WG21 Document Number: P0208Rr1

Date: 2017-06-17

Intended audience: LEWG

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Copy-Swap Transaction

# Changes since R0

* Changed title to “Copy-Swap Transaction” from “Copy-Swap Helper.”
* Proposes a transaction-like function, copy\_swap\_transaction instead of a factory function copy\_swap\_helper.
* Adds get\_allocator function template.
* Removed formal wording that relates to memory\_resource\*. A better approach, described in [P0339](http://www.open-std.org/JTC1/SC22/WG21/docs/papers/2017/p0339r3.pdf), eliminates the need for special handling of memory\_resource\*.

# Motivation

A favorite idiom for writing exception-safe code is to employ the *copy-swap idiom*. In general, the copy-swap idiom involves making a copy of an object and modifying the copy. Once the modification is successful and does not throw an exception the original object and the copy are swapped. If an exception is thrown during modification of the copy, however, the original object is left unchanged, providing what is often called *the strong guarantee* of exception safety. In pseudo-C++, the copy-swap idiom for safely modifying an object x of type T is:

try {

T xprime(x);

*modify xprime here (might throw)*

…

using std::swap;

swap(x, xprime); // Does not throw

} catch (etc.) { … }

A variation of this idiom is commonly used to get the strong guarantee in the implementation of a copy-assignment operator:

T& T::operator=(const T& rhs)

{

T(rhs).swap(\*this); // T::swap does not throw

return \*this;

}

The problem with this idiom is that if T is an allocator-aware type, the allocator instance used for the copy might not be the correct allocator instance to use for the swap. In the assignment-operator example, if rhs has a different allocator than \*this, it is likely that the temporary copy T(rhs) will have the same allocator as rhs and a different allocator than \*this. Unless the allocator type has the propagate\_on\_container\_swap trait set to true (a rarity), the swap becomes undefined behavior and is likely to fail, not with an exception, but with an assertion failure or worse.

The general copy-swap idiom for modifying a single object of type T is less likely to fail because most allocators do propagate on copy construction. Such propagation is not guaranteed, however; pmr::polymorphic\_allocator in the fundamentals TS being an example of an allocator that does not propagate on copy construction of the container.

# Summary of proposal

This paper proposes four function templates that can be used to solve the problems above and have the added benefit of annotating the use of the copy-swap idiom in user code. The functions use metaprogramming to determine if a type uses an allocator and, if so, it ensures that the temporary copy used for the copy-swap idiom uses the correct allocator. Because the presence or absence of an allocator is determined at compile-time, these function templates are usable in generic code, where the type being swapped may or may not use an allocator. The general copy-swap idiom using these facilities would look like the following:

try {

std::copy\_swap\_transaction(x, [&](auto& xprime){

*modify xprime here (might throw)*

…

});

} catch (etc.) { … }

Note that a single call to copy\_swap\_transaction may be used to modify multiple variables safely, as follows:

try {

std::copy\_swap\_transaction(x, y, [&](auto& xprime, auto& yprime){

*modify xprime here (might throw)*

*modify yprime here (might throw)*

…

});

} catch (etc.) { … }

The assignment operator example would be rewritten as follows:

T& T::operator=(const T& rhs)

{

return swap\_assign(\*this, rhs);

}

The swap\_assign feature takes care of the boilerplate of exception-safe assignment and also handles the somewhat complicated allocator propagation traits.

Also proposed is a get\_allocator(x) function template that returns the allocator for x, if it has one, and the default allocator otherwise. This primitive functionality is useful for implementing the other two templates, but is useful on its own and is thus described explicitly.

# Target publication

These functions can be targeted for C++20 or the third revision of the Library Fundamentals TS (LFTS-3) or both, as determined by the LEWG. It should be noted that the problem being solved has existed since C++11 and that the facility being proposed has been fully implemented.

# Implementation experience

The functions described in this paper have been fully implemented and well tested. The code (including test driver) is available at <https://github.com/phalpern/uses-allocator>.

# Alternative design

An earlier revision of this paper proposed two other function templates:

* copy\_swap\_helper(x) returned a copy of x using x’s allocator even if the allocator would not normally propagate on copy construction.
* copy\_swap\_helper(x, y) returned a copy of x using y’s allocator.

Both functions would work as normal copy constructors if x does not use an allocator.

The one-argument form of copy\_swap\_helper was removed because the copy\_swap\_transaction function expressed the idiom more cleanly.

The two-argument form of copy\_swap\_helper was removed because the only known use for such a function was for the copy-swap assignment idiom, and even then it did the wrong thing in the presence of some propagation traits. Thus, I encapsulated the entire idiom, including the correct use of propagation traits, into swap\_assign, instead.

