Computer Programming: Skills & Concepts (CP)  
Characters  

Mahesh Marina  

Monday 30 October 2017
Last lecture

- Practical programming

This lecture

- Robust input handling
- Characters in C
scanf – erroneous input

What if the user types a word, when an integer is required?

As already noted in tutorials:

*Apart from the action performed by `scanf` (reading, or attempting to read, the object of the specified type), `scanf` returns an integer, which is the number of input items assigned. This may be fewer than provided for, or even zero, in the event of a matching failure.*

This returned value can be used to test for a successful read:

```c
scanf("%d", &a) == 1
```

if and only if an integer was successfully read into a.
Suppose we want to read in an integer to \( x \):
We can *test* for success by saving the returned value of `scanf`:

```c
read_succ = scanf("%d", &x);
if (read_succ == 1) {
   ....
} else {
   ....
}
```

What about the else branch?

- Print an error message and terminate?
- Can give the user a second try.

*scanf* – error-checking our input
scanf error-checking – first attempt

```c
printf("Please input an integer: ");
read_succ = scanf("%d", &x);
if (read_succ == 1) {
    ....
}
else {
    /* read_succ must have been 0 */
    printf("That wasn't an integer! Try again: ");
    read_succ = scanf("%d", &x);
    ....
}
```

**PROBLEM:** Guaranteed to fail on error . . .

**WHY?**
scanf error-checking – ‘skipping over’

\texttt{scanf("%*s")}; means ‘skip over’ first item in read-buffer from standard input (the s is for ‘string’ (sequence of non-whitespace characters), the * for ‘don’t save’).

\begin{verbatim}
printf("Please input an integer: ");
read_succ = scanf("%d", &x);
if (read_succ == 1) {
    ....
} else {
    /* read_succ must have been 0 */
    scanf("%*s"); /* scan the bad-input, don't save */
    printf("That wasn't an integer! Try again: ");
    read_succ = scanf("%d", &x);
    ....
}
\end{verbatim}
printf("Please input an integer: ");
read_succe = scanf("%d", &x);
if (read_succe != 1) { /* read_succe must have been 0 */
    while (read_succe != 1) {
        scanf("%*s"); /* scan bad-input, don't try to save */
        printf("That wasn't an integer! Try again: ");
        read_succe = scanf("%d", &x);
    }
}

.... /* Now we definitely have an int; do the work */

Try it with the Fibonacci programs!
Characters

What is it that input handling is actually reading from the terminal? Not integers, doubles, or whatever, but characters.

The various symbols (‘A’, ‘a’, ‘0’, ’;’, ’@’, etc) that you might find on the keyboard, together with control characters such as ‘\n’ (newline), all have integer codes (ASCII).

These integers are rather small, so can be wasteful (but sometimes necessary) to use a variable of type int to represent them.
The char type

The type char is like a small integer type, just big enough (a byte) to hold the usual (in the 1970s) character set.

- **Advantage** of char over int: saves space. Is the type used in many text-processing encodings.
- **Disadvantage** of char over int: cannot be used in certain situations (as we’ll see).

Oddly enough, ’a’, ’b’, ’c’, etc., denote integer constants and not characters.
Bytes and char

A byte is a binary number of length 8 (8 ‘bits’).

- 2 options for each bit ⇒ a byte can take on $2^8 = 256$ possible values (0 up to 255).
- This is enough to cover the English alphabet + other relevant symbols . . .
Bytes and char

A byte is a *binary number* of length 8 (8 ‘bits’).

- 2 options for each bit ⇒ a byte can take on $2^8 = 256$ possible values (0 up to 255).
- This is enough to cover the English alphabet + other relevant symbols . . .

If you want to play 麻將, listen to τασομημά, discuss the plays of Ἀριστοφάνης, or just ask somebody what their Erdős number is, you need more. In the modern world, real characters have values up to 1114111 – but the C `char` is still 8 bits. If you need to deal with non-ASCII, consult a book or the Web!
Bytes and char

A byte is a binary number of length 8 (8 ‘bits’).

- 2 options for each bit ⇒ a byte can take on $2^8 = 256$ possible values (0 up to 255).
- This is enough to cover the English alphabet + other relevant symbols ... 

If you want to play 麻將, listen to ηωζωηηηη, discuss the plays of Ἄριστοφάνης, or just ask somebody what their Erdős number is, you need more. In the modern world, real characters have values up to 1114111 – but the C char is still 8 bits. If you need to deal with non-ASCII, consult a book or the Web!

