Wearing the hair shirt

A retrospective on Haskell

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Haskell is 15 years old

(born FPCA 87)

Haskell is 15 years old
(born FPCA'87)

Simon is 45 years old
(born 18 Jan: POPL'58)

The primoridal soup

FPCA, Sept 1987: initial meeting. A dozen lazy functional programmers, wanting to agree on a common language.

- Suitable for teaching, research, and application
- Formally-described syntax and semantics
- Freely available
- Embody the apparent consensus of ideas
- Reduce unnecessary diversity

Led to...a succession of face-to-face meetings

April 1990: **Haskell 1.0** report released (editors: Hudak, Wadler)

Timeline

- Sept 87: **kick off**
- Apr 90: **Haskell 1.0**
- Aug 91: **Haskell 1.1 (153pp)**
- May 92: **Haskell 1.2 (SIGPLAN Notices) (164pp)**
- May 96: **Haskell 1.3. Monadic I/O, separate library report**
- Apr 97: **Haskell 1.4 (213pp)**
- Feb 99: **Haskell 98 (240pp)**
- Dec 02: **Haskell 98 revised (260pp)**

The Book!

Haskell 98

Haskell 98

- Stable
- Documented
- Consistent across implementations
- Useful for teaching, books

Haskell + extensions

- Dynamic, exciting
- Unstable, undocumented, implementations vary...

Reflections on the process

- The idea of having a fixed standard (Haskell 98) in parallel with an evolving language, has worked really well
- Formal semantics only for fragments (but see [Faxen2002])
- A smallish, rather pointy-headed user-base makes Haskell nimble. Haskell has evolved rapidly and continues to do so.

Motto: avoid success at all costs

The price of usefulness

- Libraries increasingly important:
  - 1996: Separate libraries Report
  - 2001: Hierarchical library naming structure, increasingly populated
- Foreign-function interface increasingly important
  - 1993 onwards: a variety of experiments
  - 2001: successful effort to standardise a FFI across implementations
- Any language large enough to be useful is dauntingly complex

Reflections on process

- Self-appointed committee initially, but increasingly open process: there is now no Haskell committee
- Language development by user suggestion + implementers
- Gives too much power to implementers?

Syntax

Good ideas from other languages

List comprehensions

```
[(x,y) | x <- xs, y <- ys, x+y < 10]
```

Separate type signatures

```
head :: [a] -> a
head (x:xs) = x
head []     = error "head of nil"
```

DIY infix operators

```
f `map` xs
```

Optional layout

```
let x = 3
    y = 4
in x+y
```

```
let { x = 3; y = 4} in x+y
```

Syntactic redundancy

- Seductive idea: provide just one way of doing any particular thing
- Haskell's choice: provide multiple ways, and let the programmer decide
- Main example: "declaration style" vs "expression style"

"Declaration style"

Define a function as a series of independent equations

```
map f []     = []
map f (x:xs) = f x : map f xs
```

```
sign x  | x>0          = 1
        | x==0         = 0
        | x<0          = -1
```

“Expression style“

Define a function as an expression

```
map = \f xs -> case xs of
                 []     -> []
                 (x:xs) -> map f xs
```

```
sign = \x -> if x>0 then 1
             else if x==0 then 0
             else -1
```

Fat vs thin

Expression style

- Let
- Lambda
- Case
- If

Declaration style

- Where
- Function arguments on lhs
- Pattern-matching
- Guards

SLPJ's conclusion
syntactic redundancy is a big win

Tony Hoare's comment "I fear that Haskell is doomed to succeed"

Example (ICFP02 prog comp)

Pattern match

Guard

Pattern guard

Conditional

Where clause

```
sp_help item@(Item cur_loc cur_link _) wq vis
  | cur_length > limit          -- Beyond limit
  = sp wq vis
  | Just vis_link <- lookupVisited vis cur_loc
  =     -- Already visited; update the visited
        -- map if cur_link is better
    if cur_length >= linkLength vis_link then
        -- Current link is no better
         sp wq vis
    else
        -- Current link is better
         emit vis item ++ sp wq vis'

  | otherwise   -- Not visited yet
  = emit vis item ++ sp wq' vis'
  where
   vis’ = ...
   wq   = ...
```

So much for syntax...

What is important or interesting about Haskell?

What really matters?

