

Java Conclusions

1. Programmer Efficiency

Why do Java programmers get things done so quickly?

Robust -- memory, arrays, ...

Modular/OOP -> enables modular coding

Modular/OOP -> enables good, "blessed" libraries

Portable -> avoids boring versioning problems

Programmer efficiency is never going out of style.

Modularity + libraries + robust = programmers get things done more quickly
(30%?)

This will only become more important as machines get faster relative to programmers.

2. Robust / Secure

Another feature that is never going out of style

Nice that it is designed in from the ground up.

Works well with client-server applications -- where viruses are a concern

3. Portable

Useful to be able to target all OSes

Very Useful for networked computers, palm pilots, etc. to be able to send code around that works everywhere

4. Performance

Performance is not great, but acceptable (e.g. the draw program was functional)

Maybe less of a problem as Moore's law churns along

JIT/Hotspot technology transforms the bytecode in to native code anyway

Java still uses significantly more memory -- maybe ok

Slow startup time is the most noticeable problem -- is Sun being too complacent?

Java Dynasty?

Will we be using a Java derivative in 2020? -- I think the answer is yes.

Features

Programmer efficiency, Robustness, Portability, Slowness

Short-Term / Long-Term

The above is a better match in the long term than the short term. Java has made it this far, it will just look better in the future.

High road / low road

Java will be your "high road" structured/OOP language -- big projects. (C++ is also a contender for structured, but I think Java looks better 90% of the time).

C# is similar to Java, but windows specific
 You will also know a "low road" language for little projects: Perl, Python, Javascript, Visual Basic, ...

CPU/Programmer Curve

CPU cost vs. programmer cost

Up through 1994, CPU cost was more important -> lots of C and C++ coding
 In 1994, the curves cross. Suddenly interpreted languages like Perl, Python, and Java make sense.

This was a one-time switch from the old C/C++ days, to the dynamic, programmer efficient, memory and CPU wasteful Perl/Java days.

Java was on the scene at the right time, and soaked up the network effect and inertia (just as C did 20 years earlier for the compiled language age).

Inertia / Network Effect

Software Inertia -- software systems, languages, etc. have very high inertia.

Leads to a winner-take-all structure and slow evolution (HTTP, TCP/IP, Win32)
 Java appears to have won the "programmer efficient" language niche -- it's a fine language, and it arrived at the right time in history.

Microsoft's C# is basically a clone of Java under Microsoft's control. In this case, inertia will work against Microsoft. C# shows up too late to deflect Java's rise to prominence. (C# will no doubt be popular as a windows-only programming language, as Visual Basic is now).

Steve Jobs Software Inertia Design

When at NeXT, Steve Jobs remarked on a strategy for dealing with high software inertia.

Notice that software systems tended to have high inertia vs. their hardware -- that once DOS or MacOS 1.0 became popular, their design decisions remained in force for a long time, and were hard to displace.

In contrast, hardware evolves pretty quickly -- e.g. think about the hardware that DOS derived OS;s have run on vs. the struggle for the software side to advance. Therefore, a new software paradigm should be as advanced as possible for current hardware.

Java reflects this idea -- it chooses aggressive long term features (robust, programmer efficient, portable), at the cost of mediocre current performance.

According to Steve Jobs, 5 years in the future, this tradeoff looks brilliant

JVM Performance Curve

Bytecode can remain as it is

Java performance depends more on the implementation of the JVM -- note that the JVM can evolve year-to-year, and that has been happening.

In other words, bytecode is fixed, but this does not limit JVM development. JVM can work differently year to year, and the old byte code keeps working.

This flexibility allows Java to get better without compromising backward compatibility.

