The
Oaklisp Language Manual

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Contents

1 Introduction **1**

2 Types and Objects **4**
2.1 Fundamental Types 4
2.2 Operations on Objects 5
2.3 Operations on Types 5
2.4 Defining New Types 6
2.5 Type Predicates 6
2.6 Constants 6
2.7 Standard Truth Values 7
2.8 Coercion 7
2.9 Mixing Types 8

3 Methods and Scoping **9**
3.1 Methods 9
3.2 Scoping 10
3.3 Functional Syntax 10
3.4 Dispatching to Supertypes 11
3.5 Rest Args 11

4 Side Effects **13**
4.1 Assignment 13
4.2 Locatives 13
4.3 Operation Types 14
4.4 Modification Forms 14

5 Evaluation and Locales **15**
5.1 Evaluation 15
5.2 Installing Names in a Locale 16
5.3 Structuring the Namespace 17
5.4 Variables 17
5.5 Macros 18
5.6 Compilation 18

6 Dynamic State **19**
6.1 Fluid Variables . . . 19
6.2 Non-local Exits . . . 20
6.3 Error Resolution . . . 21
6.3.1 Signaling Errors . . . 21
6.3.2 Restart Handlers . . . 21
6.3.3 Error Handlers . . . 22
6.3.4 Operations on Errors . . . 23
6.3.5 Error Types . . . 23

7 Control **25**
7.1 Simple Constructs . . . 25
7.2 Mapping Constructs . . . 26

8 Sequences **28**
8.1 Type Predicates . . . 28
8.2 Sequence Operations . . . 29
8.3 Vector Constructors . . . 29
8.4 List Constructors . . . 30
8.5 List Accessors . . . 30
8.6 Lists as Sets . . . 31
8.7 Lists as Associations . . . 32
8.8 Lists as Stacks . . . 32

9 Numbers **33**
9.1 Arithmetic . . . 33
9.2 Comparison . . . 34
9.3 Predicates . . . 34
9.4 Rounding . . . 35
9.5 Bitwise Logical Operations . . . 35
9.6 Accessing Components . . . 36

10 Input and Output **37**
10.1 Streams and Files . . . 37
10.2 Reading . . . 39
10.3 Printing . . . 41

11 Miscellaneous **43**
11.1 Tables . . . 43
11.2 Delays . . . 43

12 User Interface **45**
12.1 Invoking Oaklisp 45
12.1.1 Architectures 46
12.2 The Top Level Environment 47
12.3 Miscellaneous Functions 48
12.4 Debugging 48

Chapter 1

Introduction

This is the introduction to the original Oaklisp proposal which we wrote in January 1985. Although the core language hasn't changed since then, some of the peripheral ideas in the proposal have been modified or abandoned.

One of the most interesting language ideas to emerge from the 1970's was the object-oriented programming model. Although this model has been incorporated to some extent in a number of recent Lisps, these implementations have not had the generality and power that characterize a true object-based system like Smalltalk. The most significant trend in the contemporary Lisp world is the move toward lexical scoping, which was initiated by Steele and Sussman with their Scheme papers and continued most faithfully by the designers of T.

The major goal of Oaklisp was to combine the ideas of Smalltalk and Scheme in a simple but expressive language that inherits their exemplary properties of modularity and consistency. Unlike T, which adds an object-based capability to Scheme by constructing objects out of closures, Oaklisp builds a lexically scoped Lisp system on top of a general message-passing system that allows for full inheritance of methods from multiple superclasses.

The first design choice for Oaklisp was the extent to which we should push the object-based model. We agreed with the designers of ADA that the packaging of state and procedures into new types can be a significant modularity tool for users of the language. We also agreed with the designers of the Lisp Machine that single-user Lisp systems should be open, with no clear line between system and user code. Therefore, both to allow the system implementors to use powerful user-level tools and to allow users to easily manipulate the system, we decided that absolutely everything should be a full-fledged object in Oaklisp. There is no reason why user-defined types should be any different from the types used to build the system. Oaklisp stands in marked contrast to other object-oriented Lisp systems which have magic data types that are not part of the user-level type hierarchy.[1] Our current Oaklisp implementation takes this idea to such an

[1] For example, ZetaLisp flavors are not themselves instances of flavors.

extreme that there are no magic objects anywhere in the system, no matter how deep you go. This meant not only that the vast majority of the system could be written in Lisp, but that the construction of the debugger and garbage collector was greatly simplified.

As a corollary to the previous decision, we decided that all computation should be performed by methods that are invoked after a search up the type hierarchy. Functions can be thought of as methods attached to the top of the hierarchy, since they are methods that can perform an operation on any type. This leads to the interesting result that after a function has been defined, a new method can be added to take over that operation for a special case.

The power of the method-invocation model of computation is derived from the generality of the inheritance mechanism.[2] A simple type-tree would have provided Oaklisp with the ability to define shadowable system-wide defaults for print and so forth. However, we felt that the mixin concept of flavors was such a valuable tool for factoring object functionality that inheritance from multiple supertypes was essential. This idea of inheriting from several mixins, each of which knows how to do something and encapsulates its own state, led to the following inheritance rule: a new type inherits all of the methods of its supertypes, but methods for the new type cannot refer to instance variables from the supertypes (even though those variables do exist in the new composite object.) This does not cause problems, because when operations for the supertypes are passed to the object, the methods which handle them *can* reference the appropriate instance variables. Since the names of instance variables are never inherited, conflicts cannot occur between names in the various supertypes.

This treatment of instance variable names was also motivated by our decision to follow Scheme and make Oaklisp lexically scoped. Oaklisp not only benefits from the conceptual correctness which results from being able to close methods at compile time, but takes full advantage of tail-recursion and the lack of search associated with variable references. Once again, we decided to carry a principle to its extreme, and say that *all* variable references must be resolved at compile time, which results in both a simpler compiler and faster execution of code. Although this decision sounds intolerable for users, it actually represents a shift of functionality from the compiler to the error-handling system and user-interface, both of which we decided to make unusually powerful in our Oaklisp implementation.

Another principle which we borrowed from Scheme is anonymity. The lack of coupling between names and objects gives the system a degree of modularity and flexibility that would otherwise be difficult to achieve. For example, if a type is redefined, old instances of that type will still have pointers to the old type descriptor. Operations on both kinds of object will be handled by the correct methods, and when the last instance of the old type goes away, the old type

[2] It is primarily the lack of inheritance that weakens the T object facility.

descriptor will also be garbage collected.

The portion of Oaklisp that has been described so far can be considered its kernel. The portion that follows can mostly be implemented as methods at the user level. It is interesting to note that the dynamic variables and mutable binding contours which are described below can be built on top of a bare lexical Lisp kernel. However, the Oaklisp kernel is not a usable system, since we intentionally stripped it down knowing that the lost facilities would be replaced at a higher level.

The first addition is a mutable binding contour facility based the locale structures of T.[3] Oaklisp locales are objects that accept messages which install and look up names. Locales can have multiple superiors which are recursively searched if a name can't be found. Unlike T locales, Oaklisp locales are not associated with textual binding contours that can interact with let's and generate ambiguities. Moreover, a reference to an undefined name creates an error, which means that forward references to uninstalled names are impossible.

The second addition is a dynamic scoping facility that knows how to deal with catch and throw. The new dynamic variables are entirely separate from the static variables, and are always textually distinguishible from static variables to avoid confusion. Dynamic variables use deep-binding in our implementation so that they will behave correctly when there is more than one process. The implementation of dynamic variables is an issue since we decided to follow the Lisp Machine and implement light-weight processes that share the same address space to expedite data sharing and fast context switching.

Our final design decision was also influenced by the Lisp Machine. Error handling in Oaklisp is designed to take maximum advantage of the type inheritance mechanism that is built into the language. A complete hierarchy exists of all the types of system errors. When an error occurs, an instance of that error type is created, and a message is sent to the error object asking for a handler to take control. The default message causes the debugger to be invoked. However, each process has some dynamic state which can be modified with the condition-bind construct to cause a different handler to be invoked when a particular error occurs at a particular time. This mechanism brings the full power of the language to bear on the problem of resolving errors, and is the reason that we felt we could make the language itself so strict with respect to variable references. Since our implementation of Oaklisp runs on the Lisp Machine and the Macintosh, it was no problem to delegate authority for reporting and resolving unbound variable references to the user-interface, which uses menus and dialog boxes to determine the user's intentions. If the user sets a switch that indicates that he wants unbound names to be automatically installed in the innermost locale, then the interface merely creates an error-handler to perform that function, and the user is not bothered again.

[3] In place of locales we could have implemented a simple top-level binding environment.

Chapter 2

Types and Objects

Oaklisp is an object-oriented language which is organized around the concept of *type*. The type of an object determines its behavior when operations are performed on it. To permit the modular specification of types with complex behaviors, a type is allowed to have multiple supertypes. There is no distinction in Oaklisp between predefined system types and user-defined types.

A type specifies the behavior of an object by providing methods that are used to perform operations on that object. Because methods are inherited from supertypes, a subtype only needs to supply those methods which are required to distinguish itself from the more general types. A method defined for a given type pre-empts any inherited methods for the same operation.

Instance variables are the mechanism for keeping state in objects. Every object possesses a data structure where the values of its instance variables are stored. Although each object contains storage for all of the instance variables required by its type and supertypes, methods for a given type can only refer to instance variables defined in that type. In particular, methods cannot refer to instance variables that are defined in supertypes.

It is possible to think of Oaklisp in terms of messages that are being passed to objects, rather than in terms of operations that are being performed on objects. The latter view was chosen because it is more consistent with Lisp syntax and semantics.

2.1 Fundamental Types

There are two important relations in the Oaklisp type system: *is-a* and *subtype*. An object is related to its type by the relation *is-a*, and a type is related to its supertypes by the relation *subtype*. Each of these relations defines a tree structure which includes all of the objects in the system.

The most fundamental types in the system are `type` and `object`. They are distinguished by their position at the top of the *is-a* and *subtype* hierarchies,

and by their circular definitions.

type *Type*

This type is the top of the *is-a* hierarchy. It is the type of types, so new types are created by instantiating it.

object *Type*

This type is the top of the *subtype* hierarchy, and has no supertype. Every other type is a subtype of object, so default methods for operations such as print are defined for object.

