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ANSA Phase III

OMG architecture and CORBA specification

Andrew Watson

Abstract

These slides briefly present the OMG organisation and architecture, then concentrate on the structure of the ORB in sufficient detail to fill the balance of a 45 minute presentation. They are intended to be printed in colour, and in particular slide 6 will not reproduce properly on a monochrome printer - however, a grayscale printer such as the LaswerJet 4m should produce something usable.

Slide 17 might be regarded as contentious - you may wish to omit it.

APM.1146.02 **Approved** 8th February 1995
Briefing Note

Distribution:
Supersedes: APM 1070
Superseded by:

OMG architecture and CORBA specification

Andrew Watson

APM

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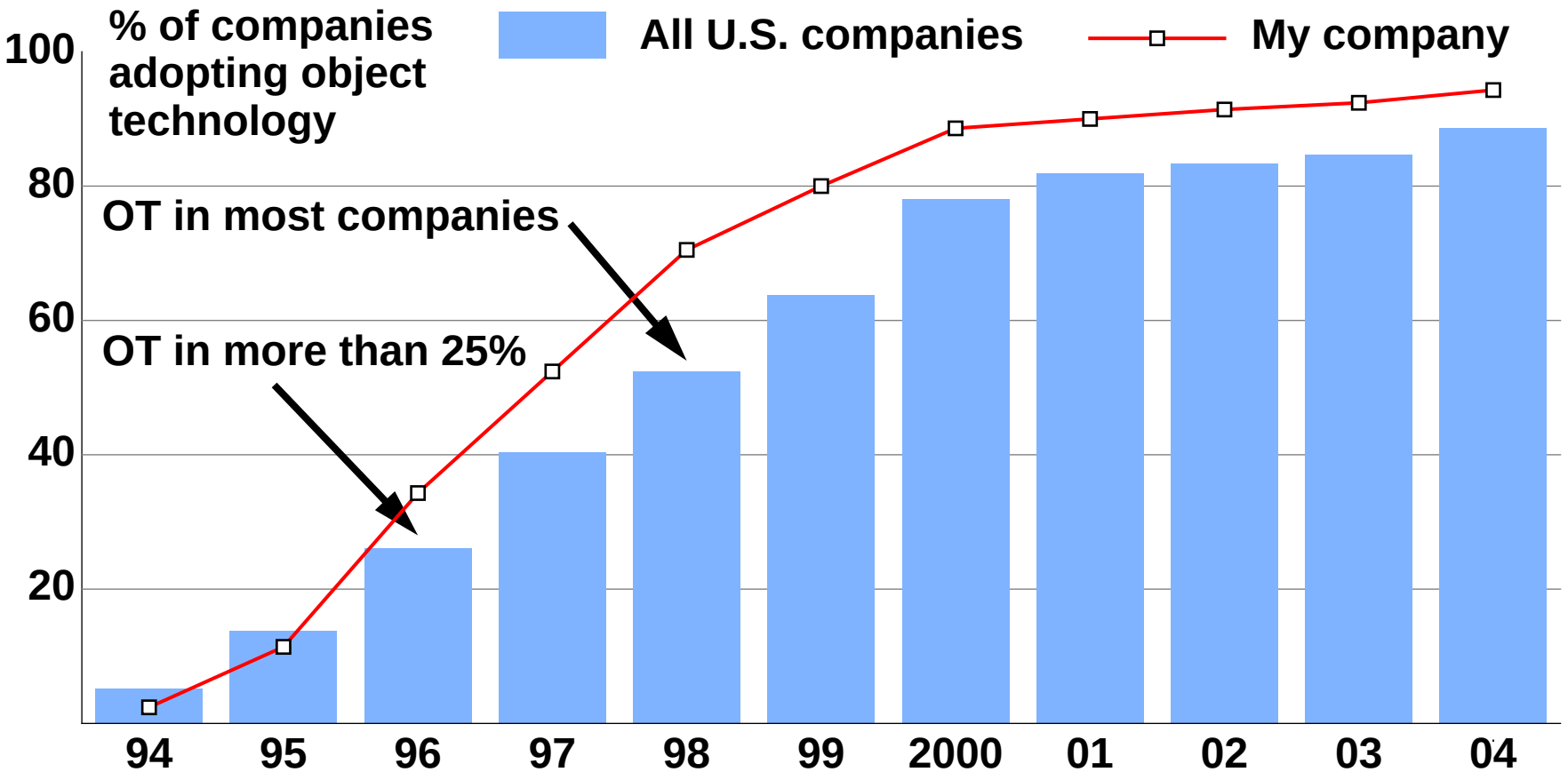
Preface: a word on objects

- **There's no single agreed set of features in "an object system"**
  - Every object-based language/database/infrastructure has a different set
- **Key concept is encapsulation**
  - Precise control over how object interacts with its clients -> modularity
  - Modularity is the key to developing application components separately
  - ..... to distributing application components across several machines
  - ..... to testing and verifying components separately
  - ..... to reusing the same components in many applications
- **Other OO concepts are secondary**
  - Particularly inheritance

Market expectations for OT



Whence came OMG?

- **Non-profit organisation founded April 1989 to promote unified market for OO products**
  - US-based but international in scope
  - Many vendors, some end-users, one or two researchers
- **Mission: To develop a single architecture, using object technology, for distributed application integration**
  - Provides reusability of components
  - Provides interoperability and portability of applications
  - Based on commercially-available software
  - “It should be as easy to plug a computer into the global information network as it is to plug it into mains power network”

Org Chart

OMG Board
Chris Stone (OMG)

Technical Committee
Richard Soley (OMG)

Subcommittees

Liaison
Jon Siegel (OMG)

Policies & Procedures
Richard Soley (OMG)

Requirements
Geoff Lewis (SunSoft)

Object Model
Andrew Hutt (ICL)

Ad-hoc working group
Richard Soley (OMG)

Task Forces

Object Request Broker
Andrew Watson (APM)

Common Facilities
Tom Mowbray (MITRE)

Object Services
Geoff Lewis (SunSoft)

Revision Task Forces
Various

SIGs

End-user
Peter Walker (GPT)

OO databases
Jacob Stein (Servio)

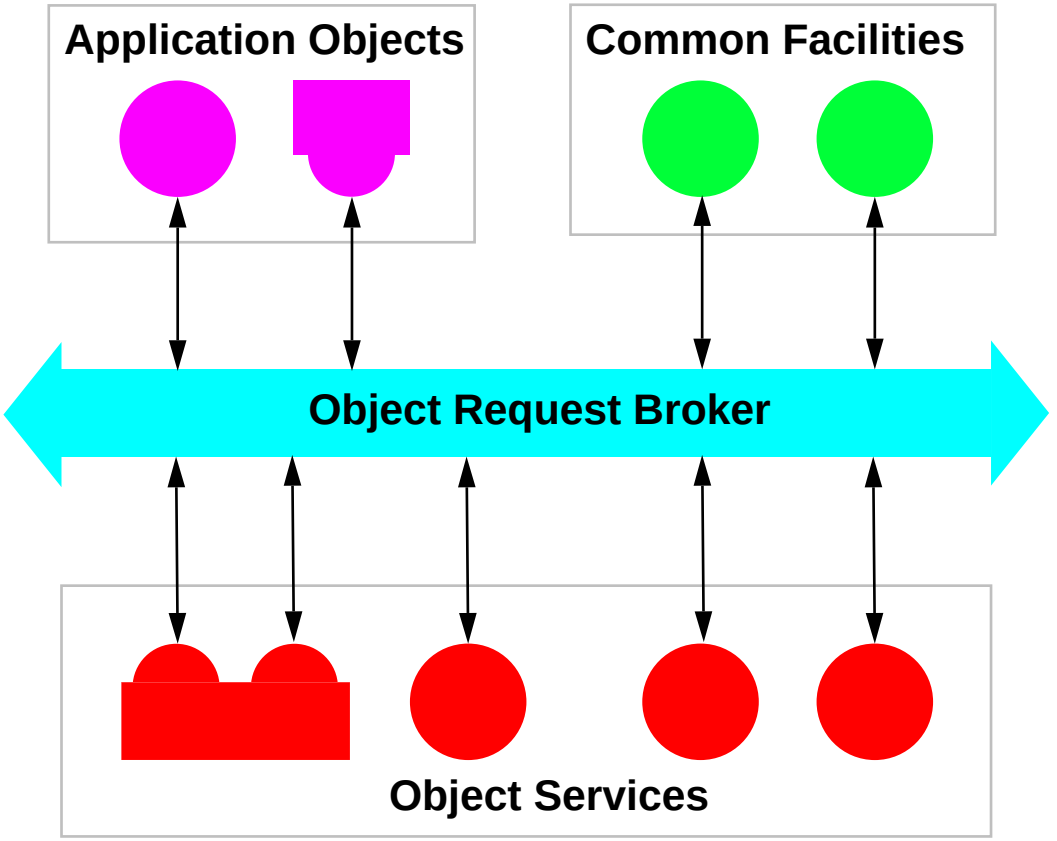
Parallel Object systems
Gene Pierce (NCR)

Analysis & Design
Andrew Hutt (ICL))

Business Object Mgmt.
Robert Shelton (Open Eng)

Financial
Jack Hassall (Stanford s/w)

Object Management Architecture



Populating the Framework

- **Task Force is formed, issues Request for Information (RFI)**
  - **Everyone invited to respond with whatever material they think relevant**
- **TF studies responses, decides strategy**
  - **Possibly produces Roadmap or Architecture document**
- **TF issues Request for Proposals (RFP)**
  - **Members supply specifications of technology to fill stated requirement**
- **TF recommends a single response to TC, which recommends to board**
- **Task Force dissolved**

Object Request Broker

- **OMG's first RFP cycle**
  - **RFI closed Aug. 1990 (8 responses), RFP closed Dec. 1990 (10 LOIs)**
- **Seven proposals presented March 1991**
  - **APM, Bull, DEC, DSET, HP/Sun, Hyperdesk, NCR/ODI**
- **Two merged submissions by demonstrations in May 1991**
  - **HP/Sun/NCR/ODI & Hyperdesk/DEC**
- **"90 day" team formed, presented merged proposal (CORBA) in September 1991**
- **Proposal accepted October 1991**

Key CORBA concepts

- **Object**
  - "Classical" object model: each request directed to a particular object
- **Object reference**
  - "Handle" used by client(s) to make invocation on service-provider
  - Opaque (i.e. no handle equality test - see Powell's paper)
  - May be passed as request parameter
- **Request**
  - Operation name + target object ref + zero or more parameters
  - Optional "request context" (to "pass additional data about the request")
  - Outcome: results or an exception
  - Parameters may be IN, OUT or IN/OUT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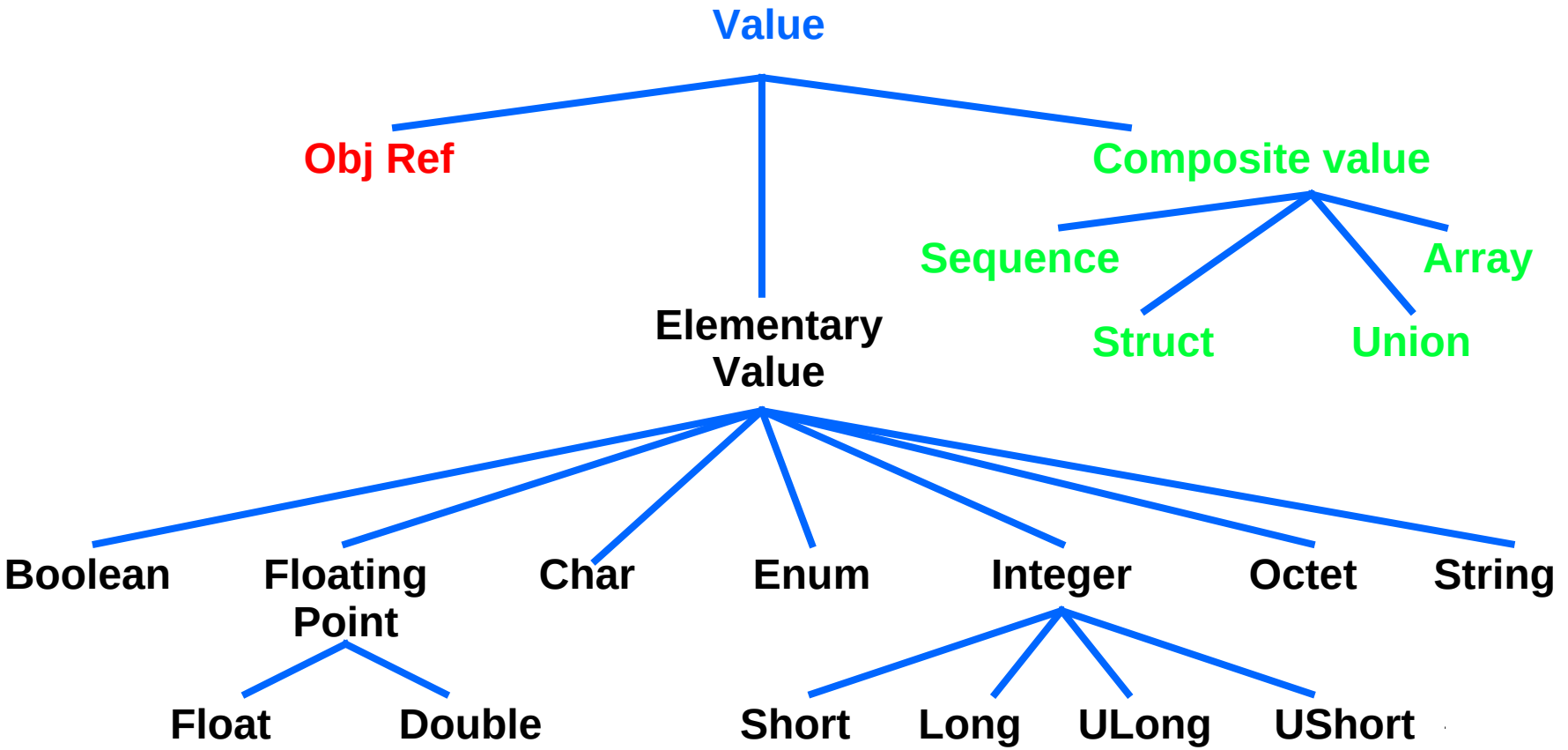
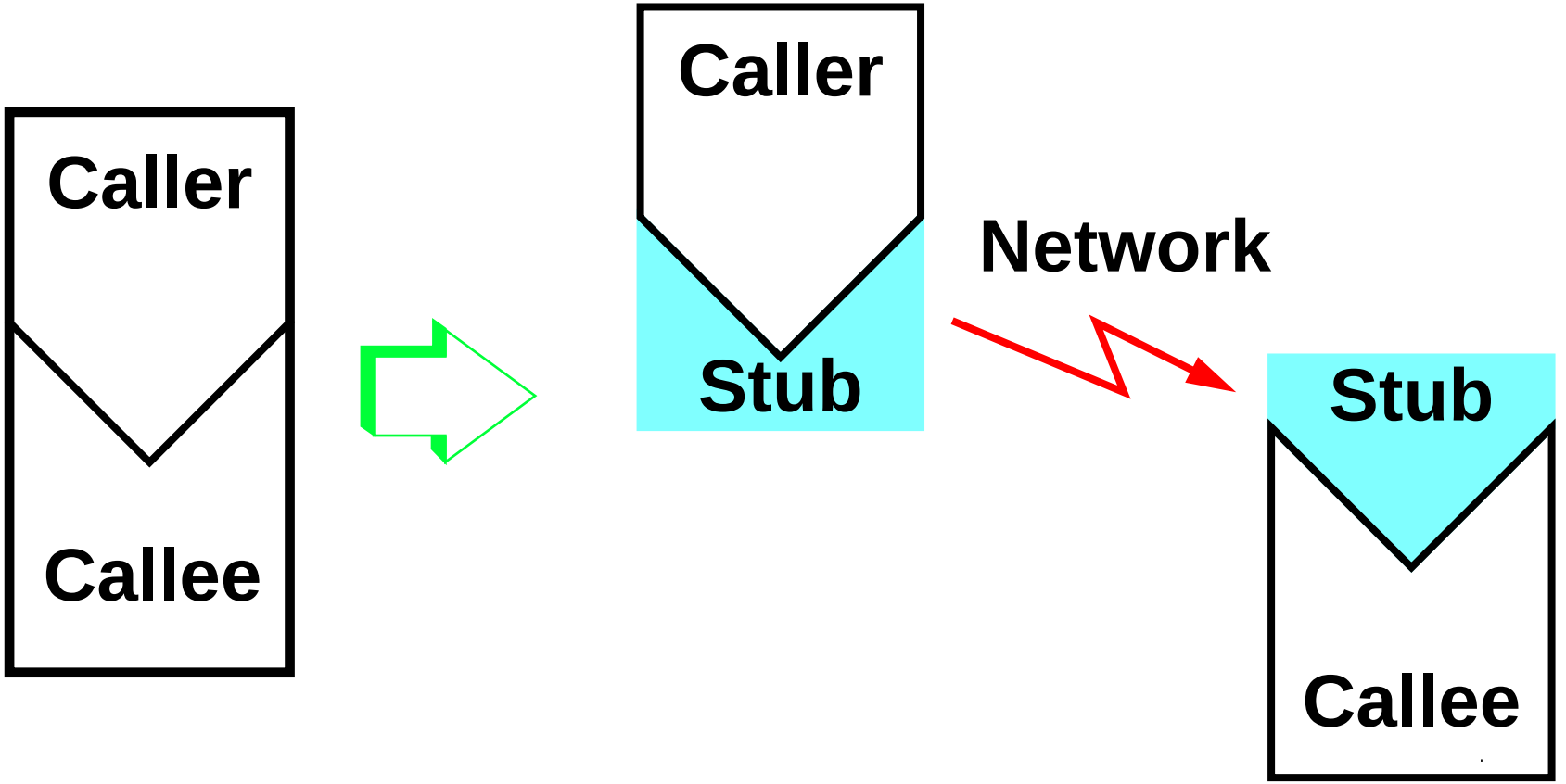
Data Types

