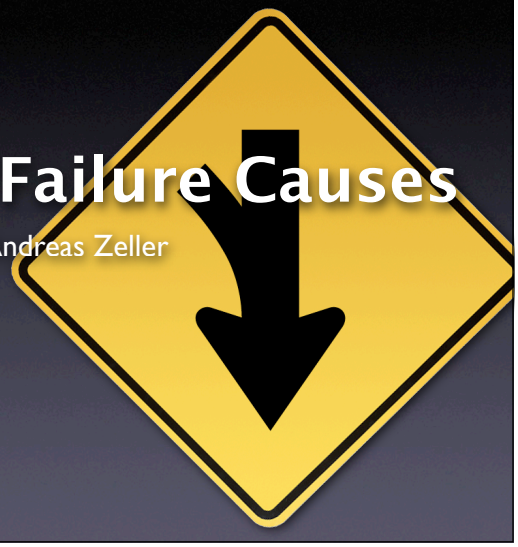
Isolating Failure Causes

Andreas Zeller



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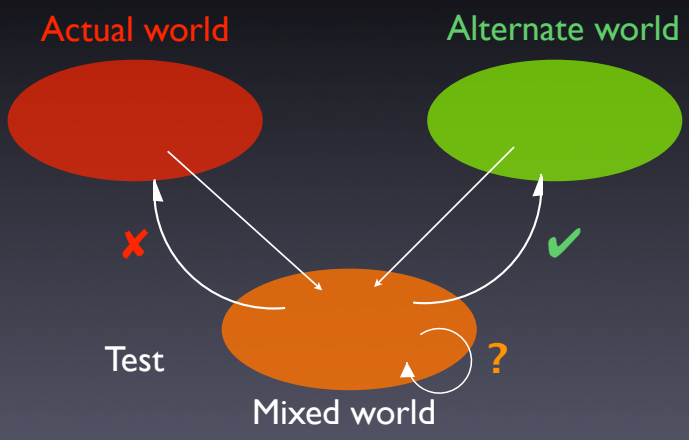
Isolating Causes



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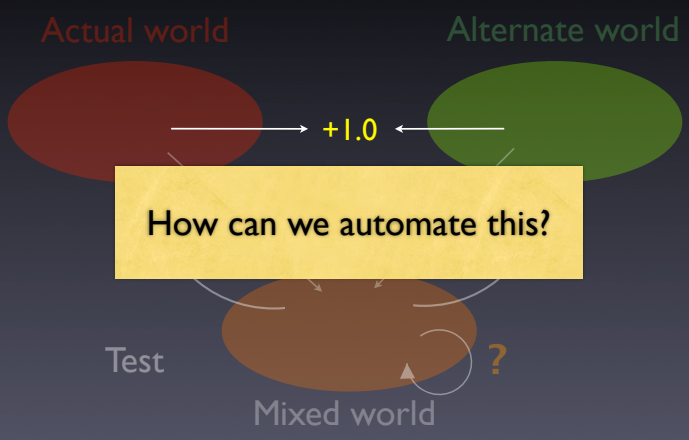
Isolating Causes



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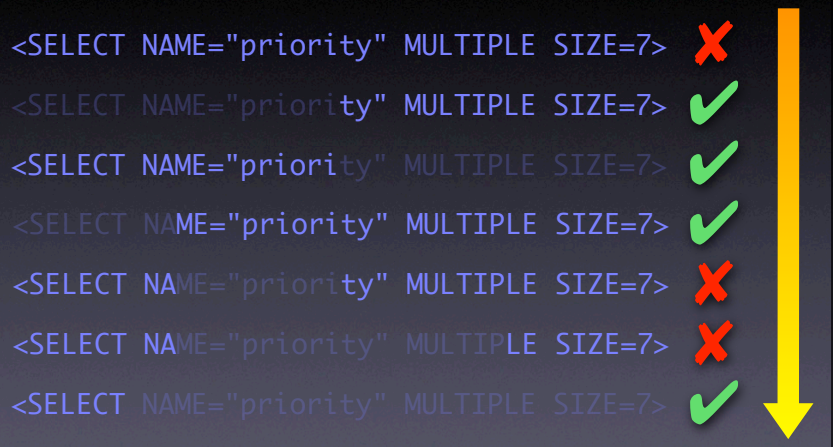
Simplifying Input



