CSc 520

Principles of Programming Languages

25: Names, Scope, Bindings — Closures

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A closure is a structure

(procedure_addr, environment).

To pass C() to A we construct a closure consisting of C’s address and the static link that would have been used if C would have been called directly:

```plaintext
program M;
    procedure A(procedure P)
        P();
    end
    procedure C(); begin end;
begin
    A(C);
end
```
Deep Binding

When a reference to a procedure is created (for example by passing it as a reference to another procedure), when are scope rules applied?

1. When the reference is first created?
2. When the routine is first called?

Early binding of a referencing environment (what Pascal uses) is called **deep binding**.
Subroutine Closures...

procedure A(I:integer; procedure P)
    procedure B(); begin write(I); end;
begin
    if I > 1 then P() else A(2,B);
end

procedure C(); begin end;

begin
    A(1,C);
end

There are two I:s when B is called.
A closure was created for $B$ when $A(2,B)$ was closed, hence $B$ will print 1.
First-Class Subroutines

- A language construct is first-class if it can be passed as a parameter, returned from a subroutine, or assigned to a variable.

- A language construct is second-class if it can be passed as a parameter but not be returned from a subroutine, or assigned to a variable.

- A language construct is third-class if it can’t even be passed as a parameter.

- Procedures are second-class in most imperative languages.
If a procedure can be returned as the result of a function we could reference an environment that has gone out of scope:

```pascal
procedure A() : procedure;
    var x : integer := 5;
procedure B();
    write(x);
end
begin
    return B;
end;

begin
    var X : procedure := A();
    X();
end
```
In functional languages functions are first-class.

Functional languages specify that local variables have unlimited extent — they exist for as long as someone references them.

Algol-like languages specify that local variables have limited extent — they exist until the scope in which they are declared is exited.

Objects with limited extent can be stored on a stack. Objects with unlimited extent must be stored on the heap.
First-Class Subroutines...

- C and C++ do not have nested scope — no problem.
- Modula-2 — global procedures are first-class (can be stored), local procedures are third-class.
- Modula-3 — global procedures are first-class, local procedures are second-class (can be passed as parameters).
- Ada 83 — procedures are third class.
- Ada 95 — nested procedures can be returned if the scope in which it was declared is at least as wide as that of the declared return type. I.e. a procedure can only be propagated to an area of the program where the referencing environment is active.
Call-With-Current-Continuation

The Scheme built-in function
\texttt{call-with-current-continuation} (also called \texttt{call/cc}) takes a function as argument:

\texttt{call-with-current-continuation (foo) (foo cont)}

foo takes a \texttt{continuation} as argument.

\texttt{(call/cc foo)} calls foo, passing it the current continuation.

A continuation is a closure that holds the current program counter and environment.
Call-With-Current-Continuation...

- `foo` can invoke the continuation and immediately return to the situation as it was when the call was made.
- Any intermediate stack frames are popped off.
- Continuations are first-class: you can store them in variables, return them from functions, etc.
- `call/cc` can be used as a general building-block to construct a variety of control structures, such as iterators and coroutines.
- Continuations can, for example, be used to quickly exit a tree-search procedure once the node we’re looking for has been found.
 Call-With-Current-Continuation...

• The function throws the continuation the value 99 which makes it pop out of the current evaluation and return 99:

```lisp
> (call/cc (lambda (c) (c 99)))
99
```

• The expression \( (* \left[ \right] 76) \) is never executed. Rather, the function pops out and returns 99:

```lisp
> (call/cc (lambda (c) (* (c 99) 76)))
99
```
Continuations can be stored in variables and invoked later:

> (let ((cont #f))
  (call/cc (lambda (k) (set! cont k)))
  (cont #f))

99

Or, like this:

> (define cont #f)
> (+ 5 (call/cc
       (lambda (e) (set! cont e) (* 4 3))))

17
> (cont 10)
15
Read Scott, pp. 141–143