References Revisited
CSE 333 Winter 2019

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Administrivia

- No exercise due Friday. Next exercise out today after midterm, due Wednesday before class (STL map exercise)
- Midterm: Friday in class
  - Closed book, no notes
  - Old exams and topic list on the course web now
    - Everything up through C++ classes, dynamic memory, templates & STL (vectors only— not map and others)
    - Review in sections tomorrow
- Homework 3 – spec out now, files pushed by Friday
  - Spec overview & demo in class today
- Missed classes (especially smart pointers) – can we schedule a make-up lecture? When?
Discussion group and email hints

- **Please** send any necessary email to cse333-staff[at]cs, **not** to individual TAs/instructor

Please help your readers (both for cse333 and elsewhere):
- Use descriptive titles and provide enough context in the question so readers don’t need to go on a treasure hunt
- Please don’t post screenshots of text
  - Hard to read and/or require opening an extra window
  - If it’s text, copy and paste the text(!) (drag to select in terminal or dialog boxes)
  - Images are fine if they actually are relevant to the posting
- Your readers thank you for your help 😊
Confusion About References

- When should they be used?
  - Particularly with parameters and return values

- When can using them cause trouble?
The Plan...

- We’ll go through a bunch of code examples
- For each example, we want to decide if it is appropriate to use references, and then chose one answer from this list:

  A. We must NOT use a reference
  B. It’s OK but discouraged to use a reference
  C. It’s OK and encouraged to use a reference
  D. We must use a reference
  E. We’re lost...
# Parameters 1

```cpp
#include <cstdlib>
#include <iostream>

using namespace std;

// SHOULD WE BE USING REFERENCES FOR PARAMETERS "a" AND "b"?
// (Answer: ?)
int LeastCommonMultiple(const int &a, const int &b) {
    for (int n=1; ; n++) {
        if ((n % a == 0) && (n % b == 0))
            return n;
    }
}

int main(int argc, char **argv) {
    int x = 12, y = 14;

    int lcm = LeastCommonMultiple(x, y);
    cout << "LCM(" << x << "," << y << ") is " << lcm << endl;
    return EXIT_SUCCESS;
}
```
param1.cc

B. It’s OK but *discouraged* to use a reference

- A const reference to a small primitive type (*e.g.* `int`, `float`)
- We aren’t changing the argument values (`const`), so it doesn’t matter if we use a copy or not – reference is *optional*
- Correct behavior, but might have better performance with regular call-by-value
Parameters 2

```cpp
#include <cmath>
#include <cstdlib>
#include <iostream>
#include "ThreeDPoint.h"

// SHOULD WE BE USING REFERENCES FOR PARAMETERS "a" AND "b"?
// (Answer: ?)

double Distance(const ThreeDPoint &a, const ThreeDPoint &b) {
    double dist = pow(a.x-b.x, 2) + pow(a.y-b.y, 2) + pow(a.z-b.z, 2);
    return sqrt(dist);
}

int main(int argc, char **argv) {
    ThreeDPoint a(1,2,3), b(4,5,6);

    int dist = Distance(a, b);
    cout << "Distance(a,b) is " << dist << endl;
    return EXIT_SUCCESS;
}
```
C. It’s OK and *encouraged* to use a reference

- A const reference to a complex type (*e.g.* struct, object instance)
- We aren’t changing the argument values (*const*), so it doesn’t matter if we use a copy or not – reference is *optional*
- Correct behavior and likely performance benefit from not having to copy

Follow-up: Why not pass in a pointer instead?
Return Value 1

```cpp
#include <cstdlib>
#include <iostream>

typedef struct Point_st {
    double x, y, z;
} Point;

// SHOULD WE BE USING A REFERENCE FOR THE RETURN VALUE?
// (Answer: ?)
Point &MakePoint(const int x, const int y, const int z) {
    Point retval = {x, y, z};
    return retval;
}

int main(int argc, char **argv) {
    Point p = MakePoint(1, 2, 3);
    std::cout << p.x << "," << p.y << "," << p.z << std::endl;
    return EXIT_SUCCESS;
}
```
ret1.cc

