Preface

If objects did not exist, we would have to invent them.

In the last few days, I've been reading a couple of interesting pieces, ostensibly on programming without objects. The first of these is Doug Hoyte's *Let over Lambda*—"one of the most hardcore computer programming books out there"—according to the back-cover copy, and certainly an interesting and engaging read. In six chapters and 200 pages, we start in Lisp and move from closures to `lambda` expressions to `alambdas`, `dlambdas` and ultimately to `plambdas`. These "Pandoric Lambdas" create a closure that can respond to different methods, and whose state can either be encapsulated or visible outside. I seem to remember SIMULA had something similar in the mid-1960s.

The second is Jonathan Shapiro's *Retrospective Thoughts on BitC* (posted to `bitc-dev` on March 23, 2012). Of the four reasons why Shapiro chose to abandon BitC, the third is "The absence of some form of inheritance," and Shapiro goes on to say "I could nearly imagine getting what I needed by adding `ThisType` and inherited interfaces. But ...the combination is equivalent (from a type system perspective) to single-inheritance subclassing."

Truly, if objects did not exist, we would have to invent them. At ECOOP, of course, we have an advantage: Ole-Johan Dahl and Kristen Nygaard did invent objects; Alan Kay built a dynamic language based on objects; and the rest is the history of a large fraction of practical and academic programming for the last 30 years.

This year's ECOOP continued in that tradition, and started some new traditions of its own. ECOOP 2012 was only the second ECOOP to be held outside Europe (OOPSLA/ECOOP 1990 was held in Ottawa, and Canada is not technically part of Europe); ECOOP 2012 was the first ECOOP to be held in Asia; the first to be co-located with another programming language conference (PLDI); and the first to have a Program Chair from New Zealand. I must admit I was not entirely sure how that combination of circumstances would affect the conference. As far as the technical program represented in this volume is considered, this has been a great success: 140 papers were submitted, a significant increase over the last few ECOOPs.

Each paper was allocated to at least three Program Committee members to review — some papers were allocated more. All in all, we received 466 reviews, including external reviews contributed by 104 external reviewers. The Program Committee discussed these reviews online, after which authors had the opportunity to respond to reviews. The Program Committee then met in London and selected the 30 papers presented here. Of the 140 submissions, 16 were (co-)authored by members of the Program Committee. These papers received at least five reviews, and four of them were accepted.

A conference is only as good as the research it presents. I would like to thank all the authors who submitted their work to ECOOP: without your courage in sending your work, there would be no conference! I would like to thank the Program Committee, who collectively read and evaluated every paper submitted, and provided as much feedback as they could manage to the papers' authors. The quality of the Program Committee has long been a strength of ECOOP, and this year was no exception. Chairing the committee has been an honor and a privilege.

Thanks are due to Tony Hosking and Hong Mei, ECOOP Conference Chairs, for actually organizing the conference; to Tony Hosking (again), to Sophia Drosso-poulou and Susan Eisenbach for organizing and hosting the PC meeting; and to Richard van de Stadt for CyberChairPRO. Tony (again) and Steve Blackburn chaired discussions on papers where I had a conflict of interest. Finally, thanks are due to Jan Vitek, Co-chair of PLDI 2012, who first suggested collocating ECOOP and PLDI in Beijing. That seems like a great decision (so far).

And now, all that remains is to ignore the talks, read email through the keynotes, sleep through the summer school, tweet through the tutorials, disregard the workshops, and enjoy all the many and varied sights and delights of Beijing, sure in the knowledge that when we return home, these proceedings will still be waiting for us — the twenty-sixth of their kind, this year's modest addition to the history of object-oriented programming.

March 2012   James Noble