



Assignment 3 Journal

Assignment 3 Journal: File I/O and Array Problems

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Overview of the Assignment Journal

This Journal was made retroactively, weekly reflections are based on my GitHub commits and are an expansion of these commits. In this journal focuses on C++ file I/O, array manipulation, and template programming. This includes my planning, design decisions, testing approach, and reflections on each of the 6 problems. Documenting my thoughts and challenges throughout the process helped me in efficiently managing my time and deepening my understanding of the course material.

Daily/Weekly Progress and Activities

Week 1 (Oct 30–Nov 2): Reviewing Requirements and Setting Up

1. Initial Reading

- Thoroughly read the Assignment 3 description, taking note of the six (6) distinct problems:
 1. Counting words in a file
 2. Displaying file contents one line at a time
 3. Implementing a `TextFileReader` class

4. Performing floating-point array operations
 5. Extending the `Book` class and creating a `Bookshelf`
 6. Implementing a custom `Set` template
- Determined that a large part of this assignment would involve file I/O in C++ streams, plus revisiting OOP concepts from previous assignments.

2. Gathering Resources

- Consulted DevDocs C++ for references on file handling (`ifstream` , `ofstream` , `getline` , etc.) and template programming.
- Looked up various forum discussions about user-friendly file I/O prompts, to ensure best practices in error handling.

3. Environment Setup

- Confirmed my compiler (MinGW on Windows 10) was working properly and could handle file operations smoothly.
- Created a folder structure with separate subfolders for each problem to keep my code organized.

Reflection: Taking time to plan each problem's implementation details helped me avoid confusion later. Understanding the requirements thoroughly is crucial before diving into coding.

Week 2 (Nov 3–Nov 7): Problem 1 – Counting Words in a File

1. Design Decisions

- Chose to prompt the user for the file name rather than use command-line arguments, as it felt more user-friendly.
- Decided to store the file content line-by-line, then split by whitespace for counting words, ensuring robust handling of different text inputs.

2. Process and Challenges

- **Implementation:**
 - Used a simple loop with `getline()` to read each line.

- Employed a string stream or manual parsing to split each line into words.
- Incremented a counter for each word found.

- **Challenges:**

- Needed to handle edge cases, such as empty lines or lines with multiple spaces. It was somewhat tricky for me because I did consider every edge case during implementation.
- Ensured the program handled a missing or invalid filename by displaying an error message and exiting.

3. Testing

- Tested using the given `excerpt.txt` file and confirmed that the total word count made sense compared to manual checks.
- Tried smaller custom text files to see if blank lines or punctuation affected the count.

4. Reflections

- This problem refined my knowledge of file input, error handling, and string parsing in C++.
- Also reminded me to always check for edge cases in textual data.

Connection to Learning Outcomes: Improved my confidence working with file streams and string operations—key components of C++ programming.

Week 3 (Nov 8–Nov 10): Problem 2 – Display File Contents One Line at a Time

1. Design Decisions

- Elected to prompt user input for the file name.
- Decided to use `cin.get()` to pause after printing each line.

2. Implementation and Challenges

- **Implementation:**

- Opened the file in read mode (`ifstream`).
- Read each line with `getline()` , displayed it, then waited for `Enter` before printing the next line.

- **Challenges:**

- Ensuring cross-platform consistency. Windows and Unix-based systems may handle newline characters differently.
- Added a small prompt (e.g., "Press <Enter> to see the next line...") to give the user clearer instructions.

3. Reflections

- Learned the importance of user experience in console applications—small details like prompts and clear instructions enhance usability.
- Reinforced how to handle file I/O line by line with incremental user interaction.

Connection to Learning Outcomes: Practiced controlling program flow and integrating user input for improved interactivity.

Week 4 (Nov 11–Nov 14): Problem 3 – TextFileReader Class

1. Design Decisions

- Created a `TextFileReader` class with:
 - An internal `std::string` array of size 100 for storing lines.
 - Two constructors (default and one that takes a filename).
 - Member functions: `contents()` (returns a combined string), `display()` (prints lines with line numbers).
- Created a `TextFileReaderDemo` class with a `main()` that accepts command-line arguments (for filename).

2. Process and Challenges

- **Implementation:**

- The second constructor automatically opens the file and reads contents into the array.
- `contents()` merges the stored lines into a single `std::string` or `std::stringstream`.
- `display()` prints each line with format "line i: <text>".
- **Challenges:**
 - Handling lines beyond the 100th entry. For now, I simply stopped reading after 100 lines, as per requirements.
 - Ensured the line numbering started at 1, not 0.

3. Testing

- Used the `excerpt.txt` file, tested the program with command-line arguments (e.g., `TextFileReaderDemo excerpt.txt`).
- Confirmed lines were read correctly and displayed with correct line numbers.

