Laboratorio di Tecnologie dell'Informazione

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Exceptions
What are exceptions?

• Exceptions are a mechanism for handling an error during execution.

• A function can indicate that an error has occurred by throwing an exception.

• The code that deals with the exception is said to handle it.
Why use exceptions?

- Code where the error occurs and code to deal with the error can be separated.
- Exceptions can be used with constructors and other functions/operators which can not return an error code.
- Properly implemented exceptions lead to better code.
How to use exceptions?

- **try**
  - Try executing some block of code
  - See if an error occurs

- **throw**
  - An error condition occurred
  - Throw an exception to report the failure

- **catch**
  - Handle an exception thrown in a try block
How exceptions work?

- Normal program control flow is halted
  - At the point where an exception is thrown
- The program call stack “unwinds”
  - Stack frame of each function in call chain “pops”
  - Variables in each popped frame are destroyed
  - Goes until an enclosing try/catch scope is reached
- Control passes to first matching catch block
  - Can handle the exception and continue from there
  - Can free some resources and re-throw exception
What’s right about exceptions

• Can’t be silently ignored: if there is no applicable catch block for an exception the program terminates

• Automatically propagate across scopes (due to stack unwinding)

• Handling is out of main control flow, the code that implements the algorithm is not polluted
Exceptions syntax
C++ exceptions syntax

- Use **try-catch** blocks to catch an exception

```cpp
try
{
    statement(s);
}
catch (ExceptionClass identifier)
{
    statement(s);
}
catch (ExceptionClass identifier)
{
    statement(s);
}
```

Place a statement(s) (function or method) that might throw an exception within a **try block**.

Appropriate code to handle the exception.

A try block **must** be followed by one or more **catch blocks**.
C++ exception flow

- When a statement (function or method) in a try block causes an exception:
  - Rest of try block is ignored.
  - Control passes to catch block corresponding to the exception.
  - After a catch block executes, control passes to statement after last catch block associated with the try block.

```c++
try
{
    ...
    statement;
    ...
}
catch (ExceptionClass identifier)
{
    statement(s);
}
statement(s);
```
A more complex example of exception flow:

```cpp
void encodeChar(int i, string& str)
{
    ...
    str.replace(i, 1, 1, newChar);
}

void encodeString(int numChar, string& str)
{
    for(int i=numChar-1; i>=0; i--)
        encodeChar(i, str);
}

int main()
{
    string str1 = "NTU IM";
    encodeString(99, str1);
    return 0;
}
```

Can throw the `out_of_range` exception.

Abnormal program termination
Catching the exception

- Two examples on how to catch the exception:

```cpp
void encodeChar(int i, string& str)
{
    try
    {
        ...
        str.replace(i, 1, 1, newChar);
    } catch (out_of_range e) {
        cout << "No character at " << i << endl;
    }
}

void encodeString(int numChar, string& str)
{
    for(int i=numChar-1; i>=0; i--)
        encodeChar(i, str);
}

int main()
{
    string str1 = "NTU IM";
    encodeString(99, str1);
    return 0;
}
```

No character at 98
No character at 97...
Catching the exception

- Two examples on how to catch the exception:

```cpp
void encodeChar(int i, string& str)
{
    ...
    str.replace(i, 1, 1, newChar);
}

void encodeString(int numChar, string& str)
{
    try
    {
        for(int i=numChar-1; i>=0; i--)
            encodeChar(i, str);
    } catch (out_of_range e) {
        cout << "Something wrong" << endl;
    }
}

int main()
{
    string str1 = "NTU IM";
    encodeString(99, str1);
    return 0;
}
```
Handlers

• A handler may re-throw the exception that was passed:
  • it forwards the exception
  • Use: throw; // no operand
  • after the local handler cleanup it will exit the current handler

• A handler may throw an exception of a different type
  • it translates the exception
Catching multiple exceptions

• The order of catch clauses is important:
  • Especially with inheritance-related exception classes
  • Put more specific catch blocks before more general ones
  • Put catch blocks for more derived exception classes before catch blocks for their respective base classes

• catch(...) catches any type
Catching multiple exceptions example

```cpp
try {
    // can throw exceptions
} catch (DerivedExc &d) {
    // Do something
} catch (BaseExc &d) {
    // Do something else
} catch (...) {
    // Catch everything else
}
```
Throwing exceptions

- When you detect an error within a method, you can throw an exception by using a `throw` statement.
- The remaining code within the function does not execute.
- **Syntax:** `throw ExceptionClass(stringArgument);`

```java
void myMethod(int x) throw(MyException)
{
    if (...) 
        throw MyException("MyException: ...");
    ...
} // end myMethod
```
• The exception is propagated back to the point where the function was called.

```java
try {
    ...
    myMethod(int x);
    ...
} catch (ExceptionClass identifier) {
    statement(s);
}
```
Specifying exceptions

• Functions that throw an exception have a throw clause, to restrict the exceptions that a function can throw.
  • Allow stronger type checking enforced by the compiler
  • By default, a function can throw anything it wants

• A throw clause in a function’s signature
  • Limits what can be thrown
  • A promise to calling function

• A throw clause with no types
  • Says nothing will be thrown

• Can list multiple types, comma separated
Specifying exceptions examples

// can throw anything
void Foo::bar();

// promises not to throw
void Foo::bar() throw();

// promises to only throw int
void Foo::bar() throw(int);

// throws only char or int
void Foo::bar() throw(char,int);
Destructors and exceptions
Destructors and exceptions

- Prevent exceptions from leaving destructors: premature program termination or undefined behaviour can result from destructors emitting exceptions

- during the stack unwinding resulting from the processing of the exception are called the destructors of local objects, and one may trigger another exception
How to behave: example

class DBConnection {
public:
  // ...

  // return a DBConnection object
  static DBConnection create();

  void close(); // close connection and
  // throws exception if
  // closing fails
};

// class to manage DBConnection
class DBConnMgr {
public:
  // ...

  DBConnMgr(DBConnection dbc);
  ~DBConnMgr() {
    db.close(); // we’re sure it
    // gets closed
  }

private:
  DBConnection db;
};

// client code
{
  DBConnMgr dbc( DBConnection::create() );
  //... use DBConnection through DBConnMgr interface
} // DBConnMgr obj is automatically destroyed, calling the close
How to behave: example

class DBConnection {
public:
    //...

    // return a DBConnection object
    static DBConnection create();

    void close(); // close connection and throws exception if closing fails
};

// class to manage DBConnection
class DBConnMgr {
public:
    //...

    DBConnMgr(DBConnection dbc);
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private:
    DBConnection db;
};

// client code
{
    DBConnMgr dbc( DBConnection::create() );
    //... use DBConnection through DBConnMgr interface
} // DBConnMgr obj is automatically destroyed, calling the close
(Not so good) solutions

- **Terminate the program:**

```cpp
DBConnMgr::~DBConnMgr() {
    try{ db.close(); }
    catch (...) {
        // log failure and...
        std::abort();
    }
}
```

- **Swallow the exception:**

```cpp
DBConnMgr::~DBConnMgr() {
    try{ db.close() } 
    catch (...) {
        // just log the error
    }
}
```
(Not so good) solutions

• Terminate the program:

```cpp
DBConnMgr::~DBConnMgr() {
    try{ db.close(); }
    catch (...) {
        // log failure and...
        std::abort();
    }
}
```

• Swallow the exception:

```cpp
DBConnMgr::~DBConnMgr() {
    try{ db.close() }
    catch (...) {
        // just log the error
    }
}
```

With this solution we’re just hiding the problem
A better strategy

// class to manage DBConnection
class DBConnMgr {
public:
  //...
  DBConnMgr(DBConnection dbc);
  void close() {
    db.close();
    closed = true;
  }
  ~DBConnMgr() { // we’re sure it gets closed
    if( !closed ) {
      try {
        db.close();
      } catch (...) {
        // log and... terminate or swallow
      }
    }
  }
private:
  DBConnection db;
  bool closed;
};
A better strategy

// class to manage DBConnection
class DBConnMgr {
public:
    //...
    DBConnMgr(DBConnection dbc);
    void close() {
        db.close();
        closed = true;
    }
    ~DBConnMgr() { // we’re sure it gets closed
        if( !closed ) {
            try {
                db.close();
            } catch (...) {
                // log and... terminate or swallow
            }
        }
    }
private:
    DBConnection db;
    bool closed;
};
// class to manage DBConnection
class DBConnMgr {
public:
   //...
   DBConnMgr(DBConnection dbc);
   void close() {
       db.close();
       closed = true;
   }
   ~DBConnMgr() { // we’re sure it gets closed
       if( !closed ) {
           try {
               db.close();
           } catch (...) {
               // log and... terminate or swallow
           }
       }
   }

private:
   DBConnection db;
   bool closed;
};
Defining exceptions classes

Syntax and example
Defining exceptions classes

• C++ Standard Library supplies a number of exception classes.

• E.g., exception, out_of_range, ... etc.

• You may also want to define your own exception class.

• Should inherit from those pre-defined exception classes for a standardized exception working interface.

• Syntax:

```cpp
#include <exception>
using namespace std;
```
# Defining exceptions classes example

```cpp
#include <exception>
#include <string>
using namespace std;

class MyException : public exception
{
public:
    MyException(const string & Message = "")
    : exception(Message.c_str()) {}
} // end class

throw MyException("more detailed information");

try
{
    ...
}
catch (MyException e)
{
    cout << e.what();
}
```
A full example

• An ADT List implementation using exceptions:
  • out-of-bound list index.
  • attempt to insert into a full list.
Define two exception classes

```cpp
#include <exception>
#include <string>
using namespace std;

class ListIndexOutOfRangeException : public out_of_range {
public:
    ListIndexOutOfRangeException(const string & message = "")
        : out_of_range(message.c_str()) {}
}; // end ListException

class ListException : public logic_error {
public:
    ListException(const string & message = "")
        : logic_error(message.c_str()) {}
}; // end ListException
```
#include "MyListExceptions.h"

... class List
{
public:
    ...
    void insert(int index, const ListItemType& newItem)
    {
        throw(ListIndexOutOfRange, ListException);
    }
    ...
} // end List
void List::insert(int index, const ListItemType& newItem)  
    throw(ListIndexOutOfRangeException, ListException) {
    if (size >= MAX_LIST)  
        throw ListException("ListException: List full on insert");
    if (index >= 1 && index <= size+1)  
        {  
            for (int pos = size; pos >= index; --pos)  
                items[translate(pos+1)] = items[translate(pos)];  
            // insert new item
            items[translate(index)] = newItem;
            ++size;  // increase the size of the list by one
        } else // index out of range
            throw ListIndexOutOfRangeException(
                "ListIndexOutOfRangeException: Bad index on insert");
    }  // end insert
Good Programming Style with C++ Exceptions

• Don’t use exceptions for normal program flow
  • Only use where normal flow isn’t possible
• Don’t let exceptions leave main or constructors
  • Violates “normal” initialization and termination
• Always throw some type
  • So the exception can be caught
• Use exception specifications widely
  • Helps caller know possible exceptions to catch
Exception-safe functions

- Exception-safe functions offer one of three guarantees:
  - **basic guarantee**: if an exception is thrown, everything in the program remains in a valid state
  - **strong guarantee**: if an exception is thrown, the state of the program is unchanged. The call to the function is atomic
  - **nothrow guarantee**: promise to never throw exception: they always do what they promise. All operations on built-in types are nothrow.
Exception-safe code

• When an exception is thrown, exception safe functions:
  • leak no resource (e.g. new-ed objects, handles, etc.)
  • don’t allow data structures to become corrupted (e.g. a pointer that had to point to a new object was left pointing to nowhere)
Credits

• These slides are (heavily) based on the material of:
  • Dr. Walter E. Brown, Fermi Lab
  • Dr. Chien Chin Chen, National Taiwan University
  • Dr. Jochen Lang, University of Ottawa
  • Fred Kuhns, Washington University
  • Scott Meyers, “Effective C++, 3rd ed.”