

Linking

CSE4100: System Programming

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Today

- **Linking**
- Case study: Library interpositioning

Linking

■ What's linking?

- A process of collecting and combining various pieces of code and data into a single file that can be *loaded* (copied) into memory and executed
- Linking can be performed at *compile time*, *load time*, and *run time*
- Linking is performed automatically by programs called *linkers* on modern systems

Why bother learning about linking?

■ Understanding linkers will help you

■ build large programs

- Unless you understand how a linker resolve references, what a library is, and how a linker uses a library to resolve references, these kinds of errors will be baffling and frustrating.

■ avoid dangerous programming errors

- Programs that incorrectly define multiple global variables can pass through the linker without any warnings in the default case. The resulting programs can exhibit baffling run-time behavior and are extremely difficult to debug.

■ understand how language scoping rules are implemented

- What's the difference between global and local variables?
- What does it really mean when you define a variable or function with the **static** attribute?

Why bother learning about linking?

- understand other important systems concepts
 - The executable object files produced by linkers play key roles in important systems functions such as loading and running programs, virtual memory, paging, and memory mapping
- enable you to exploit shared libraries
 - With the increased importance of shared libraries and dynamic linking in modern operating systems, linking is a sophisticated process that provides the knowledgeable programmer with significant power.
 - For example, many software products use shared libraries to upgrade shrink-wrapped binaries at run time.
 - Many Web servers rely on dynamic linking of shared libraries to serve dynamic content.

Example C Program

```
int sum(int *a, int n);

int array[2] = {1, 2};

int main()
{
    int val = sum(array, 2);
    return val;
}
```

main.c

```
int sum(int *a, int n)
{
    int i, s = 0;

    for (i = 0; i < n; i++) {
        s += a[i];
    }
    return s;
}
```

sum.c

Static Linking

- Programs are translated and linked using a *compiler driver*:

- `linux> gcc -Og -o prog main.c sum.c`
- `linux> ./prog`

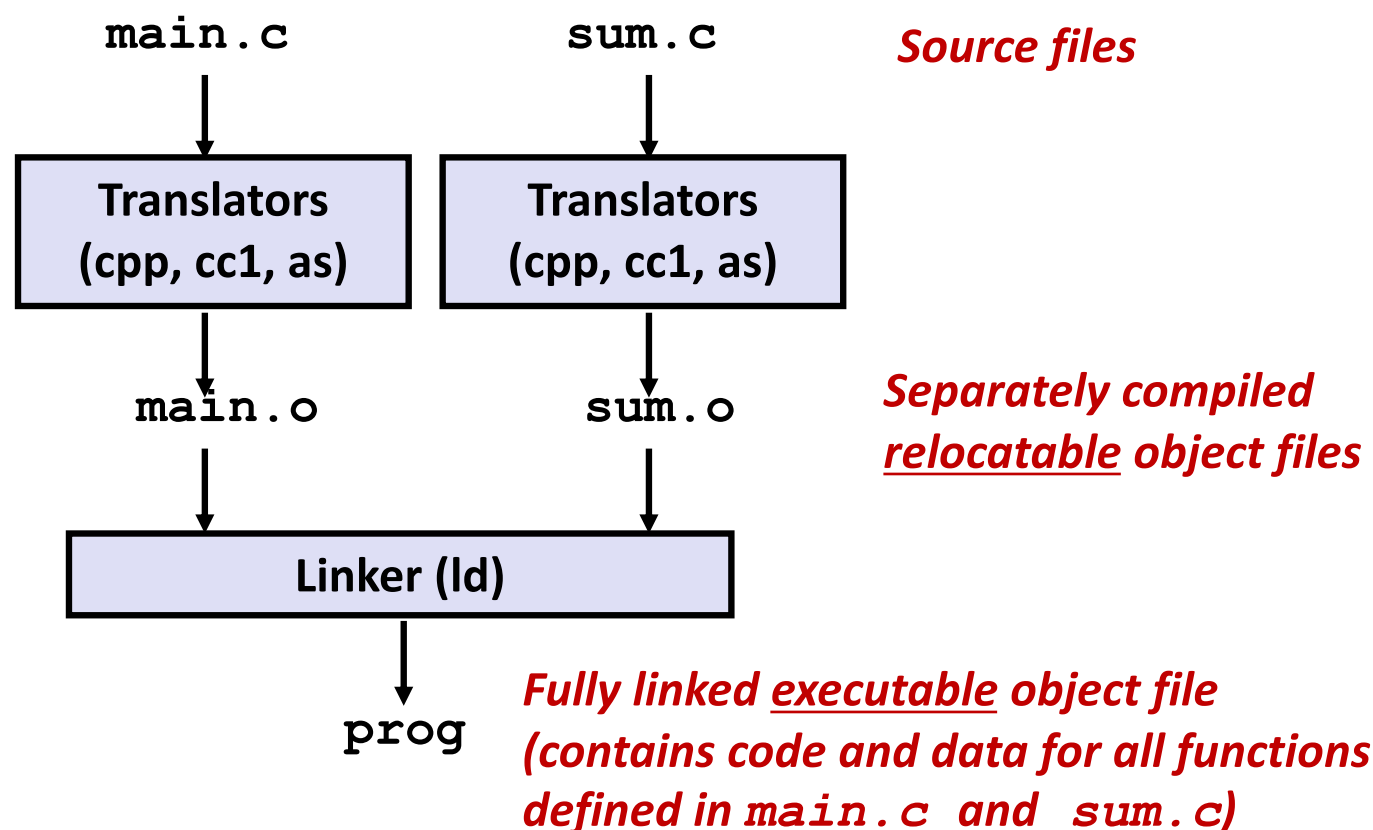
- **Compiler driver**

- C preprocessor (cpp)
 - translates the C source file main.c into an ASCII intermediate file main.i
- C Compiler (cc1)
 - translates main.i into an ASCII assembly-language file main.s
- Assembler (as)
 - translates main.s into a binary relocatable object file main.o
- Linker (ld)
 - combine main.o and sum.o along with the necessary object files, to create the binary executable object file prog

Static Linking

■ Programs are translated and linked using a *compiler driver*:

- `linux> gcc -Og -o prog main.c sum.c`
- `linux> ./prog`



Why Linkers?

■ Reason 1: Modularity

- Program can be written as a collection of smaller source files, rather than one monolithic mass.
- Can build libraries of common functions (more on this later)
 - e.g., Math library, standard C library

Why Linkers? (cont)

■ Reason 2: Efficiency

- Time: Separate compilation
 - Change one source file, compile, and then relink.
 - No need to recompile other source files.
- Space: Libraries
 - Common functions can be aggregated into a single file...
 - Yet executable files and running memory images contain only code for the functions they actually use.

What Do Linkers Do?

■ Step 1: Symbol resolution

- Programs define and reference *symbols* (global variables and functions):
 - `void swap() {...} /* define symbol swap */`
 - `swap(); /* reference symbol swap */`
 - `int *xp = &x; /* define symbol xp, reference x */`
- Symbol definitions are stored in object file (by assembler) in *symbol table*.
 - Symbol table is an array of `structs`
 - Each entry includes name, size, and location of symbol.
- **During symbol resolution step, the linker associates each symbol reference with exactly one symbol definition.**

What Do Linkers Do? (cont)

■ Step 2: Relocation

- Merges separate code and data sections into single sections
- Relocates symbols from their relative locations in the `.o` files to their final absolute memory locations in the executable.
- Updates all references to these symbols to reflect their new positions.

Let's look at these two steps in more detail....

