CEN 5016: Software Engineering

Fall 2025

University of Central Florida

Dr. Kevin Moran

Week 5 - Class 11: Static & Dynamic Analysis

Administrivia

- *Assignment 3*
  - Due Tuesday, Sept 23rd
- *SDE Project Part 1*
  - Due Tuesday, Sept 23rd
- Project Teams have been finalized in Webcourses

Software QA: Static & Dynamic Analysis

Learning Goals

- Gain an understanding of the relative strengths and weaknesses of static and dynamic analysis
- Examine several popular analysis tools and understand their use cases
- Understand how analysis tools are used in large open-source software

Activity: Analyze the Python Program Statically

```python
def n2s(n: int, b: int) -> str:
    if n <= 0:
        return '0'
    r = ''
    while n > 0:
        u = n % b
        if u >= 10:
            u = chr(ord('A') + u - 10)
        n = n // b
        r = str(u) + r
    return r
```

1. What are the set of data types taken by variable `u` at any point in the program?
2. Can the variable `u` be a negative number?
3. Will this function always return a value?
4. Can there ever be a division by zero?
5. Will the returned value ever contain a minus sign '-'?

Answer: Yes, No, Maybe

What Static Analysis Can & Cannot Do

- Type-checking is well established
  - Set of data types taken by variables at any point
  - Can be used to prevent type errors (e.g. Java) or warn about potential type errors (e.g. Python)
- Checking for problematic patterns in syntax is easy and fast
  - Is there a comparison of two Java strings using `==`?
  - Is there an array access `a[i]` without an enclosing bounds check for `i`?
- Reasoning about termination is impossible in general
  - Halting problem
- Reasoning about exact values is hard, but conservative analysis via abstraction is possible
  - Is the bounds check before `a[i]` guaranteeing that `I` is within bounds?
  - Can the divisor ever take on a zero value?
  - Could the result of a function call be `42`?
  - Will this multi-threaded program give me a deterministic result?
  - Be prepared for “MAYBE”
- Verifying some advanced properties is possible but expensive
  - CI-based static analysis usually over-approximates conservatively

Bad News: Rice's Theorem

- Every static analysis is necessarily incomplete, unsound, undecidable, or a combination thereof
- *"Any nontrivial property about the language recognized by a Turing machine is undecidable."*
- Henry Gordon Rice, 1953

Static Analysis is Well-Suited to Detecting Certain Defects

- **Security:** Buffer overruns, improperly validated input…
- **Memory safety:** Null dereference, uninitialized data…
- **Resource leaks:** Memory, OS resources…
- **API Protocols:** Device drivers; real time libraries; GUI frameworks
- **Exceptions:** Arithmetic/library/user-defined
- **Encapsulation:**
  - Accessing internal data, calling private functions…
- **Data races:**
  - Two threads access the same data without synchronization

Static Analysis Tools: Broad Classification

- Linters
  - Shallow syntax analysis for enforcing code styles and formatting
- Pattern-based bug detectors
  - Simple syntax or API-based rules for identifying common programming mistakes
- Type-annotation validators
  - Check conformance to user-defined types
  - Types can be complex (e.g., “Nullable”)
- Data-flow analysis / Abstract interpretation)
  - Deep program analysis to find complex error conditions (e.g., ” can array index be out of bounds?”)

Static Analysis Tools: Applications

- Find bugs
- Refactor code
- Keep your code stylish!
- Identify code smells
- Measure quality
- Find usability and accessibility issues
- Identify bottlenecks and improve performance

Activity: Analyze the Python Program Dynamically

```
def n2s(n: int, b: int) -> str:
    if n <= 0:
        return '0'
    r = ''
    while n > 0:
        u = n % b
        if u >= 10:
            u = chr(ord('A') + u - 10)
        n = n // b
        r = str(u) + r
    return r
print n2s(12, 10))
```

Answer: Yes, No, Maybe

1. What are the set of data types taken by variable `u` at any point in the program?
2. Did the variable `u` ever contain a negative number?
3. For how many loop executions did the while loop execute?
4. Was there a division by zero?
5. Did the returned value ever contain a minus sign '-'?

Dynamic Analysis Reasons about Program Executions

- Tells you properties of the program that were definitely observed
  - Code coverage
  - Performance profiling
  - Type profiling
  - Testing
- In practice, implemented by program instrumentation
  - Think "Automated logging"
  - Slows down execution speed by a small amount

Static Analysis vs. Dynamic Analysis

- Requires only source code
- Conservatively reasons about all possible
- Reported warnings may contain false positives
- Can report all warnings of a particular class of problems
- Advanced techniques like verification can prove certain complex properties, but rarely run in CI due to cost

- Requires successful build + test inputs
- Observes individual executions
- Reported problems are real, as observed by a witness input
- Can only report problems that are seen. Highly dependent on test inputs. Subject to false negatives
- Advanced techniques like symbolic execution can prove certain complex properties, but rarely run in CI due to cost

Static Analysis

Tools for Static Analysis

CSI

UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND 1856

FindBugs™
because it's easy

: my[py]