2.2 Operations on Objects

The following operations are defined for all objects. Because they determine the semantics of the language, they cannot be redefined or shadowed.

(get-type object) *Operation*

Returns the type of object.

(eq? object object) *Predicate*

Determines object identity. Two objects may look and act the same, but still fail the eq? test. In particular, numbers are not guaranteed to be unique. Symbols *are* interned, though.

2.3 Operations on Types

Types are distinguished from other objects by the fact that they can perform the make operation, which is the mechanism for generating new objects.

(make type) *Operation*

Returns a new instance of type.

The instance variables of an object returned by make are all bound to some unspecified value. Usually new objects need to be initialized in some other way, which can be accomplished by performing an operation on them immediately after they are made. By convention, this operation is initialize.

(initialize object) *Operation*

Returns object.

This method for initialize is clearly a no-op. When a type requires special initialization, it should shadow this default.

2.4 Defining New Types

Since types are objects, new ones are created by sending a make message to the appropriate type object, which in this case is type.

(make type ivars supertypes) *Operation*

Returns a new type-object with the supertypes and instance variables specified by the argument lists.

At run-time, methods are chosen by performing a left-to-right depth-first search on the supertype list.[1] Instances of the new type will contain a block of instance variables for each of the ancestor types, although duplicate types in the ancestor tree are eliminated.[2]

2.5 Type Predicates

The implicit type checking performed by the method invocation mechanism of Oaklisp reduces the need to call explicit type predicates. Furthermore, the two predicates defined in this section are sufficiently general to replace all of the ordinary Lisp type predicates such as null? and number?. A few of these have been retained to make the environment more familiar.

(is-a? object type) *Predicate*

Determines whether object is an instance of *type* or one of its subtypes. (is-a? object object) is always true.

(subtype? type1 type2) *Predicate*

Determines whether *type1* is a subtype of *type2*. As you would expect, subtype? is transitive. Since each type is a subtype of itself, subtype? defines a partial ordering of all the types in the system.

2.6 Constants

Some objects have external representations that are not self-evaluating expressions. quote allows the inclusion of such objects as constants in code.

(quote object) *Special Form*

Returns *object* without evaluating it.

[1] Of course, Oaklisp implementations are free to use more efficient mechanisms that have the same effect.

[2] This aspect of the language is in flux, and should not be relied upon by users.

2.7 Standard Truth Values

The standard truth values of Oaklisp are represented by the objects bound to the following variables.

t *Global Variable*

The value of this is #t. Any non-false value will do just as well for the purpose of logical tests.

#f *Global Variable*

This is the false value, the only object recognized by logical tests as denoting falsehood.

nil *Global Variable*

The value of this is the empty list, written (). Notice that nil itself is just a variable, so (eq? nil 'nil) is false.

Note: currently () is the same as #f, the object used to represent falsehood. In the future it is possible that these two notions, emptiness and falsehood, will be disconfabulated. Programs should be written in such a way that if #f and () were not the same object, they would still work.

2.8 Coercion

Some types are *coercable*, meaning that there is an operation associated with that type that allows objects to be coerced to that type. To create a coercable type, one instantiates coercable-type rather than type.

(coercer coercable-type) *Locatable Operation*

This returns the coercer of a type. For example, to coerce a list into a string one uses (coercer string), as in ((coercer string) '(#\f #\o #\o)) ⇒ "foo". The reader will read frog preceded by a control-y character as (coercer frog); this was motivated by the fact that control-y prints as → on both Macintosh™ and Symbolics computers, giving coercion a pleasant syntax, (→string '(#\f #\o #\o)) ⇒ "foo".

coercable-type *Type*

This is a subtype of type with has the added functionality of responding to the coercer message by returning its coercion operation. By default, (is-a? foo bar) implies that ((coercer bar) foo) ⇒ foo

2.9 Mixing Types

Frequently, type hierarchies become so rich that they threaten to overwhelm users with a plethora of possible combinations of mixins. The combinatorial explosion of the number of possible concocted types seems intrinsic to the style of programming involving multiple functionally orthogonal mixins. Above a certain level of complexity, finding a type with certain known characteristics can become difficult. Programmers are left wondering "Has a type based on *foo* with *bar*, *baz* and *zonk* mixed in been created, if so what's its name, and if not what should I name it and where should I define it?"

Oaklisp's *mixin managers* take care of this problem. When one needs "the type based on *foo* with *bar*, *baz* and *zonk* mixed in," one asks a mixin manager for it. If such a type has already been created, it is returned; if not, the mixin manager creates an appropriate new type, caches it, and returns it. This eliminates the burden of remembering which types have been concocted and what they are named.

(mix-types mixin-manager type-list) *Operation*

This returns a composite type whose supertypes are *type-list*. *Mixin-manager* checks its cache, and if the requested type is not found it creates a type with (make type '() type-list), caches it, and returns it.

mixin-manager *Type*

Instances of this cache composite types, acting as a sort of composite type library.

The Oaklisp operation type hierarchy is quite elaborite, containing a large number of functionally orthogonal mixins, and therefore the Oaklisp internals make heavy use of the mxin manager facility when dealing with operations. For example, the following definition for + is drawn from deep within the bowels of Oaklisp.

```
(define-constant-instance +
  (mix-types oc-mixer
        (list foldable-mixin open-coded-mixin operation)))
```

Chapter 3

Methods and Scoping

In Chapter 2, the concept of *type* was discussed. The assertion was made that operation methods lie at the heart of the typing system, because they determine the behavior of objects. This chapter describes the mechanism for defining methods.

3.1 Methods

A table of methods is maintained in the descriptor of every type. At run-time, these tables are searched to find the methods which are used to handle operations on objects. The only mechanism for manipulating method tables is the following side-effecting special form.

(add-method (operation [(type . ivar-list)] . arg-list). body) *Special Form*
Adds a method for *operation* to the method table of *type*. If a method for *operation* already exists, it is replaced. The value returned by add-method is *operation*.

The body of the form is surrounded by an implicit block. The arguments to the method are specified by *arg-list*. Since the first argument is always the object handling the message, a useful convention is to call it self. Instance variables of *type* can be referenced in the body if they are declared in *ivar-list*. Instance variables of supertypes may not be referenced in any case. Naming conflicts between instance variables and arguments are resolved by the rule that the variables in *arg-list* shadow instance variables that have the same names. Oaklisp closes methods over free variable references at compile-time, thereby solving the upward funarg problem and allowing procedures to share state in a controlled manner.

3.2 Scoping

Oaklisp is a lexically scoped language in which all variable references are resolved at compile-time. When a variable reference is encountered, the compiler searches outwards from that point through the nested lexical binding contours until it finds a declaration for the variable.[1] We have already seen one mechanism for introducing new lexical contours: the argument list of the add-method special form. Oaklisp provides several other forms which can be used to define local variables and procedures.

(let ((var_1 val_1)...var_n val_n). body) *Special Form*

Evaluates *body* in an environment where the n variables are bound to the n values. The value returned is that of *body*.

(let* ((var_1 val_1)...var_n val_n). body) *Special Form*

This form is similar to let. The difference is that let performs the bindings simultaneously whereas let* performs the bindings sequentially so that each value expression can refer to the preceding variables.

(labels ((var_1 val_1)...(var_n val_n)). body) *Special Form*

labels differs from let in that the value expressions are evaluated in a binding environment in which all of the variables are already defined. This facilitates the definition of mutually recursive procedures.

3.3 Functional Syntax

Sometimes it is convenient to adopt a more conventional Lisp viewpoint while designing programs. This viewpoint considers functions to be the primary programming abstraction, with objects downgraded to the status of data which is passed around between functions. The key to this programming style is the ability to write functions which can accept arguments of any type.

Oaklisp readily accommodates the functional programming style, since methods can be defined for the type object, which is the supertype of all other types. In fact, if the type specifier is omitted in an add-method form, the type object is assumed. Thus, (add-method (cons-1 x) (cons x 1)) defines a method that is valid for any type. To give the language a more familiar appearance when this programming style is used, the following macros are also provided.

(lambda arg-list . body) *Macro*

≡ (add-method ((make operation) . arg-list) . body)

(define (variable . arg-list). body) *Macro*

[1] If a declaration isn't found, the compiler proceeds to look for the variable in the appropriate locale. See Chapter 5.

≡ (define variable (lambda arg-list . body))

When *arg-list* is dotted, the expansion shown for lambda applies only if the body uses the rest name as a rest name, that is, at the end of a call or in a rest-length form, as described in the section on rest args below. A body that instead refers to the name as an ordinary variable gets it bound to a list of the extra arguments, which lambda collects with listify-args. Only lambda does this; add-method always binds a rest name the native way.

3.4 Dispatching to Supertypes

Sometimes a method doesn't want to override the inherited method completely, but rather wishes only to modify or extend its behaviour. For instance, imagine that the type dog has a method so that the notice-stranger operation causes it to run around, jump up and down, bark, and return the amount of time wasted. Say that stupid-dog is a subtype of dog defined by (define-instance stupid-dog type '() (list dog)), and that we want stupid dogs to behave just like regular dogs in response to a see-stranger message, except that they do it twice. This could be accomplished without the duplication of code by dispatching to the supertype twice, as in the following code fragment.

```
(add-method (see-stranger (stupid-dog) self stranger)
  (+ (↑super dog see-stranger self stranger)
     (↑super dog see-stranger self stranger)))
```

(↑super type operation self . args) *Operation*

This is just like (operation self . args) except that the method search begins at *type* rather than at the type of *self*. It is required that *type* be an immediate supertype of the type that the method this call appears in is added to, although our current implementation does not yet enforce this restriction. ↑super is analogous to the Smalltalk-80 mechanism of the same name, except that due to Oaklisp's multiple inheritance it is necessary for the programmer to explicitly state which supertype is to be dispatched to.

3.5 Rest Args

When a method is defined with a parameter list that is improper (*i.e.* dotted) the method is permitted to receive extra values in addition to its regular parameters at run time. These values are associated with the pseudo variable name that appears after the dot, which will henceforth be called the rest name. Unlike a

real variable name, a rest name can't be evaluated and can only be referred to in two places: at the end of a function call that uses dotted syntax (which signifies that the extra values should be passed on to the function being called), and in a rest-length form, which is the mechanism for finding out how many rest args a method has been passed.

