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# Chapter 6

## Basic IDL-to-C++ Mapping

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### 6.1 Chapter Overview

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This chapter explains how IDL types are mapped to their corresponding C++ types by an IDL compiler. Sections 6.3 to 6.8 cover identifiers, modules, and simple IDL types. Section 6.9 covers memory management issues related to variable-length types, and Section 6.10 presents detailed examples of memory management for strings. Sections 6.11 and 6.12 discuss the mapping for wide strings and fixed-point types. The mapping for user-defined complex types is covered in Sections 6.13 to 6.18. Section 6.19 shows how smart pointers can eliminate the need to take care of memory management.

This chapter does not cover all of the mapping. Chapter 7 presents the client-side mapping for operations and exceptions, Chapter 9 details the server-side mapping, and Chapters 15 to 17 cover the dynamic aspects of IDL. (The complete C++ mapping specification can be found in [17a].)

This chapter is long, and you probably won't be able (or inclined) to absorb all of it by reading it from beginning to end. Instead, you may prefer to browse the sections that interest you and refer to the details later. The chapter is arranged so that it is suitable as a reference. All the material for a particular topic is presented together, so you should be able to find the answers to specific questions as they arise.

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## 6.2 Introduction

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The mapping from IDL to C++ must address a large number of requirements:

- The mapping should be intuitive and easy to use.
- It should preserve commonly used C++ idioms and “feel” like normal C++ as much as possible.
- It should be type-safe.
- It should be efficient in its use of memory and CPU cycles.
- It must work on architectures with segmented or hard (non-virtual) memory.
- It must be reentrant so that it can be used in threaded environments.
- The mapping must preserve location transparency; that is, the source code for client and server must look identical whether or not client and server are collocated (are in the same address space).

Some of these requirements conflict with others. For example, typically we cannot achieve ease of use and optimum efficiency at the same time, so we must make trade-offs. The C++ mapping adopted by the OMG deals with these compromises by choosing efficiency over convenience. The reason for this approach is twofold.

- It is possible to layer a slower but more convenient mapping on top of a faster but less convenient one, but we cannot layer a fast mapping on top of a slow one. Favoring a mapping that is fast but less convenient lets the OMG and ORB vendors add other options, such as code generation wizards, later.
- Increasingly, designers use IDL to describe in-process interfaces, which have the advantage of location transparency. Such interfaces let you build systems that implement different functional units in a single process and then let you later split that single process into multiple processes without breaking existing source code. The run-time efficiency of the mapping may be irrelevant for interprocess communication, but it matters for in-process communication.

These design choices mean that the C++ mapping is large and complex, but things are not as bad as they may seem. First, the mapping is consistent. For example, once you have understood the memory management of strings, you also know most of the rules for other variable-length types. Second, the mapping is type-safe; no casts are required, and many mistakes are caught at compile time. Third, the mapping is easy to memorize. Although some classes have a large number of member functions, you need call only a small number of them for typical use; some member functions exist to provide default conversions for parameter passing, and you need not ever call them explicitly.

Keep in mind that you should not try to read and understand the header files generated by the IDL compiler. The header files typically are full of incomprehensible macros, mapping implementation details, and cryptic workarounds for various compiler bugs. In other words, the header files are not meant for human consumption. It is far easier to look at the IDL instead. IDL and a knowledge of the C++ mapping rules are all you need to write high-quality code.

## 6.3 Mapping for Identifiers

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IDL identifiers are preserved without change in the generated C++ code. For example, the IDL enumeration

```
enum Color { red, green, blue };
```

maps to the C++ enumeration

```
enum Color { red, green, blue };
```

The C++ mapping also preserves the scoping of IDL. If a scoped name such as `Outer::Inner` is valid in IDL, the generated C++ code defines the same name as `Outer::Inner`.

A problem arises if C++ keywords are used in an IDL definition. For example, the following IDL definition is legal:

```
enum class { if, this, while, else };
```

Clearly, this definition cannot be translated without mapping away from the C++ keywords. The C++ mapping specifies that IDL identifiers that are C++ keywords get a `_cxx_` prefix, so the preceding is translated as

```
enum _cxx_class { _cxx_if, _cxx_this, _cxx_while, _cxx_else };
```

The resulting code is harder to read, so you should avoid using IDL identifiers that are C++ keywords.

It is also a good idea to avoid IDL identifiers containing a double underscore, such as

```
typedef long    my__long;
```

The identifier `my__long` is legal and maps to C++ `my__long`. However, standard C++ reserves identifiers containing double underscores for the implementation, so, strictly speaking, `my__long` invades the compiler's namespace. In practice, IDL identifiers containing double underscores are not likely to cause problems,

but you should be aware that the C++ mapping does not address this potential name clash.

## 6.4 Mapping for Modules

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IDL modules are mapped to C++ namespaces. The contents of an IDL module appear inside the corresponding C++ namespace, so the scoping of an IDL definition is preserved at the C++ level. Here is an example:

```
module Outer {
    // More definitions here...
    module Inner {
        // ...
    };
};
```

This maps to correspondingly nested namespaces in C++:

```
namespace Outer {
    // More definitions here...
    namespace Inner {
        // ...
    }
}
```

A useful feature of namespaces is that they permit you to drop the name of the namespace by using a `using` directive. This technique eliminates the need to qualify all identifiers with the module name:

```
using namespace Outer::Inner;
// No need to qualify everything
// with Outer::Inner from here on...
```

IDL modules can be reopened. A reopened module is mapped by reopening the corresponding C++ namespace:

```
module M1 {
    // Some M1 definitions here...
};

module M2 {
    // M2 definitions here...
};
```

```
module M1 {    // Reopen M1
    // More M1 definitions here...
};
```

This maps to C++ as

```
namespace M1 {
    // Some M1 definitions here...
}

namespace M2 {
    // M2 definitions here...
}

namespace M1 { // Reopen M1
    // More M1 definitions here...
}
```

Because not all C++ compilers have caught up with the ISO/IEC C++ Standard [9], namespaces are not universally available. For compilers not supporting namespaces, CORBA specifies an alternative that maps IDL modules to C++ classes instead of namespaces:

```
class Outer {
public:
    // More definitions here...
    class Inner {
public:
        // ...
    };
};
```

This alternative mapping is workable but has drawbacks.

- No `using` directive is available, so you must fully qualify names that are not in the current scope (or in one of its enclosing scopes).
- There is no sensible mapping of reopened modules onto classes. This means that IDL compilers will not permit you to reopen an IDL module if code generation is for a C++ compiler that does not support namespaces.

For the remainder of this book, we use the mapping to namespaces.

## 6.5 The CORBA Module

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CORBA defines a number of standard IDL types and interfaces. To avoid polluting the global namespace, these definitions are provided inside the CORBA module. The CORBA module is mapped in the same way as any other module, so the ORB header files provide a CORBA namespace containing the corresponding C++ definitions.

We discuss the contents of the CORBA namespace incrementally throughout this book.

## 6.6 Mapping for Basic Types

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IDL basic types are mapped as shown in Table 6.1. Except for `string`, each IDL type is mapped to a type definition in the CORBA namespace. The type definitions allow the mapping to maintain the size guarantees provided by IDL. To ensure that your code remains portable, always use the names defined in the CORBA namespace for IDL types (for example, use `CORBA::Long` instead of `long` to declare a variable). This will also help the transition of your code to 64-bit architectures (which may define `CORBA::Long` as `int`).

Note that IDL `string` is mapped directly to `char *` instead of a type definition. The reason is that when the OMG first produced the C++ mapping, it was felt that binary layout of data in memory had to be the same for both the C and the C++ mappings.<sup>1</sup> This precludes mapping strings to something more convenient, such as a string class.

### 6.6.1 64-bit Integer and `long double` Types

The specification assumes that the underlying C++ implementation provides native support for (unsigned) `long long` and `long double`. If such support is not available, the mapping for these types is not specified. For that reason, you should avoid 64-bit integers and `long double` unless you are sure that they are supported as native C++ types on the platforms relevant to you.

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1. In hindsight, imposing this restriction was probably a mistake because it forces the C++ mapping to be less type-safe and convenient than it could have been otherwise.

