

# Learning How to Teach Computer Science – And Why I Teach the Way I Do

#### Susan H Rodger

Professor of the Practice

**Duke University** 

Durham, NC USA



#### So Many People To Thank!

- My Husband and Family
- My mentors
- So many colleagues
  - AP CS, SIGCSE, ITiCSE Working Groups, Algorithm Visualization, JFLAP, Alice, CRA-WP, Rensselaer, Duke, ...
- So many students



Thanks to Steve Wolfman and Gary Lewendoski for the SIGCSE 2010 scarf!



### My Journey starts Way Back

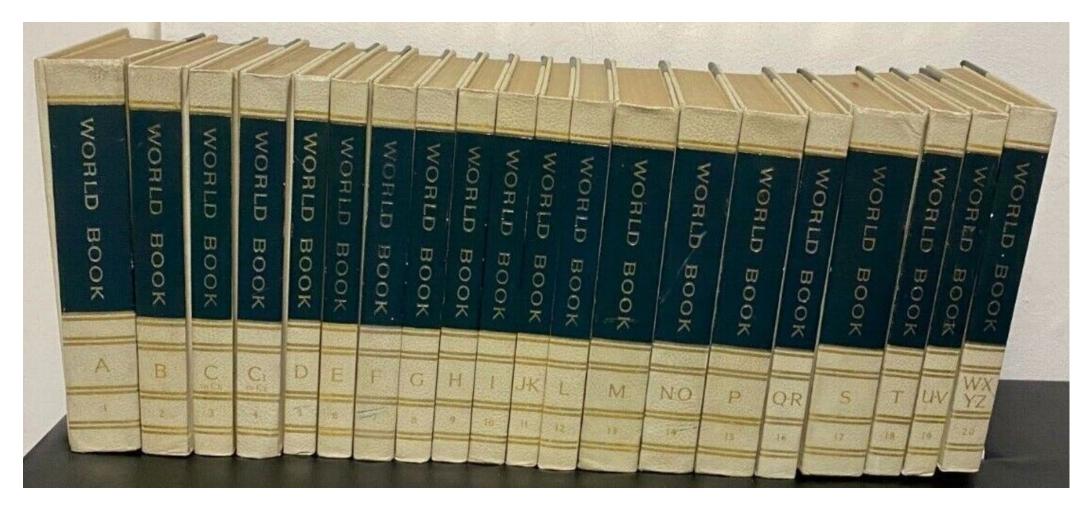
- Very shy
- Me and my sisters
  - May 1970
- Solved a lot of puzzles
- Loved Math
- Interest in teaching







### My World Wide Web



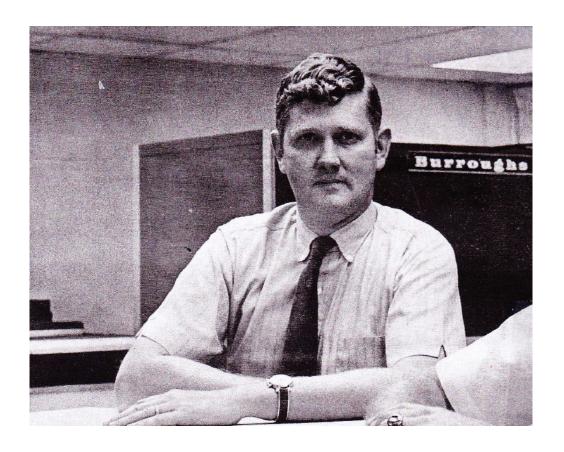


### Computers?

 My Dad started ADP with Don Harley

Large Disk drives and tape drives

• No computers in my H.S.





### College – North Carolina State University

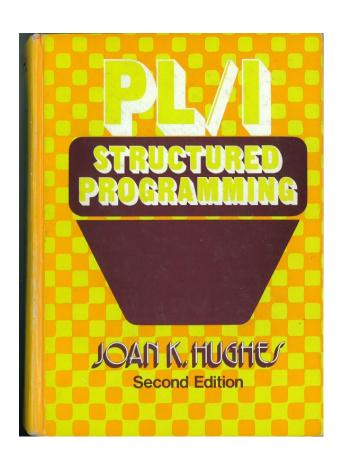
- Liked Math a lot
- Took programming course first semester
  - PL/1



```
Hello2: proc options(main);
    put list ('Hello, world!');
end Hello2;
```



### PL/1 Structured Programming by Hughes



#### **Contents**

#### Chapter

- 1 Introduction to PL/I 1
- 2 Top-Down Structured Programming 41
- 3 Data Types and Data Manipulation 101
- 4 Logical Testing 175
- 5 Table Handling 245
- 6 File Declarations and Stream I/O 313
- 7 Record I/O, Structures, Pictures 387
- 8 File Processing 473
- 9 Subroutines and Functions 563
- 10 List Processing and Storage Classes 601

#### Appendix

- A Answers to Checkpoint Questions 663
- B Built-in Functions 691
- C PL/I Language Comparison Charts 706
- D IBM Data Formats 756
- E Glossary of PL/I Terms 776

Index 803



# PL/1 Program – Table for Powers of 2

766	PL/I	Structured	Programming
-----	------	------------	-------------

Positive Binary Values		Absolute Values		Negative Binary Values	
Bit Positions 11 1111 1111 2222 2222 2233 3123 4567 8901 2345 6789 0123 4567 8901	Powers of 2	Decimal Notation Base = 10	Hexadecimal Notation Base - 16	Bit Positions 11 1111 1111 2222 2222 2233 0123 4567 8901 2345 6789 0123 4567 8901	
0000 0000 0000 0000 0000 0000 0000 0000 0000	3 4 4 5 6 7 8 8 9 9 10 10 11 12 12 12 12 12 12 12 12 12 12 12 12	134, 217, 728 268, 435, 456 536, 870, 912 1, 073, 741, 824 2, 147, 483, 647	40,000,000 7F,FFF,FFF	No negative zero	

FIGURE D.4 Powers-of-two table.

March 17, 2023 SIGCSE 2023



#### Jobs at NCSU and where to go next?

- Systems Programmer University Systems Control Center
  - Pull data off of Magnetic tapes



David McAllister, Numerical Analysis



David McAllister

- Double major in Computer Science and Math
  - Start of Senior year Question led me to Math Advisor
  - Dana Latch
  - You are going to graduate school, aren't you?



Dana Latch



### Applied to PhD programs and Industry

- Applied to PhD programs
- IBM
  - Got job offer and Accepted
- Still waiting from PhD programs





#### Issue with my GRE Score

- Quantitative High score 90%
- High GPA
- Verbal low score 28%
- Prof. Latch referred me to a Psychologist for evaluation
  - Evaluation (Feb 1983):
    - "...Miss Rodger has a learning disability. ... this disability is a subtle one and a discreet one that affects her ability to retain small bits of verbal information."
    - "I believe that deficits in both of these areas are primarily responsible for her low GRE Verbal score...
    - "present no reason to indicate that Miss Rodger's intellectual capacity would not be suffient to handle graduate work in the area she will enter."

Sent letter to graduate schools

#### Sent Letter to Graduate Schools





Office of the Vice President for Research and Dean of the Graduate School

March 23, 1983

Dear Ms. Rodger:

I am pleased to offer you official admission to study toward the Doctor of Philosophy degree in the Department of Computer Sciences for the 1983 fall session at the West Lafayette campus. Your admission is conditional upon the following:

- 1. Demonstration of proficiency in English composition during your first term. This may be accomplished in the Office of Writing Review, Heavilon Hall.
- 2. Satisfactory completion of your undergraduate degree and submission of your undergraduate final transcript during your first term.

Demonstrate proficiency in English Composition



#### What about that IBM job?

Turned down the job to go to graduate school

They offered me a summer job!



## English Proficiency Done!

#### PURDUE UNIVERSITY OFFICE OF WRITING REVIEW

September 20, 1983

Dear Ms. Rodger,

Demonstrated proficiency in English Composition!

It is a pleasure to inform you that you have cleared the English requirement for graduate students and that the Graduate School has been so notified. Since neither this office nor the Graduate School normally notifies your major professor, you may want to show him this note. Then, we suggest that you keep it as official evidence that you have met the requirement. If you would like to come by the office and look over the corrections on your paper, we will be glad to show it to you.



