System-Level I/O

Introduction to Computer Systems 18th Lecture, Dec. 3, 2018

Instructors:

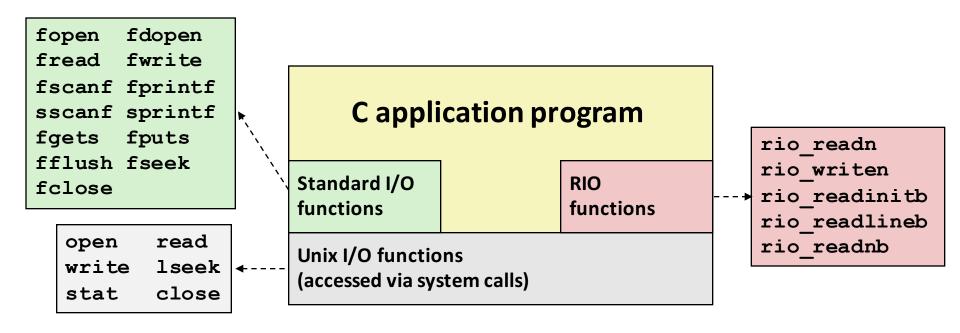
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Today

- Unix I/O
- Metadata, sharing, and redirection
- Standard I/O
- RIO (robust I/O) package
- Closing remarks

Today: Unix I/O and C Standard I/O

- Two sets: system-level and C level
- Robust I/O (RIO): 15-213 special wrappers good coding practice: handles error checking, signals, and "short counts"

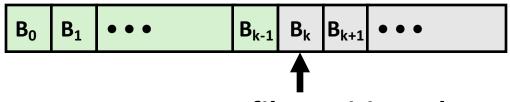


Unix I/O Overview

- A Linux *file* is a sequence of *m* bytes:
 - \blacksquare $B_0, B_1, \dots, B_k, \dots, B_{m-1}$
- Cool fact: All I/O devices are represented as files:
 - /dev/sda2 (/usr disk partition)
 - /dev/tty2 (terminal)
- Even the kernel is represented as a file:
 - /boot/vmlinuz-3.13.0-55-generic (kernelimage)
 - proc (kernel data structures)

Unix I/O Overview

- Elegant mapping of files to devices allows kernel to export simple interface called *Unix I/O*:
 - Opening and closing files
 - open() and close()
 - Reading and writing a file
 - read() and write()
 - Changing the current file position (seek)
 - indicates next offset into file to read or write
 - lseek()



Current file position = k

File Types

Each file has a type indicating its role in the system

- Regular file: Contains arbitrary data
- Directory: Index for a related group of files
- Socket: For communicating with a process on another machine

Other file types beyond our scope

- Named pipes (FIFOs)
- Symbolic links
- Character and block devices

Regular Files

- A regular file contains arbitrary data
- Applications often distinguish between text files and binary files
 - Text files are regular files with only ASCII or Unicode characters
 - Binary files are everything else
 - e.g., object files, JPEG images
 - Kernel doesn't know the difference!
- Text file is sequence of text lines
 - Text line is sequence of chars terminated by newline char ('\n')
 - Newline is 0xa, same as ASCII line feed character (LF)
- End of line (EOL) indicators in other systems
 - Linux and Mac OS: '\n' (0xa)
 - line feed (LF)
 - Windows and Internet protocols: '\r\n' (0xd 0xa)
 - Carriage return (CR) followed by line feed (LF)

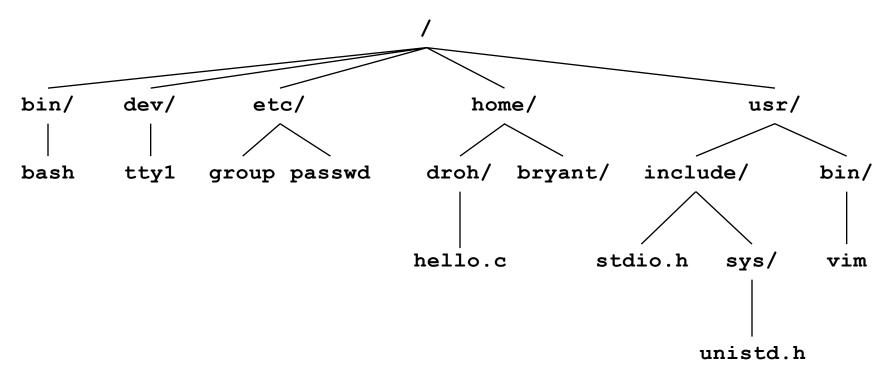


Directories

- Directory consists of an array of links
 - Each link maps a filename to a file
- Each directory contains at least two entries
 - . (dot) is a link to itself
 - . . (dot dot) is a link to the parent directory in the directory hierarchy (next slide)
- Commands for manipulating directories
 - mkdir: create empty directory
 - 1s: view directory contents
 - rmdir: delete empty directory