Laziness

Type classes

Sexy types

Laziness

- John Hughes's famous paper "Why functional programming matters"
  - Modular programming needs powerful glue
  - Lazy evaluation enables new forms of modularity; in particular, separating *generation* from *selection*.
  - Non-strict semantics means that unrestricted beta substitution is OK.

But…

- Laziness makes it much, much harder to reason about performance, especially space. Tricky uses of seq for effect
  `seq :: a -> b -> b`
- Laziness has a real implementation cost
- Laziness can be added to a strict language (although not as easily as you might think)
- And it's not so bad only having βV instead of β

So why wear the hair shirt of laziness?

Laziness

Laziness is jolly convenient

```
sp_help item@(Item cur_loc cur_link _) wq vis
  | cur_length > limit          -- Beyond limit
  = sp wq vis
  | Just vis_link <- lookupVisited vis cur_loc
  = if cur_length >= linkLength vis_link then
        sp wq vis
    else
        emit vis item ++ sp wq vis'

  | otherwise
  = emit vis item ++ sp wq' vis'
  where
   vis' = ...
   wq'  = ...
```

Used in two cases

Used in one case

Combinator libraries

Recursive values are jolly useful

```
type Parser a = String -> (a, String)

exp :: Parser Expr
exp = lit “let” <+> decls <+> lit “in” <+> exp
   ||| exp <+> aexp
   ||| ...etc...
```

This is illegal in ML, because of the value restriction

Can only be made legal by eta expansion.

But that breaks the Parser abstraction,
and is extremely gruesome:

```
exp x = (lit “let” <+> decls <+> lit “in” <+> exp
      ||| exp <+> aexp
      ||| ...etc...) x
```

The big one....

Laziness keeps you honest

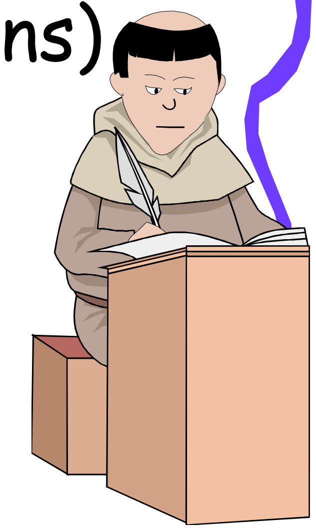
- Every call-by-value language has given into the siren call of side effects
- But in Haskell

  ```
  (print "yes") + (print "no")
  ```

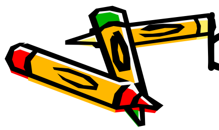
  just does not make sense. Even worse is

  ```
  [print "yes", print "no"]
  ```

- So effects (I/O, references, exceptions) are just not an option.



- Result: **prolonged embarrassment**. Stream-based I/O, continuation I/O... but NO DEALS WIH THE DEVIL



Monadic I/O

A value of type (`IO t`) is an "action" that, when performed, may do some input/output before delivering a result of type t.

eg.

```
getChar :: IO Char
putChar :: Char -> IO ()
```

Performing I/O

```
main :: IO a
```

- A program is a single I/O action
- Running the program performs the action
- Can't do I/O from pure code.
- Result: clean separation of pure code from imperative code

Connecting I/O operations

```
(>>=)   :: IO a -> (a -> IO b) -> IO b
return :: a -> IO a
```

eg.

```
getChar    >>= (\a ->
getChar    >>= (\b ->
putChar b >>= (\() ->
return (a,b))))
```

The do-notation

```
getChar    >>= \a ->
getChar    >>= \b ->
putchar b >>= \()->
return (a,b)
```

==

```
do {
   a <- getChar;
   b <- getChar;
   putchar b;
   return (a,b)
}
```

- Syntactic sugar only
- Easy translation into (>>=), return
- Deliberately imperative “look and feel”

Control structures

Values of type (IO t) are first class

So we can define our own "control structures"

```
forever :: IO () -> IO ()
forever a = do { a; forever a }

repeatN :: Int -> IO () -> IO ()
repeatN 0 a = return ()
repeatN n a = do { a; repeatN (n-1) a }
```

e.g. `repeatN 10 (putChar 'x')`

Monads generally

A monad consists of:

- A type constructor M
- bind :: M a -> (a -> M b) -> M b
- unit :: a -> M a
- PLUS some per-monad operations (e.g. getChar :: IO Char)

There are lots of useful monads, not only I/O

Monads

- Exceptions

```
type Exn a = Either String a
fail :: String -> Exn a
```

- Unique supply

```
type Uniq a = Int -> (a, Int)
new :: Uniq Int
```

- Parsers

```
type Parser a = String -> [(a,String)]
alt :: Parser a -> Parser a -> Parser a
```

Monad combinators (e.g. sequence, fold, etc), and do-notation, work over all monads

Example: a type checker

```
tcExpr :: Expr -> Tc Type
tcExpr (App fun arg)
    = do { fun_ty <- tcExpr fun
         ; arg_ty <- tcExpr arg
         ; res_ty <- newTyVar
         ; unify fun_ty (arg_ty --> res_ty)
         ; return res_ty }
```

Tc monad hides all the plumbing:

- Exceptions and failure
- Current substitution (unification)
- Type environment
- Current source location
- Manufacturing fresh type variables

Robust to changes in plumbing

The IO monad

The IO monad allows controlled introduction of other effect-ful language features (not just I/O)

- State

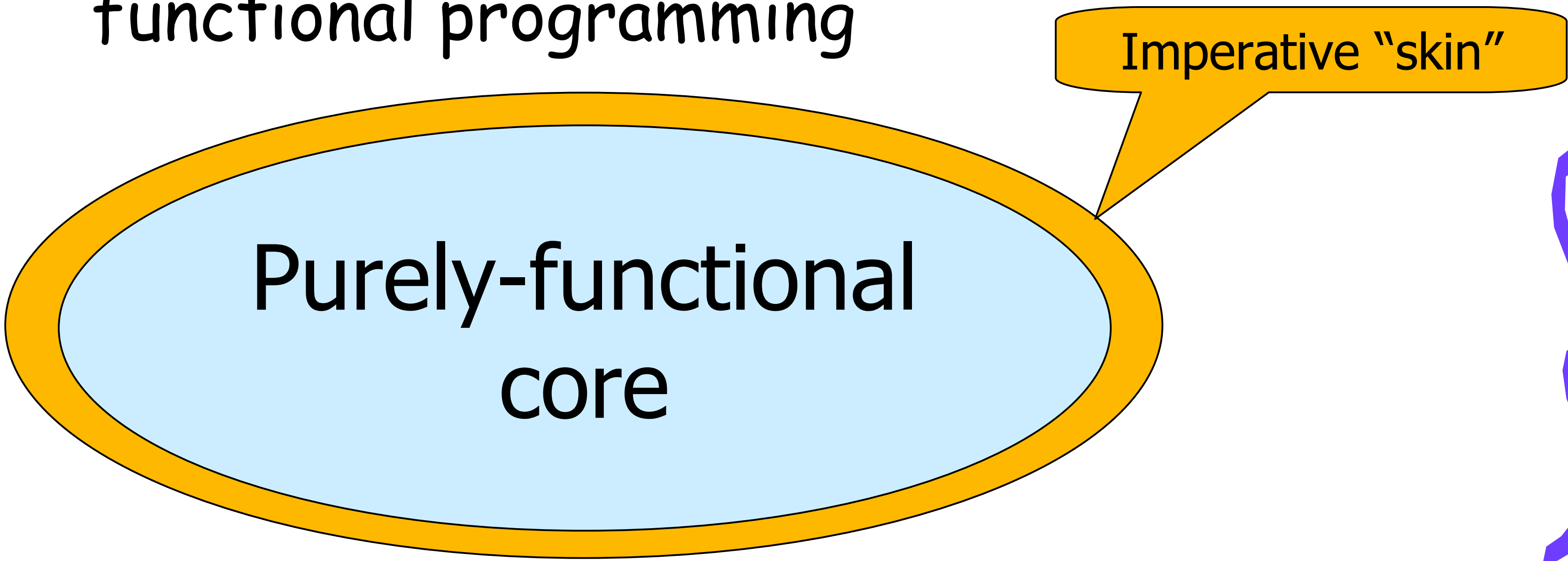
```
newRef :: IO (IORef a)
read   :: IORef s a -> IO a
write  :: IORef s a -> a -> IO ()
```

- Concurrency

```
fork      :: IO a -> IO ThreadId
newMVar   :: IO (MVar a)
takeMVar :: MVar a -> IO a
putMVar   :: MVar a -> a -> IO ()
```

What have we achieved?

- The ability to mix imperative and purely-functional programming



What have we achieved?

- ...without ruining either
- All laws of pure functional programming remain unconditionally true, even of actions

e.g. let x=e in ...x....x...

=

....e....e.....