#### Graduate School at Purdue





- Teaching Assistant for intro programming in Fortran
  - Taught several Discussion sections
  - Punch cards
- First Semester deciding research area
  - Numerical Analysis
  - Algorithms
- TA for several other courses
- Liked teaching and helping students!





Greg Frederickson

#### Finished PhD at Purdue

- PhD Purdue University 1989
  - Computational Geometry
  - Parallel Scheduling Algorithms
- Job Search
  - Two-body problem





# Assistant Professor Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute





- 1989-1994
- Continued research in algorithms

First two women faculty in dept – me and Ellen Walker



Ellen Walker

Really like teaching and helping students



#### Career Change from a Lunch at a SIGCSE TS

- Presented paper at SIGCSE 1994 in March in Phoenix, Arizona
- Heard about new position at Duke University
- I was listening, but had low self-esteem



- Got two NSF grants Education, and Broadening Participation
- Sunday, Emailed Alan Biermann to inquire about position



**Rocky Ross** 



Alan Biermann



#### Career Change from a Lunch at a SIGCSE TS

• Alan Biermann's response:

"We are having 3 candidates interview next week and may put out an offer."

"It is probably too late to apply now unless our search is unsuccessful in which case a second round could take place."

- I emailed him back and said I would apply
  - I mention I just got 2 NSF grants!
- He emails back:

"Congratulations on your grants success. Yes, you should send in your application. (But do not put a huge effort into it unless you find out we have reopened the search.)"

On Monday, I FEDEX'd my paper application!



Alan Biermann



# Career Change from a Lunch at a SIGCSE TS

- Tuesday: I get a call from Owen Astrachan
  - They need my reference letters today and want me to come interview this week.
- Wednesday: an email from Owen

"I'd like to extend an invitation to come to Duke", "If you could arrange to come by tomorrow evening (Thurs)"

• I email him on Thursday:

"I picked up my tickets this morning. So you can find me, I'll be wearing white jeans and white sneakers. I have long brown hair and wear glasses."

• He emails back:

"I got your abstract and your self-description. I'm kind of skinny, wear glasses and will be looking like I'm looking for someone."



Owen Astrachan

#### Thank you for reference letters!



Mukkai Krishnamoorthy



Erich Kaltofen

**Bob McLaughlin** 



Assistant Professor of the Practice Duke University

- Since 1994
- Assistant -> Associate -> Professor of the Practice



- Been involved with SIGCSE in many ways and lots of communities through SIGCSE interactions
- Here are some of the communities I have been involved with



#### Community: AP Computer Science

- Test Development Committee 1995-2001
- CS A Exam and CS B Exam
  - Pascal 1984-1998
  - C++ 1999-2003
  - Java 2004 present
- Lots of panels at SIGCSE on changing AP CS







#### Community on Algorithm Visualization

- 1992 Computers in Science Education and Training Workshop, Nova Scotia, met John Stasko
- SIGCSE conferences met many people
- My Workshop on Interactive and Visual Tools 1996
  - Gave talks Stasko, Poplawski, Ericson, Guzdial, ...
- AlgoViz Cliff Shaffer and others
- Many ITiCSE Working Groups on Algorithm Visualization – Tom Naps and others
- Online textbooks OpenDSA, Runestone Academy



John Stasko



Cliff Shaffer



**Tom Naps** 







#### Community - CS into K-12 with Alice

- Met Wanda Dann and Steve Cooper at SIGCSE 02
- Integrating Alice into CS 0
- Workshop 2005 at Duke
- First Alice Symposium at Duke College and HS
- Adventures in Alice Programming!
- Many years with K-12!















24

March 17, 2023 SIGCSE 2023



#### What about My Disabilty?

- Diagnosed as heading to Graduate School
- Never got any accommodations in Graduate School
- Never got any accommodations as a Professor
- It has been hard!
- Takes me longer to do things
  - Writing
  - Organizing thoughts
- Been easier to talk about with
  - BPC activities, Access Computing, NCWIT, CRA-WP









#### Another Psych Evaluation

- November 2021
  - "scores revealed a large and unusual discrepancy between verbal reasoning and nonverbal reasoning, indicating an underlying verbal-based learning disability"
  - "very mild/high functioning end of the autism spectrum"
  - Camouflaging behaviors masking or strategies to hide autistic characteristics

#### I'm autistic

Nice to have a name to my difficulties



#### How do I Compensate?

- I start things really early or else!
- I write down notes everywhere!
- In meetings I write down and organize my thoughts before speaking
- I have a sticky note on my laptop for lecture
- I say tongue-twisters for articulation
- 2. Betty Botter bought some butter

  But she said the butter's bitter

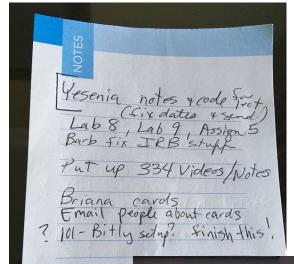
  If I put it in my batter, it will make my batter bitter

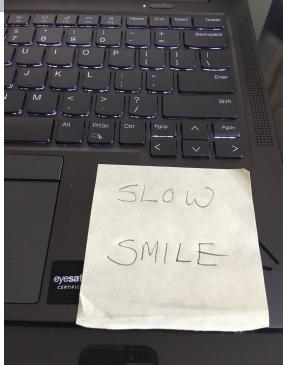
  But a bit of better butter will make my batter better

  So 'twas better Betty Botter bought a bit of better butter

  March 17, 2023

  SIGCSE 2023





27



#### That is my Journey, now on to Teaching



#### Learning How To Teach Computer Science

- Amazing that getting a PhD means you can now teach!
  - Little Training -> Being a Teaching Assistant
- First semester at Rensselaer Challenge Prior Dept Decision:
  - Combine CS1/CS2 with Foundations of Computing (automata, grammar)
  - Give challenge to new women faculty! Ellen Walker and me
- How did we survive:
  - Energetic
  - Loved both subjects
  - Stay one step ahead of students!

Don't do this to your new faculty!



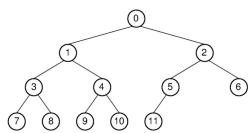
### Advice from many years on Learning to Teach

- 7 tips
- By the way I'm still learning!



#### 1) Borrow

- Borrow lecture notes and slowly make them your own
- Borrow assignments and slowly make them your own
- Borrow Ideas
- You are at a great place to borrow ideas SIGCSE TS
  - "Making Lemonade: Exploring the bright side of large lecture courses", Wolfman, SIGCSE 02
    - Make a binary tree with your class to find the depth of the tree
  - Nifty Assignments
    - Very cool assignments since 1999
    - Boggle, Book Recommendations



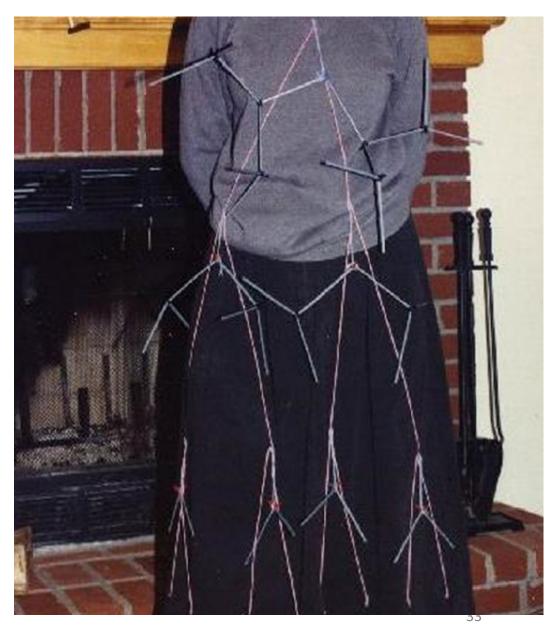


### 2) Make concepts visual





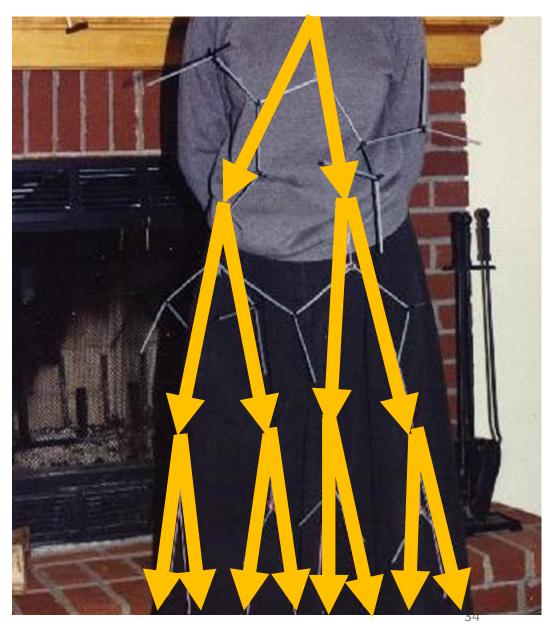
March 17, 2023



SIGCSE 2023



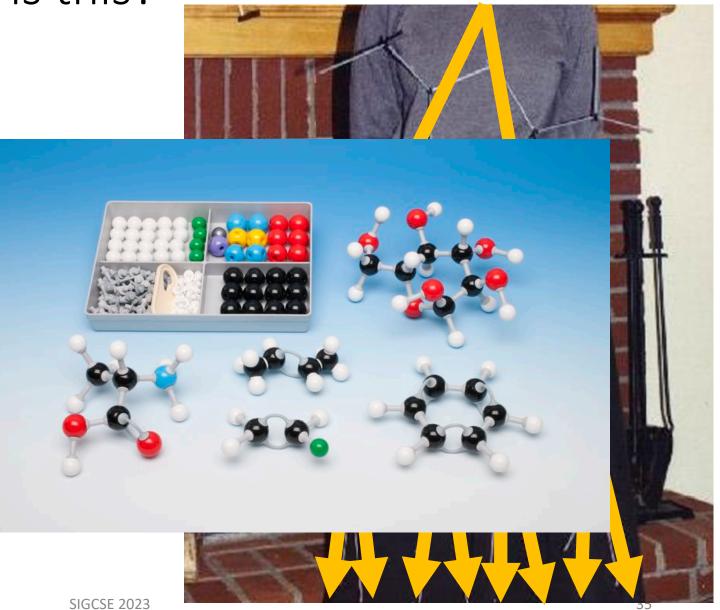




SIGCSE 2023







March 17, 2023 SIGCS

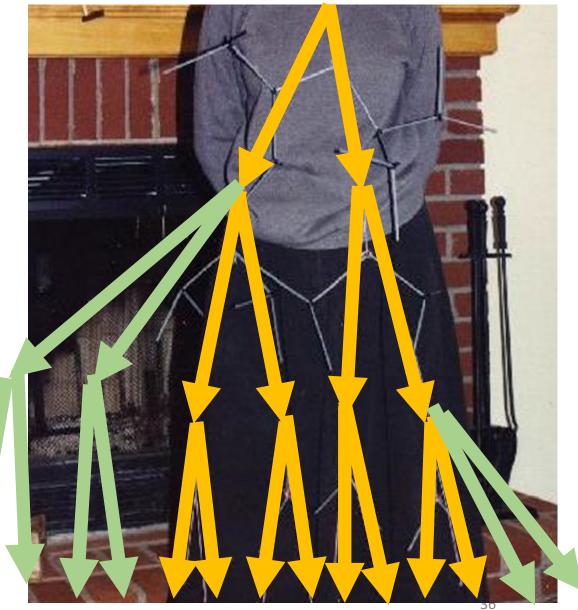




Attached to each node, green subtree of the same size made with molecule kit

Only two shown

What is it?



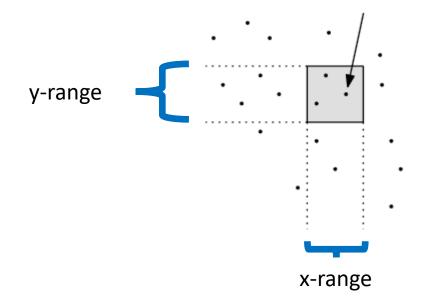
March 17, 2023

SIGCSE 2023



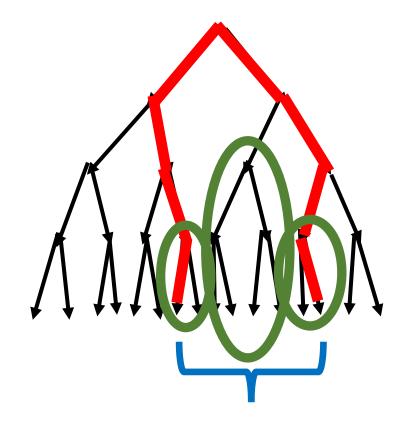
#### 2-D range tree

- Here is the problem
- Points in the x-y plane
- Search in for those points in a square

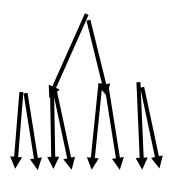




#### Main tree by x-values, subtree by y-values



In the x-range



Each subtree organized by y-value

Search each subtree by y-value



#### Did you follow that?

- Engagement Taxonomy
- "Exploring the role of Visualization and Engagement in Computer Science Education", ITiCSE 2002 Working Group, Naps et al.
- Six levels of engagement with visualization technology
  - No viewing ← lowest level
  - Viewing
  - Responding
  - Changing
  - Constructing
  - Presenting



# 3) Make Lecture Interactive – Don't give answers Names, Types, and Values

- Relate to a file. Consider: cats.jpg
- What is its name?
- What is its type?
- What is its value?

#### Names, Types, and Values

- Relate to a file. Consider: cats.jpg
- What is its name?
  - cats.jpg
- What is its type?
  - .jpg (type of image file)



- What is its value?
  - Content of the file, picture of cats?



101, Spring 2023

2

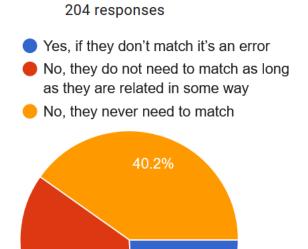


#### Compare input from all

• Use forms (google forms) or clickers

Do the variable names of the argument and parameter need to match (as in the names are exactly the same)?

- Yes, if they don't match it's an error
- No, they do not need to match as long as they are related in some way
- No, they never need to match



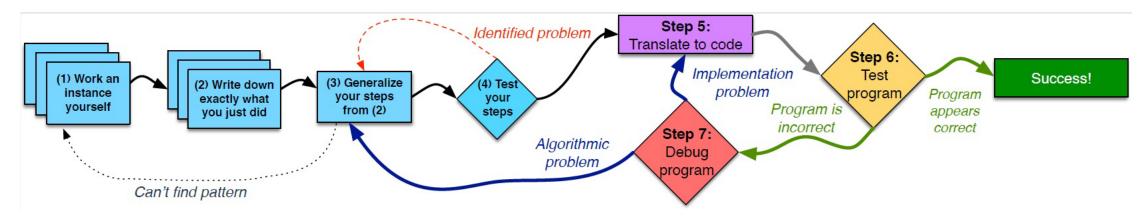
24%

35.8%



#### Use interactive techniques

• In CS1 we teach 7 steps: from problem to running code



- Will students use this?
- Not unless they see you using it!
- We use it in lecture a lot to solve problems

"Translation from problem to code in 7 steps", CompEd 19, Hilton, Lipp, and Rodger, 2019.

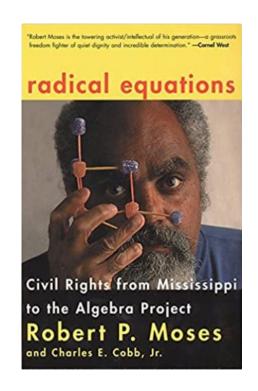
#### From a CS 1 student:

"I just want to tell you that I tried the seven step method, and I worked on all of my code for one or two hours before I even looked at the computer. AND IT WORKED! I got all my code right on the first try! For the first time ever, I don't have to go to the help lab ..."