Directory Hierarchy

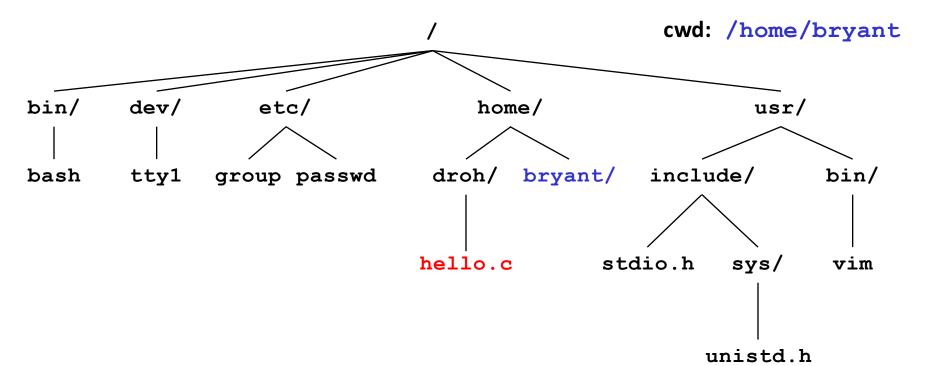
 All files are organized as a hierarchy anchored by root directory named / (slash)



- Kernel maintains current working directory (cwd) for each process
 - Modified using the cd command

Pathnames

- Locations of files in the hierarchy denoted by pathnames
 - Absolute pathname starts with '/' and denotes path from root
 - home/droh/hello.c
 - Relative pathname denotes path from current working directory
 - ../droh/hello.c



Opening Files

 Opening a file informs the kernel that you are getting ready to access that file

```
int fd; /* file descriptor */
if ((fd = open("/etc/hosts", O_RDONLY)) < 0) {
    perror("open");
    exit(1);
}</pre>
```

- Returns a small identifying integer file descriptor
 - fd == -1 indicates that an error occurred
- Each process created by a Linux shell begins life with three open files associated with a terminal:
 - 0: standard input (stdin)
 - 1: standard output (stdout)
 - 2: standard error (stderr)

Closing Files

 Closing a file informs the kernel that you are finished accessing that file

```
int fd;   /* file descriptor */
int retval; /* return value */

if ((retval = close(fd)) < 0) {
   perror("close");
   exit(1);
}</pre>
```

- Closing an already closed file is a recipe for disaster in threaded programs (more on this later)
- Moral: Always check return codes, even for seemingly benign functions such as close()

Reading Files

 Reading a file copies bytes from the current file position to memory, and then updates file position

- Returns number of bytes read from file fd into buf
 - Return type ssize_t is signed integer
 - nbytes < 0 indicates that an error occurred</p>
 - Short counts (nbytes < sizeof (buf)) are possible and are not errors!</p>

Writing Files

 Writing a file copies bytes from memory to the current file position, and then updates current file position

- Returns number of bytes written from buf to file fd
 - nbytes < 0 indicates that an error occurred
 - As with reads, short counts are possible and are not errors!

Simple Unix I/O example

Copying stdin to stdout, one byte at a time

```
#include "csapp.h"
int main(void)
{
    char c;

    while(Read(STDIN_FILENO, &c, 1) != 0)
        Write(STDOUT_FILENO, &c, 1);
    exit(0);
}
```

On Short Counts

- Short counts can occur in these situations:
 - Encountering (end-of-file) EOF on reads
 - Reading text lines from a terminal
 - Reading and writing network sockets
- Short counts never occur in these situations:
 - Reading from disk files (except for EOF)
 - Writing to disk files
- Best practice is to always allow for short counts.

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File Metadata

- Metadata is data about data, in this case file data
- Per-file metadata maintained by kernel
 - accessed by users with the stat and fstat functions

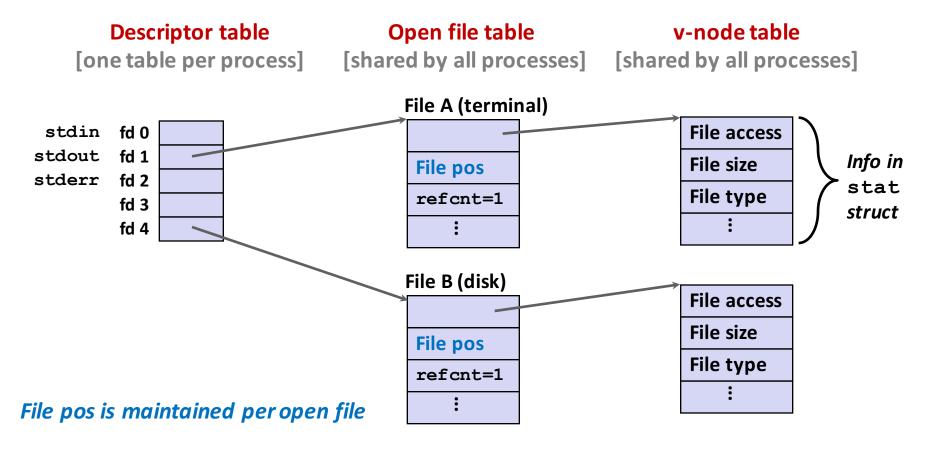
```
/* Metadata returned by the stat and fstat functions */
struct stat {
             st dev; /* Device */
   dev t
              st ino; /* inode */
   ino t
   mode t
             st mode; /* Protection and file type */
   st uid; /* User ID of owner */
   uid t
             st_gid; /* Group ID of owner */
   gid t
            st rdev; /* Device type (if inode device) */
   dev t
   off t
              st size; /* Total size, in bytes */
   unsigned long st blksize; /* Blocksize for filesystem I/O */
   unsigned long st blocks; /* Number of blocks allocated */
   time t st atime; /* Time of last access */
             st mtime; /* Time of last modification */
   time t
   time t
             st ctime; /* Time of last change */
};
```

Example of Accessing File Metadata

```
linux> ./statcheck statcheck.c
                                      type: regular, read: yes
int main (int argc, char **argv)
                                      linux> chmod 000 statcheck.c
                                      linux> ./statcheck statcheck.c
    struct stat stat;
                                      type: regular, read: no
    char *type, *readok;
                                      linux> ./statcheck ...
                                      type: directory, read: yes
    Stat(arqv[1], &stat);
    if (S ISREG(stat.st mode)) /* Determine file type */
       type = "regular";
    else if (S ISDIR(stat.st mode))
       type = "directory";
    else
       type = "other";
    if ((stat.st mode & S IRUSR)) /* Check read access */
       readok = "yes";
    else
        readok = "no";
   printf("type: %s, read: %s\n", type, readok);
   exit(0);
                                                     statcheck.c
```

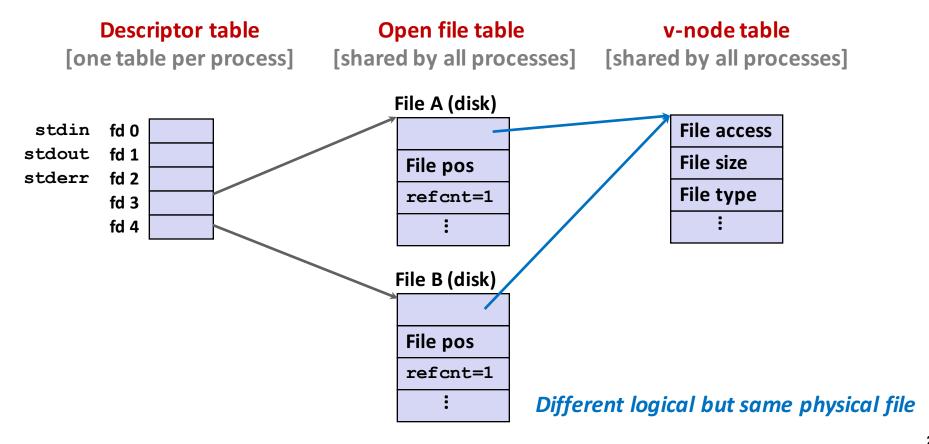
How the Unix Kernel Represents Open Files

Two descriptors referencing two distinct open files.
 Descriptor 1 (stdout) points to terminal, and descriptor 4 points to open disk file



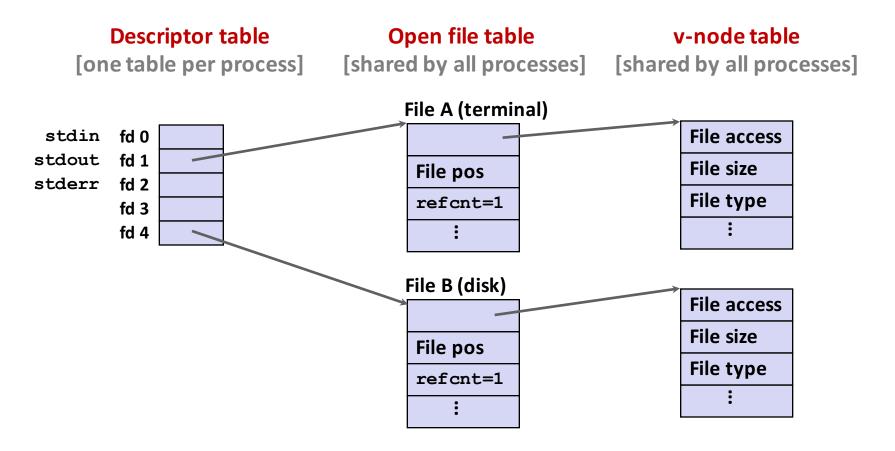
File Sharing

- Two distinct descriptors sharing the same disk file through two distinct open file table entries
 - E.g., Calling open twice with the same filename argument