snyk

sonarqube

coverity®
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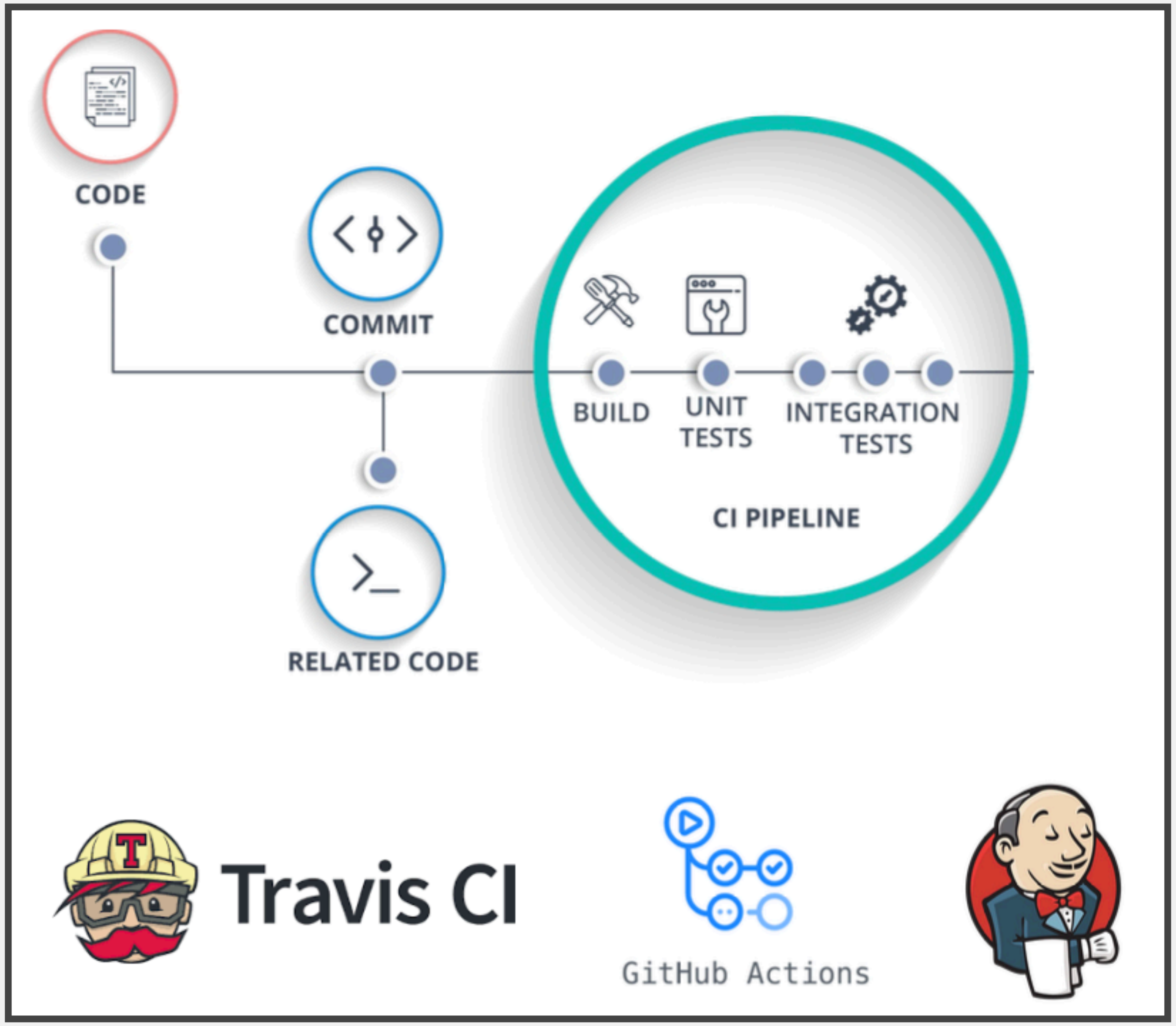
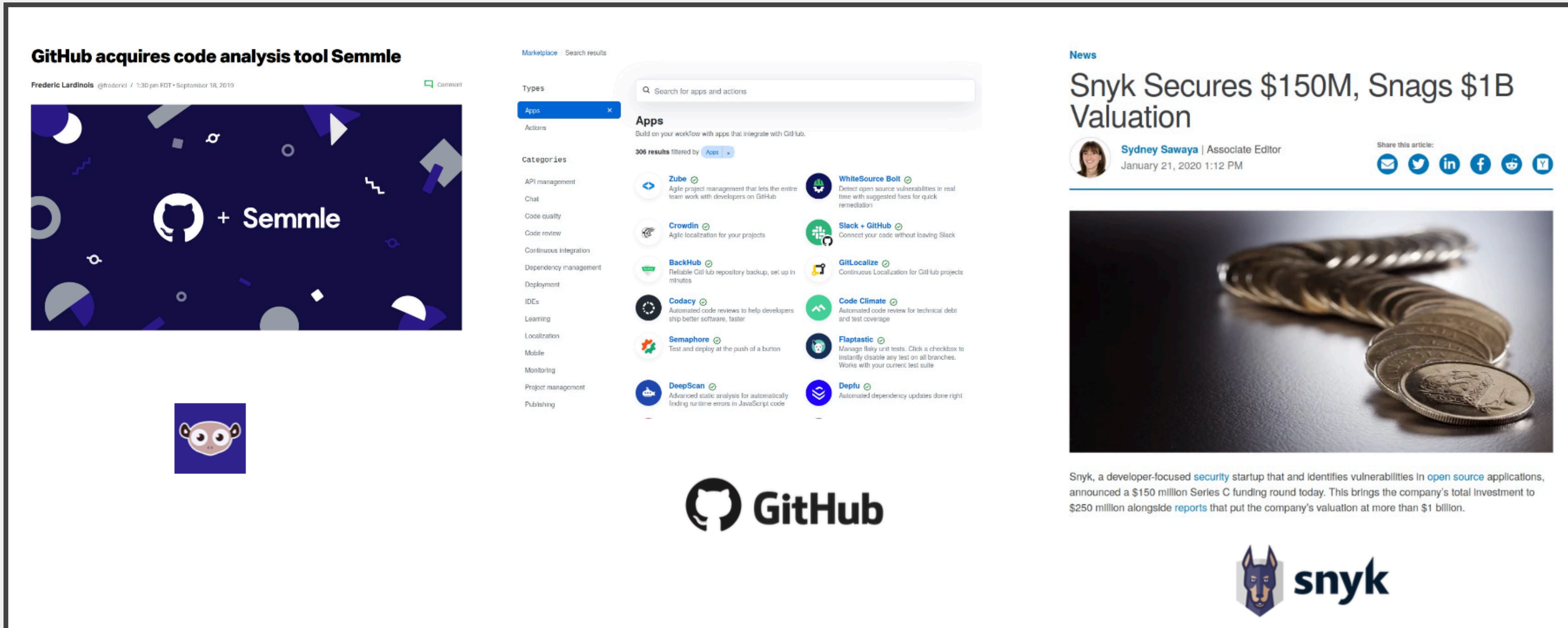
squale

