



Unit 2. Encapsulation

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2.8 Member Operator Overloading

Sue is working on her `Date` class but can't seem to get the assignment operator working. Why is that? Of all the operators, the assignment seems to be the most useful (with the exception of the insertion and the extraction operator). While investigating the cause of this obvious oversight, she stumbles upon member operator overloading.

Objectives

By the end of this chapter, you will be able to:

- Implement operator loading as non-member, non-member with friends, or as member functions
- List which operators should and must be overloaded as member functions
- Be able to use either the prefix or the infix notation for an overloaded operator

Prerequisites

Before reading this chapter, please make sure you are able to:

- Explain the differences between infix and prefix function notation (Chapter 2.6)
- Create a function to implement non-member operator overloading (Chapter 2.6)

What is member overloading and why you should care

Member operator overloading is the process of using infix notation of methods. This is similar to nonmember operator overloading except the left-hand-side part of the equation is always this. It also allows operator functions to access member variables without using the friend modifier.

Most operators can be overloaded using non-members or as members. There are a few operators that can only be overloaded as non-members and a few that can only be overloaded as members. The non-member variety are those whose left-hand-side is not this. The classic examples of this are the insertion and extraction operators. For the insertion operator the left-hand-side is an ostream object; for the extraction operator the left-hand-side is an istream object.

The assignment operator can only be overloaded as a member function. The same is true with the array index operator also known as the square bracket operator (`[]`). That being said, the following rules-of-thumb are applied when considering whether to make an operator member or non-member:

- Member if it is a unary operator (like the negative (`-`), not (`!`), dereference (`*`), address-of- (`&`), increment (`++`) or decrement (`--`)).
- Non-member if both operands are treated equally and are left unchanged (like addition (`+`), multiplication (`*`), equivalence (`==` `!=`), comparison (`>` `>=` `<` `<=`), and (`&&`) and or (`|`)).
- Member if the binary operator does not treat both operands equally (like assignment (`=`), add-onto (`+=` `-=` `*=` `/=` `%=` `&=` `! =`), and array index (`[]`)).

Syntax overview

The syntax of member operator overloading is identical to non-member with two important distinctions. First, the function is part of a class. Therefore it is defined as a member function, either prototyped in the class definition or completely defined as inline in the class definition. Second, the left-hand-side parameter is hidden. Recall from Chapter 2.1 that a function modifying an object needs to pass the object as a

parameter. In the case of member functions, this parameter is hidden and given the name `this`. The same is true with member operator overloading. . The following operators must be overloaded as member functions:

Operator	Example	Use
assignment	$a = b$	Assign the value of b onto a
square bracket	$a[b]$	Retrieve an item from a collection
function call	$a(b)$	Can take any number of parameters, used similarly to non-default constructors

The following operators must be overloaded as non-member functions:

Operator	Example	Use
insertion	$a < b$	When the left-hand-side is an ostream object
extraction	$a > b$	When the left-hand-side is an istream object
addition	$a + b$	When the returned data type is not the same as the left-hand-side data type
multiplication	$a * b$	When the returned data type is not the same as the left-hand-side data type

The following should be overloaded as member functions:

Operator	Example	Use
add onto	$a \div b$	Right-hand-side can be any data type
subtract from	$a \div b$	Right-hand-side can be any data type
multiply onto	$a * b$	Right-hand-side can be any data type
divide by	a/b	Right-hand-side can be any data type
modulus from	$a \% b$	Right-hand-side can be any data type
increment	$a + +$	Add one, postfix or prefix
decrement	$a - -$	Subtract one, postfix or prefix
negative	$-a$	Negative, opposite, disjoint set
not	$1a$	Logical not, opposite

The following should be overloaded as non-member functions

Operator	Example	Use
addition	$a + b$	Sum, add, adding onto, etc.
subtraction	$a - b$	Difference, subtraction, distance between, removing from, etc.
multiplication	$a * b$	Multiplying, extending, etc.
division	a/b	Division, dividing, reducing, etc.
modulus	$a \% b$	Remainder

Operator	Example	Use
equivalence	$a \Rightarrow b$	Are they the same?
different	$a \nmid b$	Are they different?
greater than	$a > b$	Is one larger than another?
greater than or equal to	$a \geq b$	Is one larger or equal to another?
less than	$a < b$	Is one smaller than another?
less than or equal to	$a \leq b$	Is one smaller or equal to another?
and	$a \ \&\& \ b$	Logical "and", subset
or	$a \ \ b$	Logic "or", superset

Assignment

Conceptually the assignment (=) operator works the same as the copy constructor with the exception that a new object is not created. Instead, an exact copy of the object on the left-hand-side is made to the object on the right-hand side. The one exception to this general rule is those times when the left-hand-side represents a different data type than the object on the right-hand-side. Be careful with those situations; make sure the overloading the assignment operator makes sense in that context.