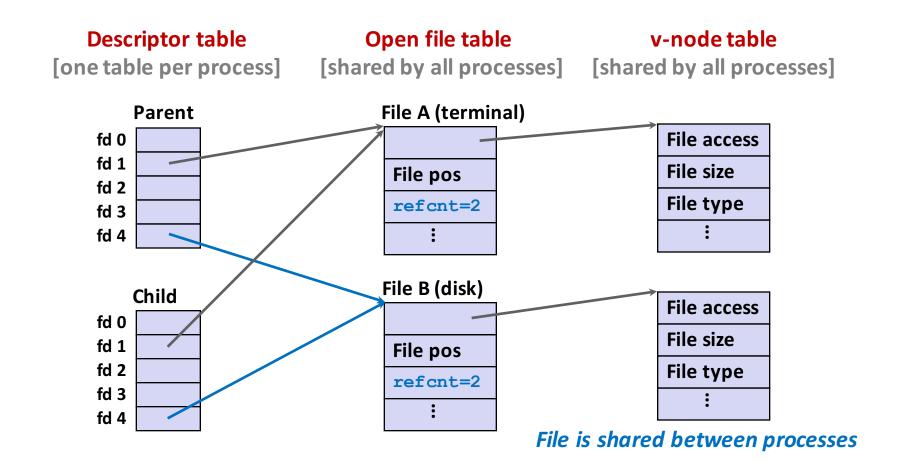
How Processes Share Files: fork

- A child process inherits its parent's open files
 - Note: situation unchanged by exec functions (use fcntl to change)
- Before fork call:



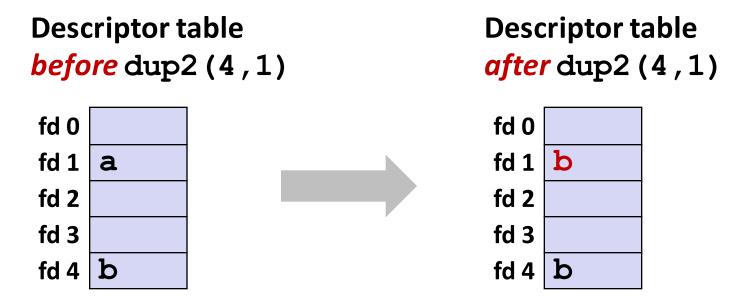
How Processes Share Files: fork

- A child process inherits its parent's open files
- After fork:
 - Child's table same as parent's, and +1 to each refent



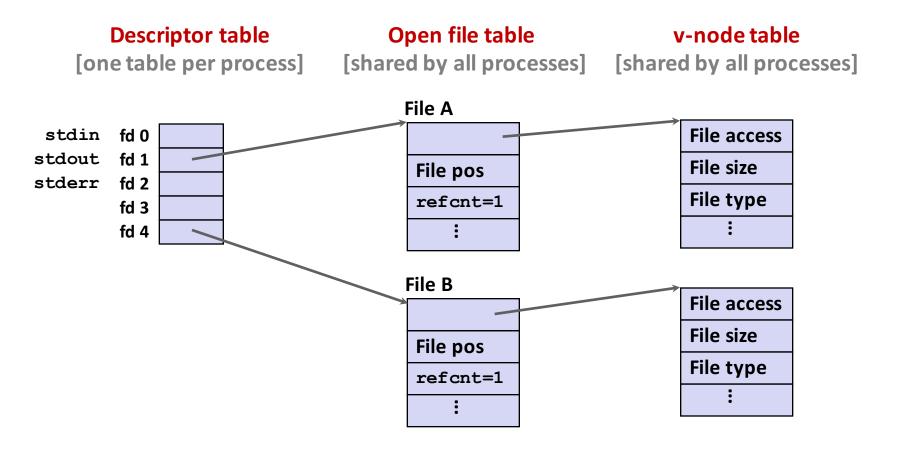
I/O Redirection

- Question: How does a shell implement I/O redirection?
 linux> ls > foo.txt
- Answer: By calling the dup2 (oldfd, newfd) function
 - Copies (per-process) descriptor table entry oldfd to entry newfd



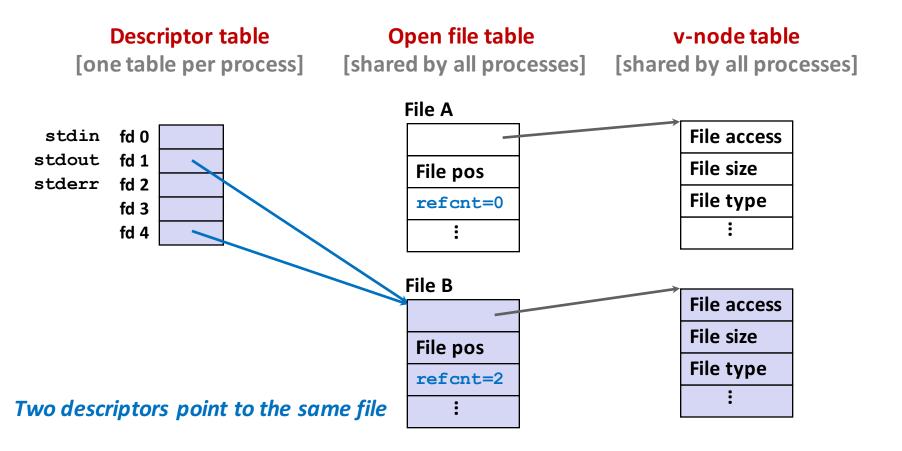
I/O Redirection Example

- Step #1: open file to which stdout should be redirected
 - Happens in child executing shell code, before exec



I/O Redirection Example (cont.)

