Computer Programming: Skills & Concepts
(INF-1-CP)
Functions and Pointers

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Last time:
- Functions
- return

This time:
- Global variables
- Motivation for Pointers
- Addresses aka Pointers
Aside: You can mix types

Good Code:

```c
float Round(double numerator, int decimal_places);
```
/* Declare a global variable. */
/* Notice this is outside a function. */
int i;

void print_i() {
    /* i is accessible from any function */
    printf("%d", i);
}

int main() {
    /* i is accessible from any function */
    i = 1;
    print_i();
    return EXIT_SUCCESS;
}
Global Variables Are Bad

```c
int day;

int GetMonth() {
    ...
}

int main() {
    day = 1;
    GetMonth();
    /* What does this print? */
    printf("%d", day);
    return EXIT_SUCCESS;
}
```
int day;

int GetMonth() {
    int month;
    printf("Enter a day and month:");
    scanf("%d %d", &day, &month);
    return month;
}

int main() {
    day = 1;
    GetMonth();
    /* What does this print? */
    printf("%d", day);
    return EXIT_SUCCESS;
}
Global Variables Are Evil

- Global variables can be read/written from any system module
  - In contrast, local variables only seen from a particular software module
- Excessive use of globals tends to compromise modularity
  - Changes to code in one place affect other parts of code via the globals
  - Think of it as data flow spaghetti

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1973 February

GLOBAL VARIABLE CONSIDERED HARMFUL

W. Wulf, Mary Shaw
Carnegie-Mellon University

The problems of indiscriminant access and vulnerability are complementary: the former reflects the fact that the declaror has no control over who uses his variables; the latter reflects the fact that the program itself has no control over which variables it operates on. Both problems force upon the programmer the need for a detailed global knowledge of the program which is not consistent with his human limitations.

[Wulf 1973, pp. 28,32]
11,528 global variables make Toyota cars unsafe
...what alternatives are there?
### ReadDate function

```c
int ReadDate() {
    int day = ReadValue(31);
    int month = ReadValue(12);
    return /* Problem: we can’t return both day and month. */;
}
```

**Problem**

We can’t return two ints.
Bad Code:

```c
void ReadDate(int day, int month) {
    day = ReadValue(31);
    month = ReadValue(12);
}
```

Remember: arguments are copies. They won’t impact the caller.

**Addresses** are one way around this...
Addresses (also known as Pointers)

Computers keep variables at numbered addresses:

Idea: tell ReadDate to put day in box 0211 and month in 0224.
int main() {
    int i;
    /* Print the address of i (the number on its box) */
    printf("%p\n", &i);
    return EXIT_SUCCESS;
}

New notation:
&i  Address of i
%p  Formatting for pointers aka addresses
Addresses can be Stored

```c
int i;
/* This stores the address of i */
int* address_of_i = &i;
/* Print the same value (the address of i) twice: */
printf("%p\n", &i);
printf("%p\n", address_of_i);
```

Notation:

- `&i` Address of `i`
- `%p` Formatting for addresses
- `int*` Type of an address to an int
Address Types

int* means an address to an int.
double* means an address to a double.
etc.

Good Code:

```c
int i;
int* address_of_i = &i;
```

Good Code:

```c
double value;
double* address_of_value = &value;
```

Bad Code:

```c
double value;
double address_of_value = &value; /* Missing asterisk */
```
Using Addresses: *

Use * to access a variable at an address.

```
int i = 2;
int* address_of_i = &i;
```

Now i and *address_of_i are interchangeable (aliases).
Using Addresses: *

Use * to access a variable at an address.

```c
int i = 2;
int* address_of_i = &i;

Now i and *address_of_i are interchangeable (aliases).

/* Both print 2. */
printf("%d\n", *address_of_i);
printf("%d\n", i);
```
Using Addresses: *

Use * to access a variable at an address.

```c
int i = 2;
int* address_of_i = &i;
```

Now `i` and `*address_of_i` are *interchangeable* (aliases).

```c
/* Both print 2. */
printf("%d\n", *address_of_i);
printf("%d\n", i);
```

```c
/* This is the same as i = 3. */
*address_of_i = 3;
/* Prints 3. */
printf("%d\n", i);
```
Another Example

```c
int i = 2;
/* & takes the address of i. Then * goes there. */
*(&i) = 3;
/* prints 3 */
printf("%d\n", i);
```

Not terribly useful, but instructive.
Summarizing

Variables live in memory. Memory is like a bunch of post boxes.
⇒ Every variable has a numbered address.

To get that address, we use &.
To access the value at an address, we use *.
We can remember addresses. int* stores an address to an int.
Summarizing

Variables live in memory. Memory is like a bunch of post boxes.

⇒ Every variable has a numbered address.

To get that address, we use &.
To access the value at an address, we use *.
We can remember addresses. int* stores an address to an int.

Three uses of the * symbol:

*address_to_i  Access a variable at an address
int*            Type of an address
i * j           Multiply i by j
Useful for Multiple Values

Good Code:

```c
void ReadDate(int* address_of_day, int* address_of_month) {
    *address_of_day = ReadValue(31);
    *address_of_month = ReadValue(12);
}

int main() {
    int day, month;
    ReadDate(&day, &month);
    printf("You entered %d of %d", day, month);
    return EXIT_SUCCESS;
}
```

Question: Aren't Arguments Copied?

Answer: yes, the addresses are copied.
Useful for Multiple Values

Good Code:

```c
void ReadDate(int* address_of_day, int* address_of_month) {
    *address_of_day = ReadValue(31);
    *address_of_month = ReadValue(12);
}

int main() {
    int day, month;
    ReadDate(&day, &month);
    printf("You entered %d of %d", day, month);
    return EXIT_SUCCESS;
}
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Useful for Multiple Values

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void ReadDate(int* address_of_day, int* address_of_month) {
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int main() {
    int day, month;
    ReadDate(&day, &month);
    printf("You entered %d of %d", day, month);
    return EXIT_SUCCESS;
}
```

Question: Aren’t Arguments Copied?
Answer: yes, the addresses are copied.
Addresses: Reach Into Another Environment

The program has one giant set of post boxes.
A function can access any of them... but needs the address.
Dangling Addresses

Bad Code:

```c
int *Dangerous() {
    int i;
    return &i;
}
```

Remember from Lecture 7:
When a function returns, its environment is destroyed, *including* \( i \).

Told the postman the box is unused, but somebody still has the address.
Summary: Escaping the Environment

Global Variables
Easy to use initially
Hard to know what a function does:
void ReadDate();

Addresses
Requires thinking about postboxes.
Explicitly documents what a function can do:
void ReadDate(int* day, int* month);
Following Up

For Functions in general:
‘A Book on C’, Sections 5.1-5.6
(please ignore the comments on ‘traditional C’ and C++)

For pointers:
‘A Book on C’, Sections 6.1-6.3