Lab 4: Debugging
12:00 PM, Feb 14, 2018

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Objectives

By the end of this lecture, you will be able to:

- utilize state to achieve cool things
- utilize the Eclipse debugger

Setup

Before beginning today’s lab, copy the support code to your lab04/src directory inside your javaproject directory:

```bash
cp /course/cs0180/src/lab04/src/*
~/course/cs0180/workspace/javaproject/src/lab04/src
```

1 Debugging

As you’ve learned by now, debugging is an immensely important part of programming. Even when coding up an algorithm seems easy, fixing its bugs can be extremely difficult. This section of today’s lab is meant to teach you debugging strategies that should come in handy in your future CS endeavors, whether it be in CS 18 or otherwise.

Bugs are, put simply, when something that you don’t think will happen does in fact happen, or when something you think will happen does not happen.

As your programs grow in size, you’ll often find that an error in one part of your program is due to something in a completely different part of your program. This means you can’t just inspect your program at the place where the error manifests itself. Good debugging strategies provide you with context information that helps locate the origin of a bug.

First, we’ll show you a really cool tool common to many languages and IDEs, that Eclipse provides!
1.1 Debuggers

A debugger is a program you can use to help you search for bugs. Critically, a debugger allows you to set **breakpoints**. If you set a breakpoint on a line of your code, then when you run your program, your program will pause on that line before executing it. This allows you to inspect the state of your program before resuming execution.

Luckily, Eclipse comes with a built in debugger! Let’s go deeper into what debuggers allow you to do. Following are the most helpful tools you can use:

**Breakpoints** - setting a breakpoint on a line of code, then running your program, will pause your program each time it reaches that line. It will pause before executing the line. At that time, you can investigate the state of your program by looking at the menu of variables in the Variables pane. Then, you can continue your program in one of several ways.

**Step Into** - Once you’re stopped at a breakpoint, there are a few options on how you want to continue. Suppose you have a breakpoint on a line that has a call to a method. For example, suppose you are stopped on the line:

```
getCatAge(myAge);
```

If you step into this method, then you will enter the `getCatAge` method you wrote, and pause execution on the first line inside that method, before that line is executed.

If you are stopped at a breakpoint, but there is no method call in the line you’re stopped at, you should avoid using step into.

**Note:** Since you are debugging the code you wrote, you should never step into a method that you did not write. You’ll reach all kinds of weird places. For example, if you step into this line:

```
System.out.println("Hello!");
```

You’ll find yourself in the source code for the `println` method! There’s no way that could be the cause of a bug in your program, so you should not step into system calls.

**Step Over** - Similar to step into, step over is a way to proceed after being paused at a breakpoint. However, whereas step into would pause on the first line inside the method call, step over will execute the method, then break on the following line of code. For example, suppose we again have a breakpoint on the call to `getCatAge`:

```
getCatAge(myAge);
getHumanAge(myCatsAge);
```

Now, let’s say you step over. Then, `getCatAge` will execute, and you will pause on the `getHumanAge` line. In this sense, you do not enter a method call, but rather, execute it and go to the next line.

In effect, step over will **execute the current line, and pause on the next line** of code, regardless of whether the current line was a method or not.

**Step Return** - What if you pressed step into, but you meant to use step over instead, and now you’re stuck who-knows-where in some source code from a system call? Not to fear! You can use step return to finish executing the function you’re inside, then pause. For example, suppose in the following code, you have a breakpoint on the first line, and you accidentally step into it:

```
System.out.println(myAge);
```
getCatAge(myAge);

Then, if you press step return, you’ll finish executing the println and pause on the getCatAge line.

**Resume** - this is yet another way to continue from a breakpoint. This will, in effect, resume execution normally until the next breakpoint or until the program terminates.

**Note:** What would happen if you step into a line of code containing multiple function calls, like this one:

```java
System.out.println(getCatAge(10));
```

When you step into this, you’ll be in the getCatAge code. Once getCatAge returns, you’ll again be on the above line. If you step into this again, you’ll now be in the println source code.

This might sound a bit confusing - how will you know which function you’re stepping into? The answer is to go by order of evaluation. In the above example, getCatAge must be evaluated before it can be printed, so when you step into the line, you step into getCatAge first. However, don’t stress too much - if you step into the wrong function, you can always use resume to continue executing until the next breakpoint or step return to finish executing the function you’re in and then pause again.

### 1.2 Getting Started in the Eclipse Debugger

Phew! That was a lot of new information. We’re going to use Eclipse’s debugger in this lab, but first, we want to make sure that all made sense. In the following task, we’ll list some examples of what you might want to do using the debugger, and ask you how to accomplish them using the commands we’ve just described.

