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Software Engineering with Reusable Components

Software is rarely built completely from scratch. To a great extent, existing software documents (source code, design documents, etc.) are copied and adapted to fit new requirements. Yet we are far from the goal of making reuse the standard approach to software development. Software reuse is the process of creating software systems from existing software rather than building them from scratch. Software reuse is still an emerging discipline. It appears in many different forms from ad-hoc reuse to systematic reuse, and from white-box reuse to black-box reuse. Many different products for reuse range from ideas and algorithms to any documents that are created during the software life cycle. Source code is most commonly reused; thus many people misconceive software reuse as the reuse of source code alone. Recently source code and design reuse have become popular with (object-oriented) class libraries, application frameworks, and design patterns. Software components provide a vehicle for planned and systematic reuse. The software community does not yet agree on what a software component is exactly. Nowadays, the term component is used as a synonym for object most of the time, but it also stands for module or function. Recently the term component-based or component-oriented software development has become popular. In this context components are defined as objects plus something. What something is exactly, or has to be for effective software development, remains yet to be seen. However, systems and models are emerging to support that notion.

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