The functionality of both versions of copy\_swap\_helper can be implemented simply using the make\_using\_alloctor template proposed in [P0591](http://www.open-std.org/JTC1/SC22/WG21/docs/papers/2017/p0591r2.pdf), combined with get\_allocator, proposed here. This fact further reduces the motivation for copy\_swap\_helper.

# Proposed Wording

This text is relative to the Library Fundamentals TS Version 2 DTS (LFTS 2), [N4617](http://www.open-std.org/JTC1/SC22/WG21/docs/papers/2016/n4617.pdf).

Requests for guidance are highlighted yellow.

Add the following feature test macro to section 1.6 [general.feature.test] of the LFTS:

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Doc no.** | **Title** | **Primary Section** | **Macro Name Suffix** | **Value** | **Header** |
| P0208 | Copy-Swap Transaction | TBD | copy\_swap\_transaction | 201707 | <experimental/memory> |

Add to header <experimental/memory> synopsis:

namespace std {

namespace experimental {

inline namespace fundamentals\_v3 {

template <class T>

*see-below* get\_allocator(T&& x);

template <class T, class... Rest>

void copy\_swap\_transaction(T& t, Rest&&... rest);

template <class T>

T& swap\_assign(T& lhs, decay\_t<T> const& rhs);

template <class T>

T& swap\_assign(T& lhs, decay\_t<T>&& rhs);

}

}

}

Add the following descriptions for the above function templates:

template <class T>

*see-below* get\_allocator(T&& x);

*Returns:* x.get\_allocator() if that expression is well-formed; otherwise allocator<byte>{}.

Consistent with P0339, it might be better if the default return value were pmr::polymorphic\_allocator<byte>{}. Thoughts?

It is probably reasonable to have get\_allocator() be a customization point. What wording magic is needed for that?

template <class T, class... Args>

void copy\_swap\_transaction(T& t, Args&&... args);

*Requires:* The args parameter pack shall have at least one element. All but the last element of args shall be lvalue references comprising a partial parameter pack V&...v. Each element of v... shall be *swappable* ([swappable.requirements] in C++17). The last element of args shall be an object f of type F such that std::forward<F>(f)(v...) is well-formed.

*Effects:* Let v1, v2, …, vN of types V1&, V2&, …, VN&, be the first N elements of parameter pack args..., where N is one less than sizeof…(Args), and let value f, of type F, be the last argument in args.... For each i in 1…N, constructs vi’ of type Vi by *uses-allocator construction* with allocator get\_allocator(vi) and argument vi ([allocator.uses.construction] in C++17). Invokes std::forward<F>(f)(v1’, v2, …, vN’). Then for i in N…1, invokes swap(vi, vi’) in the context described by the swappable requirement.

*Throws:* nothing unless a constructor, swap, or invocation of f throws. [*Note:* Using arguments for which swap does not throw ensures that the values referenced by the first N arguments are modified only if f succeeds without throwing. – *end note*]

template <class T>

T& swap\_assign(T& lhs, decay\_t<T> const& rhs);

*Effects:* swap(lhs, R), where R is defined as follows:

* If get\_allocator(lhs) is well formed and uses\_allocator\_v<T, decltype(get\_allocator(lhs))> is true,
  + If allocator\_traits<decltype(lhs.get\_allocator())>::propagate\_on\_container\_copy\_assignment::value is true, then R is an object of type T constructed by *uses-allocator construction* ([allocator.uses.construction] in the C++ standard)with allocator get\_allocator(rhs) and argument std::forward<T>(rhs). [*Note*: if the allocator’s propagate\_on\_container\_swap trait is false, then the swap(lhs, R) might produce unexpected results, including undefined behavior – *end note*]
  + Otherwise R is an object of type T constructed by *uses-allocator construction* ([allocator.uses.construction] in the C++ standard)with allocator get\_allocator(lhs) and argument rhs.
* Otherwise, R is rhs.

*Returns:* lhs

*Remarks:* The invocation of swap occurs in the context described for the swappable requirements ([swappable.requirements] in C++17).

template <class T>

T& swap\_assign(T& lhs, decay\_t<T>&& rhs);

*Effects:* swap(lhs, R), where R is defined as follows:

* If get\_allocator(lhs) is well formed and uses\_allocator\_v<T, decltype(get\_allocator(lhs))> is true,
  + If allocator\_traits<decltype(get\_allocator(lhs))>::propagate\_on\_container\_move\_assignment::value is true, then R is T(std::move(rhs)). [*Note*: if the allocator’s propagate\_on\_container\_swap trait is false, then the swap(lhs, R) might produce unexpected results, including undefined behavior – *end note*]
  + Otherwise R is an object of type T constructed by *uses-allocator construction* ([allocator.uses.construction] in the C++ standard)with allocator get\_allocator(lhs) and argument std::move(rhs).
* Otherwise, R is rhs.

*Returns:* lhs

*Remarks:* The invocation of swap occurs in the context described for the swappable requirements ([swappable.requirements] in C++17).