Review from Lecture 7

- Designing our own container classes
- Dynamically allocated memory in classes
- Copy constructors, assignment operators, and destructors
- Templated classes
- Implementation of the DS Vec class, mimicking the STL vector class

Today

- Returning references to member variables from member functions
- Another vector operation: pop_back
- Erasing items from vectors is inefficient!
- Iterators and iterator operations
- Vec iterator implementation
- Looking Ahead: Lists as a different sequential container class.

Optional Reading: Ford & Topp Ch 6; Koenig & Moo, Sections 5.1-5.5

8.1 Constructors, Destructors, & Assignment Operator

From an old test: Match up the line of code with the function that is called. Each letter is used exactly once.

```
Foo f1;                  // a) assignment operator
Foo* f2;                 // b) destructor
f2 = new Foo(f1);        // c) copy constructor
f1 = *f2;                // d) default constructor
delete f2;               // e) none of the above
```

8.2 References and Return Values

- A reference is an alias for another variable. For example:

```
string a = "Tommy";
string b = a;       // a new string is created using the string copy constructor
string& c = a;      // c is an alias/reference to the string object a
b[1] = 'i';
cout << a << " " << b << " " << c << endl;  // outputs: Tommy Timmy Tommy
```

The reference variable c refers to the same string as variable a. Therefore, when we change c, we change a.

- Exactly the same thing occurs with reference parameters to functions and the return values of functions. Let’s look at the Student class from Lecture 4 again:
class Student {
public:
    const string& first_name() const { return first_name_; }
    const string& last_name() const { return last_name_; }
private:
    string first_name_;
    string last_name_;
};

In the main function we had a vector of students:
vector<Student> students;

Based on our discussion of references above and looking at the class declaration, what if we wrote the following. Would the code then be changing the internal contents of the i-th Student object?

string & fname = students[i].first_name();
fname[1] = 'i'

The answer is NO! The Student class member function first_name returns a const reference. The compiler will complain that the above code is attempting to assign a const reference to a non-const reference variable.

If we instead wrote the following, then compiler would complain that you are trying to change a const object.

const string & fname = students[i].first_name();
fname[1] = 'i'

Hence in both cases the Student class would be “safe” from attempts at external modification.

However, the author of the Student class would get into trouble if the member function return type was only a reference, and not a const reference. Then external users could access and change the internal contents of an object! This is a bad idea in most cases.

8.3 Another vector operation: pop_back

We have seen how push_back adds a value to the end of a vector, increasing the size of the vector by 1. There is a corresponding function called pop_back, which removes the last item in a vector, reducing the size by 1.

There are also vector functions called front and back which denote (and thereby provide access to) the first and last item in the vector, allowing them to be changed. For example:

vector<int> a(5, 1); // a has 5 values, all 1
a.pop_back(); // a now has 4 values
a.front() = 3; // equivalent to the statement, a[0] = 3;
a.back() = -2; // equivalent to the statement, a[a.size()-1] = -2;

8.4 Motivating Example: Course Enrollment and Waiting List

This program maintains the class list and the waiting list for a single course. The program is structured to handle interactive input. Error checking ensures that the input is valid.

Vectors store the enrolled students and the waiting students. The main work is done in the two functions enroll_student and remove_student.

The invariant on the loop in the main function determines how these functions must behave.
# include <algorithm>
# include <iostream>
# include <string>
# include <vector>

using namespace std;

void erase_from_vector(unsigned int loc, vector<string>& v) {
    assert(loc < v.size());
    if (found)
        erase_from_vector(loc, waiting);
    cout << "removed from the waiting list."
    else
        cout << "Student " << id << " is in neither the course nor the waiting list"
}

int main() {
    // Read in the maximum number of students in the course
    unsigned int max_students;
    cout << "Enrollment program for CSCI 1200
Enter the maximum number of students allowed
";
    cin >> max_students;
    // Initialize the vectors
    vector<string> enrolled; vector<string> waiting;
    // (1) enrolled contains the students already in the course,
    // (2) waiting contains students who will be admitted (in the order of request) if a spot opens up
    // (3) enrolled.size() <= max_students,
    // some nice output
    sort(enrolled.begin(), enrolled.end());
    cout << "\n\n\nStudents are on the waiting list in the following order:
";
    for (unsigned int j=0; j<waiting.size(); ++j)
        cout << waiting[j] << endl;
    return 0;
}
8.5 Exercises

