CS100 Lecture 16

Class Basics II

Contents

Type alias members

Type aliases in C++: `using`.

A better way of declaring type aliases:

```cpp
// C-style
typedef long long LL;
// C++-style
using LL = long long;
```

It is more readable when dealing with compound types:

```cpp
// C-style
typedef int intarray_t[1000];
// C++-style
using intarray_t = int[1000];
```

```cpp
// C-style
typedef int (&ref_to_array)[1000];
// C++-style
using ref_to_array = int (&)[1000];
```

`using` can also declare *alias templates* (in later lectures), while `typedef` cannot.

[Best practice] In C++, Use `using` to declare type aliases.

Type alias members

A class can have **type alias members**.

```cpp
class Dynarray {
 public:
  using size_type = std::size_t;
  size_type size() const { return m_length; }
};
```

Usage: `ClassName::TypeAliasName`

```cpp
for (Dynarray::size_type i = 0; i != a.size(); ++i)
  // ...
```

Note: Here we use `ClassName::` instead of `object.`, because such members belong to **the class**, not one single object.

Type alias members

The class also has control over the accessibility of type alias members.

```
class A {
  using type = int;
};
A::type x = 42; // Error: Accessing private member of `A`.
```

The class has control over the accessibility of **anything that is called a *member* of it**.

Type alias members in the standard library

All standard library containers (and `std::string`) define the type alias member `size_type` as the return type of `.size()`:

```
std::string::size_type i = s.size();
std::vector<int>::size_type j = v.size(); // Not `std::vector::size_type`!
                                          // The template argument `<int>`
                                          // is necessary here.
std::list<int>::size_type k = l.size();
```

Why?

Type alias members in the standard library

All standard library containers (and `std::string`) define the type alias member `size_type` as the return type of `.size()`:

```
std::string::size_type i = s.size();
std::vector<int>::size_type j = v.size();
std::list<int>::size_type k = l.size();
```

- This type is **container-dependent**: Different containers may choose different types suitable for representing sizes.
  - The Qt containers often use `int` as `size_type`.
- Define `Container::size_type` to achieve good **consistency** and **generality**.

`static` members

`static` data members

A `static` data member:

```
class A {
  static int something;
  // other members ...
};
```

Just consider it as a **global variable**, except that

- its name is in the **class scope**: `A::something`, and that
- the accessibility may be restricted. Here `something` is `private`.

`static` data members

A `static` data member:

```cpp
class A {
  static int something;
  // other members ...
};
```

There is **only one** `A::something`: it does not belong to any object of `A`. It belongs to the **class** `A`.

- Like type alias members, we use `ClassName::` instead of `object.` to access them.

`static` data members

A `static` data member:

```
class A {
  static int something;
  // other members ...
};
```

It can also be accessed by `a.something` (where `a` is an object of type `A`), but `a.something` and `b.something` refer to the same variable.

- If `f` is a function that returns an object of type `A`, `f().something` always accesses the same variable no matter what `f()` returns.
- In the very first externally available C++ compiler (Cfront 1.0, 1985), `f` in the expression `f().something` is not even called! This bug has been fixed soon.

`static` data members: Example

Suppose we want to assign a unique id to each object of our class.

```cpp
int cnt = 0;

class Dynarray {
  int *m_storage;
  std::size_t m_length;
  int m_id;
public:
  Dynarray(std::size_t n)
      : m_storage(new int[n]{}), m_length(n), m_id(cnt++) {}
  Dynarray() : m_storage(nullptr), m_length(0), m_id(cnt++) {}
  // ...
};
```

We use a global variable `cnt` as the "counter". Is this a good design?

`static` data members: Example

The name `cnt` is confusing: A "counter" of what?

```cpp
int X_cnt = 0, Y_cnt = 0, Z_cnt = 0;
struct X {
  int m_id;
  X() : m_id(X_cnt++) {}
};
struct Y {
  int m_id;
  Y() : m_id(Y_cnt++) {}
};
struct Z {
  int m_id;
  Z() : m_id(Z_cnt++) {}
};
```

- The program is in a mess with global variables all around.
- No prevention from potential mistakes:

  ```cpp
  struct Y {
    Y() : m_id(X_cnt++) {}
  };
  ```

  The mistake happens silently.

`static` data members: Example

Restrict the name of this counter in the scope of the corresponding class, by declaring it as a `static` data member.

- This is exactly the idea behind `static` data members: A "global variable" restricted in class scope.

```cpp
class Dynarray {
  static int s_cnt; // !!!
  int *m_storage;
  std::size_t m_length;
  int m_id;

public:
  Dynarray(/* ... */) : /* ... */, m_id(s_cnt++) {}
};
```

- `s` stands for `static`.