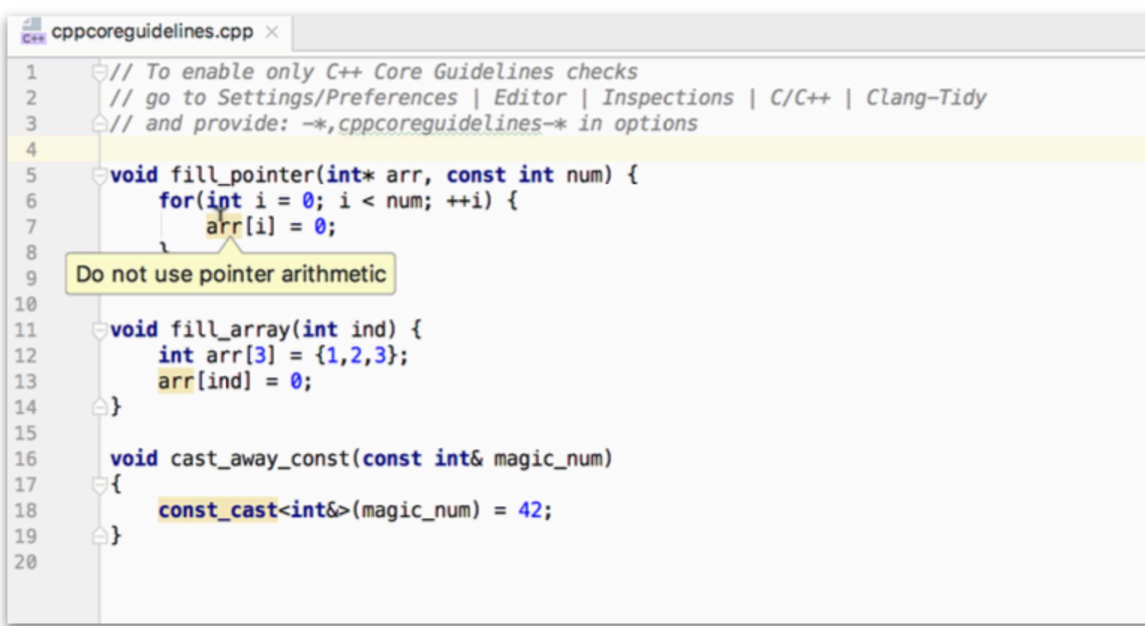
Static Analysis is a Key Part of CI

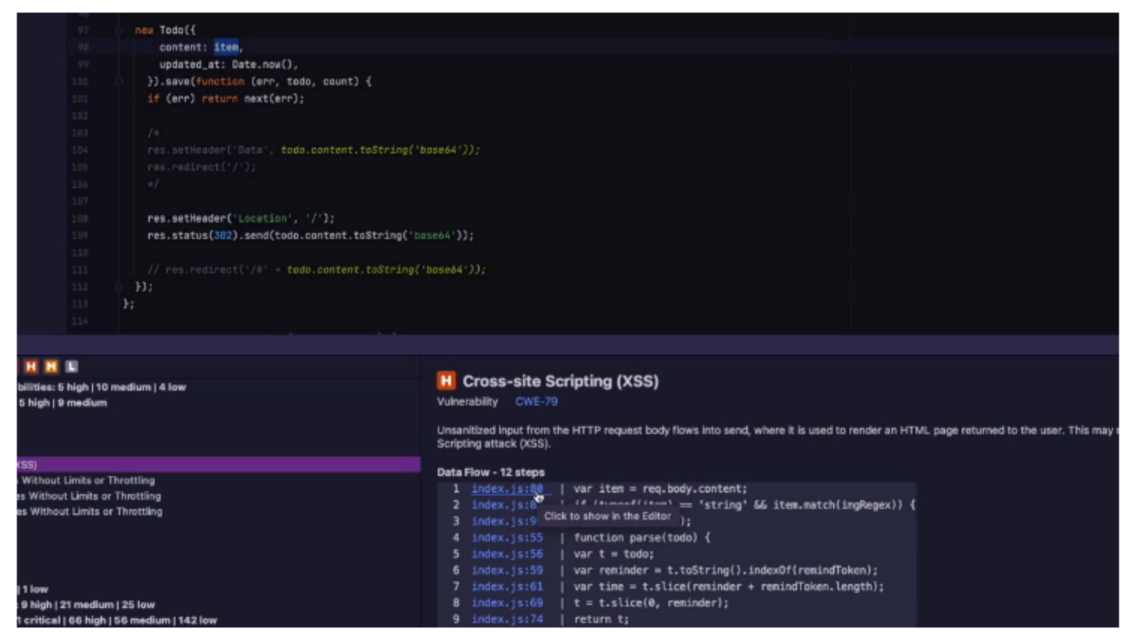


Static Analysis used to be Purely Academic…



Static Analysis is Also Integrated into IDEs





What Makes a Good Static Analysis Tool?

- Static analysis should be fast
  - Don't hold up development velocity
  - This becomes more important as code scales
- Static analysis should report few false positives
  - Otherwise developers will start to ignore warnings and alerts, and quality will decline
- Static analysis should be continuous
  - Should be part of your continuous integration pipeline
  - Diff-based analysis is even better -- don't analyse the entire codebase; just the changes
- Static analysis should be informative
  - Messages that help the developer to quickly locate and address the issue
  - Ideally, it should suggest or automatically apply fixes

(1) Linters

- Cheap, fast, and lightweight static source analysis

Use Linters to Enforce Style Guidelines

- Don’t rely on manual inspection during code review!

Don’t rely on manual inspection during code review!

CSI

Java

RuboCop

Black

python

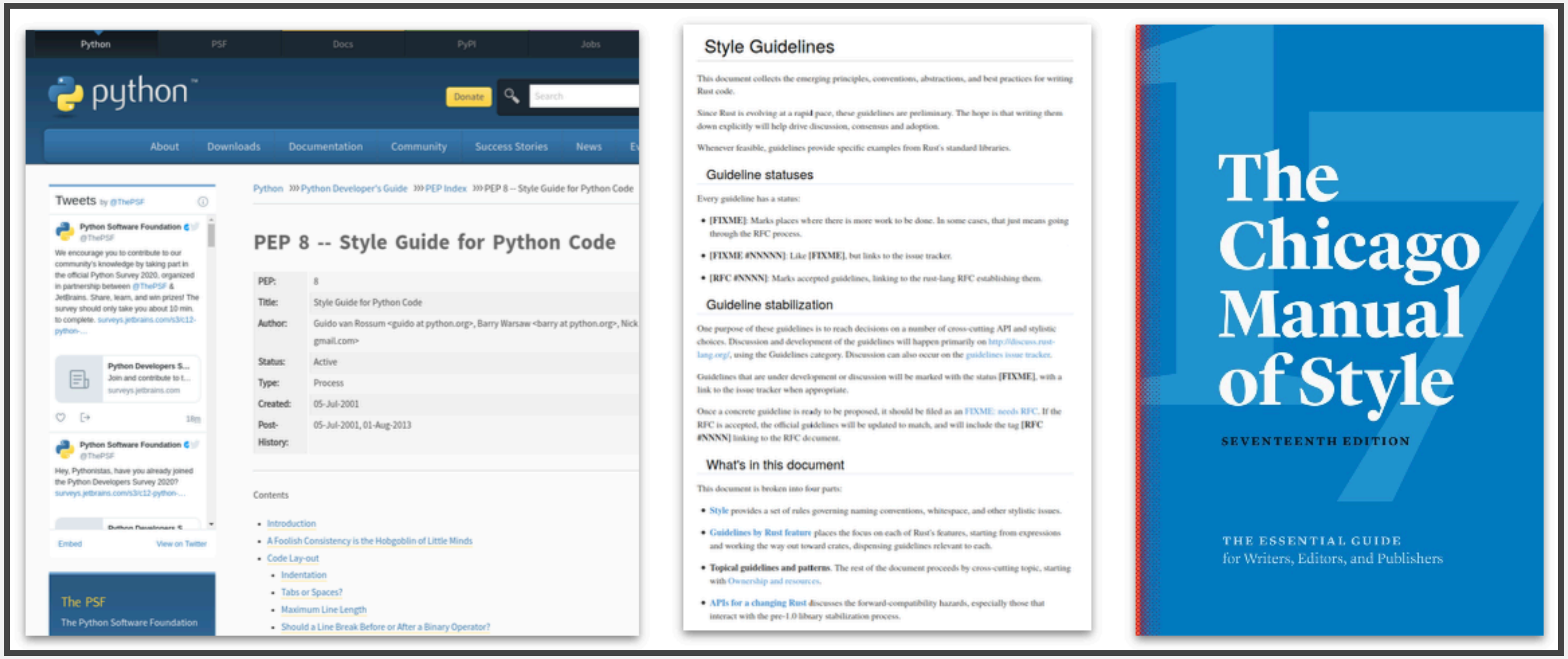
Linters Use Very "Shallow" Static Analysis

- Ensure proper indentation
- Naming convention
- Line sizes
- Class nesting
- Documenting public functions
- Parenthesis around expressions
- What else?

