(algorithms)

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As a long time Lisp programmer—more than 20 years—few things mean more to my continued happiness as a programmer than the continued survival and good health of Lisp. Unfortunately, as I ponder the future of Lisp, I see bad signs as well as good. The continued steady progress toward an ANSI standard for Common Lisp is a very important anchor of stability. On the other hand, the dream sired by the AI boom of the '80s that Lisp would expand into huge new markets appears stillborn. Rather, it is C (and C++) that are expanding into new markets.

I expect that many of us could be happy if Lisp merely remained strong in its current niche. However, as with many things in life, there is no "merely remaining strong" for a programming language. In general, programming languages are either growing (with concomitant commercial support for their health and maintenance) or fading away (with concomitant commercial neglect).

The issues that will determine the fate of Lisp are varied and complex, and most of us are not in a position to do anything about most of them. However, I personally believe that one issue—the amount of sharing of code between programmers—is more important than all the others. Fortunately, this is something we can all do something about.

This issue's Algorithms article discusses the importance of code sharing to the future of Lisp and outlines some of the steps we can all take to promote it. As part of this, the article includes a review of the just released book/CD-ROM *Prime Time Freeware for AI*. In my opinion, such attempts at promoting large scale sharing may be just as important for the future health of Lisp as the upcoming Common Lisp Standard.

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