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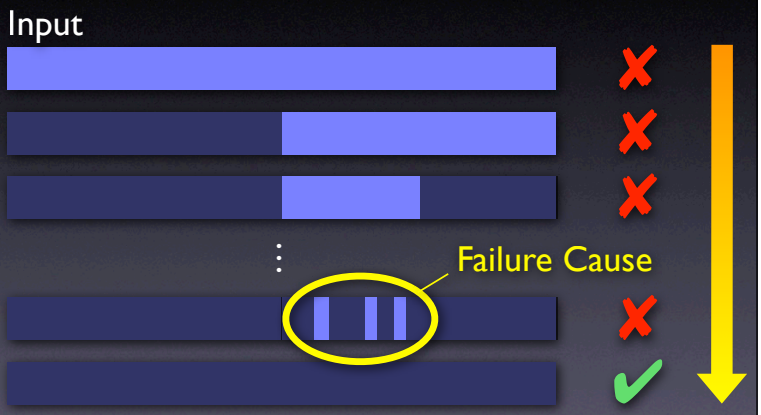
Simplifying



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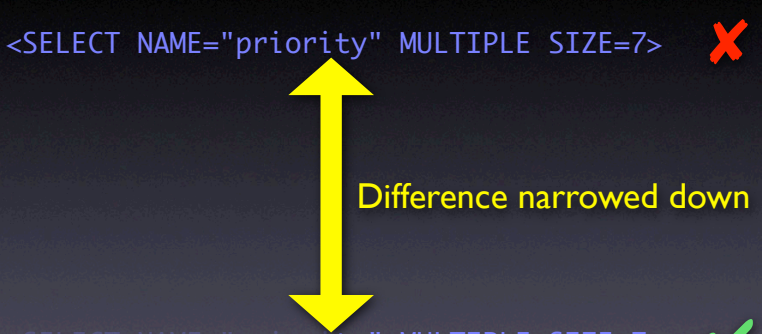
Isolating Input



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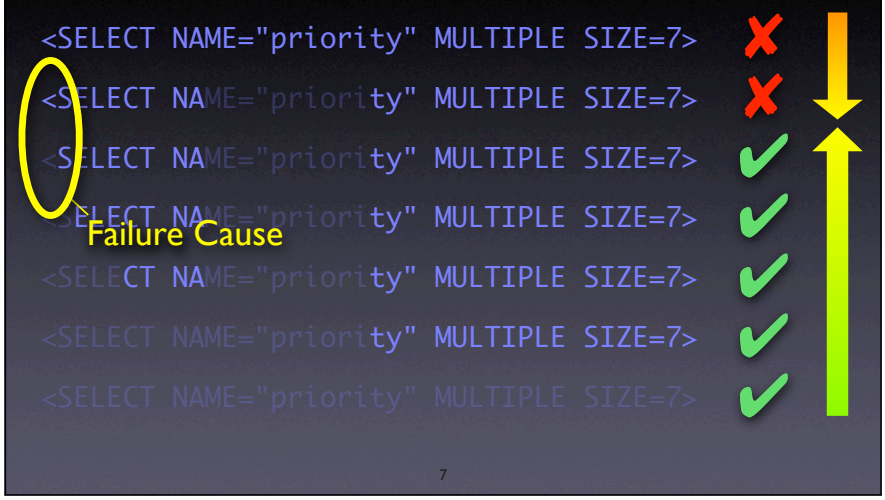
Isolating Input