Use Linters to Improve Maintainability

- Why? We spend more time reading code than writing it.
  - Various estimates of the exact %, some as high as 80%
- Code is ownership is usually shared
- The original owner of some code may move on
- Code conventions make it easier for other developers to quickly understand your code

UseStyle Guidelines to Facilitate Communication



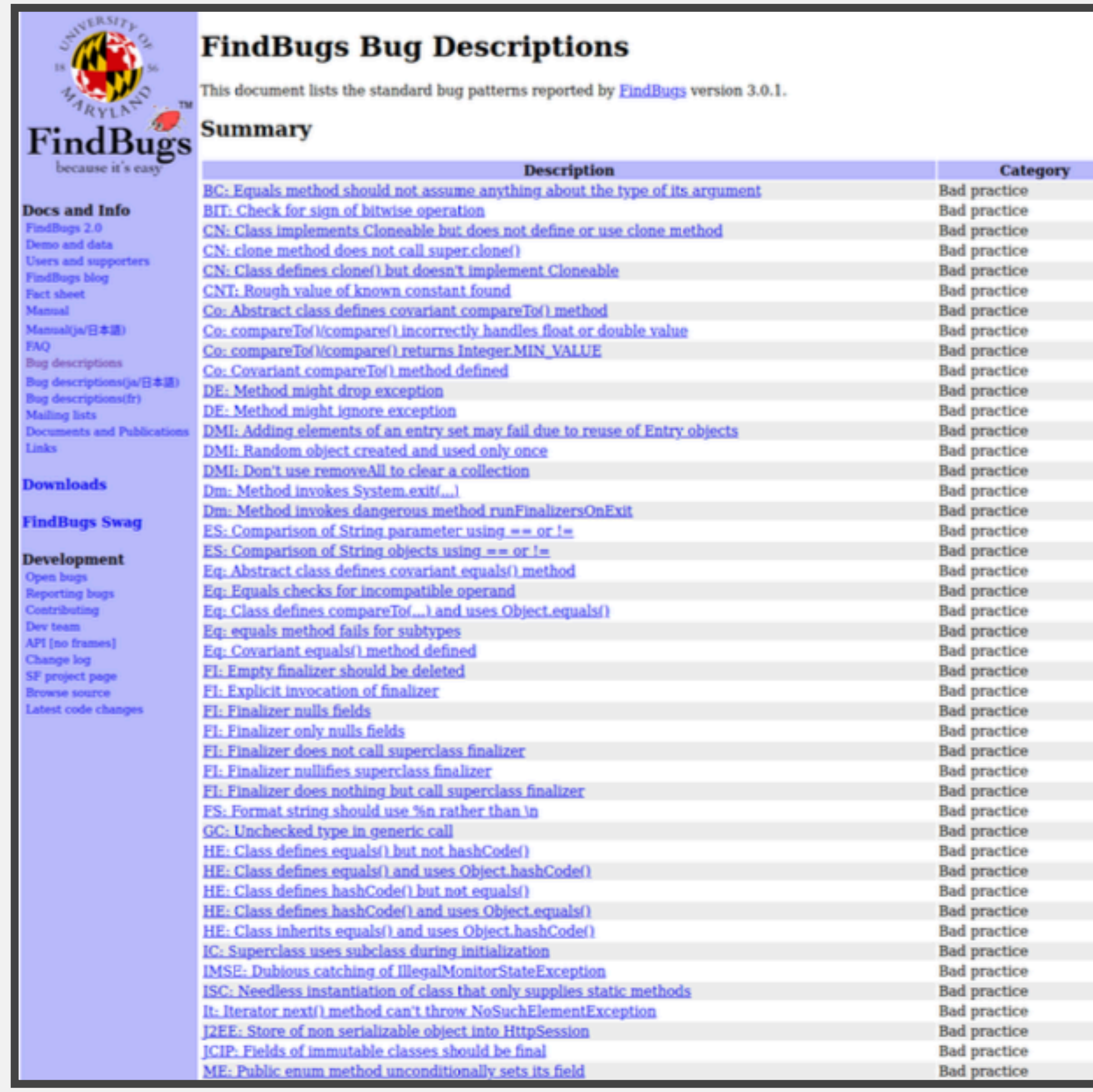
- Guidelines are inherently opinionated, but consistency is the important point. Agree to a set of conventions and stick to them.

Take Home Message: Style is an Easy Way to Improve Readability!

- Everyone has their own opinion (e.g., tabs vs. spaces)
- Agree to a convention and stick to it
  - Use continuous integration to enforce it
- Use automated tools to fix issues in existing code

(2) - Pattern-based Static Analysis Tools

- Bad Practice
- Correctness
- Performance
- Internationalization
- Malicious Code
- Multithreaded Correctness
- Security
- Dodgy Code



FindBugs
because it's easy

Docs and Info
FindBugs 2.0
Demo and data
Users and supporters
FindBugs blog
Fact sheet
Manual
Manual(ja/日本語)
FAQ
Bug descriptions
Bug descriptions(ja/日本語)
Bug descriptions(fr)
Mailing lists
Documents and Publications
Links

Downloads

FindBugs Swag

Development
Open bugs
Reporting bugs
Contributing
Dev team
API [no frames]
Change log
SF project page
Browse source
Latest code changes

