

Re: Sorting lists in .Net – why it sucks

Source:

<http://www.tech-archive.net/Archive/DotNet/microsoft.public.dotnet.general/2008-01/msg00388.html>

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 - *Date:* Fri, 25 Jan 2008 15:41:55 +0100
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For info, Wintellect (<http://www.wintellect.com/PowerCollections.aspx>) has written a set of generic collection classes that support what you are looking for (OrderedBag<T>).

From Jeffrey Richter Book:

At Microsoft's request, Wintellect has produced the "Power Collections Library" to bring some of the C++ Standard Template Library's collection classes to the CLR programmer.

– José

"nightwatch77" <rafal.gwizdala@xxxxxxxxxx> wrote in message
news:8c3f6f35-5f68-4cdf-8fd5-8aa2b462c433@xx

Today I stumbled upon a very interesting 'feature' of .net 2.0
My application uses a generic SortedList class for storing a sorted list of objects (on a DateTime key) – that is, SortedList<DateTime, object>. However, the program kept crashing for some time until I debugged it to find out that it crashes on inserting data to the sorted list. Problem was that I was inserting two items with the same date (the same key).

Hey, how do you think, should sorted list just crash when there is a duplicate value? Normal lists are expected to store duplicate values, but some great inventor at Microsoft has made it better. They have documented this behavior, but why they assume sorting shouldn't work for duplicate entries in the list? Normal sorting algorithms are just fine with that.

Of course, I had to use non-generic ArrayList instead with custom IComparer for sorting.

And there goes another surprise – ArrayList.Sort implements an unstable sort algorithm. That is, for equal objects, it does not guarantee that after sorting they will keep the original order. Of course this is not documented at all. And of course causes problems – in my case it would make sequential messages with timestamp come in wrong order.

I don't know what sort algorithm did Microsoft use, but simple

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QuickSort implementation is a stable algorithm and has no problem with sorting duplicated values. When Microsoft recruits any developer, they ask him to implement some list sorting algorithm during job interview, so I thought all developers in Microsoft are capable of implementing it correctly.

Best regards,
RG