```
    struct {
      char design[DESIGN_LEN+1];
      int colors;
      int sizes;
    } shirt;
  } item;
};
```

Notice that the union (named `item`) is a member of the `catalog_item` structure, and the `book`, `mug`, and `shirt` structures are members of `item`. If `c` is a `catalog_item` structure that represents a book, we can print the book's title in the following way:

```
printf("%s", c.item.book.title);
```

As this example shows, accessing a union that's nested inside a structure can be awkward: to locate a book title, we had to specify the name of a structure (`c`), the name of the union member of the structure (`item`), the name of a structure member of the union (`book`), and then the name of a member of that structure (`title`).

We can use the `catalog_item` structure to illustrate an interesting aspect of unions. Normally, it's not a good idea to store a value into one member of a union and then access the data through a different member, because assigning to one member of a union causes the values of the other members to be undefined. However, the C standard mentions a special case: two or more of the members of the union are structures, and the structures begin with one or more matching members. (These members need to be in the same order and have compatible types, but need not have the same name.) If one of the structures is currently valid, then the matching members in the other structures will also be valid.

Consider the union embedded in the `catalog_item` structure. It contains three structures as members, two of which (`mug` and `shirt`) begin with a matching member (`design`). Now, suppose that we assign a value to one of the `design` members:

```
strcpy(c.item.mug.design, "Cats");
```

The `design` member in the other structure will be defined and have the same value:

```
printf("%s", c.item.shirt.design);   /* prints "Cats" */
```

Using Unions to Build Mixed Data Structures

Unions have another important application: creating data structures that contain a mixture of data of different types. Let's say that we need an array whose elements are a mixture of `int` and `double` values. Since the elements of an array must be of the same type, it seems impossible to create such an array. Using unions, though, it's relatively easy. First, we define a union type whose members represent the different kinds of data to be stored in the array: