



Implicit Function Types

Principles of Functional Programming

Repetitive Using Clauses

In last version of the conference management system of the last session we got rid of explicit Viewers arguments.

But we still need explicit using parameter clauses.

```
def score(paper: Paper)(using Viewers): Int = ...  
def rankings(using Viewers): List[Paper] = ...  
def delegateTo(p: Person, query: Viewers => T)(using Viewers): T = ...
```

Can we get rid of these as well?

Lambdas With Using Clauses

Let's massage the definition of rankings a bit:

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def rankings = (viewers: Viewers) =>  
  papers.sortBy(score(_, viewers)).reverse
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What is its type?

- ▶ For a normal anonymous function it would be:
Viewers => List[Paper]
- ▶ For an anonymous functions with a using clause it is:
Viewers ?=> List[Paper]

Implicit Function Types

Viewers \Rightarrow List[Paper] is called an *implicit function type*.

There are two typing rules involving such types.

1. Implicit functions get their arguments inferred just like methods with using clauses. In

```
val f: A  $\Rightarrow$  B
```

```
given a: A
```

```
f
```

the expression `f` expands to `f(using a)`.

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f
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the expression `f` expands to `f(using a)`.

2. Implicit functions get created on demand.

If the expected type of an expression `b` is `A \Rightarrow B`, then `b` expands to the anonymous function `(_: A) \Rightarrow b`.

Example Application

Let's use implicit function types in our conference management system.

First, introduce a type alias

```
type Viewed[T] = Viewers ?=> T
```

This is just for conciseness; Viewed[T] is easier to read than Viewers ?=> T and it expresses the point we want to make.

Example Application (2)

Now, perform the apply two changes:

1. Replace every method signature ending in
 `(using Viewers): SomeType`
with
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with

`: Viewed[SomeType]`

2. Replace function type parameter

`query: Viewers => SomeType`

with

`query: Viewed[SomeType]`

Trade Types for Type Parameters

Implicit Parameters in using clauses trade *types* for *terms*:

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Implicit Function Types go one step further. They trade types for parameters.

- ▶ The developer writes down the return type of the method.
The compiler infers one or more method parameters that match the type.

Abstracting over Context Abstractions

Another way to look at it is to see implicit function types, as *second degree context abstractions*.

- ▶ Implicit parameters in using clauses abstract over the context at the call site.
They are first-degree context abstractions.
- ▶ Implicit function types allow to abstract over using clauses (in the original sense: they allow to introduce a name such as `Viewed` that can be used instead of writing explicit parameter clauses).
- ▶ So, together with type aliases, they enable abstractions of context abstractions.