

cs3157 lecture #9 notes.

mon 24 mar 2003

<http://www.cs.columbia.edu/~cs3157>

- news
 - homework #3 due next monday
 - QUIZ #2 ON WEDNESDAY IN HERE (NEXT CLASS!)
- today
 - software documentation
 - user documentation
- sources
 - <http://java.sun.com/j2se/javadoc/writingdoccomments/index.html>

software documentation.

- also called source code documentation
- is hard to write
- is harder to maintain
- must be up-to-date with the source code, otherwise it's useless
- think of it as a contract between the programmer and the subsequent programmers that will use the code
- two methodologies:
 - within source code
 - external to source code
- first way makes it easier to maintain and keep accurate

software documentation — bugs.

- two types:
 - specification bugs
 - code bugs
- differences between how code is specified and how it works
- only one is right (if any)

software documentation — javadoc.

- Java tool for generating the pretty API documentation you find on the java.sun.com web site
- easy to use
- good standard
- useful for conventions for other languages

software documentation — javadoc (2).

- handles four types of source code files:
 - class source code files (*.java)
 - package comment files
 - overview comment files
 - miscellaneous unprocessed files

software documentation — class source code files.

- documentation is in the form of source code comments
- comments contain javadoc tags and HTML tags
- javadoc tags are processed by javadoc
- HTML tags are processed when displayed by a browser
- must immediately precede a declaration of:
 - a class
 - a field
 - a constructor
 - a method
- consists of:
 - description (comes first)
 - block tags (come second)

software documentation — example.

```
/**
 * Returns an Image object that can then be painted on the screen.
 * The url argument must specify an absolute {@link URL}. The name
 * argument is a specifier that is relative to the url argument.
 * <p>
 * This method always returns immediately, whether or not the
 * image exists. When this applet attempts to draw the image on
 * the screen, the data will be loaded. The graphics primitives
 * that draw the image will incrementally paint on the screen.
 *
 * @param url an absolute URL giving the base location of the image
 *           name the location of the image, relative to the url argument
 * @return the image at the specified URL
 * @see Image
 */
public Image getImage(URL url, String name) {
    try {
        return getImage(new URL(url, name));
    } catch (MalformedURLException e) {
        return null;
    }
}
```

software documentation — details.

- each line is indented to align with the code below the comment
- first line begins with /**
- last line ends with */
- all intervening lines start with *
- first sentence is a short summary of the method
- {@link URL} converts to HTML and points to documentation for the URL class (this is an example of a javadoc tag)
- separate paragraphs with <p> HTML tag
- insert blank line between description and block tags
- description ends with first line that begins with @
- limit comment lines to 80 characters (or less)

software documentation — class source code files.

- documentation is in the form of source code comments
- comments contain javadoc tags and HTML tags
- javadoc tags are processed by javadoc
- HTML tags are processed when displayed by a browser
- class/interface tags:

- @see
- @since
- @deprecated
- @serial
- @author
- @version
- {@link}
- {@linkplain}
- {@docRoot}

software documentation — class source code files (2).

- field tags:

- @see
- @since
- @deprecated
- @serial
- @serialField
- {@link}
- {@linkplain}
- {@docRoot}
- {@value}

software documentation — class source code files (3).

- constructor and method tags:

- @see
- @since
- @deprecated
- @param
- @return
- @throws (same as @exception)
- @serialData
- {@link}
- {@linkplain}
- {@inheritDoc}
- {@docRoot}

software documentation — package comment files.

- create a file named `package.html` and place it in the package directory
- contains one big documentation comment, **without the comment separators** (`/** */` or leading `*`s)
- **comment is in html**
- **make the first sentence a summary about the package**
- **do not put a title or any other text between the `<body>` tag and the first sentence**
- **package tags:**

- @see
- @since
- @deprecated
- @serial
- @author
- @version
- {@link}
- {@linkplain}
- {@docRoot}

software documentation — overview comment files.

- contains overview documentation for an application or set of packages
- can be anywhere in source code tree and can have any name
- convention is to place it at top level and name it `overview.html`
- to process it, run

```
unix$ javadoc -overview <filename>
```
- make the first sentence a summary about the application or set of packages
- do not put a title or any other text between the `<body>` tag and the first sentence
- tags:
 - `@see`
 - `@since`
 - `@author`
 - `@version`
 - `{@link}`
 - `{@linkplain}`
 - `{@docRoot}`

software documentation — miscellaneous unprocessed files.