Three Kinds of Object Files (Modules)

■ Relocatable object file (`.o` file)

- Contains code and data in a form that can be combined with other relocatable object files to form executable object file.
 - Each `.o` file is produced from exactly one source (`.c`) file

■ Executable object file (a `.out` file)

- Contains code and data in a form that can be copied directly into memory and then executed.

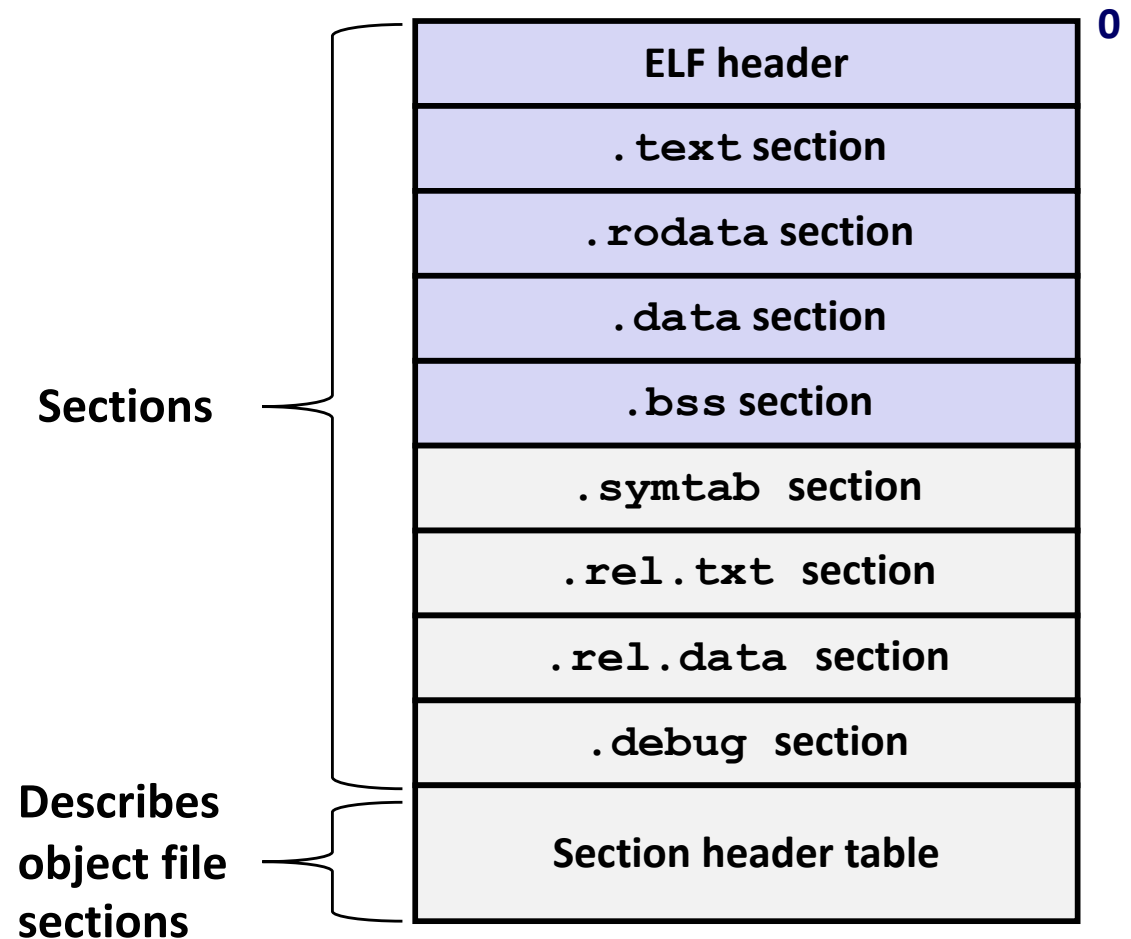
■ Shared object file (`.so` file)

- Special type of relocatable object file that can be loaded into memory and linked dynamically, at either load time or run-time.
- Called *Dynamic Link Libraries* (DLLs) by Windows

Executable and Linkable Format (ELF)

- **Standard binary format for object files**
- **One unified format for**
 - Relocatable object files (`.o`),
 - Executable object files (`a.out`)
 - Shared object files (`.so`)
- **Generic name: ELF binaries**

ELF Object File Format



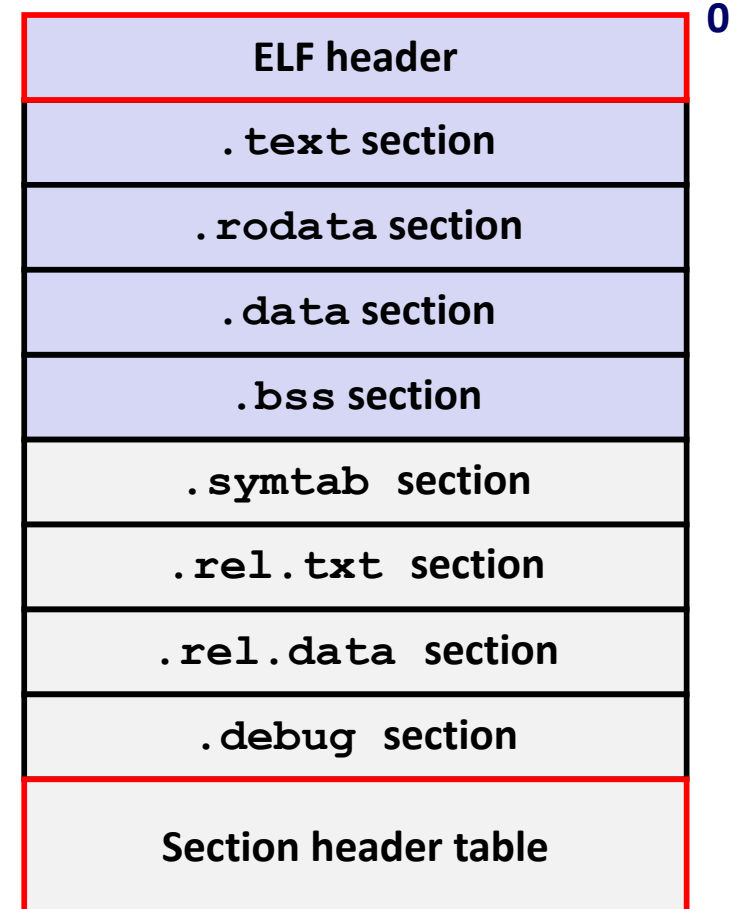
ELF Object File Format

■ Elf header (16 B)

- Describes word size, byte ordering, file type (.o, exec, .so), machine type, file offset of section header table, etc.

