Recursion

4-16-2012
Minute essay comments:

- Don't use XML for …
  - Human-only stuff
  - Simple things
  - Big data sets of numbers
  - Binary data, like images
  - Low-level

- Is XML used in video games?
- Comments on in-class code.
- Making computer remember who created whom.
- Am I a Ke$ha fan? Do I prefer Animal or Cannibal?
More

- Other operations for XML nodes.
- Commercially available 3-D chocolate printer.
- IcP solutions
Previously we used recursion to create iteration. This is done with a recursive method that calls itself once and can often be done better with loops.

The real power of recursion comes in when the method calls itself two or more times.

The call stack provides memory so recursion can do one thing, then come back and do another.
The simplest example of a recursive function that calls itself more than once is the Fibonacci numbers.

- 1, 1, 2, 3, 5, 8, 13, 21, ...
- Each number is the sum of the two before it.
  - \( f(n) = \text{if}(n>2) f(n-1) + f(n-2) \) else 1
- Simple, but not great.
A classic example of recursion is solving the Towers of Hanoi.

This game is generally made with disks and three pegs.

You need to move the disks from one peg to another.

- Can only move one disk at a time.
- Can't place a disk on one smaller than it.

Solution to N disks: move N-1 disks, move 1 disk, move N-1 disks.
Mazes

- My favorite example is mazes.
- Consider a maze as a 2-D grid with each square either filled or not.
- Now the challenge is to find the length of the shortest path through the maze.
- How do you do that?
What questions do you have about stuff?