexes, because the `VAR q` in `TopSort` allows any `q` that satisfies the two conditions. The `perms` method on sets and sequences is defined in section 9 of the reference manual; the `dom` method gives the domain of a function. `TopSort` is a procedure, not a function, because its result is non-deterministic; we discussed this point earlier when studying `SquareRoot`. Like that one, this spec has no internal state, since the module has no `VAR`. It doesn't need one, because it does all its work on the input argument.

The following implementation is from Cormen, Leiserson, and Rivest. It adds vertexes to the front of the output sequence as depth-first search returns from visiting them. Thus, a child is added before its parents and therefore appears after them in the result. Unvisited vertexes are `white`, nodes being visited are `grey`, and fully visited nodes are `black`. Note that all the descendants of a `black` node must be `black`. The `grey` state is used to detect cycles: visiting a `grey` node means that there is a cycle containing that node.

This module has state, but you can see that it's just for convenience in programming, since it is reset each time `TopSort` is called.

```
MODULE TopSortImpl EXPORT V, G, Q, TopSort =        % implements TopSort

TYPE Color = ENUM[white, grey, black]               % plus the spec's types

VAR  out  : Q
     color: V -> Color                              % every vertex starts white

PROC TopSort(g) -> Q RAISES {cyclic} = VAR i := 0 |
     out := {}; color := {* -> white}
     DO VAR v | color(v) = white => Visit(v, g) OD; % visit every unvisited vertex
     RET out

PROC Visit(v, g) RAISES {cyclic} =
     color(v) := grey;
     DO VAR v' | g(v, v') /\ color(v') # black =>   % pick an successor not done
          IF   color(v') = white => Visit(v', g)
          [*]  RAISE cyclic                         % grey — partly visited
          FI
     OD;
     color(v) := black; out := {v} + out            % add v to front of out
```

The implementation is as non-deterministic as the spec: depending on the order in which `TopSort` chooses `v` and `Visit` chooses `v'`, any topologically sorted sequence can result. We could get a deterministic implementation in many ways, for example by taking the smallest node in each case (the `min` method on sets is defined in section 9 of the reference manual):

```
     VAR v  := {v0 | color(v0) = white}.min              in TopSort
     VAR v' := {v0 | g(v, v0) /\ color(v') # black }.min in Visit
```

An implementation in C would do something like this; the details would depend on the representation of `G`.

Example: Editor buffers

A text editor usually has a *buffer* abstraction. A buffer is a mutable sequence of `C`'s. To get started, suppose that `C = Char` and a buffer has two operations,

`Get(i)` to get character `i`

`Replace` to replace a subsequence of the buffer by a subsequence of an argument of type `SEQ C`, where the subsequences are defined by starting position and size.

We can make this specification precise as a Spec class.


```
CLASS Buffer EXPORT B, C, X, Get, Replace =

TYPE X = Nat                                        % indeX in buffer
     C = Char
     B = SEQ C                                      % Buffer contents

VAR  b : B := {}                                    % Note: initially empty

FUNC Get(x) -> C = RET b(x)                         % Note: defined iff 0<=x<b.size

PROC Replace(from: X, size: X, b': B, from': X, size': X) =
% Note: fails if it touches C's that aren't there.
     VAR b1, b2, b3 | b = b1 + b2 + b3 /\ b1.size = from /\ b2.size = size =>
       b := b1 + b'.seg(from', size') + b3

END Buffer
```

We can implement a buffer as a sorted array of *pieces* called a 'piece table'. Each piece contains a `SEQ C`, and the whole buffer is the concatenation of all the pieces We use binary search to find a piece, so the cost of `Get` is at most logarithmic in the number of pieces. `Replace` may require inserting a piece in the piece table, so its cost is at most linear in the number of pieces.[7] In particular, neither depends on the number of `C`'s. Also, each `Replace` increases the size of the array of pieces by at most two.

A piece is a `B` (in C it would be a pointer to a `B`) together with the sum of the length of all the previous pieces, that is, the index in `Buffer.b` of the first `C` that it represents; the index is there so that the binary search can work. There are internal routines `Locate(x)`, which uses binary search to find the piece containing `x`, and `Split(x)`, which returns the index of a piece that starts at `x`, if necessary creating it by splitting an existing piece. `Replace` calls `Split` twice to isolate the substring being removed, and then replaces it with a single piece. The time for `Replace` is linear in `pt.size` because on the average half of `pt` is moved when `Split` or `Replace` inserts a piece, and in half of `pt`, `p.x` is adjusted if `size' # size`.