`static` data members

```cpp
class Dynarray {
  static int s_cnt; // !!!
  int *m_storage;
  std::size_t m_length;
  int m_id;

public:
  Dynarray(/* ... */) : /* ... */, m_id(s_cnt++) {}
};
```

You also need to give it a definition outside the class, according to some rules.

```cpp
int Dynarray::s_cnt; // Zero-initialize, because it is `static`.
```

Or initialize it with some value explicitly:

```cpp
int Dynarray::s_cnt = 42;
```

`static` data members

Exercise: `std::string` has a `find` member function:

```
std::string s = something();
auto pos = s.find('a');
if (pos == std::string::npos) { // This means that `'a'` is not found.
  // ...
} else {
  std::cout << s[pos] << '\n'; // If executed, it should print `a`.
}
```

`std::string::npos` is returned when the required character is not found.

Define `npos` and `find` for your `Dynarray` class, whose behavior should be similar to those of `std::string`.

`static` member functions

A `static` member function:

```
class A {
 public:
  static void fun(int x, int y);
};
```

Just consider it as a normal non-member function, except that

- its name is in the **class scope**: `A::fun(x, y)`, and that
- the accessibility may be restricted. Here `fun` is `public`.

`static` member functions

A `static` member function:

```
class A {
 public:
  static void fun(int x, int y);
};
```

`A::fun` does not belong to any object of `A`. It belongs to the **class** `A`.

- There is no `this` pointer inside `fun`.

It can also be called by `a.fun(x, y)` (where `a` is an object of type `A`), but here `a` will not be bound to a `this` pointer, and `fun` has no way of accessing any non-`static` data member of `a`.

`friend`

`friend` functions

Recall the `Student` class:

```cpp
class Student {
  std::string m_name;
  std::string m_id;
  int m_entranceYear;
public:
  Student(const std::string &name, const std::string &id)
      : m_name(name), m_id(id), m_entranceYear(std::stol(id.substr(0, 4))) {}
  auto graduated(int year) const { return year - m_entranceYear >= 4; }
  // ...
};
```

Suppose we want to write a function to display the information of a `Student`.

`friend` functions

```cpp
void print(const Student &stu) {
  std::cout << "Name: " << stu.m_name << ", id: " << stu.m_id
            << "entrance year: " << stu.m_entranceYear << '\n';
}
```

This won't compile, because `m_name`, `m_id` and `m_entranceYear` are `private` members of `Student`.

- One workaround is to define `print` as a member of `Student`.
- However, there do exist some functions that cannot be defined as a member.

`friend` functions

Add a `friend` declaration, so that `print` can access the private members of `Student`.

```cpp
class Student {
  friend void print(const Student &); // The parameter name is not used in this
                                      // declaration, so it is omitted.

  std::string m_name;
  std::string m_id;
  int m_entranceYear;
public:
  Student(const std::string &name, const std::string &id)
      : m_name(name), m_id(id), m_entranceYear(std::stol(id.substr(0, 4))) {}
  auto graduated(int year) const { return year - m_entranceYear >= 4; }
  // ...
};
```

`friend` functions

Add a `friend` declaration.

```
class Student {
  friend void print(const Student &);

  // ...
};
```

A `friend` is **not** a member! You can put this `friend` delcaration **anywhere in the class body**. The access modifiers have **no effect** on it.

- We often declare all the `friend`s of a class in the beginning or at the end of class definition.

`friend` classes

A class can also declare another class as its `friend`.

```cpp
class X {
  friend class Y;
  // ...
};
```

In this way, any code from the class `Y` can access the private members of `X`.

Definition and declaration

Definition and declaration

For a function:

```
// Only a declaration: The function body is not present.
void foo(int, const std::string &);
// A definition: The function body is present.
void foo(int x, const std::string &s) {
  // ...
}
```

Class definition

For a class, a **definition** consists of **the declarations of all its members**.

```cpp
class Widget {
public:
  Widget();
  Widget(int, int);
  void set_handle(int);

  // `const` is also a part of the function type, which should be present
  // in its declaration.
  const std::vector<int> &get_gadgets() const;

  // ...
private:
  int m_handle;
  int m_length;
  std::vector<int> m_gadgets;
};
```

Define a member function outside the class body

A member function can be declared in the class body, and then defined outside.

```cpp
class Widget {
public:
  const std::vector<int> &get_gadgets() const; // A declaration only.
  // ...
}; // Now the definition of `Widget` is complete.

// Define the function here. The function name is `Widget::get_gadgets`.
const std::vector<int> &Widget::get_gadgets() const {
  return m_gadgets; // Just like how you do it inside the class body.
                    // The implicit `this` pointer is still there.
}
```

The `::` operator

```cpp
class Widget {
public:
  using gadgets_list = std::vector<int>;
  static int special_member;
  const gadgets_list &get_gadgets() const;
  // ...
};
const Widget::gadgets_list &Widget::get_gadgets() const {
  return m_gadgets;
}
```

- The members `Widget::gadgets_list` and `Widget::special_member` are accessed through `ClassName::`.
- The name of the member function `get_gadgets` is `Widget::get_gadgets`.

