11. A bit of Smalltalk

Oscar Nierstrasz
Roadmap

- The origins of Smalltalk
- Syntax in a nutshell
- Pharo and Gt
- Demo — the basics
- Demo — live programming with Gt
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The origins of Smalltalk

Alan Kay’s Dynabook project (1968)

Alto — Xerox PARC (1973)

Smalltalk-78 windows
In the late 60s, Alan Kay predicted that in the foreseeable future handheld multimedia computers would become affordable. He called this a “Dynabook”. (The photo shows a mockup, not a real computer.)

He reasoned that such systems would need to be based on object from the ground up, so he set up a lab at the Xerox Palo Alto Research Center (PARC) to develop such a fully object-oriented system, including both software and hardware. They developed the first graphical workstations with windowing system and mouse.
Smalltalk-80

Everything is an object. Everything is there, all the time. First windowing system with mouse. First graphical IDE.
Smalltalk-80 was introduced to the world in 1981 in a now-famous issue of Byte Magazine. The “Smalltalk balloon” refers to this issue.

Smalltalk — a *live* programming environment
Smalltalk is often bundled into a single, “one-click” application, but there are actually four pieces that are important to understand.

Every user of Smalltalk can work with one or more Smalltalk images. The *image* file contains a snapshot of all the objects of the running system. Every time you quit Smalltalk, you can save and update this snapshot. In addition, the *changes* file consists of a log of all changes to the source code of that image, i.e., all new or changed classes and all compiled methods. If your image crashes (which is possible since Smalltalk allows you to do anything, even if that might be fatal), you can restart your image and *replay your changes*, so nothing is lost.

In addition, the virtual machine and sources files may be shared between users. The *VM* runs the bytecode of compiled methods and manages the image and changes file. Finally the *sources* file (optional) contains all the source code of objects in the base image (so you can not only explore this but modify it if you want).
Object-oriented language genealogy

1950

ALGOL 60

FORTRAN

COBOL

LISP

1960

ALGOL 68

Simula 67

Smalltalk 72

Smalltalk 80

C

awk

1970

C++

1980

Objective C

Self

Python

Perl

Ada 95

2000

Java

JavaScript

Ruby

Squeak

Pharo

2010

C#

Groovy

Eiffel

Modula-2

Oberon

Perl

awk

phi

Ada

Self

JavaScript

Ruby

Squeak

Pharo

C#

Groovy

Eiffel

Modula-2

Oberon

Perl

awk

phi

Ada
Simula was the first object-oriented language, designed by Kristen Nygaard and Ole Johan Dahl. Simula was designed in the early 60s, to support simulation programming, by adding classes and inheritance to Algol 60. The language was later standardized as Simula 67. Programmers quickly discovered that these mechanisms were useful for general-purpose programming, not just simulations.

Smalltalk adopted the ideas of objects and message-passing as the core mechanisms, not just add-ons to a procedural language.

Stroustrup ported the ideas of Simula to C to support simulation programming. The resulting language was first called “C with classes”, and later C++.

Cox added Smalltalk-style message-passing syntax to C and called it “Objective-C”.

Java integrated implementation technology from Smalltalk and syntax from C++.

Squeak and Pharo are modern descendants of Smalltalk-80.
## Smalltalk vs. Java vs. C++

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The most important difference between Smalltalk, Java and C++, is that Smalltalk supports “live programming”. Whereas in Java and C++ you must first write source code and compile it before you run anything, in Smalltalk you are always programming in a live environment. You incrementally add classes and compile methods within a running system.

As a consequence, Smalltalk has to be fully reflective, allowing you to reify (“turn in objects”) all aspects of the system, and change them at run time. The only thing you cannot change from within Smalltalk is the virtual machine.
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## Literals and constants

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<th>Example</th>
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<td>'hello'   $a</td>
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<tr>
<td>Numbers</td>
<td>1   3.14159</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Symbols</td>
<td>#yadayada</td>
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<tr>
<td>Arrays</td>
<td>#(1 2 3)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pseudo-variables</td>
<td>self super</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constants</td>
<td>true false</td>
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</table>
Everything is an object in Smalltalk, including these literal and constant values.

Strings are just special kinds of ordered collections holding character values.

Smalltalk supports various kind of numbers, and also supports radix notation for numbers in different bases.

Symbols behave much like strings, but are guaranteed to be globally unique. They always start with a hash (#).

In addition to self, super, true and false, there are only two further reserved names in Smalltalk: nil and thisContext. (The latter is only needed for meta-programming!)
Three kinds of messages

> *Unary messages*

5 factorial
Transcript cr

> *Binary messages*

3 + 4

> *Keyword messages*

3 raisedTo: 10 modulo: 5

Transcript show: 'hello world'
Smalltalk has a very simple syntax. There are just three kinds of messages:

1. *Unary messages* consist of a single word sent to an object (the result of an expression). Here we send `factorial` to the object `5` and `cr` (carriage return) to the object `Transcript`. (Aside: upper-case variables are global in Smalltalk, usually class names. Transcript is one of the few globals that is not a class.)

