C++17 Standard Library Quick Reference

A Pocket Guide to Data Structures, Algorithms, and Functions

Second Edition

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Dedicated to my parents and my brother,
who are always there for me.
Their support and patience helped me
in finishing this book.

—Marc Gregoire

In loving memory of Jeroen.
Your enthusiasm and courage will forever remain
an inspiration to us all.

—Peter Van Weert

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About the Authors

Peter Van Weert is a Belgian software engineer and C++ expert, mainly experienced in large-scale desktop application development. He is passionate about coding, algorithms, and data structures.

Peter received his master of science in computer science summa cum laude with congratulations of the Board of Examiners from the University of Leuven. In 2010, he completed his PhD thesis in Leuven at the research group for declarative languages and artificial intelligence. During his doctoral studies, he was a teaching assistant for courses on software analysis and design, object-oriented programming (Java), and declarative programming (Prolog and Haskell).

After graduating, Peter joined Nikon Metrology to work on industrial metrology software for high-precision 3D laser scanning and point cloud–based inspection. At Nikon, he learned to handle large C++ code bases and gained further proficiency in all aspects of the software development process—skills that serve him well today at Medicim, the software R&D center for dental companies Nobel Biocare, Ormco, and KaVo Kerr. At Medicim, Peter contributes to their next-generation digital platform for dentists, orthodontists, and oral surgeons that offers patient data acquisition from a wide range of hardware, diagnostic functionality, implant planning, and prosthetic design.

In his spare time, Peter writes books on C++ and is a regular speaker at and board member of the Belgian C++ Users Group.

Marc Gregoire is a software architect from Belgium. He graduated from the University of Leuven, Belgium, with a degree in "Burgerlijk ingenieur in de computer wetenschappen" (equivalent to a master of science in engineering in computer science). The year after, he received an advanced master's degree in artificial intelligence, cum laude, at the same university. After his studies, Marc started working for a software consultancy company called Ordina Belgium. As a consultant, he worked for Siemens and Nokia Siemens Networks on critical 2G and 3G software running on Solaris for telecom operators. This required working in international teams stretching from South America and the United States to Europe, the Middle East, Africa, and Asia. Now, Marc is a software architect at Nikon

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His main expertise is C/C++, specifically Microsoft VC++ and the MFC framework. He has experience in developing C++ programs running 24/7 on Windows and Linux platforms, for example, KNX/EIB home automation software. In addition to C/C++, Marc also likes C#.

Since April 2007, he has received the annual Microsoft MVP (Most Valuable Professional) award for his Visual C++ expertise.

Marc is the founder of the Belgian C++ Users Group (www.becpp.org), author of *Professional C++* (Wiley), technical editor for numerous books for several publishers, and a member on the CodeGuru forum (as Marc G). He maintains a blog at www.nuonsoft.com/blog/.

About the Technical Reviewer

Christophe Pichaud is a French C/C++ developer based in Paris. Over the course of his career, he has developed large scale server implementations in the banking industry, where he helped build the first French online bank account service (for Banque-Populaire), as well as Retail Services (Société Générale). He's also performed C++ migrations and developed hybrid applications with the .NET stack. Among his past clients are Accenture, Avanade, Sogeti, CapGemini, Palais de Elysée (French Presidency), SNCF, Total, Danone, CACIB, and BNP Paribas. He earned his MCSD.NET certification and currently works for a Microsoft Gold Partner called Devoteam Modern Applications in Paris, a division of Devoteam (www.devoteam.com).

Additionally, he participates in Microsoft Events as speaker for TechDays, and as an MVP at Ask the Expert sessions. He's regularly written C++ technical articles for the French magazine *Programmez* since 2011. He is also the community manager of the ".NET Azure Rangers," which includes 26 members and 9 MVPs and whose activities include speaking, writing and community-building around Microsoft technologies.

When he is not developing software or reading books, Christophe spends his spare time and holidays with his three daughters, Edith, Lisa, and Audrey along with his father Jean-Marc and mother Mireille in the Burgundy region of France.

