Program Synthesis (Part I)



July 8, 2019 Program Synthesis Moves a Step Closer to Reality George Leopold

As data scientists and software developers sort through the plethora of tools and APIs ranging from Python to Apache Spark, automation schemes are emerging to help programmers navigate those tools and the accompanying



Apr 16	Program Synthesis (Part 1
Wed	[overview]

Apr 21 Program Synthesis (Part 2) Mon [overview]

Apr 24 _ Thu

Apr 25 _ Fri



Exam #2 Due

(you pick a 2-hour window within this 24-hour day)

HW 6b (Contribution) Due

All Course Materials Due

(cannot be accepted later than this, please plan accordingly)

Agenda

- A gentle introduction to program synthesis
 - Mostly using examples/demos/figures
 - But also some formalisms/algorithms (Part 1 and Part 2)
- Goals
 - Get exposed to "program synthesis"
 - Appreciate this research topic
 - Learn a little bit about how synthesis works

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- 'hat are we doing here?
- Filling in Initials for Names
- ow would you do it?
- Idea 1: manually
- dea 2: write an Excel formula?
- dea 3: hire someone to do it for you?
- dea 4: StackOverflow?
- dea 5: ChatGPT?

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- dea 3: hire someone to do it for you?
- dea 4: StackOverflow?
- dea 5: ChatGPT?
- /hat are some problems with ach idea?

- No (very little) manual work
- No need to write Excel macros
- Highly automated
- People love it

Excel Flash Fill Is A Brilliant Time Saver

Share 🕜 У 🤠

Angus Kidman



Rebecca Jackson 🥶 レベッカ Rebeccal

Flashfill in The New Office Excel = witchcraft. It "knows" what you want to do. Love it! - Paul Dolley #AUSPC

FlashFill



Wesley Backelant @WesleyBackelant

...

#FlashFill in #Excel2013 can be so helpful. Love it :-)



Andrew Kemp @andrew_kemp

Gotta love the flashfill feature in excel 2013 for when I'm working with **#PowerShell** and **#csv** for **#exchange** and #activedirectory



Dr.B 📒 Learned Hand @sundarb

Love this back story on the invention of **#FlashFill**. Well done @SumitGulwani for a really useful tool & to @shobanab Ph.D who was the program manager" why @microsoftexcell is indispensable in B-Schools. **#Customer pain points for #Innovation #Marketing**



...

FlashFill Demo

Watch video demo..



https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LbK-FfCEBOw&t=20s 10

This video is part of a Microsoft Office 2013 webinar delivered in August 2012 for The Training Show.

The clip demonstrates a new feature in Excel called Flash Fill.



What's FlashFill?

FlashFill is <u>an Excel feature that automatically transforms</u> <u>strings using examples</u>.

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What does a desired program do in this case?

What's FlashFill?

• FlashFill is an Excel feature that automatically transforms <u>strings using examples</u>.

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11	Allyson Phou	

13

- What does a desired program do in this case?
- FlashFill synthesizes a program:
- (1) Take the first char. of first name
- (2) Concatenate it with space
- (3) Concatenate it with the first char. of last name







Vince Baumel aguantum relic

One of my favorite features of **#Excel** is flash-fill. I can't think of another shortcut that has saved me as much time, and it's surprisingly intuitive. In this example, my string column is actually 3 fields delimited by /. Fill one example row out, and CTRL+E under to flash-fill.

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sil.	A	B	с	D
1		NUMBER	NAME	FAVORITE ANIMAL
2	81264/Jessica/Lory, rainbow	81264	Jessica	Lory, rainbow
3	59343/Henryetta/Blue crane			
4	29877/Dacie/Cape raven	-0		
5	30293/Hernando/Macaw, green-winged			
6	78202/Lorenza/Rat, white-faced tree			
7	69532/Laurel/Swan, black			
8	33316/Angelica/Lion, south american sea			
9	23325/Ash/Legaan, ground			
10	76449/Carolyne/Yellow-headed caracara			
11	73305/Urban/Western spotted skunk			
12	45093/Fabian/Shark, blue			
13	26767/Gwenora/Olive baboon			
14	34147/Danna/Boar, wild			
15	57139/Ranee/Violet-crested turaco			
16	31142/Valera/White-tailed deer			
17	72558/Mia/Ibex			
18	59246/Deva/Rhinoceros, white			
19	15973/Lorelei/Slender loris			
20	77652/Salomo/Eurasian beaver			
21	67964/Andreas/Argalis			
22	22983/Sherill/Lion, asian			
23	69133/Jordana/European beaver			
24	21496/Averyl/Blue-breasted cordon bleu			
25	46911/Cam/Silver-backed jackal			
26	36133/Bron/Currasow (unidentified)			
27	51294/Candace/Possum, western pygmy			
28	28118/Huntlee/Flightless cormorant			
29	45094/Aguste/Swan, black			
30	27205/Randie/Crowned eagle			
31	79343/Florida/Black-winged stilt			
32	47094/Weston/Leadbeateri's ground hornbill			
33	67805/Lionello/Small Indian mongoose			
34	69732/Angelico/Rhinoceros, white			
35	73914/Ker/Blackbird, red-winged			
36	24641/Phaidra/Genet, common			
37	GIF /Amber/Western bearded dragon			
38	27345/Ally/Parrot, hawk-headed			

https://twitter.com/i/status/1462868647815397377

•••

What (kind of) program do you think FlashFill would synthesize?

(next)



Vince Baumel @quantum_relic

One of my favorite features of **#Excel** is flash-fill. I can't think of another shortcut that has saved me as much time, and it's surprisingly intuitive. In this example, my string column is actually 3 fields delimited by /. Fill one example row out, and CTRL+E under to flash-fill.

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16 https://twitter.com/i/status/1462868647815397377

What (kind of) program do you think FlashFill would synthesize?

B	C	
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•••



kurtsh ∂kurtsh

I've been working here for more than 2 decades & didn't know this. Damn. #excel #powertips

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5	Ariana Venti 12/27/1990		R			· · · ·	
6	Brad Spitt 2/14/1974						
7	Britney Cheers 4/23/1981						
8	Cardi A 6/19/1977						
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10	David Backgammon 10/7/1983						
11	Dwayne Jonson 8/23/1989						
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13	France Hilton 8/15/1977						
14	Gary Busy 3/4/1992						
15	George Looney 7/29/1979						
16	Yennifer Aniston 10/13/1986						
17	John Average 9/13/1971						
18	Johnny Deep 6/21/1978						
19	Justina Bieber 7/16/1982						
20	Katy Berry 4/14/1974						
21	Keanu Leaves 2/19/1976					_	
22	Kevin Fart 10/6/1965						
23	Khloe Doordashian 4/2/1989						
24	Kim Eyelashian 8/19/1972						
25	Leonardo DiCaprio 1/7/1987						
100	Matt Baman 5/4/1001						
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20	Megan Faux 5/22/1982						
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https://twitter.com/kurtsh/status/1462999130960064515?s=20&t=RRDbl1bBg0CTapPZielzhg

What (kind of) program do you think FlashFill would synthesize?



(next)



18 https://twitter.com/kurtsh/status/1462999130960064515?s=20&t=RRDbl1bBg0CTapPZielzhg



19 https://twitter.com/DataChaz/status/1454954213302312962?s=20&t=RRDbl1bBg0CTapPZielzhg

What (kind of) program do you think FlashFill would synthesize?

(no next!)



20 https://twitter.com/DataChaz/status/1454954213302312962?s=20&t=RRDbl1bBg0CTapPZielzhg

What (kind of) program do you

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Salt Lake City	UT	Utah	1
Durham	NC	North Carolina	3
Columbus	OH		3
Baton Rouge	LA		1
Omaha	NE		2
New Orleans	LA		39
Des Moines	IA		16
Seattle	WA		42
Oklahoma City	OK		14
Houston	TX		62
Charleston	SC		
Washington	DC		22
Milwaukee	WI		528
Columbia	SC		56
San, Diego	CA		329
Orlando	FL		190
Boston	MA		489
Dallas	TX		489
winneapolis	MN		396
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What (kind of) program do you think FlashFill would synthesize?

