



I/O Management

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Goals of this Lecture

- Help you to learn about:
 - The Unix **stream** concept
 - Standard C I/O functions
 - Unix system-level functions for I/O
 - How the standard C I/O functions use the Unix system-level functions
 - Additional abstractions provided by the standard C I/O functions

Streams are a beautiful Unix abstraction

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Stream Abstraction




- Any source of input or destination for output
 - E.g., keyboard as input, and screen as output
 - E.g., files on disk or CD, network ports, printer port, ...
- Accessed in C programs through file pointers
 - E.g., `FILE *fp1, *fp2;`
 - E.g., `fp1 = fopen("myfile.txt", "r");`
- Three streams provided by `stdio.h`
 - Streams **`stdin`**, **`stdout`**, and **`stderr`**
 - Typically map to keyboard, screen, and screen
 - Can redirect to correspond to other streams
 - E.g., `stdin` can be the output of another program
 - E.g., `stdout` can be the input to another program

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Sequential Access to a Stream



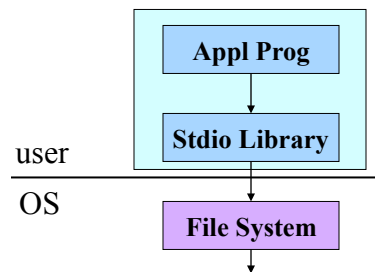
- Each stream has an associated file position
 - Starting at beginning of file (if opened to read or write)
 - Or, starting at end of file (if opened to append)
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- Read/write operations advance the file position
 - Allows sequencing through the file in sequential manner
 - Support for random access to the stream
 - Functions to learn current position and seek to new one

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Standard I/O Functions



- **Portability**
 - Generic I/O support for C programs
 - Specific implementations for various host OSes
 - Invokes the OS-specific system calls for I/O
- **Abstractions for C programs**
 - Streams
 - Line-by-line input
 - Formatted output
- **Additional optimizations**
 - Buffered I/O
 - Safe writing



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Example: Opening a File



- **`FILE *fopen("myfile.txt", "r")`**
 - Open the named file and return a stream
 - Includes a mode, such as "r" for read or "w" for write
- **Creates a FILE data structure for the file**
 - Mode, status, buffer, ...
 - Assigns fields and returns a pointer
- **Opens or creates the file, based on the mode**
 - Write ('w'): create file with default permissions
 - Read ('r'): open the file as read-only
 - Append ('a'): open or create file, and seek to the end

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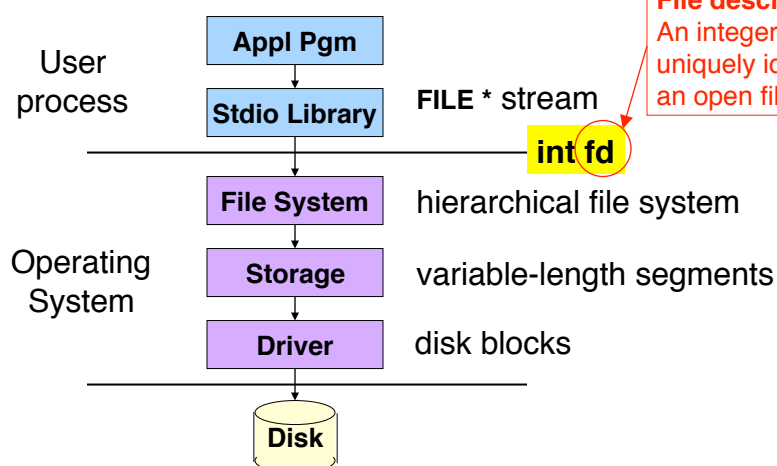
Example: Formatted I/O



- `int fprintf(fp1, "Number: %d\n", i)`
 - Convert and write output to stream in specified format
- `int fscanf(fp1, "FooBar: %d", &i)`
 - Read from stream in format and assign converted values
- Specialized versions
 - `printf(...)` is just `fprintf(stdout, ...)`
 - `scanf(...)` is just `fscanf(stdin, ...)`

