

Lesson 4: Use Arrays



Variable length arrays, implementing stacks

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Use Arrays

- An array is a contiguous chunk of memory
- In C we can create arrays using
`int *array = new int[20]`
- The array has an access time of $\Theta(1)$
- The constant factor is small (i.e. access time ≈ 1 time step)
- Arrays provide a very efficient use of memory
- 95% of the time using arrays is going to give you the best performance although never use raw arrays!

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Outline

1. Why Arrays?
2. **Variable Length Arrays**
3. Programming Language
4. Implementing Stacks



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ADT for a List

- What do we want of a list of `ints`?
 - ★ `void push_back(int value)`
 - ★ random access `array[i]`
 - ★ `int size()`
- It would be useful if it resized
- It would be great to have some algorithms (e.g. sort) that can be run on a list

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1. **Why Arrays?**
2. Variable Length Arrays
3. Programming Language
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Disadvantages of Arrays

- Arrays have a fixed length
- Very often we don't know how big an array we want
 - ★ E.g. reading words from a file
- Adding or deleting elements from the middle of an array is costly
- Sorted arrays are expensive to maintain
- Arrays don't know how big they are—annoying

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Variable Length Arrays

- We want a variable length array
- Initially a variable length array would have length zero
- We should be able to
 - ★ Add an element to an array
 - ★ Access any element in the array
 - ★ Change an element
 - ★ Delete elements
 - ★ Know how many elements we have

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Implementation

- How should we implement a list?
- Use an array, of course!
- We need to distinguish between
 - ★ the number of elements in the list `size()`
 - ★ the number of elements in the array `capacity()`
- If the number of elements grows larger than the capacity then we need to increase the capacity

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Initial Capacity

- We could prevent resizing arrays by using a huge initial capacity
- However, how big is big enough?
- What happens when we have an array of arrays?
- Memory like time is resource we should care about
- In an analogy with **time complexity** we also care about **space complexity** (i.e. how much memory we need)
- If we want to store n elements it is reasonable to expect that we use cn bits of memory where we want to keep c small

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Resizing Memory

- We start with some reasonable capacity
- We can add elements until we reach the capacity
- A simple method for resizing memory is
 - ★ create a new array with double the capacity of the old array
 - ★ copy the existing elements from the old array to the new array

`list.push_back(62)` →

31	35	85	23
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31	35	85	23	62			
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- Amongst a number of issues that make C++ dangerous are
 - ★ Memory management
 - ★ Writing to parts of memory that you should not
 - ★ Multiple inheritance, although you seldom need to do this
- However, by using existing data structures (STL) and following established programming patterns these don't have to be an issue

Trouble with Memory Management

- If you don't release memory acquired with `new` using `delete` you cause a **memory leak**
- Often memory leaks are no concern, but in large programs memory leaks will rapidly exhaust the computer's memory, slowing down the code and eventually leading to the programme crashing
- To release a block of memory we can use:


```
delete[] storage;
```
- Now `storage` is a **dangling pointer** and must not be used as it is no longer valid
- If we accidentally delete the storage twice we get an *undefined behaviour*, but often the programme will crash

Writing over Memory

- In C++ the following will compile and run


```
int *array = new int[4];
int *a = new int[2];
double *darray = new double[4];
array[4] = 4;
```
- However `array[4]` has not been assigned (unlike `array[0]`, `array[1]`, `array[2]` and `array[3]`)
- The memory on the heap corresponding to the address of `array[4]` might have been assigned to `a[0]` in which case you may inadvertently have set `a[0]` to 4 leading to the program not doing what you want
- It might be that you have put an `int` into `darray[0]` which will then crash the system when you read `darray[0]`

Follow Programming Idioms

- Using common data structures and following common idioms will prevent most errors

```
int n = 5;
vector<int> array(n);

for(int i=0; i<array.size(); ++i) {
    array[i] = i;
}

for(auto pt=array.begin(); pt != array.end(); ++pt){
    *pt *= 2;
}

for(int& element: array) {
    element += 2;
}
```

- Most programming languages have two types of memory
 - The Stack:** is the area of memory controlled by compiler for local variables, function calls, etc.
 - The Heap:** is area that the programmer (you) can request, which is nice

- In C++ you are given the **right** to ask for memory


```
int *storage = new int[n];
```

- You have **responsibility** to free the memory


```
delete[] storage;
```

Resource Acquisition is Initialisation (RAII)

- Java and Python use garbage collectors which automatically check whether memory can be accessed and if not it is removed
- In C++ this is your responsibility
- But there is a standard **programming pattern** to elevate the problem known as **Resource Acquisition is Initialisation (RAII)**
 - Wrap all resources in classes. Request the resources in the constructor and release the resource in the destructor*
- When the object goes out of scope (you leave a `for` loop, function call, etc.) the destructor is called and the resource is safely released

Guarding Against Mistakes

- These are really hard problems to debug because where the program goes wrong or crashes can be very far from the assignment that caused the error
- Java takes the approach that it always tests whether you are writing in valid memory
- By default C++ doesn't even for data structures—making this check slows down random access
- Checks can also make pipeline optimisations harder to make
- The onus is on the user to use the memory correctly

Outline

1. Why Arrays?
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4. Implementing Stacks



- Lets look at implementing a stack
- Remember a stack has methods
 - ★ `push(Object)`
 - ★ `pop()`
 - ★ `top()`
 - ★ `empty()`

Notes on Implementation

- I don't need to write a constructor as C++ generates a default constructor that will initialise the stack correctly
- I don't need to write a destructor because by default the destructor for `vector<T>` will be called which releases memory
- I've written the `pop` command, that I like, but if I run


```
stack<Widget> widget_stack;
Widget w;
widget_stack.push(w);
Widget w1(widget_stack.pop());
```

if the last command throws an exception then the last term on the stack is lost for ever

Using MyStack

- Implementing a stack using a dynamically re-sizable array is trivial
- Stacks have many applications
- E.g. suppose we want to write a program to reverse the order of strings in a file

you can't swallow a cage can't you

you
can't
swallow
a
cage
can
you

Lessons

- Arrays are very efficient both in space (memory) and access time
- Resizing an array is not that costly
- insertion and deletion are expensive, $O(n)$
- Arrays are often the simplest way to implement many other data structures, e.g. stacks
- Use (dynamically re-sizable) arrays frequently

```
template <typename T>
class MyStack
{
private:
    std::vector<T> stack;

public:
    void push(const T& obj) {stack.push_back(obj);}

    T top() const {return stack.back();}

    T pop() {
        T tmp = stack.back();
        stack.pop_back();
        return tmp;
    }

    T empty() {return stack.size()==0;}
};
```

Why not use a vector

- Surely it is mad to use `MyStack<T>` as I could just use the more powerful `vector<T>`
- I can make `MyStack<T>` as efficient as `vector<T>` by inlining function calls
- But why would I want to lose functional?
- By using `MyStack<T>` I am **declaring my intention** of using this data structure as a stack
- I'm not going to do something weird like modify an element inside the stack
- My code becomes self-explanatory—I don't need to write comments as it is clear what I am doing

Reversing Strings in File

```
#include <stack>
#include <iostream>
#include <fstream>
#include <iterator>
#include <algorithm>
using namespace std;

int main(int argc, char *argv[]) {
    ifstream in(argv[1]);

    stack<string> stack;

    string word;
    while (in >> word)
        stack.push(word);

    while(!stack.empty()) {
        cout << stack.top() << ' ';
        stack.pop();
    }
}
```