CSC 143

Model, View, Controller design pattern

Overview

- Topics
  - Displaying dynamic data
  - Model-View
  - Model-View-Controller (MVC)
- Reading:
  - Textbook: Ch. 20

Review: Repainting the Screen

- GUI components such as JPanels can draw on themselves using a Graphics context
- Problem: Drawings aren't permanent – need to be refreshed
  - Window may get hidden, moved, minimized, etc.
- Even components like buttons, listboxes, file choosers etc. also must render themselves.
  - Seldom a reason to override paint for such components. There are indirect but more convenient ways to change the rendering.
- Solution: A "callback" method called paintComponent

Review: Using *paintComponent*

- Or just plain *paint* for older AWT components.
- Every Component subclass has a *paint* (*paintComponent*) method
  - Called *automatically* by the system when component needs redrawing
- Program can override *paintComponent* to get the Graphics and draw what is desired
- To request the image be updated, send it a "repaint" message
  - paintComponent( ) is eventually called
- Footnote: "Render" is the word for producing the actual visual image
  - Rendering may take place at multiple levels
  - Ultimate rendering is done by low-level software and/or hardware

Drawing Based on Stored Data

- Problem: how does paintComponent( ) know what to paint?
  - The picture might need to change over time, too.
- Answer: we need to store the information somewhere
- Where? Some possibilities
  - Store detailed graphical information in the component
    Lines, shapes, colors, positions, etc.
    Probably in an instance variable, accessible to paintComponent
  - Store *underlying* information in the component
  - Store objects that know how to paint themselves
  - Store references to the underlying data and query it as needed
    data object returns information in a form that might differ from the underlying data
    paintComponent translates the data into graphics
- All of these approaches can be made to work. What is best?

Model-View-Controller Pattern

- Idea: want to separate the underlying data from the code that renders it
  - Good design because it separates issues
  - Consistent with object-oriented principles
  - Allows multiple views of the same data
- Model-View-Controller pattern
  - Originated in the Smalltalk community in 1970's
  - Used throughout Swing
    Although not always obvious on the surface
  - Widely used in commercial programming
  - Recommended practice for graphical applications

MVC Overview

- Model
  - Contains the "truth" – data or state of the system
  - "Model" is a poor word. "Content" or "underlying data" would be better.
- View
  - Renders the information in the model to make it visible to users in desired formats
    Graphical display, dancing bar graphs, printed output, network stream….
- Controller
  - Reacts to user input (mouse, keyboard) and other events
  - Coordinates the models and views
    Might create the model or view
    Might pass a model reference to a view or vice versa

MVC Interactions and Roles

- **Model**
  - Maintains the data in some internal representation
  - Supplies data to view when requested
    Possibly in a different representation
  - Advanced: Notifies viewers when model has changed and view update might be needed
  - Generally unaware of the display details
- **View**
  - Maintains details about the display environment
  - Gets data from the model when it needs to
  - Renders data when requested (by the system or the controller, etc.)
  - Advanced: Catches user interface events and notifies controller
- **Controller**
  - Intercepts and interprets user interface events
  - routes information to models and views

MVC vs MV

- Separating Model from View...
  - ...is just good, basic object-oriented design
  - usually not hard to achieve, with forethought
- Separating the Controller is a bit less clear-cut
  - May be overkill in a small system.
- Often the Controller and the View are naturally closely related

  Both frequently use GUI Components, which the Model is unlikely to do.
- Model-View Pattern: **MV**
  - Folds the Controller and the View together.

9

Implementation Note

- Model, View, and Controller are design concepts, not class names
- Might be more than one class involved in each.
- The View might involve a number of different GUI components
  - Example: JFileChooser
- MVC might apply at multiple levels in a system
  - A Controller might use a listbox to interact with a user.
  - That listbox is part of the Controller
  - However, the listbox *itself* has a Model and a View, and possibly a Controller.

10

Model-View Interaction

- It's possible to have more than one viewer
- A viewer tells the model that it wants to be notified when something interesting happens
- The model contains a list of all interested viewers
- When something happens (a cycle in the simulation has occurred, for example), the model calls the notify( ) method of each viewer
  - Viewers can react however they like
- This illustrates the "observer pattern"
  - used heavily in the Java user interface libraries, among other places

11