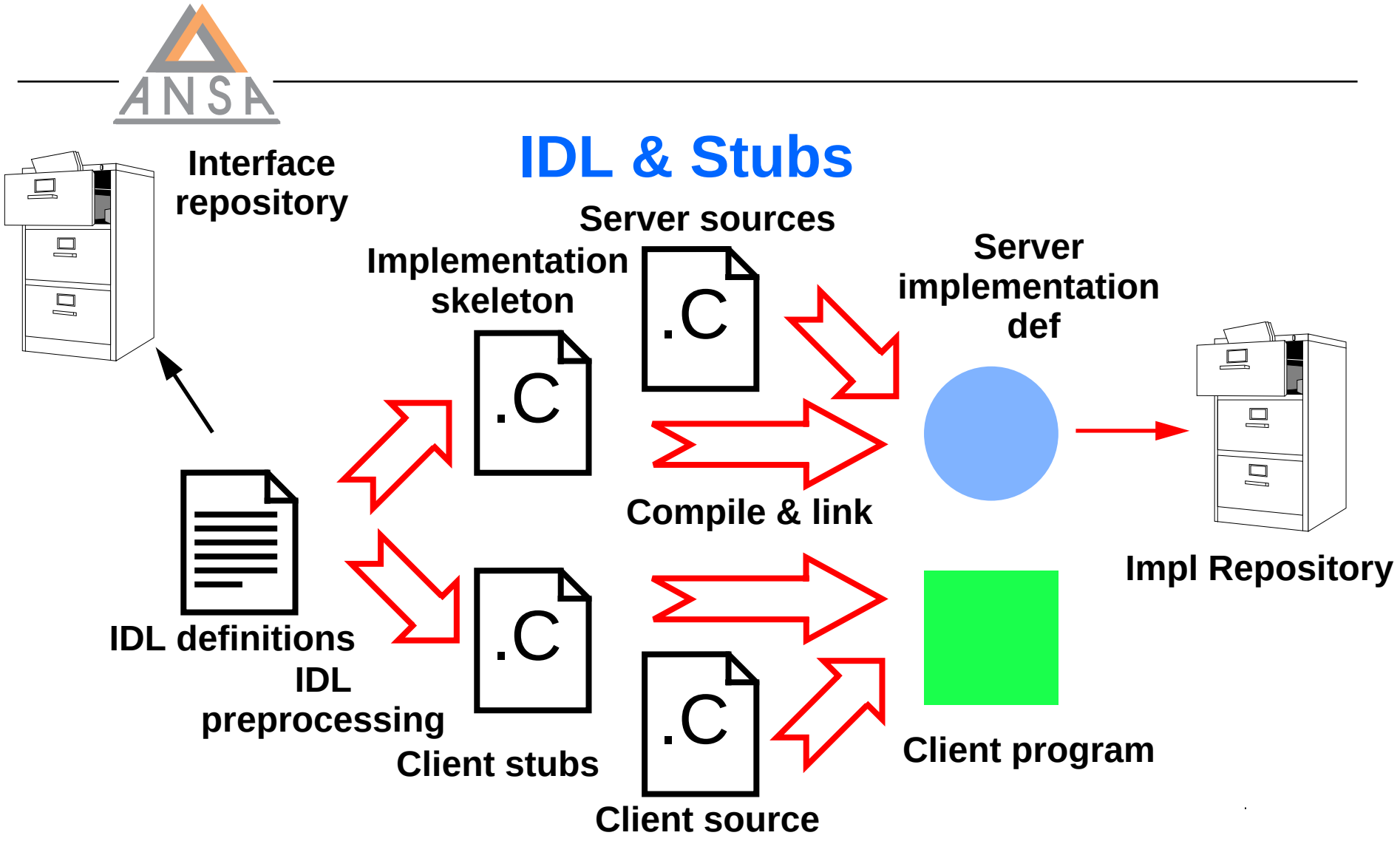

Value
Obj Ref
Composite value
Sequence
Array
Struct
Union
Elementary Value
Boolean
Floating Point
Char
Enum
Integer
Octet
String
Float
Double
Short
Long
ULong
UShort

Key concepts (cont.)

- **Interface**
  - Set of operation signatures
  - Identifies requests that can be made on object satisfying that interface
  - Interface = abstract type (abstract class in C++ speak)
- **Operation signature**
  - Operation name + parameter types & directions + exception spec + context spec + semantics (at-most once vs. one-way best-effort)
  - cf. C/C++ function prototype
- **Interface Definition Language (IDL)**
  - Written interface definitions
  - Doesn't specify implementation (despite looking like C++)

Stubs

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IDL & Stubs
Interface repository
Server sources
Implementation skeleton
.C
.C
Server implementation def
Compile & link
Impl Repository
IDL definitions
IDL preprocessing
.C
.C
Client stubs
Client source
Client program

Key concepts (cont.)