What we have not achieved

- Imperative programming is no easier than it always was

e.g. `do { ...; x <- f 1; y <- f 2; ...}`

?=?

```
do { ...; y <- f 2; x <- f 1; ...}
```

- ...but there's less of it!
- ...and actions are first-class values

Open challenge 1

Open problem: the IO monad has become Haskell's sin-bin. (Whenever we don't understand something, we toss it in the IO monad.)

Festering sore:

```
unsafePerformIO :: IO a -> a
```

Dangerous, indeed type-unsafe, but occasionally indispensable.

Wanted: finer-grain effect partitioning

e.g. IO {read x, write y} Int

Open challenge 2

Which would you prefer?

```
do { a <- f x;
     b <- g y;
     h a b }
```

```
h (f x) (g y)
```

In a commutative monad, it does not matter whether we do `(f x)` first or `(g y)`.

Commutative monads are very common. (Environment, unique supply, random number generation.) For these, monads over-sequentialise.

Wanted: theory and notation for some cool compromise.

Monad summary

- Monads are a beautiful example of a theory-into-practice (more the thought pattern than actual theorems)
- Hidden effects are like hire-purchase: pay nothing now, but it catches up with you in the end
- Enforced purity is like paying up front: painful on Day 1, but usually worth it
- But we made one big mistake...

Our biggest mistake

Using the scary term
"monad"
rather than
"warm fuzzy thing"

What really matters?

~~Laziness~~

Purity and monads

Type classes

Sexy types

SLPJ conclusions

- Purity is more important than, and quite independent of, laziness
- The next ML will be pure, with effects only via monads
- Still unclear exactly how to add laziness to a strict language. For example, do we want a type distinction between (say) a lazy Int and a strict Int?

Type classes

Type classes

```
class Eq a where
  (==) :: a -> a -> Bool

instance Eq Int where
  i1 == i2 = eqInt i1 i2

instance (Eq a) => Eq [a] where
  []     == []     = True
  (x:xs) == (y:ys) = (x == y) && (xs == ys)


member :: Eq a => a -> [a] -> Bool
member x []                 = False
member x (y:ys) | x==y      = True
                | otherwise = member x ys
```

Initially, just a neat way to get systematic overloading of (==), read, show.

Implementing type classes

```
data Eq a = MkEq (a->a->Bool)
eq (MkEq e) = e

dEqInt :: Eq Int
dEqInt = MkEq eqInt

dEqList :: Eq a -> Eq [a]
dEqList (MkEq e) = MkEq el
  where el []     []     = True
        el (x:xs) (y:ys) = x `e` y && xs `el` ys

member :: Eq a -> a -> [a] -> Bool
member d x []                   = False
member d x (y:ys) | eq d x y    = True
                  | otherwise = member deq x ys
```