# Bob Moses – Interactive Techniques for Algebra

- 1960's Civil Rights Activist
  - Organizer Black voter registration drive in Mississippi
  - Fighting the use of law to oppress the black vote
- 1982 MacArthur Genius Award
- 80's Closing the gap with algebra
  - No algebra in 8<sup>th</sup> grade in his kids' school
  - First step get all kids to be able to take algebra
  - Second step How to empower students, start with a train trip
  - Algebra as a gateway to higher level math/science
  - Huge movement! Interactive approach increased pass rates



Strongly recommend his book



#### Constance Bland

- Mississippi Valley State University, Professor, Chair, Vice president of Academic Affairs
- In 1999, the only Black woman to get a PhD in CS.
- Bob Moses wrote that she says: "I wasn't committed...I liked the idea of math based on a student's experience...", "... it really began to sink in just how valuable this project was or could be"
- She was a co-PI (Mississippi site) on my NSF Alice grant to teach middle school teachers programming!





#### 4) Use Visual and Interactive Tools in Teaching

Many Tools for learning programming:











- KEY: You must use the tools while teaching!
- Students need to see you make mistakes!

March 17, 2023 SIGCSE 2023 45

# Python Tutor – My Favorite tool for Visualizing data concepts in CS 1

- Example: Concatenation of two Python lists
- Two ways to demo
  - 1. Step through example using Python Tutor
  - 2. Copy screen shots onto a slide
- Pause to ask questions

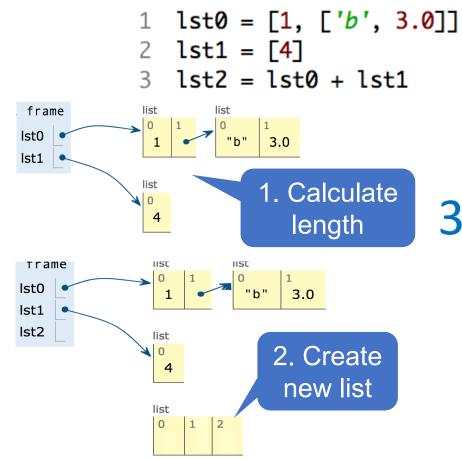
• This example I borrowed from Kristin Stephens-Martinez!

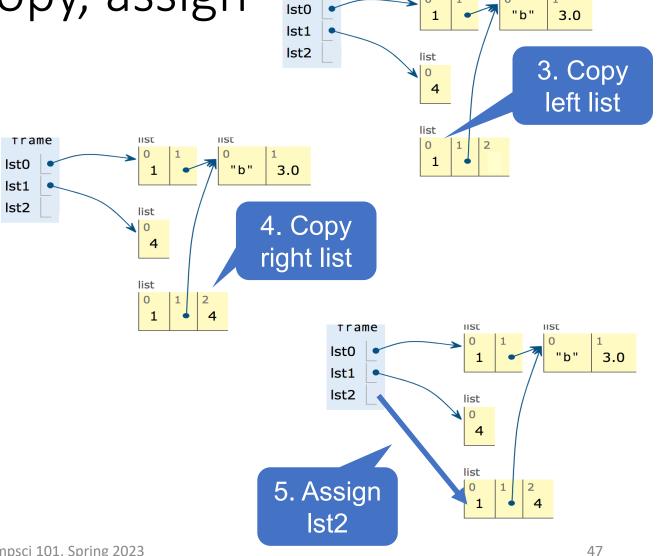
March 17, 2023 SIGCSE 2023 46



#### Concatenation of two lists, 5 steps: Length, create, copy, copy, assign тrаmе

How is the inner list copied?

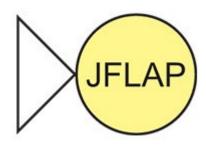






#### Example: use JFLAP in teaching Automata

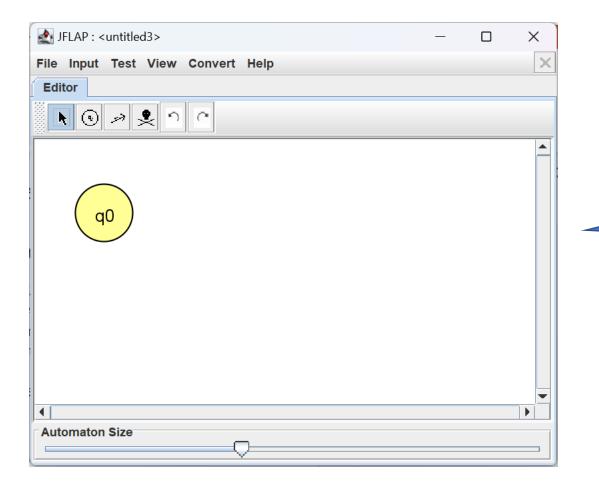
- Use JFLAP during lecture to step through an example
  - Building a Finite State Machine and tracing through it