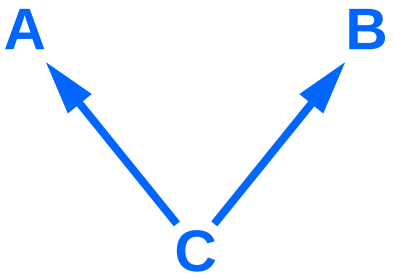
- **Interfaces can be derived from other interfaces by extension**
  - Creates a subtype (since redefinition of operations not permitted and IDL has no self-reference)
  - An interface can be derived from multiple ancestors - but illegal if operation names conflict
  - CORBA calls this derivation “inheritance” (sic)
- **Two interpretations of what this means**
  - Interfaces may only be “cast” to those from which they inherit, or ...
  - Merely saves the effort of writing out the new definition in full
  - Interface B inherits from interface A is a sufficient, but not a necessary, condition for B to be used as if it is A

Interface inheritance & subtyping

```
interface A {void f {in float x}}

interface B {long g {in long x}}

interface C: B, A {void h {in long x}}
```



- **By second interpretation, C is completely equivalent to:**

```
interface C:{void f {in float x}
             long g {in long x}
             void h {in long x}}
```

- **C is a subtype of both A and B**
  - **object with interface C may be substituted where-ever clients expect one with interfaces A or B**

Key concepts (cont.)

- **Object Adaptor**
  - "Glue" that passes incoming invocation into server object
  - Includes implementation skeleton generated from IDL
  - Only Basic Object Adaptor (BOA) specified by CORBA
- **Dynamic Invocation Interface (DII)**
  - Client's alternative to invoking object's operations via stubs
  - Req'd only where Lisp programmer would use 'eval' (i.e. almost never)
  - Complicated and error-prone: use only if unavoidable
- **Interface Repository**
  - Provides ability to find interface of arbitrary object at run-time (see above)

Why the DII isn't for you

- **For client to make request using stub, target object need only have operation with the right name and signature**
  - **No need to know the implementation of the object**
  - **No need for server's IDL to be identical to (or derived from) the client's**
  - **No need for server even to exist until client actually makes request**
  - **Therefore, usually no need for DII: stub-based client can do the job**
- **DII forces programmer to build parameter lists etc "by hand"**
  - **No check that he got it right until run-time**
  - **Large API, lots of code**
  - **Only necessary if writing language interpreter, object browser etc**
- **"If you can write it in C++, you can use a stub"**

Invocation semantics

- **CORBA invocations are synchronous (request/response)**
  - **Therefore your CORBA implementation must have threads**
- **One way invocations also available**
  - **Unreliable**
  - **Correct implementation of CORBA could throw away every 10th one-way invocation ... or every second one ... or all of them**
  - **... and before you say it, yes this isn't much use to you!**
  - **One-way provided for access to the comms, to build blast protocols etc**
  - **Queued message delivery provided by Event Service**
- **Deferred synchronous also available via DII**

Availability

- **Four or five companies have ORBs available today (2/95)**
- **Several are in beta test**
- **Many companies (100?) are working on ORBs and related products**
- **Compliance testing being investigated by X/Open**

Future ORB developments

- **Published CORBA Spec is 1.1**
- **CORBA 1.2 Spec cleans up some ambiguities**
  - **Not published in book form, but as Postscript source, because ...**
- **ORB 2.0 about to be published**
  - **Provides wire-level interoperability**
  - **Standardises update functions for Interface Repository**
  - **Standardises object initialisation**
  - **Cleans up some more loose ends**

Future ORB developments (cont.)

- **CORBA 1.x included only language mappings for C**
  - **C++ and Smalltalk have since been added**
  - **COBOL, Eiffel, Ada are in prospect**
- **Forthcoming RFPs:**
  - **Extended IDL datatypes, for wide characters & internationalisation**
  - **COM/CORBA interworking**

Getting OMG specs

- **Final specifications available from:**
  - **OMG +1 508 820 4300 request@omg.org**
  - **X/Open +44 1734 508311**
- **OMG plan a subscription service to keep documents up to date**
- **Working documents, RFPs etc. available electronically:**
  - **Send email to: server@omg.org**
  - **By anonymous ftp from: ftp.omg.org:/pub/docs**
  - **Via the Web: http://www.omg.org**