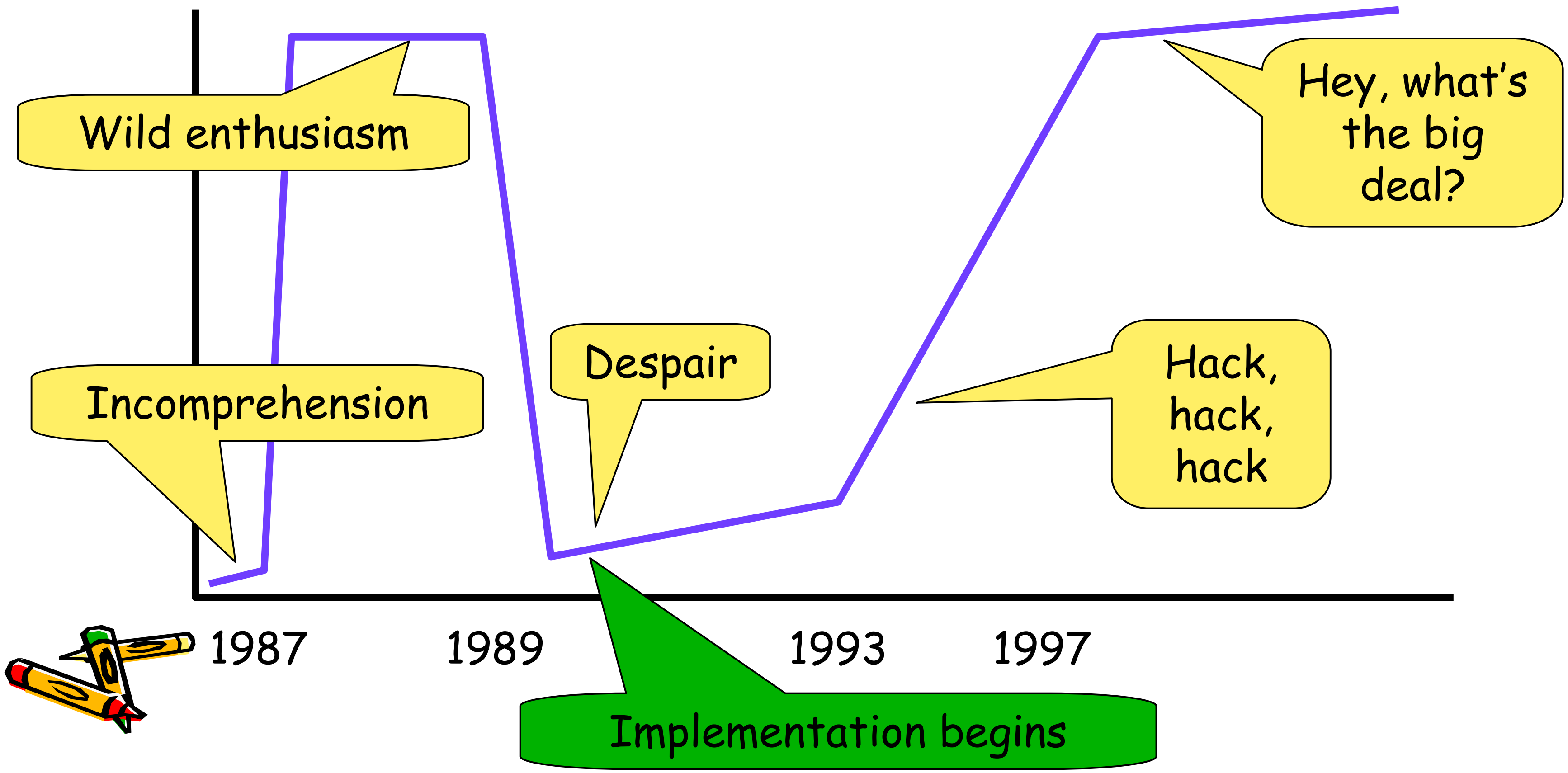
Class witnessed by a "dictionary" of methods

Instance declarations create dictionaries

Overloaded functions take extra dictionary parameter(s)

Type classes over time

- Type classes are the most unusual feature of Haskell's type system



Type classes are useful

Type classes have proved extraordinarily convenient in practice

- Equality, ordering, serialisation, numerical operations, *and not just the built-in ones (e.g. pretty-printing, time-varying values)*
- Monadic operations

```
class Monad m where
  return :: a -> m a
  (>>=)  :: m a -> (a -> m b) -> m b
  fail   :: String -> m a
```

Note the higher-kinded type variable, m

Quickcheck

```haskell
propRev :: [Int] -> Bool
propRev xs = reverse (reverse xs) == xs

propRevApp :: [Int] -> [Int] -> Bool
propRevApp xs ys = reverse (xs++ys) ==
                   reverse ys ++ reverse xs
```

```
ghci> quickCheck propRev
OK: passed 100 tests

ghci> quickCheck propRevApp
OK: passed 100 tests
```

Quickcheck (which is just a Haskell 98 library)

- Works out how many arguments
- Generates suitable test data
- Runs tests

Quickcheck

```
quickCheck :: Test a => a -> IO ()

class Test a where
  prop :: a -> Rand -> Bool

class Arby a where
  arby :: Rand -> a

instance (Arby a, Test b) => Test (a->b) where
  prop f r = prop (f (arby r1)) r2
           where (r1,r2) = split r

instance Test Bool where
  prop b r = b
```

Extensiblity

- Like OOP, one can add new data types "later". E.g. QuickCheck works for your new data types (provided you make them instances of **`Arby`**)
- ...but also not like OOP

Type-based dispatch

```
class Num a where
  (+)         :: a -> a -> a
  negate      :: a -> a
  fromInteger :: Integer -> a
  ...
```

- A bit like OOP, except that method suite passed separately?

```
double :: Num a => a -> a
double x = x+x
```

- No: type classes implement type-based dispatch, not value-based dispatch

Type-based dispatch

```
class Num a where
  (+)         :: a -> a -> a
  negate      :: a -> a
  fromInteger :: Integer -> a
  ...
```

```
double :: Num a => a -> a
double x = 2*x
```

means

```
double :: Num a -> a -> a
double d x = mul d (fromInteger d 2) x
```

The overloaded value is *returned by* ***fromInteger***, not passed to it. It is the dictionary (and type) that are passed as argument to **fromInteger**

Type-based dispatch

So the links to intensional polymorphism are much closer than the links to OOP.