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Layers of Abstraction



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System-Level Functions for I/O



```
int creat(char *pathname, mode_t mode);
    • Create a new file named pathname, and return a file descriptor

int open(char *pathname, int flags, mode_t mode);
    • Open the file pathname and return a file descriptor

int close(int fd);
    • Close fd

int read(int fd, void *buf, int count);
    • Read up to count bytes from fd into the buffer at buf

int write(int fd, void *buf, int count);
    • Writes up to count bytes into fd from the buffer at buf

int lseek(int fd, int offset, int whence);
    • Assigns the file pointer of fd to a new value by applying an offset
```

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Example: `open()`



- Converts a path name into a file descriptor
 - `int open(const char *pathname, int flags, mode_t mode);`
- Arguments
 - Pathname: name of the file
 - Flags: bit flags for `O_RDONLY`, `O_WRONLY`, `O_RDWR`
 - Mode: permissions to set if file must be created
- Returns
 - File descriptor (or a -1 if an error)
- Performs a variety of checks
 - E.g., whether the process is entitled to access the file
- Underlies `fopen()`

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Example: read ()



- Reads bytes from a file descriptor
 - `int read(int fd, void *buf, int count);`
- Arguments
 - File descriptor: integer descriptor returned by `open ()`
 - Buffer: pointer to memory to store the bytes it reads
 - Count: maximum number of bytes to read
- Returns
 - Number of bytes read
 - Value of 0 if nothing more to read
 - Value of -1 if an error
- Performs a variety of checks
 - Whether file has been opened, whether reading is okay
- Underlies `getchar ()` , `fgets ()` , `scanf ()` , etc.

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Example: A Simple getchar ()



```
int getchar(void) {  
    char c;  
    if (read(0, &c, 1) == 1)  
        return c;  
    else return EOF;  
}
```

- Read one character from `stdin`
 - File descriptor 0 is `stdin`
 - `&c` points to the buffer
 - 1 is the number of bytes to read
- Read returns the number of bytes read
 - In this case, 1 byte means success

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Making getchar () More Efficient



- Poor performance reading one byte at a time
 - Read system call is accessing the device (e.g., a disk)
 - Reading one byte from disk is very time consuming
 - Better to read and write in *larger chunks*
- Buffered I/O
 - Read a large chunk from disk into a buffer
 - Dole out bytes to the user process as needed
 - Discard buffer contents when the stream is closed
 - Similarly, for writing, write individual bytes to a buffer
 - And write to disk when full, or when stream is closed
 - Known as “flushing” the buffer

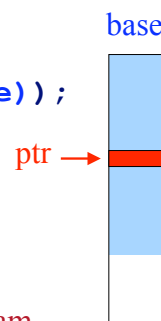
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Better getchar () with Buffered I/O



```
int getchar(void) {  
    static char base[1024];  
    static char *ptr;  
    static int cnt = 0;  
    }  
  
    if (cnt-- > 0) return *ptr++;  
  
    cnt = read(0, base, sizeof(base));  
    if (cnt <= 0) return EOF;  
    ptr = base;  
    return getchar();  
}
```

persistent variables



But, many functions may read (or write) the stream...

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Details of FILE in stdio.h (K&R 8.5)



```
#define OPEN_MAX 20 /* max files open at once */

typedef struct _iobuf {
    int cnt; /* num chars left in buffer */
    char *ptr; /* ptr to next char in buffer */
    char *base; /* beginning of buffer */
    int flag; /* open mode flags, etc. */
    char fd; /* file descriptor */
} FILE;
extern FILE _iob[OPEN_MAX];

#define stdin (&_iob[0])
#define stdout (&_iob[1])
#define stderr (&_iob[2])
```

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A Funny Thing About Buffered I/O



- The standard library also buffers **output**; example:

```
int main(void) {
    printf("Step 1\n");
    sleep(10);
    printf("Step 2\n");
    return 0;
}
```

- Run “a.out > out.txt &” and then “tail -f out.txt”
 - To run a.out in the background, outputting to out.txt
 - And then to see the contents on out.txt
- Neither line appears till ten seconds have elapsed
 - Because the output is being buffered
 - Add fflush(stdout) to flush the output buffer
 - fclose() also flushes the buffer before closing

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Summary



- System-level I/O functions provide simple abstractions
 - Stream as a source or destination of data
 - Functions for manipulating streams
- Standard I/O library builds on system-level functions
 - Calls system-level functions for low-level I/O
 - Adds buffering
- Powerful examples of abstraction
 - Application pgms interact with streams at a high level
 - Standard I/O library interact with streams at lower level
 - Only the OS deals with the device-specific details

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