The Container-Iterator-Algorithm Abstraction in C++ Standard Template Library (STL)

台北科技大學資工系
鄭有進 教授
http://www.ntut.edu.tw/~yccheng
Programming Tasks

- You will have many opportunities to work with two things:
  - *Selecting data structures for storing data*
  - *Selecting algorithms to work on the data*
- What are the available strategies?
Reality Checks (I)

- I don’t know much about data structures (yet)
- I do know data structures pretty well, but am I implementing it correctly?
- Same things can be said about algorithms, too.
Reality Checks (II)

- I know my implementation is correct, but is it efficient?
- I know my implementation is correct, but if I change my data structure (respectively, algorithm), will my algorithm (resp., data structure) still work?

   In comes C++ Standard Template Library.
What’s in C++ STL (1)

- A collection of data structures *regardless of data types*
- A collection of algorithms that solve many common problems *regardless of data types*
- A collection of interfaces (iterators) between data structures and algorithms so that one can vary regardless of the other
What’s in C++ STL (2)

- Other generic utilities:
  - functional objects
  - numerical arrays
  - internationalization
  - exceptions
  - I/O streams
  - memory management (auto pointers and allocators)
STL Programming Paradigms

- STL programming is called *generic programming* that encourages decoupling of algorithms and data structures.
- In addition, it can easily blend with
  - Procedure-based paradigm
  - Object-based paradigm
  - Object-oriented paradigm
Ways STL Can Help

- Ready solution: how to put them together? (example 1)
- Develop your algorithms so that they work on different types of data structures: how to work with iterators? (example 2)
- Develop your data structures so that they work with different algorithms: how to create the right iterators? (example 2)
The Problem

- Problem: You have a number of objects stored in a container. You want to write a find function to find certain elements.
- Objective: write a find function that works on various type of container regardless of data types
Candidate Containers

- Fixed size, random access: vector

- Variable size, sequential access: list
Example 1: Eating Out Of The Can

#include <vector>
#include <algorithm>
using namespace std;

int main()
{
    int a[]={0,2,4,6,8,10,12,14,16,18};
    int size = sizeof(a)/sizeof(int); // size==10
    vector<int> va(a, size);
    vector<int>::iterator key;

    for (int i=0; i<size; ++i)
        if ((key=find(va.begin(),va.end(),i)) != va.end())
            cout << "va[" << key-va.begin() << "] = " << *key << 
            "\n";
}

C++ Language Feature: Template

- Functions (and classes) that are otherwise identical except the type of data they process

```cpp
void swap (int &a, int & b) {
    int temp t=a;
    a=b;
    b=t;
}

Template<class T>
void swap (T &a, T & b) {
    T temp t=a;
    a=b;
    b=t;
}
```
Example 2

- OOD walk-through for developing a generic find function
A Development Scenario

- Start with a find function using int array as the container. (version 1)
- Eliminate find’s dependency on array with pointers (version 2.1)
- Convert find into template (version 2.2)
- Encapsulate pointer with iterator (version 3)
- Make container responsible for generating its own iterator (v 3)
Summary

- STL provides with great number of containers and algorithms that can be readily reused.
- STL provide a reference model for developing your data structures and algorithms.
- STL can easily work with procedure and object paradigms.
Further Information

Linked slides
#include <iostream>
bool find1(int a[], int size, int value, int &key);

int main()
{
    int a[]={0,2,4,6,8,10,12,14,16,18};
    int size = sizeof(a)/sizeof(int);
    int key;
    
    for (int i=0; i<size; ++i)
        if (find1(a,size,i,key))
            cout << "a[" <<key<<"]" = " << a[key] << "\n";
}
bool find1(int a[], int size, int value, int &key) {
    for (int i=0; i<size; ++i)
        if (a[i]==value) {
            key = i;
            return true;
        }
    return false;
}
Version 1 Facts

- find() explicitly knows that it is using an integer array. (Knowledge implies dependency.)

- To achieve our objective:
  - Replace indexing operator [] and range of array with pointers (Version 2.1)
  - Make find a template function to remove data type dependency (Version 2.2)
int main()
{
    int a[]={0,2,4,6,8,10,12,14,16,18};
    int size = sizeof(a)/sizeof(int);
    int *key, *begin, *end;

    begin=a;
    end=a+size;

    for (int i=0; i<size; ++i)
        if (find2(begin,end,i,key))
            cout << "a[" <<key-begin<<"] = " << *key << "\n";
}
bool find2(int *begin, int *end, int value, int * &key) {
    for (int *i=begin; i != end; ++i)
        if (*i==value) {
            key = i;
            return true;
        }
    return false;
}
Version 2.2-find

template <class T>
bool find3(T *begin, T *end, T value, T * &key)
{
    for (T *i=begin; i != end; ++i)
        if (*i==value) {
            key = i;
            return true;
        }
    return false;
}
Version 2.2 Facts

- The following statement implies that find3 knows that the contiguous memory is allocated to the container:
  
  ```
  for (T *i=begin; i != end; ++i)
  ```

- This is OK for array type containers, but what about list and tree type containers?
  - Encapsulate so that find() doesn’t operate directly on raw pointers. (Version 3)
int main()
{
    int a[]={0,2,4,6,8,10,12,14,16,18};
    vector<int>va(a,sizeof(a)/sizeof(int));
    int size = sizeof(a)/sizeof(int);
    vector<int>::iterator key;

    for (int i=0; i<size; ++i)
    {
        if (find5(va.begin(),va.end(),i,key))
            cout << "va[" << key - va.begin() << "] = " << *key
                 << "\n";
    }
}
Version 3 - find

template <class IT, class T>
bool find5(IT begin, IT end, T value, IT &key)
{
    for (IT i=begin; i != end; ++i)
        if (*i==value) {
            key = i;
            return true;
        }
    return false;
}
Version 3 Facts

- What are iterator’s services?
- Who should be responsible for generating iterators? A container knows how best an iterator works on it.
Iterator Services

• Operators:
  • inequality operator !=
  • prefix increment operator ++
  • de-reference operator *
  • assignment operator =
Containers and Iterators

- Array and raw pointer
- STL containers and iterators
  - vector and vector::iterator
  - list and list::iterator
  - map and map::iterator
  - set and set::iterator
  - etc.
Vector and vector::iterator(1)

- Vector is responsible for creating vector::iterator.

```cpp
template <class T>
class vector {
    class iterator;

public:
    vector(int sz):size(sz){p=new T[size];}
    vector(T a[], int sz):size(sz) {
        p = new T[size];
        for (int i=0; i<size; ++i)
            p[i] = a[i];
    }
```
vector and vector::iterator(2)

iterator begin() {return iterator(p);}
iterator end() {return iterator(p+size);}
private:
    int size;
    T *p;
public:
    class iterator {
    public:
        iterator(){}
        iterator(T *p):current(p){}
        iterator(const iterator & it):current(it.current){}
vector and vector::iterator(3)

bool operator != (iterator x) {return current != x.current;}
T & operator*() {return *current;}
iterator & operator++() { ++current; return *this;}
int operator-(iterator it) {return current-it.current;}
iterator & operator=(iterator it){current=it.current;}
private:
  T *current;
};