**Table 6.1.** Mapping for basic types.

IDL	C++
short	CORBA::Short
long	CORBA::Long
long long	CORBA::LongLong
unsigned short	CORBA::UShort
unsigned long	CORBA::ULong
unsigned long long	CORBA::ULongLong
float	CORBA::Float
double	CORBA::Double
long double	CORBA::LongDouble
char	CORBA::Char
wchar	CORBA::WChar
string	char *
wstring	CORBA::WChar *
boolean	CORBA::Boolean
octet	CORBA::Octet
any	CORBA::Any

### 6.6.2 Overloading on Basic Types

All the basic types are mapped so that they are distinguishable for the purposes of C++ overloading; the exceptions are `char`, `boolean`, `octet`, and `wchar`. This is because all three of the types `char`, `boolean`, and `octet` may map to the same C++ character type, and `wchar` may map to one of the C++ integer types or `wchar_t`. For example:

```
void foo(CORBA::Short param)    { /*...*/ };
void foo(CORBA::Long param)    { /*...*/ };
void foo(CORBA::Char param)    { /*...*/ };
void foo(CORBA::Boolean param) { /*...*/ }; // May not compile
void foo(CORBA::Octet param)   { /*...*/ }; // May not compile
void foo(CORBA::WChar param)   { /*...*/ }; // May not compile
```

The first three definitions of `foo` are guaranteed to work, but the final three definitions may not compile in some implementations. For example, an ORB could map IDL `char`, `boolean`, and `octet` to C++ `char` and map IDL `wchar` to C++ `short`. (In that case, the preceding definitions are ambiguous and will be rejected by the compiler.) To keep your code portable, do not overload functions solely on `Char`, `Boolean`, and `Octet`, and do not overload on `WChar` and an integer type even if it happens to work for your particular ORB.

### 6.6.3 Types Mappable to `char`

IDL `char`, `boolean`, and `octet` may map to signed, unsigned, or plain `char`. To keep your code portable, do not make assumptions in your code about whether these types are signed or unsigned.

### 6.6.4 Mapping for `wchar`

IDL `wchar` may map to a C++ integer type, such as `int`, or may map to C++ `wchar_t`. The mapping to integer types accommodates non-standard compilers, in which `wchar_t` is not a distinct type.

### 6.6.5 Boolean Mapping

On standard C++ compilers, IDL `boolean` may be mapped to C++ `bool`; the specification permits this but does not require it. If it is not mapped to C++ `bool`—for example, on classic C++ compilers—CORBA: :`Boolean` maps to plain `char`, `signed char`, or `unsigned char`.

The C++ mapping does not require Boolean constants `TRUE` and `FALSE` (or `true` and `false`) to be provided (although `true` and `false` will work in a standard C++ environment). To keep your code portable, simply use the integer constants 1 and 0 as Boolean values; this works in both standard and classic environments.

### 6.6.6 String and Wide String Mapping

Strings are mapped to `char *`, and wide strings are mapped to CORBA: :`WChar *`. This is true whether you use bounded or unbounded strings. If bounded strings are used, the mapping places the burden of enforcing the bound on the programmer. It is unspecified what should happen if the length of a



bounded string is exceeded at run time, so you must assume that the behavior is undefined.

The use of `new` and `delete` for dynamic allocation of strings is not portable. Instead, you must use helper functions in the CORBA namespace:

```
namespace CORBA {
    // ...
    static char *   string_alloc(ULong len);
    static char *   string_dup(const char *);
    static void     string_free(char *);

    static WChar *  wstring_alloc(ULong len);
    static WChar *  wstring_dup(const WChar *);
    static void     wstring_free(WChar *);
    // ...
}
```

These functions handle dynamic memory for strings and wide strings. The C++ mapping requires that you use these helper functions to avoid replacing global operator `new[]` and operator `delete[]` and because non-uniform memory architectures may have special requirements. Under Windows, for example, memory allocated by a dynamic library must be deallocated by that same library. The string allocation functions ensure that the correct memory management activities can take place. For uniform memory models, such as in UNIX, `string_alloc` and `string_free` are usually implemented in terms of `new[]` and `delete[]`.

The `string_alloc` function allocates one more byte than requested by the `len` parameter, so the following code is correct:

```
char * p = CORBA::string_alloc(5); // Allocates 6 bytes
strcpy(p, "Hello");                // OK, "Hello" fits
```

The preceding code is more easily written using `string_dup`, which combines the allocation and copy:

```
char * p = CORBA::string_dup("Hello");
```

Both `string_alloc` and `string_dup` return a null pointer if allocation fails. They do not throw a `bad_alloc` exception or a CORBA exception.

The `string_free` function must be used to free memory allocated with `string_alloc` or `string_dup`. Calling `string_free` for a null pointer is safe and does nothing.

Do not use `delete` or `delete[]` to deallocate memory allocated with `string_alloc` or `string_dup`. Similarly, do not use `string_free` to

deallocate memory allocated with `new` or `new[ ]`. Doing so results in undefined behavior.

The `wstring*` helper functions have the same semantics as the `string*` helper functions, but they operate on wide strings. As with `string_alloc`, `wstring_alloc` allocates an additional character to hold the zero terminating value.

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## 6.7 Mapping for Constants

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Global IDL constants map to file-scope C++ constants, and IDL constants nested inside an interface map to static class-scope C++ constants. For example:

```
const long MAX_ENTRIES = 10;

interface NameList {
    const long MAX_NAMES = 20;
};
```

This maps to

```
const CORBA::Long MAX_ENTRIES = 10;

class NameList {
public:
    static const CORBA::Long MAX_NAMES; // Classic or standard C++
    // OR:
    static const CORBA::Long MAX_NAMES = 20; // Standard C++
};
```

This mapping preserves the nesting of scopes used in the IDL, but it means that IDL constants that are nested inside interfaces are not C++ compile-time constants. In classic (non-standard) C++, initialization of static class members is illegal, so instead of generating the initial value into the header file, the IDL compiler generates an initialization statement into the stub file. Standard C++, on the other hand, permits initialization of constant class members in the class header for integral and enumeration types. Therefore, in a standard environment, you may find that constants defined inside an interface end up being initialized in the class header.

Normally, the point of initialization is irrelevant unless you use an IDL constant to dimension an array:

```
char * entry_array[MAX_ENTRIES];           // OK
char * names_array[NameList::MAX_NAMES];  // May not compile
```

You can easily get around this restriction by using dynamic allocation, which works no matter how your IDL compiler maps constants:

```
char * entry_array[MAX_ENTRIES];           // OK
char ** names_array = new char *[NameList::MAX_NAMES]; // OK
```

String constants are mapped as a constant pointer to constant data:

```
const string  MSG1 = "Hello";
const wstring MSG2 = L"World";
```

This maps to the following:

```
//
// If IDL MSG1 and MSG2 are at global scope:
//
const char * const      MSG1 = "Hello";
const CORBA::WChar * const MSG2 = L"World";

//
// If IDL MSG1 and MSG2 are in an IDL interface "Messages":
//
class Messages {
public:
    static const char * const      MSG1; // "Hello"
    static const CORBA::WChar * const MSG2; // L"World"
};
```

Note that if IDL constants are declared inside a module (instead of an interface), their mapping depends on whether you are using a classic or a standard C++ compiler:

```
module MyConstants {
    const string GREETING = "Hello";
    const double PI = 3.14;
};
```

In classic C++, this maps to

```
class MyConstants {
public:
    static const char * const GREETING; // "Hello"
    static const CORBA::Double PI;     // 3.14
};
```

With a standard C++ compiler, the module maps to a namespace and the constants are in the generated header file:

```
namespace MyConstants {
    const char * const GREETING = "Hello";
    const CORBA::Double PI = 3.14;
}
```

---

## 6.8 Mapping for Enumerated Types

---

IDL enumerated types map to C++ enumerations. The C++ definition appears at the same scope as the IDL definition. The enumeration is mapped to C++ unchanged except that a trailing dummy enumerator is added to force enumerators to be a 32-bit type:

```
enum Color { red, green, blue, black, mauve, orange };
```

This appears in C++ as

```
enum Color {
    red, green, blue, black, mauve, orange,
    _Color_dummy=0x80000000 // Force 32-bit size
};
```

The mapping specification does not state what name is used for the dummy enumerator. The IDL compiler simply generates an identifier that will not clash with anything else in the same scope.

Note that this mapping guarantees that `red` will have the ordinal value 0, `green` will have the ordinal value 1, and so on. However, this guarantee applies only to the C++ mapping and not to all language mappings in general. This means that you cannot portably exchange the *ordinal values* of enumerators between clients and servers. However, you can portably exchange the enumerators themselves. To send the enumerator value `red` to a server, simply send `red` (and not zero). If `red` is represented by a different ordinal value in the target address space, the marshaling code translates it appropriately. (The mapping for enumerations is type-safe in C++, so you cannot make this mistake unless you use a cast. However, for other implementation languages, this may not be the case.)