A. We must NOT use a reference

- A reference to a stack-allocated complex type
- Never return a reference (or pointer to) a local variable
  - Also, destructor is called on object when returning
Copy Constructor

```cpp
#ifndef _COMPLEX_H_
#define _COMPLEX_H_

#include <iostream>

namespace complex {

class Complex {

public:
    // Copy constructor -- should we pass a reference or not?
    // (Answer: ?)
    Complex(const Complex &copyme) {
        real_ = copyme.real_;  
        imag_ = copyme.imag_; 
    }

private:
    double real_, imag_;  
};  // class Complex

} // namespace complex

#endif  // _COMPLEX_H_
```

Complex1.h
Complex1.h

D. We must use a reference

- A const reference to a complex type
- We aren’t changing the argument’s values so it doesn’t matter if we use a copy or not, in theory
- A copy constructor *must* take a reference, otherwise it would need to call itself to make a (call-by-value) copy of the argument...
operator+

```cpp
#include <iostream>

namespace complex {

class Complex {
    public:
        // Should operator+ return a reference or not?
        // (Answer: ?)
        Complex &operator+(const Complex &a) const {
            Complex tmp(0, 0);
            tmp.real_ = this->real_ + a.real_
            tmp.imag_ = this->imag_ + a.imag_
            return tmp;
        }

    private:
        double real_, imag_;  
};  // class Complex
} // namespace complex
```
Complex2.h

A. We must NOT use a reference
   - A reference to a stack-allocated variable
   - Never return a reference (or pointer to) a local variable
     - Destructor is also called on object when returning

Follow-up: If we fix the code, does chaining work?
Assignment Operator

#include <iostream>

namespace complex {

class Complex {

public:
  // Should the assignment operator return a reference?
  // (Answer: ?)
  Complex &operator=(const Complex &a) {
    if (this != &a) {
      this->real_ = a.real_;
      this->imag_ = a.imag_;
    }
    return *this;
  }

private:
  double real_, imag_;  // class Complex
};  // namespace complex

// class Complex

Complex3.h
D. **We must use a reference**

- A reference to `*this`, the object this method was called on.
- All of the “work” is done in the method body; the return value is only there for chaining (but required for chaining to work correctly).

Follow-up: What happens in `(a = b) = c;` if we don’t use a reference?

- Does it compile?
- Does it “work”?
- Does it do the “right thing”?
operator+=

```cpp
#include <iostream>

namespace complex {

class Complex {

public:
    // Should += return a reference?
    // (Answer: ?)
    Complex &operator+=(const Complex &a) {
        this->real_ += a.real_;  
        this->imag_ += a.imag_;  
        return *this;
    }

private:
    double real_, imag_;  
};  // class Complex

}  // namespace complex
```
Complex4.h

D. We must use a reference

- A reference to *this, the object this method was called on
- All of the “work” is done in the method body; the return value is only there for chaining (but required for chaining to work correctly)
- You hardly see people chain +=, but it is allowed by the primitive data types, so we follow suit
  - Style/code quality: overloaded operators should have similar semantics to basic definitions to avoid programmer surprises
operator<<

#include <iostream>

namespace complex {

class Complex {
    public:
        double real() const { return real_; }
        double imag() const { return imag_; }

    private:
        double real_, imag_; 
}; // class Complex

} // namespace complex

// Should operator<< return a reference?
// (Answer: ?)
std::ostream &operator<<(std::ostream &out,
    const complex::Complex &a) {
    out << "(" << a.real() << " + " << a.imag() << "i")";
    return out;
}
Complex5.h

D. We must use a reference

- A reference to `out`, the ostream object provided as an reference argument
- The return value is only there for chaining (but *required* for chaining to work correctly)
- Copying of streams is disallowed (and doesn’t make sense)