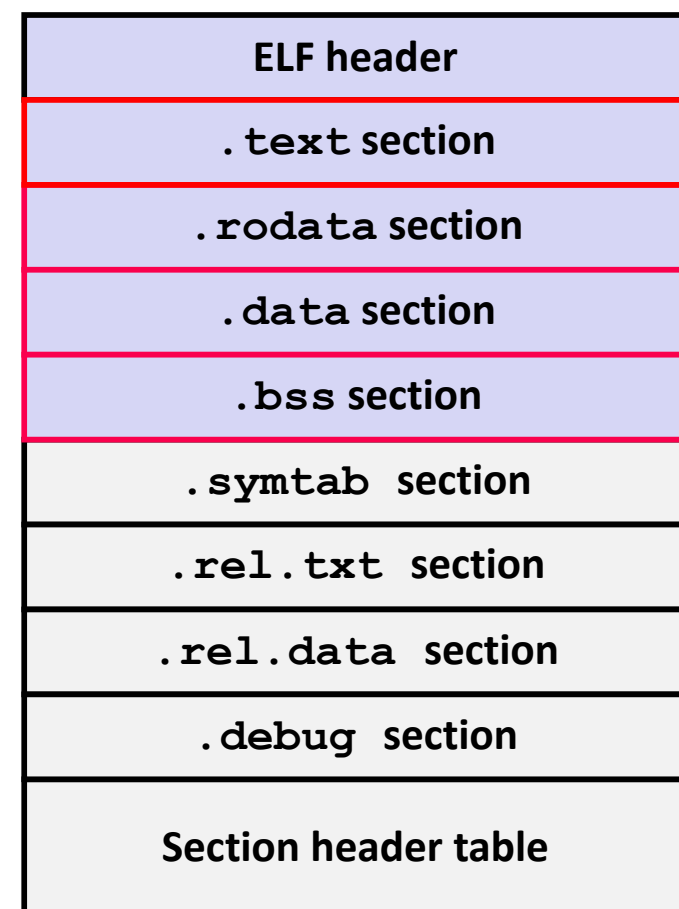
■ Section header table

- Offsets and sizes of each section



ELF Object File Format

- **.text section**
 - Code (the machine code of the compiled program)
- **.rodata section**
 - Read only data: jump tables for switch statements, ...
- **.data section**
 - Initialized global variables
- **.bss section**
 - Uninitialized global variables
 - “Block Started by Symbol”
 - “Better Save Space”
 - Has section header but occupies no space



0

ELF Object File Format (cont.)

■ **.symtab section**

- Symbol table with info. about functions and global variables (procedures and static variable names) that are defined and referenced in the program

■ **.rel.text section**

- Relocation info for **.text** section
- Addresses of instructions that will need to be modified in the executable
- Instructions for modifying.

■ **.rel.data section**

- Relocation info for **.data** section
- Addresses of pointer data that will need to be modified in the merged executable

■ **.debug section**

- Info for symbolic debugging (**gcc -g**)

ELF header
.text section
.rodata section
.data section
.bss section
.symtab section
.rel.txt section
.rel.data section
.debug section
Section header table

Symbols and Symbol Tables

- Each relocatable object module, m , has a symbol table
- The symbol table contains information about the symbols that are defined and referenced by m
- In the context of a linker, there are three different kinds of symbols:
 - Global symbols
 - External symbols
 - Local symbols

Linker Symbols

■ Global symbols

- Symbols defined by module m that can be referenced by other modules.
- E.g.: non-**static** C functions and non-**static** global variables.

■ External symbols

- Global symbols that are referenced by module m but defined by some other module.

■ Local symbols

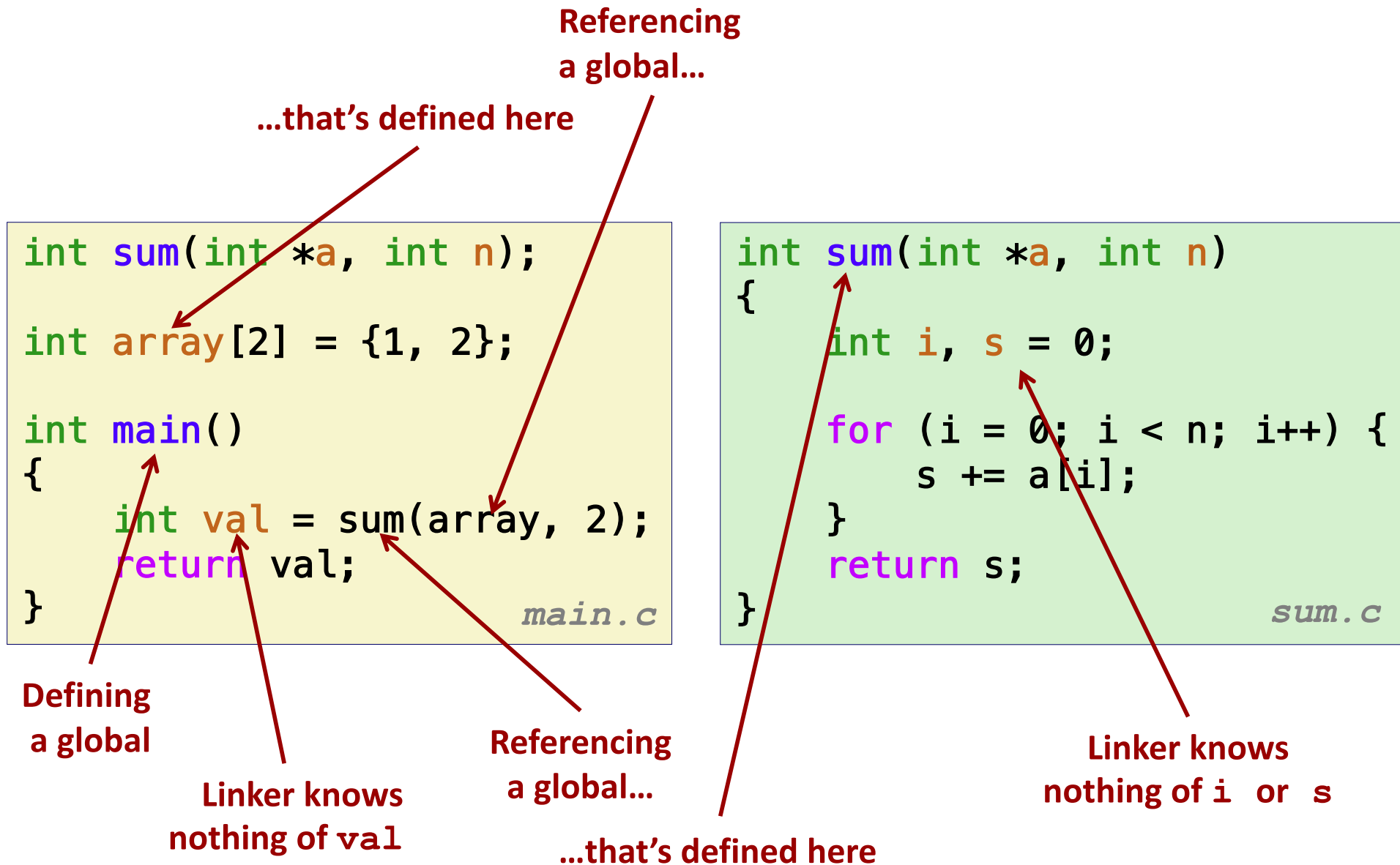
- Symbols that are defined and referenced exclusively by module m .
- E.g.: C functions and global variables defined with the **static** attribute.
- **Local linker symbols are *not* local program variables**

Local linker symbols vs. Local program variables

- `.symtab` does not contain any symbols that correspond to local non-static program variables
- Local non-static program variables are managed at run time on the stack and are not of interest to the linker

See more details in next slides...

Step 1: Symbol Resolution



Local Symbols

■ Local non-static C variables vs. local static C variables

- local non-static C variables: stored on the stack
- local static C variables: stored in either `.bss`, or `.data`

```
int f()
{
    static int x = 0;
    return x;
}

int g()
{
    static int x = 1;
    return x;
}
```

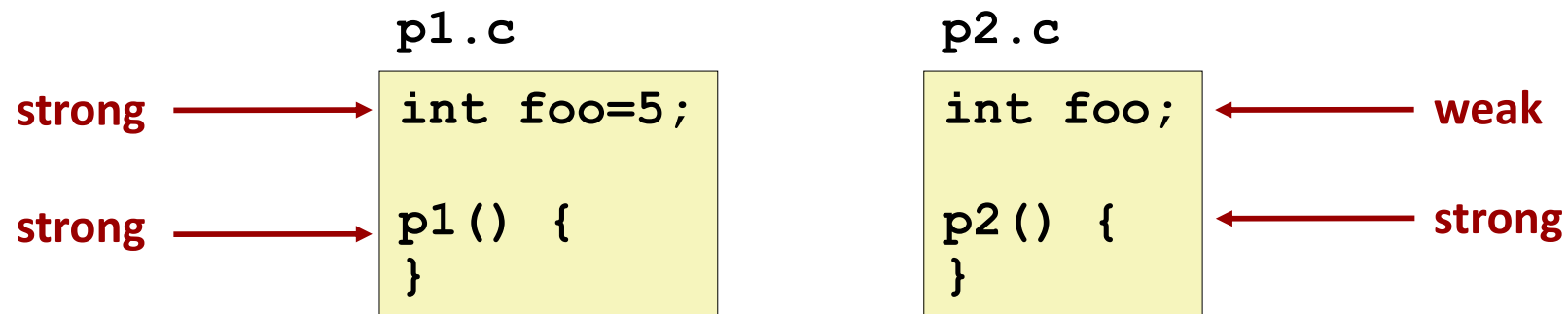
Compiler allocates space in `.data` for each definition of `x`

Creates local symbols in the symbol table with unique names, e.g., `x.1` and `x.2`.

How Linker Resolves Duplicate Symbol Definitions

■ Program symbols are either *strong* or *weak*

- **Strong**: procedures and initialized globals
- **Weak**: uninitialized globals



Linker's Symbol Rules

- **Rule 1: Multiple strong symbols are not allowed**
 - Each item can be defined only once
 - Otherwise: Linker error

- **Rule 2: Given a strong symbol and multiple weak symbols, choose the strong symbol**
 - References to the weak symbol resolve to the strong symbol

- **Rule 3: If there are multiple weak symbols, pick an arbitrary one**

Linker Puzzles

```
int x;
p1() {}
```

```
p1() {}
```

Link time error: two strong symbols (**p1**)

```
int x;
p1() {}
```

```
int x;
p2() {}
```

References to **x** will refer to the same uninitialized int.

```
int x;
int y;
p1() {}
```

```
double x;
p2() {}
```

Writes to **x** in **p2** might overwrite **y**!
Evil!

```
int x=7;
int y=5;
p1() {}
```

```
double x;
p2() {}
```

Writes to **x** in **p2** will overwrite **y**!
Nasty!

```
int x=7;
p1() {}
```

```
int x;
p2() {}
```

References to **x** will refer to the same initialized variable.

Nightmare scenario: two identical weak structs, compiled by different compilers with different alignment rules.

Two weak definitions of x (rule 3)

■ Run-time bugs

- Can cause some insidious run-time bugs that are incomprehensible to the unwary programmer

```
1  /* foo4.c */
2  #include <stdio.h>
3  void f(void);
4
5  int x;
6
7  int main()
8  {
9      x = 15213;
10     f();
11     printf("x = %d\n", x);
12     return 0;
13 }
```

```
1  /* bar4.c */
2  int x;
3
4  void f()
5  {
6      x = 15212;
7  }
```

Another example (rule 2)

```

1  /* foo5.c */
2  #include <stdio.h>
3  void f(void);
4
5  int y = 15212;
6  int x = 15213;
7
8  int main()
9  {
10     f();
11     printf("x = 0x%x y = 0x%x \n",
12           x, y);
13     return 0;
14 }

```



```

1  /* bar5.c */
2  double x;
3
4  void f()
5  {
6     x = -0.0;
7 }

```

■ Subtle and nasty run-time bugs!

- On an x86-64/Linux machine, doubles are 8 bytes and ints are 4 bytes
- Suppose the address of x is 0x601020 and the address of y is 0x601024
- The assignment x = 0.0 in lin6 6 will overwrite the memory locations for x and y with the double-precision floating-point representation of negative zero!

Global Variables

- **Avoid if you can**
- **Otherwise**
 - Use `static` if you can
 - Initialize if you define a global variable
 - Use `extern` if you reference an external global variable

Step 2: Relocation

■ Step1: Symbol resolution

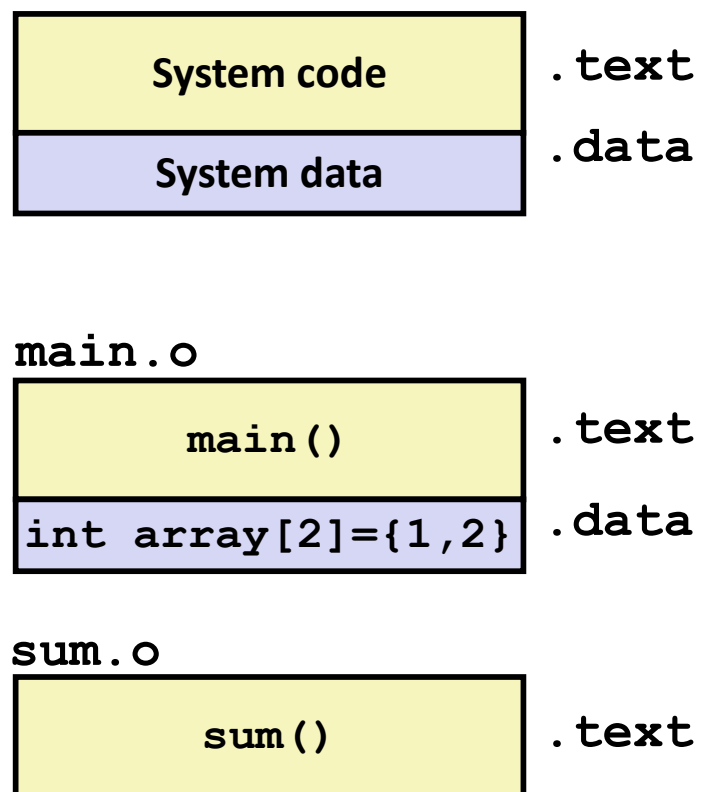
- Once the linker has completed the symbol resolution step, it has associated each symbol reference in the code with exactly one symbol definition
- At this point, the linker knows the exact sizes of the code and data sections in its input object modules.

■ Now, next step is the relocation step (Step 2)

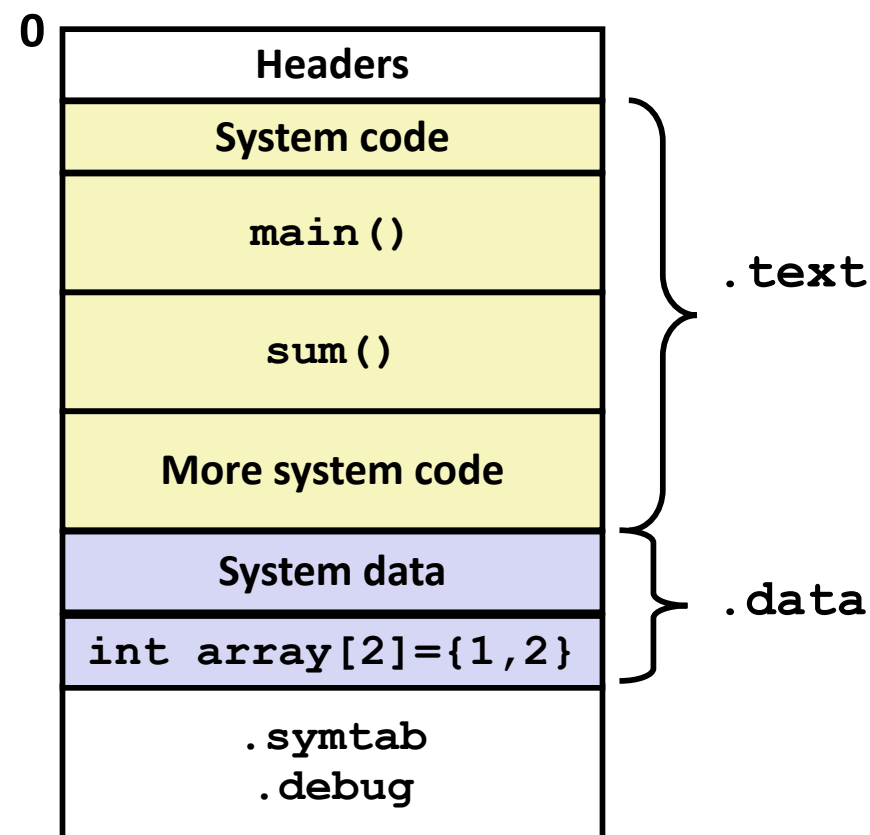
- Merges the input modules and assigns run-time addresses to each symbol
- More details will come in the next slides...

Step 2: Relocation

Relocatable Object Files



Executable Object File



Relocation Entries

- When an assembler generates an object module, it does not know where the code and data will ultimately be stored in memory.
- Nor does it know the location of any externally defined functions or global variables that are referenced by the module.
- So, whenever the assembler encounters a reference to an object whose ultimate location is unknown, it generates a *relocation entry* that tells the linker how to modify the reference when it merges the object file into an executable.
- Relocation entries for code are placed in `.rel.text`.
- Relocation entries for data are placed in `.rel.data`.

Relocation Entries

```
int array[2] = {1, 2};

int main()
{
    int val = sum(array, 2);
    return val;
}                                     main.c
```

```
0000000000000000 <main>:
 0:  48 83 ec 08                sub    $0x8,%rsp
 4:  be 02 00 00 00            mov    $0x2,%esi
 9:  bf 00 00 00 00            mov    $0x0,%edi                # %edi = &array
                                # Relocation entry
                                a: R_X86_64_32 array

 e:  e8 00 00 00 00            callq  13 <main+0x13>          # sum()
                                # Relocation entry
                                f: R_X86_64_PC32 sum-0x4

13:  48 83 c4 08                add    $0x8,%rsp
17:  c3                        retq

                                                                main.o
```

Relocated .text section

00000000004004d0 <main>:

```

4004d0:    48 83 ec 08          sub    $0x8,%rsp
4004d4:    be 02 00 00 00      mov    $0x2,%esi
4004d9:    bf 18 10 60 00      mov    $0x601018,%edi    # %edi = &array
4004de:    e8 05 00 00 00      callq 4004e8 <sum>      # sum()
4004e3:    48 83 c4 08          add    $0x8,%rsp
4004e7:    c3                  retq

```

00000000004004e8 <sum>:

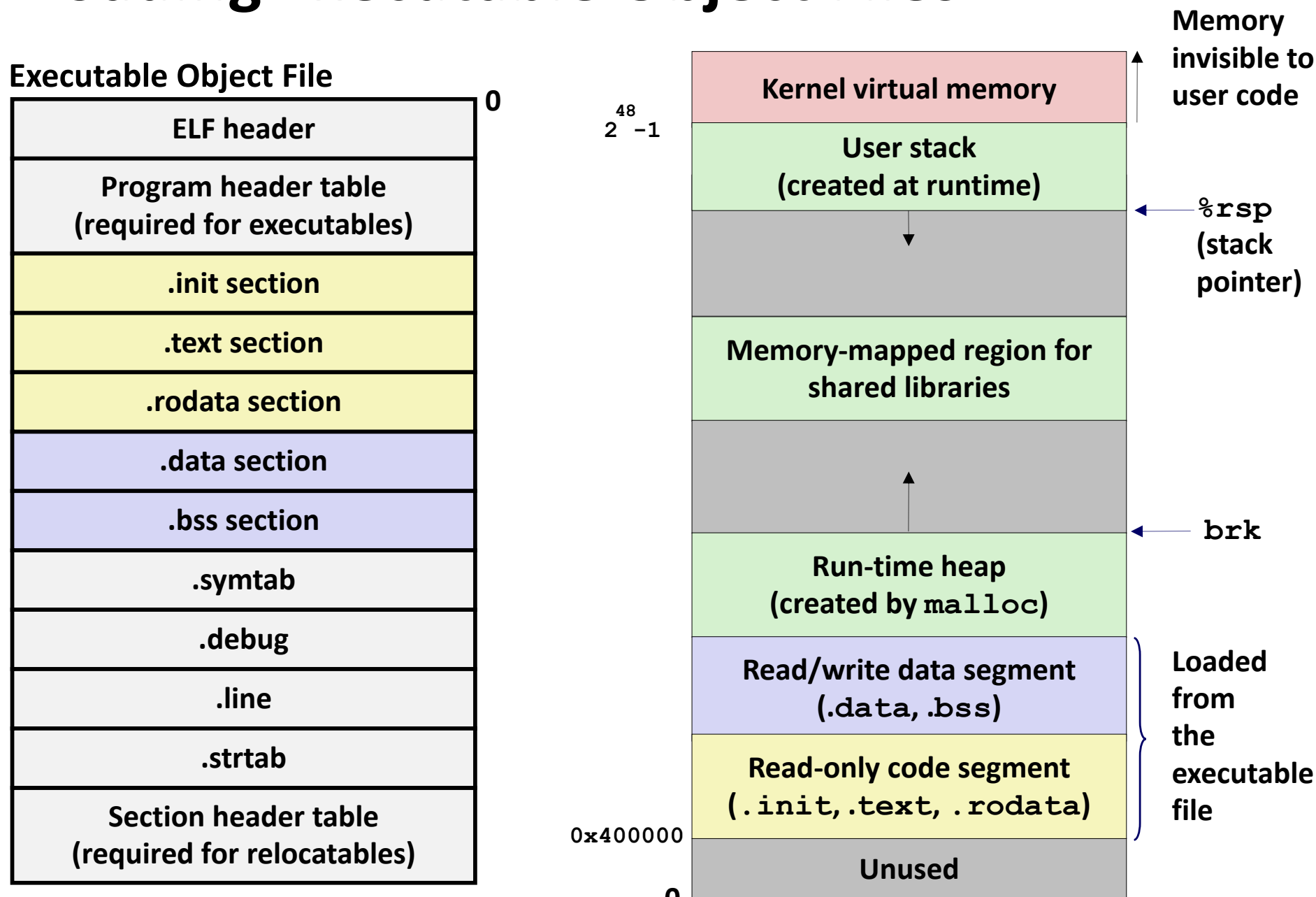
```

4004e8:    b8 00 00 00 00      mov    $0x0,%eax
4004ed:    ba 00 00 00 00      mov    $0x0,%edx
4004f2:    eb 09              jmp    4004fd <sum+0x15>
4004f4:    48 63 ca          movslq %edx,%rcx
4004f7:    03 04 8f          add    (%rdi,%rcx,4),%eax
4004fa:    83 c2 01          add    $0x1,%edx
4004fd:    39 f2             cmp    %esi,%edx
4004ff:    7c f3             jl     4004f4 <sum+0xc>
400501:    f3 c3             repz  retq

```

Using PC-relative addressing for sum(): $0x4004e8 = 0x4004e3 + 0x5$

Loading Executable Object Files



Packaging Commonly Used Functions

- **How to package functions commonly used by programmers?**
 - Math, I/O, memory management, string manipulation, etc.

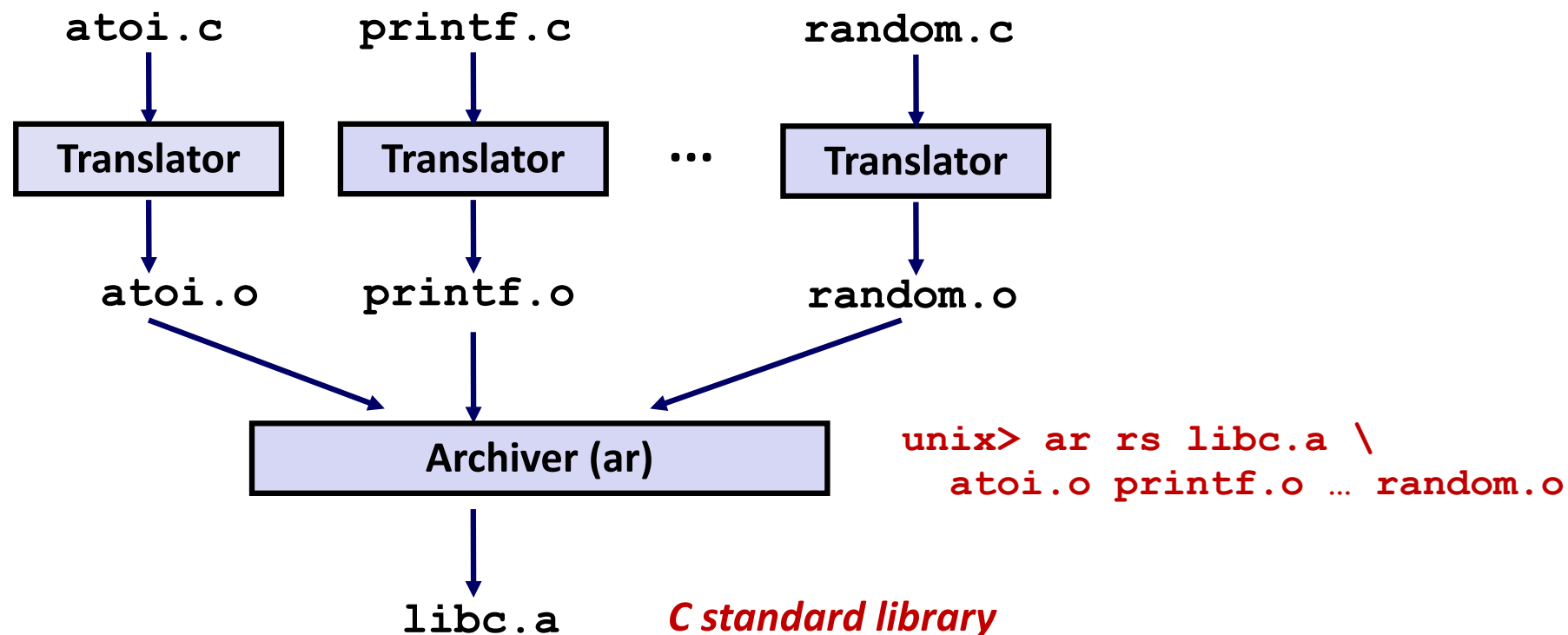
- **Awkward, given the linker framework so far:**
 - **Option 1:** Put all functions into a single source file
 - Programmers link big object file into their programs
 - Space and time inefficient
 - **Option 2:** Put each function in a separate source file
 - Programmers explicitly link appropriate binaries into their programs
 - More efficient, but burdensome on the programmer

Old-fashioned Solution: Static Libraries

■ **Static libraries** (.a archive files)

- Concatenate related relocatable object files into a single file with an index (called an *archive*).
- Enhance linker so that it tries to resolve unresolved external references by looking for the symbols in one or more archives.
- If an archive member file resolves reference, link it into the executable.

Creating Static Libraries



- Archiver allows incremental updates
- Recompile function that changes and replace .o file in archive.

Commonly Used Libraries

libc.a (the C standard library)

- 4.6 MB archive of 1496 object files.
- I/O, memory allocation, signal handling, string handling, data and time, random numbers, integer math

libm.a (the C math library)

- 2 MB archive of 444 object files.
- floating point math (sin, cos, tan, log, exp, sqrt, ...)

```
% ar -t libc.a | sort
...
fork.o
...
fprintf.o
fpu_control.o
fputc.o
freopen.o
fscanf.o
fseek.o
fstab.o
...
```

```
% ar -t libm.a | sort
...
e_acos.o
e_acosf.o
e_acosh.o
e_acoshf.o
e_acoshl.o
e_acosl.o
e_asin.o
e_asinf.o
e_asinl.o
...
```

Linking with Static Libraries

```
#include <stdio.h>
#include "vector.h"

int x[2] = {1, 2};
int y[2] = {3, 4};
int z[2];

int main()
{
    addvec(x, y, z, 2);
    printf("z = [%d %d]\n",
          z[0], z[1]);
    return 0;
}
main2.c
```