Using the operator

With the assignment operator (as with the += operator), the left-hand-side gets changed:

```
{
    Complex c1(10.0, 9.6);
    // initialize to 10.0 + 9.6i
    Complex c2;
    // initially 0 + 0i
    Complex c3;
    // same here
    c3 = c2 = c1;
    // c2 assigned to 4.5 + 9.6i. Next
} // c3 is assigned to 4.5 + 9.6i
```

The right-hand-side of the assignment operator is the thing being copied. This means it should not change, thus being a constant. Since we should not make a copy of the right-hand-side, it additionally should be byreference.

The left-hand-side of the assignment operator is being changed. Since the assignment operator must be a member function, it comes through as this. Since this changes, the method cannot be constant.

Finally, we need to be able to chain or stack assignment operators. The return value should be the newly changed left-hand-side. Thus the assignment operator in the above code can be re-written as:

$$c3 = (c2 = c1)$$

Prototype

The prototype for the assignment operator defined with the Complex class on the right-hand-side is:

The name of the function is "Complex :: operator = ()". We can call it with "c1.operator=(c2)" or "c1 = c2"

Complex & Complex :: operator = (const Complex & rhs);

Return the left-hand-side by-reference so we don't make a copy of this

The left-hand-side is this because we are overloading a member operator

The right-hand-side is an object constant by-reference so we don't change or make a copy of rhs

Implementation

The following is the implementation of the assignment operator for the Complex class:

```
Complex & Complex :: operator = (const Complex & rhs)
{
    this->r = rhs.r;
    // the left-hand-side of the operator
    this->i = rhs.i;
    // comes in as "this"
    return *this;
    // return *this because "this" is
}
```

The most common mistake is to forget to return *this, thereby making it impossible to chain the assignment operator.

Square bracket

The square bracket operator ([]), also known as the array index operator, is commonly used to retrieve an item from a collection. The interesting thing about this operator, however, is that the parameter does not need to be an integer.

Using the operator

The square bracket operator is commonly used with containers (classes storing data). To demonstrate, we will start with the simple container class Array:

```
class Array
{
    ... code removed for brevity ...
private:
    double * data; // where the data for the array is stored
    int sizeArray; // the number of items currently in the array
};
```

We can use the square-bracket operator both as an accessor and as a mutator:

```
{
    Array array(10); // initial capacity of 10
    array[0] = 9.9; // change the 1st item by setting it to 9.9
    cout << array[0] << endl; // access the 1st item, the value 9.9
}
```

The right-hand-side of the square bracket operator traditionally is an integer, corresponding to the index of the item in the container. Note, however, that this can be any data type. The left-hand-side is the class itself, represented as this. If you wish the square-bracket operator to function only as a getter, make this constant by making the method itself constant. The return value is the data being accessed from the container. If the square bracket operator is to function as just a getter, either return by-value or a constant by-reference. If the square bracket operator is to function as both a getter and a setter, then the function must return by-reference.

Prototype

The prototype for the square-bracket operator defined with the Array class on the right-hand-side is:

```
double & Array : : operator [] (int index);
```

Return value by-reference so we this operator can be both a getter and a setter

The left-hand-side is this because we are overloading a member operator

The right-hand-side is typically an index. Since we usually use a built-in data type, there is no need to make it constant.

Implementation

The following is the implementation of the square-bracket operator for the Array class:

```
double & Array :: operator [] (int index) throw(bool)
{
    if (index < 0 || index >= sizeArray)
        throw false;
    return data[index];
}
```

Function call

The function call operator () can also be overloaded as a member function. While this is not commonly done, it does have a few rather unusual benefits. First, it can be overloaded with any number of operands. Most operators are unary or binary, but the function call operator can be anything. The second use for the function call operator is how it works similarly to a non-default constructor. Recall that a constructor can take any number of parameters, serving to initialize the class with the passed values. The function call

operator can look and work the same, except a new object is not created. In other words, it can be a set () function.

Using the operator

It is rare to overload the function operator. However, in those situations when initializing or setting a value to an object needs to occur frequently and with many parameters, it might be the most convenient tool for the job at hand.

```
{
    Complex c1(10.0, 9.6);
    c1(3.4, 2.1);
}
```

The left-hand-side is the object being operated on. Since we usually change the left-hand-side, the method is frequently not a constant.

There can be any number of parameters to the function call operator. Usually they come in as constant byreference, but there is no hard-and-fast rule here.

The return value of the function call operator is usually void. That being said, it can be anything.

Prototype

The prototype for the square-bracket operator defined with the Array class on the right-hand-side is:

The name of the function is "Complex :: operator () ()". We can call it with "c.operator()(3.4, 2.1)" or "c(3.4, 2.1)"

```
void Complex :: operator () (float real, float  
imaginary);
```

Return value can be anything. In this case, the operator works like a setter

The left-hand-side is this because we are overloading a member operator

There can be any number of parameters here. In this case, we are sending to builtin parameters by-value

Implementation

The following is the implementation of the function-call operator for the Complex class:

```
void Complex :: operator () (float real, float imaginary = 0.0)
{
    this->r = real;
    this->i = imaginary;
}
```

Logical operators

The logical "and" (&&) and logical "or" (||) operators can be overloaded as with any other operator. The problem with overloading these operators originates in how they are usually used. Traditionally the "and" and "or" operators take a Boolean value on both the left-hand-side and the right-hand-side.

```
{
    bool value1 = false;
    bool value2 = true;
    bool logicalAnd = value1 && value2; // set intersection n
    bool logicalOr = value1 || value2; // set union U
}
```

Note that we can also use "and" to mean set intersection (the list of elements two sets have in common) and "or" to mean union (the list of elements in either of the two sets).

First, we will write a function to compute all the elements in common between two Arrays:

```
Array intersection(const Array & lhs, const Array & rhs) // return a new set, b
{
    Array array; // the new Array to be returned
    for (int i = 0; i < lhs.size(); i++) // go through all the items
        if (rhs.isMember(lhs.get(i))) // if it is not present
            array += lhs.get(i); // add it.
    return array; // return the new array by-value
}
```

The "and" operator can be implemented as:

```
Array Array :: operator && (const Array & rhs) const
{
    Array array; // the new Array to be returned
    for (int i = 0; i < size(); i++) // access size() or this->size()
        if (rhs.isMember(data[i])) // access the private member variable data[]
            array += data[i];
    return array; // return the same way: by-value
}
```

The "or" operator (||) works in much the same way. While it is uncommon to want to overload the logical "and" or "or" operator, the union and intersection metaphor is commonly needed.

Member vs. non-member

As mentioned previously, most operators can be overloaded as a member or as a non-member. A few examples are:

Addition

```

class Complex
{
... code removed for brevity ...
    inline friend Complex operator + (const Complex & lhs, const Comple
    { // (a + bi) + (c + di) = (a + c) + (b + d)i
    return Complex(lhs.r + rhs.r, lhs.i + rhs.i);
    }
};

class Complex
{
... code removed for brevity ...
    Complex operator + (const Complex & rhs) const
    { // (a + bi) + (c + di) = (a + c) + (b + d)i
    return Complex(r + rhs.r, i + rhs.i);
    }
};

```

Observe how we have one less parameter because lhs becomes `*this`. Also, if the lhs parameter with the non-member function is a const, the corresponding method is a const with member operator overloading.

Add onto

```

class Complex
{
... code removed for brevity...
    inline friend Complex & operator += (Complex & lhs, const Complex &
    { // (a + bi) + (c + di) = (a + c) + (b + d)i
    lhs.r += rhs.r;
    lhs.i += rhs.i;
    return lhs;
    }
};

class Complex
{
... code removed for brevity ...
    Complex & operator += (const Complex & rhs)
    { // (a + bi) + (c + di) = (a + c) + (b + d)i
    r += rhs.r;
    i += rhs.i;
    return *this;
    }
};

```

Because member functions have access to member variables without using the dot operator, the member variables `r` and `i` are directly accessible in the member version of the `+=` function. Also, since this changes in the member function, the method is not a const.

Increment prefix

```

class Complex
{
    ... code removed for brevity ...
    inline friend Complex & operator ++ (Complex & c)
    {
        return c += 1.0; // prefix ++ is exactly the same as += 1
    }
};

class Complex
{
    ... code removed for brevity ...
    Complex & operator ++ ()
    {
        return *this += 1.0; // prefix ++ is exactly the same as += 1
    }
};

```

In the non-member function, we returned "c += 1.0;". Since we have no 'c' parameter, we have to use *this instead. Note that we could also have said "return operator+=(1.0);".

Comparison

```

class Complex
{
    ... code removed for brevity ...
    inline friend bool operator == (const Complex & lhs, const Complex & rh
    {
        return (lhs.r == rhs.r && lhs.i == rhs.i);
    }
};

class Complex
{
    ... code removed for brevity ...
    bool operator == (const Complex & rhs) const
    {
        return (r == rhs.r && i == rhs.i);
    }
};

```

In each of the above examples, less code needs to be written to implement the operator as a member.

Calling operator functions

Operator overloading is designed to make it easier and more convenient for the client to call a common function. That being said, C++ allows the programmer to call the function either with the infix notation or the prefix notation. Therefore, the following are equivalent:

```
int main()
{
    cout << "Hello world";
    return 0;
}
```

```
int main()
{
    operator << (cout, "Hello world");
    return 0;
}
```

Of course, one would never want to do this. However, it does more clearly illustrate how functions work. Consider the following code for the Complex class:

```
class Complex
{
    ... code removed for brevity ...
    inline friend Complex & operator += (Complex & lhs, const Complex & rhs)
    { // (a + bi) + (c + di) = (a + c) + (b + d)i
        lhs.r += rhs.r;
        lhs.i += rhs.i;
        return lhs;
    }
};
```

In this example, it is possible to call the += operator several ways:

```
{
    Complex c1(4, 5);
    Complex c2(6, 1);
    Complex c3(6, 0);
    c1 += c2 += c3;
}

{
    Complex c1(4, 5);
    Complex c2(6, 1);
    Complex c3(6, 0);
    operator += (c1, operator += (c2,
c3));
}
```

From this example, it becomes clear why the += operator needs to return a Complex object by-reference. If it was lacking, it would be impossible to chain more than one += operator on the same line.

Example 2.8 - Complex

This example will demonstrate how to implement the common operators as member functions. In this example, every function that can be overloaded as a method will be, regardless of whether it is easier for the client to work. All the operators will be overloaded as inline functions.

Take the code from “Example 2.7 - Complex” and convert every possible non-member operator to a member operator.

In this example, all the methods are implemented as inline.

```
class Complex
{
    ... code removed for brevity...
public:
    Complex operator + (const Complex & rhs) const
    {
        return Complex(r + rhs.r, i + rhs.i);
    }
    Complex operator + (double rhs) const
    {
        return Complex(r + rhs, i);
    }
    // cannot be a method because the left-hand-side is not a Complex
    inline friend Complex operator + (int lhs, const Complex & rhs)
    {
        return rhs + lhs;
    }
    Complex & operator += (const Complex & rhs)
    { // (a + bi) + (c + di) = (a + c) + (b + d)i
        r += rhs.r;
        i += rhs.i;
        return *this;
    }
    Complex & operator += (double rhs)
    { // (a + bi) + c = (a + c) + bi
        r += rhs;
        return *this;
    }
    Complex & operator ++ ()
    {
        return *this += 1.0;
    }
    Complex operator ++ (int postfix)
    {
        Complex old(*this);
        *this += 1.0;
        return old;
    }
};
```

The complete solution is available at [2-8-complex.html](#) or: `/home/cs165/examples/2-8-complex/`

Example 2.8 - Card

This example will demonstrate how to implement the common operators as member functions. In this example, every function that can be overloaded as a method will be, regardless of whether it is easier for the client to work. All the operators will be overloaded as non-inline functions.

Take the code from "Example 2.7 - Card" and convert every possible non-member operator to a member operator.