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Isolating

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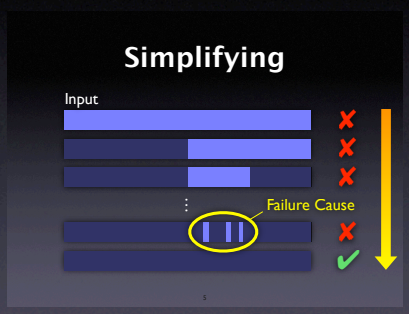
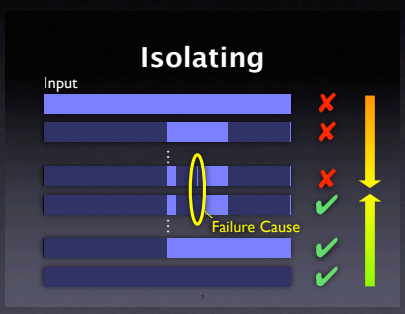
Finding Causes





- minimal input
- minimal context

- minimal difference
- common context

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Configuration

Circumstance

$$\delta$$

All circumstances

$$C = \{\delta_1, \delta_2, \dots\}$$

Configuration $c \subseteq C$

$$c = \{\delta_1, \delta_2, \dots \delta_n\}$$

Tests

Testing function

$$test(c) \in \{✔, ✘, ?\}$$

Initial configurations

$$test(c_✔) = ✔$$
$$test(c_✘) = ✘$$

Minimal Difference

Goal: Subsets $c'_✘$ and $c'_✔$

$$\varnothing = c_✔ \subseteq c'_✔ \subset c'_✘ \subseteq c_✘$$

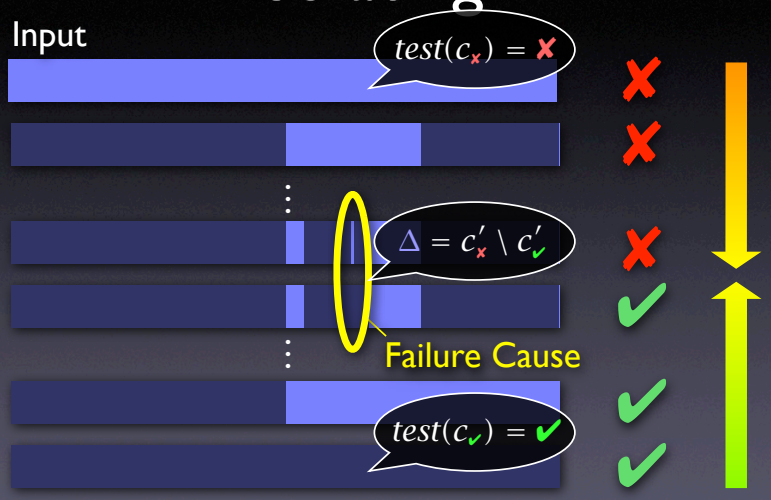
Difference

$$\Delta = c'_✘ \setminus c'_✔$$

Difference is 1-minimal

$$\forall \delta_i \in \Delta \cdot test(c'_✔ \cup \{\delta_i\}) \neq ✔ \wedge test(c'_✘ \setminus \{\delta_i\}) \neq ✘$$

Isolating



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Algorithm Sketch

- Extend *ddmin* such that it works on *two sets at a time* – $c'_{\times}$ and $c'_{\checkmark}$
- Compute subsets

$$\Delta_1 \cup \Delta_2 \cup \cdots \cup \Delta_n = \Delta = c'_{\times} \setminus c'_{\checkmark}$$

- For each subset, test
  - the *addition* $c'_{\checkmark} \cup \Delta_i$
  - the *removal* $c'_{\times} \setminus \Delta_i$

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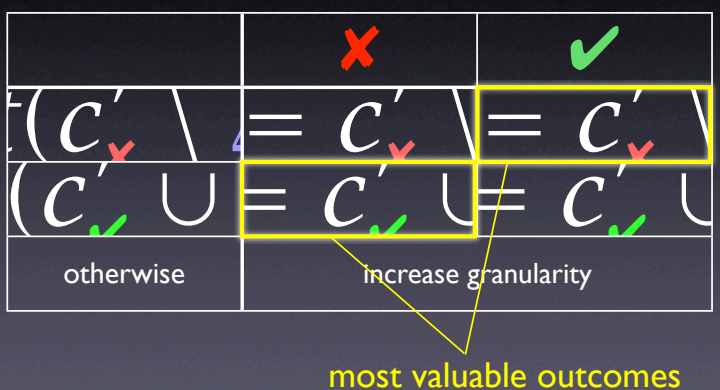
Test Outcomes



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dd in a Nutshell

$dd(c_{✔}, c_{✘}) = (c'_{✔}, c'_{✘})$ $\quad \Delta = c'_{✘} \setminus c'_{✔}$ is 1-minimal

$dd(c_{✔}, c_{✘}) = dd'(c_{✔}, c_{✘}, 2)$

$dd'(c'_{✔}, c'_{✘}, n) =$

$$\begin{cases} (c'_{✔}, c'_{✘}) & \text{if } |\Delta| = 1 \\ dd'(c'_{✘} \setminus \Delta_i, c'_{✘}, 2) & \text{if } \exists i \in \{1..n\} \cdot test(c'_{✘} \setminus \Delta_i) = ✔ \\ dd'(c'_{✔}, c'_{✔} \cup \Delta_i, 2) & \text{if } \exists i \in \{1..n\} \cdot test(c'_{✔} \cup \Delta_i) = ✘ \\ dd'(c'_{✔} \cup \Delta_i, c'_{✘}, \max(n-1, 2)) & \text{else if } \exists i \in \{1..n\} \cdot test(c'_{✔} \cup \Delta_i) = ✔ \\ dd'(c'_{✔}, c'_{✘} \setminus \Delta_i, \max(n-1, 2)) & \text{else if } \exists i \in \{1..n\} \cdot test(c'_{✘} \setminus \Delta_i) = ✘ \\ dd'(c'_{✔}, c'_{✘}, \min(2n, |\Delta|)) & \text{else if } n < |\Delta| \text{ (“increase granularity”)} \\ (c'_{✔}, c'_{✘}) & \text{otherwise} \end{cases}$$