The dictionary is like a proxy for the (interesting aspects of) the type argument of a polymorphic function.

```
f :: forall a. a -> Int
f t (x::t) = ...typecase t...
```

Intensional polymorphism

```
f :: forall a. C a => a -> Int
f x = ...(call method of C)...
```

Haskell

C.f. Crary et al λR (ICFP98), Baars et al (ICFP02)

Cool generalisations

- Multi-parameter type classes
- Higher-kinded type variables (a.k.a. constructor classes)
- Overlapping instances
- Functional dependencies (Jones ESOP'00)
- Type classes as logic programs (Neubauer et al POPL'02)

Qualified types

- Type classes are an example of qualified types [Jones thesis]. Main features
  - types of form $\forall\alpha.\mathbf{Q} \Rightarrow \tau$
  - qualifiers Q are witnessed by run-time evidence
- Known examples
  - type classes (evidence = tuple of methods)
  - implicit parameters (evidence = value of implicit param)
  - extensible records (evidence = offset of field in record)
- Another unifying idea: Constraint Handling Rules (Stucky/Sulzmann ICFP'02)

Type classes summary

- A much more far-reaching idea than we first realised
- Variants adopted in Isabel, Clean, Mercury, Hal, Escher
- Open questions:
  - tension between desire for overlap and the open-world goal
  - danger of death by complexity

Sexy types

Sexy types

Haskell has become a laboratory and playground for advanced type hackery

- Polymorphic recursion
- Higher kinded type variables
  ```
  data T k a = T a (k (T k a))
  ```
- Polymorphic functions as constructor arguments
  ```
  data T = MkT (forall a. [a] -> [a])
  ```
- Polymorphic functions as arbitrary function arguments (higher ranked types)
  ```
  f :: (forall a. [a]->[a]) -> ...
  ```
- Existential types
  ```
  data T = exists a. Show a => MkT a
  ```

Is sexy good? Yes!

- Well typed programs don't *go wrong*
- Less mundanely (but more allusively) sexy types let you think higher thoughts and still stay [almost] sane:
  - deeply higher-order functions
  - functors
  - folds and unfolds
  - monads and monad transformers
  - arrows (now finding application in real-time reactive programming)
  - short-cut deforestation
  - bootstrapped data structures

How sexy?

- Damas-Milner is on a cusp:
  - Can infer most-general types without any type annotations at all
  - But virtually any extension destroys this property
- Adding type quite modest type annotations lets us go a LOT further (as we have already seen) without losing inference for most of the program.
- Still missing from the sexiest Haskell impls
  - λ at the type level
  - Subtyping
  - Impredicativity