(rest-length rest-name) *Special Form*

Yields the number of extra values that were received by the method in which rest-name is declared.

Rest args can never be accessed directly, but must be passed tail recursively to other functions. In fact, a function is not permitted to return without disposing of its rest args. Usually a function that takes a variable number of arguments will recurse on itself or on a helper function, consuming its arguments one by one until they are all gone, at which point the function is free to return.

The following functions have been provided to make it easier to write a function definition that satisfies all of the rules for rest args.

(consume-args val . args) *Operation*

Returns *val* after consuming *args*.

(listify-args op . args) *Operation*

Calls *op* on a list consisting of the values of *args*.

A call to listify-args can be used as the body of a method definition as a means of trivially satisfying the rest arg rules. When using this technique, *op* is a lambda that performs all of the computation for the method. The rest args of the method are wrapped up in a list that is passed in as the lambda's one parameter, and the regular parameters and instance variables of the method are available inside the lambda because of lexical scoping.

Chapter 4

Side Effects

The treatment of side effects in Oaklisp is modelled on that of T. The salient feature of this approach is the use of reversible access procedures to perform side effects on composite data structures and anonymous storage cells.

4.1 Assignment

Side effects on variables and objects are performed with the set! special form, which combines the functionality of the setq and setf forms found in other Lisps.

(set! location new-value) *Special Form*

Changes the value of *location* to *new-value*, which is then returned as the value of the expression.

If *location* is a symbol, then it is interpreted as a variable name. The variable must have been previously defined in some lexical binding contour or locale.

If *location* is a list, then it is interpreted as a reference to a settable access operation. For example, (set! (car foo) 'bar) means the same thing as (rplaca foo 'bar) in Common Lisp.

(setter operation) *Locatable Operation*

Takes a settable access operation and returns the corresponding alteration operation.

4.2 Locatives

locative is an Oaklisp type that is similar to the pointer types found in procedural languages such as C or Pascal. Locatives are created and dereferenced by the following constructs.

(make-locative location) *Special Form*

Returns a locative that points to *location*, which must be a variable or a list with the form of a call on a locatable access operation.

(locater operation) *Locatable Operation*
Takes a locatable access operation and returns the corresponding locative-making operation.

(contents locative) *Locatable Operation*
Returns the contents of the location which is referenced by *locative*. Since contents is a settable operation, side effects can be performed on locations through locatives. For example, (set! (contents (make-locative (car foo))) 'bar) has the same effect as (set! (car foo) 'bar).

4.3 Operation Types

Since operations are objects, they are classified into types according to the operations which can be performed on them. The types discussed here can generate side-effecting operations from access operations.

operation *Type*
This is the generic operation type that is a component of all other operation types.

settable-operation *Type*
An access operation is settable if side effects can be performed through it. Settable operations respond to setter.

locatable-operation *Type*
An access operation is locatable if it retrieves information from a single physical location. Locatable operations respond to setter and locater.

4.4 Modification Forms

See Chapter 6 of *The T Manual* for a description of the following forms.

(swap location new-value) *Special Form*

(modify location procedure) *Special Form*

(modify-location location continuation) *Special Form*

Chapter 5

Evaluation and Locales

Locales are the namespace structuring mechanism of Oaklisp. Whenever an Oaklisp expression is evaluated, a locale must be provided in order to specify a particular mapping from symbols to macro-expanders and from symbols to storage cells.

5.1 Evaluation

(eval form locale) *Operation*
Evaluates *form* relative to *locale*.

Although programmers don't often need to call eval directly, every expression typed at the top level is passed in to eval to be evaluated relative to the locale specified by the fluid variable current-locale. Files may be evaluated using the load function.

(load file-name [locale]) *Operation*
Reads all of the forms in the file *file-name* and evaluates them relative to *locale*, which defaults to the value of (fluid current-locale) if not specified.

The file compiler can be used to create an assembly language file that has the same effect as an Oaklisp source file.

(compile-file locale file-name [output-name]) *Operation*
Compiles the file *file-name* relative to *locale*, which defaults to the value of (fluid current-locale). A file must be compiled and loaded relative to the same locale in order to guarantee that the program's semantics are preserved. The object is written to *output-name* if given, otherwise into the directory (fluid compiler-output-directory) if that is set, otherwise beside the source.

Oaklisp source files have a default extension of .oak while compiled files are given the extension .oa. compile-file first tries to read the file

file-name.oak, and then looks for *file-name*, while load looks first for *file-name*.oa, then for *file-name*.oak, and finally for *file-name*.

5.2 Installing Names in a Locale

Oaklisp has several forms that can be used to insert global variables and macro definitions into a locale. The target locale isn't explicitly specified by any of these forms, but is implicitly understood to be the locale with respect to which the form is being evaluated. Thus, when a form is typed at the top level, the effect is on (fluid current-locale), and when a file is loaded, the effect is on the locale specified in the call to load.

(define var val) *Special Form*
Installs the global variable *var* in the current locale with value *val*.

(define-constant var val) *Special Form*
This form is like define except that *var* is marked as frozen in the current locale so that the compiler can be free to substitute the value for references to *var*.

(define-instance var typ . make-args) *Special Form*
If the contents of *var* isn't of type *typ*, this is the same as (set! var (make typ . make-args)). If *var* is already bound to an object of the right type, this form has no effect. *Note:* this language feature is in flux. Currently, it sends an initialize message to the object with the new *make-args*.

(define-syntax macro-name expander) *Special Form*
Installs *macro-name* in the current locale. *expander* should be a lambda that is able to translate an example of the macro into a form that has simpler syntax.

As with all Oaklisp forms, the effect of a define-syntax form in a file is not felt until run-time when the file is loaded. Since it is often convenient to be able to use a macro in the file in which it is defined, a special mechanism has been provided for defining file-local macros that are in effect at compile time. The following magic forms should be used with care, since they violate the usually absolute dichotomy between compile time and load time.

(local-syntax macro-name expander) *Special Form*
During the compilation of a file in which a local-syntax form is contained, the form augments the name space with the macro specified by *macro-name* and *expander*. This form can only appear at top level in a file; and essentially disappears before load time.

(define-local-syntax macro-name expander) *Special Form*
Temporarily augments the compile-time name space with the specified macro, and also installs the macro in the current locale when the file is loaded. This form can only appear at top level in a file.

5.3 Structuring the Namespace

Oaklisp locales are not associated with textual binding contours, nor are they particularly user-friendly objects. They were designed to be a powerful implementation tool, leaving the task of providing a convenient interactive interface to higher-level code.

(make locale superior-list) *Operation*

Returns a new locale which inherits names from the locales in *superior-list*. During recursive name lookups, the superiors are searched deapth first in left-to-right order.

5.4 Variables

Locales are essentially mappings from symbols to storage cells. Although locales can be created on-the-fly, their main use is in building the structured top-level environment for global variables. Variable names must be installed in a locale before they can be referenced. Precise control over shadowing and cross-referencing can be achieved using the following settable operations.

(variable? locale symbol) *Settable Operation*

Returns a locative to the appropriate storage cell if *symbol* is installed as a variable name, or #f otherwise. The search is allowed to proceed to superior locales if necessary.

(set! (variable? locale symbol) locative) *Operation*

If *symbol* is not currently defined at any level, then it is installed in *locale*, with the location named by *locative* serving as its value cell. If *symbol* is defined at some level, then its value cell at the highest level[1] is changed to be the location referenced by *locative*.

(set! (variable? locale symbol) #f) *Operation*

If *symbol* is defined at some level, then its definition is removed from the highest level. Otherwise an error is generated.

(variable-here? locale symbol) *Settable Operation*

Returns a locative to the appropriate storage cell if *symbol* is installed as a variable name, or #f otherwise. The search is constrained to *locale* itself.

[1] *i.e.* in the nearest locale to the one handling the operation.

(set! (variable-here? locale symbol) locative) *Operation*

If *symbol* is not currently defined in *locale*, then it is installed, with the location named by *locative* serving as its value cell. If *symbol* is defined in *locale*, then its value cell is changed to be the location referenced by *locative*.

(set! (variable-here? locale symbol) #f) *Operation*

If *symbol* is defined in *locale* then its definition is removed. Otherwise an error is generated.

5.5 Macros

Macro definitions are also stored in locales. These definitions are stored as a mapping from names to macro expanders. A macro expander is simply a one-argument function that takes an S-expression as its input and returns a transformed S-expression. Macro definitions are installed with the following settable operations, which are entirely analogous to the ones described in Section 5.4.

(macro? locale symbol) *Settable Operation*

Returns the appropriate macro expander if *symbol* is installed as a macro name and #f otherwise. The search is allowed to proceed to superior locales if necessary.

(macro-here? locale symbol) *Settable Operation*

Returns the appropriate macro expander if *symbol* is installed as a macro name, or #f otherwise. The search is constrained to *locale* itself.

5.6 Compilation

All evaluation in Oaklisp is performed with respect to some locale. The syntax of the language is determined by the macro tables visible from that locale, and free variable references are likewise resolved using the global variables defined in its name space.

(frozen? locale symbol) *Settable Predicate*

Returns #t if *symbol* is a frozen variable, otherwise #f. The search is allowed to proceed to superior locales if necessary. If *symbol* is not found anywhere, an error occurs.

(frozen-here? locale symbol) *Settable Predicate*

Returns #t if *symbol* is a frozen variable, otherwise #f. The search is constrained to *locale* itself. If *symbol* is not installed as a variable in *locale*, an error occurs.

Chapter 6

Dynamic State

As Steele and Sussman pointed out in *The Art of the Interpreter*, dynamic scoping provides the most natural decomposition of state in certain situations. This chapter describes the Oaklisp facilities for creating and manipulating state that has dynamic extent.

6.1 Fluid Variables

To avoid the problems that arise when fluid variables are integrated with the lexical environment, Oaklisp fluid variables have been placed in a completely separate dynamic environment. Fluid variables don't even look like lexical variables, since they can only be referenced using the fluid special form. The mechanism for creating fluid variables is bind, which syntactically resembles let.

(bind ((fluid var_1)val_1)...((fluid var_n val_n). body) *Special Form*
Evaluates *body* in a dynamic environment where the n symbols are bound to the n values.