[7] By using a tree of pieces rather than an array, we could make the cost of `Replace` logarithmic as well, but to keep things simple we won't do that. See `FSImpl` in handout 7 for more on this point.

```
CLASS BufImpl EXPORT B,C,X, Get, Replace =          % implements Buffer

TYPE                                                % Types as in Buffer, plus
     N   = X                                        % iNdex in piece table
     P   = [b, x]                                   % Piece: x is pos in Buffer.b
     PT  = SEQ P                                    % Piece Table

VAR  pt  := PT{}

ABSTRACTION FUNCTION buffer.b = + : {p :IN pt | | p.b}
% buffer.b is the concatenation of the contents of the pieces in pt

INVARIANT (ALL n :IN pt.dom |  pt(n).b # {}
                            /\pt(n).x = + :{i :IN 0 .. n-1 | | pt(i).b.size})
% no pieces are empty, and  x is the position of the piece in Buffer.b, as promised.

FUNC Get(x) -> C = VAR p := pt(Locate(x)) | RET p.b(x - p.x)

PROC Replace(from: X, size: X, b': B, from': X, size': X) =
     VAR n1 := Split(from); n2 := Split(from + size),
         new := P{b := b'.seg(from', size'), x := from} |
         pt :=  pt.sub(0, n1 - 1)
              + NonNull(new)
              + pt.sub(n2, pt.size - 1) * AdjustX(size' - size )

PROC Split(x) -> N =
% Make pt(n) start at x, so pt(Split(x)).x = x.  Fails if x > b.size.
% If  pt=abcd|efg|hi, then Split(4) is RET 1 and Split(5) is pt:=abcd|e|fg|hi; RET 2
     IF   pt = {} /\ x = 0 => RET 0
     [*] VAR n := Locate(x), p := pt(n), b1, b2 |
          p.b = b1 + b2 /\ p.x + b1.size = x =>
               VAR frag1 := p{b := b1}, frag2 := p{b := b2, x := x} |
                    pt :=  pt.sub(0, n - 1)
                         + NonNull(frag1) + NonNull(frag2)
                         + pt.sub(n + 1, pt.size - 1);
                    RET (b1 = {} => n [*] n + 1)
     FI

FUNC Locate(x) -> N = VAR n1 := 0, n2 := pt.size - 1 |
% Use binary search to find the piece containing x. Yields 0 if pt={},
% pt.size-1 if pt#{} /\ x>=b.size; never fails.  The loop invariant is
%  pt={} \/ n2 >= n1 /\ pt(n1).x <= x /\ ( x < pt(n2).x \/ x >= pt.last.x )
% The loop terminates because n2 - n1 > 1 ==> n1 < n < n2, so n2 – n1 decreases.
     DO n2 - n1 > 1 =>
          VAR n := (n1 + n2)/2 | IF pt(n).x <= x => n1 := n [*] n2 := n FI
     OD; RET (x < pt(n2).x => n1 [*] n2)

FUNC NonNull(p) -> PT = RET (p.b # {} => PT{p} [*] {})

FUNC AdjustX(dx: Int) -> (P -> P) = RET (\ p | p{x + := dx})

END BufImpl
```

If subsequences were represented by their starting and ending positions, there would be lots of extreme cases to worry about.

Suppose we now want each C in the buffer to have not only a character code but also some additional properties, for instance the font, size, underlining, etc. Get and Replace remain the same. In addition, we need a third exported methodApply that applies to each character in a subsequence of the buffer a map function C -> C. Such a function might make all the C's italic, for example, or increase the font size by 10%.

```
PROC Apply(map: C->C, from: X, size: X) =
     b :=   b.sub(0, from-1)
          +  b.seg(from, size) * map
          +  b.sub(from + size, b.size-1)
```

Here is an implementation for Apply that takes time linear in the number of pieces. It works by changing the representation to add a map function to each piece, and in Apply composing the map argument with the map of each affected piece. We need a new version of Get that applies the proper map function, to go with the new representation.

```
TYPE P    = [b, x, map: C->C]                       % x is pos in Buffer.b

ABSTRACTION FUNCTION buffer.b = + :{p :IN pt | | p.b * p.map}
% buffer.b is the concatenation of the pieces in p with their map's applied.
% This is the same AF we had before, except for the addition of * p.map.

FUNC Get(x) -> C = VAR p := pt(Locate(x)) | RET p.map(p.b(x - p.x))

PROC Apply(map: C->C, from: X, size: X) =
  VAR n1 := Split(from), n2 := Split(from + size) |
     pt :=  pt.sub(0 , n1 - 1)
          + pt.sub(n1, n2 - 1) * (\ p | p{map := p.map * map})
          + pt.sub(n2, pt.size - 1)
```

Note that we wrote Split so that it keeps the same map in both parts of a split piece. We also need to add map := (\ c | c) to the constructor for new in Replace.

