Delivering Common Lisp Applications with ASDF 3.3

Pushing the Envelope or Therapeutic Fury?

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http://github.com/fare/asdf2017/
This Talk

This Talk: A progress report on ASDF, de facto standard build system for Common Lisp, continued evolution of the tradition of Lisp, a language discovered, not created, in 1958.

Plan

Some Background

Recent ASDF Progress

Lessons for build systems in any language
Some Background
What makes ASDF different

**DEFSYSTEM:** compile & load "systems" *in-image*

C analogs: make, pkg-config, ld.so, libc

Primarily designed for CL code

ASDF: extensible in CL itself via OO protocol...

... can be made to build anything!

Big focus on backward-compatibility

"If it's not backwards, it's not compatible"
Some History

<1981 Lisp Machine  DEFSYSTEM (1976 Make)

1990  MK-DEFSYSTEM: portable, pre ANSI CL

2001  0.5 kloc  ASDF 1: danb’s OO build (2004 1.1 kloc)

2009  2.0 kloc  ASDF 1.369 struggling with issues

2010  3.3 kloc  ASDF 2: robust portable configurable

2012  4.5 kloc  ASDF 2.26: stable, one last issue…

2013  9.7 kloc  ASDF 3: correct, delivers, UIOP

2014  11.3 kloc  ASDF 3.1: CL as scripting language

2017  12.8 kloc  ASDF 3.2: link C, launch-program

2017?  13.2 kloc  ASDF 3.3: proper phase separation
Current Limitations

Not declarative enough:
CL has ubiquitous global side-effects

One global set of system versions
One global syntax

Compared to bazel, missing:
cross-compilation, determinism, scalability…
New in ASDF
Previously on this show...

ASDF 3.1 (2014) ELS, ILC demos:
CL as a scripting language

Bazelisp (2016) ELS demo:
scalably build executables
with statically-linked C extensions
2017 Innovations

ASDF 3.2 (January 2017):
Application Delivery with static C libraries
Asynchronous subprocesses with `launch-program`
Source Location Configuration improvements
Deprecation infrastructure

ASDF 3.3 (Real Soon Now 2017):
Proper Phase Separation
Application Delivery with static C libraries

Previously

Extract functions & constants: :cffi-grovel-file

Compile & link wrappers: :cffi-wrapper-file

New in ASDF 3.2 + cffi-toolchain (2017)

Plain C code to link to: :c-file

cffi-toolchain: one place to deal with C

Not (yet) a general-purpose C build system

Missing per-system compile and link flags
Example system using C code

(defsystem "foo" :depends-on ("cffi")
  :defsystem-depends-on ("cffi-grovel")
  :serial t
  :component
  ((:cffi-grovel-file "interface-extraction")
   (:cffi-wrapper-file "complex-interfaces")
   (:c-file "some-c-code")
   (:cl-source-file "some-lisp")))
Loading a system

2001: (asdf:operate 'asdf:load-op "foo")

or "short" (asdf:oos 'asdf:load-op "foo")

2009: also (asdf:load-system "foo")

2013: also (asdf:oos :load-op "foo")

2014: also (asdf:make "foo")
Making a binary

ASDF 3.0 (2013): image-based delivery
devel. image (asdf:oos :image-op "foo")
standalone app. (asdf:oos :program-op "foo")
Any C extensions must be dynamically linked

ASDF 3.2 (2017): with static C extensions
(asdf:oos :static-image-op "foo")
(asdf:oos :static-program-op "foo")
Demo time!

(asdf:make "workout-timer/static")
Asynchronous subprocesses

**ASDF 3.1 (2014): run-program**
synchronous subprocesses (Unix and Windows)
exit status, optionally error out if not successful
I/O redir.: inject into stdin, capture stdout & stderr

**ASDF 3.2 (2017): launch-program**
asynchronous subprocess (Unix and Windows)
exit status, waiting for processes, killing them
I/O redirection, interaction through streams
Asynchronous Limitations

No event loop to which to integrate
No general signal support
Can make do with pipes and macros
Still way better than shell programming!

For more serious system programming: iolib
It requires a C extension—but that’s now easier!
Source Location Configuration: Before

ASDF 1 (2001): push to *central-registry*
eary in ~/.sbclrc — repeat for each impl!