- Step #2: call dup2 (4,1)
 - cause fd=1 (stdout) to refer to disk file pointed at by fd=4



Warm-Up: I/O and Redirection Example

```
#include "csapp.h"
int main(int argc, char *argv[])
    int fd1, fd2, fd3;
    char c1, c2, c3;
    char *fname = arqv[1];
    fd1 = Open(fname, O RDONLY, 0);
    fd2 = Open(fname, O RDONLY, 0);
    fd3 = Open(fname, O RDONLY, 0);
    Dup2 (fd2, fd3);
    Read(fd1, &c1, 1);
    Read(fd2, &c2, 1);
    Read(fd3, &c3, 1);
    printf("c1 = %c, c2 = %c, c3 = %c\n", c1, c2, c3);
    return 0;
                                              ffiles1.c
```

Warm-Up: I/O and Redirection Example

```
#include "csapp.h"
int main(int argc, char *argv[])
                                      c1 = a, c2 = a, c3 = b
    int fd1, fd2, fd3;
   char c1, c2, c3;
    char *fname = arqv[1];
    fd1 = Open(fname, O RDONLY, 0);
    fd2 = Open(fname, O RDONLY, 0);
    fd3 = Open(fname, O RDONLY, 0);
                                      dup2(oldfd, newfd)
   Dup2 (fd2, fd3); ←
   Read(fd1, &c1, 1);
   Read(fd2, &c2, 1);
   Read(fd3, &c3, 1);
   printf("c1 = %c, c2 = %c, c3 = %c\n", c1, c2, c3);
   return 0;
                                            ffiles1.c
```

Master Class: Process Control and I/O

```
#include "csapp.h"
int main(int argc, char *argv[])
    int fd1;
    int s = getpid() & 0x1;
    char c1, c2;
    char *fname = argv[1];
    fd1 = Open(fname, O RDONLY, 0);
    Read(fd1, &c1, 1);
    if (fork()) { /* Parent */
        sleep(s);
        Read(fd1, &c2, 1);
        printf("Parent: c1 = %c, c2 = %c\n", c1, c2);
    } else { /* Child */
        sleep(1-s);
        Read(fd1, &c2, 1);
        printf("Child: c1 = %c, c2 = %c\n", c1, c2);
    return 0;
                                            ffiles2.c
```

Master Class: Process Control and I/O

```
#include "csapp.h"
                                       Child: c1 = a, c2 = b
int main(int argc, char *argv[])
                                       Parent: c1 = a, c2 = c
   int fd1;
    int s = getpid() & 0x1;
   char c1, c2;
                                       Parent: c1 = a, c2 = b
   char *fname = argv[1];
                                       Child: c1 = a, c2 = c
   fd1 = Open(fname, O RDONLY, 0);
   Read(fd1, &c1, 1);
    if (fork()) { /* Parent */
                                       Bonus: Which way does it go?
       sleep(s);
       Read(fd1, &c2, 1);
       printf("Parent: c1 = %c, c2 = %c\n", c1, c2);
    } else { /* Child */
       sleep(1-s);
       Read(fd1, &c2, 1);
       printf("Child: c1 = %c, c2 = %c\n", c1, c2);
   return 0;
                                          ffiles2.c
```

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Standard I/O Functions

- The C standard library (libc.so) contains a collection of higher-level standard I/O functions
 - Documented in Appendix B of K&R
- Examples of standard I/O functions:
 - Opening and closing files (fopen and fclose)
 - Reading and writing bytes (fread and fwrite)
 - Reading and writing text lines (fgets and fputs)
 - Formatted reading and writing (fscanf and fprintf)

Standard I/O Streams

- Standard I/O models open files as streams
 - Abstraction for a file descriptor and a buffer in memory
- C programs begin life with three open streams (defined in stdio.h)
 - stdin (standardinput)
 - stdout (standard output)
 - stderr (standard error)

```
#include <stdio.h>
extern FILE *stdin; /* standard input (descriptor 0) */
extern FILE *stdout; /* standard output (descriptor 1) */
extern FILE *stderr; /* standard error (descriptor 2) */
int main() {
    fprintf(stdout, "Hello, world\n");
}
```

