Further Mathematics and Algorithms

Lesson 7: *Writing an Arrays*

Resizeable arrays, iterators

Resizable Arrays

- We are finally in a position where we can make our array resizable
- We need to have both a length (which the user know about) and a capacity which is invisible to the user, but allows us to add elements while not having to create too many new arrays
- We need to change the constructor

```
template <typename T>
Array<T>::Array(unsigned n=0) {
  length = n;
  if (n==0) {
    n = 8;
  }
  data = new T[n];
  capacity = n;
}
```

- If we don't give the constructor an argument it will be set to 0

Push Back

- Let's introduce a new command that allows us to add to the end of an array

- If the capacity is not big enough we need to increase the capacity

```
template <typename T>
T Array<T>::push_back(T value) {
  if (length == capacity) {
    capacity *= 2;
    T* new_data = new T[capacity];
    for (int i=0; i<length; ++i) {
      new_data[i] = data[i];
    }
    delete [] data;
    data = new_data;
  }
  data[length] = value;
  ++length;
  return value;
}
```

Refactoring

- It is possible to define functions inside the class definition
- This has the advantage of making the code much more compact
- It has the disadvantage of confusing the interface (a list of function that can be called) with the implementation
- It is unfortunate that when you use templates you tend to put the implementation details in the header file
- What you should do depend on whether you are after a quick solution or are writing code that many people might use

New Code

```
template <typename T>
class Array {
private:
  T *data;
  unsigned length;
  unsigned capacity;
public:
  Array(unsigned n=0) {
    length = n;
    if (n==0) {
      n = 8;
    }
    data = new T[n];
    capacity = n;
  }
  Array(const Array& other);
  ~Array() {delete[] data;}
  T& operator[](unsigned index) {return data[index];}
  const T& operator[](unsigned index) const {return data[index];}
  unsigned size() const {return length;}
  T push_back(T value);
};
```

Iterators

- Iterators are designed to follow the same semantics as pointers
- Because we are just wrapping an array where we can use pointers to navigate the array we can use pointers as iterators
- All we need to do is add two new methods

```
T* begin() {return data;}
T* end() {return data+length;}
```

- We can the use iterators to iterate over our array

vector

- C++ comes with a powerful library known as the **standard template library** (STL)
- This includes containers (resizable arrays, linked lists, double ended queues, sets, maps, etc.)
- The resizable array is called `vector<T>`
- We can just replace `"array.h"` with `<vector>` and `Array` with `vector` in our main function and everything will work the same
- Of course the STL vector is a bit more powerful and efficient than the `Array` class we wrote, although our class isn't bad

Iterators in Other Containers

- Iterators exist for many containers
- Because of iterators it is possible to write algorithms that work for any container that supports iterators
- The STL has a bunch of algorithms that work for different containers
- You can also use a pretty for loop

```
for(T entry: container) {
  ...
}
```

- This makes code easier to read

Writing Iterators

- For most classes we don't iterator by advancing a pointer
- Thus most iterators are more complex and we have to write a class (or structure—`struct`) which keeps the information we need to iterate
- We then have to define methods to make iteration look like iterating though an array
- We will see an example in the code for linked lists