- The C char, like int and float, is a signed type, so actually takes values from $-128$ to $127$. Usually it’s better to use unsigned char, which really does take values 0 to 255.
Some char values

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>97</th>
<th></th>
<th>98</th>
<th></th>
<th>112</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>'a'</td>
<td></td>
<td>'b'</td>
<td></td>
<td>'z'</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>'A'</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>'B'</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>'Z'</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>'0'</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>'1'</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>'9'</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>'&amp;'</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>'*'</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>'\n'</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>' '</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>'\a'</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>'\r'</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

' ' is the space character.
'\r' is the carriage return character.
'\a' is a special character that rings a bell!
I/O with characters

- **getchar()**: returns the next character from the input stream (could be characters typed at a keyboard, or read from a file). If the end of the stream has been reached (user types CTRL/D or the end of the file is reached) the special value EOF (which is $-1$ on most systems, but always refer to it as EOF) is returned.

- **putchar(c)**: writes the character $c$ to the *output stream* (could be the screen, or another file).

These functions are included in `<stdio.h>`.

**NOTE**: `getchar()` returns an int, not a char! This is so that it can return all the possible unsigned chars as well as the value EOF.
Library functions

In addition, `#include <ctype.h>` gives us various functions on characters:

- `isalpha(c)`: is `c` alphabetic?
- `isupper(c)`: is `c` upper case?
- `isdigit(c)`: is `c` a digit (0 to 9)?
- `toupper(c)`: if `c` is a lower case letter, return the corresponding upper case letter; otherwise return `c`.

... and several others: see Kelley and Pohl A.2, or the `isalpha` man-page.
void PrintNum(int n) {
    while (n > 0) {
        if (n >= 100) {
            n = n - 100; putchar('C');
        } else if (n >= 90) {
            n = n + 10; putchar('X');
        } else if (n >= 50) {
            n = n - 50; putchar('L');
        } else if (n >= 40) {
            n = n + 10; putchar('X');
        } else if (n >= 10) {
            n = n - 10; putchar('X');
        }
    }
}
} else if (n >= 9) {
    n = n + 1;  putchar('I');
} else if (n >= 5) {
    n = n - 5;  putchar('V');
} else if (n >= 4) {
    n = n + 1;  putchar('I');
} else {
    n = n - 1;  putchar('I');
}
Idiom for single character I/O

We can do a surprising amount by filling in the following template:

```c
int c;

while ((c = getchar()) != EOF) {
    /* Code for processing the character c. */
}
```

The `while`-loop condition is a bit tricky: it reads a character from the input, assigns it to `c` and tests whether the character is EOF (i.e., whether we have reached the end of the input)!
Continuing the Roman theme: Caesar cypher

```c
const int OFFSET = 13, NUMLETS = 26;

int c, ord;    /* Why is c declared as int and not char? */

while ((c = getchar()) != EOF) {
    c = toupper(c);
    if (isupper(c)) {
        ord = c - 'A';    /* Integer in range [0,25] */
        ord = (ord + OFFSET) % NUMLETS;    /* permute by offset */
        c = ord + 'A';    /* back to char */
    }
    putchar(c);
}
```
```c
#define NUMLETS 26
int c, i, count[NUMLETS];

for (i = 0; i < NUMLETS; i++) count[i] = 0;
while ((c = getchar()) != EOF) {
    c = toupper(c);
    if (isupper(c)) {
        i = c - 'A';
        /* Integer in [0,25] */
        count[i]++;
    }
}
for (i = 0; i < NUMLETS; i++) {
    printf("%c: %d\n", i + 'A', count[i]);
}
```
Idiom for line-oriented I/O

We can do a surprising amount by filling in the following template:

```c
int c;

while ((c = getchar()) != EOF) {
    if (c == '\n') {
        /* Code for processing the line just read. */
    } else {
        /* Code for processing the character c. */
    }
}
```
Example: recording line lengths

```c
int c, charCount = 0, lineCount = 0;

while ((c = getchar()) != EOF) {
    if (c == '\n') {
        lineCount++;
        printf(" [Line %d has %d characters]\n", lineCount, charCount);
        charCount = 0;
    } else {
        charCount++;
        putchar(c);
    }
}
```
Input and output redirection

Suppose we have compiled a program, similar to the ones considered earlier, and placed the resulting object code in the file prog (maybe done by creating a Makefile and using make; or alternatively just by copying a.out into prog).

By default, input is from the keyboard, and output is to the screen. So

- Typing ./prog in the shell window runs prog, with input being taken from the keyboard, and output being written to the shell window.

However, by extending the command, we may redirect input from the keyboard to a nominated input file, and redirect the output from the screen to a nominated output file.
- `./prog < data` takes input from the file `data`, but continues to send output to the shell window.
- `./prog > results` takes input from the keyboard, but sends output to the file `results`.
- `./prog < data > results` takes input from the file `data`, and sends output to the file `results`.

**Reading material :)**

Kelley and Pohl, subsections 3.2, 3.3 and 3.9