(fluid symbol) *Special Form*
Returns the value of the fluid variable *symbol*. Even though fluid is a special form, it is settable, so (set! (fluid symbol) value) changes the value of the fluid variable *symbol* to *value*. The reader will read foo preceded by a control-v character as (fluid foo); this was motivated by the fact that control-v prints as • on both Macintosh$^{\text{tm}}$ and Symbolics computers.

6.2 Non-local Exits

Most Lisp dialects include some sort of catch facility for performing non-local exits. Oaklisp provides two facilities at varying points on the generality vs. cost spectrum.

(call-with-current-continuation operation) *Operation*
Calls *operation* with one argument, the current continuation. The synonym call/cc is provided for those who feel that call-with-current-continuation is excessively verbose.

(catch variable . body) *Special Form*
variable is lexically bound to an escape operation that may be called from anywhere within *body*'s dynamic extent. If *variable* is not called, catch yields the value of *body*. This is implemented in such a way that *body* is called tail recursively.

(native-catch variable . body) *Special Form*
variable is lexically bound to an escape tag that may be thrown from anywhere within *body*'s dynamic extent. If *variable* is not thrown to, native-catch yields the value of *body*. This is implemented in such a way that *body* is called tail recursively.

(throw tag value) *Operation*
Causes execution to resume at the point specified by *tag*. This point is always a native-catch expression, which immediately yields *value*. Cleanup actions specified with wind-protect are performed while the stack is being unwound.

(wind-protect before form after) *Special Form*
≡ (dynamic-wind (lambda () before) (lambda () form) (lambda () after))

(funny-wind-protect before abnormal-before form after abnormal-after) *Special Form*
A wind-protect evaluates *before*, *form*, and *after*, returning the value of *form*. If *form* is entered or exited abnormally (due to call/cc or catch) the *before* and *after* forms, respectively, are automatically executed. funny-wind-protect is the same except that different guard forms are evaluated depending on whether the dynamic context is entered or exited normally or abnormally.

(dynamic-wind before-op main-op after-op) *Operation*
Calls the operation *before-op*, calls the operation *main-op*, calls the operation *after-op*, and returns the value returned by *main-op*. If *main-op* is exited abnormally, *after-op* is called automatically on the way out. Similarly, if *main-op* is entered abnormally, *before-op* is called automatically on the way in.

6.3 Error Resolution

Note: the error system is not stable, and will probably evolve towards the Common Lisp error system, which has a number of good ideas.

Programs interact with the error system in three ways: they signal various sorts of errors (typically throwing the user into the debugger), they provide restart handlers that the user can invoke (using ret) to escape from the debugger, and they provide handlers to be invoked when various types of errors occur.

6.3.1 Signaling Errors

Errors are signalled using the following operations.

(warning format-string . format-args) *Operation*

Prints out the message specified by *format-string* and *format-args* and continues execution.

(error format-string . format-args) *Operation*

This signals generic-fatal-error, which normally has the effect of printing out the error message specified by *format-string* and *format-args* and dumping the user into a subordinate read-eval-print loop.

(cerror continue-string format-string . format-args) *Operation*

This signals generic-proceedable-error, which normally has the effect of printing the error message specified by *format-string* and *format-args* and dumping the user into a subordinate read-eval-print loop in which there is a restart handler that continues the computation by returning a user specified value from cerror. *Continue-string* is the text associated with this handler when it is listed as an option by the subordinate evaluator.

6.3.2 Restart Handlers

There are two special forms that programs can use to define more complex restart handlers than just returning from the call to cerror. The simpler of the two is error-return, which is similar to catch in that it can be forced to return a value before its body has been fully evaluated. This form is used in the definition of cerror.

(error-return string . body) *Macro*

Evaluates *body* in a dynamic context in which a restart handler is available that can force the form to return. The handler is identified by *string* in the list of choices the debugger presents to the user. If the handler is invoked by calling ret with an argument in addition to the handler number, the error-return form returns this value; otherwise it returns #f. If no error occurs, error-return yields the value of *body*.

The second special form acts just like a let unless an error occurs, in which case an error handler is available that re-executes the body of the form after (possibly) rebinding the lexical variables specified at the top of the form.

(error-restart string ((var_0 val_0)...) . body) *Macro*

Evaluates *body* in a dynamic context in which a restart handler is available that can force the re-evaluation of the body with new values for var_0 .... These new values are specified as additional arguments to ret. If there are not enough arguments to ret, the remaining variables are left at their previous values. The handler is identified by *string* in the list of choices printed by the debugger. If no error occurs, error-restart yields the value of *body*.

6.3.3 Error Handlers

Oaklisp uses its type system to govern the resolution of errors. The top-level environment contains a hierarchy of types which characterizes every error that can occur. When an error condition arises, the appropriate type is instantiated, and an error resolution operation is performed on the new object. This operation is performed by a method that deals with the error in a manner consistent with its type.

There are clearly better ways of dealing with some errors than invoking the debugger. A variety of methods have been written to deal with the most common errors. For example, there are proceed methods for simple arithmetic traps which substitute a program specified value for that of the failed computation. The use of proceed and other error resolution operations is prescribed by the following special form.

(bind-error-handler ((err_1 op_1)...(err_n op_n)). body) *Macro*

Evaluates *body* in a dynamic environment where the n error types have been associated with the n error resolution operations. When an error occurs, the current list of condition bindings is searched to find an operation to perform. An operation associated with a supertype of the actual error type will be selected if it is encountered on the list. If a suitable operation cannot be found, the default operation invoke-debugger is performed.

6.3.4 Operations on Errors

There are a number of operations that can be invoked on error objects in error handlers.

(report error stream) *Operation*
Instructs *error* to print a descriptive message to *stream*.

(invoke-debugger error) *Operation*
This is the default error resolution operation. It is performed on all errors unless it is explicitly overridden.

(proceed error . values) *Operation*
Attempts to continue from the error, eg. a file system error would retry the failed operation. The *values* have semantics determined by the precise type of error. For instance, continuing a failed attempt to open a file with a value might instruct the system to try a new filename.

(remember-context error after-operation) *Operation*
Instructs *error* to salt away the current continuation and then call *after-operation*, which should never return.

(invoke-in-error-context error operation) *Operation*
Invokes *operation* on *error* after moving back to the context of the error if its been salted away.

6.3.5 Error Types

There are a plethora of error types defined in Oaklisp.

general-error *Type*
This is the top of the error type hierarchy. An operation defined for general-error can be used to resolve any error.

generic-fatal-error *Type*
Signaled by error.

(make proceedable-error message) *Operation*
Uses *message* in composing its report.

generic-proceedable-error *Type*
Signaled by cerror.

error-opening *Type*
Various subtypes of this are signaled when various types of error while opening files occur.

read-error *Type*

Subtypes of this are signaled when read sees malformed or truncated input.

unexpected-eof *Type*

This subtype of read-error is signaled when the reader comes to the end of a file unexpectedly.

Work for idle hands: Many types of errors have yet to be implemented. For example, domain errors in arithmetic functions generally call error rather than signaling some special variety of error, template mismatch in the destructure* macro should signal some special type of error rather than calling cerror, etc. Basically, most calls to error and cerror in system level code should be replaced with signal, and appropriate ideosyncratic types of errors should be defined, thereby giving users more precise control over what types of system level errors to handle.

Chapter 7

Control

Nonlocal control constructs like call/cc are described in section 6.2.

Since control structures are not a very interesting issue, we followed existing Lisp dialects closely when designing this aspect of Oaklisp. Every control structure in this chapter does just what you would expect.

7.1 Simple Constructs

These forms are compatible with both T (Rees et al., 1984, chapter 5) and the Scheme standard (Rees et al., 1986).

(cond . clauses) *Special Form*

The *clauses* are run through sequentially until one is selected. Each clause can be of four possible forms. (*test* . *body*) evaluates *body* if *test* is true. (else . *body*) always evaluates *body*, and if present must be the last clause. (*test* => *operation*) calls *operation* on the result of *test* if the result of evaluating *test* was not *false*. (*test*) is equivalent to (*test* => identity).

(if test consequent [alternate]) *Special Form*

(not object) *Predicate*

(and . tests) *Special Form*

(or . tests) *Special Form*

(iterate variable specs . body) *Special Form*

(block . body) *Special Form*
Evaluates the forms of *body* sequentially, returning (tail recursively) the value of the last one.

(block0 form . body) *Special Form*
≡(let ((x *form*)) (block . *body*) x)

(dotimes (variable number [rform]). body) *Special Form*
≡(let ((x (lambda (*variable*) . *body*))) (map x (iota *number*)) *rform*)

(dolist (variable list [rform]). body) *Special Form*
≡(let ((x (lambda (*variable*) . *body*))) (map x *list*) *rform*)

(dolist-count (variable list count-var). body) *Special Form*
Just like dolist except that *count-var* gives the count of the current element in the list, starting at zero.

(while condition . body) *Special Form*
≡(let ((q (lambda () *test*))(x (lambda () . *body*))) (iterate aux () (cond ((*q*) (*x*) (aux)))))

(unless test . body) *Special Form*
≡(cond ((not *test*) . *body*))

(do ((var initial step)...)(termination-test . termination-body). body) *Special Form*
≡(iterate aux ((*var initial*) ...) (cond (*termination-test* . *termination-body*) (else (block . *body*) (aux *step* ...))))

7.2 Mapping Constructs

Although these can be used as control constructs, they can also be thought of as ways to manipulate data structures. map maps an operation over some sequences generating a sequence of results. for-each, which doesn't save the results, is used when the operation is called for effect only. For all of these, the order of evaluation is undefined; the system may apply the operation to the various elements of the sequence in any order it desires.

(map operation . sequences) *Operation*

(mapcdr operation . lists) *Operation*
Applies *operation* to successive "cdrs" rather than to elements, and returns a list of the returned values.

(for-each operation . sequences) *Operation*

(for-each-cdr operation . lists) *Operation*
Like mapcdr but for effect only.

(map! operation . sequences) *Operation*
Like map, except that the retuned values are destructively placed into the successive storage locations of the first *sequence*.

Chapter 8

Sequences

Sequences are manipulated using the nth operation, which is settable (and locatable). The sequence heirarchy is shown in figure 8.1.

