

15-410

“...Should we “crash”?...”

Errors

Sep. 22, 2008

Dave Eckhardt

Roger Dannenberg

Outline

Three kinds of error

Important to classify & react appropriately

Outline

Three kinds of error

- Hmm...
- That's not right...
- Uh-oh...

Important to classify & react appropriately

“New Player” - Take 1

```
// Improve memory locality:
// store players in array
struct player players[MAX];
struct player *new_player(int team, int num)
{
    int i;
    if ((i = emptyslot()) == -1)
        /* OH NO!!! */
        MAGIC_BREAK;
}
...
```

“New Player” - Take 2

```
// Improve memory locality:
// store players in array
struct player players[MAX];
struct player *new_player(int team, int num)
{
    int i;
    if ((i = emptyslot()) == -1)
        /* OH NO!!! */
        while(1);
}
...
}
```

What's Going On?

“Out of table slots” - what kind of thing?

- Should really never happen?
- Might happen sometimes?
- Likely to happen once a day?

What's Going On?

“Out of table slots” - what kind of thing?

- Should really never happen?
- Might happen sometimes?
- Likely to happen once a day?
 - Remember: users always want 110%!

What to do?

- *Resolve* reasonable issues when possible
 - How to resolve this one?

“New Player” - Take 3

```
struct player *players;
int playerslots;
struct player *new_player(int team, int num)
{
    int i;
    if ((i = emptyslot()) == -1)
        if ((i = grow_table_and_alloc()) == -1)
            /* OH NO!!! */
            while(1);
}
...
}
```


What's Going On?

“Out of heap space” - what kind of thing?

- Should really never happen?
- Might happen sometimes?
- Likely to happen once a day?

What's Going On?

“Out of heap space” - what kind of thing?

- Should really never happen?
- Might happen sometimes?
- Likely to happen once a day?

My suggestion

- “Might happen sometimes”

What to do?

- Hard to say what the right thing is for all clients
 - Is it fatal or not?
- Often: pass the buck

“New Player” - Take 4

```
struct player *players;
int playerslots;
struct player *new_player(int team, int num)
{
    int i;
    if ((i = emptyslot()) == -1)
        if ((i = grow_table_and_alloc()) == -1)
            return (NULL);
}
...
}
```

“Free Player” - Take 1

```
void free_player(struct player *p)
{
    switch(p->role) {
        case CONTENDER:
            free(p->cstate); break;
        case REFEREE:
            free(p->refstate); break;
    }
    free(p->generic);
    mark_slot_available(p - players);
}
```

What's Wrong?

There is a sanity-check missing...

- Probably somebody will make a mistake eventually
- Let's catch it

“Free Player” - Take 2

```
void free_player(struct player *p)
{
    switch(player->role) {
        case CONTENDER:
            free(p->cstate); break;
        case REFEREE:
            free(p->refstate); break;
        default: return;
    }
    free(p->generic);
    mark_slot_available(p - players);
}
```

All Fixed?

No!

- The program *has a bug*
 - Maybe the client is passing us random player pointers
 - Maybe we are handing out invalid p->role values
- We happened to catch the bug this time
- We might not catch it every time!
 - A random player pointer might have a “valid” p->role

The program is *broken*

- Hiding the problem isn't our job
- Hiding the problem isn't even *defensible*

Should We “Crash”?

If the program is “broken”, should we “crash”?

- Often: yes
 - Dumping core allows debugger inspection of the problem
 - Throwing running program into a debugger is probably nicer

Summary

Three kinds of error

- Hmm...
 - Try to *resolve*
- That's not right...
 - Try to *report*
- Uh-oh...
 - Try to *help the developer* find the problem faster