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```
def dd(c_pass, c_fail):
    n = 2
    while 1:
        delta = listminus(c_fail, c_pass)
        deltas = split(delta, n); offset = 0; j = 0
        while j < n:
            i = (j + offset) % n
            next_c_pass = listunion(c_pass, deltas[i])
            next_c_fail = listminus(c_fail, deltas[i])
            if test(next_c_fail) == FAIL and n == 2:
                c_fail = next_c_fail; n = 2; offset = 0; break
            elif test(next_c_fail) == PASS:
                c_pass = next_c_fail; n = 2; offset = 0; break
            elif test(next_c_pass) == FAIL:
                c_fail = next_c_pass; n = 2; offset = 0; break
            elif test(next_c_fail) == FAIL:
                c_fail = next_c_fail; n = max(n - 1, 2); offset = i; break
            elif test(next_c_pass) == PASS:
                c_pass = next_c_pass; n = max(n - 1, 2); offset = i; break
            else:
                j = j + 1
        if j >= n:
            if n >= len(delta):
                return (delta, c_pass, c_fail)
            else:
                n = min(len(delta), n * 2)
```

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Properties

number of tests t – worst case:

$$t = |\Delta|^2 + 7|\Delta| \quad \text{where} \quad \Delta = c_{✘} \setminus c_{✔}$$

number of tests t – best case
(no unresolved outcomes):

$$t \leq \log_2(\Delta)$$

size of difference – no unresolved outcomes

$$|c'_{✘} \setminus c'_{✔}| = 1$$

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Applications

Input	Code Changes	Schedules

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Applications

Input	Code Changes	Schedules

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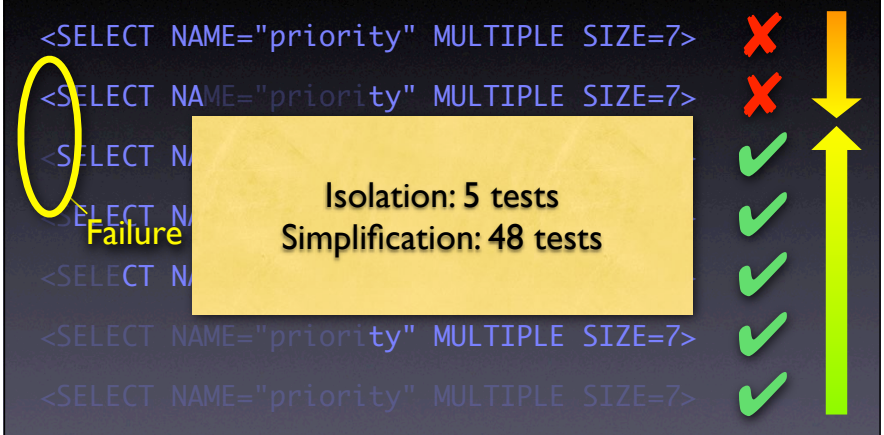
Isolating Input



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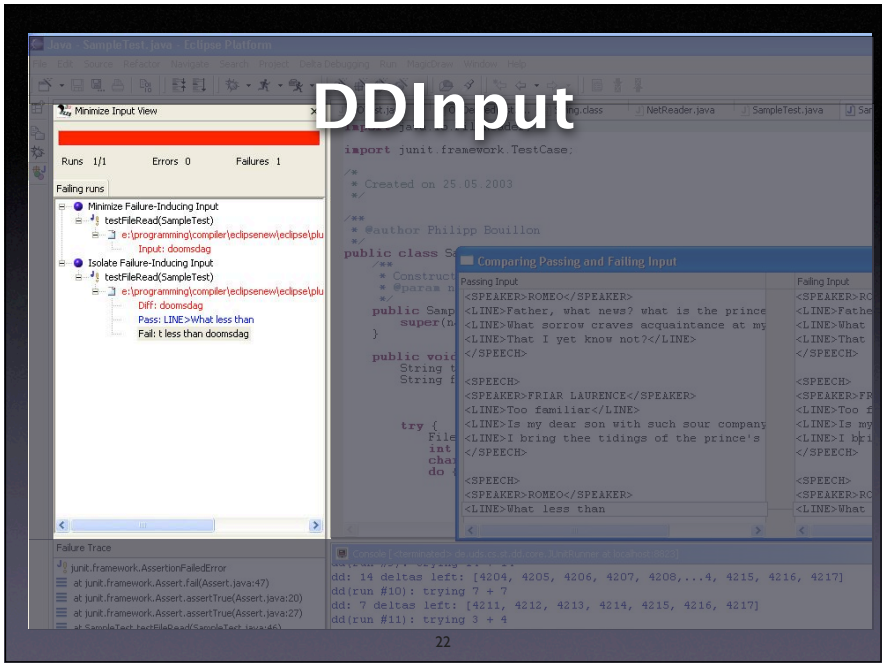

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Applications

Input	Code Changes	Schedules

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Applications

Input	Code Changes	Schedules

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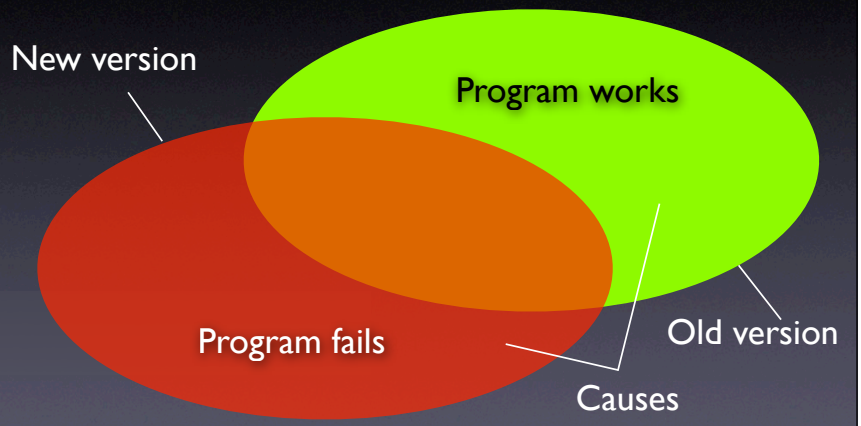
Code Changes

From: Brian Kahne <bkahne@ibmoto.com>
To: DDD Bug Report Address <bug-ddd@gnu.org>
Subject: Problem with DDD and GDB 4.17

When using DDD with GDB 4.16, the run command correctly uses any prior command-line arguments, or the value of "set args". However, when I switched to GDB 4.17, this no longer worked: If I entered a run command in the console window, the prior command-line options would be lost. [...]

Version Differences



What was Changed