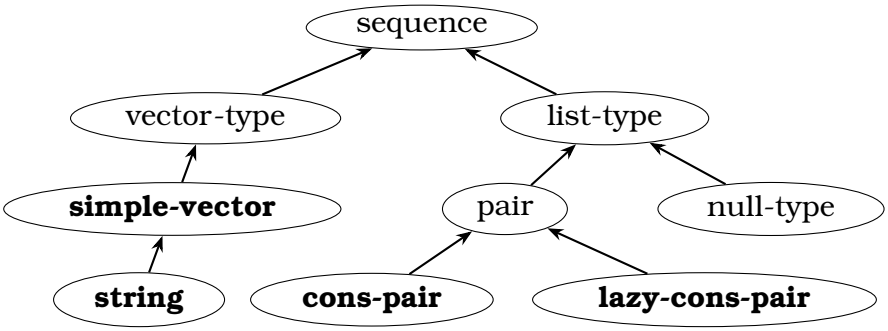


Figure 8.1: The sequence type hierarchy. Abstract types are in plain face and instantiable ones in bold.

8.1 Type Predicates

(sequence? object) *Predicate*

(vector? object) *Predicate*

(string? object) *Predicate*

(list? object) *Predicate*

(pair? object) *Predicate*

(null? object) *Predicate*

(atom? object) *Predicate*

8.2 Sequence Operations

These operations work on all sequences.

(length list) *Operation*

(nth list n) *Locatable Operation*

(last list) *Locatable Operation*

(tail list n) *Locatable Operation*

(copy sequence) *Operation*

(append sequence1 sequence2) *Operation*
Returns a sequence of the type of *sequence1*. The arguments must all be of the same type, except that when the first is a list the last one may be anything at all: as in R3RS, it becomes the tail of the result, so (append '(1 2) 3) is (1 2 . 3). A mismatch between any of the others is an error.

(append! sequence1 sequence2) *Operation*
Most sequences have immutable lengths, and hence are not appropriate arguments to append!. The major exception is lists. The same rule about the last argument applies here as in append.

(reverse sequence) *Operation*

(reverse! sequence) *Operation*

Some mapping operations are also applicable to sequences, and are documented in Section 7.2.

8.3 Vector Constructors

(vector . objects) *Operation*
Returns a simple-vector containings *objects*.

(make simple-vector length) *Operation*

((coercer simple-vector) sequence) *Coarcable Type*

8.4 List Constructors

(list . objects) *Operation*

(make list-type length fill-value) *Operation*

((coercer list-type) sequence) *Coarcable Type*

(cons object1 object2) *Operation*

(make lazy-cons-pair car-thunk cdr-thunk) *Operation*

(lazy-cons car-form cdr-form) *Macro*
≡ (make lazy-cons-pair (lambda () car-form) (lambda () cdr-form))

(lazy-map operation list . lists) *Operation*
Like map on lists, but the result is a lazy list, each element computed when first accessed; the *lists* may themselves be lazy and unbounded.

8.5 List Accessors

(car pair) *Locatable Operation*

(cdr pair) *Locatable Operation*

(c[ad]*r pair) *Locatable Operation*
Actually these are only provided for up to four a's and d's. If you think you need more, you should probably be defining accessor functions or using nth or perhaps destructure.

(last-pair pair) *Locatable Operation*
Takes successive cdr's of *pair* until it finds a pair whose cdr is not a pair, which it returns. (last-pair '(a b c)) ⇒ (c). (last-pair '(a b c . d)) ⇒ (c . d).

(destructure template structure . body) *Macro*

This is for destructuring lists, and is sort of the inverse of backquote. *Template* is a possibly nested list of variables. These variables are bound to the corresponding values of *structure* while *body* is evaluated. For instance, (destructure (a (b) . c) x (foo a b c)) ≡ (let ((a (car x))(b (caadr x))(c (cddr x))) (foo a b c))
. It is guaranteed that *structure* will be evaluated only once. We note that destructure typically generates more efficient code than the corresponding code one might typically write.

If there is a position in *template* that should be ignored, one can place a #t there. For convenience and compatiblity with destructure*, positions in *template* containing (), #f and (quote x) are also ignored.

(destructure* template structure . body) *Macro*
This is just like destructure except that an error is signaled if *structure* doesn't precisely match *template*. Positions containing #f and () are required to match literally. Positions containing (quote x) are required to match *x* literally, where *x* is not evaluated. As with destructure, positions containing #t are ignored.

destructure* is particularly useful in macro expanders where it can do much of the syntax checking automatically.

(destructure** structure (template . body)... [(otherwise . nomatch-body)]) *Macro*
This is just like destructure* except that, when one template does not match, the next in line is considered. If none match than the OTHERWISE one does; if no otherwise clause is present, an error is signaled.

8.6 Lists as Sets

(mem predicate object list) *Operation*
Returns the first tail of *list* whose car equals *object* according to *predicate*.

(memq object list) *Operation*

(del predicate object list) *Operation*

(delq object list) *Operation*

(del! predicate object list) *Operation*

(delq! object list) *Operation*

8.7 Lists as Associations

(ass predicate object list) *Operation*

(assq object list) *Operation*

(cdr-ass predicate object list) *Settable Operation*

(cdr-assq object list) *Settable Operation*

8.8 Lists as Stacks

(push location object) *Macro*

(pop location) *Macro*

Chapter 9

Numbers

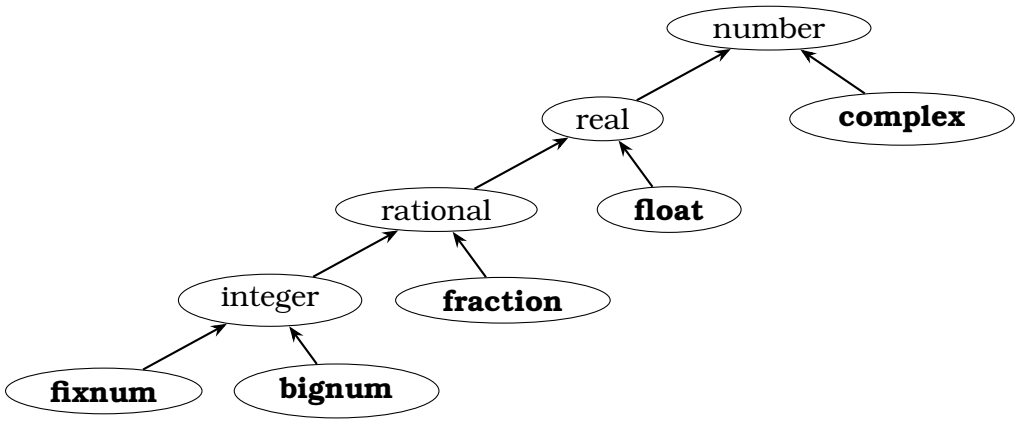


Figure 9.1: The numeric type hierarchy. Abstract types are in plain face and instantiable ones in bold. Floating point numbers are not implemented.

9.1 Arithmetic

(+ . numbers) *Operation*

(1+ n) *Operation*

(- n1 n2 . numbers) *Operation*

(- n) *Operation*

(* . numbers) *Operation*

(/ n1 n2) *Operation*

(quotient n1 n2) *Operation*

(modulo n1 n2) *Operation*

(abs n1) *Operation*

(max n . ns) *Operation*

(min n . ns) *Operation*

(expt n1 n2) *Operation*

(gcd . ns) *Operation*
The non-negative greatest common divisor of *ns*, or zero when there are none.

(lcm . ns) *Operation*
The non-negative least common multiple of *ns*, or one when there are none.

9.2 Comparison

(= n1 n2) *Operation*

(!= n1 n2) *Operation*

(< n1 n2) *Operation*

(> n1 n2) *Operation*

(<= n1 n2) *Operation*

(>= n1 n2) *Operation*

9.3 Predicates

(zero? n) *Predicate*

(negative? n) *Predicate*

(positive? n) *Predicate*

(even? n) *Predicate*

(odd? n) *Predicate*

(factor? n1 n2) *Predicate*

9.4 Rounding

These operations should work on any subtype of real.

(floor x) *Operation*
Returns the largest integer less than or equal to *x*.

(ceiling x) *Operation*
Returns the smallest integer greater than or equal to *x*.

(truncate x) *Operation*
Could be defined (if (negative? x) (ceiling x) (floor x)).

(round x) *Operation*
Returns nearest integer to *x*. Ties are broken by rounding to an even number.

9.5 Bitwise Logical Operations

These operations are only defined for integers.

(ash-left i amount) *Operation*

(ash-right i amount) *Operation*

(rot-left i amount) *Operation*

(rot-right i amount) *Operation*

(bit-not i) *Operation*

(bit-and i1 i2) *Operation*

(bit-or i1 i2) *Operation*

(bit-nor i1 i2) *Operation*

(bit-xor i1 i2) *Operation*

(bit-nand i1 i2) *Operation*

(bit-andca i1 i2) *Operation*

(bit-equiv i1 i2) *Operation*

9.6 Accessing Components

(numerator rational) *Operation*

(denominator rational) *Operation*

(real-part number) *Operation*

(imag-part number) *Operation*

Chapter 10

Input and Output

10.1 Streams and Files

Streams are the tokens through which interaction with the outside world occurs. Although streams are primarily used for reading and writing to files, they have found a number of internal uses.

stream *Type*

The supertype of all streams.

input-stream *Type*

This is an abstract type. Instantiable subtypes must define methods for the really-read-char operation.

(read-char input-stream) *Operation*

Return a character, or the-eof-token if we've already read the last character in the stream.

(unread-char input-stream character) *Operation*

Puts *character* back into *input-stream*. One can only put one character back, and it must be the last character read.

(peek-char input-stream) *Operation*

Equivalent to (let ((c (read-char input-stream))) (unread-char input-stream c) c).

the-eof-token *Object*

This distinguished object is returned to indicate that one has read past the end of the file.

output-stream *Type*

This is an abstract type. Instantiable subtypes must define methods for the write-char operation.

(write-char output-stream character) *Operation*

(newline output-stream) *Operation*
Outputs a carriage return to *output-stream*.

(freshline output-stream) *Operation*
Ensures that *output-stream* is at the beginning of a line.

