Programmer's guide to the Recognition Strategy Language (RSL)

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Programmer’s Guide to
The Recognition Strategy Language (RSL)

Version 2.0 (DRAFT)

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\textsuperscript{1}Wrote this document. RSL Language: Copyright (c) 2011, Matthew Fluet, Benjamin Holm and Richard Zanibbi
Note on the History of RSL

The first version of RSL was designed and developed by Richard Zanibbi, Dorothea Blostein and James R. Cordy at Queen’s University, Kingston, Canada in 2004. This document summarizes the re-design and re-implementation of RSL produced at the Rochester Institute of Technology by Matthew Fluet, Ben Holm and Richard Zanibbi during 2010-2011.
## Contents

1 **The Recognition Strategy Language** ........................................... 3
   1.1 Compilation and Execution .................................................. 4
   1.2 Interpretation Input and Output: *ifiles* and Related Functions ............... 6
   1.3 Example Programs .................................................................. 7
      1.3.1 Hello World ................................................................. 7
      1.3.2 A More Complex Example ............................................. 7

2 **Data Model** ........................................................................... 13
   2.1 Interpretations ...................................................................... 13
      2.1.1 Interpretation Declarations ........................................... 13
      2.1.2 Hash-Consing, Interpretations, Interpretation Sets, and *program-types.sml* ........................................................................... 13
      2.1.3 Types and Functions for Hash-Consed Structures ...................... 15
      2.1.4 Observation Specifications ............................................... 15
   2.2 Annotations ............................................................................ 16
   2.3 RSL History .......................................................................... 17
      2.3.1 User Annotation Table ..................................................... 17
      2.3.2 Decision Labels .............................................................. 18
      2.3.3 Automatically Generated Decision Label Suffixes ...................... 18

3 **RSL Syntax and Operations** .................................................. 20
   3.1 RSL Functions ....................................................................... 20
   3.2 RSL Programs ........................................................................ 21
      3.2.1 Two Entry Points: *main* and *report* ................................ 21
   3.3 External/Decision Functions .................................................. 21
      3.3.1 Regular Decision Functions ............................................. 22
      3.3.2 Historical Decision Functions ......................................... 22
      3.3.3 ‘all’ functions ............................................................... 22
   3.4 RSL Operations ..................................................................... 22
      3.4.1 Regular Function Operations ............................................ 22
      3.4.2 Historical RSL Operations .............................................. 22

4 **Pre-Processing and the RSL Compiler** ................................... 26
   4.1 *inc*: including additional SML source files .................................. 26
   4.2 Embedding ML in an RSL program .......................................... 26
   4.3 Command-Line Arguments ..................................................... 27
Chapter 1

The Recognition Strategy Language

The Recognition Strategy Language (RSL) is a domain-specific language for pattern recognition. It is implemented through translation and compilation in Standard ML (SML) using the MLton whole-program optimizing compiler. This document summarizes the second version of RSL, which is a complete re-design of the original language. This document summarizes the key features and use of the language from the programmer’s perspective.

Pattern recognition applications include computer vision, speech recognition, time series analysis, and many others. RSL was designed from the viewpoint that pattern recognition algorithms may be most easily understood in terms of the decisions they make, and that they should therefore be defined in terms of decision sequences. Generally speaking, given some data such as an image, these decisions are generally answers to one or more of the following questions:

1. Where are the objects of this type? (Segmentation)
2. What are the type(s) of these objects? (Classification)
3. How are these objects of these types structured? (Parsing (relating objects))

For non-trivial applications, these questions are often easy to pose but difficult to answer. For example, it is easy to ask, ‘Where are the faces in this image?’, but face recognition is not a solved problem in the general case. However, if we refine our question just a little bit, instead asking: ‘Where are the bounding boxes that contain faces in this image?’, the set of possible answers is well-defined and finite (though large).

RSL is designed to make it easy to express recognition decisions, and to change the functions that make decisions. We refer to this as decision-based specification of recognition algorithms.

In the list of recognition questions above, we see that one must define a set of locations in the data before they can be classified, that defining a set of (meaningful) locations requires a decision about the class of objects sought after, and that relating (parsing) locations requires a set of locations with assumed types. In addition, current information about structure (parsing) can be used to constrain the location and types of objects. Machine-learning techniques may also be used to jointly optimize a group of decisions. Using our face detection example, we might repeat a process of defining a set of candidate face rectangle locations, and repeatedly change these to maximize the probability that each of the final set of rectangles contains a single face, and that the region outside these boxes does not contain a face. To do this effectively, one needs to address the following additional question:

4. Which is the best value for this/these decision model parameter(s)? (Machine Learning)

The often complex functions that make decisions are defined separately from the main RSL program. These decision functions may be defined using different programming languages. For example, decisions
based on logical inference might be expressed in Prolog, and decisions requiring image processing might be expressed using Matlab, or C using the OpenCV library. These ‘external’ decision functions are functions in the host language (Standard ML), which then interface with the other languages using the ML Foreign Function Interface (FFI) or system calls. The current RSL implementation makes use of the FFI provided by the MLton compiler. RSL makes it easy to express mapping a decision or output function over the current set of interpretations, making it easier to create evaluation data, visualizations, or other useful information. The re-implementation of RSL in ML allows decision functions to be implemented in a concise functional style, with support for higher-order functions and automatic type inference (provided by SML, which is strictly typed).

In addition to decision-based specification, another central feature of RSL is the automatic creation of a history of the decisions made by a program, along with the ability to query this history. This makes it possible to determine exactly which decisions select correct and incorrect alternatives (in our example, bounding boxes for faces), and at what point(s) in the program’s execution. It also makes it possible to evaluate the set of generated hypotheses within an RSL program, such as using the recall and precision of this set (known as the historical recall and precision of generated hypotheses).