Introduction

The C++ Standard Library

The C++ Standard Library is a collection of essential classes and functions used by millions of C++ programmers on a daily basis. Being part of the ISO Standard of the C++ Programming Language, an implementation is distributed with virtually every C++ compiler. Code written with the C++ Standard Library is therefore portable across compilers and target platforms.

The Library is more than 25 years old. Its initial versions were heavily inspired by a (then proprietary) C++ library called the *Standard Template Library (STL)*, so much so that many still incorrectly refer to the Standard Library as "the STL." The STL library pioneered generic programming with templated data structures called *containers* and *algorithms*, glued together with the concept of *iterators*. Most of this work was adapted by the C++ standardization committee, but nevertheless neither library is a true superset of the other.

Today the C++ Standard Library is much more than the containers and algorithms of the STL, though. For decades, it has featured STL-like string classes, extensive localization facilities, and a stream-based I/O library, as well as the entire C Standard Library. Earlier this decade, the C++11 and C++14 editions of the ISO standard have added, among other things, hash map containers, generic smart pointers, a versatile random number generation framework, a powerful regular expression library, more expressive utilities for function-style programming, type traits for template metaprogramming, and a portable concurrency library featuring threads, mutexes, condition variables, and atomic variables. Most recently, C++17 has introduced, among many smaller additions, parallelized algorithms, a file system library, and several key types for day-to-day use (such as `optional<>`, `variant<>`, `any`, and `string_view`). Many of the C++11, C++14, and C++17 additions are based on Boost, a collection of open source C++ libraries.

And this is just the beginning: the C++ community has rarely been as active and alive as in the past decade. The next version of the Standard, tentatively called C++20, is expected to add even more essential classes and functions.

Why This Book?

Needless to say, it is hard to know and remember all the possibilities, details, and intricacies of the vast and growing C++ Standard Library. This handy reference guide offers a condensed, well-structured summary of all essential aspects of the C++ Standard Library and is therefore indispensable to any C++ programmer.

You could consult the Standard itself, but it is written in a very detailed, technical style and is primarily targeted at Library implementors. Moreover, it is very long: the C++ Standard Library chapters alone are nearly 1,000 pages in length, and those on the C Standard Library easily encompass another 200 pages. Other reference guides exist but are often outdated, limited (most cover little more than the STL containers and algorithms), or not much shorter than the Standard itself.

This book covers all important aspects of the C++17 and C18 Standard Libraries, some in more detail than others, and is always driven by their practical usefulness. You will not find page-long, repetitive examples; obscure, rarely used features; or bloated, lengthy explanations that could be summarized in just a few bullets. Instead, this book strives to be exactly that: a summary. Everything you need to know and watch out for in practice is outlined in a compact, to-the-point style, interspersed with practical tips and short, well-chosen, clarifying examples.

Who Should Read This Book?

The book is targeted at all C++ programmers, regardless of their proficiency with the language or the Standard Library. If you are new to C++, its tutorial aspects will quickly bring you up to speed with the C++ Standard Library. Even the most experienced C++ programmer, however, will learn a thing or two from the book and find it an indispensable reference and memory aid. The book does not explain the C++ language or syntax itself, but is accessible to anyone with basic C++ knowledge or programming experience.

What You Will Learn

- How to use the powerful random number generation facilities
- How to work with dates and times
- What smart pointers are and how to use them to prevent memory leaks
- How to use containers to efficiently store and retrieve your data
- How to use algorithms to inspect and manipulate your data
- How lambda expressions allow for elegant use of algorithms
- What functionality the library provides for stream-based I/O
- How to inspect and manipulate files and directories on your file system
- How to work with characters and strings in C++
- How to write localized applications

- How to write safe and efficient multithreaded code using the C++11 concurrency library
- How to correctly handle error conditions and exceptions
- And more!

