

333 Project

- **a simulation of reality:**
 - building a substantial system
 - in groups of 3 or 4 people
- **"three-tier" system for any application you like**
- **3 major pieces**
 - graphical user interface ("presentation layer")
 - processing in the middle ("business logic")
 - storage / data management
- **examples: many web-based services**
 - Amazon, Ebay, other web stores
 - news, information services, bots
 - email, chat, ...
- **your project:**
 - make something of roughly this structure
 - but smaller, simpler, defined by your interests

Project proposal

- **by Wednesday March 12 (preferably earlier)**
 - discuss project with bwk to be sure it's generally ok
- **proposal due Friday March 14 (before break)**
 - email from project manager to bwk, ljia, gewang
 - Subject: Project proposal
 - about 2 pages worth of text, pictures, etc.
plus URL of initial project page
- **people, project name / title**
 - names, email addresses, primary role(s)
 - list one person as project manager, acts as contact
- **project vision / goal**
 - a short paragraph on what it is
- **feature list**
 - major pieces, how they fit together
- **major design choices**
 - web vs. standalone, languages, tools, environment
- **these are not binding commitments but should be your best guess based on significant thought and discussion among team members**
 - bwk, Limin and Ge are happy to talk about your ideas
- **spend some time thinking about it**
 - don't just throw together a page at the last minute because it's due
- **all components of the project are graded**

Process: organizing what to do

- **use an orderly process or it won't work**
- **this is NOT a process:**
 - talk about the software at dinner
 - hack some code together
 - test it a bit
 - do some debugging
 - fix the obvious bugs
 - repeat from the top until the semester ends
- **classic "waterfall" model: a real process**
 - specification
 - requirements
 - architectural design
 - detailed design
 - coding
 - integration
 - testing
 - delivery
- **this is overkill for 333**
- **however, some process is essential ...**

"Staged delivery" model

- **conceptual design**
 - roughly, what are we doing?
 - blackboard sketches
- **requirements definition ("what")**
 - gather ideas about what it should do
 - specify with written docs, prototypes, **scenarios**
 - potential users, competitive analysis, prototyping
 - this should not change much once you're started
it's too hard to hit a moving target
- **architecture / design ("how")**
 - map out structure with design diagrams, prototypes
 - explore options & alternatives on paper
 - partition into major subsystems
 - specify interactions between subsystems
interfaces, information flow, control flow
 - decide pervasive design issues
language, environment, storage, error handling
 - make versus buy decisions taken here
[aside on what you can use from elsewhere]
- **implementation ("what by when")**
 - deliver in stages, each of which is complete, working
what will be in each release?
 - test as you go: easy to break => lower grade

Make versus buy

- **you can use components and code from elsewhere**
- **design has to be your own**
- **so does selection and assembly of components**
- **so does the bulk of the work**
- **it's fine to build on what others have done**
 - identify what you have used, where it came from

Interfaces

- **the boundary between two parts of a program**
- **a contract between the two parts**
- **what are the inputs?**
- **what are the outputs?**
- **what is the transformation?**
- **who manages resources?**
 - especially memory
 - shared state
- **critical thing is to hide design decisions behind interfaces, so they can be changed later without affecting the rest of the program**
 - data representations and formats
 - what database system is being used (if any)
 - specific algorithms
- **in previous years, "I wish we had done interfaces better" is one of the most common comments**
 - less often: "We thought hard about the interfaces so it was easy to change things."

Deciding what to do

- **formal processes are nice, but you still have to do a lot of thinking and exploring informally**
- **do this early, so you have time to let ideas gel**
- **make big decisions first, to narrow the range of uncertainty later**
 - Web based or standalone, Unix or Windows
 - build the GUI in Java or VB or Tcl/ Tk?
 - what kinds of windows will be visible?
 - what do individual screens and menus look like?
- **McConnell: "large grain" decisions before "small grain"**
- **think through decisions at each stage so you know enough to make decisions at next stage**
- **this is more iterative than this might imply**
 - don't make binding decisions until you are all fairly comfortable with them
 - what do users see and do?
 - scenarios are very helpful (storyboards)
 - sketches of screen shots
 - diagrams of how information, commands, etc., will flow

Other ways to think about it

- **"elevator pitch"**
 - what would you say if you were alone in an elevator with Bill Gates for 60 seconds?
 - attention-grabbing description
 - a paragraph without big words but good buzzwords
- **5-7 slides for a 5-10 minute talk**
 - what would be the titles and 2-3 points on each slide?
- **1 page advertisement**
 - what would be the main selling points?
 - what would your web page look like?
- **talk/demo outline**
 - how would you organize a talk and demo to give at the end of the semester?
 - what would you want working for the demo?
- **business plan**
 - how would you pitch it to an angel or venture capitalist?
 - what does it do for who?
 - who would want it?
 - what's the competition?
 - what are the stages of evolution or major releases?
- **job talk / interview**
 - what did we do that's really cool?

Roles: who does what?

- **not all of these need be explicit, but projects have to do these tasks**
- **project manager**
 - orchestrates code, testing, documentation, etc.
 - in charge, but not necessarily the technical lead
- **architect**
 - how do the pieces fit together
 - makes it look like the product of a single mind
- **user interface designer**
 - makes it look like the product of a single mind
- **developer**
 - you all have to do a significant part of this
- **quality assurance / testing**
 - responsible for making sure it always works
- **toolsmith**
 - support, builds, export packaging
- **documentor**
 - manual, internals doc, web page, blurbs, presentation
- **risk officer (McConnell)**
 - what are the risks? what could go wrong?
 - not the project manager!!

Things to do from the beginning

- **think about schedule**
 - keep a timeline of what you intend and what you did
- **plan for a sequence of stages**
 - do not build something that requires a "big bang" where nothing works until everything works
 - always be able to declare success and walk away
- **simplify**
 - do not take on too big a job
 - do not try to do it all at the beginning
(but do not try to do it all at the end -- that's disaster)
- **use source code control for everything**
 - RCS or CVS is mandatory
- **leave lots of room for "overhead" activities**
 - testing: build quality in from the beginning
 - documentation: you have to provide written material
 - deliverables: you have to package your system for delivery
 - changing your mind: some decisions will be reversed and some work will have to be redone
 - disaster: lost files, broken hardware, overloaded systems are all inevitable
 - sickness: you will lose time for all kinds of unavoidable reasons
 - health: there is more to life than this project!

2003 Schedule

February							
S	M	Tu	W	Th	F	S	
						1	
2	3	4	5	6	7	8	
9	10	11	12	13	14	15	
16	17	18	19	20	21	22	→ you are here
23	24	25	26	27	28		
March							
						1	
2	3	4	5	6	7	8	meet with bwk by 13th
9	10	11	12	13	14	15	initial proposal
16	17	18	19	20	21	22	spring break - enjoy
23	24	25	26	27	28	29	draft plan, TA meeting
30	31						
April							
1	2	3	4	5			
6	7	8	9	10	11	12	prototype
13	14	15	16	17	18	19	
20	21	22	23	24	25	26	alpha test
27	28	29	30				
May							
				1	2	3	beta test
4	5	6	7	8	9	10	demo days
11	12	13	14	15	16	17	Dean's date

Some mechanics

- **groups of 3 or 4**
 - find your own partners (newsgroup, etc.)
 - grad students in groups of their own
- **Limin and Ge will be first -level managers**
- **weekly meeting of your whole group with your manager each week after break**
 - everyone should attend essentially all of these
- **be prepared:**
 - what have we accomplished
 - what didn't get done
 - what do we plan to do next
- **these are a graded component**
- **this is my attempt to make sure that things don't get left to the last week**