- contains hardcoded HTML documentation for files that don't fall into any of the other categories
- these files are *unprocessed* by javadoc
- but can be referenced by files that are
- place files in a directory called `doc-files`, anywhere in the source code tree
- you can have one `doc-files` directory per package

software documentation — tags.

- most frequently used tags (in Java API), in this order:
 - `@author` (classes and interfaces only)
 - `@version` (classes and interfaces only)
 - `@param` (methods and constructors only)
 - `@return` (methods only — except void)
 - `@throws` (same as `@exception`)
 - `@see`
 - `@since`
 - `@serial` (or `@serialField` or `@serialData`)
 - `@deprecated` (only if applicable)
- other tags:
 - `@link` and `@linkplain`
 - `@value`

software documentation — tag descriptions: `@author`.

- adds an "Author" entry with the specified name-text to the generated docs when the `-author` option is used
- syntax:

```
@author name-text
```
- may contain multiple `@author` tags

software documentation — tag descriptions: @version.

- adds a “Version” subheading with the specified version-text to the generated docs when the -version option is used
- syntax:
`@version version-text`
- a doc comment may contain at most one @version tag
- use RCS automated version identifier (\$Id\$) to fill in version-text

software documentation — tag descriptions: @param.

- adds a parameter to the “Parameters” section
- syntax:
`@param parameter-name description`
- should describe the data type of the parameter
- should describe how the parameter is used within the method

software documentation — tag descriptions: @return.

- adds a “Returns” section with the description text
- syntax:
`@return description`
- should specify the data type of the return value
- should describe the range of possible return values

software documentation — tag descriptions: @throws.

- adds a “Throws” subheading to the generated documentation, with the class-name and description text.
- syntax:
`@throws class-name description`
- class-name is the name of the exception that may be thrown by the method
- multiple @throws tags can be used
- documentation is copied from an overridden method to a subclass only when the exception is explicitly declared in the overridden method (or implemented)
- use `{@inheritDoc}` to force inheriting of documentation

software documentation — tag descriptions: @see.

- adds a “See Also” heading with a link or text entry that points to reference
- syntax:
`@see reference`
- three forms:
`@see ``string```
`@see label`
`@see package.class#member label`

software documentation — tag descriptions: @since.

- adds a “Since” heading with the specified since-text to the generated documentation
- syntax:
`@since since-text`
- indicates what was the current version of the class or package when this element was created

software documentation — tag descriptions: @link.

- inserts an in-line link with visible text label that points to the documentation for the specified package, class or member name of a referenced class
- syntax:
`{@link package.class#member label}`
- similar to @see, but generates an in-line link instead of placing a reference in the “See Also” section
- also —
- syntax:
`{@linkplain package.class#member label}`
- which is identical to {@link}, except the link’s label is displayed in plain text than code font

software documentation — tag descriptions: @value.

- displays the value of the constant when used in a static field comment
- syntax:
`{@value}`

software documentation — tricks.

- sentences end with a period followed by a space
 - screws up things like “Prof. Sklar”
 - so do this: `Prof . ; Sklar`
- in Java, doc comments are inherited for:
 - methods in a class that override its superclass’ (javadoc automatically adds “overrides”)
 - methods in an interface that override its superinterface (javadoc automatically adds “overrides”)
 - methods in a class that implement a method in an interface (javadoc automatically adds “specified by”)

software documentation — style guide.

- use `<code>` style for:
 - Java keywords
 - package names
 - class names
 - method names
 - interface names
 - field names
 - argument names
 - code examples
- omit parentheses for the general form of methods and constructors
 - do this: The `add` method enables you to insert items
 - not this: The `add ()` method enables you to insert items

software documentation — style guide (2).

- use a phrase for first “sentence” in description
- tag conventions
 - order of tags
 - ordering of multiple tags
 - required tags (`@param`, `@return`)
- be consistent!!

software documentation — the javadoc command.

- syntax:
`javadoc <options> <packagenames> <sourcefiles> <@files>`
- where:
 - options = command-line options, including:
 - * `-sourcepath`
 - * `-tags`
 - * `-overview`
 - packagenames = series of names of packages, separated by spaces
 - sourcefiles = series of source file names, separated by spaces; can contain wildcard () to process all .java files
 - @files = files containing packagenames and sourcefiles
- do `man javadoc` for more information

user documentation.

- develop a plan of action
- decide on an approach
- design a useful format
- prepare first draft
- seek objective feedback
- revise as needed (edit!)

user documentation — plan of action.

- analyze your audience
- four types of audiences
 - lay (general public)
 - executive (the boss)
 - expert (peers)
 - technician (maintainers)
- or real world — a mix of all four

user documentation — interests of each audience.