4. Reflections

- This problem showed the power of bundling related file operations within a dedicated class.
- Reinforced constructor usage in practical contexts (e.g., automatically reading a file upon object creation).

Connection to Learning Outcomes: Applied OOP concepts with constructors, classes, and method organization to enhance code readability and maintainability.

Week 5 (Nov 15–Nov 18): Problem 4 – Floating Point Array Operations

1. Design Decisions

- Planned to create three floating-point arrays of size 25.
- First array stores loop counters (0 to 24), second array stores squares of the loop counter, third array stores sums of the corresponding elements.

2. Implementation and Challenges

- **Implementation:**

- Used a `for` loop from 0 to 24 to fill the first two arrays.
- Created another loop to add the corresponding elements and store results in the third array.

- **Challenges:**

- Formatting the display as required ("counter; element + element = element").
- I used Indexing to make sure my code was not off by one.

3. Reflections

- Showed me how to structure loop logic cleanly.
- Showed the risks of not having some way of terminating a while loop, this is why i tried to use a for loop wherever possible.

Connection to Learning Outcomes: Strengthened my familiarity with array indexing, loops, and displaying results in a clear format.

Week 6 (Nov 19–Nov 23): Problem 5 – Book and Bookshelf Classes

1. Design Decisions

- Extended the `Book` class from Assignment 2 to incorporate additional attributes or methods as needed.
- Created a `Bookshelf` class that manages an `std::vector<Book>` (or `std::list<Book>`), storing 12 Book objects.

2. Process and Challenges

- **Implementation:**

- `Bookshelf` has a `main()` that populates 12 books with distinct attributes (title, ISBN, author, etc.).
- Implemented a sorting routine using a custom comparator that sorts first by title, then by year of publication if titles match.

- **Challenges:**

- Ensuring the comparator function or lambda worked properly in C++.
- Displaying unsorted and sorted lists in a readable format.

3. Reflections

- Learned more about how to implement custom sorting in C++ using the STL's `std::sort` with a comparator.
- Reinforced OOP design by reusing the `Book` class and incorporating it into a larger class (`Bookshelf`).

Connection to Learning Outcomes: Practiced advanced usage of the standard library (e.g., vectors and sorting), plus data encapsulation in a real-world scenario.

Week 7 (Nov 24–Nov 27): Problem 6 – Custom Set Template Class

1. Design Decisions

- Chose to implement a `Set<T>` template backed by an `std::vector<T>` for internal storage.
- Decided to store only unique elements (checked before insertion).
- Created a nested iterator class that mimics standard library set behavior (with `begin()`, `end()`, `operator++`, etc.).

2. Implementation and Challenges

- **Implementation:**

- On insertion, verified that the element was not already in the vector before pushing it.
- Added the nested `iterator` class with a pointer or index referencing the internal vector.

- **Challenges:**

- Understanding the differences between standard library iterators and custom iterators.

- Creating a custom iterator is tedious but proved to be useful when trying to understand the limitations of the standard library functions.

3. Testing

- Inserted various integer, string, and custom class elements into both my custom `Set` and `std::set`.
- Ensured iteration order may differ (since `std::set` is typically ordered), but uniqueness matched across both containers.

4. Reflections

- This was the most challenging part of the assignment, involving templates, iterators, and unique-element logic.
- Gained a deeper appreciation for how the C++ STL is implemented and how to replicate some of its functionalities.

Connection to Learning Outcomes: Practiced advanced C++ template usage, demonstrating the ability to create generic, reusable data structures.

Final Reflections

Overall, Assignment 3 was an extensive exercise in **file handling, array manipulation, and template programming**. Each problem tackled a unique aspect of C++:

- **File I/O** in Problems 1–3 cemented my ability to handle text file operations, from word counting to reading entire files into arrays.
- **Array operations** in Problems 4–5 underscored the importance of data structure planning and loop logic.
- **Template and STL** usage in Problem 6 introduced me to creating my own data structures and iterators, giving me a behind-the-scenes view of the standard library's design.

Maintaining this journal was tremendously beneficial, as it helped me capture the progress, setbacks, and solutions for each problem. By the end, I had not only working C++ programs but also a clearer perspective on best practices for planning, testing, and implementing various programming tasks.

Key Takeaways:

- Thorough planning and iterative testing minimized confusion and rework.
- Proper documentation (journaling) made it easier to reflect on the growth of my skills.
- OOP and templates in C++ offer powerful abstractions but require attention to detail and consistent testing.

I believe the work in this assignment helped fulfill the course's learning outcomes regarding **file I/O, object-oriented programming, data structures, and template concepts**. I am more confident handling diverse tasks in C++ now, from reading files to building custom containers.

Sources and References

1. [DevDocs C++](#) – for syntax and standard library references
 2. Course forums and official C++ documentation for clarifications on file I/O, iterators, and templates
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End of Assignment 3 Journal