Motivation

Consider a new class for a number-like object:

```cpp
class complex {
    public:
        double real;
        double imaginary;
        complex(double, double);
    }
```

We'd want to add, subtract, etc. complex numbers.

Without Operators

We could create functions for this job:

```cpp```
complex add(complex a, complex b)
complex subtract(complex a, complex b)
Etc.
```cpp```

```cpp```
complex x(0.0, 4.5);    // 4.5i
complex y(1.0, -7.0);  // 1 - 7i
complex z = add(x, y); // 1 - 2.5i
```cpp```

With Operators

C++ let us do the following (with a little work):

```cpp```
complex x(0.0, 4.5);    // 4.5i
complex y(1.0, -7.0);  // 1 - 7i
complex z = x + y;     // 1 - 2.5i
```cpp```

And even this (chaining):

```cpp```
complex c = x + z - y;
```cpp```

Operator Overloading

Here's how:

```cpp```
complex operator+(const complex &a, const complex &b) {
    return complex(
        a.real + b.real,
        a.imaginary + b.imaginary
    );
}
```cpp```

Member vs. Non-Member

- We wrote the previous method as a non-member function.
- You can do it the other way, too:
  ```cpp```
  complex complex::operator+(const complex &b) const {
      return complex(
          real + b.real,
          imaginary + b.imaginary
      );
  }
  ```cpp```
- Declare in the class declaration like any other method.
- Note, only one argument – for the RHS (Right Hand Side) argument.
Member vs. Non-Member

- Some operators (e.g., assignment) must be member functions
- Some operators (e.g., <<, >>) cannot be member functions
- Non-member operator functions may have to be declared as friend functions for private access
- Most binary operators can be either
  - Which you use partly a matter of style
  - For now, recommend using non-member functions

Mixed Type

Suppose we want to add complex and real numbers:

```cpp
complex a(1.0, 3.1); // 1 + 3.1i
double x = 0.5;
complex z = a + x;   // 1.5 + 3.1i
```

More Overloading

To support mixed type operations, we just add more overloaded functions:

```cpp
complex operator +(const complex &a, const complex &b);
complex operator +(const complex &a, const double &b);
complex operator +(const double &a, const complex &b);
```

Note this last one cannot be a member function!

Stream Output

As another example consider the following:

```cpp
complex c(4.0, 0.5);
cout << c << endl;  // error!
```

To make this work, we need to tell C++ how to print complex values on streams:

```cpp
ostream &operator<<(ostream &out, const complex &c) {
    out << c.real << " + " << c.imaginary << 'i';
    return out;
}
```

Note: cannot be a member function of complex!

Other Operators

- In all, C++ lets you overload some 50 different operators!
- Some you’ve seen:
  - <<, >> for stream operations (originally used for bitwise shift operations)
  - + for string concatenation (and complex addition)
  - [] for string and vector element access
  - = for assignment
- Besides these, a common set are the Boolean comparison operators: <, >, <=, >=, and ==.

Rules

These are not everyone’s rules. But they’re mine.

i. Mostly, don’t. Use clearly named member functions or static member functions instead.

ii. If you must, then:
   a. Be consistent – use symbols that mimic their original use (or existing practice, as in + for concatenation)
   b. Be complete – if you overload one of a set, overload them all - e.g., <<, >>, and ==, not just <.

iii. Exceptions to the above:
   a. = part of the “big 3”
   b. () used for “function objects”
Up Next

- Friday, Oct. 20
  - Lab – Operator overloading
  - APT 4 assigned
- Monday, Oct. 23
  - The “Big 3”
  - Read sections 13.8 – 13.11
  - Project 3 – Postfix calculator due
- Wednesday, Oct. 25
  - Templates
  - Read chapter 14