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## 6.9 Variable-Length Types and `_var` Types

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IDL supports a number of variable-length types, such as strings and sequences. Variable-length types have special mapping requirements. Because the sizes of variable-length values are not known at compile time, they must be dynamically allocated at run time. This raises the issue of how dynamic memory is allocated and deallocated as well as your responsibilities as the programmer with respect to memory management.

The C++ mapping operates at two different levels. At the lower, or “raw,” level, you are responsible for all memory management activities. You can choose to code to this level, but the price is that you must remember exactly under what circumstances you need to allocate and deallocate dynamic memory. The lower level of the mapping also exposes you to differences in memory management rules for fixed- and variable-length structured types.

At the higher level, the C++ mapping makes life easier and safer by providing a set of smart pointer classes known as `_var` types. `_var` types relieve you of the burden of having to explicitly deallocate variable-length values and so make memory leaks less likely. These types also hide differences between fixed- and variable-length structured types, so you need not worry constantly about the different memory management rules that apply to them.

### 6.9.1 Motivation for `_var` Types

Programmers new to CORBA and the C++ mapping usually have difficulties coming to grips with `_var` types and understanding when and when not to use them. To clarify the motivation for `_var` types, let us consider a simple programming problem. The problem is not specific to CORBA; it applies to C and C++ in general. Here is the problem statement:

Write a C function that reads a string from an I/O device and returns that string to the caller. The length of the string is unlimited and cannot be determined in advance.

The problem statement captures a frequent programming problem, namely, how to read a variable-length value without advance knowledge of the total length of the value. There are several approaches to addressing the problem, and each has its own trade-offs.

#### Approach 1: Static Memory

Here is one approach to implementing the helper function:

```
const char *
get_string()
{
    static char buf[10000]; /* Big enough */
    /* Read string into buf... */
    return buf;
}
```

This approach has the advantage of simplicity, but it suffers from a number of serious drawbacks.

- The string to be returned may be longer than you expect. No matter what value you pick to dimension the `buf` array, it may be too small. If the actual string is too long, either you overrun the array and the code fails catastrophically, or you must arbitrarily truncate the string.
- For short strings, the function wastes memory because most of the `buf` array is not used.
- Each call to `get_string` overwrites the result of the previous call. If the caller wants to keep a previous string, it must make a copy of the previous result before calling the function a second time.
- The function is not reentrant. If multiple threads call `get_string` concurrently, the threads overwrite one another's results.

### Approach 2: Static Pointer to Dynamic Memory

Here is a second try at writing `get_string`:

```
const char *
get_string()
{
    static char * result = 0;
    static size_t rsize = 0;
    static const size_t size_of_block = 512;
    size_t rlen;

    rlen = 0;
    while (data_remains_to_be_read()) {
        /* read a block of data... */
        if (rsize - rlen < size_of_block) {
            rsize += size_of_block;
            result = realloc(result, rsize);
        }
        /* append block of data to result... */
    }
}
```

```
        rlen += size_of_block;
    }
    return result;
}
```

This approach uses a static pointer to dynamic memory, growing the buffer used to hold the data as necessary. Using dynamic memory gets rid of the arbitrary length limitation on the string but otherwise suffers the problems of the previous approach: each call still overwrites the result of the previous call, and the function is not reentrant. This version can also waste significant amounts of memory, because it permanently consumes memory proportional to the worst case (the longest string ever read).

### Approach 3: Caller-Allocated Memory

In this approach, we make the caller responsible for providing the memory to hold the string:

```
size_t
get_string(char * result, size_t rsize)
{
    /* read at most rsize bytes into result... */
    return number_of_bytes_read;
}
```

This is the approach taken by the UNIX `read` system call. It solves most of the problems in that it is reentrant, does not overrun memory or arbitrarily truncate data, and is frugal with memory. (The amount of potentially wasted memory is under control of the caller.)

The disadvantage is that if the string is longer than the supplied buffer, the caller must keep calling until all the data has been read. (Repeated calls by multiple threads are reentrant if we assume that the data source is implicit in the calling thread.)

### Approach 4: Return Pointer to Dynamic Memory

In this approach, `get_string` dynamically allocates a sufficiently large buffer to hold the result and returns a pointer to the buffer:

```
char *
get_string()
{
    char * result = 0;
    size_t rsize = 0;
    static const size_t size_of_block = 512;
```

```

while (data_remains_to_be_read) {
    /* read a block of data... */
    rsize += size_of_block;
    result = realloc(result, rsize);
    /* append block of data to result... */
}
return result;
}

```

This is almost identical to approach 2 (the difference is that `get_string` does not use static data). It neatly solves all the problems: the function is reentrant, does not impose arbitrary size limitations on the result, does not waste memory, and does not require multiple remote calls for long results (but dynamic allocation adds a little to the cost of collocated calls).

The main drawback of this approach is that it makes the caller responsible for deallocating the result:

```

/* ... */
{
    char * result;
    result = get_string();
    /* Use result... */
    free(result);

    /* ... */

    result = get_string();
    /* ... */

} /* Bad news, forgot to deallocate last result! */

```

Here, the caller returns from a block without deallocating the result returned by `get_string`. The memory occupied by the result can never be reclaimed. Repeated mistakes of this kind doom the caller to an inevitable death. Eventually, the caller runs out of memory and is aborted by the operating system, or, in an embedded system, the caller may lock up the machine.

## 6.9.2 Memory Management for Variable-Length Types

From the preceding discussion, it should be clear that approaches 1 and 2 are not suitable for the C++ mapping because they are not reentrant. Approach 3 is not an option, because the cost of repeated calls becomes prohibitive if caller and callee are on different machines.



This leaves approach 4, which is the approach taken by the C++ mapping for variable-length types. The C++ mapping makes the caller responsible for deallocating a variable-length result when it is no longer needed.

By definition, the following IDL types are considered variable-length:

- Strings and wide strings (whether bounded or unbounded)
- Object references
- Type any
- Sequences (whether bounded or unbounded)
- Structures and unions if they (recursively) contain variable-length members
- Arrays if they (recursively) contain variable-length elements

For example, an array of `double` is a fixed-length type, whereas an array of `string` is a variable-length type.

For each structured IDL type in a definition, the IDL compiler generates a pair of C++ types. For example, for an IDL union `foo`, the compiler generates two C++ classes: `class foo` and `class foo_var`. Class `foo` provides all the functionality required to use the union and corresponds to the lower mapping level. Class `foo_var` provides the higher mapping level by acting as a memory management wrapper around class `foo`. In particular, if class `foo` happens to represent an IDL variable-length type, class `foo_var` takes care of deallocating `foo` instances at the appropriate time.

The correspondence between IDL types and the lower and higher mapping levels is shown in Table 6.2.

**Table 6.2.** Correspondence of IDL types to C++ types.

IDL Type	C++ Type	Wrapper C++ Type
<code>string</code>	<code>char *</code>	<code>CORBA::String_var</code>
<code>any</code>	<code>CORBA::Any</code>	<code>CORBA::Any_var</code>
<code>interface foo</code>	<code>foo_ptr</code>	<code>class foo_var</code>
<code>struct foo</code>	<code>struct foo</code>	<code>class foo_var</code>
<code>union foo</code>	<code>class foo</code>	<code>class foo_var</code>
<code>typedef sequence&lt;X&gt; foo;</code>	<code>class foo</code>	<code>class foo_var</code>
<code>typedef X foo[10];</code>	<code>typedef X foo[10];</code>	<code>class foo_var</code>

Note that structures, unions, and arrays can be fixed-length or variable-length. The IDL compiler generates a `_var` class even if the corresponding IDL type is fixed-length. For a fixed-length type, the corresponding `_var` class effectively does nothing. As you will see in Section 6.19, this class is useful for hiding the memory management differences between fixed-length and variable-length types.

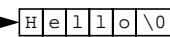
`_var` classes have similar semantics as the standard C++ `auto_ptr` template. However, the C++ mapping does not use `auto_ptr` (and other standard C++ types) because at the time the mapping was developed, many of the standard C++ types were not yet conceived.

We explore `_var` classes and their uses incrementally throughout the next few chapters. For now, we examine `CORBA::String_var` as an example of how `_var` classes help with dynamic memory management.