(flush output-stream) *Operation*
Flushes any buffered output.

(interactive? stream) *Operation*
Returns true if and only if *stream* is connected to the user. This is used to check if an end of file condition on the control stream is really an end of file or if the user just typed control-D.

(position stream) *Settable Operation*
Returns the position we are at within *stream*. By setting this, one can get back to a previous position.

(write-string string output-stream) *Operation*
Writes the characters of *string* to *stream*.

(with-open-file (variable filename . options). body) *Macro*
Binds *variable* to a stream which is connected to the file with the name *filename*. *Options* is not evaluated, and describes how *filename* should be opened. Possible symbols include in for input, out for output, and append for output with position set to the end of the file. The ugly option can be added to either out or append if the user doesn't mind poor formating, as in files meant to be read only by other programs. The opened stream will be closed when the with-open-file is exited, even upon abnormal exit. **Note:** the stream is not reopened upon abnormal entry, but this may be changed in future versions of the system.

(with-input-from-string (variable sequence). body) *Macro*
Binds *variable* to an input stream whose contents are the characters of *sequence*. Although *sequence* is usually a string, this will work correctly for any sequence type.

(make string-output-stream) *Operation*
These save all their output and return it as a string in response to the (coercer string) operation.

10.2 Reading

Oaklisp has an industrial strength reader, replete with nonterminating macro characters and descriptive error messages. List syntax is not described below; read some other lisp manual. Our reader is modeled after the Common Lisp reader, so we emphasize differences with the Common Lisp reader below.

(read input-stream) *Operation*
Returns a lisp object read from *stream*. This is sensitive to a large number of factors detailed below.

standard-read-table *Object*
This holds the read table for usual lisp syntax. The nth operation can be used to get and set elements of read tables, which are indexed by characters. Potential entries are whitespace, constituent, single-escape, illegal, (terminating-macro . *operation*), and (nonterminating-macro . *operation*).

(skip-whitespace input-stream) *Operation*
Reads characters from *input-stream* until the next character is not whitespace.

The reader is not sensitive to the case of macro characters.

(define-macro-char character operation) *Operation*
Defines *character* to be a reader macro in standard-read-table. When *character* is encountered by the reader, *operation* is called with two arguments, the stream and the character that was read.

(define-nonterminating-macro-char character operation) *Operation*
Just like define-macro-char except that the macro is not triggered if *character* is read inside a token.

There are a number of "quotelike" macro characters present for the convenience of the user.

macro character	**symbol**
'	quote
`	quasiquote
control-v	fluid
control-y	coercer
,@	unquote-splicing
,	unquote

(define-quotelike-macro-char character object) *Operation*
Makes *character* a terminating macro which returns a list of *object* and the next thing read. This also arranges for the printer to print using analogous syntax. For instance, the quote syntax is defined with the line (define-quotelike-macro-char #' 'quote) in the system internals.

the-unread-object *Object*

When a reader macro returns this, the reader takes it to mean that nothing at all was read. For instance, the reader macro for ; reads the remainder of the line and returns this.

The character [is used to read lists in the same way that (is, except that [must be matched by a]. This is mostly for compatiblity with code written at the University of Indiana.

Since there are no packages in Oaklisp, the : character is treated like any other constituent.

Most of the Common Lisp hash reader macros are supported. For instance, the character object representing a is read #\a. Many special characters have long names, such as #\space.

(define-hash-macro-char character operation) *Operation*

Defines *character* to be a hash reader macro character. *Operation* should take three arguments: a stream, the character, and the numeric argument that was between the hash and the character, #f if none was passed.

There are many hash reader macro characters, including #o, #x, #d, #b and #c for octal, hexidecimal, decimal, binary and complex numbers, respectively. The syntax #nrxxx is used to read *xxx* in base *n*. #(...) is used for reading vectors. The #| macro comments out text until a matching |#, with proper nesting. #;e comments out the s-expression *e*. As described in Section 2.7, #t and #f are read as the canonical true and false values, respectively.

The #[symbol "..."] syntax can be used to read arbitrary characters, although the |...| construction is prefered. Analogous constructors can be added with the settable operation hash-bracket-option.

(fluid input-base) *Fluid Variable*

The radix in which numbers will be read.

(fluid features) *Fluid Variable*

A list of "features" present in the current implementation, used by the #+ and #- reader macros. Testable and settable with the feature? settable operation. It is guaranteed that the oaklisp and scheme features will be present in any implementation of Oaklisp.

(fluid current-locale) *Fluid Variable*

The #. macro evaluates its argument in this locale.

(fluid read-suppress) *Fluid Variable*

This is true when what is being read will just be ignored, and indicates to the reader that it shouldn't go to the trouble of interpreting the meaning of complex tokens or anything like that.

10.3 Printing

The printer is pretty heavy duty, but has no facilities for printing circular objects.

(format stream control-string . args) *Operation*

This is very similar to the Common Lisp format function, and is the usual way for users to print things.

Stream is permitted to be #t to indicate that output should be sent to the standard output, and #f to indicate that the output should be bundled up into a string and returned.

Characters in control-string are printed directly, except for the ~ character which indicates that some action should be taken. The ~ may be followed by a number or by a : or @, which vary the action that would normally be taken in some way.

Currently defined ~ characters and their associated actions are:

A Print and argument with (fluid print-escape) bound to #f.

~ Print a ~.

% Do a newline.

& Do a freshline.

S Print an argument with (fluid print-escape) bount to #t.

B Print an argument in binary.

D Print an argument in decimal.

O Print an argument in octal.

X Print an argument in hex.

nR Print an argument in base *n*.

C Print an argument which is a character.

P Print an s if the argument is not 1.

! Print a weak pointer to the argument, preceded by an expression which evaluates to the argument if (fluid fancy-references) is on. This is used to print unique id's for objects without nice printed representations, like operations.

The numbers before a directive are the Common Lisp *mincol* and *padchar* parameters. With a *mincol* the output of A, S and C is padded on the right to that width, and the output of B, D, O and X is padded on the left. A second parameter gives the character to pad with, so ~5,'0D prints 42 as 00042. Since ~*n*R already takes the base as its first parameter, its *mincol* and *padchar* are its second and third.

A tilde followed by a newline is ignored; this construct is used for making *control-string* more readable by breaking it across lines.

(print object stream) *Operation*

Writes a representation of *object* to *stream*. Users are encouraged to add informative print methods for types they define.

(define-simple-print-method type string) *Operation*

Instructs the printer to include *string* in the printed representation of instances of *type*.

(fluid print-radix) *Fluid Variable*

The radix in which numbers will be printed. The default is ten.

(fluid print-level) *Fluid Variable*

The number of levels of list structure to be printed before the printer abbreviates. The default is #f, meaning never abbreviate.

(fluid print-length) *Fluid Variable*

The number of elements of a list to be printed before the printer abbreviates. The default is #f, meaning never abbreviate.

(fluid print-escape) *Fluid Variable*

This controls whether the printer tries to print things that are easy for people to read, or ones that can be read back in to Oaklisp. The default is #t, meaning to maintain print/read consistency at the expense of readability.

(fluid symbol-slashification-style) *Fluid Variable*

This controls the style of printing of symbols when they are escaped. See the implementation manual for details.

(fluid fraction-display-style) *Fluid Variable*

This can be either normal, fancy or float. In these cases, (/ -5 3) would print as either -5/3, -1·2/3 or -1.6666666666, respectively.

Chapter 11

Miscellaneous

11.1 Tables

The types are generic-hash-table and eq-hash-table. The access interface is present?, which returns a pair whose car is the key and whose cdr is the associated value. A different interface to hash tables is provided by the T-style table-entry operation which returns the associated value or #f if the key isn't in the table. The setter of either operation can be used to add, modify, and remove associations.

(make generic-hash-table key-hash-op equal-op) *Operation*

(make eq-hash-table) *Operation*

(present? table key) *Settable Operation*
Returns (key . val) pair, or #f if not present.

(table-entry table key) *Settable Operation*
Returns value indexed by *key* or #f if not present.

11.2 Delays

Oaklisp's delays are compatible with the facility defined in R3RS, but extend those primitive facilities in two ways. First, the system will automatically force promises when appropriate. For instance, (+ 2 (delay 3)) does not signal an error; it returns 5. Similarly, delays are printed transparently, slightly violating read/print consistency. Secondly, the delay facility is user extensible. Users can create new kinds of delays that have special protocols, for instance numeric delays that do not force themselves upon arithmetic operations, but instead make more and more complicated delays.

(delay expression) *Special Form*

This immediately returns a *promise* for *expression*, without actually computing *expression*. This promise does not compute *expression* until it is forced, at which point it returns the value of *expression*, computing it if it hasn't already done so.

(force x) *Operation*

If *x* is a promise, it is forced to compute its value, which is returned. If *x* is not a promise, it itself is returned.

promise *Type*

This is the type of the objects returned by delay.

forcible *Type*

This is an abstract type, of which promise is a concrete subtype. Subtypes of forcible are expected to respond to the force operation in a sensible fashion. Oaklisp's system internals sometimes force instances of forcible automatically, for instance when sending them messages for which no appropriate method can otherwise be found.

(fluid forcible-print-magic) *Fluid Variable*

Controls how delays are printed. This is how (delay 'foo) would print under various settings of forcible-print-magic.

value	**print style**
#f	#<DELAY 3462>
indicate	#[DELAY FOO 3462]
transparent	FOO

The default is transparent. A setting of indicate is more instructive if you encounter odd behavior that might be due to delays.

Chapter 12

User Interface

The Oaklisp user interface currently consists of a read-eval-print loop and a simple debugging facility.

Errors land the user into a recursive evaluation loop in which special restart handlers are available. Our implementation includes mechanisms for inspecting objects and tracing function calls.

12.1 Invoking Oaklisp

Oaklisp is run as

oaklisp [emulator options] -- [Oaklisp options]

The options before the -- are for the bytecode emulator and the ones after it are processed by the Oaklisp world itself, in order, when it boots; without any it enters the read-eval-print loop. The emulator options include

--world ***file*** the world image to boot (the installed oakworld.bin by default, or the file named by the environment variable OAKWORLD);

--dump ***file*** dump the world to *file* on exit;

--size-heap ***n*** the size of the heap, in units of 1024 references;

--batch do not trap interrupts, for use from scripts and makefiles;

--no-line-editing read the terminal a character at a time, without GNU readline (when built with it, a line typed at the terminal can be edited, and earlier lines recalled, before it is read);

--version print the version and architecture (section 12.1.1) and exit.