In this example, all the methods are not implemented as inline.

```
class Card
{
    ... code removed for brevity ...
    // insertion and extraction operators
    friend std::ostream & operator << (std::ostream & out, const Card & card);
    friend std::istream & operator >> (std::istream & in, Card & card);
    // increment and decrement ... only changing rank
    Card & operator ++ (); // prefix
    Card & operator -- (); // prefix
    Card operator ++ (int postfix); // postfix
    Card operator -- (int postfix); // postfix
    // change a card by adding or subtracting one
    Card operator + (const int input) const;
    friend Card operator + (const int input, const Card & lhs);
    Card operator - (const int input) const;
    Card & operator += (const int input);
    Card & operator -= (const int input);
    // assignment
    Card & operator = (const Card & rhs);
    Card & operator () (int iSuit, int iRank);
    // Relative comparison... only comparing rank
    bool operator >= (const Card & rhs) const;
    bool operator > (const Card & rhs) const;
    bool operator <= (const Card & rhs) const;
    bool operator < (const Card & rhs) const;
    // Absolute comparison... comparing both rank and suit
    bool operator == (const Card & rhs) const;
    bool operator != (const Card & rhs) const;
};
```

The complete solution is available at 2-8-card.html or: [/home/cs165/examples/2-8-card/](http://home/cs165/examples/2-8-card/)

Example 2.8 - Array

This example will demonstrate how to use the array-index operator as well as use the += operator to append, the && operator to find set intersection, and the || operator to find set union.

Write a function to implement an Array. This will behave much like the STL vector class except it will append with the += operator rather than push_back() and it will display the contents with the insertion operator.

In this example, all the methods are implemented as inline.

```

class Array
{
    ... code removed for brevity ...
public:
    // access a given item for getting and setting
    double & operator [](int index) throw(bool)
    {
        if (index < 0 || index >= sizeArray)
            throw false;
        return data[index];
    }
    // push an item onto the back of the list
    Array & operator += (double value) throw(bool)
    {
        grow(sizeArray + 1);
        data[sizeArray++] = value;
        return *this;
    }
    // copy the contents of one Array onto another
    Array & operator = (const Array & rhs) throw(bool)
    {
        grow(rhs.capacity());
        sizeArray = 0;
        for (int i = 0; i < rhs.size(); i++)
            (*this) += rhs.get(i);
        return *this;
    }
    // grow the array to a given size
    void grow(int capacity) throw(bool);
    // set intersection
    Array operator && (const Array & rhs) const;
    // set union
    Array operator || (const Array & rhs) const;
    // fetch the size or capacity
    int size() const { return sizeArray; }
    int capacity() const { return capacityArray; }
private:
    double * data; // where the data for the array is stored
    int sizeArray; // the number of items currently in the array
    int capacityArray; // the capacity of the array
};

```

The complete solution is available at [2-8-array.html](#) or: `/home/cs165/examples/2-8-array/`

Review 1-8

What are the data types for the return value, left-hand-side, and right-hand-side for the following operators for the Complex class?

	Expression	Return value	Left-Hand-Side	Right-Hand-Side
1.	lhs + rhs	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>

	Expression	Return value	Left-Hand-Side	Right-Hand-Side
2.	lhs += rhs			
3.	lhs++			
4.	++lhs			
5.	lhs == rhs			
6.	lhs << rhs			
7.	lhs >> rhs			
8.	-lhs			

Please see page 197 for a hint.

Problem 9

Given the following friend non-member operator overloading: Time operator + (const Time & lhs, int secondsToAdd) { return Time(lhs.secondsSinceMidnight + secondsToAdd); } Define the member version of the addition operator.

Problem 10

Given the following friend non-member operator overloading:

```
bool operator == (const Time & lhs, const Time & rhs)
{
    return (lhs.secondsSinceMidnight == rhs.secondsSinceMidnight);
}
```

Define the member version of the equivalence operator.

Problem 11

Write an assignment operator for the following class:

```
class Time
{
    public:
        Time() : secondsSinceMidnight(0) {}
        Time(int rhs) : secondsSinceMidnight(rhs) {}
        Time(const Time & rhs)
        {
            secondsSinceMidnight = rhs.secondsSinceMidnight;
        }
    private:
        int secondsSinceMidnight;
};
```

Please see page 190 for a hint.

Problem 12

Given the following Position structure:

```
struct Position
{
    int row;
    int col;
};
```

Given the following TicTacToe class:

```
class TicTacToe
{
    ... code removed for brevity ...
private:
    char board[3][3];
};
```

And given the following method:

```
char & TicTacToe :: getPiece(const Position & pos)
{
    return board[pos.row][pos.col];
}
```

Write the array-index operator for the TicTacToe class.