```
$ diff -r gdb-4.16 gdb-4.17
diff -r gdb-4.16/COPYING gdb-4.17/COPYING
5c5
< 675 Mass Ave, Cambridge, MA 02139, USA
---
> 59 Temple Place, Suite 330, Boston, MA 02111-1307 USA
282c282
< Appendix: How to Apply These Terms to Your New Programs
---
> How to Apply These Terms to Your New Programs
```

...and so on for 178,200 lines (8,721 locations)

Challenges

- Granularity – within some large change, only a few lines may be relevant
- Interference – some (later) changes rely on other (earlier) changes
- Inconsistency – some changes may have to be combined to produce testable code

Delta debugging handles all this

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General Plan

- Decompose diff into changes per location (= 8,721 individual changes)
- Apply subset of changes, using PATCH
- Reconstruct GDB; build errors mean unresolved test outcome
- Test GDB and return outcome

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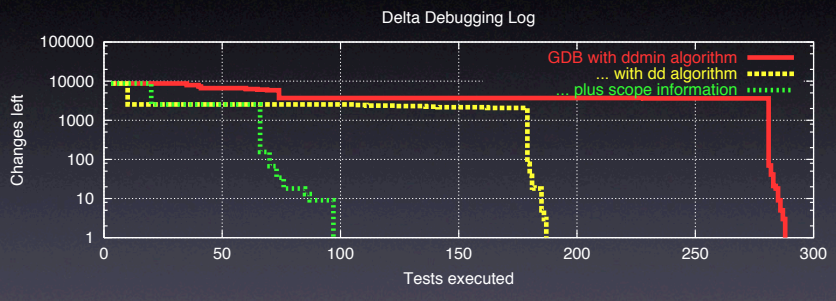
Isolating Changes



- Result after 98 tests (= 1 hour)

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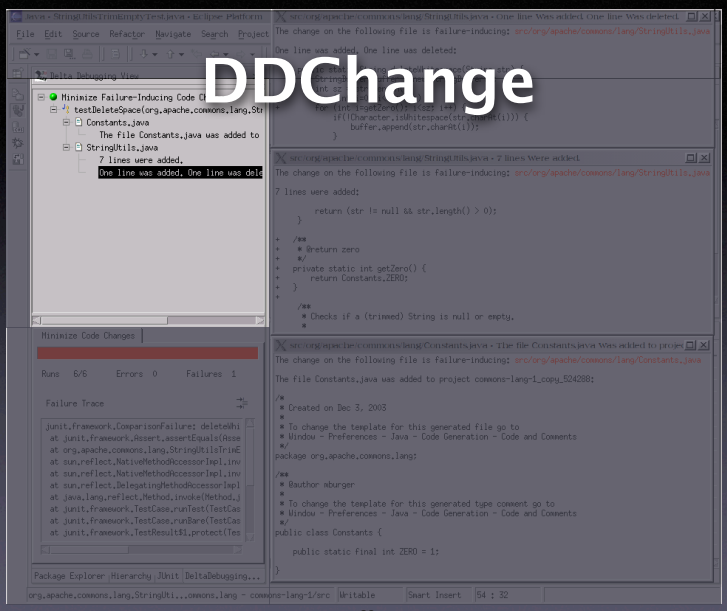
The Failure Cause