- lay
 - overview
 - conclusions
 - personal implications — use “you”
 - use examples
- executive
 - solutions
 - budget, profits
 - recommendations
 - summary!

user documentation — interests of each audience (2).

- experts
 - data
 - theories
 - details
 - process
- technicians
 - how to fix it
 - be practical
 - they don't like to *read*, they like to *do*

user documentation — approaches.

- narrative
 - report approach
 - emphasizes results and conclusions
- analytical
 - textbook
 - emphasizes processes
- instructional
 - directions
 - emphasizes procedure
 - takes reader's role

user documentation — formats.

- reports are not *read*, they are *used*
- need a high level of structure!
- general report format
 - front matter
 - internal matter
 - concluding matter

user documentation — front matter.

- letter of transmittal, preface, acknowledgements
- cover
- title page
- summary and/or abstract
- table of contents: headings, subheadings
- lists of tables and illustrations

user documentation — internal matter.

- introduction
 - write this last!
 - background
 - purpose
 - scope
 - be organized and brief
- body of report
 - remember audience analysis
 - conclusions
 - * objective findings
 - * results based on logical chain of reasoning
 - recommendations
 - * subjective findings
 - * opinions

user documentation — concluding matter.

- appendices
- glossary
- index
- bibliography

user documentation — summary/abstract.

- very important!
- (executive) summary
 - condensed version of longer document
 - should reflect style and organization of document
 - 5-10/
- abstract
 - brief description of document
 - very tight
 - conveys main idea
 - includes keywords
 - 75-200 words

user documentation — summary/abstract (2).

- present only critical information
- include controlling ideas (what is the thesis?)
- include major findings
- omit details
- should be self-contained
- exercise: take all topic sentences from each paragraph in the report and put them into an abstract/summary

user documentation — editing.

- revising
- systematic editing — do a limited number of things at a time
- distinguish between
 - content (ideas)
 - language
- condense
- consolidate
- simplify

user documentation — writing style.

- active versus passive voice
 - active voice (“Simon played the game.”)
 - * more direct
 - * natural speaking pattern
 - * takes responsibility (“Our algorithm solved the problem.”)
 - passive voice (“The game was played by Simon.”)
 - * can feel backwards
 - * tends to lead to longer sentences
 - * don’t use it too much
 - * appears to remove blame (“The problem was not solved by our algorithm.”)

user documentation — writing style (2).

- use vigorous, descriptive verbs
- keep parallel thoughts parallel
 - use same structure in same situation
 - e.g., always start list elements with “-ing” words
- use periodic structure for emphasis and organization
 - i.e., “In the first step,... In the second step,...”
- structure useful paragraphs
 - like a sandwich
- writing should flow!

user documentation — rhetorical devices.

- use examples
- use definitions
- use comparisons
- use classifications and divisions
- use causal analysis
 - deduction (general → specific)
 - induction (specific → general)

user documentation — descriptions.

- identify with the reader
- only present relevant details
- describe overall object first
- then describe components in detail
- use rhetorical devices
- use graphics
- keep in mind reader’s questions:
 - what is it?
 - what does it do?
 - what does it look like?
 - what is it made of?
 - how does it work?

user documentation — controlling jargon.

- two kinds of jargon
 - specialized terms and abbreviations
 - hidden jargon — giving common words a special twist
- easily abused
 - confuses and intimidates
 - can confer spurious legitimacy

user documentation — graphics: tables.

- typeset
- stay with text
- (typically) show exact quantities
- two types:
 - general, reference
 - summary

user documentation — graphics: illustrations.

- artwork
- divorced from text
- (typically) show approximate quantities
- demonstrate trends
- includes
 - graphs (e.g., line graphs, bar charts, ...)
 - diagrams (e.g., flowcharts, UML)
 - cartoons (artist's rendition)
 - maps
 - photographs

user documentation — graphics: design guidelines.

- reader's aid
- intelligent, efficient display of data
- limited symbols
- accurate
- honest scaling
- relatively self-contained
- numbered
- descriptive title (who? what? when? etc.)
- reference in text
- placement as close to first mention in text as possible

user documentation — graphics: accompanying text.

- explain significance of data
- interpret the data
- why is it interesting?
- explain outliers, anomalies

user documentation — good references.

- good dictionary (Random House, Oxford, etc)
- Roget's Thesaurus
- Strunk and White: "Elements of Style"
- Chicago Manual of Style
- "Elements of Programming Style"
- Brusaw, Alred and Oliu: "Handbook of Technical Writing"