The revised RSL also permits annotations for decision to be recorded in the history, and then observed after the decision-making portion of an RSL program is complete. This is an important change, as it allows the output of arbitrary computations to be stored separately from the interpretation data, without being available to the decision process itself.

The remainder of this document briefly summarizes the use and key features of RSL.

### 1.1 Compilation and Execution

Figure 1.1 illustrates how RSL programs are compiled and executed using the `rslc` program. `rslc` is itself a script which calls the RSL Parser (`rslp`, a TXL program), followed by the MLton Standard ML Compiler. MLton is a whole-program optimizing compiler that produces efficient executables. Invoking `rslc` without arguments produces the following:

```
RSL Parser -> MLton Compiler script
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-v: generate verbose output (.dot graph file, .data output file)

NOTE: compiler flags and .o/.c libraries may be intermixed.
It is assumed that compiler flags do not have .o/.c files as values.
```

At compile time, the user provides an `.rsl` program (`program.rsl` in Figure 1.1) which may include one or more Standard ML files containing decision functions (`decFunctions.sml` in Figure 1.1). Any compiled C library files invoked by decision functions to the RSL compiler must be passed to `rslc`, which simply passes them on to the MLton compiler.

Given an `.rsl` program, the RSL parser (`rslp`, implemented in the TXL language) generates files for interpretation types and operations (shown as `program-types.sml`), the SML translation of the RSL program (`program.sml`), and a MLton build file (`program.mlb`). An additional file with the extension `.lsrl` is produced for reference (this is a modified version of the user’s program), but not used during compilation with MLton.
(a) **RSL Program Compilation.** Inputs and outputs are shown using solid lines; file dependencies are shown using dashed lines. `program.lrsl` is an annotated RSL file produced before generating .sml code, and is produced for reference only. Objects files for compiled C programs may be passed to MLton (their use requires the MLton Foreign Function Interface). **The rslc program invokes both rslp and MLton.**

(b) **RSL Program Execution.** An interpretation file (textfile in a format defined by the programmer) may be passed on the standard input, and if provided will define the initial set of interpretations for the program (otherwise an empty set is used). **If rslc is invoked using the -v option,** then in addition to text sent to the standard output (e.g. from `print` statements), snapshots of the execution traces at the end of the `main()` and `report()` functions are produced.

Figure 1.1: RSL Program Compilation and Execution

For the main RSL program, The main program translation maps RSL functions to ML functions, and RSL operations to operations in Abstract Syntax Tree (AST) nodes, and performs some context-sensitive syntax checking for the RSL program (e.g. insuring that ‘reporting’ operations are not used in the main program). The output executable is produced by compiling the generated SML files with the RSL Core
library, which includes code for interpreting the generated ASTs.\footnote{Dependencies on the Core RSL library (implemented in SML) are not shown in Figure 1.1. The set of RSL Core library files may be found by looking at the .mlb file generated by the RSL parser (rslp).}

An executable RSL program may be used with different input files, called \textit{interpretation files} or \textit{ifiles} for short, that contain zero or more interpretations of the data to be recognized in the RSL program. These files are simply a list of interpretations, where individual interpretations are in a format specified by the programmer. A detailed description of interpretation files are provided below in Section 1.2. Running an interpretation file through an RSL program produces data on the standard output. \textbf{If rslc is run with the -v (verbose) option}, then the execution will also produce files summarizing the execution trace after the \texttt{main()} function has completed, and after the \texttt{report()} function has completed. These output files are produced only if the \texttt{main()} or \texttt{report()} functions are defined.

\textbf{A Note on Sharing ifiles Between RSL Programs:} An RSL program may use an ifile produced by another RSL program, provided that the interpretation type definitions are the same. This allows RSL programs to be built up from smaller programs, or for RSL programs to be broken up into a set of smaller programs that can be chained together.

\section{1.2 Interpretation Input and Output: ifiles and Related Functions}

An interpretation file, or \textit{ifile} is a text file representing a set of interpretations in a list. The format is very simple, containing:

- The number of interpretations (first line)
- For each interpretation:
  \begin{verbatim}
  [ Interp (number) ]
  ( (( Interp. data in programmer-defined format )))
  blank line
  \end{verbatim}

Here is a simple interpretation file, containing three interpretations, with interpretations represented by a single integer:

\begin{verbatim}
3
[Interp 1]
9

[Interp 2]
11

[Interp 3]
13
\end{verbatim}

Note that RSL programs can automatically generate the number of interpretations, interpretation headings, and invoke user functions to write an interpretation file such as the one shown above. Users may also manually create or modify ifiles on their own (e.g. to quickly generate test cases, or try different inputs for a given RSL program).

Figure 1.2 lists the functions used in RSL to read and write ifiles (each has a default definition in rsl/trunk/rsl_parser/AstTraceExec.sml that has no effect). The \texttt{streamToInterp} function is used to read interpretations below the \texttt{“[Interp number]”} headings from ifiles passed on the Standard
Figure 1.2: Pre-defined Interpretation Input and Output Functions. Programmers may over-ride the default implementations of these functions (e.g. in an included file decFns.sml). annotToString is used when producing output for annotations in the execution trace, but not for reading/writing interpretations.

Input, or added to the current interpretation set from a file using the add operation. The output function interpToString is used to implement the print ifile and write ifile <filename> commands, which print an interpretation file for the current set of interpretations in an RSL program to the standard output or an external file, respectively.