## 6.10 The `String_var` Wrapper Class

The class `CORBA::String_var` provides a memory management wrapper for `char *`, shown in Figure 6.1. The class stores a string pointer in a private variable and takes responsibility for managing the string's memory. To make this more concrete, following is the class definition for `String_var`. We examine the purpose of each member function in turn. Once you understand how `String_var` works, you will need to learn little new for the remaining `_var` classes. The `_var` classes for structures, unions, and so on are very similar to `String_var`.

```
class String_var {
public:
    String_var();
    String_var(char *);
    String_var(const char *);
    ~String_var();
    // etc...
private:
    char * s;
};
```



**Figure 6.1.** `String_var` wrapper class.

```

class String_var {
public:
    String_var();
    String_var(char * p);
    String_var(const char * p);
    String_var(const String_var & s);
    ~String_var();

    String_var & operator=(char * p);
    String_var & operator=(const char * p);
    String_var & operator=(const String_var & s);

    operator char *();
    operator const char *() const;
    operator char * &();

    char & operator[](ULong index);
    char operator[](ULong index) const;

    const char * in() const;
    char * & inout();
    char * & out();
    char * _retn();
};

```

String\_var()

The default constructor initializes a `String_var` to contain a null pointer. If you use a default-constructed `String_var` value without initializing it first, you will likely suffer a fatal crash because the code ends up dereferencing a null pointer:

```

CORBA::String_var s;
cout << "s = \" << s << \"\" << endl; // Core dump imminent!

```

String\_var(char \*)

This constructor initializes the `String_var` from the passed string. The `String_var` takes responsibility for the string: it assumes that the string was allocated with `CORBA::string_alloc` or `CORBA::string_dup` and calls `CORBA::string_free` when its destructor runs. The point is that you can initialize the `String_var` with a dynamically allocated string and forget about having to explicitly deallocate the string. The `String_var` takes care of deallocation when it goes out of scope. For example:

```
{
    CORBA::String_var s(CORBA::string_dup("Hello"));
    // ...
} // No memory leak here, ~String_var() calls string_free().
```

```
String_var(const char *)
```

If you construct a `String_var` using the `const char *` constructor, the `String_var` makes a deep copy of the string. When the `String_var` goes out of scope, it deallocates its copy of the string but leaves the original copy unaffected. For example:

```
const char * message = "Hello";
// ...

{
    CORBA::String_var s(message); // Makes a deep copy
    // ...
} // ~String_var() deallocates its own copy only.

cout << message << endl; // OK
```

```
String_var(const String_var &)
```

The copy constructor also makes a deep copy. If you initialize one `String_var` from another `String_var`, modifications to one copy do not affect the other copy.

```
~String_var
```

The destructor calls `CORBA::string_free` to deallocate the string held by the `String_var`.

```
String_var & operator=(char *)
String_var & operator=(const char *)
String_var & operator=(const String_var &)
```

The assignment operators follow the conventions of the constructors. The `char *` assignment operator assumes that the string was allocated with `string_alloc` or `string_dup` and takes ownership of the string.

The `const char *` assignment operator and the `String_var` assignment operator each make a deep copy.

Before accepting the new string, the assignment operators first deallocate the current string held by the target. For example:

```

CORBA::String_var target;
target = CORBA::string_dup("Hello");    // target takes ownership

CORBA::String_var source;
source = CORBA::string_dup("World");    // source takes ownership

target = source;    // Deallocates "Hello" and takes
                   // ownership of deep copy of "World".

```

```

operator char *()
operator const char *() const

```

These conversion operators permit you to pass a `String_var` as a `char *` or `const char *`. For example:

```

CORBA::String_var s;
s = get_string();    // get_string() allocates with string_alloc(),
                   // s takes ownership

size_t len;
len = strlen(s);    // const char * expected, OK

```

The main reason for the conversion operators is to let you transparently pass a `String_var` to IDL operations that expect an argument of type `char *` or `const char *`. We discuss the details of parameter passing in Chapter 7.

```

operator char * &()

```

This conversion operator allows you to pass a string for modification to a function using a signature such as

```

void update_string(char * &);

```

Conversion to a *reference* to the pointer (instead of just to the pointer) is necessary so that the called function can increase the length of the string. A reference to the pointer is passed because lengthening the string requires reallocation, and this in turn means that the *pointer value*, and not just the bytes it points to, needs to change.

```

char & operator[](ULong)
char operator[](ULong) const

```

The overloaded subscript operators permit you to use an index to get at the individual characters of a `String_var` as if it were an array. For example:

```

CORBA::String_var s = CORBA::string_dup("Hello");
cout << s[4] << endl;    // Prints 'o'

```

Strings are indexed as ordinary arrays are, starting at zero. For the "Hello" string, the expression `s[5]` is valid and returns the terminating NUL byte. Attempts to index beyond the NUL terminator result in undefined behavior.

### 6.10.1 Pitfalls of Using `String_var`

As you will see in Section 7.14.12, class `String_var` (and the other `_var` classes) exists mainly to deal with return values and out parameters for operation invocations. There are a number of situations in which `String_var` can be used inefficiently or inappropriately. Following are some of the pitfalls.

#### Initialization or Assignment from String Literals

String literals need special attention, at least if you are using classic (non-standard) C++; the type of a string literal is `char *` in classic C++ but is `const char *` in standard C++. If you are using a classic C++ compiler, the following code is guaranteed to crash sooner or later:

```
CORBA::String_var s1("Hello"); // Looming disaster!
CORBA::String_var s2 = "Hello"; // Same problem!
```

Note that even though the second declaration looks like an assignment, it really is a declaration, and therefore both `s1` and `s2` are initialized by a constructor. The question is, which constructor?

In classic C++, the type of the string literal "Hello", when passed as an argument, is `char *`. The compiler therefore invokes the `char *` constructor, *which takes ownership of the passed string*. When `s1` and `s2` are destroyed, the destructor invokes `string_free` with an address in the initialized data segment. Of course, freeing non-heap memory results in undefined behavior and in many implementations causes a core dump.

The same problem arises if you assign a string literal to a `String_var`:

```
CORBA::String_var s3;
s3 = "Hello"; // Calls operator=(char *), looming disaster!
```

Again, in classic C++, the type of "Hello" is `char *` (and not `const char *`), so the assignment is made by a call to `String_var::operator=(char *)`. As with the `char *` constructor, this operator assigns ownership of the string to the `String_var`, and that will cause the destructor to attempt to free non-heap memory.

To work around this problem, either you can create a copy of the literal yourself and make the `String_var` responsible for the copy, or you can force a deep copy by casting to `const char *`:

```
// Force deep copy
CORBA::String_var s1((const char *)"Hello");

// Explicit copy
CORBA::String_var s2(CORBA::string_dup("Hello"));

// Force deep copy
CORBA::String_var s3 = (const char *)"Hello";

// Explicit copy
CORBA::String_var s4 = CORBA::string_dup("Hello");

CORBA::String_var s5;
s5 = (const char *)"Hello";           // Force deep copy

CORBA::String_var s6;
s6 = CORBA::string_dup("Hello");     // Explicit copy

const char * p = "Hello";           // Make const char * pointer

CORBA::String_var s7(p);             // Make deep copy
CORBA::String_var s8 = p;           // ditto...
CORBA::String_var s9;
s9 = p;                               // ditto...
```

The preceding code shows various ways of initializing and assigning string literals. In all cases, each `String_var` variable ends up with its own separate copy of the literal, which can be deallocated safely by the destructor.

Wherever a cast to `const char *` is used, the constructor or assignment operator makes a deep copy. Wherever a call to `string_dup` is used, a copy of the string literal is created explicitly, and the `String_var` takes responsibility for deallocation of the copy.

Both approaches are correct, but as a matter of style we prefer a call to `string_dup` instead of a cast. To a casual reader, casts indicate that something unusual is happening, whereas calling `string_dup` emphasizes that an allocation is made.

The explicit copy style works correctly for both classic and standard C++, and we use that style throughout the remainder of this book. Of course, if you are working exclusively in a standard C++ environment, the following is safe:

```
CORBA::String_var s = "Hello"; // OK for standard C++, deep copy
```

### Assignment of `String_var` to Pointers

If you assign a `String_var` variable to a `char *` or `const char *` variable, you need to remember that the assigned pointer will point at memory internal to the `String_var`. This means that you need to take care when using the pointer after such an assignment:

```
CORBA::String_var s1 = CORBA::string_dup("Hello");
const char * p1 = s1; // Shallow assignment
char * p2;
{
    CORBA::String_var s2 = CORBA::string_dup("World");
    p2 = s2; // Shallow assignment
    s1 = s2; // Deallocate "Hello", deep copy "World"
} // Destructor deallocates s2 ("World")

cout << p1 << endl; // Whoops, p1 points nowhere
cout << p2 << endl; // Whoops, p2 points nowhere
```

This code illustrates two common mistakes. Both of them arise from the fact that assignment from a `String_var` to a pointer is always shallow.