2. *Binary messages* are operators composed of the characters `+`, `−`, `*`, `/`, `&`, `=`, `>`, `|`, `<`, `~`, and `@`. Here we send the message “+ 4” to the object `3`.

3. *Keyword messages* take multiple arguments. Here we send “`raisedTo: 10 modulo: 5`” to `3` and “`show: 'hello world'`” to `Transcript`. 
First unary, then binary, then keyword:

\[ 2 \text{ raisedTo: } 1 + 3 \text{ factorial} \]

Same as:

\[ 2 \text{ raisedTo: } (1 + (3 \text{ factorial})) \]

Use parentheses to force order:

\[ 1 + 2 \times 3 \]

\[ 1 + (2 \times 3) \]
The precedence rules for Smalltalk are exceedingly simple: unary messages are sent first, then binary, and finally keyword messages. Use parentheses to force a different order. Note that there is no difference in precedence between binary operators.
Blocks

1 to: 5 do: [:n | Transcript show: n; cr ]

Keyword message  Block argument  Cascade
A typical method in the class Point

\[ \leq \text{aPoint} \]

"Answer whether the receiver is neither below nor to the right of aPoint."

\[ \wedge x \leq \text{aPoint} \ x \ \text{and: } [y \leq \text{aPoint} \ y] \]

\[(2@3) \leq (5@6) \text{ true}\]
The slide shows the <= method of the Point class as it appears in the IDE.

The first line lists the method name and its formal parameters. In this case we are defining the method for the <= selector. (In Smalltalk, method names are called “selectors”, because when a message is received, the selector is used to select the method to respond.)

Comments are enclosed in double quotation marks (strings are enclosed in single quotes).

The body of this method consists of a single expression. The caret (^) is a reserved symbol in Smalltalk and denotes a return value. A block is enclosed in square brackets and denotes an expression that may be evaluated. In this case, the Boolean and: method will only evaluate the block if its receiver (i.e., the subexpression to the left of the and:) evaluates to true.
Statements and cascades


code:

| p pen |
p := 100@100.
pen := Pen new.
pen up.
pen goto: p; down; goto: p+p
This is a code snippet (not a method) that may be evaluated in the Playground.

Here we see that statements are expressions separated by periods (.). Even though Smalltalk does not support type declarations, local variables must still be declared, appearing within or-bars ( | ).

A variable is bound to a value using the assignment operator ( := ). Smalltalk supports a special syntax, called a cascade, to send multiple messages to the same receiver. Messages in a cascade are separated by semi-colons (;). In this case we send the messages “goto: p”, “down”, and finally “goto: p+p” to the receiver p. (This draws a line from the Point 100@100 to 200@200.)

Note that 100@100 looks like special syntax for Point objects, but it is really just a Factory method of the Number class, which creates a new Point instance.
Local variables are delimited by `| var |`

Block variables by `: var`
NB: Since source code for methods in the IDE does not show the class of the method, it is a common convention in documentation to add the missing class name, followed by two greater-than signs (>>, as in this example.

This example serves mainly to show that blocks can take arguments. The arguments are after the opening left square bracket, and each is preceded by a colon (:).

The block:

[:each| each factorial]

takes its arguments from the receiver of `collect:`, the collection holding 10 and 5.
Control Structures

> Every control structure is realized by message sends

```plaintext
max: aNumber
  ^ self < aNumber
    ifTrue: [aNumber]
    ifFalse: [self]

4 timesRepeat: [Beeper beep]
```
There are no built-in control constructs in Smalltalk. *Everything happens by sending messages!*

Even a simple if statement is achieved by sending a message to a boolean expression, which will then evaluate the block argument only if it boolean is true.

Here we see that the `max:` method is implemented by sending `ifTrue:ifFalse:` to the Boolean expression `self<aNumber`. The `ifTrue:ifFalse:` method is itself defined in the Boolean classes `True` and `False`.

(Try to imagine how it would be implemented, and then check in the image to see how it is done.)
Creating objects

Class methods

OrderedCollection new
Array with: 1 with: 2

Factory methods

1@2
1/2

a Point
a Fraction
Ultimately all objects (aside from literals) are created by sending the message `new` to a class. (The message `new:` is used to create arrays of a given length.) Further constructors may be defined as convenience methods on classes, for example,

```
Array with: 1 with: 2
```

will create an `Array` of length 2 using `new:`, and then initialize it with the two arguments.

