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Part 1: General core

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Annex

Foreword

ISO (the International Organization for Standardization) and IEC (the International Electrotechnical Commission) form the specialized system for worldwide standardization. National bodies that are members of ISO or IEC participate in the development of International Standards through technical committees established by the respective organization to deal with particular fields of technical activity. ISO and IEC technical committees collaborate in fields of mutual interest. Other international organizations, governmental and non-governmental, in liaison with ISO and IEC, also take part in the work.

In the field of information technology, ISO and IEC have established a joint technical committee ISO/IEC JTC 1. Draft International Standards adopted by the joint technical committee are circulated to national bodies for voting. Publication as an International Standard requires approval by at least 75% of the national bodies casting a vote.

International Standard ISO/IEC 13211 was prepared by Joint Technical Committee ISO/IEC JTC 1, *Information technology*, Subcommittee SC 22, *Programming languages, their environments and system software interfaces.*

Annex A of this part of ISO/IEC 13211 is for information only.

Introduction

This is the first International Standard for Prolog, Part 1 (General Core). It was produced on 20 April 1995.

There is no other International Standard for Prolog.

Prolog (Programming in Logic) combines the concepts of logical and algorithmic programming, and is recognized not just as an important tool in AI (Artificial Intelligence) and expert systems, but as a general purpose high-level programming language with some unique properties.

The language originates from work in the early 1970s by Robert A. Kowalski while at Edinburgh University (and ever since at Imperial College, London) and Alain Colmerauer at the University of Aix-Marseilles in France. Their efforts led in 1972 to the use of formal logic as the basis for a programming language. Kowalski's research provided the theoretical framework, while Colmerauer's gave rise to the programming language Prolog. Colmerauer and his team then built the first interpreter, and David Warren at the AI Department, University of Edinburgh, produced the first compiler.

The crucial features of Prolog are unification and backtracking. Unification shows how two arbitrary structures can be made equal, and Prolog processors employ a search strategy which tries to find a solution to a problem by backtracking to other paths if any one particular search comes to a dead end.

Prolog is good for windowing and multimedia because of the ease of building complex data structures dynamically, and also because the concept of backing out of an operation is built into the language.

Prolog is taught in more UK university computing degrees than any other programming language.

This part of ISO/IEC 13211 defines the general core features of Prolog, and part 2 will define modules.

Information technology — Programming languages — Prolog — Part 1: General core

1 Scope

ISO/IEC 13211 is designed to promote the applicability and portability of Prolog text and data among a variety of data processing systems.

This part of ISO/IEC 13211 specifies:

a) The representation of Prolog text,

b) The syntax and constraints of the Prolog language,

c) The semantic rules for interpreting Prolog text,

d) The representation of input data to be processed by Prolog,

e) The representation of output produced by Prolog, and

f) The restrictions and limits imposed on a conforming Prolog processor.

NOTE — This part of ISO/IEC 13211 does not specify:

a) the size or complexity of Prolog text that will exceed the capacity of any specific data processing system or language processor, or the actions to be taken when the corresponding limits are exceeded;

b) the minimal requirements of a data processing system that is capable of supporting an implementation of a Prolog processor;

c) the methods of activating the Prolog processor or the set of commands used to control the environment in which Prolog text is prepared for execution and executed;

d) the mechanisms by which Prolog text is prepared for use by a data processing system;

e) the typographical representation of Prolog text published for human reading;

f) the user environment (top level loop, debugger, library system, editor, compiler etc.) of a Prolog processor.

This part of ISO/IEC 13211 is intended for use by implementors and knowledgeable programmers, and is not a tutorial.

1.1 Notes

Notes in this part of ISO/IEC 13211 have no effect on the language, Prolog text or Prolog processors that are defined as conforming to this part of ISO/IEC 13211. Reasons for including a note include:

a) Cross references to other clauses and subclauses of this part of ISO/IEC 13211 in order to help readers find their way around,

b) Warnings when a built-in predicate as defined in this part of ISO/IEC 13211 has a different meaning in some existing implementations.

2 Normative references

The following standards contain provisions which, through reference in this text, constitute provisions of this part of ISO/IEC 13211. At the time of publication, the editions indicated were valid. All standards are subject to revision, and parties to agreements based on this part of ISO/IEC 13211 are encouraged to investigate the possibility of applying the most recent editions of the standards listed below. Members of IEC and ISO maintain registers of currently valid International Standards.

ISO/IEC 646 : 1991, *Information technology — ISO 7-bit coded character set for information interchange.*

ISO 2382-15 : 1985, *Data processing — Vocabulary — Part 15: Programming languages.*

ISO 8859-1 : 1987, *Information technology — 8-bit single-byte coded graphic character sets — Part 1: Latin alphabet No. 1.*

ISO/IEC 9899 : 1990, *Programming languages — C.*

ISO/IEC TR 10034 : 1990, *Guidelines for the preparation of conformity clauses in programming language standards.*

ISO/IEC 10967-1 : 1994, *Information technology — Language independent arithmetic — Part 1: Integer and floating point arithmetic.*

BS 6154 : 1981, *Method of defining — Syntactic metalanguage.*