ASDF 2 (2010): declare hierarchical source-registry
~/.config/common-lisp/source-registry.conf
Inherit wider configuration, or override it, from CL...
or from shell: CL_SOURCE_REGISTRY, XDG vars

Default ⊋ ~/.local/share/common-lisp/source/

ASDF 3.1 (2014), also ~/common-lisp/
Source Location Configuration: After

Recurising through large trees can be very slow

2015: .cl-source-registry.registry.cache for a :tree
Regenerate with a standard #!/usr/bin/cl script:
/asdf/tools/cl-source-registry-cache.lisp

Harkens back to ASDF 1 style symlink farms, but only for impatient power users with lots of systems

2015: also multicall binaries with cl-launch

2016: expose interface to XDG base directory vars
XDG also on Windows, modulo ASDF adaptuation

ASDF 3.2 (2017): the new release has it all
Deprecation Infrastructure

asdf:run-shell-command was a very bad API

Use uiop:run-program instead, as per docstring

In 3.2, using it now issues a style-warning
In 3.3, full warning if used, breaks on SBCL
In 3.4, cerror if used, breaks everywhere
In 3.5, error if not deleted yet from codebase

uiop/version makes staged deprecation easy

Part of UIOP 3.2, part of ASDF 3.2 (2017)
Proper Phase Separation

ASDF extensions: with CLOS. How to load one?

Using ASDF!

What if it itself relies on extensions?
Build in multiple phases.

What if an extension is modified?
Rebuild everything that transitively depends on it.

And what if a library is needed in multiple phases?
Only build it once.
Improper Phase Separation

ASDF 1 had only two phases: plan, then perform
(that was its least bug—see ASDF 2 & 3 papers)

If *defining* system `foo` depends on `ext`:

ASDF 1: `foo.asd` has (oos 'load-op "ext")

ASDF 2: `:defsystem-depends-on ("ext")`

ASDF 3: make it usable despite package issue

Kind of works. ASDF unaware it’s recursively called

Across phases: extra builds, *missing rebuilds*
Separating Phases

ASDF 3.3: loading the asd file is itself an *action*!

define-op — for *primary* systems.

Big tricky refactoring of *find-system*:

*find-system > load-asd > operate > perform > load* *

ASDF 3 had a cache: only call *input-files* once

(its API functions define a pure attribute grammar)

ASDF 3.3 extends it to a multi-phase *session*

One *plan* per phase, a *session* across phases.
Traversals of the Action Graph

Many kinds of traversals of the graph of *actions*:

**ASDF 1**: mark as needed, in this image

**ASDF 3**: mark as needed, in any previous image

**ASDF 3**: go thru all dependencies, e.g. to get list

**ASDF 3.3**: query whether up-to-date

**ASDF 1**: 1 bit (keep), plus *"magic"* (=bugs)

**ASDF 3**: 2 bit (needed-in-image), plus *timestamp*

**ASDF 3.3**: 3 bit (done), plus *phase*
Proper Phase Separation: Incompatibilities

:defsystem-depends-on to systems in same file
(as in the latest iolib release)

clear-system inside perform
(as in lots of systems that use prove)

operate in a CL file or perform method
(temporary exception: (require ...))

Now very bad taste: misnamed secondary system
(used all over: once a ASDF 1 colloquialism)
Proper Phase Separation: How good are we?

Build extensions is a universal need

Most build systems (Make…): on par with ASDF

Language-specific builds can be greater (Racket…) but not general-purpose.

Bazel: non-extensible extension language

ASDF is on the bleeding edge!?
Lessons and Opportunities
Evolving ASDF

ASDF sucks—less

Amazing how much is done with how few klocs

Ceiling: CL’s model of global side-effects
Impedes declarativeness, reproducibility, etc.

Evolution is costly (yet consider the alternative)
Gets worse as the code- and user- bases grow

Backward-incompatible change: takes 1-2 years…
Quicklisp: fix it all! And/or issue warnings and wait.
Beyond ASDF?

The ultimate purpose of a build system is:

Division of labor

Opportunity for much a better build system.

What design is worth starting from scratch?

Core: Pure FRP, CLOS-style OO, versioning plus staging, virtualization, instrumentation

http://j.mp/BuildSystems
Enjoy ASDF!

Common Lisp keeps improving, slowly:
AI, e-commerce, games…
Web, desktop or mobile apps—and now scripts #!

ASDF also keeps improving, slowly.
If there were demand, it could improve faster…

Donate to ASDF through the CLF!

https://common-lisp.net/project/asdf/