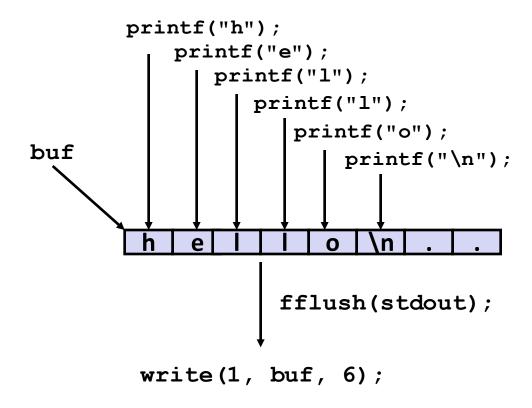
Buffered I/O: Motivation

- Applications often read/write one character at a time
 - getc, putc, ungetc
 - gets, fgets
 - Read line of text one character at a time, stopping at newline
- Implementing as Unix I/O calls expensive
 - read and write require Unix kernel calls
 - > 10,000 clock cycles
- Solution: Buffered read
 - Use Unix read to grab block of bytes
 - User input functions take one byte at a time from buffer
 - Refill buffer when empty

Buffer already read unread

Buffering in Standard I/O

Standard I/O functions use buffered I/O



Buffer flushed to output fd on "\n", call to fflush or exit, or return from main.

Standard I/O Buffering in Action

You can see this buffering in action for yourself, using the always fascinating Linux strace program:

```
#include <stdio.h>
int main()
{
    printf("h");
    printf("e");
    printf("l");
    printf("l");
    printf("o");
    printf("\n");
    fflush(stdout);
    exit(0);
}
```

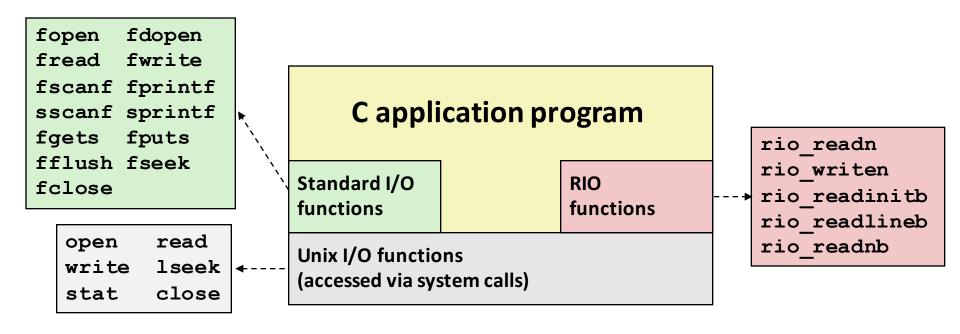
```
linux> strace ./hello
execve("./hello", ["hello"], [/* ... */]).
...
write(1, "hello\n", 6) = 6
...
exit_group(0) = ?
```

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Today: Unix I/O, C Standard I/O, and RIO

- Two *incompatible* libraries building on Unix I/O
- Robust I/O (RIO): 15-213 special wrappers good coding practice: handles error checking, signals, and "short counts"



Unix I/O Recap

```
/* Read at most max_count bytes from file into buffer.
   Return number bytes read, or error value */
ssize_t read(int fd, void *buffer, size_t max_count);
```

```
/* Write at most max_count bytes from buffer to file.
    Return number bytes written, or error value */
ssize_t write(int fd, void *buffer, size_t max_count);
```

Short counts can occur in these situations:

- Encountering (end-of-file) EOF on reads
- Reading text lines from a terminal
- Reading and writing network sockets

Short counts never occur in these situations:

- Reading from disk files (except for EOF)
- Writing to disk files
- Best practice is to always allow for short counts.

The RIO Package (15-213/CS:APP Package)

- RIO is a set of wrappers that provide efficient and robust I/O in apps, such as network programs that are subject to short counts
- RIO provides two different kinds of functions
 - Unbuffered input and output of binary data
 - rio_readn and rio_writen
 - Buffered input of text lines and binary data
 - rio_readlineb and rio_readnb
 - Buffered RIO routines are thread-safe and can be interleaved arbitrarily on the same descriptor
- Download from http://csapp.cs.cmu.edu/3e/code.html
 - → src/csapp.c and include/csapp.h

Unbuffered RIO Input and Output

- Same interface as Unix read and write
- Especially useful for transferring data on network sockets

```
#include "csapp.h"
ssize_t rio_readn(int fd, void *usrbuf, size_t n);
ssize_t rio_writen(int fd, void *usrbuf, size_t n);
Return:num.bytestransferredifOK, Oon EOF(rio_readnonly),-1 on error
```

- rio readn returns short count only if it encounters EOF
 - Only use it when you know how many bytes to read
- rio_writen never returns a short count
- Calls to rio_readn and rio_writen can be interleaved arbitrarily on the same descriptor

Implementation of rio readn

```
/*
 * rio readn - Robustly read n bytes (unbuffered)
 */
ssize t rio readn(int fd, void *usrbuf, size t n)
    size t nleft = n;
    ssize t nread;
    char *bufp = usrbuf;
   while (nleft > 0) {
       if ((nread = read(fd, bufp, nleft)) < 0) {</pre>
           if (errno == EINTR) /* Interrupted by sig handler return */
              nread = 0;  /* and call read() again */
           else
              return -1; /* errno set by read() */
       }
       else if (nread == 0)
          break;
                               /* EOF */
       nleft -= nread;
       bufp += nread;
                               /* Return >= 0 */
    return (n - nleft);
                                                              csapp
```