This implementation was used in the Bravo editor for the Alto, the first what-you-see-is-what-you-get editor. It is still used in Microsoft Word.

Example: Windows

A window (the kind on your computer screen, not the kind in your house) is a map from points to colors. There can be lots of windows on the screen; they are ordered, and closer ones block the view of more distant ones. Each window has its own coordinate system; when they are arranged on the screen, an offset says where each window's origin falls in screen coordinates.

```
MODULE Window EXPORT Get, Paint =

TYPE I         = Int
     Coord     = Nat
     Intensity = IN 0 .. 255
     P         = [x: Coord, y: Coord] WITH {"-":=PSub}       % Point
     C         = [r: Intensity, g: Intensity, b: Intensity]  % Color
     W         = P -> C                                      % Window

FUNC PSub(p1, p2) -> P = RET P{x := p1.x - p2.x, y := p1.y - p2.y}
```

The shape of the window is determined by the points where it is defined; obviously it need not be rectangular in this very general system. We have given a point a "-" method that computes the vector distance between two points.

A 'window system' consists of a sequence of `[w, offset: P]` pairs; we call a pair a `V`. The sequence defines the ordering of the windows (closer windows come first in the sequence); it is indexed by 'window number' `WN`. The `offset` gives the screen coordinate of the window's `(0, 0)` point, which we think of as its upper left corner. There are two main operations: `Paint(wn, p, c)` to set the value of `P` in window `wn`, and `Get(p)` to read the value of `p` in the topmost window where it is defined (that is, the first one in the sequence). The idea is that what you see (the result of `Get`) is the result of painting the windows from last to first, offsetting each one by its `offset` component and using the color that is painted later to completely overwrite one painted earlier. Of course real window systems have other operations to change the shape of windows, add, delete, and move them, change their order, and so forth, as well as ways for the window system to suggest that newly exposed parts of windows be repainted, but we won't consider any of these complications.

First we give the spec for a window system initialized with `n` empty windows. It is customary to call the coordinate system used by `Get` the screen coordinates. The `v.offset` field gives the screen coordinate that corresponds to `{0, 0}` in `v.w`. The `v.c(p)` method below gives the value of `v`'s window at the point corresponding to `p` after adjusting by `v`'s offset. The state `ws` is just the sequence of `V`'s. For simplicity we initialize them all with the same offset `{10, 5}`, which is not too realistic.

`Get` finds the smallest `WN` that is defined at `p` and uses that window's color at `p`. This corresponds to painting the windows from last (biggest `WN`) to first with opaque paint, which is what we wanted. `Paint` uses window rather than screen coordinates.

The state (the `VAR`) is a single sequence of windows.

```
TYPE WN          =  IN 0 .. n-1                              % Window Number
     V           =  [w, offset: P]                           % window on the screen
                    WITH {c:=(\ v, p | v.w(p - v.offset))}   % C of a screen point p

VAR  ws          := {i :IN 0..n-1 | | V{{}, P{10,5}}}        % the Window System

FUNC Get(p) -> C = VAR wn := {wn' | V.c!(ws(wn'), p)}.min | RET ws(wn).c(p)

PROC Paint(wn, p, c) = ws(wn).w(p) := c

END Window
```

Now we give an implementation that only keeps track of the visible color of each point (that is, it just keeps the pixels on the screen, not all the pixels in windows that are covered up by other windows). We only keep enough state to handle `Get` and `Paint`.

The state is one `W` that represents the screen, plus an `exposed` variable that keeps track of which window is exposed at each point, and the offsets of the windows. This is sufficient to implement `Get` and `Paint`; to deal with erasing points from windows we would need to keep more information about what other windows are defined at each point, so that `exposed` would have a type `P -> SET WN`. Alternatively, we could keep track for each window of where it is defined.

Real window systems usually do this, and represent `exposed` as a set of visible regions of the various windows. They also usually have a 'background' window that covers the whole screen, so that every point on the screen has some color defined; we have omitted this detail from the spec and the implementation.

We need a history variable `wH` that contains the `w` part of all the windows. The abstraction function just combines `wH` and `offset` to make `ws`. The important properties of the implementation are contained in the invariant, from which it's clear that `Get` returns the answer specified by `Window.Get`. Another way to do it is to have a history variable `wsH` that is equal to `ws`. This makes the abstraction function very simple, but then we need an invariant that says `offset(wn) = wsH(n).offset`. This is perfectly correct, but it's usually better to put as little stuff in history variables as possible.

MODULE WinImpl `EXPORT Get, Paint =`

```
VAR  w       :=  W{}                                  % no points defined
     exposed :   P -> WN := {}                        % which wn shows at p
     offset  :=  {i :IN 0..n-1 | | P(5, 10)}         %
     wH      :=  {i :IN 0..n-1 | | W{}}               % history variable

ABSTRACTION FUNCTION ws = (\ wn | V{w := wH(wn), offset := offset(wn)})

INVARIANT
     (ALL p |    w!p = exposed!p
             /\ (w!p ==>    {wn | V.c!(ws(wn), p)}.min = exposed(p)
                         /\ w(p) = ws(exposed(p)).c(p) ) )
```

The invariant says that each visible point comes from some window, `exposed` tells the topmost window that defines it, and its color is the color of the point in that window. Note that for convenience the invariant uses the abstraction function; of course we could have avoided this by expanding it in line, but there is no reason to do so, since the abstraction function is a perfectly good function.

```
FUNC Get(p) -> C = RET w(p)

PROC Paint(wn, p, c) =
     VAR p0 | p = p0 - offset(wn) =>                  % the screen coordinate
       IF wn <= exposed(p0) => w(p0) := c; exposed(p0) := wn [*] SKIP FI;
       wH(wn)(p) := c                                 % update the history var

END WinImpl
```

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Operators (§ 5, § 9)

Op	*Pr*	*Type*	x op y *is*
.	9	Any	x's y field/method
IS	8	Any	does x have type y?
AS	8	Any	x with type y
**	8	Int	x^y
*	7	Int	x × y
		set	x ∩ y (intersection)
		func	composition
		relation	composition
/	7	Int	x/y rounded to 0
//	7	Int	mod: x – (x/y)*y
+	6	Int	x + y
		set	x ∪ y (union)
		func	overlay
		seq	concatenation
-	6	Int	x – y
		set	set difference
		seq	multiset diff
!	6	func	x defined at y
!!	6	func	x!y ∧ x(y) not ex
..	5	Int	seq {x, x+1,..., y}
=	4	Any	x = y
#	4	Any	x ≠ y
==	4	seq	x = y as multisets
<=	4	Int	x ≤ y
		set	x ⊆ y (subset)
		seq	x a prefix of y
<<=	4	seq	x a sub-seq of y
IN	4	set/seq	x ∈ y (member)
~	3	Bool	not x (unary)
/\	2	Bool	x ∧ y (and)
\/	1	Bool	x ∨ y (or)
==>	0	Bool	x implies y

Operators associate to the left.

Expression forms (§ 5)

f(e)	func	function invocation
op : sq	set/seq	sq(0) op sq(1) …
(ALL x | pred)	Bool	pred(x1) ∧ … ∧ pred(xn)
(EXISTS x | pred)	Bool	pred(x1) ∨ … ∨ pred(xn)
(pred => e1 [*] e2)	Any	e1 if pred else e2

Constructors (§ 5)

{e1, …, en}	set	with these members
{i:Nat | i<3 | i**2}		of i^2's where i<3
f{e1 -> e2}	func	f except = e2 at arg e1
f{* -> e}		= e at every arg
(\i:Int | i<3)		lambda (also LAMBDA)
{e1, …, en}	seq	of e's in this order
{i :IN 0 .. 5 || i**2}		{0,1,4,9,16,25}
{i:=0 BY i+1 WHILE i<6||i**2}		same
(e1, …, en)	tuple	of e's in this order
r{f1:=e1, …, fn:=en}	record	r except f1 = e1 ...