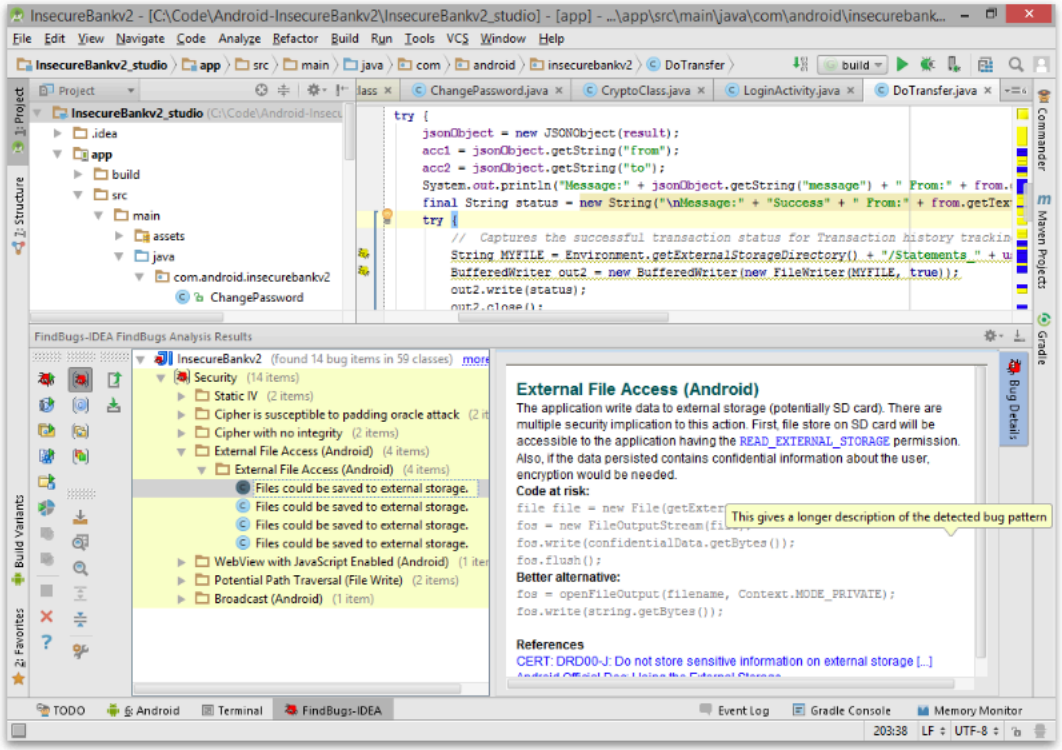
FindBugs Bug Descriptions

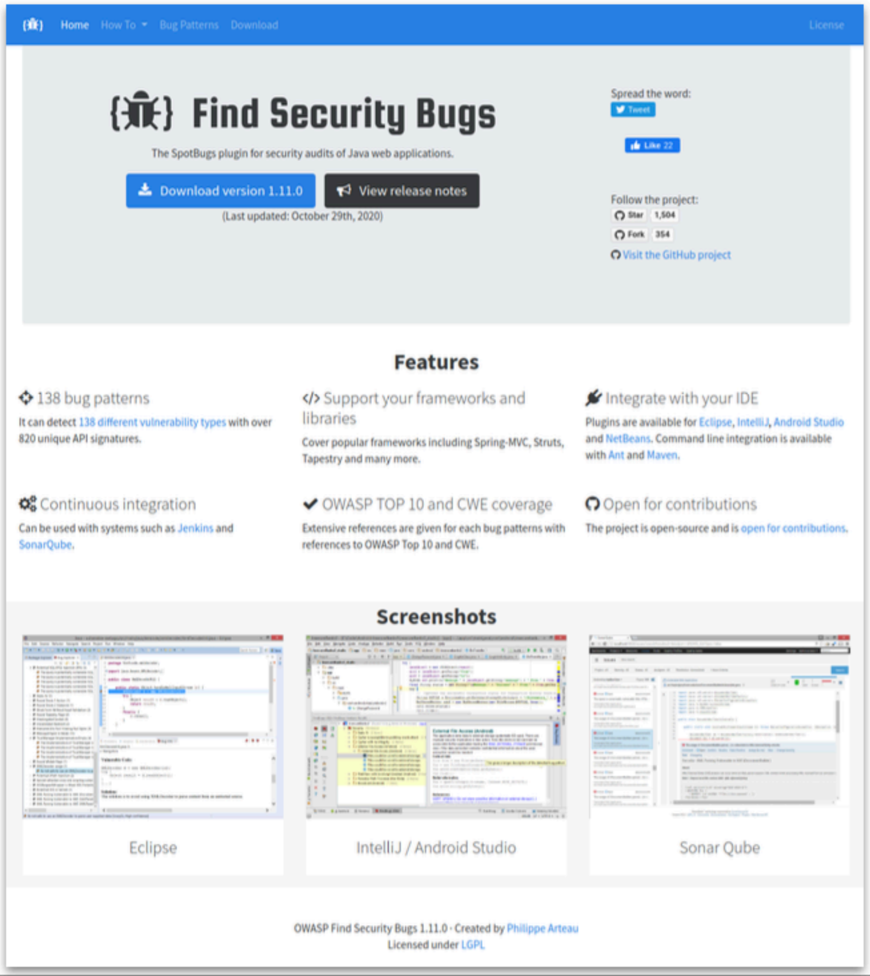
This document lists the standard bug patterns reported by FindBugs version 3.0.1.

Summary

Description	Category
BC: Equals method should not assume anything about the type of its argument	Bad practice
BIT: Check for sign of bitwise operation	Bad practice
CN: Class implements Cloneable but does not define or use clone method	Bad practice
CN: clone method does not call super.clone()	Bad practice
CN: Class defines clone() but doesn't implement Cloneable	Bad practice
CNT: Rough value of known constant found	Bad practice
Co: Abstract class defines covariant compareTo() method	Bad practice
Co: compareTo()/compare() incorrectly handles float or double value	Bad practice
Co: compareTo()/compare() returns Integer.MIN_VALUE	Bad practice
Co: Covariant compareTo() method defined	Bad practice
DE: Method might drop exception	Bad practice
DE: Method might ignore exception	Bad practice
DMI: Adding elements of an entry set may fail due to reuse of Entry objects	Bad practice
DMI: Random object created and used only once	Bad practice
DMI: Don't use removeAll to clear a collection	Bad practice
Dm: Method invokes System.exit(...)	Bad practice
Dm: Method invokes dangerous method runFinalizersOnExit	Bad practice
ES: Comparison of String parameter using == or !=	Bad practice
ES: Comparison of String objects using == or !=	Bad practice
Eq: Abstract class defines covariant equals() method	Bad practice
Eq: Equals checks for incompatible operand	Bad practice
Eq: Class defines compareTo(...) and uses Object.equals()	Bad practice
Eq: equals method fails for subtypes	Bad practice
Eq: Covariant equals() method defined	Bad practice
FI: Empty finalizer should be deleted	Bad practice
FI: Explicit invocation of finalizer	Bad practice
FI: Finalizer nulls fields	Bad practice
FI: Finalizer only nulls fields	Bad practice
FI: Finalizer does not call superclass finalizer	Bad practice
FI: Finalizer nullifies superclass finalizer	Bad practice
FI: Finalizer does nothing but call superclass finalizer	Bad practice
FS: Format string should use %n rather than \n	Bad practice
GC: Unchecked type in generic call	Bad practice
HE: Class defines equals() but not hashCode()	Bad practice
HE: Class defines equals() and uses Object.hashCode()	Bad practice
HE: Class defines hashCode() but not equals()	Bad practice
HE: Class defines hashCode() and uses Object.equals()	Bad practice
HE: Class inherits equals() and uses Object.hashCode()	Bad practice
IC: Superclass uses subclass during initialization	Bad practice
IMSE: Dubious catching of IllegalMonitorStateException	Bad practice
ISC: Needless instantiation of class that only supplies static methods	Bad practice
It: Iterator next() method can't throw NoSuchElementException	Bad practice
J2EE: Store of non serializable object into HttpSession	Bad practice
JCIP: Fields of immutable classes should be final	Bad practice
ME: Public enum method unconditionally sets its field	Bad practice

SpotBugs can be Extended with Plugins





Challenges

- **The analysis must produce zero false positives**
  - Otherwise developers won't be able to build the code!
- **The analysis needs to be really fast**
  - Ideally < 100 ms
  - If it takes longer, developers will become irritated and lose productivity
- **You can't just "turn on" a particular check**
  - Every instance where that check fails will prevent existing code from
  - There could be thousands of violations for a single check across large codebases

(3) -Use Type Annotations to Detect Common Errors

- Uses a conservative analysis to prove the absence of certain defects
  - Null pointer errors, uninitialized fields, certain liveness issues, information leaks, SQL injections, bad regular expressions, incorrect physical units, bad format strings, ...
  - C.f. SpotBugs which makes no safety guarantees
  - Assuming that code is annotated and those annotations are correct
- Uses annotations to enhance type system
- Example: Java Checker Framework or MyPy

CHECKER framework

(3) -Use Type Annotations to Detect Common Errors

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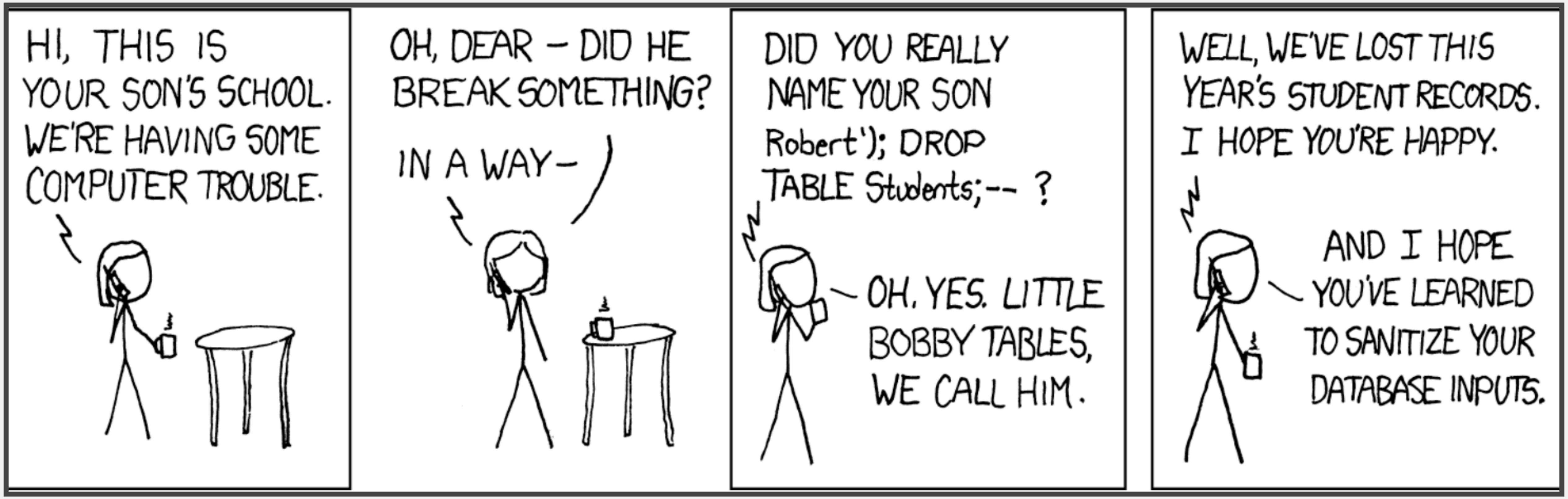
Taint Analysis

- Tracks flow of sensitive information through the program
- Tainted inputs come from arbitrary, possibly malicious sources
  - User inputs, unvalidated data
- Using tainted inputs may have dangerous consequences
  - Program crash, data corruption, leak private data, etc.
- We need to check that inputs are sanitized before reaching sensitive locations

Classic Example: SQL Injection



Classic Example: SQL Injection

```
void processRequest() {
String input = getUserInput();
String query = "SELECT ... " + input;
executeQuery(query);
}
```

Classic Example: SQL Injection

```
void processRequest() {
String input = getUserInput();
String query = "SELECT ... " + input;
executeQuery(query);
}
```

Tainted input arrives from untrusted source

Tainted output flows to a sensitive sink

Classic Example: SQL Injection

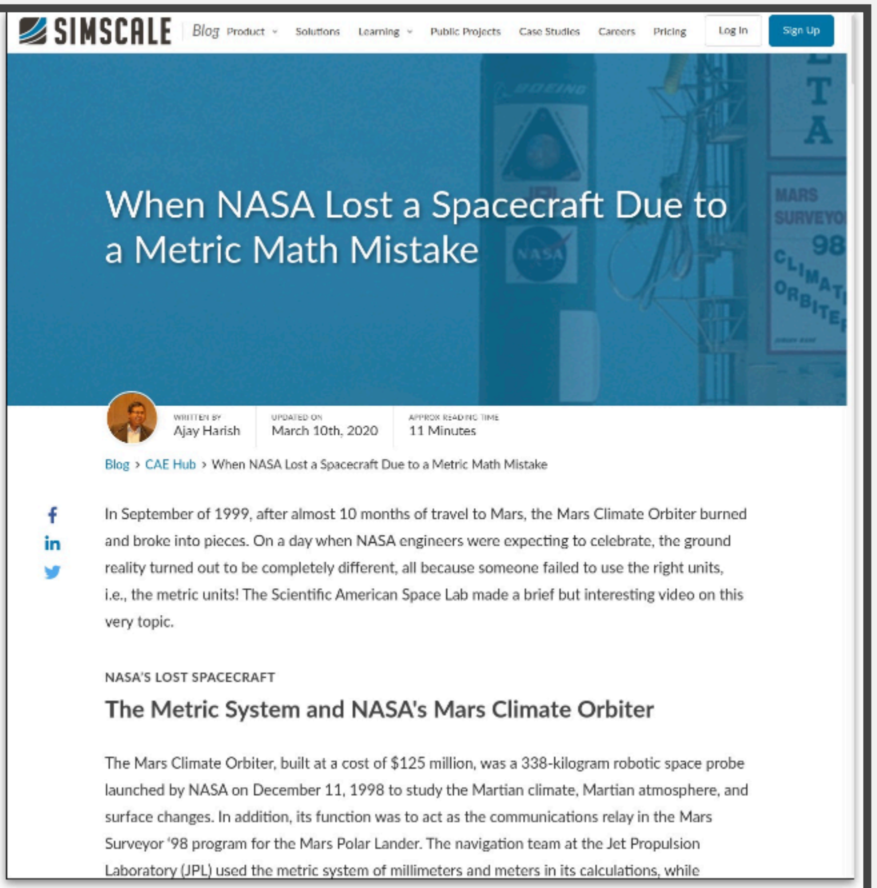
```
void processRequest() {
String input = getUserInput();

input = sanitizeInput(input);

String query = "SELECT ... " + input;
executeQuery(query);

}
```

Taint is removed by sanitizing data

We can now safely execute query on untainted data

Unit Catastrophe

Remember the Mars Climate Orbiter incident from 1999?



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When NASA Lost a Spacecraft Due to a Metric Math Mistake

WRITTEN BY Ajay Harish | UPDATED ON March 10th, 2020 | APPROX READING TIME 11 Minutes

Blog > CAE Hub > When NASA Lost a Spacecraft Due to a Metric Math Mistake

In September of 1999, after almost 10 months of travel to Mars, the Mars Climate Orbiter burned and broke into pieces. On a day when NASA engineers were expecting to celebrate, the ground reality turned out to be completely different, all because someone failed to use the right units, i.e., the metric units! The Scientific American Space Lab made a brief but interesting video on this very topic.

NASA'S LOST SPACECRAFT

The Metric System and NASA's Mars Climate Orbiter

The Mars Climate Orbiter, built at a cost of $125 million, was a 338-kilogram robotic space probe launched by NASA on December 11, 1998 to study the Martian climate, Martian atmosphere, and surface changes. In addition, its function was to act as the communications relay in the Mars Surveyor '98 program for the Mars Polar Lander. The navigation team at the Jet Propulsion Laboratory (JPL) used the metric system of millimeters and meters in its calculations, while

NASA's Mars Climate Orbiter (cost of $327 million) was lost because of a discrepancy between use of metric unit Newtons and imperial measure Pound-force.

Units Checker Identifies Physical Unit Inconsistencies

- Guarantees that operations are performed on the same kinds and units
- Kinds of annotations
  - @Acceleration, @Angle, @Area, @Current, @Length, @Luminance, @Mass, @Speed, @Substance, @Temperature, @Time
- SI unit annotation
  - @m, @km, @mm, @kg, @mPERs, @mPERs2, @radians, @degrees, @A, ...

Checker Frameworks: Limitations

- Can only analyze code that is annotated
  - Requires that dependent libraries are also annotated
  - Can be tricky, but not impossible, to retrofit annotations into existing codebases

- Only considers the signature and annotations of methods
  - Doesn't look at the implementation of methods that are being called

- Dynamically generated code
  - Spring Framework

- • Can produce false positives!
  - Byproduct of necessary approximations

Infer: What if we didn’t want Annotations

- Focused on memory safety bugs
  - Null pointer dereferences, memory leaks, resource leaks, ...
- Compositional interprocedural reasoning
  - Based on separation logic and bi-abduction
- Scalable and fast
  - Can run incremental analysis on changed code
- Does not require annotations
- Supports multiple languages
  - Java, C, C++, Objective-C
  - Programs are compiled to an intermediate representation

Infer: What if we didn't want Annotations

NULLPTR_DEREFERENCE

Reported as "Nullptr Dereference" by pulse.