1. Write \texttt{erase\_from\_vector}. This function removes the value at index location \(i\) from a vector of strings. The size of the vector should be reduced by one when the function is finished.

\begin{verbatim}
// Remove the value at index location \(i\) from a vector of strings. The
// size of the vector should be reduced by one when the function is finished.
void erase_from_vector(unsigned int i, vector<string>& v) {
}
\end{verbatim}

2. Give an order notation estimate of the cost of \texttt{erase\_from\_vector}, \texttt{pop\_back}, and \texttt{push\_back}.

8.6 What To Do About the Expense of Erasing From a Vector?

- When items are continually being inserted and removed, vectors are not a good choice for the container.
- Instead we need a different sequential container, called a \textit{list}.
  - This has a “linked” structure that makes the cost of erasing independent of the size.
- We will move toward a list-based implementation of the program in two steps:
  - Rewriting our \texttt{classlist\_vec\_cpp} code in terms of iterator operations.
  - Replacing vectors with lists

8.7 Iterators

- Here’s the definition (from Koenig & Moo). An iterator:
  - identifies a container and a specific element stored in the container,
  - lets us examine (and change, except for const iterators) the value stored at that element of the container,
  - provides operations for moving (the iterators) between elements in the container,
  - restricts the available operations in ways that correspond to what the container can handle efficiently.
- As we will see, iterators for different container classes have many operations in common. This often makes the switch between containers fairly straightforward from the programmer’s viewpoint.
- Iterators in many ways are generalizations of pointers: many operators / operations defined for pointers are defined for iterators. You should use this to guide your beginning understanding and use of iterators.

8.8 Iterator Declarations and Operations

- Iterator types are declared by the container class. For example,
  \begin{verbatim}
  vector<string>::iterator p;
  vector<string>::const_iterator q;
  \end{verbatim}
defines two (uninitialized) iterator variables.
- The \textit{dereference operator} is used to access the value stored at an element of the container. The code:
  \begin{verbatim}
  p = enrolled.begin();
  *p = "012312";
  \end{verbatim}
changes the first entry in the \texttt{enrolled} vector.
- The dereference operator is combined with dot operator for accessing the member variables and member functions of elements stored in containers. Here’s an example using the \texttt{Student} class and \texttt{students} vector from Lecture 4:
  \begin{verbatim}
  vector<Student>::iterator i = students.begin();
  (*i).compute_averages(0.45);
  \end{verbatim}
Notes:
- This operation would be illegal if i had been defined as a const_iterator because compute_averages is a non-const member function.
- The parentheses on the *i are required (because of operator precedence).

• There is a “syntactic sugar” for the combination of the dereference operator and the dot operator, which is exactly equivalent:

```cpp
vector<StudentRec>::iterator i = students.begin();
i->compute_averages(0.45);
```

• Just like pointers, iterators can be incremented and decremented using the ++ and -- operators to move to the next or previous element of any container.

• Iterators can be compared using the == and != operators.

• Iterators can be assigned, just like any other variable.

• Vector iterators have several additional operations:
  - Integer values may be added to them or subtracted from them. This leads to statements like
    ```cpp
    enrolled.erase(enrolled.begin() + 5);
    ```
  - Vector iterators may be compared using operators like <, <==, etc.
  - For most containers (other than vectors), these “random access” iterator operations are not legal and therefore prevented by the compiler. The reasons will become clear as we look at their implementations.