The Oaklisp options are

--eval ***expression*** evaluate *expression*, given as one argument;

--load ***file*** load *file*, as load would;

--compile ***file*** compile *file*.oak to *file*.oa, as compile-file would;

--outdir ***directory*** write the objects of the following --compile switches to *directory* rather than beside their sources (it sets (fluid compiler-output-directory));

--target ***architecture*** compile the following files for *architecture* rather than for the running system (it sets (fluid target-architecture));

--locale ***locale*** evaluate, load and compile the following in *locale*, e.g. scheme-locale or compiler-locale, rather than system-locale;

--exit exit, with a nonzero status if any earlier switch failed.

For example, to compile a file for Scheme and leave:

oaklisp -- --locale scheme-locale --compile myfile --exit

(exit [status]) *Operation*
Leaves Oaklisp, giving the shell the status *status*, an integer from 0 to 255, or 0. (After an error, the status is the debugger's nesting level, so that a script that errored does not report success.)

(dump-world file-name) *Operation*
Saves the running world to *file-name*, a binary world image, and keeps running. The image can be booted with --world.

(load-world file-name) *Operation*
Replaces the running world with the image in *file-name*. It never returns.

system-version *Global Variable*
A string naming the version of Oaklisp, e.g. "Oaklisp 2.0.1".

12.1.1 Architectures

An Oaklisp system is built for an *architecture*: the size of a reference in bits (32 or 64, which fixes the range of fixnums at 30 or 62 bits), the number of 16-bit instructions packed into each reference in a code vector (2, or 4 with 64-bit references), and the byte order of the machine. Architectures are named bc2-32, bc2-64 and bc4-64 for compiled code, which does not depend on byte order, and bc2-el32, bc2-eb32, bc2-el64, bc2-eb64, bc4-el64 and bc4-eb64 for running systems and world images, el and eb being little and big endian. Compiled code can be

loaded by any system with the same instruction packing; a file compiled for 32-bit references can be loaded by a 64-bit system, since the difference is only the range its integer constants are assumed to fit. Compiled files and world images carry a header line naming their architecture, and a mismatch is an error.

host-architecture *Global Variable*

Describes the running system: an association list with the keys word-size (32 or 64), instructions-per-ref (2 or 4) and endian (little or big).

(fluid target-architecture) *Fluid Variable*

The architecture the compiler generates code for, in the same form; by default the host's. It is set by the --target switch, and the compiler may be given any architecture, which is how Oaklisp is bootstrapped onto a new one.

(parse-architecture-name string) *Operation*

Returns the architecture named by *string*, e.g. "bc2-64", as an association list; an error if the name is not one of those above.

(architecture-name architecture) *Operation*

The name of *architecture*, the inverse of the above.

most-positive-fixnum *Global Variable*

most-negative-fixnum *Global Variable*

The largest and smallest fixnums of the running system: $2^{29}-1$ and -2^{29} with 32-bit references, $2^{61}-1$ and -2^{61} with 64-bit ones.

12.2 The Top Level Environment

All expressions must be evaluated with respect to a particular naming environment. The read-eval-print loop uses the locale specified by the fluid variable current-locale. The Oaklisp system boots up with this variable bound to user-locale. Other useful name spaces are scheme-locale, system-locale, and compiler-locale.

Several fluid variables are used to keep a short history of the dialogue conducted by the top level evaluator. The most useful of these is (fluid *), which contains the value produced by the most recent user expression. The value of this variable is rolled back into (fluid **) and then into (fluid ***) to provide access to the three most recent values. Similarly, there are three copies of (fluid +) and (fluid ?) that provide access to recent expressions that were read in and to their form after macro expansion.

The switch (fluid fancy-references) controls the printing of anonymous objects. When this switch is turned off, an object usually prints out something like this: #<op 806>. This format indicates the type of the object, and provides a weak

pointer that can be derefenced with object-unhash to get the object. When the (fluid fancy-references) switch is turned on, the printer attempts to generate an expression that will evaluate to the object in the current locale. For example, the above operation might print out as #<op (setter car) 806>. The default value for this switch is #f, but it is briefly switched on by describe.

Two more fluid variables that are frequently used at the top level are (fluid print-length) and (fluid print-level), which are normally set to small integer values in order to abbreviate the printing of long lists, but which can be set to #f in order to enable exhaustive printing.

12.3 Miscellaneous Functions

There are some other very useful functions that are part of the user interface.

(apropos word [place]) *Operation*

Returns either variables or symbols containing *word*, depending on *place*, which can be a locale or symbol-table. *place* defaults to (fluid current-locale).

(%gc) *Operation*

Collect garbage. This does not collect garbage in "static space," but it is exceedingly unlikely that there is any there.

(%full-gc) *Operation*

Collect more garbage. This does collect garbage from "static space," but more importantly, it put everything not freed into static space, so it need not be transported in future normal garbage collections.

12.4 Debugging

The following special forms can be used to trace the execution of an operation.

(trace-variable-in global-var) *Special Form*

Puts a trace on the operation stored in *global-var*, causing a message to be printed every time the operation is called.

(trace-variable-out global-var) *Special Form*

Puts a trace on the operation stored in *global-var*, causing a message to be printed every time a call to the operation returns.

(trace-variable-in-out global-var) *Special Form*

(untrace-variable global-var) *Special Form*

Objects can be examined in detail with the describe function, which prints the object and its type with (fluid fancy-references) turned on, followed by the object's internal state. The internal state is organized as instance-variable blocks from the object's various component types. An object's internal state usually contains anonymous objects whose printed representation includes weak pointers which can be dereferenced using object-unhash. Together, describe and object-unhash constitute a simple but effective inspector.

To simplify this process describe applied to an integer which is the object-hash of some object will describe that object. In other words, describe can be applied to the numeric ID in an object's printed representation.

(describe object) *Operation*

Prints out lots of stuff about *object*.

(object-unhash i) *Operation*

Dereferences the weak pointer *i*.

When an error occurs in our implementation of Oaklisp, the user is thrown into a recursive evaluation loop whose dynamic context is nested inside that of the error. Several restart handlers are typically available in a recursive evaluation loop, and the ret function is the mechanism for invoking one of these handlers. call/cc can be used to preserve an error context when it might be useful to restart the computation at a later time.

(ret n . args) *Operation*

Invokes restart handler *n*, as specified by the list of handlers printed out by a subordinate evaluation loop. (ret 0), which returns control to the top level evaluation loop, is always in effect.

The following dialogue with Oaklisp illustrates some of these points.

```
Oaklisp 1.0  - (C) 1987 Barak A. Pearlmutter and Kevin J. Lang.
Oaklisp evaluation loop.
  Active handlers:
  0: Return to top level.

> (with-open-file (inf "fone.nums" in) (car (read inf)))

Error: Error opening "fone.nums" for reading.
Oaklisp evaluation loop.
  Active handlers:
  0: Return to top level.
  1: Retry opening file (argument for different file name).
  2: Return to debugger level 1.

>> (call/cc identity)              ;get error context.
```

```
>> (set foo (fluid *))              ;stash it away.

>> (ret 0)                          ;back to top level.

   Invoking handler Return to top level..

> (describe foo)                   ;inspect continuation.

#<Op FOO 798> is of type #<Type OPERATION 801>.

 from #<Type 801>:
  LAMBDA? : #<Object 802>           ;what's this thing?
  CACHE-TYPE : 0
  CACHE-METHOD : 0
  CACHE-TYPE-OFFSET : 0

> (describe (object-unhash 802))

#<Object 802> is of type #<Type %METHOD 803>.

 from #<Type 803>:
  THE-CODE : #<VLmixin 804>
  THE-ENVIRONMENT : #<VLmixin 805>

> (foo 0)                          ;re-enter error context.

>> (ret 1 "phone.nums")            ;resume computation

   Invoking handler Retry opening the file ...

268-7598                           ;got that phone number!

> (exit)

Oaklisp stopped itself...
```

Using the error system effectively is an important part of providing the user with a helpful interface. Details on the error system can be found in Section 6.3.

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Index

bignum, **33**
call/cc, *see* 20
complex, **33**
cons-pair, **28**
fixnum, **33**
float, **33**
fraction, **33**
integer, **33**
lazy-cons-pair, **28**
list-type, **28**
null-type, **28**
number, **33**
pair, **28**
rational, **33**
real, **33**
sequence, **28**
simple-vector, **28**
string, **28**
vector-type, **28**
(), 7, 31
+, 8
.oa, 15, 16, 46
.oak, 15, 16, 46
OAKWORLD, 45
Oaklisp 2.0.1|hyperpage, 46
#+, 40
#-, 40
#., 40
#b, 40
#c, 40
#d, 40
#f, 7, 17, 18, 22, 31, 40–43, 48
#o, 40
#t, 7, 18, 31, 40–42
#x, 40
add-method, 9–11
append, 29, 38
append!, 29
bc2-32, 46
bc2-64, 46
bc2-64|hyperpage, 47
bc2-eb32, 46
bc2-eb64, 46
bc2-el32, 46
bc2-el64, 46
bc4-64, 46
bc4-eb64, 46
bc4-el64, 46
big, 47
bind, 19
block, 9
call-with-current-continuation, 20
call/cc, 20, 25, 49
car, 31, 43
catch, 3, 20, 21
cdr, 30, 43
cerror, 21, 23, 24
coercable-type, 7
coercer, 7, 39
compile-file, 15, 46
compiler-locale, 46, 47
condition-bind, 3
constituent, 39
contents, 14
current-locale, 15, 47
define, 16
define-macro-char, 39
define-syntax, 16
delay, 44
describe, 48, 49