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(no next!)

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Durham	NC	North Carolina	3	Durham	NC	North Carolina	3		
Columbus	OH		35	Columbus	OH	Oorth Carolina	35		
Baton Rouge	LA		11	Baton Rouge	LA	Lorth Carolina	11		
Omaha	NE		27	Omaha	NE	North Carolina	27		
New Orleans	LA		39	New Orleans	LA	Lorth Carolina	39		
Des Moines	IA		16	Des Moines	IA	Iorth Carolina	16		
Seattle	WA		42	Seattle	WA	Worth Carolina	42		
Oklahoma City	OK		14:	Oklahoma City	OK	Oorth Carolina	14:		
Houston	TX		620	Houston	TX	Torth Carolina	620		
Charleston	SC		25	Charleston	SC	Sorth Carolina	29		
Washington	DC		225	Washington	DC	Dorth Carolina	225		
Milwaukee	WI		528	Milwaukee	WI	Worth Carolina	528		
Columbia	SC		56	Columbia	SC	Sorth Carolina	56		
San, Diego	CA		329	San, Diego	CA	Corth Carolina	329		
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Boston	MA		489	Boston	MA	Morth Carolina	489		
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Minneapolis	MN		396	Minneapolis	MN	Morth Carolina	396		
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FlashFill Doesn't Always Work As Expected...

- FlashFill has an underlying programming language
 - Domain-specific language (DSL) for string transformation

FlashFill Doesn't Always Work As Expected...

• FlashFill has an underlying programming language

Domain-specific language

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

Some examples: SQL, MATLAB, HTML, etc.

- **Domain-specific language (DSL)** for string transformation

- A domain-specific language (DSL) is a computer language specialized to a particular application domain. This is
- in contrast to a general-purpose language (GPL), which is broadly applicable across domains. There are a wide
- variety of DSLs, ranging from widely used languages for common domains, such as HTML for web pages, down to



FlashFill Doesn't Always Work As Expected...

- FlashFill has an underlying programming language
 - Domain-specific language (DSL) for string transformation
 - which means, fundamentally, it can only perform computations expressible in this language
 - In other words, FlashFill cannot synthesize programs that are not expressible in its underlying programming language
 - E.g., transforming dates is not supported, since FlashFill does not recognize dates. Same for US states.



FlashFill T-Shirt!

FlashFill author: Sumit Gulwani (Microsoft)

A	В	С
DEC	December	
NOV	November	
ост	Octember	
APR	Aprember	
AUG	Augember	
FEB	Febember	
JAN	Janember	
IUL	Julember	
IUN	Junember	
MAR	Marember	
MAY	Mayember	
SED	Sepember	
SLF		
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Latest Developments of FlashFill

FlashFill++: Scaling Programming by Example by Cutting to the Chase

JOSÉ CAMBRONERO*, Microsoft, USA SUMIT GULWANI*, Microsoft, USA

VU LE*, Microsoft, USA

D

FLAME: A Small Language Model for Spreadsheet Formulas

A

More publications can be found: https://www.microsoft.com/en-us/research/group/prose/publications/

Harshit Joshi¹*, Abishai Ebenezer⁴*, José Cambronero Sanchez^{2†}, Sumit Gulwani^{2†}, Aditya Kanade^{3†}, Vu Le^{2†}, Ivan Radiček^{5†*}, Gust Verbruggen^{2†}

¹ Stanford University ² Microsoft, USA ³ Microsoft Research, India ⁴ University of Washington ⁵ Demiurg



Watch video..



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What are we doing here? Scraping Subway store information



- What are we doing here? Scraping Subway store information
- How would you do it?



- What are we doing here? Scraping Subway store information
- How would you do it?
 - Idea 1: manually
 - Idea 2: write a Selenium program?
 - Idea 3: hire someone to do it for you?
 - Idea 4: StackOverflow?
 - Idea 5: ChatGPT?



- What are we doing here? Scraping Subway store information
- How would you do it?
 - Idea 1: manually
 - Idea 2: write a Selenium program?
 - Idea 3: hire someone to do it for you?
 - Idea 4: StackOverflow?
 - Idea 5: ChatGPT?
- What are some problems with each idea?

WebRobot

- No (very little) manual work
- No need to write Selenium programs
- Highly automated

WebRobot: Web Robotic Process Automation using **Interactive Programming-by-Demonstration**

Rui Dong University of Michigan, USA

Zhicheng Huang University of Michigan, USA

Yan Chen University of Toronto, Canada

Ian Iong Lam University of Michigan, USA

Xinyu Wang University of Michigan, USA



Follow-Ups of WebRobot

WebRobot: Web Robotic Process Automation using **Interactive Programming-by-Demonstration**

SemanticOn: Specifying Content-Based Semantic Conditions for Web Automation Programs

MIWA: Mixed-Initiative Web Automation for Better User Control and Confidence

Variables

XIANG LI*, University of Michigan, USA XIANGYU ZHOU*, University of Michigan, USA RUI DONG, University of Michigan, USA YIHONG ZHANG, University of Washington, USA XINYU WANG, University of Michigan, USA

- **DiLogics: Creating Web Automation Programs With Diverse** Logics
 - Efficient Bottom-Up Synthesis for Programs with Local

WebRobot Demo

Watch video demo..

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How Does WebRobot Work?

- Idea: Programming-by-Demonstration (PBD)
- Record a trace of user-performed actions, then synthesize a program with loops that generalizes the trace

Trace

- EnterData /../input x[zips][1]
- Click /../button
- ScrapeText /../div[1]/div[2]/div[1]/div[1]/div/h3 3
- ScrapeText /../div[1]/div[2]/div[1]/div[2]/div[1]/div[4]/a/div
- ScrapeText /../div[2]/div[2]/div[1]/div[1]/div/h3
- 6 ScrapeText /../div[2]/div[2]/div[1]/div[2]/div[1]/div[4]/a/div
- ScrapeText /../div[3]/div[2]/div[1]/div[1]/div/h3 7
- ScrapeText /../div[3]/div[2]/div[1]/div[2]/div[1]/div[4]/a/div 8

PBD

Program

EnterData /../input x[zips][1] Click /../button foreach q in Dscts(e, div[@class='rightContainer']) do ScrapeText *Q*//h3 ScrapeText *Q*//div[@class='locatorPhone']


Recap.. FlashFill vs. WebRobot

- FlashFill
- String editing in Excel Web automation Problem
 - Programming-by-Example
 - For string editing

Idea

DSL

WebRobot

Programming-by-Demonstration

For web automation



FlashFill vs. WebRobot: What's In Common?

WHAT DO THEY HAVE IN COMMON?





FlashFill vs. WebRobot: What's In Common?

• Share same "interface".

"Specification" ———

"Program"



FlashFill vs. WebRobot: What's In Common?

Share same "interface".

"Specification" ———

• Differ in:

- Application domains / use cases.
- Definitions of "specification".
- Programming languages.

→ "Program"



New terminology, but not totally unfamiliar.

"Program"

New terminology, but not totally unfamiliar. What do I want to do? → Human → Program

"Program"

New terminology, but not totally unfamiliar.

What do I want to do?

C program

→ "Program"

Human ----- Program

Assembly

New terminology, but not totally unfamiliar.

What do I want to do?

C program

→ "Program"

Human ----- Program GCC ----- Assembly

New terminology, but not totally unfamiliar.

What do I want to do?

C program

Data

→ "Program"



New terminology, but not totally unfamiliar.

What do I want to do?

C program

Data

→ "Program"

→ Human → Program
→ GCC → Assembly
→ Training Alg. → ML model



How about this?