Destination = $F^{w}_{<:}$

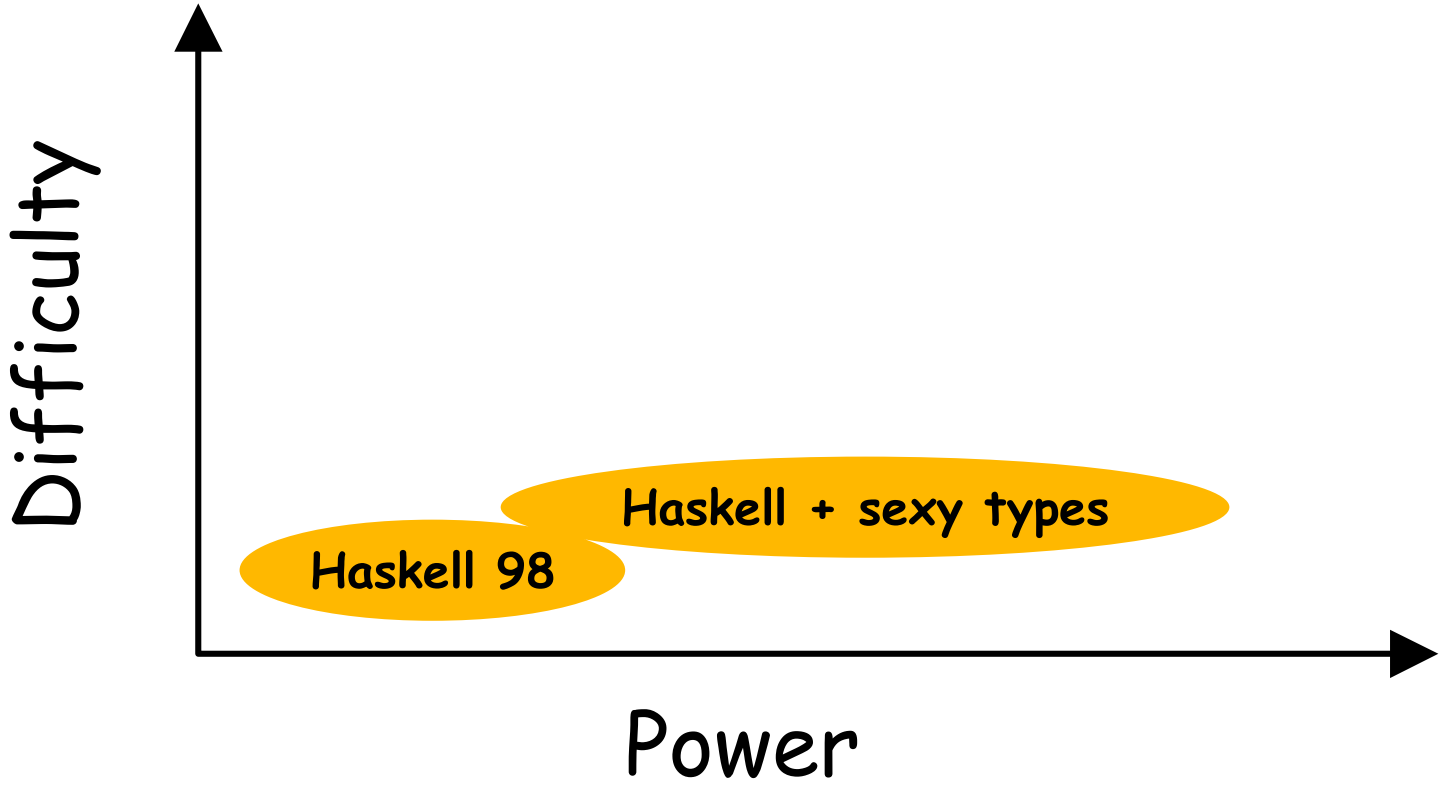
Open question

What is a good design for user-level type annotation that exposes the power of F^{w} or $F^{w}_{<:}$, but co-exists with type inference?

C.f. Didier & Didier's MLF work

Modules

ML functors



Porsche

High power, but poor power/cost ratio

- Separate module language
- First class modules problematic
- Big step in compiler complexity
- Full power seldom needed

ML functors

Haskell + sexy types

Haskell 98

Ford Cortina with alloy wheels

Medium power, with good power/cost

- Module parameterisation too weak
- No language support for module signatures

Modules

- Haskell has many features that overlap with what ML-style modules offer:
  - type classes
  - first class universals and existentials
- Does Haskell need functors anyway? No: one seldom needs to instantiate the same functor at different arguments
- But Haskell lacks a way to distribute “open” libraries, where the client provides some base modules; need module signatures and type-safe linking (e.g. PLT,Knit?). π not λ!
- **Wanted: a design with better power, but good power/weight.**

Encapsulating it all

```
data ST s a      -- Abstract
newRef :: a -> ST s (STRef s a)
read   :: STRef s a -> ST s a
write  :: STRef s a -> a -> ST s ()
```

```
runST :: (forall s. ST s a) -> a
```

Stateful computation

Pure result

```
sort :: Ord a => [a] -> [a]
sort xs = runST (do { ..in-place sort.. })
```

Encapsulating it all

`runST :: (forall s. ST s a) -> a`

Higher rank type

Security of encapsulation depends on parametricity

Monads

And that depends on type classes to make non-parametric operations explicit (e.g. f :: Ord a => a -> a)

Parametricity depends on there being few polymorphic functions (e.g.. f:: a->a means f is the identity function or bottom)

And it also depends on purity (no side effects)

Shirts off to Wadler

Type classes	"Making ad hoc polymorphism less ad hoc" [POPL89]
Monads	"The essence of functional programming" [POPL92]
Sexy types	"Theorems for free" [FPCA89]

The Haskell committee

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