```
diff -r gdb-4.16/gdb/infcmd.c gdb-4.17/gdb/infcmd.c
1239c1278
< "Set arguments to give program being debugged when it is
started.\n
---
> "Set argument list to give program being debugged when
it is started.\n
```

- Documentation becomes GDB output
- DDD expects Arguments,
  but GDB outputs Argument list

DDChange



Optimizations

- History – group changes by creation time
- Reconstruction – cache several builds
- Grouping – according to scope
- Failure Resolution – scan error messages
  for possibly missing changes

Applications

Input	Code Changes	Schedules

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Applications

Input	Code Changes	Schedules

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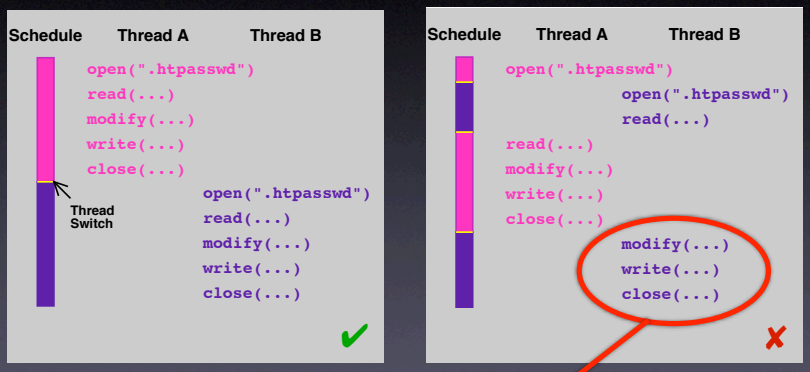
Thread Schedules



A's updates get lost!

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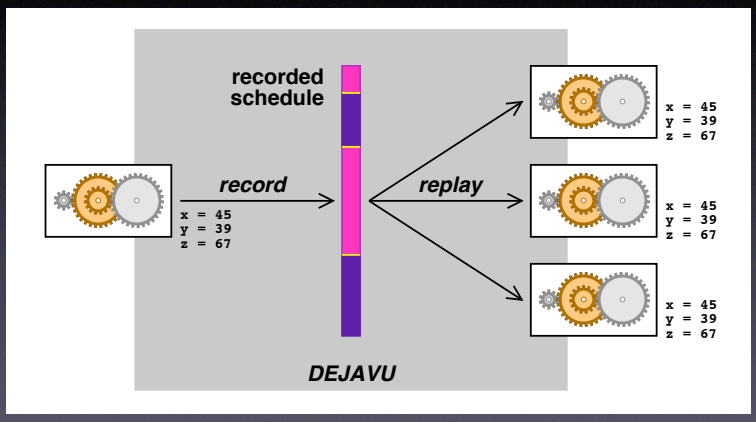
Record + Replay



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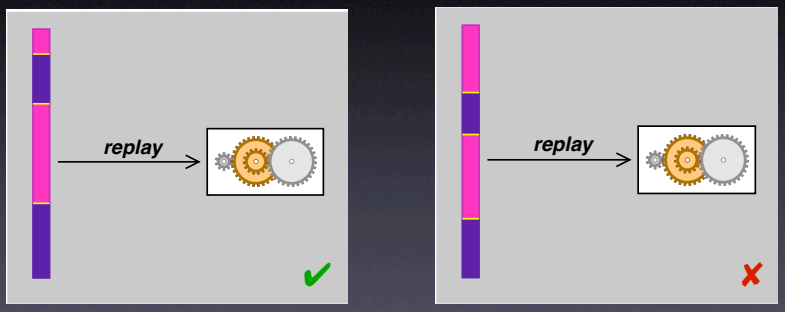
Schedules as Input



The schedule difference causes the failure!

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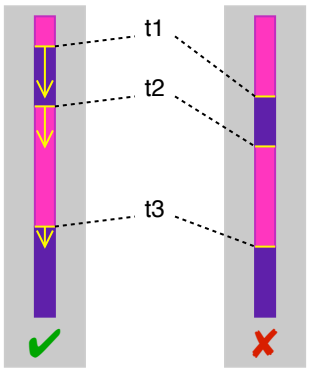
Finding Differences



- We start with runs ✔ and ✘
- We determine the differences Δ_i between thread switches t_i:
  - t_1 occurs in ✔ at "time" 254
  - t_1 occurs in ✘ at "time" 278
  - The difference $\Delta_1 = |278 - 254|$ induces a *statement interval:* the code executed between "time" 254 and 278
  - Same applies to t_2, t_3, etc.

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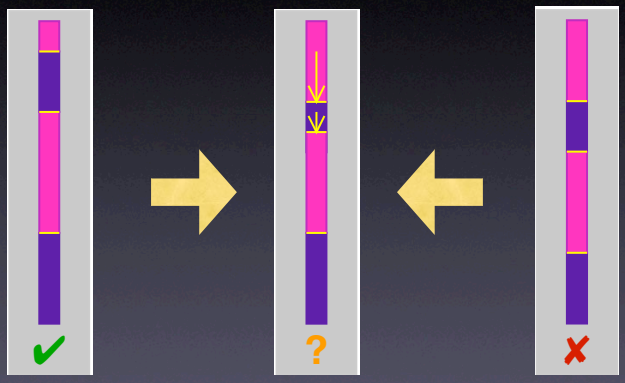
Isolating Differences



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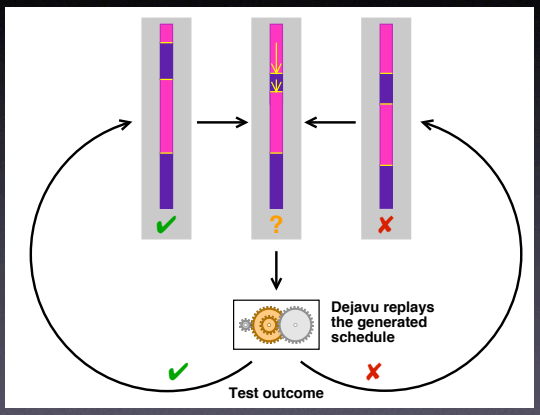
Isolating Differences



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Example: Raytracer

