Lecture #11: Strings, Mutable Data

Strings: A Specialized Type of Sequence

- Strings are sequences of characters, with a good deal of special syntax.
- Rather odd property: the base cases are circular. Characters are themselves strings of length 1!
- The usual operations on tuples apply also to strings:

```
>>> "abcd"[0]
'a'
>>> len("abcd")
4
>>> "abcd"[1:3]
'bc'
>>> "ab" + "cd"
'abcd'
>>> "x" * 5
"xxxxx"
>>> for c in "abcd":
        print(c, end=", ")
a, b, c, d,
```

Modified Operations

- Membership is not quite the same for strings as for tuples:

```
>>> 'b' in ('a', 'b', 'c', 'd')     # A sequence, not a string
True
>>> 'bc' in ('a', 'b', 'c', 'd')
False
# But...
>>> 'b' in 'abcd'
True
>>> 'bc' in 'abcd'                           # in Finds substrings
True
```

- The substring is generally more important than the character, in other words.

Numerous Functions and Methods

- The calls str(x) and x.__str__() convert values of any type into strings that depict them:

```
>>> str(3+7)
'10'                    A string, not an int
```

- The methods reflect common manipulations from "real life":

```
>>> "i can't find my shift key".capitalize()
'I can't find my shift key'.capitalize()
>>> "cHaNge".upper() + " CaSe".lower() + " raNDomLY".swapcase()
'CHANGE case RAndOMly'
>>> '1234'.isnumeric() and 'abcd'.isalpha()
True
>>> 'SNAKEeyes'.upper().endswith('YES')
True
>>> '{x} + {y} = {answer}'.format(answer=7, x=3, y=4)
'3 + 4 = 7'
```

A Cast of Thousands

- Python3 uses Unicode its basic character set: an international standard comprising most alphabets (dead and alive).
- Characters have standard numbers (indicating position in the character set) and names. The Python ord and chr convert from character to number and back.
- Getting your computer to actually render them all properly, however, is another matter entirely, which is outside Python.
- The character codes from 0–127 (7-bit codes) are known as ASCII (American Standard Code for Information Interchange). Everything you typically type uses this subset.
- Nice property: 1 byte (8 bits) per character.
- This is lost with Unicode, but since there is an extra bit, we can *encode* larger character codes (UTF-8).

Denoting Characters and Strings

- You've seen string literals all along. Python has 8 (!) styles. Consider the string

```
\begin{quote}
"I'd rather be in Philadelphia."
\end{quote}
```

which we can write:

```
>>> "\\begin{quote}\n\"I'd rather be in Philadelphia.\"\n\\end{quote}"
>>> '\\begin{quote}\n"I\'d rather be in Philadelphia."\n\\end{quote}'
>>> """\\begin{quote}
...  "I'd rather be in Philadelphia."
...  \\end{quote}"""
>>>  '''\\begin{quote}
...  "I'd rather be in Philadelphia."
...  \\end{quote}"""
>>>  r"""\begin{quote}
...  "I'd rather be in Philadelphia."
...  \end{quote}"""
```

Escapes

- The \ escape allows us to introduce special, non-graphical characters" newline `\n`, tab `\t`
- Or to insert quoting characters.
- Or Unicode characters:

```
"\u006b\u03b1\u03b2\u03b3\u03b6\u05d1\0u05d0\u8071\u8072"
"\u263a\u2639"
```

[See demo].

Strings as Sequences

- Most string operations are variations on the sequence operations we've seen.
- Example: take a string, break it into lines, indent the lines by N spaces, glue the lines back together, and return the result

```
def indent_lines(s, n):
    """The result of indenting each line in s by n spaces."""
    return "\n".join(map(lambda line: " " * n + line,
                         s.split('\n')))
```

- Use it to indent a file:

```
print(indent_lines(open("afile").read(), 4))
```

- An even more general manipulation: regular expressions:

```
import re
def indent_lines(s, n):
    return re.sub(r'(?m)^', ' ' * n, a)
```

Further exploration left to the reader.

Immutable Values

- The last weeks have concentrated on *immutable* data: Values, once created, are not changed.
- For example:

```
>>> X, Y = (1, 2, 3), (3, 4, 5)
>>> Z = (X, Y)
>>> X = (0, -1)
>>> Z
((1, 2, 3), (3, 4, 5))
```

- ...just as you'd expect for X and Y integers.

Local Variables

- What we have changed are local variables.
- But our uses of local variables have generally been such that we could replace all of them with parameters that we don't assign to.
- So instead of:

```
    def sum_every_other(A):
        S = 0
        for i in range(0, len(A), 2):
            S += A[i]
```

Alternative:

```
    def sum_every_other(A):
        def sum(i, S):
            if i >= len(A): return S
            else return sum(i+2, S+A[i])
        return sum(0, 0)
```

Referential Transparency

- This discipline of not changing things once they are created leads to the property of *referential transparency:* One may freely substitute a value for a variable having an equal value without changing the meaning of a program.
- When we can change data after creation, this property is lost.
- For example, in Python, tuples are immutable, so that these two fragments are indistinguishable, regardless of the contents of '...':

```
x = (1, 2, 3)          x = (1, 2, 3)
y = (1, 2, 3)          y = x
...                    ...
```

- But we *can* change lists in Python:

```
x = [1, 2, 3]          x = [1, 2, 3]
y = [1, 2, 3]          y = x
y[0] = 0               y[0] = 0
print x[0]             print x[0]
```

print two different things (1 vs. 0).

Mutation and Functions

- Let's work from an example:

```
def make_counter(start, limit):
    def next():
        """Increment the counter value, and return previous
        value. Returns None if counter is at the limit."""

        nonlocal start
        if start == limit:
            return None
        start += 1
        return start-1
    return next
```

- The new **nonlocal** statement says "Assignments to start in this function do not create a new local variable. Rather, they refer to the existing start defined outside (in make_counter).

Using Counters

- I can now write a loop like this:

```
>>>    c = make_counter(0, 10)
>>>    while True:
...        k = c()
...        if k is None:
..             break
...        print(c, end=",")
0, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9,
```

- Each call to `c` returns a different value: referential transparency clearly does not apply.