Class declaration and incomplete type

To declare a class without providing a definition:

```
class A;
struct B;
```

If we only see the **declaration** of a class, we have no knowledge about its members, how many bytes it takes, how it can be initialized, ...

- Such class type is an **incomplete type**.
- We cannot create an object of an incomplete type, nor can we make a call to any of its member functions.
- The only thing we can do is to declare a pointer or a reference to it.

Class declaration and incomplete type

If we only see the **declaration** of a class, we have no knowledge about its members, how many bytes it takes, how it can be initialized, ...

- Such class type is an **incomplete type**.
- We cannot create an object of an incomplete type, nor can we access any of its members.
- The only thing we can do is to declare a pointer or a reference to it.

```
class Student; // We only have this declaration.

void print(const Student &stu) { // OK. Declaring a reference to it is OK.
  std::cout << stu.m_name << '\n'; // Error. We don't know anything about its
                                   // members.
}
```

Destructors revisited

Destructors revisited

A **destructor** (dtor) is a member function that is called automatically when an object of that class type is "dead".

- For global and `static` objects, on termination of the program.
- For local objects, when control reaches the end of its scope.
- For objects created by `new` / `new[]`, when their address is passed to `delete` / `delete[]`.

The destructor is often responsible for doing some **cleanup**: Release the resources it owns, do some logging, cut off its connection with some external objects, ...

Destructors

```cpp
class Student {
  std::string m_name;
  std::string m_id;
  int m_entranceYear;
public:
  Student(const std::string &, const std::string &);
  std::string getName() const;
  bool graduated(int) const;
  void setName(const std::string &);
  void print() const;
};
```

Does our `Student` class have a destructor?

Destructors

Does our `Student` class have a destructor?

- It **must** have. Whenever you create an object of type `Student`, its destructor needs to be invoked somewhere in this program. [1]

What does `Student::~Student` need to do? Does `Student` own any resources?

Destructors

Does our `Student` class have a destructor?

- It **must** have. Whenever you create an object of type `Student`, its destructor needs to be invoked somewhere in this program. [1]

What does `Student::~Student` need to do? Does `Student` own any resources?

- It seems that a `Student` has no resources, so nothing special needs to be done.
- However, it has two `std::string` members! Their destructors must be called, otherwise the memory is leaked!

Destructors

To define the destructor of `Student`: Just write an empty function body, and everything is done.

```cpp
class Student {
  std::string m_name;
  std::string m_id;
  int m_entranceYear;
public:
  ~Student() {}
};
```

Destructors

```cpp
class Student {
  std::string m_name;
  std::string m_id;
  int m_entranceYear;
public:
  ~Student() {}
};
```

- When the function body is executed, the object is *not yet* "dead".
  - You can still access its members.

    ```cpp
    ~Student() { std::cout << m_name << '\n'; }
    ```

- After the function body is executed, **all its data members** are destroyed automatically, **in reverse order** in which they are declared.
  - For members of class type, their destructors are invoked automatically.

Constructors vs destructors

```
Student(const std::string &name)
    : m_name(name) /* ... */ {
  // ...
}
```

- A class may have multiple ctors (overloaded).
- The data members are initialized **before** the execution of function body.
- The data members are initialized **in order** in which they are declared.

```
~Student() {
  // ...
}
```

- A class has only one dtor. [1]
- The data members are destroyed **after** the execution of function body.
- The data members are destroyed **in reverse order** in which they are declared.

Compiler-generated destructors

For most cases, a class needs a destructor.

Therefore, the compiler always generates one [2] if there is no user-declared destructor.

- The compiler-generated destructor is `public` by default.
- The compiler-generated destructor is as if it were defined with an empty function body `{}`.
- It does nothing but to destroy the data members.

We can explicitly require one by writing `= default;`, just as for other copy control members.

Summary

Notes

[1] Objects created by `new` / `new[]` are not required to destroyed. A `delete` / `delete[]` expression will destroy it, but it is not mandatory. So you can still create an object with a deleted destructor (see 3) by a `new` expression, but you can't `delete` it, which possibly leads to memory leak.

[2] A class can have many prospective destructors since C++20.

[3] If no user-declared destructor is provided for a class type, the compiler will always **declare** a destructor as an `inline` `public` member of its class.

If an implicitly-declared destructor is not deleted, it is **implicitly-defined** by the compiler when it is **odr-used**. In some very special cases the compiler may fail to define the destructor (e.g. due to a member whose destructor is inaccessible). In that case, the destructor is implicitly deleted.