Infer reports null dereference bugs in Java, C, C++, and Objective-C when it is possible that the null pointer is dereferenced, leading to a crash.

Null dereference in Java

Many of Infer's reports of potential Null Pointer Exceptions (NPE) come from code of the form

```
p = foo(); // foo() might return null
stuff();
p.goo();   // dereferencing p, potential NPE
```

Infer: What if we didn't want Annotations

Examples

Infer's cost analysis statically estimates the execution cost of a program without running the code. For instance, assume that we had the following program:

```
void loop(ArrayList<Integer> list){
  for (int i = 0; i <= list.size(); i++){
  }
}
```

For this program, Infer statically infers a polynomial (e.g. `8|list|+16`) for the execution cost of this program by giving each instruction in Infer's intermediate language a symbolic cost (where `|.|` refers to the length of a list). Here---overlooking the actual constants---the analysis infers that this program's asymptotic complexity is `O(|list|)`, that is loop is linear in the size of its input list. Then, at diff time, if a developer modifies this code to,

Beware of Inevitable False Positives

openssl / openssl

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Consider using Facebook's "infer" static analysis tool #6968 New issue

Open richsalz opened this issue on Au

dot-asm commented on Sep 2, 2018 Contributor

I'm not impressed. Majority, >2/3 of reports are DEAD_STORE and most common reason is last `*ptr++`. More specifically `++` is viewed problematic because *pointer* is not used anymore. The post-increment is also customarily part of macro, so that in order to address this, one would have to have two macros, one that leaves pointer post-incremented and one that doesn't. It would be excessive and doesn't help readability.

Majority of MEMORY_LEAK reports is because it fails to recognize for example EVP_MD_CTX_free as resource freeing. This is counter-productive, one has to work too hard look for real ones. There seem to be couple in test/*... Then there is some hairy stuff in o_names.c:236, maybe false positive... Oh! There seem to be real leak in ssl3_final_finish_mac(), multiple logical errors...

The Best QA Strategies use Multiple Tools

How Many of All Bugs Do We Find? A Study of Static Bug Detectors

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ABSTRACT

Static bug detectors are becoming increasingly popular and are widely used by professional software developers. While most work on bug detectors focuses on whether they find bugs at all, and on how many false positives they report in addition to legitimate warnings, the inverse question is often neglected: How many of all real-world bugs do static bug detectors find? This paper addresses this question by studying the results of applying three widely used static bug detectors to an extended version of the Defects4J dataset that consists of 15 Java projects with 594 known bugs. To decide which of these bugs the tools detect, we use a novel methodology that combines an automatic analysis of warnings and bugs with a manual validation of each candidate of a detected bug. The results of the study show that: (i) static bug detectors find a non-negligible amount of all bugs, (ii) different tools are mostly complementary to each other, and (iii) current bug detectors miss the large majority of the studied bugs. A detailed analysis of bugs missed by the static detectors shows that some bugs could have been found by variants of the existing detectors, while others are domain-specific problems that do not match any existing bug pattern. These findings help potential users of such tools to assess their utility, motivate and outline directions for future work on static bug detection, and provide a basis for future comparisons of static bug detection with other bug finding techniques, such as manual and automated testing.

International Conference on Automated Software Engineering (ASE '18), September 3–7, 2018, Montpellier, France. ACM, New York, NY, USA, 12 pages.
https://doi.org/10.1145/3238147.3238213

1 INTRODUCTION

Finding software bugs is an important but difficult task. For average industry code, the number of bugs per 1,000 lines of code has been estimated to range between 0.5 and 25 [21]. Even after years of deployment, software still contains unnoticed bugs. For example, studies of the Linux kernel show that the average bug remains in the kernel for a surprisingly long period of 1.5 to 1.8 years [8, 24]. Unfortunately, a single bug can cause serious harm, even if it has been subsisting for a long time without doing so, as evidenced by examples of software bugs that have caused huge economic loses and even killed people [17, 28, 46].

Given the importance of finding software bugs, developers rely on several approaches to reveal programming mistakes. One approach is to identify bugs during the development process, e.g., through pair programming or code review. Another direction is testing, ranging from purely manual testing over semi-automated testing, e.g., via manually written but automatically executed unit tests, to fully automated testing, e.g., with UI-level testing tools. Once the software is deployed, runtime monitoring can reveal so far missed bugs, e.g., collect information about abnormal runtime

Tool	Bugs
Error Prone	8
Infer	5
SpotBugs	18
Total:	**31**
Total of 27 unique bugs	

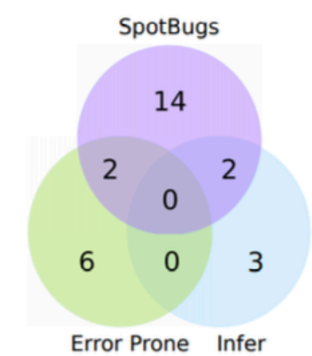
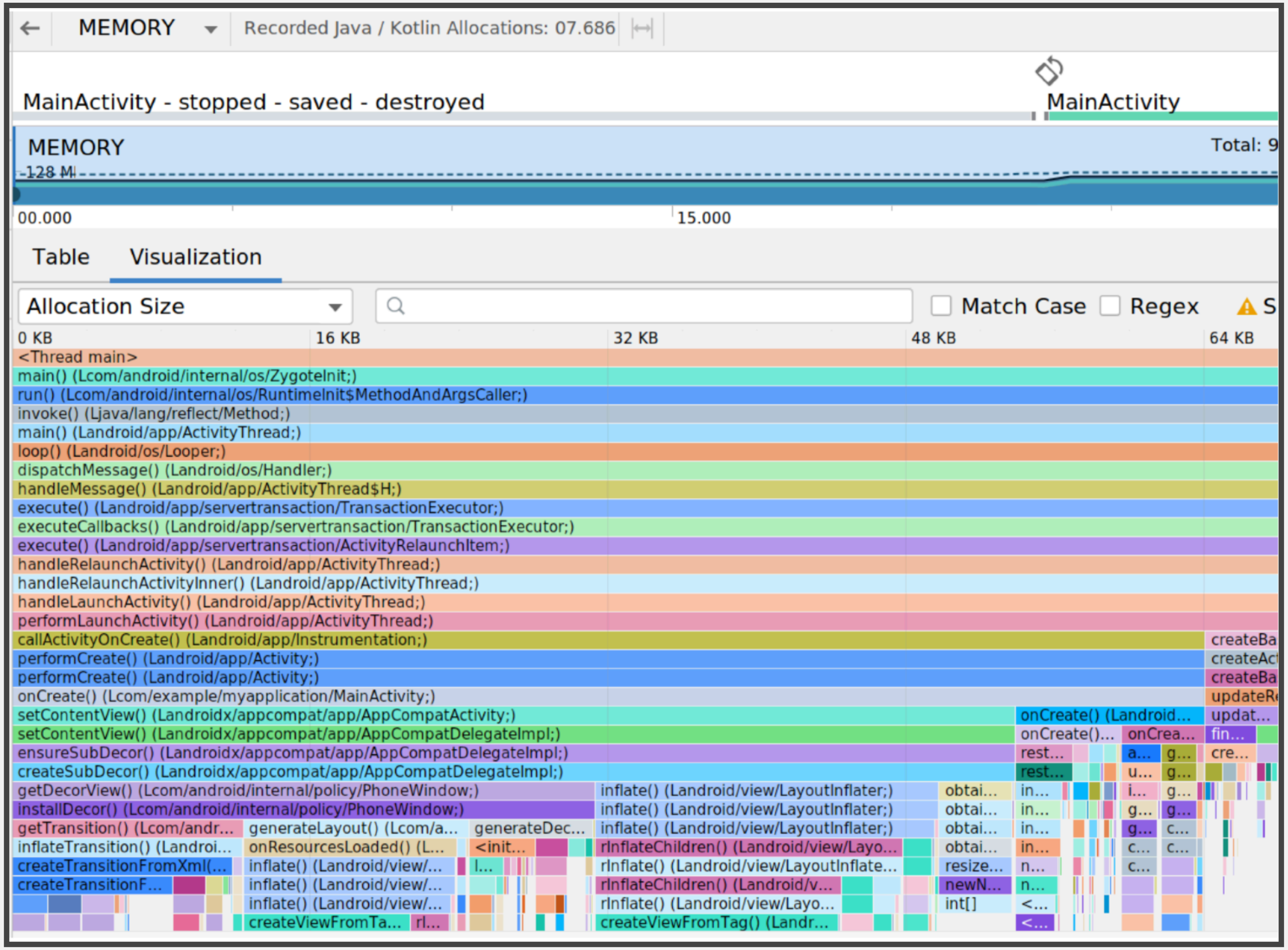


Figure 4: Total number of bugs found by all three static checkers and their overlap.

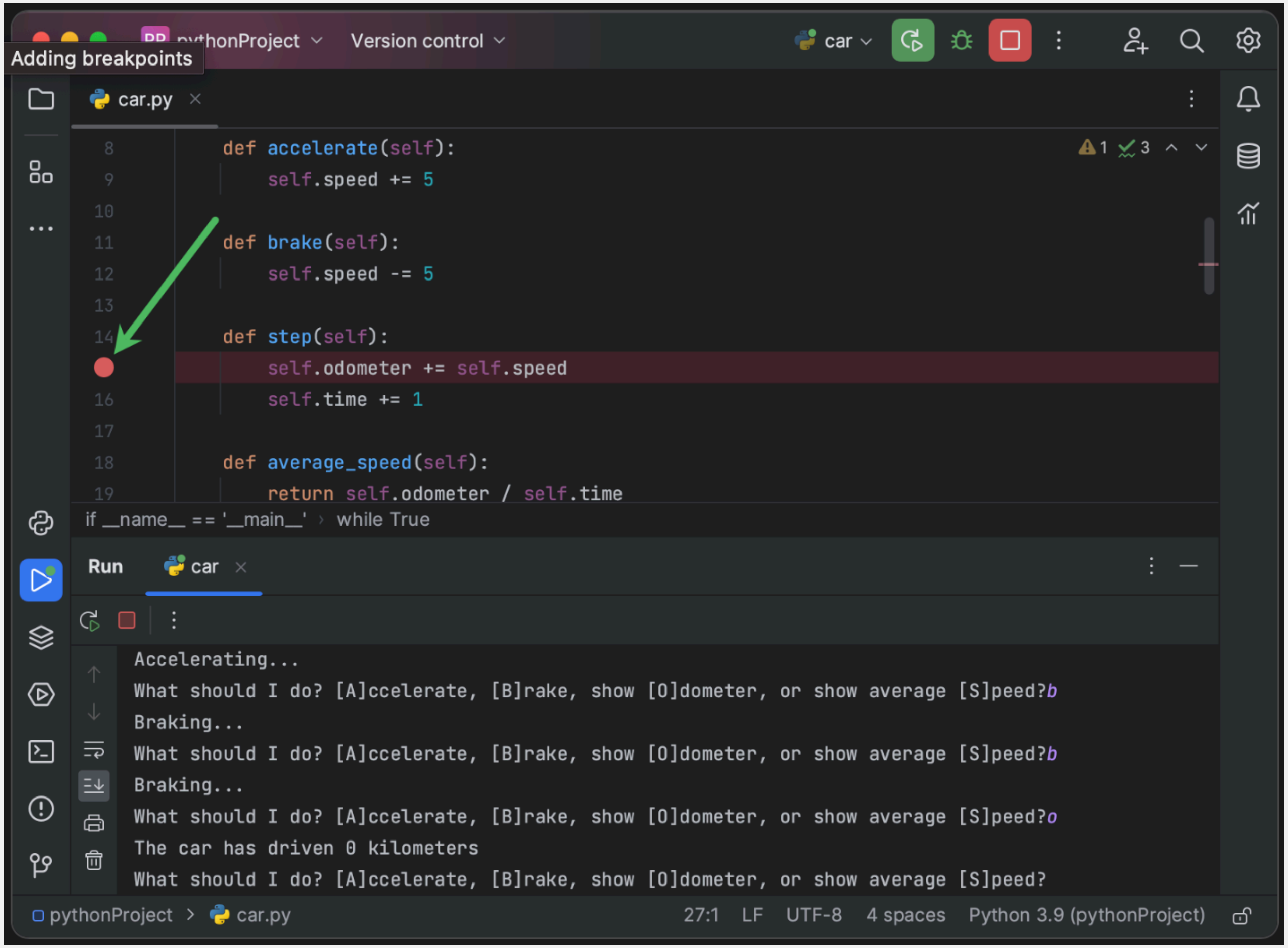
Dynamic Analysis

Android Memory Profiler



https://developer.android.com/studio/profile/memory-profiler

Pycharm Debugger



https://www.jetbrains.com/help/pycharm/debugging-your-first-python-application.html#where-is-the-problem

Valgrind Dynamic Analysis Library

Valgrind is an instrumentation framework for building dynamic analysis tools. There are Valgrind tools that can automatically detect many memory management and threading bugs, and profile your programs in detail. You can also use Valgrind to build new tools.

The Valgrind distribution currently includes seven production-quality tools: a memory error detector, two thread error detectors, a cache and branch-prediction profiler, a call-graph generating cache and branch-prediction profiler, and two different heap profilers. It also includes an experimental SimPoint basic block vector generator. It runs on the following platforms: X86/Linux, AMD64/Linux, ARM/Linux, ARM64/Linux, PPC32/Linux, PPC64/Linux, PPC64LE/Linux, S390X/Linux, MIPS32/Linux, MIPS64/Linux, X86/Solaris, AMD64/Solaris, ARM/Android (2.3.x and later), ARM64/Android, X86/Android (4.0 and later), MIPS32/Android, X86/FreeBSD, AMD64/FreeBSD, ARM64/FreeBSD, X86/Darwin and AMD64/Darwin (Mac OS X 10.12).

Valgrind is Open Source / Free Software, and is freely available under the GNU General Public License, version 2.

https://valgrind.org/

Summary

- Linters are cheap, fast, but imprecise analysis tools
  - Can be used for purposes other than bug detection (e.g., style)
- Conservative analyzers can demonstrate the absence of particular defects
  - At the cost of false positives due to necessary approximations
  - Inevitable trade-off between false positives and false negatives
- The best QA strategy involves multiple analysis and testing techniques
  - The exact set of tools and techniques depends on context