- The first pointer assignment (`p1 = s1`) makes `p1` point at memory still owned by `s1`. The assignment `s1 = s2` is a deep assignment, which deallocates the initial value of `s1` ("Hello"). The value of `p1` is not affected by this, so `p1` now points at deallocated memory.
- The second pointer assignment (`p2 = s2`) is also a shallow assignment, so `p2` points at memory owned by `s2`. When `s2` goes out of scope, its destructor deallocates the string, which leaves `p2` pointing at deallocated memory.

This does not mean that you should never assign a `String_var` to a pointer (in fact, such assignments are often useful). However, if you make such an assignment and want to use the pointer, you must ensure that the pointed-to string is not deallocated by assignment or destruction.



### 6.10.2 Passing Strings as Parameters for Read Access

Frequently, you will find yourself writing functions that accept strings as parameters for read access. Your program is also likely to have variables of both type `char *` and type `String_var`. It would be nice to have a single helper function that could deal with both types. Given the choice of `char *` and `String_var`, how should you declare the formal parameter type of such a function?

Here is how *not* to do it:

```
void
print_string(CORBA::String_var s)
{
    cout << "String is \"" << s << "\"" << endl;
}

int
main()
{
    CORBA::String_var msg1 = CORBA::string_dup("Hello");
    print_string(msg1);    // Pass String_var
    return 0;
}
```

This code is correct but inefficient. The `print_string` function expects a parameter of type `String_var`. The parameter is passed by value, and that forces the compiler to create a temporary `String_var` instance that is passed to `print_string`. The result is that for every call to `print_string`, several function calls are actually made: a call to the copy constructor to create the temporary, followed by a call to an overloaded `ostream operator<<` to print the string, followed by a call to the destructor to get rid of the temporary `String_var` again. The constructor calls `string_dup` (which calls `strcpy`), and the destructor calls `string_free`. The `string_dup` and `string_free` functions will probably call `operator new[]` and `operator delete[]`, which in turn are often implemented in terms of `malloc` and `free`. This means that the preceding innocent-looking piece of code can actually result in as many as ten function calls for each call to `print_string`!

In most implementations, at least some of the function calls will be inlined, so the cost is not quite as dramatic as it may first seem. Still, we have observed massive slowdowns in large systems because of such innocent mistakes. Most of the cost arises from the hidden dynamic memory allocation. As shown in [11],

allocating and destroying a class instance on the heap is on average about 100 times as expensive as allocating and destroying the same instance on the stack.

Here is another problem with the `print_string` function:

```
print_string("World"); // Call with char *, looming disaster!
```

This code compiles fine, and it prints exactly what you think it should. However, it will likely cause your program to dump core. This happens for the same reasons as discussed earlier: the type of the string literal is `char *` (at least in classic C++), and that eventually results in an attempt to deallocate non-heap memory in the destructor.

The key to writing `print_string` correctly is to pass a formal argument of type `const char *`:

```
void
print_string(const char * s)
{
    cout << "String is \"" << s << "\"" << endl;
}

int
main()
{
    CORBA::String_var msg1 = CORBA::string_dup("Hello");
    print_string(msg1); // Pass String_var, fine
    print_string("World"); // Pass as const char *, fine too
    return 0;
}
```

With this definition of `print_string`, things are well behaved. When the actual parameter is of type `String_var`, the compiler uses the `const char *` conversion operator to make the call. The conversion operator returns the private pointer inside the `String_var` and is typically inlined, and that keeps the cost of the call to a minimum.

Passing the string literal "World" to `print_string` does not create problems. The literal is simply passed as a `const char *` to the function.

No temporary is created in either case, and no calls to the memory allocator are necessary.

### 6.10.3 Passing Strings as Parameters for Update Access

To pass a string either as a `char *` or as a `String_var` to a function for update, a formal parameter of type `String_var &` will not work. If you pass a

char \* where a String\_var & is expected, the compiler creates a temporary. This results in construction of a String\_var from a char \* literal and eventually causes a core dump. To get it right, we must use a formal argument type of char \* &:

```
void
update_string(char * & s)
{
    CORBA::string_free(s);
    s = CORBA::string_dup("New string");
}

int
main()
{
    CORBA::String_var sv = CORBA::string_dup("Hello");
    update_string(sv);
    cout << sv << endl; // Works fine, prints "New string"

    char * p = CORBA::string_dup("Hello");
    update_string(p);
    cout << p << endl; // Fine too, prints "New string"
    CORBA::string_free(p);

    return 0;
}
```

A final warning: update\_string assumes that the string it is passed was allocated with string\_alloc or string\_dup. This means that the following code is not portable:

```
char * p = new char[sizeof("Hello")];
strcpy(p, "Hello");
update_string(p); // Bad news!
delete[] p;
```

This code causes a string allocated by new[] to be deallocated by string\_free and causes a string allocated by string\_dup to be deallocated by delete[], and that simply does not work on some platforms.

Calling update\_string with an uninitialized pointer is also asking for trouble, because it results in passing a stray pointer to string\_free, most likely with disastrous consequences. However, passing a variable initialized to null is safe; string\_free does nothing when given a null pointer.

### 6.10.4 Problems with Implicit Type Conversions

Passing a `String_var` where a `char *` is expected relies on implicit type conversion. Some compilers do not correctly apply conversion operators, or they incorrectly complain about ambiguous calls. Rather than expect every C++ compiler to be perfect, the C++ mapping provides member functions that allow you to perform explicit conversions. These member functions are `in`, `inout`, `out`, and `_retn` (the names suggest the use for passing a parameter in the corresponding direction).

```
const char * in() const
```

You can call this conversion function if your compiler rejects an attempt to pass a `String_var` where a `const char *` is expected. For example:

```
void print_string(const char * s) { /* ... */ } // As before

// ...
```

```
CORBA::String_var sv(CORBA::string_dup("Hello"));
print_string(sv);           // Assume compiler bug prevents this
print_string(sv.in());     // Explicit call avoids compiler bug
```

The `in` member function returns the private pointer held by the `String_var` wrapper as a `const char *`. You could achieve the same thing by using a cast:

```
print_string((const char *)sv);
```

This code explicitly invokes operator `const char *` on the `String_var`. However, using the `in` member function is safer than a “sledgehammer” cast that bypasses all type checking. Similar arguments apply to using the `inout` and `out` member functions in preference to a cast.

```
char * & inout()
```

You can call the `inout` member function if your compiler refuses to accept a `String_var` where a `char * &` is expected. For example:

```
void update_string(char * & s) { /* ... */ } // As before

// ...
```

```
CORBA::String_var sv;
update_string(sv);           // Assume compiler bug prevents this
update_string(sv.inout());  // Explicit call avoids compiler bug
```

The `inout` member function returns a reference to the pointer held by the `String_var` wrapper so that it can be changed (for example, by reallocation).

```
char * & out()
```

This conversion operator allows you to pass a `String_var` as an *output* parameter where a `char * &` is expected. The `out` member function differs from the `inout` member function in that `out` deallocates the string before returning a reference to a null pointer. To see why this is necessary, consider the following helper function:

```
void
read_string(char * & s) // s is an out parameter
{
    // Read a line of text from a file...
    s = CORBA::string_dup(line_of_text);
}
```

The caller can use `read_string` as follows without causing a memory leak:

```
CORBA::String_var line;
read_string(line.out()); // Skip first line
read_string(line.out()); // Read second line - no memory leak
cout << line << endl; // Print second line
```

Calling the `out` member function does two things: it first deallocates whatever string is currently held by the `String_var`, and then it returns a reference to a null pointer. This behavior allows the caller to call `read_string` twice in a row without creating a memory leak. At the same time, `read_string` need not (but can) deallocate the string before allocating a new value. (If it deallocates the string, no harm is done because deallocation of a null pointer is safe.)

### 6.10.5 Yielding Ownership of a String

The `_retn` member function returns the pointer held by a `String_var` and also yields ownership of the string. This behavior is useful if a function must return a dynamically allocated string and also must worry about error conditions. For example, consider a `get_line` helper function that reads a line of text from a database. The caller uses the function this way:

```
for (int i = 0; i < num_lines; i++) {
    CORBA::String_var line = get_line();
    cout << line << endl;
} // Destructor of line deallocates string
```

Consider how this works. The `get_line` function dynamically allocates the returned string and makes the caller responsible for deallocation. The caller responds by catching the return value in the `String_var` variable `line`. This makes `line` responsible for deallocating each returned line in its destructor. Because `line` is declared inside the body of the loop, it is created and destroyed once per iteration, and the memory allocated to each line is deallocated immediately after each line is printed.

