

CS5733 Program Synthesis

#1. Introduction and Overview

Ashish Mishra

Instructor



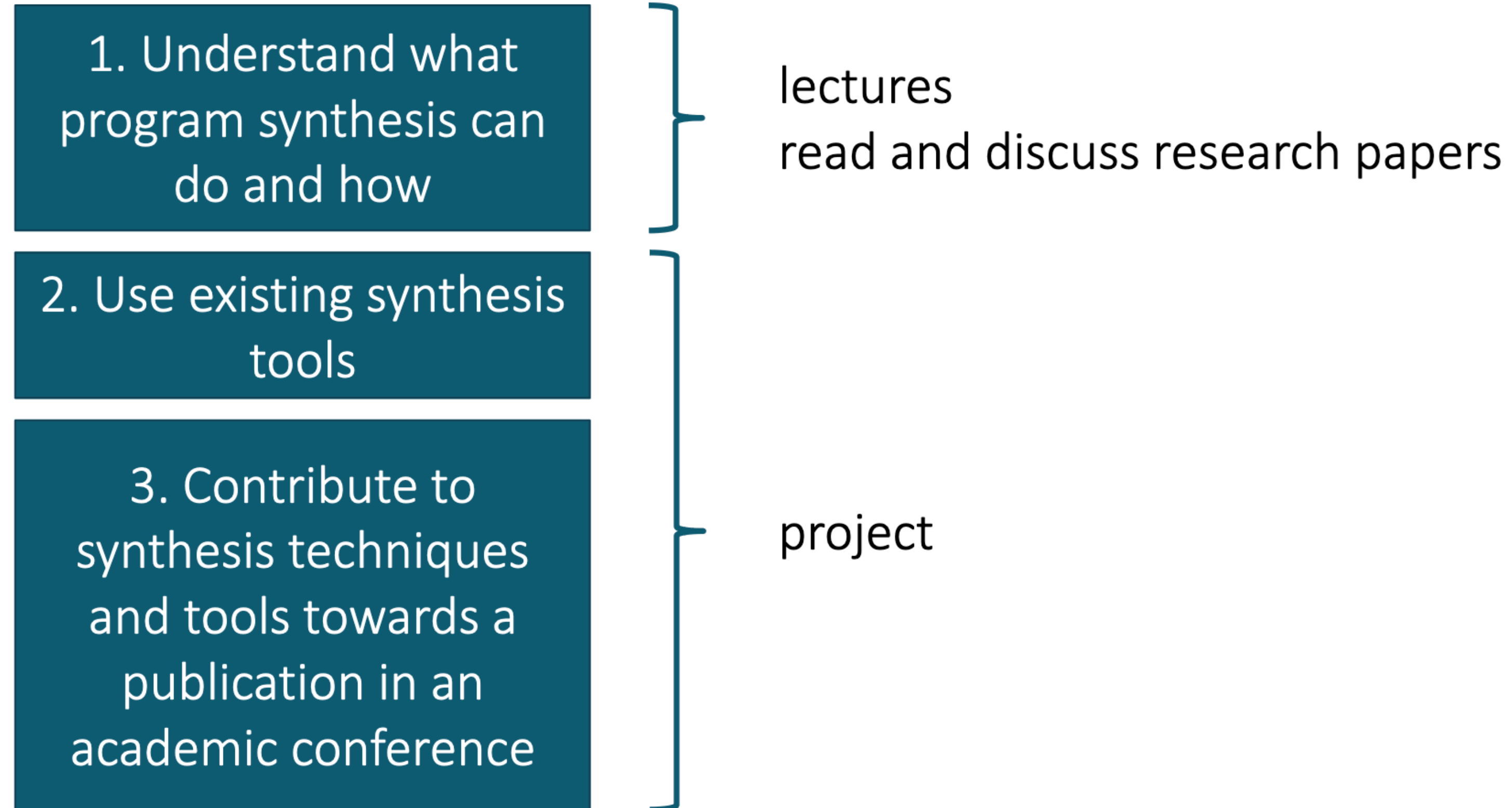
Ashish Mishra

- Asst. Professor at CSE
- Before: Postdoc, Purdue CS, Programming Languages Group.
- Even before: IISc, CSA, PhD
- Research Goal: Help programmers write correct and trustworthy software.
- Areas: Programming Languages, Program Verification, Synthesis.

Logistics

- Lecture:
 - When: Tuesdays 2:30 - 3:55 pm, Fridays 4:00 - 5:25 pm
 - Where: C-LH5
- Course Website: Please register on Google Classroom link.
 - <https://aegis-iisc.github.io/cs5733/>
- Office Hours:
 - After the class OR with appointment a few hours before.

Goals and Activities



Evaluation

- Class Participation : 5%
 - Ask/answer questions in class
 - Participate in discussions on Classroom
- Paper Reviews : 25 %
 - 10 papers
- Midterm : 20 %
- Final Course Project : 50 %
 - Team formed by deadline: 5%
 - 1-page project proposal: 15%
 - Project presentation: 15%
 - Final report: 15%

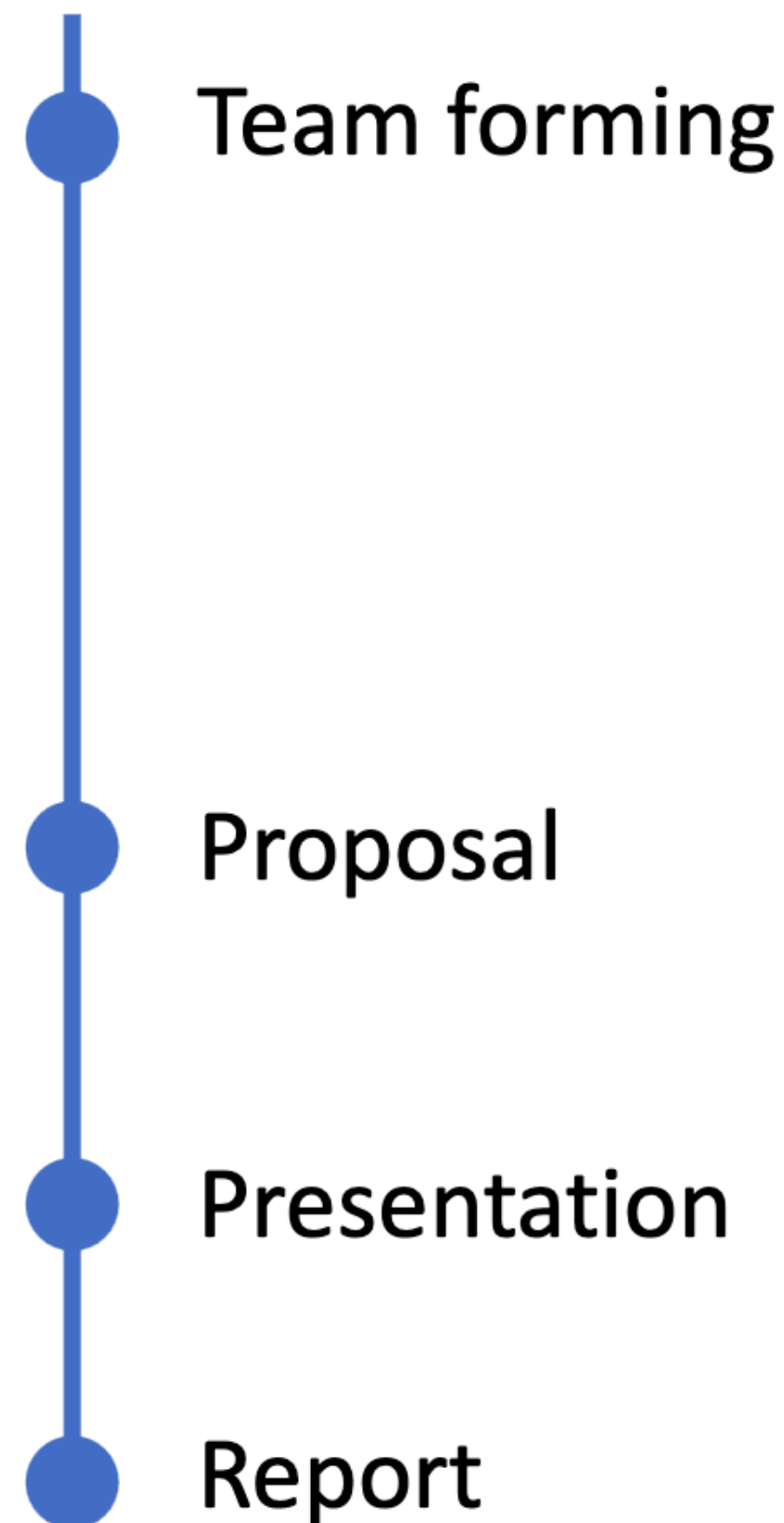
Paper Reviews

- Due on Wed of weeks 2 onwards, by the end of the day
- First review due next week
 - Posted on the Reading List at least a week before due date
- Reviews submitted via a Google Form: see course page
 - Link posted on Reading List (add this to the page)
- Review content: see course page
- Discussion:
 - before due date: discuss on Google Classroom
 - after due date: discuss in class

Project

- Kinds of projects:
 - Re-implement techniques from a paper
 - Apply existing synthesis framework to a new domain
 - Extend/improve existing synthesis algorithm or tool
 - Develop a new synthesis algorithm or tool ...
- Judged in terms of
 - Quality of execution
 - Originality
 - Scope

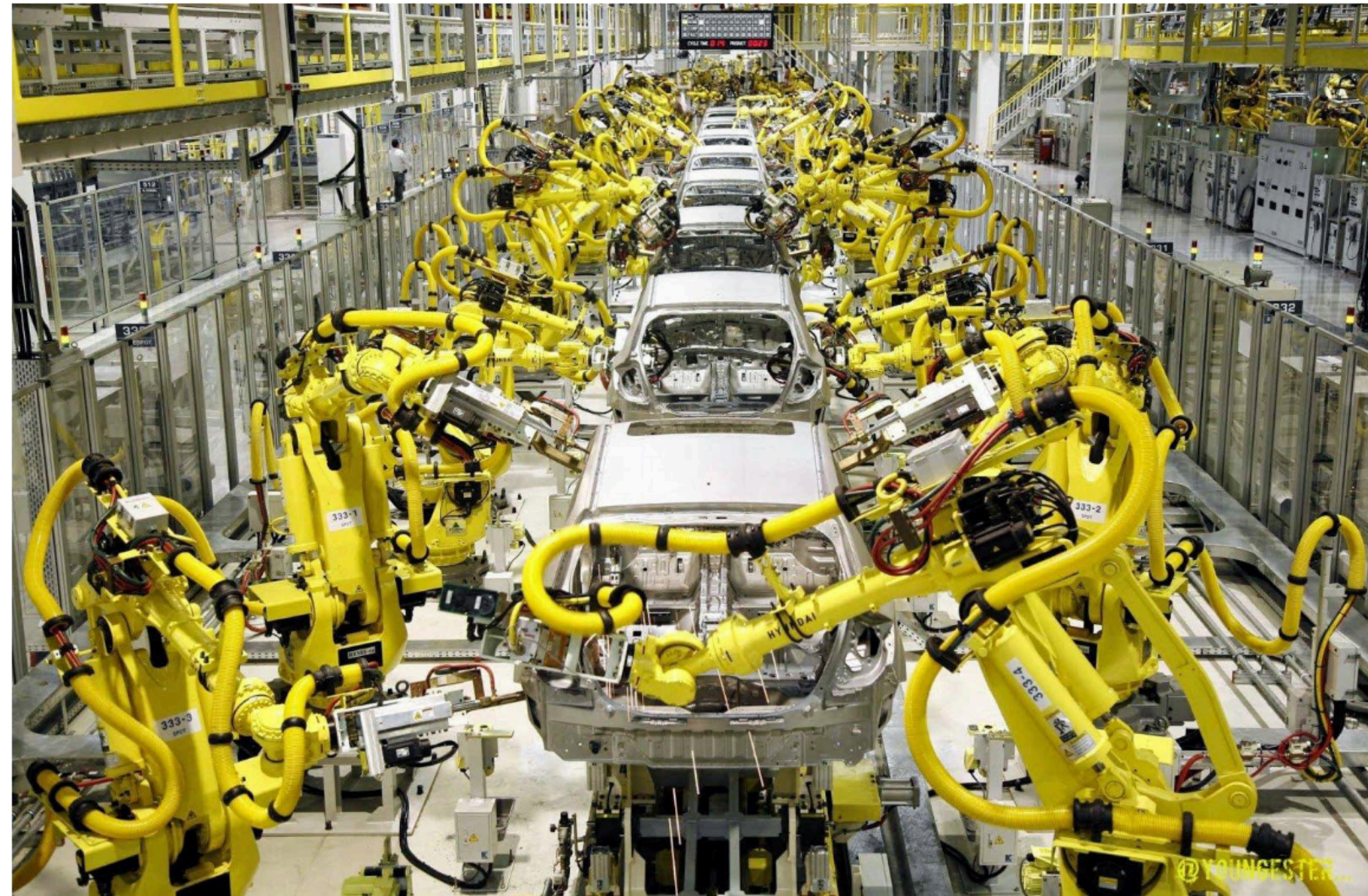
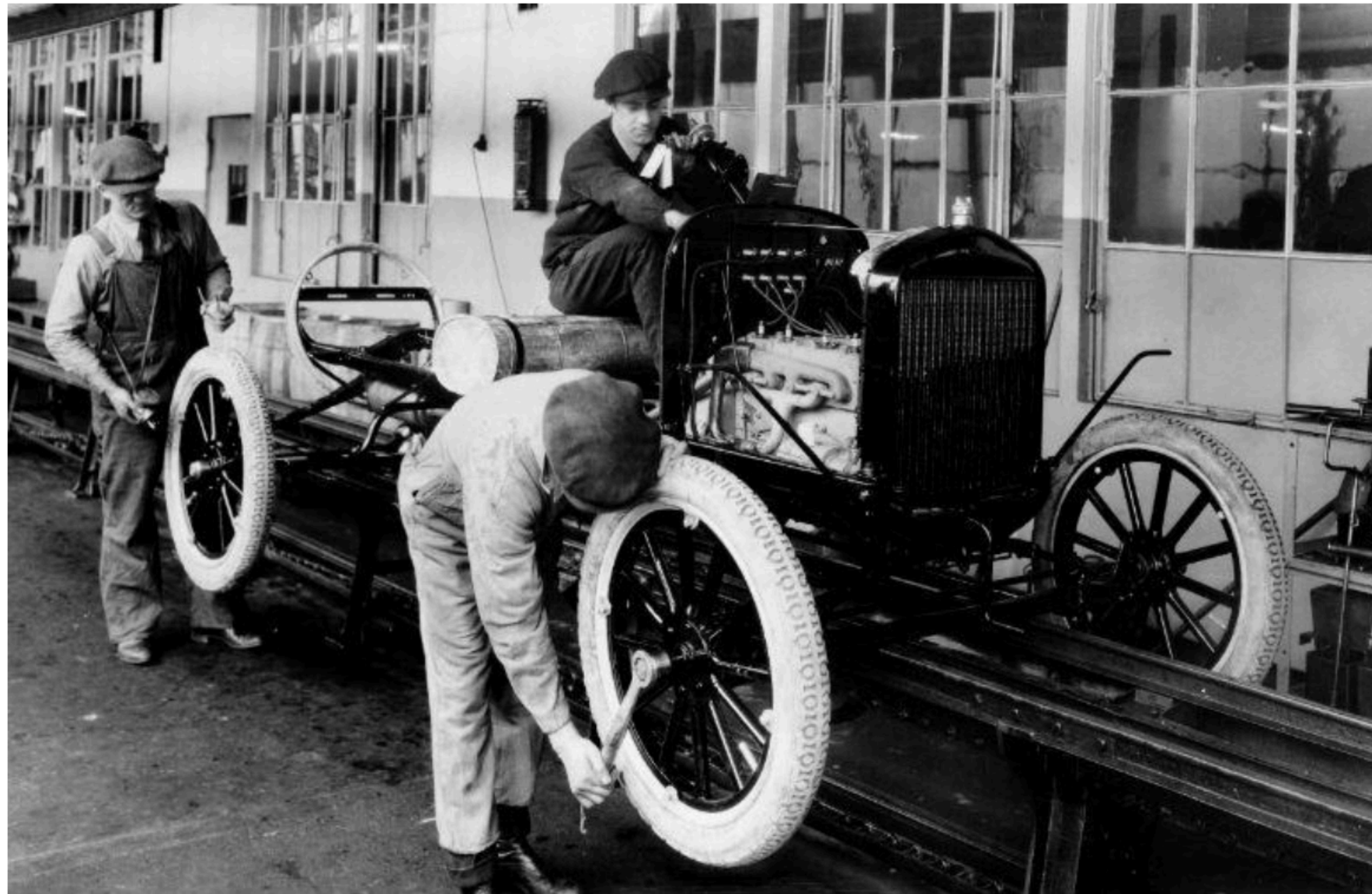
Project



- Teams of 1-2
- Pick a project:
 - List of suggested projects coming soon on Google Classroom
 - Please talk to me!
- One page: explain what you plan to do and give some evidence that you've started to work on it
- Presentations in last few classes
 - ~10-15 min per project
 - 3-8 pages, structured like a research paper

Lets begin the good stuff...

The goal: Automated Programming



A classic goal

The FORTRAN Automatic Coding System

J. W. BACKUS†, R. J. BEEBER†, S. BEST†, R. GOLDBERG†, L. M. HAIBT†,
H. L. HERRICK†, R. A. NELSON†, D. SAYRE†, P. B. SHERIDAN†,
H. STERN†, I. ZILLER†, R. A. HUGHES§, AND R. NUTT||

INTRODUCTION

THE FORTRAN project was begun in the summer of 1954. Its purpose was to reduce by a large factor the task of preparing scientific problems for IBM's next large computer, the 704. If it were possible for the 704 to code problems for itself and produce as

system is now complete. It has two components: the FORTRAN language, in which programs are written, and the translator or executive routine for the 704 which effects the translation of FORTRAN language programs into 704 programs. Descriptions of the FORTRAN language and the translator form the principal

On the Synthesis of a Reactive Module

Amir Pnueli and Roni Rosner*
Department of Computer Science
The Weizmann Institute of Science
Rehovot 76100, Israel
amir@wisdom.bitnet, roni@wisdom.bitnet

Abstract

We consider the synthesis of a reactive module with input x and output y , which is specified by the linear temporal formula $\varphi(x, y)$. We show that there exists a program satisfying φ iff the branching time formula $(\forall x)(\exists y)A\varphi(x, y)$ is valid over all tree models. For the restricted case that all variables range over finite domains, the validity problem is decidable, and we present an algorithm for constructing the pro-

gram with input x and output y , specified by the formula $\varphi(x, y)$, is constructed as a by-product of proving the theorem $(\forall x)(\exists y)\varphi(x, y)$. The specification $\varphi(x, y)$ characterizes the expected relation between the input x presented to the program and the output y computed by the program. For example, the specification for a root extracting program may be presented by the formula $|x - y^2| < \epsilon$.

This approach, which may be called the AE-

IEEE TRANSACTIONS ON SOFTWARE ENGINEERING, VOL. SE-5, NO. 4, JULY 1979

Synthesis: Dreams \Rightarrow Programs

ZOHAR MANNA AND RICHARD WALDINGER

techniques are presented for deriving programs given specifications. The specifications express the desired program without giving any hint of the algorithm. The basic approach is to transform the specifications according to certain rules, until a satisfactory pro-

INTRODUCTION

IN RECENT years there has been increasing activity in the field of program verification. The goal of these efforts is to construct computer systems for determining whether a

What is Program Synthesis



- Automatically finding programs
 - from the underlying programming language/set of components.
 - satisfying the user intent, expressed using some constraints.

This sounds familiar: Compiler/Logic Prog/ML

- Compilers:

- Fully specified High-Level code  Low-level machine rep.
- Syntax-directed translation.

Synthesis: discover *how* to perform the desired task. Some notion of *Search*

- Logic Programming

- dream: express the requirements in a logical form.
- generic algorithm for all problems.

- ML

- Find a function/learned model, whose behavior closely matches the dataset.
- the space of functions that the algorithm considers is very tightly prescribed
 - linear classifiers, decision trees and neural networks

Synthesis: general algorithms for general classes of programs, that support recursion or other forms of iteration

```

append:
  push ebp
  mov ebp, esp
  push eax
  push ebx
  push len
  call malloc
  mov ebx, [ebp + 12]
  mov [eax + info], ebx
  mov dword [eax + next], 0
  mov ebx, [ebp + 8]
  cmp dword [ebx], 0
  je null_pointer
  mov ebx, [ebx]

next_element:
  cmp dword [ebx + next], 0
  je found_last
  mov ebx, [ebx + next]
  jmp next_element

found_last:
  push eax
  push addMes
  call puts
  add esp, 4
  pop eax
  mov [ebx + next], eax

go_out:
  pop ebx
  pop eax
  mov esp, ebp
  pop ebp
  ret 8

null_pointer:
  push eax
  push nullMes
  call puts
  add esp, 4
  pop eax
  mov [ebx], eax
  jmp go_out

```

Assembly

```

void insert(node *xs, int x) {
  node *new;
  node *temp;
  node *prev;

  new = (node *)malloc(sizeof(node));
  if(new == NULL) {
    printf("Insufficient memory.");
    return;
  }
  new->val = x;
  new->next = NULL;
  if (xs == NULL) {
    xs = new;
  } else if(x < xs->val) {
    new->next = xs;
    xs = new;
  } else {
    prev = xs;
    temp = xs->next;
    while(temp != NULL && x > temp->val) {
      prev = temp;
      temp = temp->next;
    }
    if(temp == NULL) {
      prev->next = new;
    } else {
      new->next = temp;
      prev->next = new;
    }
  }
}

```

C

```

insert x [] = [x]
insert x (y:ys)
  | x ≤ y    = x:y:ys
  | otherwise = y:(insert x ys)

```

Haskell

“Any sufficiently advanced compiler is indistinguishable from a synthesizer”

?

modern program synthesis



Synthesis: Example

Library/Language

library

sort: list -> list

reverse: list -> list

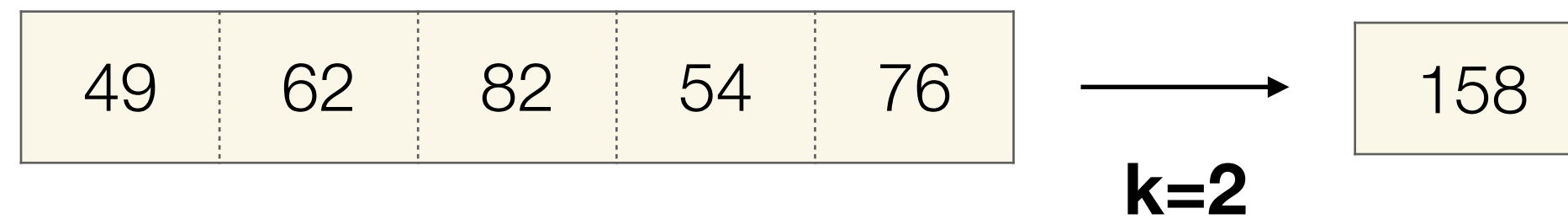
take: list -> int -> list

sum: list -> int

query

best_ksum: (l : list) -> (k : int) -> int

i/o examples



User Intent

```
best_ksum l k = sum ( take ( reverse ( sort l ) ) k )
```


Modern Program Synthesis: FlashFill



FlashFill: A Feature of Excel 2013

[Gulwani 2011]

Table116

Column1	Col 2	Col 3	Col 4	Col 5	Col 6
Ana Trujillo	357 21th Place SE,Redmond,WA,(757) 555-1634,140-37-6064,27171	Redmond	WA	(757) 555-1634	140-37-6064 27171
Antonio Moreno	515 93th Lane ,Renton,WA,(411) 555-2786,562-87-3127,28581				
Thomas Hardy	742 17th Street NE,Seattle,WA,(412) 555-5719,921-29-4931,24607				
Christina Berglund	475 22th Lane ,Redmond,WA,(443) 555-6774,844-35-6764,30146				
Hanna Moos	785 45th Street NE,Puyallup,WA,(376) 555-2462,515-68-1285,29284				
Frédérique Citeaux	308 66th Place ,Redmond,WA,(689) 555-2770,552-23-2508,21415				
Martín Sommer	887 86th Place ,Kent,WA,(715) 555-5450,870-91-9824,21536				
Laurence Lebihan	944 13th Street NE,Redmond,WA,(620) 555-2361,649-25-5312,25252				
Elizabeth Lincoln	452 73th Lane NE,Renton,WA,(851) 555-4561,425-97-6344,22279				
Victoria Ashworth	463 16th Street ,Renton,WA,(696) 555-6044,690-29-7926,22832				
Patricio Simpson	630 20th Street ,Redmond,WA,(179) 555-3265,389-78-3236,24525				
Francisco Chang	683 49th Lane ,Seattle,WA,(272) 555-7434,665-18-6435,29453				
Yang Wang	944 28th Lane ,Redmond,WA,(151) 555-2272,846-78-8452,24388				
Pedro Afonso	411 70th Place ,Kent,WA,(170) 555-2964,774-35-2298,29485				
Elizabeth Brown	971 20th Lane ,Puyallup,WA,(373) 555-4134,476-53-7164,26417				
Sven Ottlleb	676 17th Lane NE,Redmond,WA,(828) 555-1593,548-73-8633,27440				
Janine Labrune	267 95th Place SE,Seattle,WA,(949) 555-1316,350-27-8300,28074				
Ann Devon	694 53th Place ,Kent,WA,(194) 555-8124,559-74-4016,22367				
Roland Mendel	581 12th Street NW,Kent,WA,(103) 555-2146,303-79-1328,20518				
Aria Cruz	594 85th Lane ,Renton,WA,(431) 555-1376,329-93-9992,21498				
Diego Roel	550 22th Lane ,Renton,WA,(639) 555-6238,918-34-5172,25931				
Martine Rancé	688 93th Place NW,Kent,WA,(573) 555-3571,695-94-3479,22424				

Ready Average: 27171 Count: 27 Sum: 27171 106%

FlashFill: A Feature of Excel 2013

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Ready | Average: 27171 | Count: 132 | Sum: 27171 | 106%

Under the hood

Automating String Processing in Spreadsheets Using Input-Output Examples

Sumit Gulwani

Microsoft Research, Redmond, WA, USA

sumitg@microsoft.com

Abstract

We describe the design of a string programming/expression language that supports restricted forms of regular expressions, conditionals and loops. The language is expressive enough to represent a wide variety of string manipulation tasks that end-users struggle with. We describe an algorithm based on several novel concepts for synthesizing a desired program in this language from input-output

their task [9]. More significantly, programmers can perform tedious and repetitive tasks such as cleaning names/phone-numbers/dates from one file or document, etc. Spreadsheet systems allow users to write macros using a rich inbuilt library of numerical functions, or to write arbitrary scripts

The Story of the Flash Fill Feature in Excel

by Sumit Gulwani on Sep 14, 2021 | Tags: Flash Fill, MIP award, program synthesis, Programming by Examples

Excel 2013's coolest new feature that should have been available years ago"

Email	Last Name
Airplane.Lady@lufthansa.com	Lady
Excel.Team@microsoft.com	Team
Rishabh.Singh@mit.edu	Singh
Vu.Le@ucdavis.edu	Le
Alex.Polozov@uw.edu	Polozov
Rico.Malvar@microsoft.com	Malvar
Ben.Zorn@microsoft.com	Zorn
Piali.Choudhury@microsoft.com	Choudhury
Dany.Rouhana@microsoft.com	Rouhana
Shobana.Balakrishnan@microsoft.com	Balakrishnan
Vasudev.Gulwani@gmail.com	Gulwani
Sumay.Gulwani@gmail.com	Gulwani
Mooly.Sagiv@acm.org	Sagiv

Automating String Processing in Spreadsheets Using Input-Output Examples

Sumit Gulwani
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Abstract

We describe the design of a string programming/expression language that supports restricted forms of regular expressions, conditionals and loops. The language is expressive enough to represent a wide variety of string manipulation tasks that end-users struggle with. We describe an algorithm based on several novel concepts for synthesizing a desired program in this language from input-output examples. The synthesis algorithm is very efficient taking a fraction of a second for various benchmark examples. The synthesis algorithm is interactive and has several desirable features: it can rank multiple solutions and it supports an active interaction model wherein the user is prompted to provide outputs on inputs that may have multiple computational interpretations.

their task [9]. More significantly, programming is still required to perform tedious and repetitive tasks such as transforming entries like names/phone-numbers/dates from one format to another, data cleansing, extracting data from several text files or web pages into a single document, etc. Spreadsheet systems like Microsoft Excel allow users to write macros using a rich inbuilt library of string and numerical functions, or to write arbitrary scripts using a variety of programming languages like Visual Basic, or .Net. Since end-users are not proficient in programming, they find it too difficult to write desired macros or scripts. We have performed an extensive case study of spreadsheet help forums and identified that string processing is one of the most common class of programming problems that languages like Perl, Python, etc. do not solve well. This is not surprising given that languages like Perl,

FlashFill++: Scaling Programming by Example by Cutting to the Chase

JOSÉ CAMBRONERO*, Microsoft, USA

SUMIT GULWANI*, Microsoft, USA

VU LE*, Microsoft, USA

Major Idea is VSAs

Modern Program Synthesis: Sketch [Solar-Lezama 2013]

- Problem: isolate the least significant zero bit in a word
 - example: 0010 0101 → 0000 0010
- Easy to implement with a loop

```
int W = 32;
bit[W] isolate0 (bit[W] x) { // W: word size
    bit[W] ret = 0;
    for (int i = 0; i < W; i++)
        if (!x[i]) { ret[i] = 1; return ret; }
}
```

- Can this be done more efficiently with bit manipulation?
 - Trick: adding 1 to a string of ones turns the next zero to a 1
 - i.e. 000111 + 1 = 001000

Sketch: space of possible implementations

```
/**  
 * Generate the set of all bit-vector expressions  
 * involving +, &, xor and bitwise negation (~).  
 */
```

Missing constants!

```
generator bit[W] gen(bit[W] x){  
  if(??) return x;  
  if(??) return ??;  
  if(??) return ~gen(x);  
  if(??){  
    return { | gen(x) (+ | & | ^) gen(x) | };  
  }  
}
```

Sketch Idea : program space as a parametric program $P[c]$

Different values of c gives different program in the space

translate requirements on the behavior of the program $P[c]$ into constraints on the parameters c .

Any value of c that satisfies the constraints is guaranteed to lead to a program satisfying all the requirements.

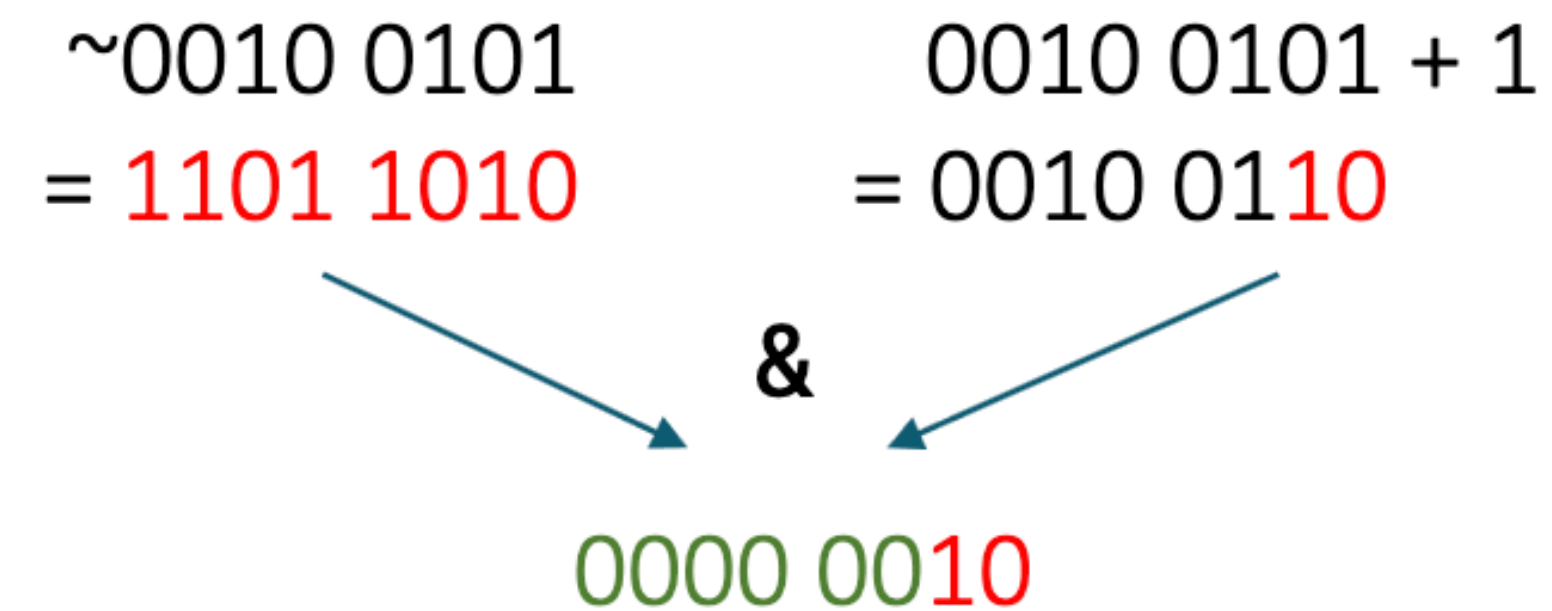
Sketch: synthesis goal

```
generator bit[W] gen(bit[W] x, int depth){
    assert depth > 0;
    if(??) return x;
    if(??) return ??;
    if(??) return ~gen(x, depth-1);
    if(??){
        return { | gen(x, depth-1) (+ | & | ^) gen(x, depth-1) | };
    }
}

bit[W] isolate0fast (bit[W] x) implements isolate0 {
    return gen(x, 3);
}
```

Sketch: output

```
bit[W] isolate0fast (bit[W] x) {  
    return (~x) & (x + 1);  
}
```



Modern Program Synthesis: Synquid

[Polikarpova et al. 2016]

Problem: intersection of sets represented as strictly sorted lists

- example: intersect [4, 8, 15, 16, 23, 42] [8, 16, 32, 64] → [8, 16]

Also: we want a guarantee that it's correct on all inputs!

Synquid: synthesis goal and components

Step 1: define synthesis goal as a *type*

`intersect :: xs:List a → ys:List a → List a`

sorted list

the set of elements

Step 2: define a set of components

- Which primitive operations is our function likely to use?
- Here: {`Nil`, `Cons`, `<`}

Synquid Output

```
intersection = \xs . \ys .
  match xs with
  Nil -> xs
  Cons x xt ->
    match ys with
    Nil -> ys
    Cons y yt ->
      if x < y
      then intersection xt ys
      else
        if y < x
        then intersection xs yt
        else Cons x (intersection xt yt)
```

	xs	ys	result
	[4, 8, 15, 16, 23, 42]	[8, 16, 32, 64]	
	[8, 15, 16, 23, 42]	[8, 16, 32, 64]	[8]
	[15, 16, 23, 42]	[16, 32, 64]	
	[16, 23, 42]	[16, 32, 64]	[8, 16]
	[23, 42]	[32, 64]	
	[42]	[32, 64]	
	[42]	[64]	
	[]	[64]	

Modern Program Synthesis: GitHub Copilot

```
// find all images
// and add a green border around them
// and add class "githubCopilot" to them
function go() {

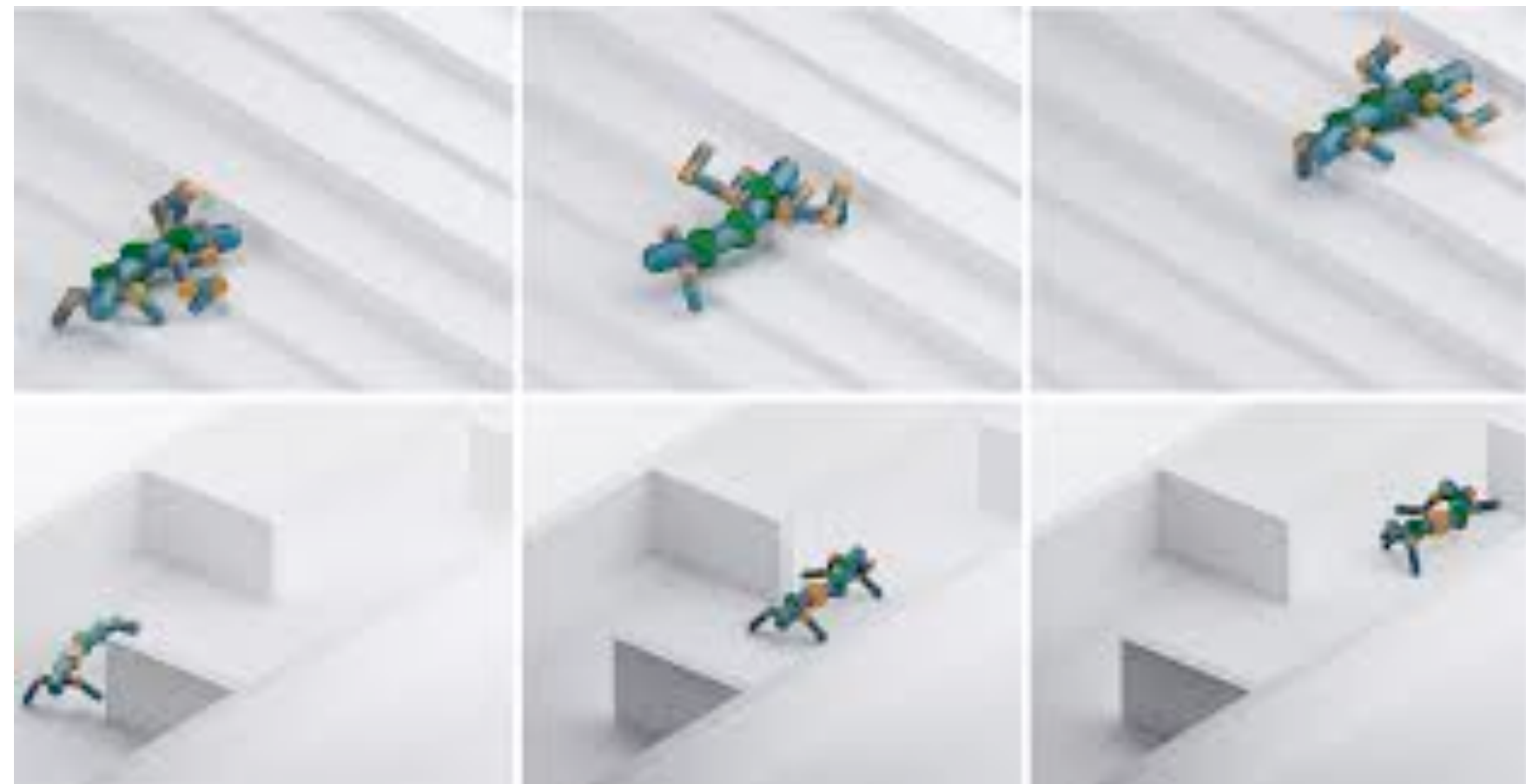
  var images = document.getElementsByTagName('img');
  for (var i = 0; i < images.length; i++) {
    if (images[i].className.indexOf('githubCopilot') == -1) {
      images[i].className += ' githubCopilot';
      images[i].style.border = '1px solid green';
    }
  }
}
```

input

output

Other Program Synthesis Successes

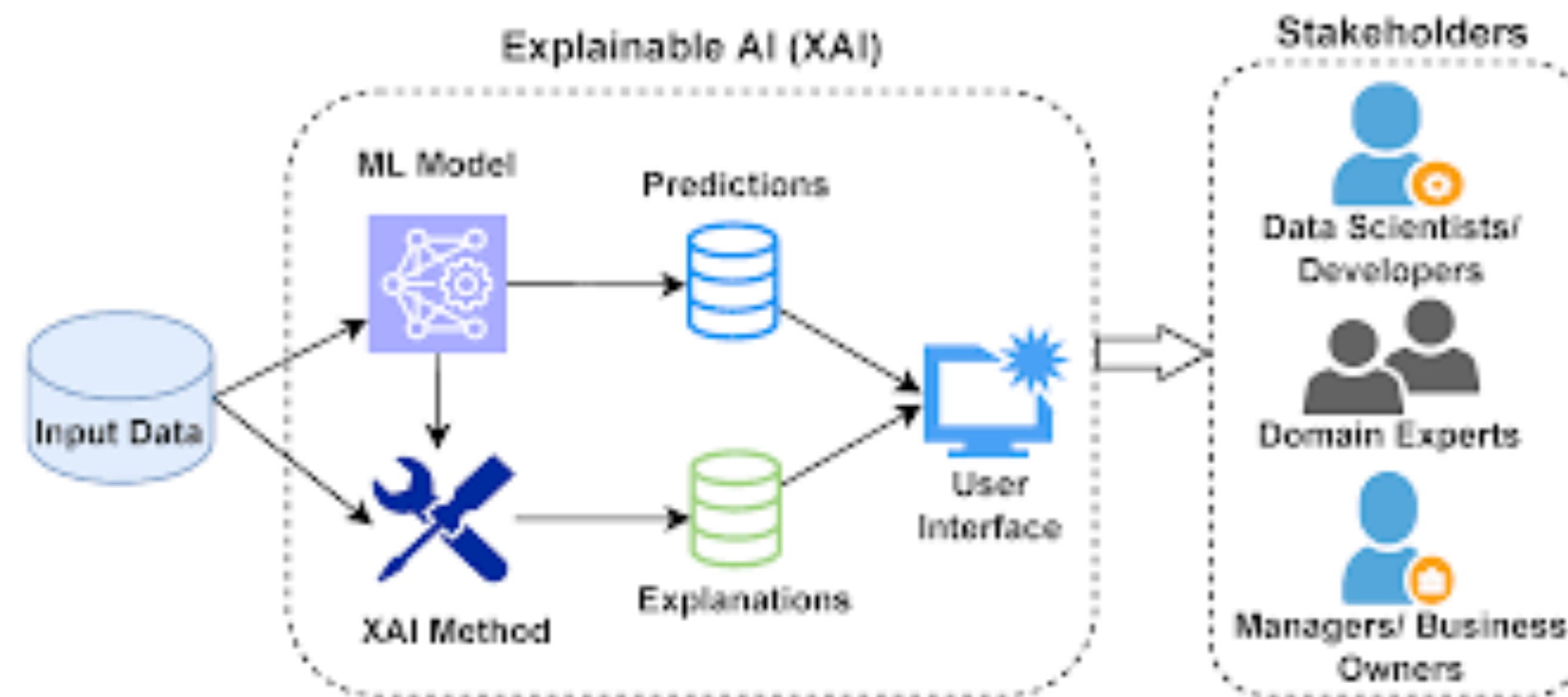
Robotics design and path planning



Data Migration

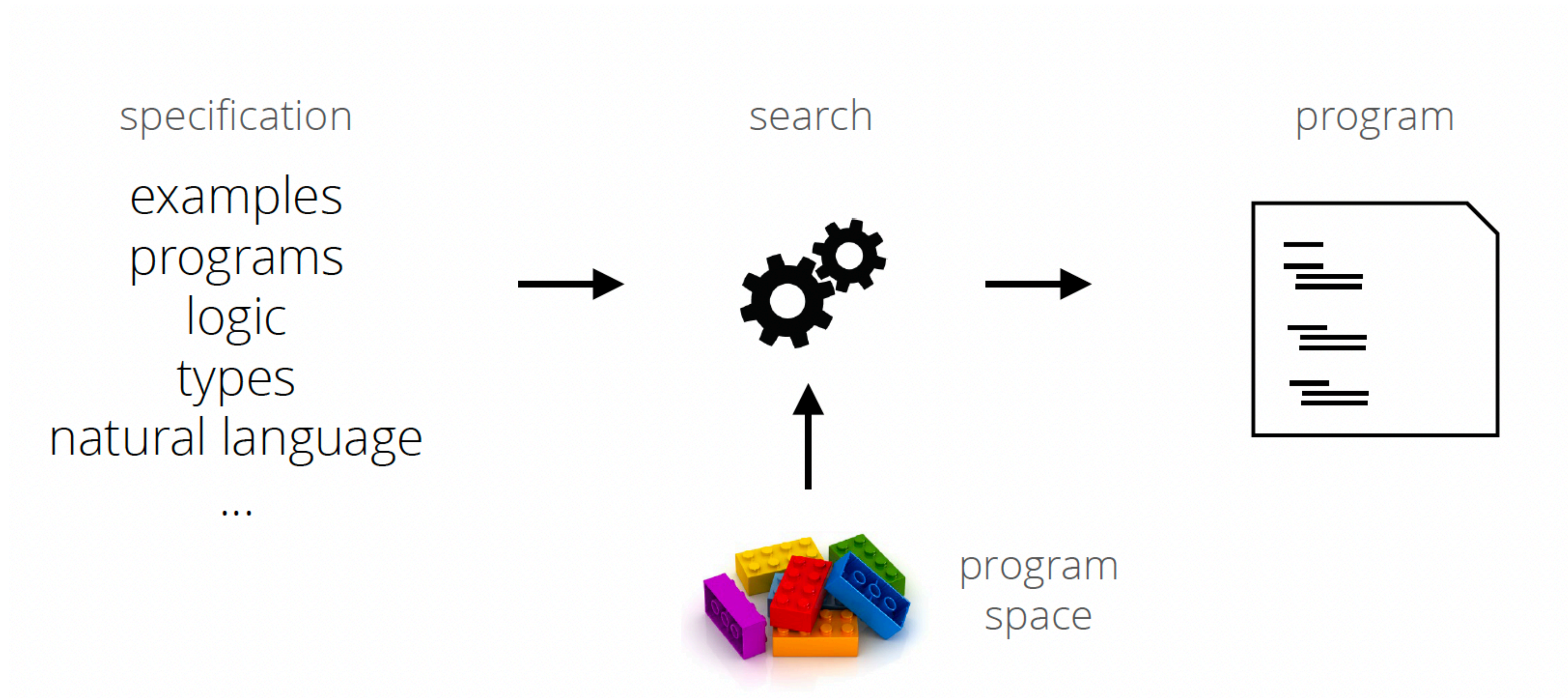


Explainable AI (XAI)