libvector.a



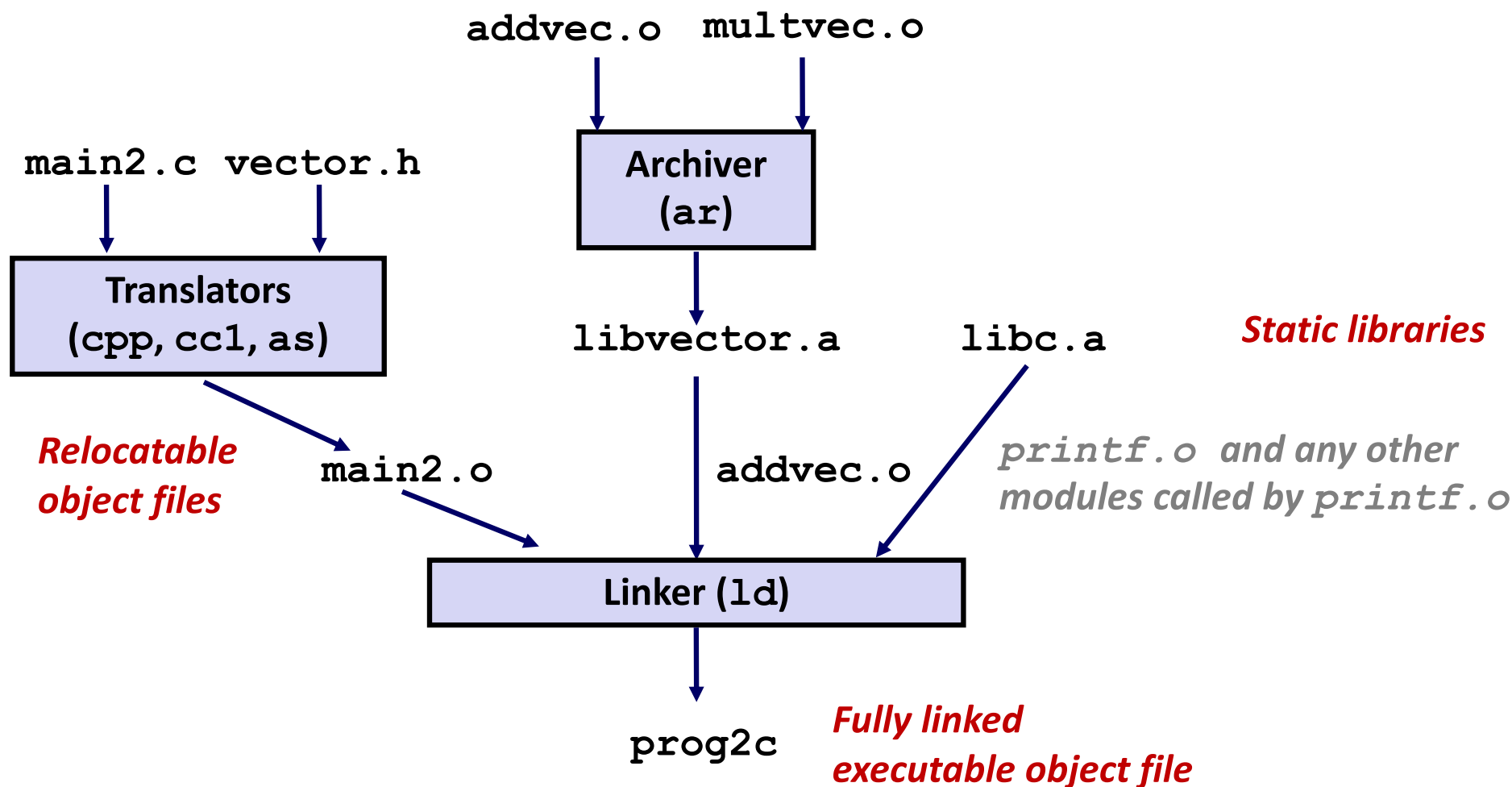
```
void addvec(int *x, int *y,
            int *z, int n) {
    int i;

    for (i = 0; i < n; i++)
        z[i] = x[i] + y[i];
}
addvec.c
```

```
void multvec(int *x, int *y,
             int *z, int n)
{
    int i;

    for (i = 0; i < n; i++)
        z[i] = x[i] * y[i];
}
multvec.c
```


Linking with Static Libraries



“c” for “compile-time”

Using Static Libraries

- **Linker's algorithm for resolving external references:**
 - Scan `.o` files and `.a` files in the command line order.
 - During the scan, keep a list of the current unresolved references.
 - As each new `.o` or `.a` file, *obj*, is encountered, try to resolve each unresolved reference in the list against the symbols defined in *obj*.
 - If any entries in the unresolved list at end of scan, then error.
- **Problem:**
 - Command line order matters!
 - Moral: put libraries at the end of the command line.

```
unix> gcc -L. libtest.o -lmine
unix> gcc -L. -lmine libtest.o
libtest.o: In function `main':
libtest.o(.text+0x4): undefined reference to `libfun'
```

Modern Solution: Shared Libraries

■ Static libraries have the following disadvantages:

- Duplication in the stored executables (every function needs libc)
- Duplication in the running executables
- Minor bug fixes of system libraries require each application to explicitly relink

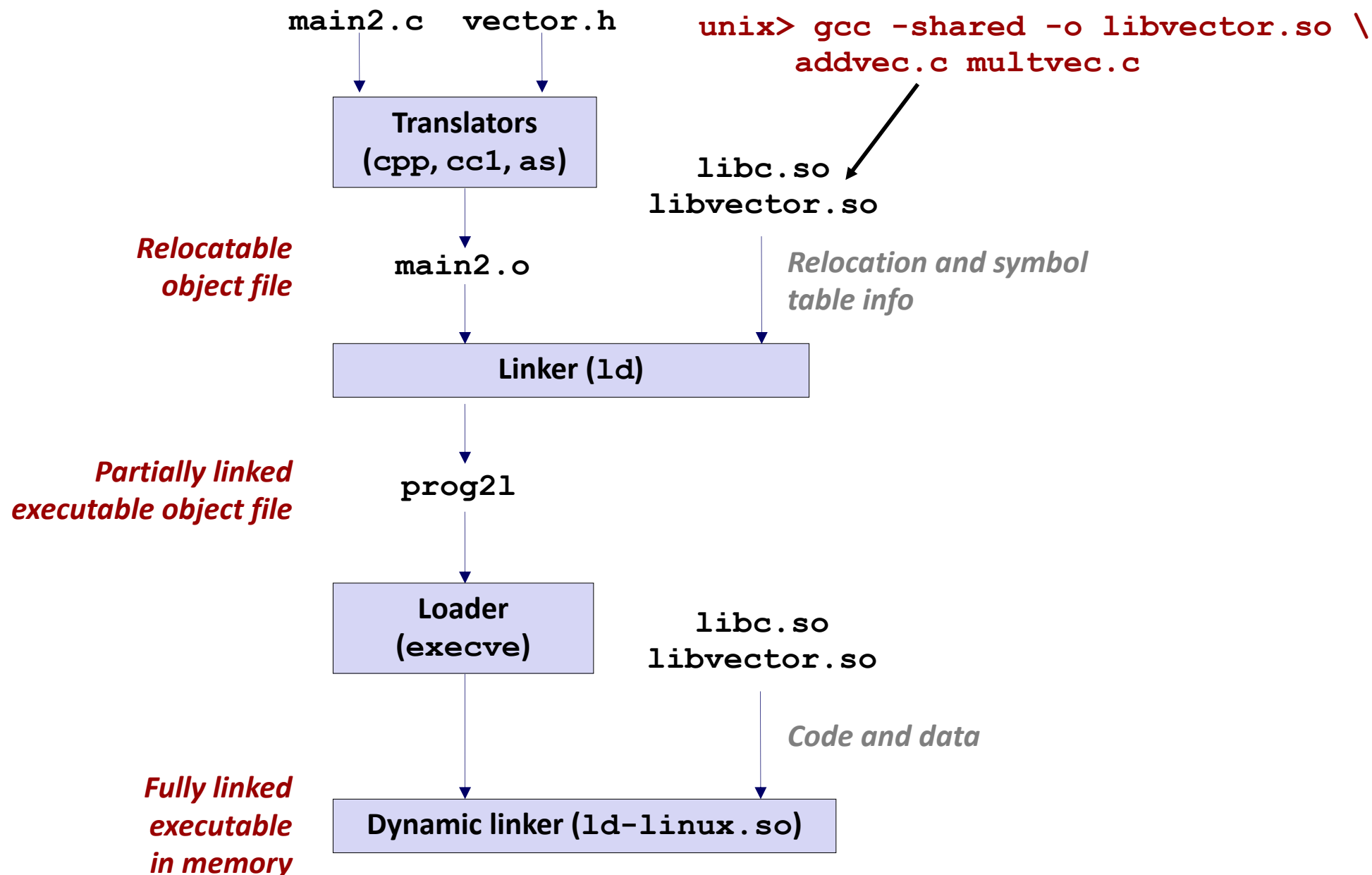
■ Modern solution: Shared Libraries

- Object files that contain code and data that are loaded and linked into an application *dynamically*, at either *load-time* or *run-time*
- Also called: dynamic link libraries, DLLs, `.so` files

Shared Libraries (cont.)