Following is an outline of the `get_line` function. The important point is that `get_line` may raise an exception *after* it has allocated the string:

```
char *
get_line()
{
    // Open database connection and read string into buffer...

    // Allocate string
    CORBA::String_var s = CORBA::string_dup(buffer);

    // Close database connection
    if (db.close() == ERROR) {
        // Whoops, a serious problem here
        throw DB_CloseException();
    }

    // Everything worked fine, return string
    return s._retn();
}
```

The trick here is that the variable `s` is a `String_var`. If an exception is thrown sometime after memory is allocated to `s`, there is no need to worry about memory leaks; the compiler takes care of invoking the destructor of `s` as it unwinds the stack to propagate the exception.

In the normal case, in which no error is encountered, `get_line` must return the string and make the caller responsible for freeing it. This means that `get_line` cannot simply return `s` (even though it would compile), because then the string would be incorrectly deallocated twice: once by the destructor of `s`, and a second time by the caller.

The final statement in `get_line` could be the following instead:

```
return CORBA::string_dup(s);
```

This code is correct but makes an unnecessary and expensive copy of the string. By invoking the `_retn` member function instead, `get_line` transfers responsi-

bility for deallocating `s` to the caller. This technique leaves the string in place and avoids the cost of making a copy.

### 6.10.6 Stream Operators

The C++ mapping provides overloaded `String_var` insertion and extraction operators for C++ `iostreams`:

```
CORBA::String_var s = ...;
cout << "String is \" << (s != 0 ? s : "") << "\"" << endl;
cin >> s;
cout << "String is now \" << (s != 0 ? s : "") << "\"" << endl;
```

Overloaded operators are provided for `istream` and `ostream`, so they can also be used with `string` (`stringstream`) and `file` (`fstream`) classes.

## 6.11 Mapping for Wide Strings

---

The mapping for wide strings is almost identical to that for strings. Wide strings are allocated and deallocated with the functions `wstring_alloc`, `wstring_dup`, and `wstring_free` (see page 147). The mapping also provides a `WString_var` class (in the CORBA namespace) that behaves like a `String_var` but operates on wide strings.

## 6.12 Mapping for Fixed-Point Types

---

C++ does not have built-in fixed-point types, so C++ support for fixed-point types and arithmetic is provided by a class and a number of overloaded operator functions:

```
namespace CORBA {
    // ...
    class Fixed {
    public:
        Fixed(int val = 0);
        Fixed(unsigned);
        Fixed(Long);
        Fixed(LongLong);
        Fixed(ULongLong);
        Fixed(Double);
```

```

        Fixed(LongDouble);
        Fixed(const char *);

        Fixed(const Fixed &);
        ~Fixed();

operator LongLong() const;
operator LongDouble() const;
Fixed round(UShort scale) const;
Fixed truncate(UShort scale) const;

Fixed & operator=(const Fixed &);
Fixed & operator+=(const Fixed &);
Fixed & operator-=(const Fixed &);
Fixed & operator*=(const Fixed &);
Fixed & operator/=(const Fixed &);

Fixed & operator++();
Fixed operator++(int);
Fixed & operator--();
Fixed operator--(int);
Fixed operator+() const;
Fixed operator-() const;
Boolean operator!() const;

UShort fixed_digits() const;
UShort fixed_scale() const;
};

istream & operator>>(istream &, Fixed &);
ostream & operator<<(ostream &, const Fixed &);

Fixed operator+(const Fixed &, const Fixed &);
Fixed operator-(const Fixed &, const Fixed &);
Fixed operator*(const Fixed &, const Fixed &);
Fixed operator/(const Fixed &, const Fixed &);

Boolean operator<(const Fixed &, const Fixed &);
Boolean operator>(const Fixed &, const Fixed &);
Boolean operator<=(const Fixed &, const Fixed &);
Boolean operator>=(const Fixed &, const Fixed &);
Boolean operator==(const Fixed &, const Fixed &);
Boolean operator!=(const Fixed &, const Fixed &);

// ...
}

```



This mapping enables you to use fixed-point quantities in C++ and to perform computations on them. Note that a single generic `Fixed` class is used, so the IDL compile-time digits and scale for fixed-point types become run-time values in C++.

### 6.12.1 Constructors

The `Fixed` class provides a number of constructors that permit construction from integer and floating-point types.

The default constructor initializes the value of a `Fixed` to zero and internally sets the digits to 1 and the scale to 0—that is, the value has the type `fixed<1,0>`.

Constructing a `Fixed` value from an integral value sets the digits to the smallest value that can hold all the value's digits and sets the scale to zero:

```
Fixed f = 999; // As if IDL type fixed<3,0>
```

Constructing a `Fixed` value from a floating-point value sets the digits to the smallest value that can represent the floating-point value. The scale is set to preserve as much of the fractional part of the floating-point value as possible, truncating at the relevant digit. Here are a few examples:

```
Fixed f1 = 1000.0; // As if IDL type fixed<4,0>
Fixed f2 = 1000.05; // As if IDL type fixed<6,2>
Fixed f3 = 0.1; // Typically as if IDL type fixed<18,17>
Fixed f4 = 1E30; // As if IDL type fixed<31,0>
Fixed f5 = 1E29 + 0.89; // As if IDL type fixed<31,1>,
// value is 1E29 + 0.8
```

Note that initialization from floating-point values can result in surprising digits and scale because of the vagaries of binary floating-point representation. For example, the value 0.1 results in an actual value of 0.10000000000000001 in many implementations. Also note that even though the value `1E29 + 0.89` is treated as `1E29 + 0.8` for the purpose of truncation, it is unlikely that your C++ compiler will be able to represent floating-point numbers with the required precision. For example, on many implementations, the `Fixed` value will be initialized to 999999999999999910000000000000 instead.

Initialization with a value that has more than 31 integral digits throws a `DATA_CONVERSION` exception (see Section 7.15 for details on exception handling):

```
Fixed f = 1E32; // Throws DATA_CONVERSION
```

Constructing a `Fixed` value from a string follows the rules for IDL fixed-point constants (see Section 4.21.4). Leading and trailing zeros are ignored, and a trailing “D” or “d” is optional:

```
Fixed f1 = "1.3";           // As if fixed<2,1>
Fixed f2 = "01.30D";       // As if fixed<2,1>
```

Note that for initialization of strings, the digits and scale of the value are set precisely according to the rules in Section 4.21.4, whereas initialization from floating-point values may result in a much larger number of digits than you would expect, depending on how accurately a value can be represented as a floating-point number. For that reason, it is probably best to avoid initialization from floating-point numbers.

### 6.12.2 Accessors

The `fixed_digits` and `fixed_scale` member functions return the total number of digits and the number of fractional digits respectively:

```
Fixed f = "3.14D";
cout << f.fixed_digits() << endl;    // Prints 3
cout << f.fixed_scale() << endl;    // Prints 2
```

### 6.12.3 Conversion Operators

The `LongLong` conversion operator converts a `Fixed` value back into a `LongLong` value, ignoring fractional digits. If the integral part of a `Fixed` value exceeds the range of `LongLong`, the operator throws a `DATA_CONVERSION` exception.

The `LongDouble` conversion operator converts a `Fixed` value to `LongDouble`.

### 6.12.4 Truncation and Rounding

The `truncate` member function returns a new `Fixed` value with the specified digits and scale, truncating fractional digits if necessary:

```
Fixed f = "0.999";
cout << f.truncate(0) << endl;    // Prints 0
cout << f.truncate(1) << endl;    // Prints 0.9
cout << f.truncate(2) << endl;    // Prints 0.99
```

The `round` member function returns a new `Fixed` value with the specified digits and scale, rounded to the specified digit:

```
Fixed r;  
  
Fixed f1 = "0.4";  
Fixed f2 = "0.45";  
Fixed f3 = "-0.445";  
  
r = f1.round(0);           // 0  
r = f1.round(1);          // 0.4  
  
r = f2.round(0);           // 0  
r = f2.round(1);          // 0.5  
  
r = f3.round(1);           // -0.4  
r = f3.round(2);          // -0.45
```

Neither `truncate` nor `round` modifies the value it is applied to; instead, they return a new value.

### 6.12.5 Arithmetic Operators

The `Fixed` class provides the usual set of arithmetic operators. Arithmetic is carried out internally with at least 62-digit precision, and the result is coerced to fit a maximum of 31 digits, truncating fractional digits. If the result of an arithmetic operation exceeds 31 integral digits, arithmetic operators throw a `DATA_CONVERSION` exception.

### 6.12.6 Stream Operators

The `Fixed` mapping provides stream insertion (`<<`) and extraction (`>>`) operators. They work like their floating-point counterparts; that is, you can control padding and precision using the usual stream features.