8.9 Exercise: Revising the Class List Program to Use Iterators

• Now let’s modify the class list program to use iterators. First rewrite the erase_from_vector to use iterators.

```cpp
void erase_from_vector(vector<string>::iterator itr, vector<string>& v) {
}
```

*Note: the STL vector class has a function that does just this... (see below)*

• Now, edit the rest of the file to remove all use of the vector subscripting operator.

8.10 Implementing Vec<T> Iterators

• Let’s add iterators to our Vec<T> class declaration from last lecture:

```cpp
public:
  // TYPEDEFS
  typedef T* iterator;
  typedef const T* const_iterator;

  // MODIFIERS
  iterator erase(iterator p);

  // ITERATOR OPERATIONS
  iterator begin() { return m_data; }
  const_iterator begin() const { return m_data; }
  iterator end() { return m_data + m_size; }
  const_iterator end() const { return m_data + m_size; }
```

• First, remember that typedef statements create custom, alternate names for existing types.

  Vec<int>::iterator is an iterator type defined by the Vec<int> class. It is just a T* (an int *). Thus, internal to the declarations and member functions, T* and iterator may be used interchangeably.
• Because the underlying implementation of Vec uses an array, and because pointers are the “iterator”s of arrays, the implementation of vector iterators is quite simple. Note: the implementation of iterators for other STL containers is more involved!

• Thus, begin() returns a pointer to the first slot in the m_data array. And end() returns a pointer to the “slot” just beyond the last legal element in the m_data array (as prescribed in the STL standard).

• Furthermore, dereferencing a Vec<T>::iterator (dereferencing a pointer to type T) correctly returns one of the objects in the m_data, an object with type T.

• And similarly, the ++, --, <, ==, !=, >=, etc. operators on pointers automatically apply to Vec iterators.

• The erase function requires a bit more attention. We’ve implemented the core of this function above. The STL standard further specifies that the return value of erase is an iterator pointing to the new location of the element just after the one that was deleted.

• Finally, note that after a push_back or erase or resize call some or all iterators referring to elements in that vector may be invalidated. Why? You must take care when designing your program logic to avoid invalid iterator bugs!

8.11 A new datatype: list

• Lists are our second standard-library container class. (Vectors were the first.) Lists are formed as a sequentially linked structure instead of the array-like, random-access / indexing structure of vectors:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>array/vector:</th>
<th>list:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7 5 8 1 9</td>
<td>7 —   5 — 8 — 1 — 9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

    0 1 2 3 4

• Lists have push_front and pop_front functions in addition to the push_back and pop_back functions of vectors.

• Erase is very efficient for a list, independent of the size of the list (we’ll see why when we discuss the implementation details in a couple lectures).

• We can’t use the standard sort function; we must use a special sort function defined by the list type.

• Lists have no subscripting operation (a.k.a. they do not allow “random-access”).

8.12 Exercise: Revising the Class List Program to Use Lists (& Iterators)

Now let’s further modify the program to use lists instead of vectors. Because we’ve already switched to iterators, this change will be relatively easy. And now the program will be more efficient!

8.13 Looking Ahead

• Although the interface (functions called) of lists and vectors and their iterators are quite similar, their implementations are VERY different.

• Clues to these differences can be seen in the operations that are NOT in common, such as:
  – No indexing (subscripting) in lists.
  – No push_front or pop_front operations for vectors.
  – Several operations invalidate the values of vector iterators, but not list iterators:
    * erase invalidates all iterators after the point of erasure in vectors;
    * push_back and resize invalidate ALL iterators in a vector
  The value of any associated vector iterator must be re-assigned / re-initialized after these operations.
  – Lists have their own, specialized sort functions.

• We have already seen that vectors are implemented in terms of arrays, which explains why erase is so expensive and is why push_front and pop_front are not allowed (even though they could be implemented).

• In the next few lectures we’ll look at how to implement lists and the cost of the corresponding operations.