8 Introducing Type Parameters

Goals

In the first part of this lab you will learn how to correctly design tests for the methods that change the state of an object.

In the second part of the lab you will learn to abstract over the functional behavior.

In the third part you will get the first introduction to the abstraction over the type of data using type parameters.

8.1 Abstracting over the Datatype: Generics

Introducing type parameters

For this part download the files in *Lab8Sp2007-s2.zip*. The folder contains the files *ImageFile.java*, *ISelect.java*, *SmallImageFile.java*, *AList.java*, *MTList.java*, *ConsList.java*, and *Examples.java*.

Create a new *Project Lab8Part1* and import into it all the given files. Add the variable to include *tester.jar* in the project.

Look at the files. The interface *ISelect* now includes a *type parameter T*:

```
public interface ISelect<T> {
  /* Return true if this Object of the type T should be selected */
  public boolean select(T o);
}
```

That means that the implementing class can decide what type of data should be used as the argument to the *select* method. This allows us to define the class *SmallImageFile* as follows:

```
/* Select image files smaller than 40000 */
public class SmallImageFile implements ISelect<ImageFile> {

  /* Return true if the size of the given ImageFile is smaller than 40000 */
  public boolean select(ImageFile o) {
    return o.height * o.width < 40000;
  }
}
```

The implementation of the *same* method in the class *ImageFile* is then greatly simplified:

```
  // is this imagefile the same as the given one?
  public boolean same(ImageFile that){
```

```
    return this.name.equals(that.name) &&
           this.width == that.width &&
           this.height == that.height &&
           this.kind.equals(that.kind);
  }
```

Look at the class definition for the class *ImageFile* to see the use of the type parameter there.

Moreover, the classes that represent a list of arbitrary items can now specify the type of items that can be included in the list construction.

Re-do all of the problems from the previous part, but using the type parameters

1. In the *Examples* class design the tests for the class *SmallImageFile*, just as you did before.

2. Design the method *allSmallerThan40000* that determines whether all items in a list are smaller that 40000 pixels. The method should take an instance of the class *SmallImageFile* as an argument.

3. Design the class *NameShorterThan4* that implements the *ISelect<ImageFile>* interface with a method that determines whether the name in the given *ImageFile* object is shorter than 4.

   Make sure in the class *Examples* you define an instance of this class and test the method.

4. Design the method *allNamesShorterThan4* that determines whether all items in a list have a name that is shorter than 4 characters. The method should take an instance of the class *NameShorterThan4* as an argument.

5. Design the method *allSuch<T>* that that determines whether all items in a list (of items of the type *T*) satisfy the predicate defined by the *select* method of a given instance of the type *ISelect<T>*. In the *Examples* class test this method by abstracting over the method *allSmallerThan40000* and the method *allNamesShorterThan4*.

6. For the second etude, at home, follow the same steps as above to design the method *anySuch* that that determines whether there is an item a list that satisfies the predicate defined by the *select* method of a given instance of the type *ISelect*.

Equality - again

Look now at the implementation of the method *contains* for the classes that represent a list of $<T>$. We know this would not work very well, because the comparison for equality requires that we are testing against an identical object, not just an object that contains the same data.

The test harness includes a parametrized *ISame* interface defined as follows:

```
interface ISame<T>{
  // is this object the same as the given one?
  boolean same(T that);
}
```

1. Modify the class *ImageFile* so that it implements the *ISame*$<T>$ interface, by defining a method that compares *this ImageFile* against the given one.

2. Modify the method definition of the *contains* method so that it expects that the object passed as argument implements the *ISame*$<T>$ interface and use the given argument to invoke the *ISame* method.

3. Of course, you are following the DESIGN RECIPE and so you have made examples and tests for your method.

4. If you are brave, modify the definition of the classes that represent lists of objects of the type $<T$ *implements*$<$*ISame*$<T>>$. It allows you to rewrite the code for the *contains* method so that *this* can invoke the *same* method.

5. Java provides a similar interface that can be used to compare two objects — *Comparator*. If you have the time, ask the TA to show you where to find the documentation for Java libraries, and look up the infomration on the *Comparator* interface.