1.3 Example Programs

1.3.1 Hello World

As a first example, below is ‘Hello World’ in RSL. Note that an interpretation type must be defined (here with a single integer field), but is not used. Note that comments begin with ‘(*’ and ending with ‘*)’.

```rsl
(* Interpretation type declaration *)
interp:
   field: int

(* This is the main function. *)
fn main() {
   print "Hello World."
}
```

1.3.2 A More Complex Example

Figure 1.3 shows a more complex RSL program, which makes use of decision points. For simplicity, interpretations consist of just an integer, and an integer set. The file containing decision and other external functions (firstExampleExternalFns.sml) is shown in Figures 1.4 and 1.5. The first part of the external function file re-defines a number of the built-in output functions described above in ML. The second part of the file defines decision functions used to modify the current set of interpretations.

The execution trace graph corresponding to the firstExample.dot file produced on running the program is shown in Figure 1.6.
In the trace graph shown in Figure 1.6, nodes and edges are numbered in sequence (in hexadecimal), with nodes corresponding to decision points with an associated set of interpretations (shown in boxes with dashed arrows coming out of nodes). Edges are annotated with the operation performed, and the associated decision point label. Note that rslp attaches a prefix D# to each label associated with a decision (given in square brackets in the .rsl program), insuring that each decision point has a unique label.

The Init{INIT} operation coming out of the node N.0000 corresponds to reading interpretations from the standard input; here no data was provided on the standard input. The conditional statement if is broken up into nodes for the sets of interpretations for which the conditional test is true and false, and then the interpretations produced in the true/false branches are merged in node N.0011. Note also that some nodes share identical interpretation sets in the graph, for example the initial empty set of interpretations remains empty when the program tries to read additional interpretations from the standard input (node IS.0000, the empty set of interpretations).

The file firstExample.data illustrates the type of output produced in .data files. Note that this provides additional information related to the interpretations and interpretation sets generated by the program.

```plaintext
(* Include (SML) decision functions from another file *)
inc "firstExampleExternalFns.sml"

(* Interpretation type. *)
interp:
  IntField: int
  IntSet: int set

(* Main function. *)
fn main() {
  (* Add initial interpretation using function initInterp. *)
  [ I ] munge: initInterp

  (* Update interpretations *)
  [ A ] update: decA
  [ B ] update: decB

  (* Accept interpretations for which decC returns true *)
  [ C ] if decC {
    accept
  } else {
    reject
  }
}
```

Figure 1.3: Example RSL file
val annotToString = fn (a : Annot.t) => case a of
    NONE => ""
  | SOME (Note (s)) => s

val intSetToString = fn (ms) =>
  (* 'o' used for function composition (right-to-left) *)
  (String.concat o List.rev o (fn l => "":l) o #2)
  (* Argument to result of function composition. *)
  (List.foldl (fn (m,(b,acc)) =>
      (true,
        (Int.toString m)::
        (if b then ","::acc else acc)))
      (false,[""])
    ms)

(* Create a string for an interpretation. *)
val interpToString = fn (i) =>
  let
    (* Here we’re binding variables to field values. *)
    val {IntField = n, IntSet = ms} = i
  in
    String.concat ["(",
      Int.toString n,
      ",",
      intSetToString ms,
      ")"]
  end

(* Use Interp.rvalue to obtain 'raw' interpretation, then invoke
 * interpToString *)
val hcInterpToString = fn (i) =>
  interpToString( Interp.rvalue i )

Figure 1.4: firstExampleExternalFns.sml: Part 1 (Output)
(* DECISION FUNCTIONS *)

(* Define a text note, which must be 'SOME' *)
val note = fn s => SOME(Note(s))

(* Use with 'Munge' operation to define initial interpretation *set* *)
val initInterp = fn i =>
  let
  in
    (note("Munge"), [ (note("Munge"), Interp.rhcons { IntField = 8, IntSet = [] }) ])
  end

val decA = fn i =>
  let
    (* Returns the value: in the original example, a pair (n,ms) *)
    val { IntField = n, IntSet = ms } = i
    (* Syntax: define function to map, followed by list to map over. *)
    val r = List.map (fn j =>
      let
        val msU = 
          List.foldl (fn (k,msU) => k::msU) []
            (List.tabulate (j, fn k => k))
        val i' = { IntField = n, IntSet = ms @ msU }
      in
        (note("decA"), i')
      end
    end)
  in
    (note("decA"), r)
  end

val decB = fn i =>
  let
    val { IntField = n, IntSet = ms } = i
    val r = List.map (fn j =>
      let
        val msD = List.filter (fn k => k mod j = 0) ms
        val i' = { IntField = n, IntSet = List.filter
          (fn el => not (List.exists
            (fn e' => e' = el)
              ms))
          ms }
      in
        (note("decB"), i')
      end)
    (if n > 0
      then List.tabulate (n - 1, fn j => j + 1)
    else [])
  in
    (note("decB"), r)
  end

val decC = fn i =>
  let
    val { IntField = n, IntSet = ms } = i
    val r = List.exists (fn e => e = (n div 2)) ms
  in
    (note("decC"), r)
  end

Figure 1.5: firstExampleExternalFns.sml: Part 2 (Decisions)
Figure 1.6: RSL Trace for execution of firstExample.rsl
Node → InterpSet::
N_0000: IS_0000
N_0001: IS_0000
N_0003: IS_0001
N_0005: IS_0008
N_0007: IS_0015
N_0009: IS_0021
N_000A: IS_0023
N_000D: IS_0021
N_000F: IS_0000
N_0011: IS_0021

