



Introduction



Issues



SBCL



Combinators



CGFs



Alt. MCs



Perfs



Conclusion

Method Combinators

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Introduction



▶ CLOS improvements over mainstream object systems

- ▶ Multiple dispatch
Increased SOC: polymorphism / inheritance
- ▶ MOP
Homogeneous behavioral reflection
- ▶ Method combinations
Increased SOC: methods / dispatch

▶ Standardization drawbacks

- ▶ Method combinations underspecified
Considered not mature enough
- ▶ MOP only a later addition
Unclear or contradictory protocols





Plan



Method Combinations Issues

The Case of SBCL

Method Combinators

Combined Generic Functions

Alternative Combinators

Performance





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Orthogonality

Short combination example

```
(defgeneric details (human)
  (:method-combination append :most-specific-last)
  (:method append ((human human)) ...)
  (:method append ((employee employee)) ...))
```

► Problems

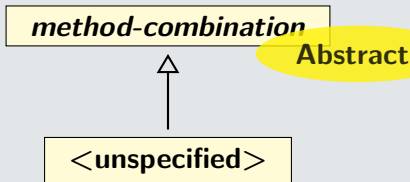
- Method qualification required
Combination change impractical
- Except for the option
Inconsistent
- No `:before` or `:after` methods
No good reason

► Workaround: long method combinations



Structure

System classes



- ▶ Portable specialization impossible
At least one implementation-specific (sub)class
- ▶ Unclear nature (classes vs. instances)
Mix of define / call-time parametrization



Protocols

Lookup (MOP)

```
find-method-combination gf name options
```

- ▶ “called to determine the combination object used by a generic function”
 - ▶ What are name and options for?
 - ▶ Error behavior?
 - ▶ There already is generic-function-method-combination



Protocols (cont.)

Generic function invocation protocol (MOP)

```
compute-effective-method gf combination methods
```

- ▶ What is combination for?
- ▶ Caching policy unspecified
Contrary to applicable methods





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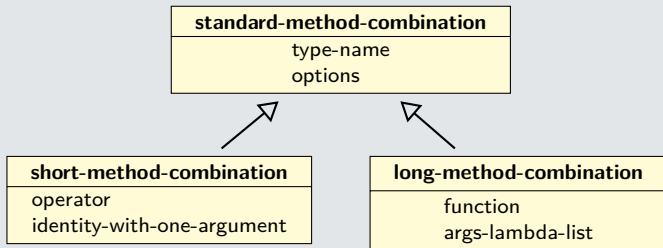
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Classes

Method combination classes hierarchy



- ▶ `options`: use-time (`:method-combination options`)
- ▶ Below: define-time



Short Method Combinations

Creation

```
(define-method-combination name option*)
```



```
(find-method-combination gf (eql name) options)
```

```
short combination object
```

- ▶ **No global namespace**
 - ▶ One method combination object per generic function
 - ▶ Redefinitions don't affect existing generic functions
- ▶ `find-method-combination` \neq the expected or the specified



Long Method Combinations

Long method combination functions

```
*long-method-combination-functions*
```

long-method-combination
function
args-lambda-list

- ▶ **Similar behavior, one additional oddity**
 - ▶ Local method combination objects
 - ▶ Global method combination functions



Long Method Combinations (cont.)

Code

```
(define-method-combination my-progn ()
  ((primary () :order :most-specific-first :required t))
  `(progn ,@(mapcar (lambda (method)
                     `(call-method ,method))
                    primary)))

(defgeneric test (i) (:method-combination my-progn)
  (:method ((i number)) (print 'number))
  (:method ((i fixnum)) (print 'fixnum)))
```

REPL

```
CL-USER> (test 1)
FIXNUM
NUMBER
```



Long Method Combinations (cont.)

Code

```
(define-method-combination my-progn ()  
  ((primary () :order :most-specific-last :required t))  
  `(progn ,@(mapcar (lambda (method)  
                     `(call-method ,method))  
                 primary)))
```

REPL

```
CL-USER> (test 1)  
FIXNUM  
NUMBER
```



Long Method Combinations (cont.)