**Task:** For each of the following, write down (on paper or in a text editor) the sequence of steps you would need to accomplish the goal. This sequence should consist of commands from our list above. For example, if one of the tasks asked how to pause on the main method, you would write “set breakpoint on main method.”

Open up the provided files, namely Restaurant, Manager, and Party. There’s no need to understand the details of what they’re each doing - yet!

1. I want to pause in the arrive method in Restaurant.

2. I want to pause at the beginning of the Restaurant constructor, and pause again once it’s done, to ensure all of the Restaurant fields are initialized properly. Then, once I’m sure of that, I want to execute the program with no further interruptions. I only want to use a single breakpoint!

3. I have a breakpoint on the openRestaurant method, and I’ve just reached it. I want to look at what’s happening in the startManaging method call in openRestaurant without adding more breakpoints.

4. I had a breakpoint on the main method (not a good idea), but accidentally stepped into the call to the LinkedList constructor. Help! How do I return to the Restaurant program I wrote?
5. I again had a breakpoint on the main method, but I want to skip past all the reservations, add calls, and go into the Restaurant constructor method, without adding more breakpoints.

Note: Your answers shouldn’t contain “restart the program”! Only use the tools we’ve mentioned above.

You’ve reached a checkpoint! Please call over a lab TA to review your work.

1.3 Eclipse Time!

Now that you understand conceptually how to use the debugger, it’s time to put your new knowledge to use.

- To get set up, click the bug button at the top left of the screen. This will arrange your windows in a way more suitable for debugging.
  - The first time you do this, a popup might appear asking about switching perspectives. You should go ahead and approve it!
- To run the debugger, use the little bug icon next to the green run button. As with the run button, clicking it will run the last program ran. Use the dropdown if you want to run something new!
- To insert a **breakpoint**, move your mouse to the left of the line you want to break on. If you have line numbers enabled, it should be to the left of the line numbers. Then, double-click, and a blue dot should appear. To remove it, right-click it and select Toggle Breakpoint, or double-click on the breakpoint.
- To **step into**, use the left-most yellow arrow at the top of the screen, next to the red stop button.
- To **step over**, use the next yellow arrow, just to the right of the step into button.
- To **step return**, use the next yellow arrow, just to the right of the step over button.
- To **resume**, press the yellow-and-green play button, to the left of the stop button.
- To return to the **normal perspective**, click the multicolored button with a J on it in the top right corner.

**Task:** Test out some of your answers from the last exercise to get comfortable with the debug window setup. Feel free to close windows you don’t think will be helpful, as you can reset the windows at any time with Window → Perspective → Reset Perspective.

Now, it’s time for you to debug our project! First, we’ll give you an outline of how it works.

At a high level, the project simulates a restaurant with a fixed number of tables, where parties of diners arrive and depart. We assume any party can eat at any table, and the maximum number of parties that can simultaneously be seated is, therefore, equal to the number of tables in the restaurant. Further, only parties on the list of upcoming reservations can be seated.
When a party (who is on the list of reservations) arrives, they are either seated (if there are open tables) or put on a queue of parties who are waiting to be seated. When a party departs, the next party waiting in the queue is seated immediately.

The following classes and descriptions are the parts of our project you should know:

**Party** - a class representing a group of people that can be seated at a restaurant. A party has only a name and no other characteristics.

**Restaurant** - a class representing the state of the restaurant. It has:

- a name, a Manager, list of upcoming reservations, list of currently seated parties, queue of parties waiting to be seated, and number of tables.
- a constructor which takes the name of the restaurant, number of tables in the restaurant, and list of upcoming reservations for that night.
- void arrive - a method that takes a party which has just arrived. The method checks the reservation list (and returns if the party isn’t on it), then seats the party if there is available room; otherwise, it adds the party to the queue of parties waiting to be seated.
- void depart - a method that takes the party which is departing. It removes the party from the list of seated parties, then checks the queue of waiting parties. If there’s a waiting party, it seats that party.
- a main method that creates several parties and starts up a Restaurant.

**Manager** - a class that randomly decides when parties arrive at or depart from the restaurant. It has:

- int makeDecision - a method that chooses at random whether to let a new party arrive or make a seated party depart.
- void partyArrives - a method that tells the restaurant to let a new party arrive.
- void partyDeparts - a method that tells the restaurant to let a seated party depart.
- Party chooseParty(Collection<Party> parties) - a method that chooses a party at random from a collection of parties.

There are a few new things included in this restaurant simulation. You’ll notice two new Java interfaces: Collection and Queue. The Collection interface represents any sort of collection, whereas the Queue interface is used for any data structure that can be used as a queue, such as a LinkedList. Feel free to check out the Java documentation for Collection and Queue for more information.