InterpSet::
IS_0000: {}
IS_0001: {I_0000}
IS_0008: {I_0000, I_0001, I_0002, I_0003, I_0004, I_0005, I_0006, I_0007}
IS_0015: {I_0000, I_0008, I_0009, I_000A, I_000B, I_000C, I_000D, I_000E, I_000F, I_0010, I_0011, I_0012, I_0013, I_0014}
IS_0021: {I_0009, I_000B, I_000C, I_000D, I_000E, I_000F, I_0011}
IS_0023: {I_0000, I_0008, I_000A, I_000E, I_0010, I_0012, I_0013, I_0014}

Interp::
I_0000: (8, {})
I_0001: (8, {0})
I_0002: (8, {0,1})
I_0003: (8, {0,1,2})
I_0004: (8, {0,1,2,3})
I_0005: (8, {0,1,2,3,4})
I_0006: (8, {0,1,2,3,4,5})
I_0007: (8, {0,1,2,3,4,5,6})
I_0008: (8, {5,3,1})
I_0009: (8, {5,4,2,1})
I_000A: (8, {6,5,3,2,1})
I_000B: (8, {6,4,3,2,1})
I_000C: (8, {5,4,3,2,1})
I_000D: (8, {6,5,4,3,2,1})
I_000E: (8, {5,3,2,1})
I_000F: (8, {4,3,2,1})
I_0010: (8, {3,1})
I_0011: (8, {4,2,1})
I_0012: (8, {3,2,1})
I_0013: (8, {2,1})
I_0014: (8, {1})

Figure 1.7: firstExample.data: output from execution of firstExample
Chapter 2

Data Model

The central data structures in an RSL program are the current set of interpretations, the history of unique interpretations, and the trace of executed decisions and their effects. We also discuss bindings of local symbols in RSL functions, though these are not stored within the history of an RSL program.

2.1 Interpretations

The most important data structure in RSL is the current set of interpretations that are modified as an RSL program executes. Roughly speaking, interpretations may be understood as a record type, or objects with data fields but no methods.

2.1.1 Interpretation Declarations

Below is a simple interpretation declaration.

```
interp:
  bbox: (int * int) * (int * int)
  density: real
```

This defines an interpretation as a record consisting of two fields, the field `bbox`, which contains a pair of integer pairs (x,y coordinates defining a bounding box), and a pixel density (percentage of foreground pixels within the bounding box), given as a floating point number (in ML terminology, a `real`).

The interpretation declaration of an RSL program must precede all other RSL functions. Field types may be any of those shown in Table 2.1.

2.1.2 Hash-Consing, Interpretations, Interpretation Sets, and `program-types.sml`

The central data structure in an RSL program is the current set of interpretations. Using a technique termed hash-consing[1], all interpretation data is stored so that each unique interpretation is stored only once within the data structures of an RSL program. This allows the set of unique interpretations produced to be stored and recovered at the end of an RSL program, and makes it possible to determine when decisions produce the same interpretation(s).

Put simply, hash-consing involves computing a hash value for every part of an interpretation, and then providing a numeric signature (tag) for each unique value of the hash-consed type. Sets of interpretations are hash-consed as well. Equivalence for two objects of a hash-consed type can then be tested using their tags, rather than comparing the entire structure of interpretations. This requires some additional overhead for
Table 2.1: Interpretation field types. See the rsl/trunk/hash-cons directory. Some types are defined for different precisions (int, real, word)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Primitive Types (ML)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>bool boolean</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>int integer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>word memory word</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>real real number (floating point)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>char character</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>string string</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>unit the empty tuple, () (analogous to void in other languages)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Data Structures (Note: element type precedes structure type)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>type1 * ... * typen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>list Tuples (pairs (e.g. int * int), triples, 4-tuples supported)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>vector List (examples: int list (real * string) list)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>set Set (example: (int * (int list)) set)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>option Optional value (e.g. int option has type NONE or SOME(int))</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

adding new elements to the hash tables (in order to define tags uniquely), but makes testing the equivalence between two interpretations fast (in the ideal case with few hash-table collisions, O(1)).

In RSL hash-consing of interpretations is implemented using ML functors that map user-provided types to hash-consed versions of those types. Hash-consed types are constructed recursively from primitive types, ending with the outer structure type (e.g. the hash-consed interpretation set). Code used to implement hash-consing may be found in the directory rsl/trunk/hash-cons.

The RSL parser (rslp) defines a structure RslTypes.Interp in the file program-types.sml for program.rsl, which defines the interpretation type, including its hash-consed type information and related functions. To produce the hash-consed type, each field of the interpretation record is given a separate ML structure, that defines a hash-consed version of the user-provided type for the field. In the example above, two structures for the fields bbox and density are generated, RslTypes.Interp.bbox_S and RslTypes.Interp.density_S, where the types for each are hash-consed. The generated code for RslTypes.Interp.t defining the hash-consed interpretation record type would look similar to:

```ml
... 
  type t = { 
    bbox_S : MkHashConsedTuple2( 
      MkHashConsedTuple2(structure H1 : HashedInt 
        structure H2: HashedInt) 
      MkHashConsedTuple2(structure H1 : HashedInt 
        structure H2: HashedInt)), 
    density_S: HashedReal } 
  ... 
```

The _S suffixes are added to make the fact that the field types are hash-consed ML structures explicit, both in the generated code, and in any code that manipulates hash-consed interpretations.

Individual interpretations as well as interpretation sets are also hash-consed and assigned to a structure in a generated .sml types file (e.g. program-types.sml). To understand the generated file and some RSL operations it is important to be aware of this translation to hash-consed types, but the programmer need not manipulate hash-consed data directly, for reasons we’ll now discuss.
**Raw Types, rvalue, and rhcons**

Simultaneously with the creation of hash-consed interpretation and interpretation set types, ‘raw’ types which correspond to the field types provided by the programmer in the interpretation declaration are generated as part of the RslTypes.Interp structure in program-types.sml. For the example above, the following will be created as the ML structure RslTypes.Interp.r:

```ml
...
  type r = {
    bbox : (int * int) * (int * int),
    density: real
  }
...
```

This defines a type that is a regular ML record with two fields of the types specified in the RSL program itself. ‘Raw’ interpretations and interpretation sets (defined as a list of ‘raw’ interpretations) may be obtained from hash-consed data using the rvalue function, and hash-consed versions of ‘raw’ data may be produced using the rhcons (recursive hash-cons) function.

Note that these field names match those given by the programmer. The expectation is that an RSL programmer will work primarily with ‘raw’ interpretations in their programs.

### 2.1.3 Types and Functions for Hash-Consed Structures

Each hash-consed structure, including those produced for primitives, data structures, interpretations and even interpretation sets themselves must define the types and functions listed below. Note that some of these are not visible within a generated program-types.sml file, as some are defined in the functors used to create hash-consed types; see rsl/trunk/hash-cons/mk-hash-consed.fun and other mk-hash-consed-*.fun and related signature files (.sig) in the same directory.

1. **Raw type (r):** un-consed type, e.g. as given for interpretation declarations
   - (a) raw value (rvalue): un-consed value, e.g. of type for interpretation declarations
   - (b) recursive hash-consing function (rhcons): maps raw type to hash-consed type through recursive bottom-up construction

2. **Hash-consed type (t)**
   - (a) hash-consed value (value): obtain the value of a hash-consed structure.
   - (b) hash function (hash)
   - (c) hash-consing function (hcons): create consed type from component types
   - (d) unique identifier (tag)
   - (e) equality test (equal): compare tags for hash-consed objects of the same hash-consed type.

**Note:** the ‘raw’ type for an interpretation set is a list of interpretations of ‘raw’ type.

### 2.1.4 Observation Specifications

Most RSL operations support the use of observation specifications which specify what fields of the interpretation records are to be visible to the decision function, and if applicable, which field(s) are updated by the decision function. For operations that update interpretations, the syntax is:
[field1], ..., [fieldn] observing [field_first], ..., [field_last]

where field1 ... fieldn are the fields to update, and field_first ... field_last are the fields to additionally observe to determine the updates. All the named fields will be de-consed (that is to say, put in 'raw' format) before being passed to the associated decision function. **Note** that munge does not support observation specifications, as the operation is designed to manipulate hash-consed interpretations directly.

For control flow operations (if, while), the syntax is:

observing [field_first], ..., [field_last]

where here we only observe interpretations, as the boolean tests do not manipulate interpretations.

Operations that support observation specifications are indicated in Tables 3.1, 3.2, 3.3 and 3.4.

Observation specifications have two purposes: first, they are used for automatic un-consing of interpretations, and to identify those fields that may be updated by a decision. By providing an explicit observation specification, those fields identified will be un-consed, vs. the default where all fields are un-consed for observing using Interp.rvalue. Similarly, for a number of operations the field(s) to update may be identified in an RSL operation, allowing a decision function to return records containing only the identified fields, rather than complete interpretations.

Generally speaking, it is a good idea to explicitly state fields to observe and modify, especially if only one or two are needed, but interpretations contain many fields. This reduces the amount of un-consing that needs to occur when passing interpretations to a decision function, and re-hash-consing when updating modified interpretations. In addition, this assists makes dependencies between interpretation components explicit in the RSL program (note that it is possible for a programmer to observe or not really manipulate fields identified in an observation specification).

**Examples**: see rsl/trunk/tests/obs_spec for simple examples of observation specifications, and associated decision functions.

### 2.2 Annotations

Preceding the interp section, there may be an optional notes section of an RSL program, which defines the set of legal annotations returned by decision functions. Annotations store information that may be useful at the end of the program, but will not used by the algorithms interpreting the input data. The declaration syntax is nearly identical to that for interpretations; here is an example.

notes:

    Prob: real
    IntensityHistogram: int vector
    (* DEFAULT: Note: string *)

Here we have defined a probability annotation Prob, and an intensity histogram for greyscale images IntensityHistogram, as a vector of integers, using one bin for each possible color (e.g. 0-255). The Note: string type is always defined by default, and is only shown above for illustration.

Any of the types shown in Table 2.1 may also be used to define annotation types. Decision functions in RSL may always return NONE (no annotation) in lieu of an annotation value. Defined annotations need to be defined using a constructor, e.g. using Note(“My annotation”) to construct an annotation of type Note.1

Annotations will be discussed further in the context of decision functions and manipulating the RSL history.

---

1In the implementation, all annotation types are defined as part of a single datatype note, with one constructor corresponding to each annotation type provided by the programmer. The set of possible annotation types, RslTypes.Annot.t, is then defined as a note option.
2.3 RSL History

There are three types of data stored in the execution history: a record of unique interpretations and interpretation sets, a record of which decisions were executed and what their inputs and outputs were, and a record of decisions produced at decision points in the trace. These three different aspects of the history are stored using execution trace graphs, with nodes representing decision points with an associated current interpretation set, and edges representing decisions made. A decision record is represented in the attributes of an edge. Additionally, some hash tables are constructed, as described below.

The execution trace graph is currently output as a .dot file, after completion of the main() and/or report() functions.