Code

```
(defmethod test ((i float)) (print 'float))
```

REPL

```
CL-USER> (test 1.5)
```

```
NUMBER
```

```
FLOAT
```

```
CL-USER> (test 1)
```

```
FIXNUM
```

```
NUMBER
```





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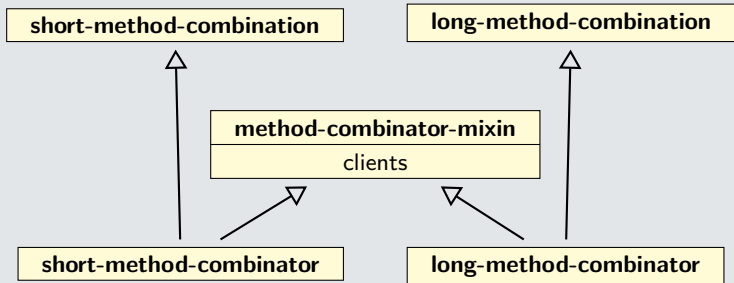
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Performance



Overview

Classes



- ▶ Stored in a global hash table
- ▶ `[setf] find-method-combinator`



Protocols

In 3 layers

define-[short|long]-method-combinator



ensure-[short|long]-method-combinator



ensure-[short|long]-method-combinator-using-class

Implementation (layer 3)

In 4 steps

define a regular combination

(find-method ↓ combination)

retrieve it

(change ↓ class)

make it combinator

(setf find-method-combinator ↓)

store it

- Note: regular combination injection





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Combined Generic Functions

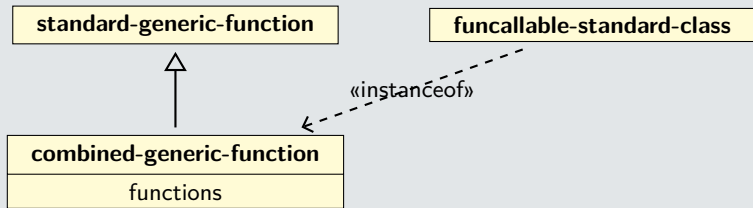
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Overview

Classes



Wrappers

```
(defcombined cgf (args...)
  (:method-combinator mc)
  ...)
```



Method Combinator Management

► Initialization

```
(defmethod find-method-combination (cgf-class-prototype ...)  
  (find-method-combinator ...))
```

► Sanitation

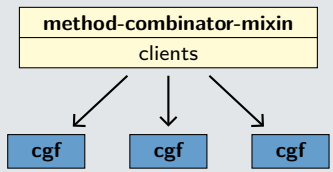
```
(defmethod find-method-combination (cgf ...)  
  (method-combinator cfg) #/or mismatch error/#)
```

► Updating

```
(change-method-combinator cgf method-combinator)
```



Client Maintenance



- ▶ Client registration:
([re]initialize-instance cgf ...)
- ▶ Client updating:
(reinitialize-instance mc ...)
(u-i-f-d-c mc ...)

New protocol

make-clients-obsolete



update-combined-generic-function-for-redefined-method-combinator





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Overview

- ▶ **Idea:** generic functions / combinators complete decoupling
- ▶ **Use:** \neq logical method combinations, selected methods *etc.*
- ▶ **Note:** already possible, but extremely costly
 - ▶ 2 calls to `reinitialize-instance`

Protocols

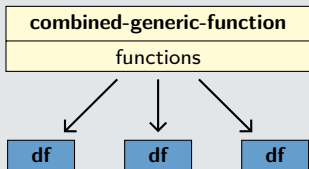
```
(call-with-combinator (find-method-combinator 'combinator)
  #'func arg1 arg2 ...)
```

```
(call/cb combinator func arg1 arg2 ...)
```

```
#!combinator(func arg1 arg2 ...)
```



Optimization



- ▶ Discriminating functions caches
- ▶ Client maintenance aware of them
- ▶ Cost
 - ▶ First alternative call: as before
 - ▶ Next: 1 or 2 hashtable lookups

▶ **Warning:** discriminating functions must close over all caches!





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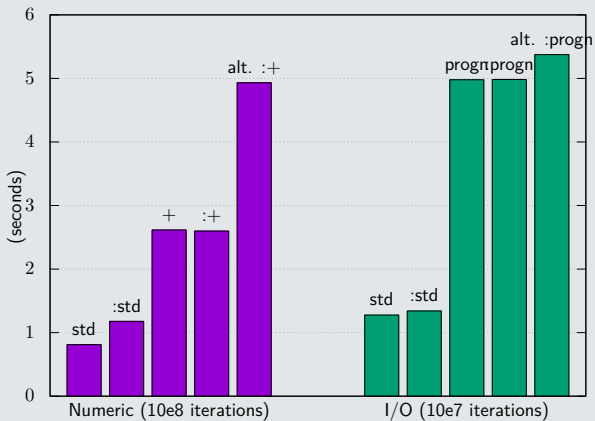
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Performance



Conclusion / Perspectives

▶ Conclusion

- ▶ Method combinations are powerful yet underspecified
- ▶ Method combinators improve their consistency
- ▶ Code available on GitHub

▶ Perspectives

- ▶ Refine / properly package implementation
- ▶ Port to other compilers
- ▶ Experiment with “floating” floating methods