Methods (§ 9)

set	*Ops:* * + - <= IN, op:	
	size	number of members
	choose	some member of s
	seq	s as some sequence
	pred	s.pred(x) = (x ∈ s)
	fmax/min	some max/min by f1
	max/min	some max/min by <=
set/seq	perms	set of all perms of sq
	fsort	sq sorted (q stably) by f1
	sort	sq sorted (q stably) by <=
func	*Ops:* * + ! !!	
	dom, rng	domain, range
	inv	inverse
	restrict	domain to set s1
	rel	r(x,y) = (f(x)=y)
predicate	set	s = {x | pred(x)}
relation	*Ops:* * and func +	
	dom, rng	domain, range
	inv	inverse
	setF	f(x) = {y | r(x,y)}
	func	f(x) = setF(x).choose
graph	isPath	is q1 a path in g?
	closure	transitive closure of g
seq	*Ops:* + - .. <= <<= IN, op:, func * !	
also see set/seq and func above	size	number of elements
	head	q(0)
	tail	{q(1),...,q(q.size-1)}
	remh	remove head = tail
	last	q(q.size-1)
	reml	{q(0),...,q(q.size-2)}
	sub	{q(i1),...,q(i2)}
	seg	{q(i1),...}, i2 elements
	fill	i2 copies of x1
	lexLE	q lexically <= q1 by f2?
	fsorter	perm sorts q stably by f1
	count	number of x1's in q
	set	q as a set, = q.rng
	tuple	tuple with q's values
uple	seq	seq with tu's values

Types (§ 4)

Any, Null, Bool, Int, Nat, Char, String	basic
SET T, IN s	set
T1 -> T2	func
APROC T1 -> T2	procs
PROC T1 -> T2	
SEQ T	seq
(T1, . . . , Tn)	tuple
[f1: T1, …, fn: Tn]	record
(T1 + … + Tn)	union
T WITH {m1:=f1, …}	add methods
T SUCHTHAT pred	limit values

Commands (§ 6)

	Pr	
SKIP, HAVOC, RET e, RAISE ex		simple
p(e)		invocation
x := e, x := p(e), (x1, ...) := e		assignment
c1 EXCEPT ex=>c2	3	handle ex
c1 ; c2	2	sequential
VAR n: T | c	1	new var n
pred => c	1	if (guarded cmd)
c1 [] c2	0	or (ND choice)
c1 [*] c2	0	else
<< c >>		atomic c
BEGIN c END		brackets
IF c FI		
DO c OD		loop until fail

Command operators associate to the left, but EXCEPT associates to the right.

Modules (§ 7)

```
MODULE/CLASS M
  [T1 WITH {m1: T11->T12, …}, …]
  EXPORT n1, … =

TYPE T1 = SET T2
     T3 = ENUM[n1, …]
CONST n: T := e
VAR   n: T := e
EXCEPTION ex = {ex11, …} + ex2 + …
FUNC f(n1: T1, …) -> T = c
APROC, PROC, THREAD similarly
END M
```

Naming conventions (except in 'Operators')

c	command	op	operator
e	expression	p	proccedure
ex	exception	*Pr*	precedence
f	function, field	q	sequence
g	graph	r	record, relation
i	Int	s	set
m	method	T	type
n	name	x	Any

zi ith extra argument of a method, or one of several like non-terminals in a rule

§ a section of the Spec reference manual

How to Write a Spec

Figure out what the state is.

Choose the state to make the spec simple and clear, not to match the code.

Describe the actions.

What they do to the state.

What they return.

Helpful hints

Notation is important, because it helps you to think about what's going on.
Invent a suitable vocabulary.

Less is more. Less state is better. Fewer actions are better.

More non-determinism is better, because it allows more implementations.
In distributed systems, replace the separate nodes with non-determinism in the spec.

Pass the coffee-stain test: people should want to read the spec.

I'm sorry I wrote you such a long letter; I didn't have time to write a short one. Pascal

How to Design an Implementation

Write the spec first.

Dream up the idea of the implementation.

Embody the key idea in the abstraction function.

Check that each implementation action simulates some spec actions.

Add invariants to make this easier. Each action must maintain them.

Change the implementation (or the spec, or the abstraction function) until this works.

Make the implementation correct first, then efficient.

More efficiency means more complicated invariants.

You might need to change the spec to get an efficient implementation.

Measure first before making anything faster.

An efficient program is an exercise in logical brinkmanship. — Dijkstra