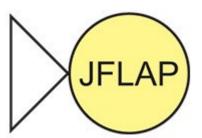


March 17, 2023 SIGCSE 2023 48



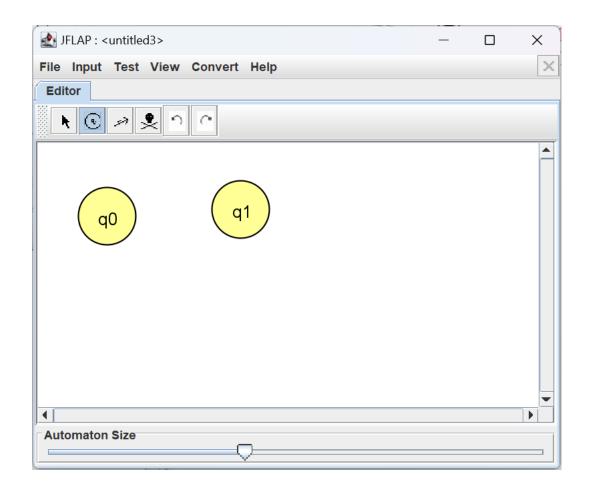
Building a Finite State Machine

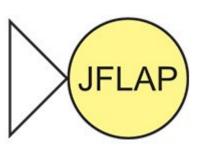




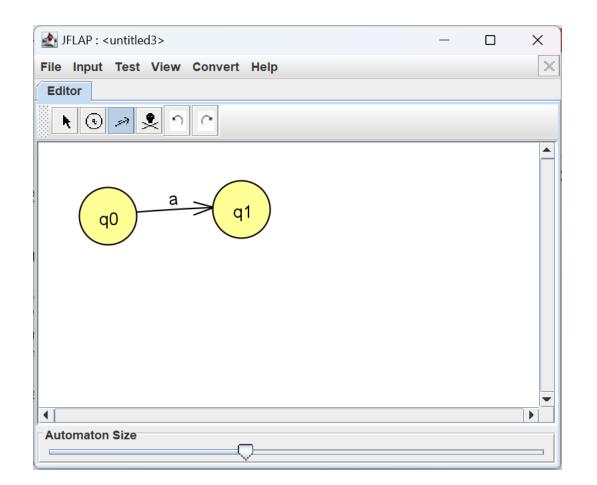
Students tell me what to do

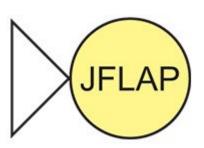




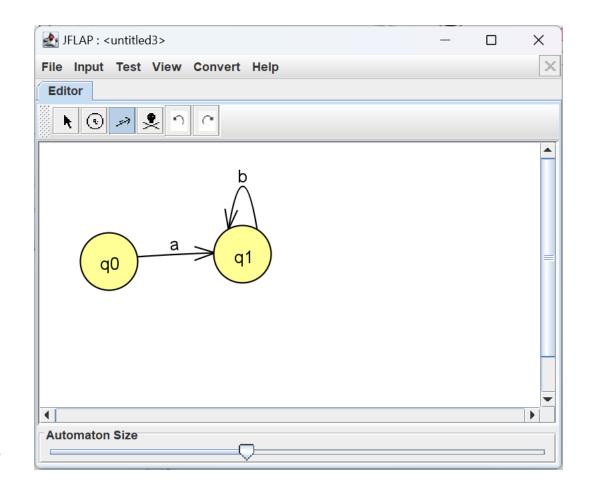


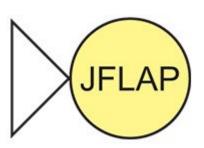




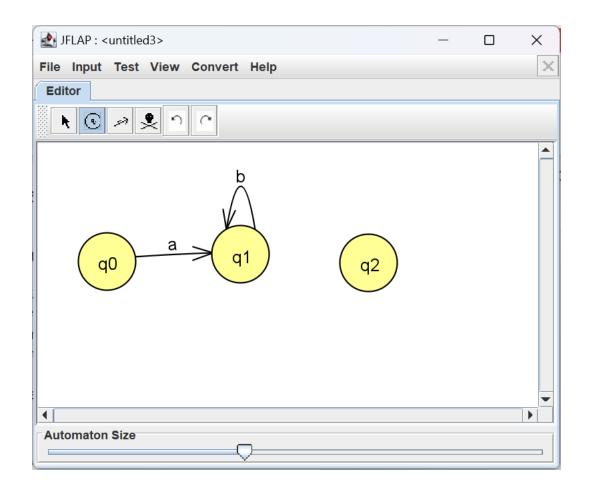


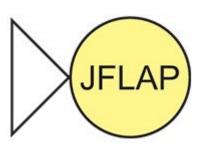




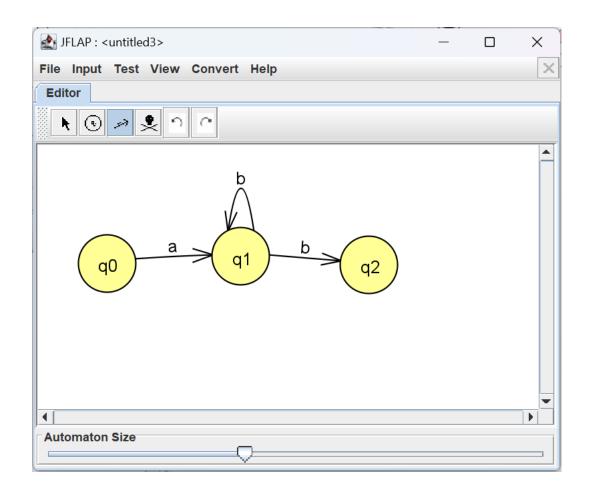


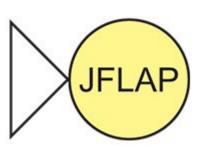








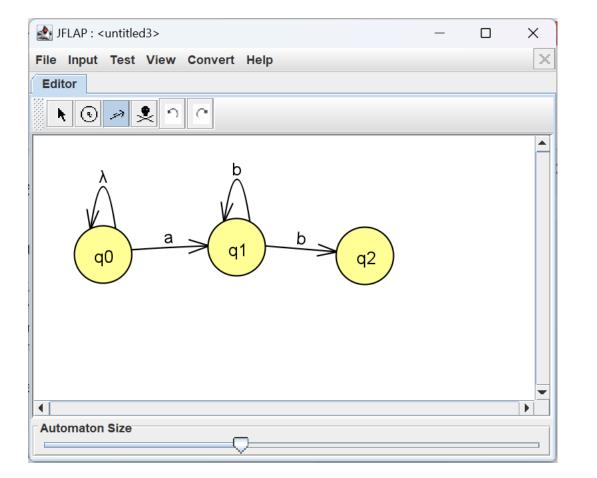


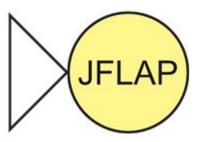




Building a Finite State Machine

•



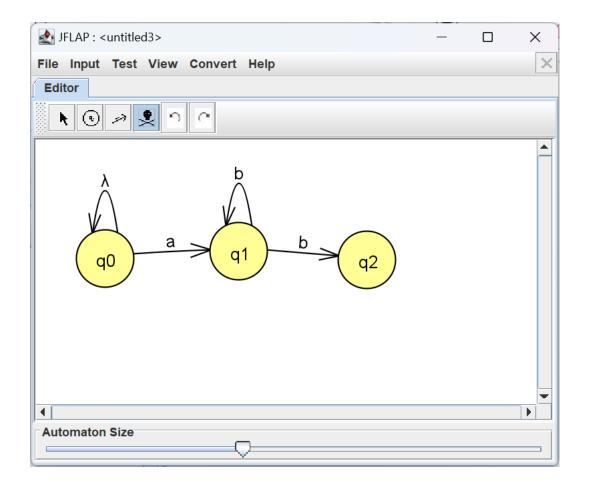


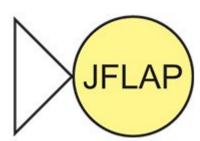
Oops!



