Algorithm That Synthesizes Other Algorithms for Hashing

A synthesized algorithm is guaranteed to be executable in constant time.

NASA’s Jet Propulsion Laboratory, Pasadena, California

An algorithm that includes a collection of several subalgorithms has been devised as a means of synthesizing still other algorithms (which could include computer code) that utilize hashing to determine whether an element (typically, a number or other datum) is a member of a set (typically, a list of numbers). Each subalgorithm synthesizes an algorithm (e.g., a block of code) that maps a static set of key hashes to a somewhat linear monotonically increasing sequence of integers. The goal in formulating this mapping is to cause the length of the sequence thus generated to be as close as practicable to the original length of the set and thus to minimize gaps between the elements.

The advantage of the approach embodied in this algorithm is that it completely avoids the traditional approach of hash-key look-ups that involve either secondary hash generation and look-up or further searching of a hash table for a desired key in the event of collisions.

This algorithm guarantees that it will never be necessary to perform a search or to generate a secondary key in order to determine whether an element is a member of a set. This algorithm further guarantees that any algorithm that it synthesizes can be executed in constant time. To enforce these guarantees, the subalgorithms are formulated to employ a set of techniques, each of which works very effectively covering a certain class of hash-key values. These subalgorithms are of two types, summarized as follows:

• Given a list of numbers, try to find one or more solutions in which, if each number is shifted to the right by a constant number of bits and then masked with a rotating mask that isolates a set of bits, a unique number is thereby generated. In a variant of the foregoing procedure, omit the masking. Try various combinations of shifting, masking, and/or offsets until the solutions are found. From the set of solutions, select the one that provides the greatest compression for the representation and is executable in the minimum amount of time.
• Given a list of numbers, try to find one or more solutions in which, if each number is compressed by use of the modulo function by some value, then a unique value is generated.

This work was done by Carolyn Mizell of Kennedy Space Center, Charles Curley of ARDC Aerospace Corp., and Umamath Nayak of Portland State University. Further information is contained in a TSP (see page 1), KSC-13094

Algorithms for High-Speed Noninvasive Eye-Tracking System

One of the algorithms enables tracking at a frame rate of several kilohertz.

NASA’s Jet Propulsion Laboratory, Pasadena, California

Two image-data-processing algorithms are essential to the successful operation of a system of electronic hardware and software that noninvasively tracks the direction of a person’s gaze in real time. The system was described in “High-Speed Noninvasive Eye-Tracking System” (NPO-30700) NASA Tech Briefs, Vol. 31, No. 8 (August 2007), page 51.

To recapitulate from the cited article: Like prior commercial noninvasive eye-tracking systems, this system is based on (1) illumination of an eye by a low-power infrared light-emitting diode (LED); (2) acquisition of video images of the pupil, iris, and cornea in the reflected infrared light; (3) digitization of the images; and (4) processing the digital image data to determine the direction of gaze from the centroids of the pupil and cornea in the images. Most of the prior commercial noninvasive eye-tracking systems rely on standard video cameras, which operate at frame rates of about 30 Hz. Such systems are limited to slow, full-frame operation.

The video camera in the present system includes a charge-coupled-device (CCD) image detector plus electronic circuitry capable of implementing an advanced control scheme that effects readout from a small region of interest (ROI), or subwindow, of the full image. Inas-
Adapting ASPEN for Orbital Express

Declarative modeling brings efficiency to encoded procedures and allows for guarantees on resource usage and time usage.

NASA’s Jet Propulsion Laboratory, Pasadena, California

By studying the Orbital Express mission, modeling the spacecraft and scenarios, and testing the system, a technique has been developed that uses recursive decomposition to represent procedural actions declaratively, schema-level uncertainty reasoning to make uncertainty reasoning tractable, and lightweight, natural language processing to automatically parse procedures to produce declarative models.

Schema-level uncertainty reasoning has, at its core, the basic assumption that certain variables are uncertain, but not independent. Once any are known, then the others become known. This is important where a variable is uncertain for an action and many actions of the same type exist in the plan. For example, if the number of retries to purge pump lines was unknown (but bounded), and each attempt required a sub-plan, then, once the correct number of attempts required for a purge was known, it would likely be the same for all subsequent purges. This greatly reduces the space of plans that needs to be searched to ensure that all executions are feasible.

To accommodate changing scenario procedures, each is ingested into a tabular format in temporal order, and a simple natural-language parser is used to read each step and to derive the impact of that step on memory, power, and communications. Then an ASPEN (Activity Scheduling and Planning Environment) model is produced based on this analysis. The model is tested and further changed by hand, if necessary, to reflect the actual procedure. This results in a great savings of time used for modeling procedures.

Many processes that need to be modeled in ASPEN (a declarative system) are, in fact, procedural. ASPEN includes the ability to model activities in a hierarchical fashion, but this representation breaks down if there is a practically unbounded number of sub-activities and decomposition topologies. However, if recursive decomposition is allowed, HTN-like encodings are enabled to represent most procedural phenomena.

For example, if a switch requires a variable (but known at the time of the attempt) number of attempts to switch on, one can recurse on the number of remaining switch attempts and decompose into either the same switching activity with one less required attempt, or not decompose at all (or decompose into a dummy task), resulting in the end of the decomposition. In fact, any bounded procedural behavior can be modeled using recursive decompositions assuming that the variables impinging the dis-