- **Dynamic linking can occur when executable is first loaded and run (load-time linking).**
 - Common case for Linux, handled automatically by the dynamic linker (`ld-linux.so`).
 - Standard C library (`libc.so`) usually dynamically linked.
- **Dynamic linking can also occur after program has begun (run-time linking).**
 - In Linux, this is done by calls to the `dlopen()` interface.
 - Distributing software.
 - High-performance web servers.
 - Runtime library interpositioning.
- **Shared library routines can be shared by multiple processes.**
 - More on this when we learn about virtual memory

Dynamic Linking at Load-time



Dynamic Linking at Run-time

```
#include <stdio.h>
#include <stdlib.h>
#include <dlfcn.h>

int x[2] = {1, 2};
int y[2] = {3, 4};
int z[2];

int main()
{
    void *handle;
    void (*addvec)(int *, int *, int *, int);
    char *error;

    /* Dynamically load the shared library that contains addvec() */
    handle = dlopen("./libvector.so", RTLD_LAZY);
    if (!handle) {
        fprintf(stderr, "%s\n", dlerror());
        exit(1);
    }
}
```

d11.c

Dynamic Linking at Run-time

```
...

/* Get a pointer to the addvec() function we just loaded */
addvec = dlsym(handle, "addvec");
if ((error = dlerror()) != NULL) {
    fprintf(stderr, "%s\n", error);
    exit(1);
}

/* Now we can call addvec() just like any other function */
addvec(x, y, z, 2);
printf("z = [%d %d]\n", z[0], z[1]);

/* Unload the shared library */
if (dlclose(handle) < 0) {
    fprintf(stderr, "%s\n", dlerror());
    exit(1);
}
return 0;
}
```

dll.c

Linking Summary

- **Linking is a technique that allows programs to be constructed from multiple object files.**
- **Linking can happen at different times in a program's lifetime:**
 - Compile time (when a program is compiled)
 - Load time (when a program is loaded into memory)
 - Run time (while a program is executing)
- **Understanding linking can help you avoid nasty errors and make you a better programmer.**

Today

- Linking
- **Case study: Library interpositioning**

Case Study: Library Interpositioning

- **Library interpositioning : powerful linking technique that allows programmers to intercept calls to arbitrary functions**
- **Interpositioning can occur at:**
 - Compile time: When the source code is compiled
 - Link time: When the relocatable object files are statically linked to form an executable object file
 - Load/run time: When an executable object file is loaded into memory, dynamically linked, and then executed.

Some Interpositioning Applications

■ Security

- Confinement (sandboxing)
- Behind the scenes encryption

■ Debugging

- In 2014, two Facebook engineers debugged a treacherous 1-year old bug in their iPhone app using interpositioning
- Code in the SPDY networking stack was writing to the wrong location
- Solved by intercepting calls to Posix write functions (write, writev, pwrite)

Source: Facebook engineering blog post at
<https://code.facebook.com/posts/313033472212144/debugging-file-corruption-on-ios/>

Some Interpositioning Applications

■ Monitoring and Profiling

- Count number of calls to functions
- Characterize call sites and arguments to functions
- Malloc tracing
 - Detecting memory leaks
 - **Generating address traces**

Example program

```
#include <stdio.h>
#include <malloc.h>

int main()
{
    int *p = malloc(32);
    free(p);
    return(0);
}                                     int.c
```

- Goal: trace the addresses and sizes of the allocated and freed blocks, without breaking the program, and without modifying the source code.
- Three solutions: interpose on the `lib malloc` and `free` functions at compile time, link time, and load/run time.

Compile-time Interpositioning

```
#ifdef COMPILETIME
#include <stdio.h>
#include <malloc.h>

/* malloc wrapper function */
void *mymalloc(size_t size)
{
    void *ptr = malloc(size);
    printf("malloc(%d)=%p\n",
        (int)size, ptr);
    return ptr;
}

/* free wrapper function */
void myfree(void *ptr)
{
    free(ptr);
    printf("free(%p)\n", ptr);
}
#endif
```

mymalloc.c

Compile-time Interpositioning

```
#define malloc(size) mymalloc(size)
#define free(ptr) myfree(ptr)
```

```
void *mymalloc(size_t size);
void myfree(void *ptr);
```

malloc.h

```
linux> make intc
```

```
gcc -Wall -DCOMPILETIME -c mymalloc.c
```

```
gcc -Wall -I. -o intc int.c mymalloc.o
```

```
linux> make runc
```

```
./intc
```

```
malloc(32)=0x1edc010
```

```
free(0x1edc010)
```

```
linux>
```

Link-time Interpositioning

```
#ifdef LINKTIME
#include <stdio.h>

void *__real_malloc(size_t size);
void __real_free(void *ptr);

/* malloc wrapper function */
void *__wrap_malloc(size_t size)
{
    void *ptr = __real_malloc(size); /* Call libc malloc */
    printf("malloc(%d) = %p\n", (int)size, ptr);
    return ptr;
}

/* free wrapper function */
void __wrap_free(void *ptr)
{
    __real_free(ptr); /* Call libc free */
    printf("free(%p)\n", ptr);
}
#endif
```

mymalloc.c

Link-time Interpositioning

```
linux> make intl
gcc -Wall -DLINKTIME -c mymalloc.c
gcc -Wall -c int.c
gcc -Wall -Wl,--wrap,malloc -Wl,--wrap,free -o intl
int.o mymalloc.o
linux> make runl
./intl
malloc(32) = 0x1aa0010
free(0x1aa0010)
linux>
```

- The “-Wl” flag passes argument to linker, replacing each comma with a space.
- The “--wrap,malloc” arg instructs linker to resolve references in a special way:
 - Refs to `malloc` should be resolved as `__wrap_malloc`
 - Refs to `__real_malloc` should be resolved as `malloc`

Load/Run-time Interpositioning

```
#ifdef RUNTIME
#define _GNU_SOURCE
#include <stdio.h>
#include <stdlib.h>
#include <dlfcn.h>

/* malloc wrapper function */
void *malloc(size_t size)
{
    void *(*mallocp)(size_t size);
    char *error;

    mallocp = dlsym(RTLD_NEXT, "malloc"); /* Get addr of libc malloc */
    if ((error = dlerror()) != NULL) {
        fputs(error, stderr);
        exit(1);
    }
    char *ptr = mallocp(size); /* Call libc malloc */
    printf("malloc(%d) = %p\n", (int)size, ptr);
    return ptr;
}
```

mymalloc.c

Load/Run-time Interpositioning

```
/* free wrapper function */
void free(void *ptr)
{
    void (*freep)(void *) = NULL;
    char *error;

    if (!ptr)
        return;

    freep = dlsym(RTLD_NEXT, "free"); /* Get address of libc free */
    if ((error = dlerror()) != NULL) {
        fputs(error, stderr);
        exit(1);
    }
    freep(ptr); /* Call libc free */
    printf("free(%p)\n", ptr);
}
#endif
```

mymalloc.c

Load/Run-time Interpositioning

```
linux> make intr
gcc -Wall -DRUNTIME -shared -fpic -o mymalloc.so mymalloc.c -ldl
gcc -Wall -o intr int.c
linux> make runr
(LD_PRELOAD="./mymalloc.so" ./intr)
malloc(32) = 0xe60010
free(0xe60010)
linux>
```

- The `LD_PRELOAD` environment variable tells the dynamic linker to resolve unresolved refs (e.g., to `malloc`) by looking in `mymalloc.so` first.

Interpositioning Recap

■ Compile Time

- Apparent calls to malloc/free get macro-expanded into calls to mymalloc/myfree

■ Link Time

- Use linker trick to have special name resolutions
 - malloc → __wrap_malloc
 - __real_malloc → malloc

■ Load/Run Time

- Implement custom version of malloc/free that use dynamic linking to load library malloc/free under different names