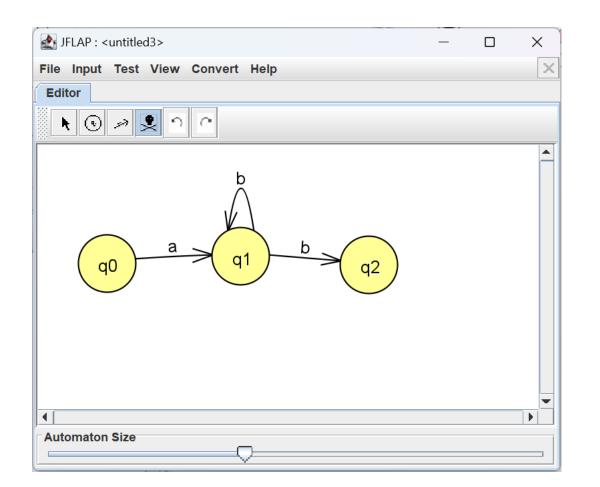
Building a Finite State Machine

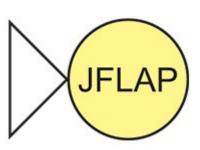
•





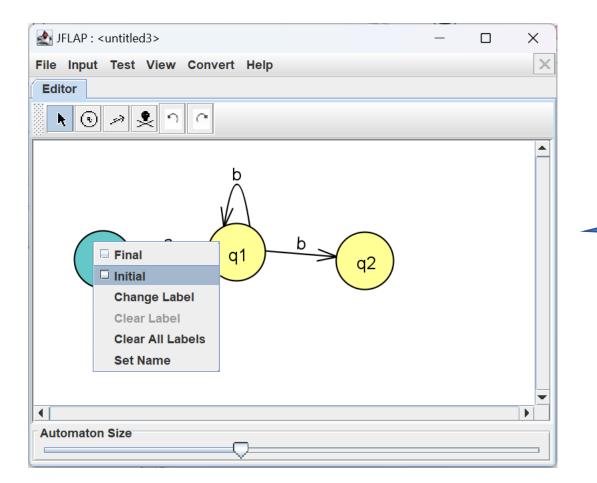


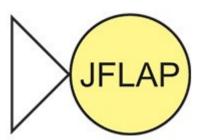






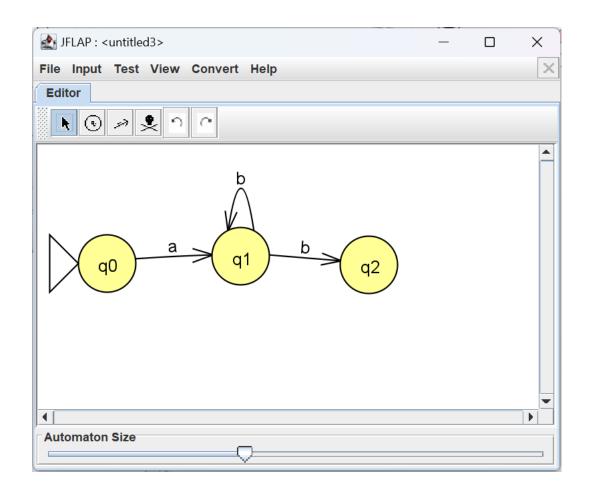
Building a Finite State Machine

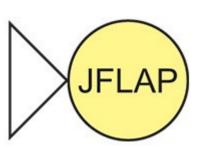




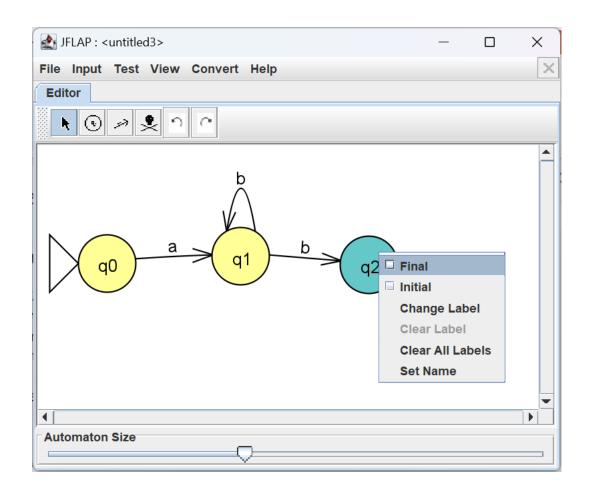
Some things may not be obvious

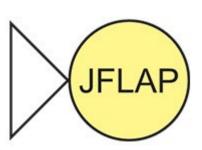




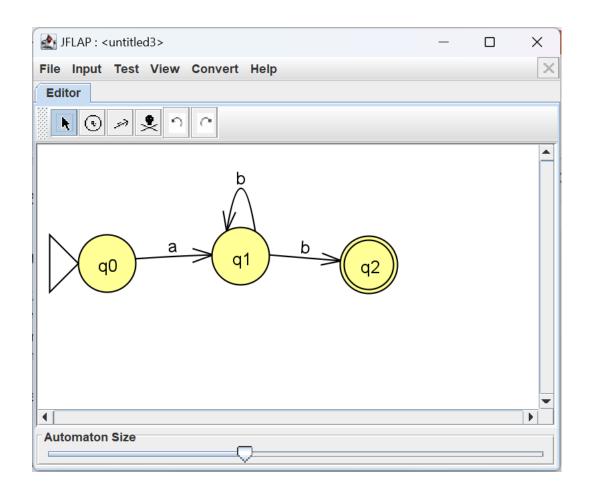


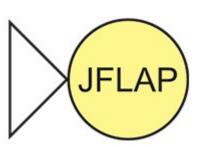




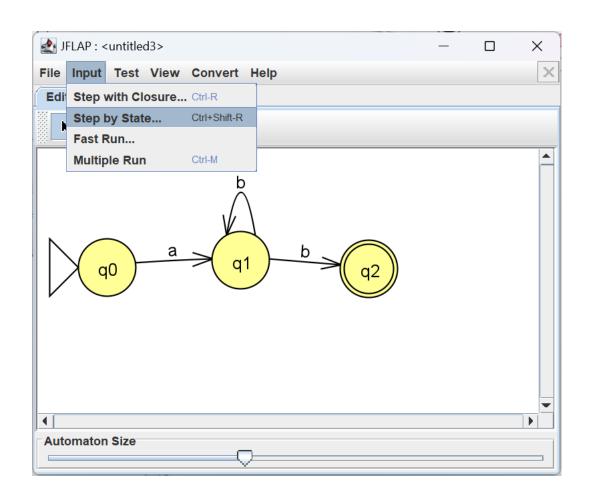


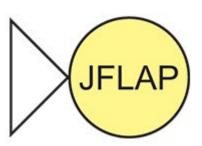






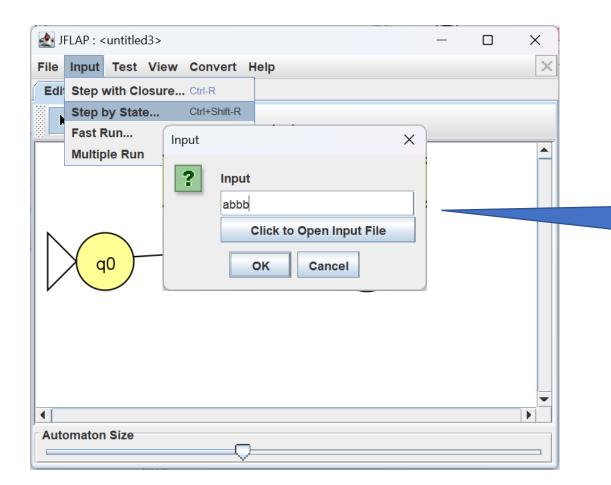


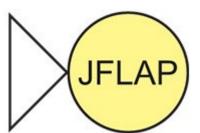






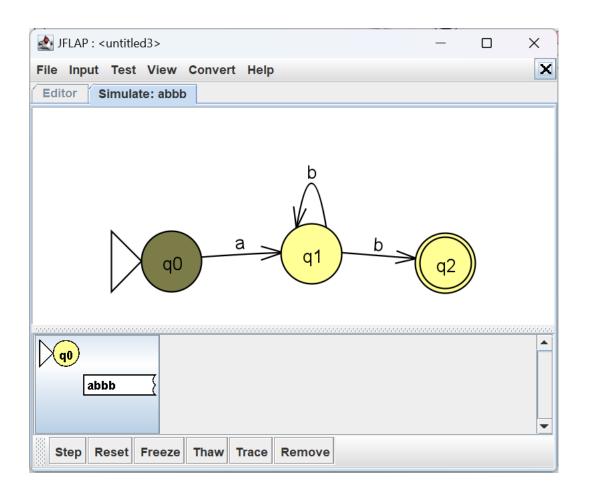
Trace an input string

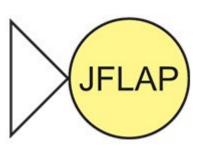




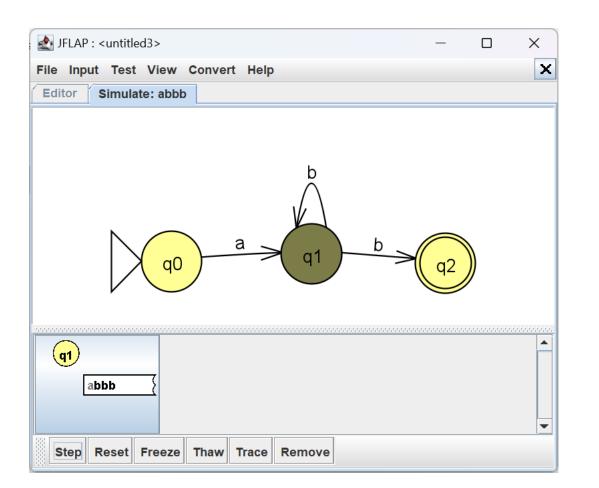
A student can pick the input string

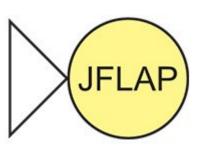




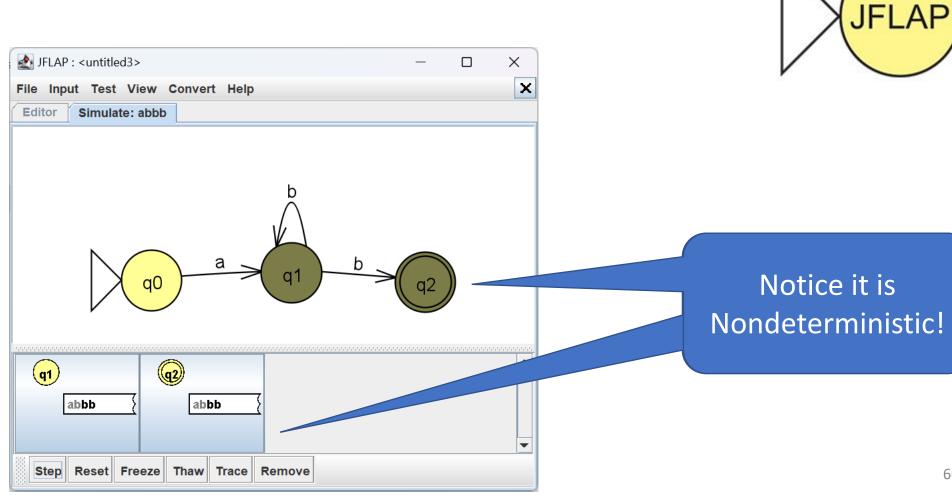




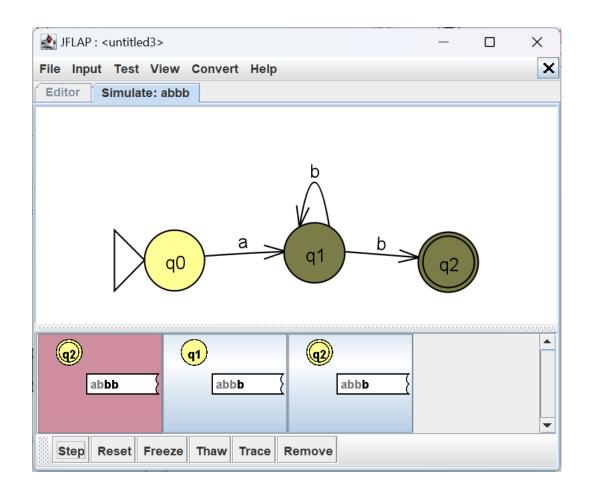


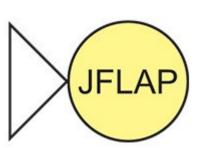








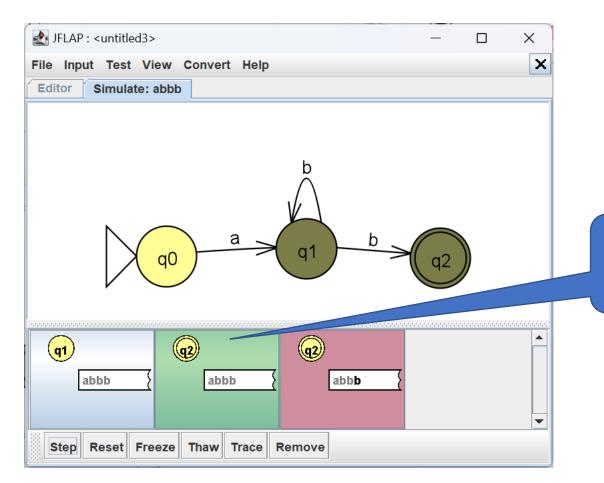


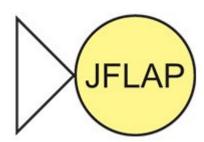




Trace an input string

•



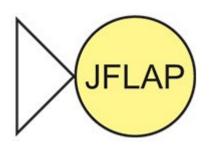


String accepted!



#### Other ways I use JFLAP in teaching

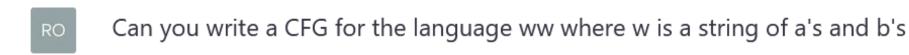
- Step through a proof or example
  - Converting an NFA to DFA
  - Show parsing some strings can take a long time!
  - Pause and ask what will happen next!
- Use JFLAP for homework problems
  - Check your answer on a conversion
  - Build an NPDA for a particular language
  - Compare parsing methods
- Students use for studying for an exam





#### Trying to solve impossible problems

- Build an NPDA or write a CFG for  $L=\{ww|w\in\Sigma^*\},\ \Sigma=\{a,b\}$ 
  - In class exercise
  - IMPOSSIBLE, NPDA has one stack, This language is NOT context-free
- Asked ChatGPT to solve this problem





Yes, I can write a CFG for the language ww where w is a string of a's and b's. Here's one possible grammar:

 $S \rightarrow aSa \mid bSb \mid \epsilon$  WRONG!



#### Use ChatGPT in class to solve problems

$$L=\{ww|w\in\Sigma^*\}, \Sigma=\{a,b\}$$