Further, you’ll notice that Restaurant has an instance of a Manager as a field, and Manager also has an instance of a Restaurant as a field. Circular references like this are common in OOP, and allow the two objects to interact by calling methods on each other.

If the restaurant simulation were working properly, you would see interleaved arrival and departure messages, sometimes multiple arrivals/departures in a row, etc. Critically, you should:
• Never see print statements indicating there are more seated parties than there are tables at any point in the output.

• Never see one particular party arrive or depart more than once.

• See that once a party departs, the party waiting the longest should be seated immediately.

• See that all parties eventually leave, and that the restaurant closes for the night once they do.

**Task:** Use the Eclipse debugger to find the two bugs, and fix them! Be sure to be able to explain to a TA what you did and why the code wasn’t working before.

**Hint:** The bugs are both found in methods we’ve outlined above, not in getters/setters or any other unmentioned methods. Further, the bugs are not found in either makeDecision or chooseParty inside the Manager class.

**Hint:** Run the project before trying to debug it, to see what’s wrong with it and form an educated guess about where the bugs are originating.

**Hint:** We know you may not have seen all of these types before, and might be unfamiliar with their methods. Hover your mouse above any method name or any type declaration to get more information!

| You’ve reached a checkpoint! Please call over a lab TA to review your work.

### 1.4 Helpful Alternative Debugging Strategies

This section discusses other good ways to debug your programs, which you’ll hopefully find useful both in CS 18 and your future programming endeavors! It is not necessary to complete this section in order to receive full credit on the lab. However, we strongly recommend you read through this information regardless.

**Code Reviews:** After you write code, it’s always good to double-check your logic. To review, or walk through, your code, simply read it over line by line, piecing together the logic at each step. Be sure to keep an eye out for common errors like null pointer or array out-of-bounds exceptions.

Code reviews are generally more effective when done in pairs or groups. Under the CS 18 collaboration policy, you are not permitted to perform collaborative code reviews on homeworks or exams. However, we strongly encourage you to utilize this tool in labs and projects!

**Assertions:** Generally, when you write code, you make assumptions like the following: “I know that condition X cannot be true here because of how I’ve written my code; therefore, I will not handle condition X.” However, it is always possible that your assumptions are not actually true. A good debugging strategy, then, would be to write an explicit “test” in your code that checks whether condition X holds, and if it does, to throw an unchecked exception reporting what went wrong. Such an exception is not meant to be handled, but rather is meant to alert you about a mistake in your assumptions.

This type of double-checking by verifying your assumed invariants and failing if the invariant does not hold is called an assertion.

Suppose we are writing a method that takes an age in human years and converts it to cat years. Let’s say we’ve assumed that no one would input an age less than 0, but we want to double-check that this is actually the case, using asserts:
public double getCatAge(double humanAge) {
    assert(humanAge >= 0);
    return (humanAge * 7 - 1);
}

Note: This is not the actual formula to convert human years to cat years.

An assert takes as input a statement that should evaluate to a boolean. If the boolean evaluates to true, the assert will pass and your program will run as if the assert were not there. However, if the boolean evaluates to false, Java will throw an AssertionError and terminate your program immediately.

Checking assertions takes time, so by default, Java ignores assertions. To enable them from the command line, run Java with the -ea flag. To enable them in Eclipse, go to Run → Run Configurations, and select the Arguments tab. Then, in the “VM Arguments” box, type -ea. Then apply your settings. Once all your assertions pass, if your program is running slowly, feel free to turn off assertions again.

Printing: Adding print statements to your code is a very useful debugging technique. It’s useful for two key reasons:

- The order in which your print statements appear reveals information about the flow of control of your program. For example, print statements could alert you if a while loop is being executed too many times.
- You can print the values of variables, thus enabling you to inspect your program’s state at particular points in its execution.

Warning: though print statements can be useful, there are good ways and bad ways to use them. The bad way is to flood your program with them. Too much information can actually cause you to spend more time sifting through output than seeing the big picture. The good way is to come up with educated guesses of what might be going wrong, then using print statements to confirm or deny those hypotheses. For example, you might say “If I’m getting output X, this could be caused by variable Y being in state Z,” then use a print statement to verify if variable Y really is in state Z.

Importantly, be sure to delete print statements once you’ve finished using them. You shouldn’t hand in code containing debugging print statements in CS 18!

Just for Fun: Now that you’ve read all about our top debugging strategies, brainstorm some pros and cons to each strategy with your partner.

Once a lab TA signs off on your work, you’ve finished the lab! Congratulations! Before you leave, make sure both partners have access to the code you’ve just written.

Please let us know if you find any mistakes, inconsistencies, or confusing language in this or any other CS18 document by filling out the anonymous feedback form: http://cs.brown.edu/courses/cs018/feedback