During execution of an RSL program, the different history components are recorded as listed below. History data is stored in a structure (see rsl/trunk/rsl/mk-rsl-trace.fun, and the associated signature file rsl-trace.sig in the same directory). This trace is passed to external functions when using ‘historical RSL operations,’ which we describe later.

1. **The trace graph.** including the data structures to record all nodes (Trace.nodes), all edges (Trace.edges), the initial node (Trace.init), and final node (Trace.fini). The functions Trace.inEdges and Trace.outEdges may be used to obtain incoming and outgoing edges for each node in the trace graph.

2. **Interpretations.** Trace.interpSetAtNode returns the interpretation set at a given node for a trace. Trace.finalInterpSet will return the current set of interpretations at the end of the trace. ***All interpretations may be obtained by folding over all interpretation sets in the trace (see the function allInterpList, defined in mk-rsl-trace.fun).

3. **Interpretation Edge Table.** Trace.getInterpEdgeTable returns a hash table mapping hash-consed interpretations to a list of all edges corresponding to operations that produced the given interpretation. **Annotations for decisions are stored on edges,** including those for individual interpretations or decisions, as well as interpretation sets.

4. **Decision points reached.** Trace.allDecisionTags will return a list of string labels for every decision point reached during the execution of a program.

5. **Decision Point Node Table.** Trace.dpNodeTable returns a hash table mapping strings for decision points to a list of all nodes produced corresponding to the labeled decision point.

2.3.1 User Annotation Table

In the reporting portion of an RSL program, operations are modified so that in addition to an interpretation or interpretation set being passed to external decisions, RSL makes the current execution trace available to the decision function, along with a hash table from (hash-consed) interpretations to a list of triples of type (string * Annot.t * DGraph.edge.t).

Currently, the hadd operation will return a hash table from (hash-consed) interpretations to triples representing edges in the execution trace, and insert these into the current user annotation table. Each entry in the list of triples for an interpretation has a string corresponding to the string label associated with the edge, NONE for the annotation, and a reference to the edge itself. **Note that edges store annotations for decisions, so these can be recovered from the edges.** See rsl/trunk/rsl/mk-rsl-exec.fun for the implementation (as AST node type E_Query).

This table is manipulated by the hadd operation (which queries the history), and some other historical functions (e.g. hupdate), where the programmer may add annotations of their own.
Note: for reporting functions, the reject operation clears both the current set of interpretations and empties the current user annotation table.

Example: see rsl/trunk/tests/query, which contains the example program queryTest1.rsl. Try running the program using:

```
./queryTest1 testIn.i 4
```

The program will print contents of the user annotation table, and make queries using simple filters.

Note: operations to query the attribute table have been added (e.g. getar), so that the programmer does not need to act on the attribute table directly. These functions are defined in the file:

```
rsl/rsl-parser/AstTraceExec.sml
```

### 2.3.2 Decision Labels

As can be seen in Figure 1.3, RSL operations may have an associated decision label. For example,

```
[ I ]
munge: initInterp
```

Labels the operation munge: initInterp with [ I ], where “I” is the label associated with this operation, which adds a single interpretation to the current interpretation set. The .lrsl file created by the RSL Parser (rslp) contains the list of complete labels used for a program. Every RSL operation other than output statements are numbered in order using D<num>: operations not labeled by the programmer will have this unique tag as a decision label, and given decision labels are modified so that D<num>_ becomes a prefix for the label. In the example above, the generated label for the munge operation is D0_I.

In the reporting portion of an RSL program, interpretations and associated annotations may be recovered from the RSL history using the hadd operation, which uses regular expression matching against decision labels to define the set of decision points from which to add interpretations and associated edges to the current set of interpretations, and the current user annotation table, respectively.

### 2.3.3 Automatically Generated Decision Label Suffixes

Within the RSL Core library (see rsl/trunk/rsl/mk-rsl-exec.fun), control flow operations are given some annotations to provide a finer-grained set of decision labels to match when querying the history. These are summarized in the table below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Operation</th>
<th>Suffix</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>if</td>
<td>-true, -false, -all</td>
<td>Set of interpretations for which the boolean test is true. Set of interpretations for which the boolean test is false. Set of interpretations produced from the union of interpretations from true and false branches.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>if all</td>
<td>-in</td>
<td>Set of interpretations received as input. Tags above also defined for if statement that is executed after the initial currying of the decision function using the current set of interpretations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>while</td>
<td>-true, -false, -out</td>
<td>while is implemented using ‘if’: multiple invocations can lead to multiple nodes in the execution trace (if decision points) having the same label (e.g. -true). See note below</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>while all</td>
<td>-in</td>
<td>Set of interpretations received as input.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>duplicate</td>
<td>-out</td>
<td>Union of interpretation sets produced by all branches.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2.2: Suffixes added to decision points during RSL execution
Note: accept operations may be labeled, which can be useful for simply capturing interpretation sets. For while operations, this must be used to capture the final set of interpretations produced, as there may be multiple ‘-out’ results produced, due to the current implementation of while using if statements.
Chapter 3

RSL Syntax and Operations

3.1 RSL Functions

The syntax of RSL functions is quite simple. Here is an example of a regular RSL function, that manipulate the current set of interpretations.

```ml
fn main ( arg1 ) {
    (* Declarations *)
    i = 5
    message = "a string"
    k = Int.toString(arg1)

    (* RSL operations )
    print "Hello World."
    print "I was given:"
    print k
    [ Out ] accept
}
```

Arguments are provided as names, without types. Also, note that value bindings must precede the RSL operations: expressions for values may be provided as any primitive ML value or single function call (which may be higher-order, i.e. arguments to this function may themselves be functions). More sophisticated bindings and operations may also be produced through embedding ML directly into the RSL function (see Section 4.2).