General Remarks

- All types, classes, functions, and constants of the C++ Standard Library are defined in the `std` namespace (short for *standard*).
- All C++ Standard Library headers must be included using `#include <`*header*`>` (note: no `.h` suffix!).
- All headers of the C Standard Library are available to C++ programmers in a slightly modified form by including `<c`*header*`>` (note the `c` prefix).[1] The most notable difference between the C++ headers and their original C counterparts is that all functionality is defined in the `std` namespace. Whether it is also provided in the global namespace is up to the implementation: portable code should therefore use the `std` namespace at all times.
- This book generally only covers headers of the C Standard Library if the C++ Standard Library does not offer more modern alternatives.
- More advanced, rarely used topics such as custom memory allocators are not covered.

Code Examples

To compile and execute the code examples given throughout the book, all you need is a sufficiently recent C++ compiler. We leave the choice of compiler entirely up to you, and we further assume you can compile and execute basic C++ programs. All examples contain standard, portable C++ code only and should compile with any C++ compiler that is compliant with the C++17 version of the Standard. We occasionally indicate known limitations of major compilers, but this is not a real goal of this book. In case of problems, please consult your implementation's documentation.

Nearly all code examples can be copied as is and put inside the `main()` function of a basic command-line application. Generally, only two headers have to be included to make a code snippet compile: the one being discussed in the context where the

[1] The original C headers may still be included with `<`*header*`.h>`, but their use is deprecated.

example is given and `<iostream>` for the command-line output statements (explained shortly). If any other header is required, we try to indicate so in the text. Should we forget, the Appendix provides a brief overview of all headers of the Standard Library and their contents. Additionally, you can download compilable source code files for all code snippets from this book from the Apress web site (www.apress.com/9781484218754).

Following is the obligatory first example (for once, we show the full program):

```
#include <iostream>

int main() {
   std::cout << "Hello world!" << std::endl;
}
```

Many code samples, including those in earlier chapters, write to the standard output console using `std::cout` and the `<<` *stream insertion operator*, even though these facilities of the C++ I/O library are only discussed in detail in Chapter 5. The stream insertion operator can be used to output virtually all fundamental C++ types, and multiple values can be written on a single line. The so-called *I/O manipulator* `std::endl` outputs the newline character (`\n`) and flushes the output for `std::cout` to the standard console. Straightforward usage of the `std::string` class defined in `<string>` may occur in earlier examples as well. For instance:

```
std::string piString = "PI";
double piValue = 3.14159;
std::cout << piString << " = " << piValue << std::endl;  // PI = 3.14159
```

More details regarding streams and strings are found in Chapters 5 and 6, respectively, but this should suffice to get you through the examples in earlier chapters.

Common Class

The following Person class is used in code examples throughout the book to illustrate the use of user-defined classes together with the Standard Library:

```
#include <string>
#include <ostream>

class Person {
public:
   Person() = default;
   explicit Person(std::string first, std::string last = "",
                   bool isVIP = false)
   : m_first(move(first)), m_last(move(last)), m_isVIP(isVIP) {}

   const std::string& GetFirstName() const { return m_first; }
   void SetFirstName(std::string first) { m_first = move(first); }

   const std::string& GetLastName() const { return m_last; }
   void SetLastName(std::string last) { m_last = move(last); }

   bool IsVIP() const { return m_isVIP; }

private:
   std::string m_first, m_last;
   bool m_isVIP = false;
};

// Comparison operator
bool operator<(const Person& lhs, const Person& rhs) {
   if (lhs.IsVIP() != rhs.IsVIP()) return rhs.IsVIP();
   if (lhs.GetLastName() != rhs.GetLastName())
      return lhs.GetLastName() < rhs.GetLastName();
   return lhs.GetFirstName() < rhs.GetFirstName();
}

// Equality operator
bool operator==(const Person& lhs, const Person& rhs) {
   return lhs.IsVIP() == rhs.IsVIP()
       && lhs.GetFirstName() == rhs.GetFirstName()
       && lhs.GetLastName() == rhs.GetLastName();
}

// Stream insertion operator for output to C++ streams.
// Details of this operator can be found in Chapter 5.
std::ostream& operator<<(std::ostream& os, const Person& person) {
   return os << person.GetFirstName() << ' ' << person.GetLastName();
}
```