Buffered RIO Input Functions

 Efficiently read text lines and binary data from a file partially cached in an internal memory buffer

```
#include "csapp.h"

void rio_readinitb(rio_t *rp, int fd);

ssize_t rio_readlineb(rio_t *rp, void *usrbuf, size_t maxlen);
ssize_t rio_readnb(rio_t *rp, void *usrbuf, size_t n);

Return: num. bytes read if OK, 0 on EOF, -1 on error
```

- rio_readlineb reads a text line of up to maxlen bytes from file fd and stores the line in usrbuf
 - Especially useful for reading text lines from network sockets
- Stopping conditions
 - maxlen bytes read
 - EOF encountered
 - Newline ('\n') encountered

Buffered RIO Input Functions (cont)

```
#include "csapp.h"

void rio_readinitb(rio_t *rp, int fd);

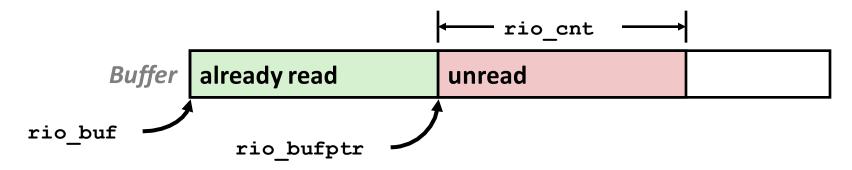
ssize_t rio_readlineb(rio_t *rp, void *usrbuf, size_t maxlen);
ssize_t rio_readnb(rio_t *rp, void *usrbuf, size_t n);

Return: num. bytes read if OK, 0 on EOF, -1 on error
```

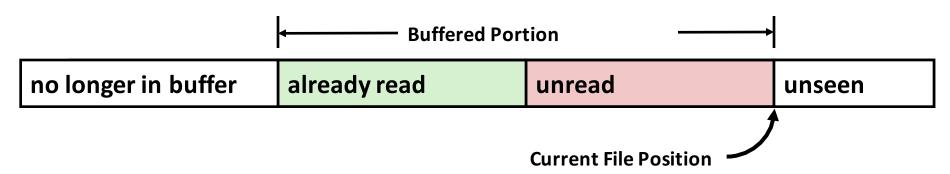
- rio readnb reads up to n bytes from file fd
- Stopping conditions
 - maxlen bytes read
 - EOF encountered
- Calls to rio_readlineb and rio_readnb can be interleaved arbitrarily on the same descriptor
 - Warning: Don't interleave with calls to rio_readn

Buffered I/O: Implementation

- For reading from file
- File has associated buffer to hold bytes that have been read from file but not yet read by user code

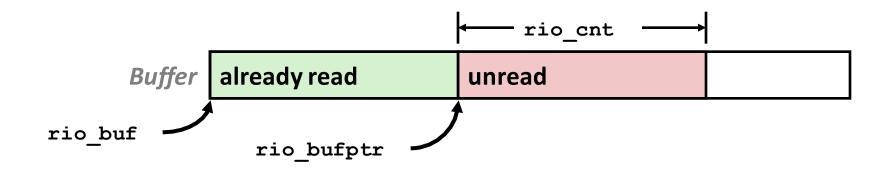


Layered on Unix file:



Buffered I/O: Declaration

All information contained in struct



RIO Example

 Copying the lines of a text file from standard input to standard output

```
#include "csapp.h"

int main(int argc, char **argv)
{
   int n;
   rio_t rio;
   char buf[MAXLINE];

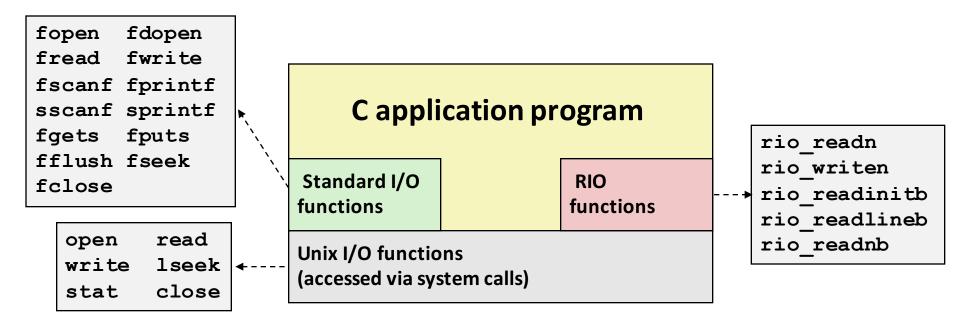
   Rio_readinitb(&rio, STDIN_FILENO);
   while((n = Rio_readlineb(&rio, buf, MAXLINE)) != 0)
        Rio_writen(STDOUT_FILENO, buf, n);
   exit(0);
}
```

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Unix I/O vs. Standard I/O vs. RIO

Standard I/O and RIO are implemented using low-level Unix I/O



Which ones should you use in your programs?