- Raytracer program from Spec JVM98 suite
- Injected a simple *race condition*
- Set up *automated test* + *random schedules*
- Obtained *passing* and *failing* schedule
- 3,842,577,240 differences, each moving a thread switch by ±1 *yield point* (time unit)

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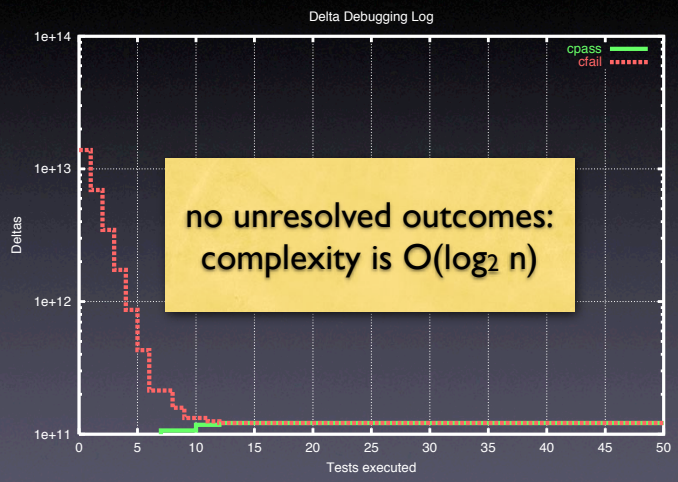
Isolating Schedules



no unresolved outcomes:
complexity is $O(\log_2 n)$

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The Failure Cause

```
25 public class Scene { …
44     private static int ScenesLoaded = 0;
45     (more methods…)
81     private
82     int LoadScene(String filename) {
84         int OldScenesLoaded = ScenesLoaded;
85         (more initializations…)
91         infile = new DataInputStream(…);
92         (more code…)
130        ScenesLoaded = OldScenesLoaded + 1;
131        System.out.println("" +
                 ScenesLoaded + " scenes loaded.");
132        …
134    }
135    …
733 }
```


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General Issues

- How do we choose the *alternate world*?
- How do we *decompose* the configuration?
- How do we know *a* failure is *the* failure?
- How do we disambiguate *multiple causes?*
- How do I get to the defect?

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Concepts

- ★ To isolate failure causes automatically, use
  - an *automated test case*
  - a means to *narrow down the difference*
  - a *strategy* for proceeding.
- ★ One possible strategy is Delta Debugging.

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Concepts (2)

- ★ Delta Debugging can isolate failure causes
  - in the (general) *input*
  - in the *version history*
  - in *thread schedules*
- ★ Every such cause implies a *fix* – but not necessarily a correction.

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