But abbabb should be in this language, and your grammar does not generate that string.



You are correct, my apologies for the oversight in my previous answer. The grammar I provided generates strings of the form ww, but not strings of the form abbabb. Here's an updated grammar that generates both:

 $S \rightarrow aSbA \mid bSaA \mid \epsilon$ 

WRONG!

A → aAbA | bAbA | ε

This grammar has two non-terminals, S and A. The start symbol S generates



#### Use ChatGPT in class to solve problems

$$L=\{ww|w\in\Sigma^*\}, \Sigma=\{a,b\}$$



But this grammar generates the string aabbab which is not in the language L





March 17, 2023 SIGCSE 2023 72



#### Use ChatGPT in class to solve problems

$$L=\{ww|w\in\Sigma^*\}, \Sigma=\{a,b\}$$



But this grammar generates the string aabbab which is not in the language L



You're right, I apologize for the mistake. Here's an updated CFG that should generate only strings of the form ww:

$$S \rightarrow aSb \mid bSa \mid \epsilon$$

WRONG
This is the first wrong grammar again!!



#### Use ChatGPT in class to solve problems

$$L = \{ww | w \in \Sigma^*\}, \ \Sigma = \{a, b\}$$

Using these productions, we can derive the string abbabb as follows:

S → bSa → baba

But it doesn't derive the string???

But we cannot derive the string aabbab using this CFG.

I hope this updated answer is helpful.

#### Totally busted!



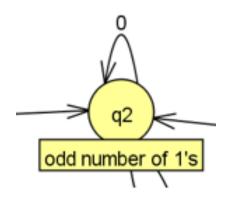
# If you can't find a tool, build one

A few tips from experience with JFLAP



#### What can make the tool more useable?

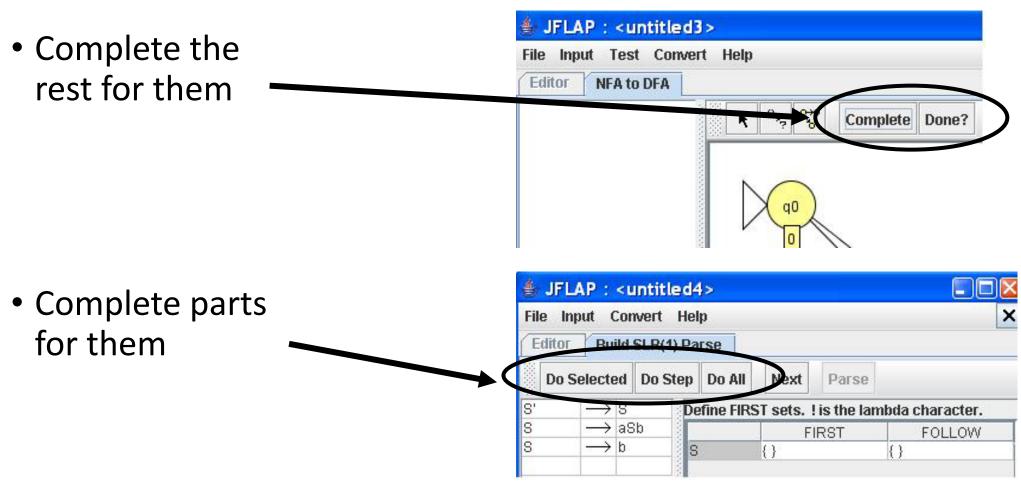
- Annotations on states
- Multiple run window
  - Develop test data
  - Easier for grading
- General definitions
  - FA recognize one or more symbols
  - NPDA pop or push 0 or more symbols
- Batch processing



Input	Result
а	Accept
aa	Accept
aab	Accept
aabb	Accept
	Reject
acb	Reject
abcbb	Accept
abbcc	Accept
abcab	Reject
bc	Reject



# In following an algorithm, allow user to proceed on if they got it





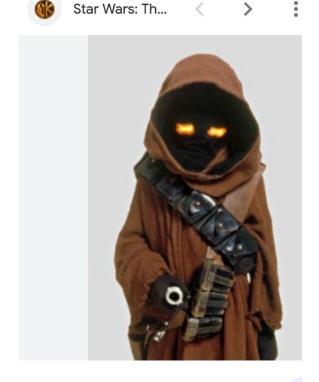
# Add Pause/Checkpoint questions

- Allow for pause to think about what comes next
- Undo/go back

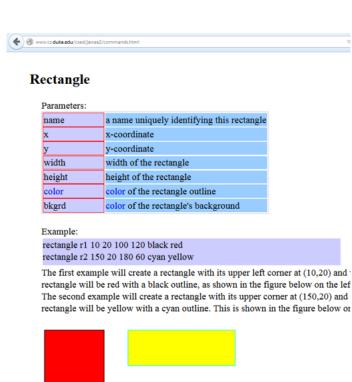
Pop up a quiz question to see if the user understands what he/she just did