	Α	В
1	Name and ID	First name and la
2	Thomas, Rhonda 82132	Rhonda Thomas
3	Emmett, Keara 34231	Keara Emmett 🧲
4	Vogel, James 32493	James Vogel
5	Jelen, Bill 23911	Bill Jelen
6	Miller, Sylvia 78356	Sylvia Miller
7	Lambert, Bobby 25900	Bobby Lambert
8	Sweet, Julie 65477	Julie Sweet
9	Williams, Don 43920	Don Williams
10	Spake, Deborah 33488	Deborah Spake



How about this?

What do I want to do? — Human C program Data Partial prog. Examples Demonstrations 49





- GCC
- Training Alg.
 - Autocomplete Complete prog.
 - FlashFill
 - WebRobot

Assembly

Program

- ML model

 - FlashFill prog.
 - Selenium prog.



Working Definition of Program Synthesis

High-level intent Specification

Typically involves search

I/O examples, demonstrations, natural language, reference *implementation, etc.*

Program synthesis

Lower-level code

Program

In some programming language (grammar + semantics)



Program Synthesis vs. Machine Learning/Deep Learning

• Is ML/DL also program synthesis?



Program Synthesis vs. Machine Learning/Deep Learning

- Is ML/DL also program synthesis?

 - At a high-level, yes

• ML/DL: data is spec, model is program, try to learn a model that matches data





Program Synthesis vs. Machine Learning/Deep Learning

- Is ML/DL also program synthesis?
 - ML/DL: data is spec, model is program, try to learn a model that matches data
 - At a high-level, yes
 - But not really..
 - synthesis to tolerate noise in spec)
 - Definitions of "programs" are very different (e.g., grammar vs. neural nets) • Data is noisy but spec is less noisy (but there is a trend in program
 - Typically continuous in ML/DL vs. discrete search space in program synthesis
 - The line is getting blurry







• Are program synthesizers compilers? Are compilers synthesizers?



- At a high-level, yes

• Are program synthesizers compilers? Are compilers synthesizers? • Compilers also convert high-level intent (code) to lower-level code



- At a high-level, yes
- But not really..

 - nowadays) whereas synthesizers perform search
 - The line is getting blurry

• Are program synthesizers compilers? Are compilers synthesizers? • Compilers also convert high-level intent (code) to lower-level code

 Compilers translate (not really true anymore) but synthesizers discover Compilers apply predefined transformations (again, not really true)







Sam Tobin-Hochstadt @samth

Replying to *@notypes*

I was once at a synthesis talk in which David Grove quoted Eran Yahav(?) as saying that a synthesizer is just a compiler that doesn't work. I found that definition really helpful, even if it was sort of a joke.

3:20 PM · May 6, 2020 · Twitter for Android

• Are program synthesizers compilers? Are compilers synthesizers?



Switch Gears..

What is **Synthesis**?

How to synthesize?



Math!

Synthesis algorithms will NOT be covered in Exam 2

Systematically Search Programs in Grammar

• Context-Free Grammar (CFG):

Non-terminal symbol

Terminal symbol



"All programs that can use x, 1 and +."



Systematically Search Programs in Grammar

• Context-Free Grammar (CFG):

• This CFG defines a set of programs



• Goal: find a program in this set that satisfies a given example



"All programs that can use x, 1 and +."





How to Search Systematically?

• Context-Free Grammar (CFG):

Top-down search







- Step 1: begin with the start symbol
- Step 2: pick a non-terminal in current result and replace it with one of its productions • Step 3: continue step 2 until no more non-terminal remains (i.e., only terminals)



Top-Down Search In Action



How to generate this search tree?

- Step 1: begin with the start symbol
- Step 2: pick a non-terminal in current result and replace it with one of its productions • Step 3: continue step 2 until no more non-terminal remains (i.e., only terminals)



Top-Down Search In Action



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e + e





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What if my grammar gets bigger?