Clement, T. et. al. 2023

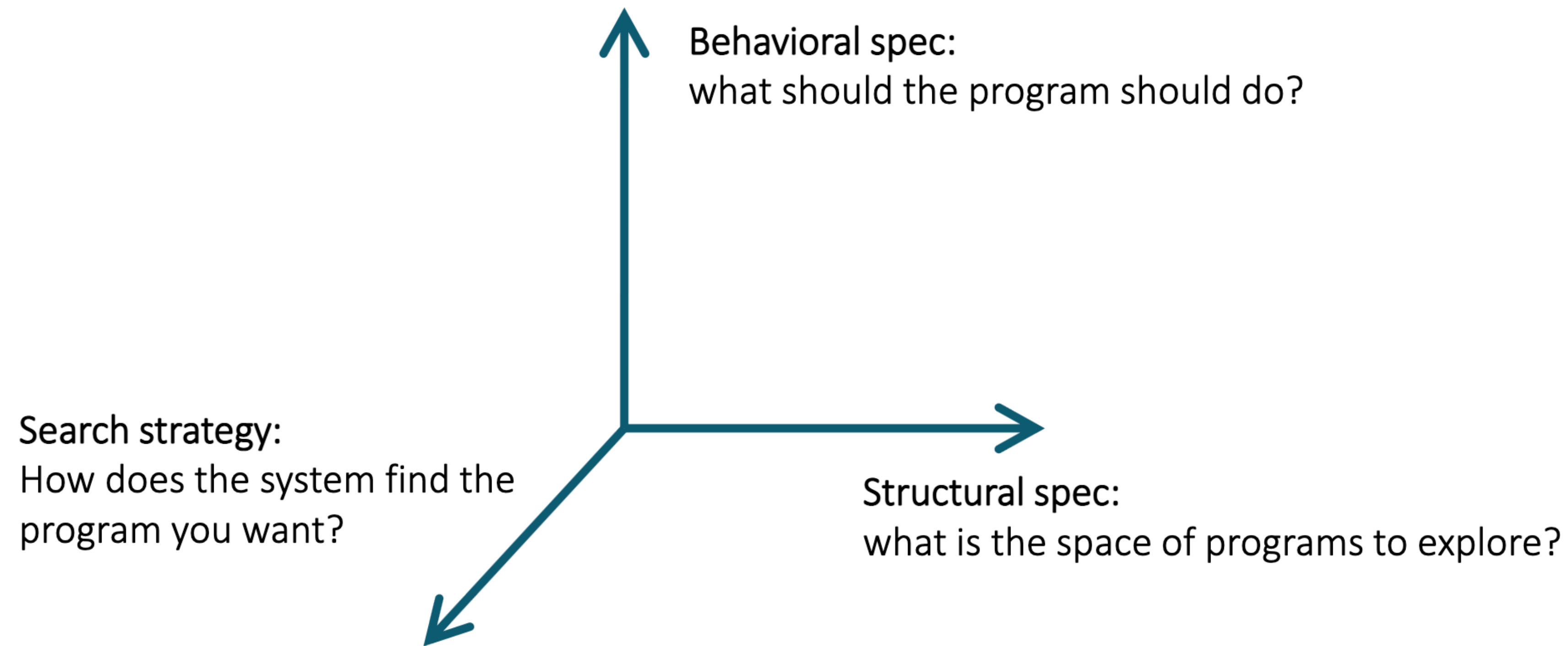
Program Synthesis



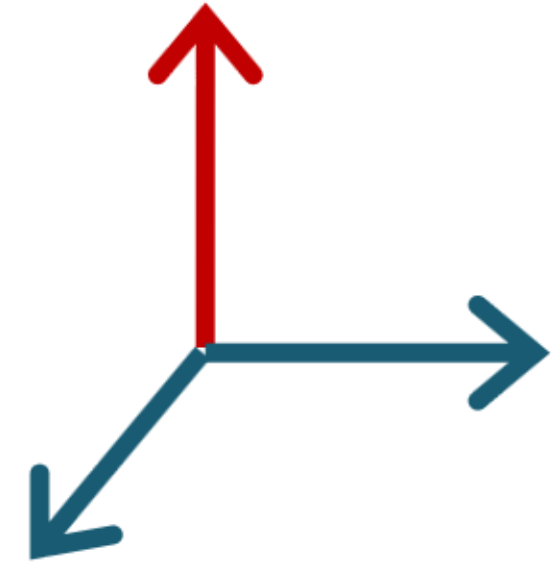
Notice the Duality with Program Verification

Dimensions in Program Synthesis

[Gulwani 2010]



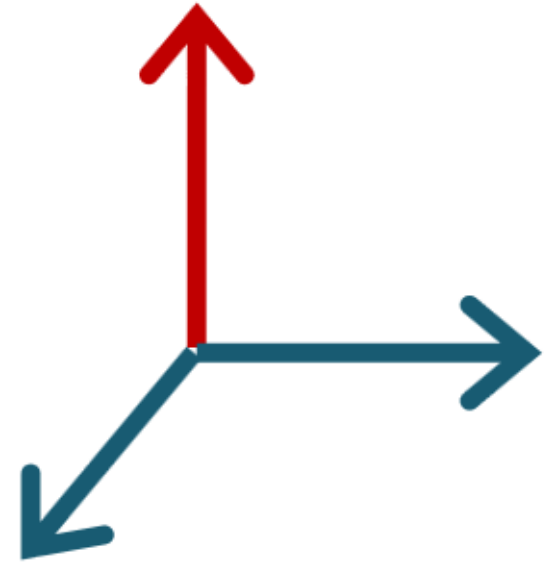
Behavioral Spec



- How do you tell the system what the program should do?
 - What is the input language / format?
 - What is the interaction model?
 - What happens when the intent is ambiguous?

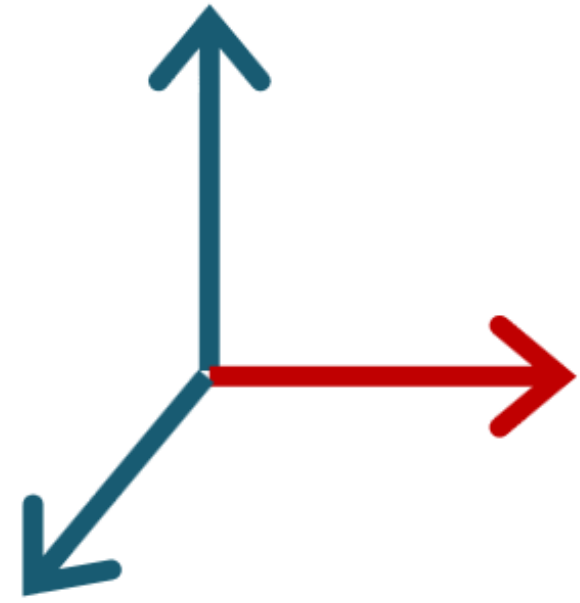
Q: What did the behavioral spec look like in FlashFill / Sketch / Synquid / Copilot?