Pros and Cons of Unix I/O

Pros

- Unix I/O is the most general and lowest overhead form of I/O
 - All other I/O packages are implemented using Unix I/O functions
- Unix I/O provides functions for accessing file metadata
- Unix I/O functions are async-signal-safe and can be used safely in signal handlers

Cons

- Dealing with short counts is tricky and error prone
- Efficient reading of text lines requires some form of buffering, also tricky and error prone
- Both of these issues are addressed by the standard I/O and RIO packages

Pros and Cons of Standard I/O

Pros:

- Buffering increases efficiency by decreasing the number of read and write system calls
- Short counts are handled automatically

Cons:

- Provides no function for accessing file metadata
- Standard I/O functions are not async-signal-safe, and not appropriate for signal handlers
- Standard I/O is not appropriate for input and output on network sockets
 - There are poorly documented restrictions on streams that interact badly with restrictions on sockets (CS:APP3e, Sec 10.11)

Choosing I/O Functions

- General rule: use the highest-level I/O functions you can
 - Many C programmers are able to do all of their work using the standard I/O functions
 - But, be sure to understand the functions you use!
- When to use standard I/O
 - When working with disk or terminal files
- When to use raw Unix I/O
 - Inside signal handlers, because Unix I/O is async-signal-safe
 - In rare cases when you need absolute highest performance
- When to use RIO
 - When you are reading and writing network sockets
 - Avoid using standard I/O on sockets

Aside: Working with Binary Files

Binary File

- Sequence of arbitrary bytes
- Including byte value 0x00
- Functions you should never use on binary files
 - Text-oriented I/O: such as fgets, scanf, rio readlineb
 - Interpret EOL characters.
 - Use functions like rio readn or rio readnb instead
 - String functions
 - strlen, strcpy, strcat
 - Interprets byte value 0 (end of string) as special

Fun with File Descriptors (1)

```
#include "csapp.h"
int main(int argc, char *argv[])
    int fd1, fd2, fd3;
    char c1, c2, c3;
    char *fname = arqv[1];
    fd1 = Open(fname, O RDONLY, 0);
    fd2 = Open(fname, O RDONLY, 0);
    fd3 = Open(fname, O RDONLY, 0);
    Dup2 (fd2, fd3);
    Read(fd1, &c1, 1);
    Read(fd2, &c2, 1);
   Read(fd3, &c3, 1);
    printf("c1 = %c, c2 = %c, c3 = %c\n", c1, c2, c3);
    return 0;
                                              ffiles1.c
```

What would this program print for file containing "abcde"?

Fun with File Descriptors (2)

```
#include "csapp.h"
int main(int argc, char *argv[])
    int fd1;
    int s = getpid() & 0x1;
    char c1, c2;
    char *fname = argv[1];
    fd1 = Open(fname, O RDONLY, 0);
    Read(fd1, &c1, 1);
    if (fork()) { /* Parent */
        sleep(s);
        Read(fd1, &c2, 1);
        printf("Parent: c1 = %c, c2 = %c\n", c1, c2);
    } else { /* Child */
        sleep(1-s);
        Read(fd1, &c2, 1);
        printf("Child: c1 = %c, c2 = %c\n", c1, c2);
    return 0;
                                            ffiles2.c
```

What would this program print for file containing "abcde"?

Fun with File Descriptors (3)

```
#include "csapp.h"
int main(int argc, char *argv[])
{
    int fd1, fd2, fd3;
    char *fname = arqv[1];
    fd1 = Open(fname, O CREAT|O TRUNC|O RDWR, S IRUSR|S IWUSR);
    Write(fd1, "pqrs", 4);
    fd3 = Open(fname, O APPEND|O WRONLY, 0);
    Write(fd3, "jklmn", 5);
    fd2 = dup(fd1); /* Allocates descriptor */
    Write(fd2, "wxyz", 4);
    Write(fd3, "ef", 2);
    return 0;
                                                       ffiles3.c
```

What would be the contents of the resulting file?

Accessing Directories

- Only recommended operation on a directory: read its entries
 - dirent structure contains information about a directory entry
 - DIR structure contains information about directory while stepping through its entries

```
#include <sys/types.h>
#include <dirent.h>
  DIR *directory;
  struct dirent *de;
  if (!(directory = opendir(dir name)))
      error ("Failed to open directory");
  while (0 != (de = readdir(directory))) {
      printf("Found file: %s\n", de->d name);
  closedir(directory);
```

For Further Information

The Unix bible:

- W. Richard Stevens & Stephen A. Rago, Advanced Programming in the Unix Environment, 2nd Edition, Addison Wesley, 2005
 - Updated from Stevens's 1993 classic text

The Linux bible:

- Michael Kerrisk, The Linux Programming Interface, No Starch Press, 2010
 - Encyclopedic and authoritative