- What is a good name?
- One tool Jawaa

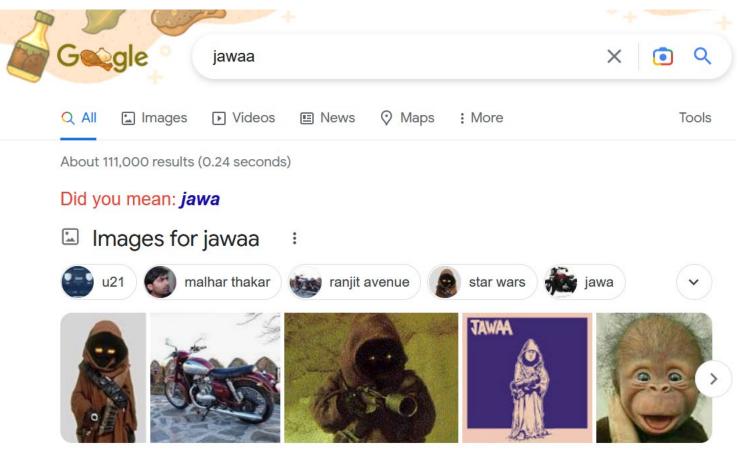


Jawa - Star Wars: The Old Re...





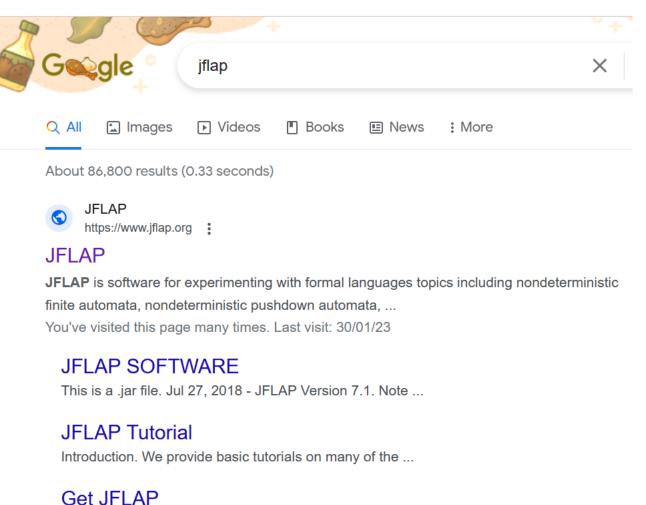
- What is a good name?
- One tool Jawaa
- Search
  - Mostly star wars!



Feedback

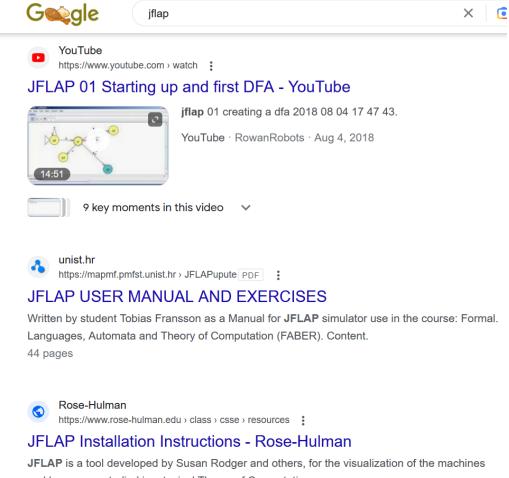


- What is a good name?
- JFLAP originally named FLAP
  - Formal Languages and Automata Package
- Java came along...
  - JFLAP





- What is a good name?
- FLAP
  - Formal Languages and Automata Package
- Java came along...
  - JFLAP



and languages studied in a typical Theory of Computation course.



# 5) Use Applications to show WHY!

- CS 1 Build a recommender system to recommend books, movies and restaurants
  - Dictionaries, parallel lists, etc.









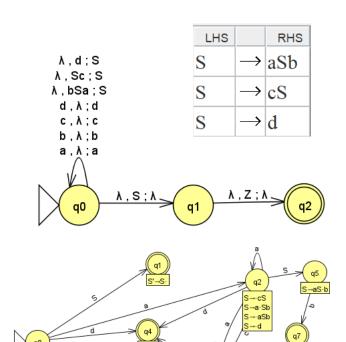
#### Use Applications to show WHY!

- Automata Theory and Formal Languages
  - Why are we learning this?
- Relate it to what they know
  - They have all had errors when compiling their program
  - ERROR ON LINE 63



#### Use Applications to show WHY!

- Write an interpreter for a small language
  - Write a CFG to define the programming language
  - LR Parsing NPDA that models the LR parsing process
  - Build an LR Parse Table build a DFA with states that have meaning about what is on the stack so far
- Spent summer 2021 (pandemic) writing 3 chapters on parsing to add applications section to Formal Languages and Automata Textbook







- Explore different Sorting algorithms
- Sort with cards!





- Explore different Sorting algorithms
- Sort with cards!
- Use Big Cards!
  - Height: 14.5 inches = 36.3 cm







- Explore different Sorting algorithms
- Sort with cards!
- Use Big Cards!
  - Height: 14.5 inches = 36.3 cm
- Sort with cookies!

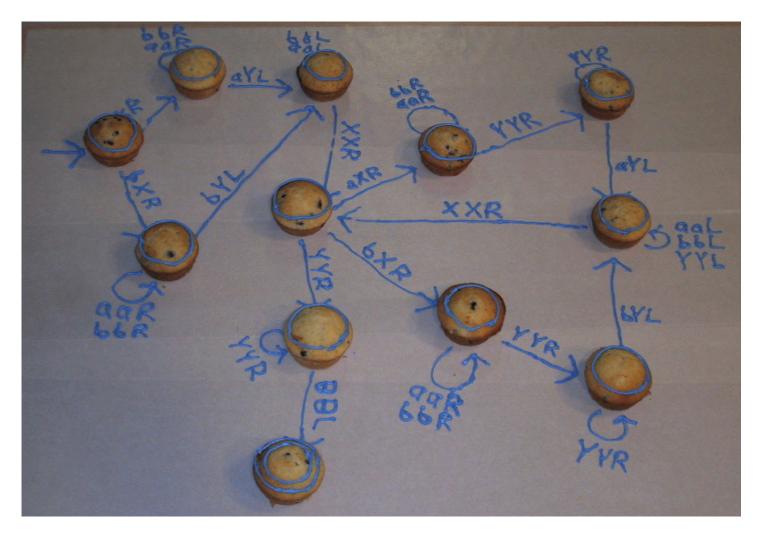








- TM made of blueberry muffins
- What is the error in it?





 Students build DFA with cookies and icing



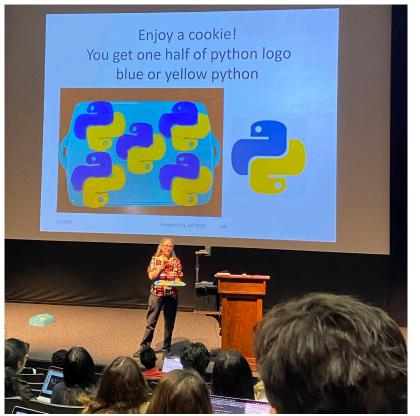






# Or just Surprise them with a treat!

• Fall 2022 CompSci 101 Python Cookies







# April 2020 – Make your own cookies! https://bit.ly/makeJavaCookies

#### MAKING JAVA COOKIES

by Susan Rodger

















# 7) Make change happen!

- Change your lecture
  - Borrow ideas from others!
- Change lives
  - Mentor students, junior faculty, staff
  - Mentor anyone you can!
- Attend a Mentoring workshop
  - Or encourage others to
- Change the culture in Computing





**Early & Mid-Career Mentoring Workshop** 









**Cultural Competence in Computing (3C) Fellows** 



#### Questions?



Python Logo cookies





Alice cookies