Behavioral Spec: Examples



- Input/output examples
- Reference implementation
- Formal specifications (pre/post conditions, types, ...)
- Natural language
- Context

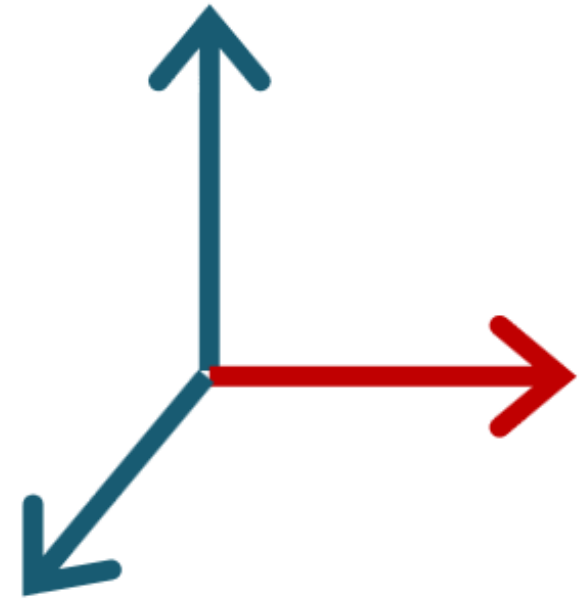
Structural Spec



- What is the space of programs to explore?
 - Large enough to contain interesting programs, yet small enough to exclude garbage and enable efficient search
 - Built-in or user-defined or learned from existing code?

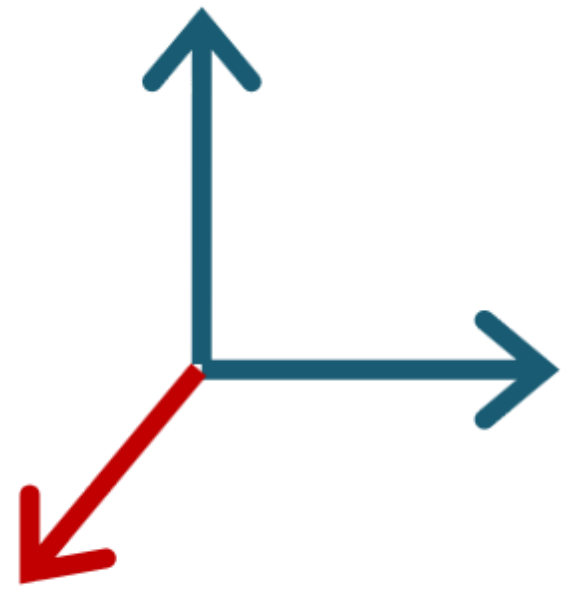
Q: What did the structural spec look like in FlashFill / Sketch / Synquid / Copilot?

Structural Spec: Examples



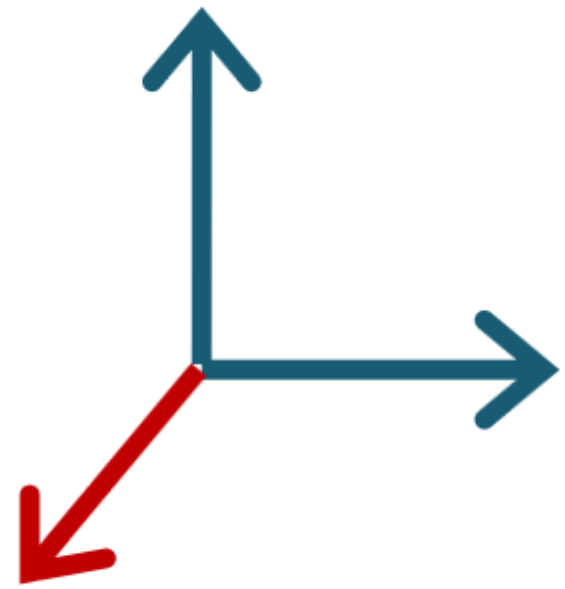
- Built-in DSLs — e.g. DSL for mathematical expressions/ Excel
- User-defined DSL (grammar)
- User-provided components. — Component-based synthesis —
- Languages with synthesis constructs
 - e.g. generators in Sketch
- Learned language model

Search Strategies



- Synthesis is search:
 - Find a program in the space defined by structural constraints that satisfies behavioral constraints
- Challenge: the space is astronomically large
 - The search algorithm is the heart of a synthesis technique
- How does the system find the program you want?
 - How does it know it's the program you want?
 - How can it leverage structural constraints to guide the search?
 - How can it leverage behavioral constraints to guide the search?

Search Strategies: Examples



- Enumerative (explicit) search
 - exhaustively enumerate all programs in the language in the order of increasing size
- Deductive
 - Top-down search with recursive reduction of problem to smaller ones.
- Stochastic and Statistical search
 - random exploration of the search space guided by a fitness function
- Representation-based search
 - use a data structure to represent a large set of programs
- Constraint-based search
 - translate to constraints and use a solve

Applications

- Data Wrangling

- Transformations

- Syntactic String Transformations

FirstName.LastName@domain \rightarrow Firstname Lastname

- Semantic Transformations

selling price =

$f(\text{Name, Selling date, MarkupRec, CostRec})$

- Splitting Table Transformations

- Extractions

- Layouts

	A	B
1	Email	Column 2
2	Nancy.FreeHafer@fourthcoffee.com	nancy freehafer
3	Andrew.Cencici@northwindtraders.com	andrew cencici
4	Jan.Kotas@litwareinc.com	jan kotas
5	Mariya.Sergienko@gradicdesigninstitute.com	mariya sergienko
6	Steven.Thorpe@northwindtraders.com	steven thorpe
7	Michael.Neipper@northwindtraders.com	michael neipper
8	Robert.Zare@northwindtraders.com	robert zare
9	Laura.Giussani@adventure-works.com	laura giussani
10	Anne.HL@northwindtraders.com	anne hl
11	Alexander.David@contoso.com	alexander david
12	Kim.Shane@northwindtraders.com	kim shane
13	Manish.Chopra@northwindtraders.com	manish chopra
14	Gerwald.Oberleitner@northwindtraders.com	gerwald oberleitner
15	Amr.Zaki@northwindtraders.com	amr zaki
16	Yvonne.McKay@northwindtraders.com	yvonne mckay
17	Amanda.Pinto@northwindtraders.com	amanda pinto

Input v_1	Input v_2	Output
Stroller	10/12/2010	$\$145.67 + 0.30 * 145.67$
Bib	23/12/2010	$\$3.56 + 0.45 * 3.56$
Diapers	21/1/2011	$\$21.45 + 0.35 * 21.45$
Wipes	2/4/2009	$\$5.12 + 0.40 * 5.12$
Aspirator	23/2/2010	$\$2.56 + 0.30 * 2.56$

MarkupRec			CostRec		
Id	Name	Markup	Id	Date	Price
S30	Stroller	30%	S30	12/2010	\$145.67
B56	Bib	45%	S30	11/2010	\$142.38
D32	Diapers	35%	B56	12/2010	\$3.56
W98	Wipes	40%	D32	1/2011	\$21.45
A46	Aspirator	30%	W98	4/2009	\$5.12
...	A46	2/2010	\$2.56
		

More Applications (Many of these will be part of the Projects)

- Graphics Programming
- Code Repair
- Code Suggestions
- Synthesizing Error-prone, hard to write programs:
 - Distributed Programming : CRDTs
 - Concurrent Programs:
- Modeling of Systems
 - Probabilistic Programs

Structure of the course

- Module 1: Synthesis of Simple Programs
 - Easy to decide when a program is correct
 - Challenge: search in a large space
- Module 2: Synthesis of Complex Programs
 - Deciding when a program is correct can be hard
 - Search in a large space is still a problem
- Module 3: Advance Topics
 - Neural Synthesis, Neural + Symbolic Approaches, Synthesis for xAI
 - Synthesis + X ($X \in \{\text{Frameworks, Compilers, Network, Databases, etc.}\}$)

Reading Weeks 1 and 2

- Topic: Enumerative synthesis from examples
 - Paper: Alur, Radhakrishna, Udupa. Scaling Enumerative Program Synthesis via Divide and Conquer
 - Review due Wednesday
 - Link to PDF on the course web page
- Submit through Google Form (link will be in webpage/Classroom)
- Project:
 - Teams due in two weeks.
 - Submit through a Google Sheet (check email for invite and instructions)

Announcements

- Non-CS students
- Registration on ERP as well as Google Classroom
- Start looking for Projects
- Plagiarism Policy.
 - A bit different.