---

## 6.13 Mapping for Structures

---

The C++ mapping treats fixed-length structures differently from variable-length structures, particularly with respect to parameter passing (see Section 7.14). We

first examine the mapping for fixed-length structures and then show the mapping and memory management rules for variable-length structures.

### 6.13.1 Mapping for Fixed-Length Structures

IDL structures map to C++ structures with corresponding members. For example:

```
struct Details {
    double      weight;
    unsigned long count;
};
```

This IDL maps to

```
class Details_var;

struct Details {
    CORBA::Double  weight;
    CORBA::ULong   count;
    typedef Details_var _var_type;
    // Member functions here...
};
```

Note that the structure may have member functions, typically class-specific `operator new` and `operator delete`. These member functions allow use of the ORB on platforms that have non-uniform memory management. However, any additional member functions in the structure are purely internal to the mapping; you should ignore them and write your code as if they did not exist. The `_var_type` definition is used for template-based programming, and we show an example of its use in Section 18.14.1.

You can use the generated structure just as you use any other C++ structure in your code. For example:

```
Details d;
d.weight = 8.5;
d.count = 12;
```

C++ permits static initialization of aggregates. A class, structure, or array is an aggregate if it does not have user-declared constructors, base classes, virtual functions, or private or protected non-static data members. The preceding structure is an aggregate, so you can initialize it statically:

```
Details d = { 8.5, 12 };
```

Some C++ compilers have problems with aggregate initializations, so use the feature with caution.

### 6.13.2 Mapping for Variable-Length Structures

The `Details` structure shown in the preceding section is a fixed-length type, so there are no memory management issues to consider. For variable-length structures, the C++ mapping must deal with memory management. Here is an example:

```
struct Fraction {
    double  numeric;
    string  alphabetic;
};
```

This structure is a variable-length type because one of its members is a string. Here is the corresponding C++ mapping:

```
class Fraction_var;

struct Fraction {
    CORBA::Double      numeric;
    CORBA::String_mgr  alphabetic;
    typedef Fraction_var _var_type;
    // Member functions here...
};
```

As before, you can pretend that any member functions in the structure do not exist. As you can see, the IDL string is mapped to a type `String_mgr` instead of `String_var` or `char *`. `String_mgr` behaves like a `String_var` except that the default constructor initializes the string to the empty string instead of initializing it to a null pointer.

In general, strings nested inside user-defined types (such as structures, sequences, exceptions, and arrays) are always initialized to the empty string instead of to a null pointer. Initializing to the empty string for nested types is useful because it means that you need not explicitly initialize all string members inside a user-defined type before sending it across an IDL interface. (As you will see in Section 7.14.15, it is illegal to pass a null pointer across an IDL interface.)<sup>2</sup>

---

2. Note that initialization to the empty string for nested string members was introduced with CORBA 2.3. In CORBA 2.2 and earlier versions, you must explicitly initialize nested string members.

If you look at the generated code for your ORB, you may find that the actual name of this class is something other than `String_mgr`, such as `String_item` or `String_member`. The exact name is not specified by the C++ mapping. For the remainder of this book, we use the name `String_mgr` whenever we show a string that is nested inside another data structure. A word of warning: do not use `String_mgr` (or its equivalent) as a type in your application code. If you do, you are writing non-portable code because the name of the type is not specified by the C++ mapping. Instead, always use `String_var` when you require a managed string type.

Apart from the initialization to the empty string, `String_mgr` behaves like a `String_var`. After you assign a string to the member `alphabetic`, the structure takes care of the memory management for the string; when the structure goes out of scope, the destructor for `alphabetic` deallocates its string for you. `String_mgr` provides the same conversions as `String_var`, and `String_mgr` and `String_var` can be freely assigned to each other, so you can effectively forget about the existence of `String_mgr`.

Automatic memory management is common to all structured types generated by the mapping. If a structure (or sequence, union, array, or exception) contains (perhaps recursively) a variable-length type, the structure takes care of the memory management of its contents. To you, this means that you need worry about the memory management only for the outermost type, and you need not worry about managing memory for the members of the type.

Here is an example to make this concept more concrete:

```
{
    Fraction f;
    f.numeric = 1.0/3.0;
    f.alphabetic = CORBA::string_dup("one third");
} // No memory leak here
```

Here, we declare a local variable `f` of type `Fraction`. The structure's constructor performs memberwise initialization. For the member `numeric`, it does nothing. However, the member `alphabetic` is a nested string, so the constructor initializes it to the empty string.

The first assignment to the member `numeric` does nothing unusual. To assign to `alphabetic`, we must allocate memory, and `alphabetic` takes responsibility for deallocating that memory again (the assignment invokes `operator=(char *)` on `alphabetic`).

When `f` goes out of scope, its default destructor uses memberwise destruction and calls the destructor of `alphabetic`, which in turn calls

`CORBA::string_free`. This means that there is no memory leak when `f` goes out of scope.

Note that you cannot statically initialize `f`, because it is not a C++ aggregate (it contains a member with a constructor):

```
Fraction f = { 1.0/3.0, "one third" }; // Compile-time error
```

In general, variable-length structures can never be statically initialized, because they contain members that have constructors.

### 6.13.3 Memory Management for Structures

You can treat structures in much the same way that you treat any other variable in your program. Most of the memory management activities are taken care of for you. This means that you can freely assign structures and structure members to one another:

```
{
    struct Fraction f1;
    struct Fraction f2;
    struct Fraction f3;

    f1.numeric = .5;
    f1.alphabetic = CORBA::string_dup("one half");
    f2.numeric = .25;
    f2.alphabetic = CORBA::string_dup("one quarter");
    f3.numeric = .125;
    f3.alphabetic = CORBA::string_dup("one eighth");

    f2 = f1; // Deep assignment
    f3.alphabetic = f1.alphabetic; // Deep assignment
    f3.numeric = 1.0;
    f3.alphabetic[3] = '\0'; // Does not affect f1 or f2
    f1.alphabetic[0] = 'O'; // Does not affect f2 or f3
    f1.alphabetic[4] = 'H'; // Ditto
} // Everything deallocated OK here
```

		f1	f2	f3
Before	numeric	0.5	0.25	0.125
	alphabetic	one half	one quarter	one eighth
-----				
After	numeric	0.5	0.5	1.0
	alphabetic	One Half	one half	one

**Figure 6.2.** Structures before and after assignments.

Figure 6.2 shows the initial and final values of the three structures for this example. As you can see, structure and member assignments make deep copies. Moreover, when the structures are deleted, the memory held by the three string members is automatically deallocated by the corresponding `String_mgr` destructor.

If you need to work with dynamically allocated structures, you use `new` and `delete`:

```
Fraction * fp = new Fraction;
fp->numeric = 355.0 / 113;
fp->alphabetic = CORBA::string_dup("Pi, approximately");
// ...
delete fp;
```

There is no need to call special helper functions for allocation and deallocation. If such functions are required for non-uniform memory architectures, they are generated as class-specific operator `new` and operator `delete` members of the structure.

#### 6.13.4 Structures Containing Structure Members

Structure members that are themselves structures do not require any special mapping rules:

```
struct Fraction {
    double numeric;
    string alphabetic;
};
```

```
struct Problem {
```



```

    string      expression;
    Fraction    result;
    boolean     is_correct;
};

```

This generates the following mapping:

```

struct Fraction {
    CORBA::Double      numeric;
    CORBA::String_mgr  alphabetic;
    // ...
};

struct Problem {
    CORBA::String_mgr  expression;
    Fraction           result;
    CORBA::Boolean     is_correct;
    // ...
};

```

Using a variable of type `Problem` follows the usual rules for initialization and assignment. For example:

```

Problem p;
p.expression = CORBA::string_dup("7/8");
p.result.numeric = 0.875;
p.result.alphabetic = CORBA::string_dup("seven eighths");
p.is_correct = 1;

Problem * p_ptr = new Problem;
*p_ptr = p; // Deep assignment
//
// It would be more efficient to use
// Problem * p_ptr = new Problem(p); // (deep) copy constructor
//
delete p_ptr; // Deep deletion

```

## 6.14 Mapping for Sequences

The mapping for sequences is large, mainly because sequences permit you to control allocation and ownership of the buffer that holds sequence elements. We discuss simple uses of unbounded sequences first and then show how you can use more advanced features to efficiently insert and extract data. The advanced features are particularly useful if you need to transmit binary data as an octet

sequence. Finally, we explain the mapping for bounded sequences, which is a subset of the mapping for unbounded sequences.