 $e \rightarrow x$

e + e|e - e|

Synthesis Seems Computationally Expensive?!



- Top-down search has exponential time complexity (to program size)
- In general, program synthesis is computationally intractable, if not undecidable

.. which means synthesis in theory does not scale to complex problems..

But, recent advances lead to <u>empirically</u> efficient synthesis!

State-of-the-Art

- How many lines of code can be automatically synthesized within a reasonable amount of time?
 - This depends on the domain, but in general, a few dozens in minutes
 - This might sound too few / too slow?

The Mythical Man-Month

 1200 lines / year = 3 lines of code per day What?



State-of-the-Art

To give you a concrete idea

What WebRobot synthesized in a few seconds

	from traceCollector.traceCollector import TraceCollector
	from selenium.common.exceptions import NoSuchElementException, StaleElementReferenceException, TimeoutException
	inport traceback
	import os
	Injoit the
	driver_path = "./chronedriver"
	trace_name = 'W90T1"
	starting_website = "https://lrv.massaucountyny.gov/" description = """
	Siven a list of tuples (section, block, lot), for each, enter them in the search, then in the search result, extract 'Address', "Vilage", "School",
••	# init the trace collector and name it
	trace_collector = TraceCollector(driver_path=driver_path, trace_name=trace_name.
	stating_website=starting_website,
	description-description, script_filefile
	input_file=os.path.dirname(
	os.patn.realpatn(tile))+~/input.json~
	driver = trade_collector.get_driver()
	# Sleeps for 20 seconds so that users can log in.
	time.sleep(20)
	# MUDNITWO, This services that the near has signed up for and logged into an account (free)
	p waannet tale script requires that the dear has signed up for and rogged rite at acount (reep.
	for 1 in range(7):
	return "tuples[{}].{)".format(i, identifier)
	# Carde partics to appropriate how
	trace_collector.perfers_send_dsta(
	<pre>trace_collector.get_full_spath_from_element; driver.find_element_bw_idwisecil</pre>
),
	data_path('section')
	# Sends block to appropriate bux trace collector.perform send data(
	trace_collector.get_full_xpath_from_element;
	driver.find element by id("blk")
	dats_path('block")
	# Sends lot to appropriate box
	trace_collector.get_full_xpath_from_element)
	driver.find_element_by_id("lot")
	data_path('lot")
	# Press "Search"
	trace_collector.perform_plick(
	driver.find_element_by_id("singlebuttons:h")
	# Scrape Address, village, school, town trace collector perform acreme text/
	trace_collector.get_full_wpath_from_element;
	driver.find_element_by_xpath(///fl#id='right'l/section'll/div[ll/div")
)
) trace collector.perform scrape text(
	<pre>trace_collector.get_full_spath_from_element;</pre>
	driver.find_element_by_xpath('//*[#id='right']/section[1]/div[2]/div")
) trace_collector.perform_scrape_text(
	trace_collector.get_full_spath_from_element;
	<pre>//*[#id='right']/section[1]/div[3]/div")</pre>
	trace_collector.perform_scrape_text(
	<pre>trace_collector.get_full_spath_from_element; driver.find_element_by_xpath(</pre>
	'//*[#id='right']/section[1]/div[4]/div")
	# Go back and initiate another search trace collector.perform yo_back()
	crace_corrector.output()

(This is an equivalent Selenium program.)



Looking into the Future

- Synthesis as an atomic functionality in Software Engineering
 - Already come true in Excel (also "software dev"?)
 - Will come true in more and more domains
- "Programming Copilot" (ChatGPT etc.) is already here...
- Symbolic vs. Neural
 - Symbolic: search in DSL to find programs that match examples...
 - Neural: machine learning and neural nets


Looking into the Future

- Symbolic vs. Neural: both have pros and cons
 - Symbolic: highly interpretable, but slow (not scalable)..
 - Neural: generalization, but hallucinations and not interpretable..
- Many other orthogonal problems to work on
 - Usability
 - Killer apps and specialized techniques