For reporting/historical functions, the syntax differs only slightly:

```ml
hfn report ( arg1 ) {
    (* Declarations *)
    i = 5
    message = "a string"
    k = Int.toString(arg1)

    (* RSL operations )
    print "Hello World."
    print "I was given:"
    print k
```
Here we run code nearly identical to that for main, but being a historical function additional operations may be used that make use of the program trace, and the user annotation table (see the previous chapter for an explanation of these).

Note that for report, the set of command line arguments is enforced as being identical to that for main. This is not the case for any other RSL functions, where the set of arguments is programmer-defined.

### 3.2 RSL Programs

RSL programs are defined, in-order, as:

1. An optional list of included SML files (inc "file")
2. An optional ‘notes’ declaration for annotation types
3. The ‘interp’ interpretation type declaration
4. Zero or more RSL regular functions
5. Zero or more reporting/historical RSL functions

In an RSL program, regular RSL functions must precede historical reporting functions. Both RSL function types may employ any of the RSL operations shown in Tables 3.1 and 3.2, which manipulate the current set of interpretations, affect control flow observing the current set of interpretations, and produce output (again, looking at the current set of interpretations).

However, the operations shown in Tables 3.3 and 3.4 can only be used in historical/reporting functions.

#### 3.2.1 Two Entry Points: main and report

The first entry point for an RSL function is the main regular RSL function. If provided, the program continues with the report historical RSL function, from which the history produced by executing main may be queried and analyzed.

### 3.3 External/Decision Functions

Decisions are made in RSL programs by functions that are normally defined outside of the RSL program itself. We refer to these as ‘external functions’ or ‘decision functions.’ All decision functions are implemented as Standard ML functions. Standard ML provides support for executing code from other languages using the Foreign Function Interface (FFI) or (much more crudely) through system calls to executable programs.

In addition to defining how interpretations are to be modified, external functions may be used to define boolean values (e.g. for conditional statements), or to produce strings (e.g. for printing to the standard output, or to a text file).

There are two basic types of decision functions; those that operate on individual interpretations (‘regular’), and those that operate on interpretations plus historical information (‘historical’). In addition, a number of operations such as update, hupdate and if allow the decision function to be a curried
function that is first applied to a set of interpretations before returning a function to be applied to individual interpretations. We briefly summarize these different types of decision functions below.

3.3.1 Regular Decision Functions

Other than for munge, regular decision functions that do not employ an observation specification or ‘all’ are of the form: RslTypes.Interp.r → [output-type] that is to say, a single interpretation is assumed as input, and the appropriate output (boolean, string, or annotated list of interpretations) needs to be returned by the decision function.

[DRAFT: for time, look at rsl/trunk/rsl/rsl-ast.sig for expected types for different operations].

3.3.2 Historical Decision Functions

For historical decision functions (again, other than munge or those using ‘all’), the input is a triple, consisting of:

(RslTypes.Interp.r * ((string * RslTypes.Annot.t * DGraph.Edge.t) list) * HashTable) → [output-type]

This simply states that the decision function must accept an interpretation, the user annotation table (a hash table of (string, annotation, trace graph edge) triples), and a Trace structure (containing information about the program’s execution to the current point in the program), and then return the output type expected by an operation.

3.3.3 ‘all’ functions

keyword Whether for regular or historical operations, the all keyword is used to indicate an operation where the decision function must be a curried function. The decision function will first be applied to the set of interpretations, and must return the curried function, along with an annotation (which is stored in the history: see rsl/trunk/rsl/mk-rsl-exec.fun).

Example: see rsl/trunk/tests/cond.

3.4 RSL Operations

In this section we provide a very brief summary of the operations available in RSL, and their syntax.

3.4.1 Regular Function Operations

Operations that may be used in both regular and historical RSL functions are summarized in Tables 3.1 and 3.2.

3.4.2 Historical RSL Operations

Operations that may only be used in historical RSL functions are summarized in Tables 3.3 and 3.4. Note that with the exception of hadd, the operations are simply variations of the regular function operations, but where the input to the function is a triple rather than a single interpretation or interpretation set. External functions associated with these ‘historical’ or ‘reporting’ operations are passed the current state of a user annotation table (in which edges from the execution trace and/or defined by the programmer are stored), along with the complete execution trace.
Table 3.1: RSL Decision and Output Operations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interpreting Operations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>accept</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>reject</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>add [file_name]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>update [obs_spec]: [dec_fn]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>munge : [dec_fn]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Output: Standard Output and Standard Error

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Output Operations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>print [string]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>print ifile</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>print [obs_spec]: [str_fn]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>print all [obs_spec]: [str_fn]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>error [string]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>error ifile</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>error [obs_spec]: [str_fn]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>error all [obs_spec]: [str_fn]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

File Output (use write ++ to append to rather than overwrite a file)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>File Output Operations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>write [string] to [file_name]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>write ifile to [file_name]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>write [obs_spec]: [str_fn]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>write all [obs_spec]: [str_fn]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.2: RSL Control Flow Statements