Other instance creation methods may be defined on the classes of arguments used to create the objects. For example, to create a `Fraction`, we send the message `/` to an `Integer`, with the numerator as its argument. This method will then actually create a new `Fraction` for us.
Creating classes

> Send a message to a class (!)

```plaintext
Number subclass: #Complex
  instanceVariableNames: 'real imaginary'
  classVariableNames: ''
  poolDictionaries: ''
  category: 'ComplexNumbers'
```
Everything is an object, ergo *classes are objects too*!
To create a new class, you must send a message to an existing class, asking it to create (or redefine) a subclass.
Since the class to be created probably does not yet exist, its name is not defined globally, so we must pass in the name as a symbol (here `#Complex`).
We can also provide the names of its instance variables (or we can update this later). Please ignore classVariableNames and PoolDictionaries — they are almost never needed. The “category” is the name of a related group of classes (something like a poor man's package).
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Pharo — a modern Smalltalk
Pharo is an open-source evolution of Smalltalk-80.
Download it from:
   http://pharo.org

To learn how to use Pharo, start with the open-source book, Pharo by Example:
   http://books.pharo.org

To learn about more advanced features, continue with Deep into Pharo
Glamorous Toolkit — a moldable Smalltalk

Gt is a “moldable” development environment built on Pharo with native windows, software analysis support, and a visualization engine.
GT offers a new graphical framework and a new set of tools for software development on top of Pharo.

https://gtoolkit.com/download/

NB: Although GT is quite mature, it does not yet offer replacements for all Pharo tools and features, so it is always possible to escape the “Morphic World” to access the traditional tool set.
Two rules to remember
Everything is an object
(Nearly) everything in Smalltalk is an object, which means that you can “grab it” and talk to it. Everything that you see on the screen is an object, so you can interact with it programmatically. The implementation of Smalltalk itself is build up of objects, so you can grab these objects and explore them. In particular, all the tools are objects, but also classes and methods are objects. This feature is extremely powerful and leads to a style of programming that is different from the usual edit/compile/run development cycle.
Everything happens by sending messages
The only way to make anything happen is by sending messages. To ask “what can I do with this object?” is the same as asking “what messages does it understand?”

The terminology of “message sending” is perhaps unfortunate, as those new to Smalltalk often assume it has something to do with network communication, but one should understand it as a metaphor: you do not “call an operation” of an object, but you politely ask it to do something by sending it a request (a “message”). The object then decides how to respond by checking to see if its class has a “method” for handling this request. If it does, it performs the method. If not, it asks its superclass if it has such a method, and so on. If this search fails, the object does not understand the message (but let’s not get into that now!).
Don’t panic!

New Smalltalkers often think they need to understand all the details of a thing before they can use it.

Try to answer the question

“How does this work?”

with

“I don’t care”.

Alan Knight. Smalltalk Guru
This slide is a paraphrase of:

Try not to care — Beginning Smalltalk programmers often have trouble because they think they need to understand all the details of how a thing works before they can use it. This means it takes quite a while before they can master Transcript show: ‘Hello World’.

One of the great leaps in OO is to be able to answer the question “How does this work?” with “I don’t care”.

alanknightsblog.blogspot.ch
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Glamorous Toolkit

Slideshows

- glamorous toolkit a tour
- moldable development
- One rendering tree
- Inspector views
- Pharo 101
- Querying Code
- Working with a REST API
- Spotter
- Playground and inspector
- Coder
- moldable analysis

Playground
Coder
Git
Monitor
Exemplifier
File system
Morphic World
Save
Quit

Why is it important?
And how else could we look at this problem?
by Tudor Girba
2021-01-27 11:39

Mapping legacy software crises
We untangle your software legacy crises. How? Take a tour guided by Wardley maps.
by Tudor Girba
2021-01-16 21:00
The Glamorous Toolkit is both a live programming environment and a “moldable” IDE providing support for data exploration and visualization. The core tools include a Playground for live exploration of code, a Coder for editing and managing code packages, a Git tool for managing repositories, and others. Various tutorials and blogs are also available from the home window.
The Playground

The Playground is a place to evaluate arbitrary Smalltalk expressions.

Evaluating an expression opens an “inspector” on the result.
You can select an expression in the Workspace and “do it”, “print it”, “inspect it”, or simply “do it and go”.

NB: use the keyboard shortcuts instead of the menu or buttons!

The inspector tabs provide various views of the object, such as the “raw” view showing the raw representation. The buttons open various tools, such as a new inspector, or a Coder view of the class.
Exploring objects and code

Send messages to objects

Expand methods in place
You can expand methods in place by clicking on the grey triangle. You can also pull up a new playground from the bottom of any inspector to evaluate arbitrary code.