destructure, 30, 31
destructure*, 24, 31
eb, 46
el, 46
else, 25
endian, 47
eq-hash-table, 43
eq?, 5
error, 23, 24
error-restart, 22
error-return, 21, 22
eval, 15
fancy, 42
feature?, 40
float, 42
fluid, 19, 39
for-each, 26
force, 44
forcible, 44
format, 41
freshline, 41
funny-wind-protect, 20
general-error, 23
generic-fatal-error, 21
generic-hash-table, 43
generic-proceedable-error, 21
hash-bracket-option, 40
illegal, 39
in, 38
indicate, 44
initialize, 5, 16
instructions-per-ref, 47
invoke-debugger, 22
labels, 10
lambda, 11
let, 3, 10, 19, 22
let*, 10
listify-args, 11, 12
little, 47
load, 15, 16, 46
local-syntax, 16
locale, 17
locater, 14
locative, 13
make, 5, 6
map, 26, 27, 30
mapcdr, 27
native-catch, 20
newline, 41
nil, 7
nonterminating-macro, 39
normal, 42
nth, 28, 30, 39
null?, 6
number?, 6
oaklisp, 40
oakworld.bin, 45
object, 4–6, 10
object-unhash, 48, 49
out, 38
pair, 43
present?, 43
print, 2, 5
proceed, 22
promise, 44
quasiquote, 39
quote, 6, 39
read, 24
read-error, 24
real, 35
really-read-char, 37
rest-length, 11, 12
rest-name, 12
ret, 21, 22, 49
scheme, 40
scheme-locale, 46, 47
self, 9
set!, 13
setf, 13
setq, 13
setter, 14
signal, 24
simple-vector, 29
single-escape, 39

standard-read-table, 39
subtype?, 6
symbol-table, 48
system-locale, 46, 47
table-entry, 43
terminating-macro, 39
the-eof-token, 37
throw, 3
transparent, 44
type, 4–7
ugly, 38
unquote, 39
unquote-splicing, 39
user-locale, 47
whitespace, 39
wind-protect, 20
with-open-file, 38
word-size, 47
write-char, 37
↑super, 11
***
    fluid, 47
**
    fluid, 47
*
    fluid, 47
    Operation, 33
+
    fluid, 47
    Operation, 33
-
    Operation, 33
/
    Operation, 33
1+
    Operation, 33
<=
    Operation, 34
<
    Operation, 34
=
    Operation, 34
>=
    Operation, 34
>
    Operation, 34
?
    fluid, 47
#f
    Global Variable, 7
%full-gc
    Operation, 48
%gc
    Operation, 48
abs
    Operation, 34
add-method
    Special Form, 9
and
    Special Form, 25
append!
    Operation, 29
append
    Operation, 29
apropos
    Operation, 48
architecture-name
    Operation, 47
ash-left
    Operation, 35
ash-right
    Operation, 35
assq
    Operation, 32
ass
    Operation, 32
atom?
    Predicate, 29
bind-error-handler
    Macro, 22
bind
    Special Form, 19
bit-andca
    Operation, 36

bit-and
Operation, 35
bit-equiv
Operation, 36
bit-nand
Operation, 36
bit-nor
Operation, 36
bit-not
Operation, 35
bit-or
Operation, 35
bit-xor
Operation, 36
block0
Special Form, 26
block
Special Form, 26
c[ad]*r
Locatable Operation, 30
call-with-current-continuation
Operation, 20
car
Locatable Operation, 30
catch
Special Form, 20
cdr-assq
Settable Operation, 32
cdr-ass
Settable Operation, 32
cdr
Locatable Operation, 30
ceiling
Operation, 35
cerror
Operation, 21
coercable-type
Type, 7
coercer
Locatable Operation, 7
compile-file
Operation, 15
compiler-output-directory
fluid, 15, 46
cond
Special Form, 25
consume-args
Operation, 12
cons
Operation, 30
contents
Locatable Operation, 14
copy
Operation, 29
current-locale
fluid, 15, 16, 48
Fluid Variable, 40
define-constant
Special Form, 16
define-hash-macro-char
Operation, 40
define-instance
Special Form, 16
define-local-syntax
Special Form, 16
define-macro-char
Operation, 39
define-nonterminating-macro-char
Operation, 39
define-quotelike-macro-char
Operation, 39
define-simple-print-method
Operation, 42
define-syntax
Special Form, 16
define
Macro, 10
Special Form, 16
del!
Operation, 31
delay
Special Form, 43
delq!
Operation, 31

delq
Operation, 31
del
Operation, 31
denominator
Operation, 36
describe
Operation, 49
destructure**
Macro, 31
destructure*
Macro, 31
destructure
Macro, 30
dolist-count
Special Form, 26
dolist
Special Form, 26
dotimes
Special Form, 26
do
Special Form, 26
dump-world
Operation, 46
dynamic-wind
Operation, 20
eq-hash-table
Making, 43
eq?
Predicate, 5
error-opening
Type, 23
error-restart
Macro, 22
error-return
Macro, 21
error
Operation, 21
eval
Operation, 15
even?
Predicate, 35
exit
Operation, 46
expt
Operation, 34
factor?
Predicate, 35
fancy-references
fluid, 41, 47–49
features
Fluid Variable, 40
floor
Operation, 35
fluid
Special Form, 19
flush
Operation, 38
for-each-cdr
Operation, 27
for-each
Operation, 27
force
Operation, 44
forcible-print-magic
Fluid Variable, 44
forcible
Type, 44
format
Operation, 41
fraction-display-style
Fluid Variable, 42
freshline
Operation, 38
frozen-here?
Settable Predicate, 18
frozen?
Settable Predicate, 18
funny-wind-protect
Special Form, 20
gcd
Operation, 34
general-error
Type, 23

generic-fatal-error
Type, 23
generic-hash-table
Making, 43
generic-proceedable-error
Type, 23
get-type
Operation, 5
host-architecture
Global Variable, 47
if
Special Form, 25
imag-part
Operation, 36
initialize
Operation, 5
input-base
Fluid Variable, 40
input-stream
Type, 37
interactive?
Operation, 38
invoke-debugger
Operation, 23
invoke-in-error-context
Operation, 23
is-a?
Predicate, 6
iterate
Special Form, 25
labels
Special Form, 10
lambda
Macro, 10
last-pair
Locatable Operation, 30
last
Locatable Operation, 29
lazy-cons-pair
Making, 30
lazy-cons
Macro, 30
lazy-map
Operation, 30
lcm
Operation, 34
length
Operation, 29
let*
Special Form, 10
let
Special Form, 10
list-type
Coercer, 30
Making, 30
list?
Predicate, 28
listify-args
Operation, 12
list
Operation, 30
load-world
Operation, 46
load
Operation, 15
local-syntax
Special Form, 16
locatable-operation
Type, 14
locater
Locatable Operation, 14
macro-here?
Settable Operation, 18
macro?
Settable Operation, 18
make-locative
Special Form, 13
make
Operation, 5, 17
map!
Operation, 27
mapcdr
Operation, 26
map

Operation, 26
max
Operation, 34
memq
Operation, 31
mem
Operation, 31
min
Operation, 34
mix-types
Operation, 8
mixin-manager
Type, 8
modify-location
Special Form, 14
modify
Special Form, 14
modulo
Operation, 34
most-negative-fixnum
Global Variable, 47
most-positive-fixnum
Global Variable, 47
native-catch
Special Form, 20
negative?
Predicate, 34
newline
Operation, 38
nil
Global Variable, 7
not
Predicate, 25
nth
Locatable Operation, 29
null?
Predicate, 28
numerator
Operation, 36
object-unhash
Operation, 49
object
Type, 5
odd?
Predicate, 35
operation
Type, 14
or
Special Form, 25
output-stream
Type, 37
pair?
Predicate, 28
parse-architecture-name
Operation, 47
peek-char
Operation, 37
pop
Macro, 32
position
Settable Operation, 38
positive?
Predicate, 35
present?
Settable Operation, 43
print-escape
fluid, 41
Fluid Variable, 42
print-length
fluid, 48
Fluid Variable, 42
print-level
fluid, 48
Fluid Variable, 42
print-radix
Fluid Variable, 42
print
Operation, 42
proceedable-error
Making, 23
proceed
Operation, 23
promise
Type, 44

push
Macro, 32
quote
Special Form, 6
quotient
Operation, 34
read-char
Operation, 37
read-error
Type, 23
read-suppress
Fluid Variable, 40
read
Operation, 39
real-part
Operation, 36
remember-context
Operation, 23
report
Operation, 23
rest-length
Special Form, 12
ret
Operation, 49
reverse!
Operation, 29
reverse
Operation, 29
rot-left
Operation, 35
rot-right
Operation, 35
round
Operation, 35
sequence?
Predicate, 28
set!
Special Form, 13
settable-operation
Type, 14
setter
Locatable Operation, 13
simple-vector
Coercer, 30
Making, 30
skip-whitespace
Operation, 39
standard-read-table
Object, 39
stream
Type, 37
string-output-stream
Making, 38
string?
Predicate, 28
string
coercer, 7, 38
subtype?
Predicate, 6
swap
Special Form, 14
symbol-slashification-style
Fluid Variable, 42
system-version
Global Variable, 46
table-entry
Settable Operation, 43
tail
Locatable Operation, 29
target-architecture
fluid, 46
Fluid Variable, 47
the-eof-token
Object, 37
the-unread-object
Object, 40
throw
Operation, 20
trace-variable-in-out
Special Form, 48
trace-variable-in
Special Form, 48
trace-variable-out
Special Form, 48

truncate
Operation, 35
type
Making, 6
Type, 5
t
Global Variable, 7
unexpected-eof
Type, 24
unless
Special Form, 26
unread-char
Operation, 37
untrace-variable
Special Form, 48
variable-here?
Settable Operation, 17
Setter, 18
variable?
Settable Operation, 17
Setter, 17
vector?
Predicate, 28
vector
Operation, 29
warning
Operation, 21
while
Special Form, 26
wind-protect
Special Form, 20
with-input-from-string
Macro, 38
with-open-file
Macro, 38
write-char
Operation, 38
write-string
Operation, 38
zero?
Predicate, 34
--batch
switch, 45
--compile
switch, 46
--dump
switch, 45
--eval
switch, 46
--exit
switch, 46
--load
switch, 46
--locale
switch, 46
--no-line-editing
switch, 45
--outdir
switch, 46
--size-heap
switch, 45
--target
switch, 46, 47
--version
switch, 45
--world
switch, 45, 46
--
switch, 45
!=
Operation, 34
↑super
Operation, 11

Smalltalk-80, 11