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Control Flow Statements</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>fun_name([arg list])</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>if [obs_spec] [bool_fn] { ... } else { ... }</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>if all [obs_spec] [bool_fn] { ... } else { ... }</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>while [obs_spec] [bool_fn] { ... }</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>while all [obs_spec] [bool_fn] { ... }</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>duplicate { ... } . . . { ... }</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 3.3: Historical RSL Decision and Output Operations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Querying the History (for Interpretations and Trace Graph Edges)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>hadd</strong> [ [dec_label list] ] [ : interp_bool ] [ notes : note_bool ]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Add interpretations from the indicated decision points, selected by</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>matching any of a list of regular expressions to portions of decision</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>labels (e.g. [ &quot;dec&quot;, &quot;init&quot;] to match all labeled points in the</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>firstExample.rsl program) <strong>Regular expressions are defined using awk syntax.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interpreations are filtered using the interp_bool function (keeping</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>those making the function true), and edges associated with the set of se-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lected interpretations are filtered using note_bool, and added to the</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>user annotation table.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>hadd all</strong> [ : bool_value ] [ notes : bool_value ]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>As above, but any filters provided are applied to the set of all interpreta-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tions produced.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interpretations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>hupdate</strong> [obs_spec] : [dec_fn]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Update each current interpretation and <strong>user annotation table</strong> using a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>decision function.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>hupdate all</strong> [obs_spec] : [dec_fn]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>As in previous, but first pass current interpretation set to dec_fn, then</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>apply resulting curried function dec_fn_curry to each interpretation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>hmunge</strong> [dec_fn]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Replace the current hash-consed interpretation set and <strong>user annotation table</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>using dec_fn.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Output: Standard Output and Standard Error</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>hprint</strong> [string]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Print string to standard output.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>hprint ifile</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Print current interpretations as an ifile to standard output.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>hprint</strong> [obs_spec] : [str_fn]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Print the string produced by str_fn for each interpretation, <strong>also observing the user annotation table and trace.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>hprint all</strong> [obs_spec] : [str_fn]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>As in previous, but first pass current interpretation set to str_fn, then apply</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the resulting curried function str_fn_curry to each interpretation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>herror</strong> [string]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Print string to standard error.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>herror ifile</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Print current interpretations as an ifile to standard error.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>herror</strong> [obs_spec] : [str_fn]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Print the string produced by str_fn for each interpretation <strong>also observing the user annotation table and trace.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>herror all</strong> [obs_spec] : [str_fn]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>As in previous, but first pass current interpretation set to str_fn, then apply</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the resulting curried function str_fn_curry to each interpretation.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>File Output (use write ++ to append)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>hwrite</strong> [string] to [file_name]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Write string to given file_name.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>hwrite ifile to [file_name]</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Write current interpretations as an ifile to file_name.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>hwrite</strong> [obs_spec] : [str_fn]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Write the string produced by str_fn for each interpretation <strong>also observing the user annotation table and trace.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>hwrite all</strong> [obs_spec] : [str_fn]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>As in previous, but first pass current interpretation set to str_fn, then apply</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the resulting curried function str_fn_curry to each interpretation.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 3.4: Historical RSL Control Flow Statements

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Syntax</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><code>hif [obs_spec] [bool_fn] { ... } else { ... }</code></td>
<td>Simple conditional (else branch optional) but also observing the user annotation table and trace. Note that interpretations are individually passed down the true or false branch; branches that receive no interpretations are not executed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><code>hif all [obs_spec] [bool_fn] { ... } else { ... }</code></td>
<td>As above, but first pass current interpretation set to str_fn, then apply the resulting curried function bool_fn_curry to each interpretation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><code>hwhile [obs_spec] [bool_fn] { ... }</code></td>
<td>Apply operations in the given scope to each interpretation making bool_fn true, until no such interpretation remains, but also observing the user annotation table and trace. .</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><code>hwhile all [obs_spec] [bool_fn] { ... }</code></td>
<td>As above, but first pass current interpretation set to bool_fn, then apply the resulting curried function bool_fn_curry to each interpretation. .</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter 4

Pre-Processing and the RSL Compiler

The current RSL compiler rslc is implemented using a combination of TXL and SML (Standard ML).

4.1 inc: including additional SML source files

At the top of an RSL program, any number of .sml files may be included using the syntax:

    inc "externalDecs.sml"
    inc "anotherFile.sml"
    ...

4.2 Embedding ML in an RSL program

While it is less-than-ideal style, to support rapid prototyping ML code may be embedded directly within an RSL program, using the syntax (*ML*) ... (*ML*). ML may be embedded in the following parts of an RSL program:

- Before the inc include declarations,
- Before the notes and interp declarations,
- Before a regular or reporting/historical RSL function, or
- In the data declaration section at the top of an RSL function.

Note that RSL functions are mapped to SML functions.

Embedded ML that precedes the include and notes/interpretation type declarations will appear in the file program-types.sml. The remaining ML code is translated and included in the main generated program.sml file produced by rslp for a program named program.rsl.

An example is provided in rsl/trunk/tests/mlembd/mlembd.rsl (note: the program takes one command line argument).
4.3 Command-Line Arguments

In an RSL program, the number of command-line arguments passed must match the number of command-line arguments named as parameters of the `main()` function. Consider the following program, which will say hello to the passed command-line arguments.

```rsl
interp:
    field: int

fn main( name1, name2 ) {
    print "Hello " ^ name1 ^ " and " ^ name2
}

hfn report() {
    print "And a Historical Hello for " ^ name1 ^ " and " ^ name2
}
```

This program will say hello to the two passed command line arguments **twice**: once for the main program, and once for the reporting portion of the program. Note that the **same command line arguments are passed to the `report()` and `main()` functions with the same identifier names, even if the report function has arguments**. This means that the reporting function shown above is transformed so that it is equivalent to:

```rsl
hfn report( arg1, arg2 ) {
    print "And a Historical Hello for " ^ name1 ^ " and " ^ name2
}
```
Bibliography