NB: self is bound to the inspected object.
Finding senders and implementors

Use keyboard shortcuts or code snippets to find method usages.
To find all the implementations of a method, just position the mouse within the method’s name, and evaluate Command+M (for iMplementors). You can also find all methods that send it as a message by evaluating Command+N (for seNders).

Gt also has extensive support for programmatically querying code. For example, you can find the senders and implementors of the factorial method by evaluating these snippets:

```plaintext
#factorial gtSenders

#factorial gtImplementors
```
Navigating to the class

View class here

View class in Coder

Search class
There are numerous ways to navigation to the class of an object. You can view the class directly in the “Meta” tab, or open a dedicated Coder pane with the “Browse” button. Alternatively you can search for a class (or anything else) with the Spotter, or open a new Coder pane and search there.
The Coder
The Coder is a dedicated tool for editing and managing classes and methods. You can view classes either within their package hierarchy or class hierarchy.

You can also view the methods of a class, or the class comment, or you can browse references to the class. Other panes will appear if they are relevant such as examples.

Methods in Smalltalk are tagged by their category, such as “comparing” or “instance creation”. Note that “class methods” are analogous to static methods in Java — you invoke them by sending the message to the class, not the object.

```
Point x: 1 y: 2
```

will create a new `Point` object 1@2.
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Demo: Defining classes and methods
This demo script can also be found in the same github repo listed earlier.
Here we apply test-driven development to simulate a Post Office serving customers.
Creating a class
Use the Coder to create a new class, specifying its name (PostOfficeTestExamples), superclass (Object), and package (PostOffice). You can also specify a tag (subpackage), instance variables (slots), and other properties.

Click the checkmark (√) to commit.

Note that you can also create class programmatically by sending a message to its superclass (“everything happens by sending messages”):

```smalltalk
Object subclass: #PostOfficeTestExamples
    instanceVariableNames: ''
    classVariableNames: ''
    package: 'PostOffice'
```
Creating test examples

In Gt, tests are written as *example methods* that return an example object. This allows tests to be composed, and also allows the results to be inspected and explored. Just add the annotation `<gtExample>` to turn a method into a (test) example.
Quick fixes

Lik most modern IDEs, Gt provides quick fixes. They appear as a “wrench” icon, not only within the Coder, but anywhere you might type a code snippet (such as the Playground).
Initialization

The initialize method is run by default in Pharo Smalltalk for all newly created objects. Here we initialize a queue slot (instance variable) for new PostOffice instances.
Unless your class is a direct subclass of `Object`, it is best practice to perform `super initialize` as the first statement in your initialize method (just as in all OO languages).

We initialize queue to `OrderedCollection`, as there it provides everything we need to model a queue, and there is no dedicated Queue class.
Printing objects

We can compose test examples, and implement `#printOn:` to make objects printable.
The `postOfficeWithJack` test example is composed from the `emptyPostOffice` example.

The default print method of classes just show the class name, so we override it in both `PostOffice` and `Customer` to show the list of names of customers in the queue.

Note the use of a Gt query to find all the `printOn:` method implementations in our package.
Running all the tests

The package view provides a way to run all the tests
You can also run a query to extract all the test examples from a package:

```
(#PostOffice gtPackageMatches & #gtExample gtPragmas) gtExamples
```

(Everything happens by sending messages.)
Enabling a “live” view

By wrapping the queue as a “value holder” obeying MVC, we obtain a live view of the PostOffice for free.
If we change the initialization method of the PostOffice as follows:

```
initialize
    queue := OrderedCollection new asValueHolder
```

the queue will be wrapped as a “value holder” that produces `ValueChanged` events when the collection is updated. The Boxes view then updates itself automatically.
What we didn’t see

> Smalltalk is fully reflective
  — Classes are objects too; the entire system is implemented in itself

> The debugger is your friend
  — Sophisticated live debugging
  — You can change the system while debugging

> You can’t lose code
  — All changes are stored and can be replayed

> “Moldable” views in Gt
  — You can create dedicated live visualizations for objects
What you should know!

- What are the key differences between Smalltalk, C++, and Java?
- What is at the root of the Smalltalk class hierarchy?
- What kinds of messages can one send to objects?
- What is a cascade?
- Why does $1 + 2/3 = 1$ in Smalltalk?
- How are control structures realized?
- How is a new class created?
- What are categories for?
- What are Factory methods? When are they useful?
Can you answer these questions?

- Which is faster, a program written in Smalltalk, C++ or Java?
- Which is faster to develop & debug, a program written in Smalltalk, C++ or Java?
- How are Booleans implemented?
- Is a comment an Object? How would you check this?
- What is the equivalent of a static method in Smalltalk?
- How do you make methods private in Smalltalk?
- What is the difference between = and ==?
- If classes are objects too, what classes are they instances of?
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