### 6.14.1 Mapping for Unbounded Sequences

IDL sequences are mapped to C++ classes that behave like vectors with a variable number of elements. Each IDL sequence type results in a separate C++ class. For example:

```
typedef sequence<string> StrSeq;
```

This maps to C++ as follows:

```
class StrSeq_var;

class StrSeq {
public:
    StrSeq();
    StrSeq(CORBA::ULong max);
    StrSeq(
        CORBA::ULong    max,
        CORBA::ULong    len,
        char **          data,
        CORBA::Boolean  release = 0
    );
    ~StrSeq();

    StrSeq(const StrSeq &);
    StrSeq & operator=(const StrSeq &);

    CORBA::String_mgr & operator[] (CORBA::ULong idx);
    const char * operator[] (CORBA::ULong idx) const;

    CORBA::ULong length() const;
    void length(CORBA::ULong newlen);
    CORBA::ULong maximum() const;

    CORBA::Boolean release() const;

    void replace(
        CORBA::ULong    max,
        CORBA::ULong    length,
        char **          data,
        CORBA::Boolean  release = 0
    );
};
```

```

    const char **      get_buffer() const;
    char **           get_buffer(CORBA::Boolean orphan = 0);

    static char **    allocbuf(CORBA::ULong nelems);
    static void       freebuf(char ** data);

    typedef StrSeq_var _var_type;
};

```

This class is complicated. To get through all the definitions without too much pain, we discuss basic usage first and then cover the more esoteric member functions.<sup>3</sup>

`StrSeq()`

The default constructor creates an empty sequence. Calling the `length` accessor of a default-constructed sequence returns the value 0. The internal maximum of the sequence is set to 0 (see page 184).

```

StrSeq(const StrSeq &)
StrSeq & operator=(const StrSeq &)

```

The copy constructor and assignment operator make deep copies. The assignment operator first destroys the target sequence before making a copy of the source sequence (unless the `release` flag is set to false; see page 187). If the sequence elements are variable-length, the elements are deep-copied using their copy constructor. The internal maximum of the target sequence is set to the same value as the internal maximum of the source sequence (see page 184).

`~StrSeq()`

The destructor destroys a sequence. If the sequence contains variable-length elements, dynamic memory for the elements is also released (unless the `release` flag is set to false; see page 187).

```

CORBA::ULong length() const

```

The `length` accessor simply returns the current number of elements in the sequence.

---

3. The `_var_type` definition generated into the class is useful for template-based programming. We show an example in Section 18.14.1.

```
void length(CORBA::ULong newlen)
```

The length modifier changes the length of the sequence.

- Increasing the length of a sequence creates `newlen - length()` new elements. The new elements are appended to the tail. Growing a sequence initializes the newly appended elements with their default constructor. (If the appended elements are strings or are complex types containing strings, the strings are initialized to the empty string.)
- Decreasing the length of a sequence truncates the sequence by destroying the `length() - newlen` elements at the tail. If you truncate a sequence by reducing its length, the truncated elements are permanently destroyed. You cannot expect the previously truncated elements to still be intact after you increase the length again.

```
CORBA::String_mgr & operator[](CORBA::ULong idx)
const char * operator[](CORBA::ULong idx) const
```

The subscript operators provide access to the sequence elements (the operator is overloaded to allow use of sequence elements in both rvalue and lvalue contexts). In this example, using a sequence of strings, the return values are `String_mgr` and `const char *`, respectively. In general, for a sequence containing elements of type `T`, these operators return values of type `T &` and `const T &`, respectively. You may find that the actual type is something other than a reference to a `T`, depending on exactly how your ORB implements sequences. However, whatever type is returned, it will behave as if it were a reference to a `T`.

Sequences are indexed from 0 to `length() - 1`. Attempts to index into a sequence beyond its current length result in undefined behavior, and many ORBs will force a core dump to alert you of this run-time error.

If you do not like this, consider the alternatives: either you can run on blindly, happily corrupting memory as you go, or the ORB could throw an exception when a sequence index is out of bounds. However, that would not do you much good. After all, indexing a sequence out of bounds is a serious run-time error (just as overrunning an array is). What would be the point of throwing an exception? None—it would just tell you that you have a bug in your code.

### Simple Use of Sequences

The few member functions we have just discussed are sufficient to make use of sequences. The following example demonstrates use of a sequence. The string elements behave like `String_mgr` instances:

```
const char * values[] = { "first", "second", "third", "fourth" };

StrSeq myseq;          // Create empty sequence

// Create four empty strings
myseq.length(4);
for (CORBA::ULong i = 0; i < myseq.length(); i++)
    myseq[i] = values[i];          // Deep copy

// Print current contents
for (CORBA::ULong i = 0; i < myseq.length(); i++)
    cout << "myseq[" << i << "] = \"\" << myseq[i] << \"\" << endl;
cout << endl;

// Change second element (deallocates "second")
myseq[1] = CORBA::string_dup("second element");

// Truncate to three elements
myseq.length(3);          // Deallocates "fourth"

// Grow to five elements (add two empty strings)
myseq.length(5);

// Initialize appended elements
myseq[3] = CORBA::string_dup("4th");
myseq[4] = CORBA::string_dup("5th");

// Print contents once more
for (CORBA::ULong i = 0; i < myseq.length(); i++)
    cout << "myseq[" << i << "] = \"\" << myseq[i] << \"\" << endl;
```

This code produces the following output:

```
myseq[0] = "first"
myseq[1] = "second"
myseq[2] = "third"
myseq[3] = "fourth"
```

```
myseq[0] = "first"
myseq[1] = "second element"
myseq[2] = "third"
myseq[3] = "4th"
myseq[4] = "5th"
```

Once `myseq` goes out of scope, it invokes the destructor for its elements, so all the strings in the sequence are deallocated properly.

To manage heap-allocated sequences, use `new` and `delete`:

```
StrSeq * ssp = new StrSeq;
ssp->length(4);
for (CORBA::ULong i = 0; i < ssp->length(); i++)
    (*ssp)[i] = values[i];
// ...
delete ssp;
```

If special allocation rules apply for non-uniform memory architectures, the sequence class contains appropriate class-specific allocation and deallocation operators.

You may be worried by the expression

```
(*ssp)[i] = values[i];
```

Dereferencing the pointer is necessary, because we need an expression of type `StrSeq` for the subscript operator. If we instead write

```
ssp[i] = values[i];    // Wrong!!!
```

the compiler assumes that we are dealing with an array of sequences and are assigning a `const char *` to the *i*-th sequence, which causes a compile-time error.

### Controlling the Sequence Maximum

When you construct a sequence variable, you can supply an anticipated maximum number of elements using the maximum constructor:

```
StrSeq myseq(10);    // Expect to put ten elements on the sequence
myseq.length(20);  // Maximum does *not* limit length of sequence
for (CORBA::ULong i = 0; i < myseq.length(); i++)
    // Initialize elements
```

As you can see, even though this code uses an anticipated maximum of 10 elements, it then proceeds to add 20 elements to the sequence. This is perfectly all right. The sequence extends the maximum as necessary to accommodate the additional elements.

Why bother with supplying an anticipated maximum? The answer has to do with how a sequence manages its buffer space internally. If you use the maximum constructor, the sequence sets an internal maximum to a value *at least* as large as the one you supply (the actual maximum may be set to a larger value than the one you supply). In addition, a sequence guarantees that elements will not be relocated in memory while the current length does not exceed the maximum.

Typically, you do not care about relocation of elements in memory unless you are maintaining pointers to the sequence elements. In that case, you must know when sequence elements may relocate in memory because relocation will invalidate your pointers.

Another reason for supplying a maximum is efficiency. If the sequence has some idea of the expected number of elements, it can chunk memory allocations more efficiently. This approach reduces the number of calls to the memory allocator and reduces the number of times elements need to be copied as the sequence grows in length. (Memory allocation and data copying are expensive.)

You can retrieve the current maximum of a sequence by invoking the `maximum` member function. The following small program appends octets to a sequence one octet at a time and prints the maximum every time it changes:

```
int
main()
{
    BinaryFile s(20); // IDL: typedef sequence<octet> BinaryFile;

    CORBA::ULong max = s.maximum();
    cout << "Initial maximum: " << max << endl;

    for (CORBA::ULong i = 0; i < 256; i++) {
        s.length(i + 1);
        if (max != s.maximum()) {
            max = s.maximum();
            cout << "New maximum: " << max << endl;
        }
        s[i] = 0;
    }
    return 0;
}
```

On a particular ORB, this code might produce the following output:

```
Initial maximum: 64
New maximum: 128
New maximum: 192
New maximum: 256
```

This output allows you to reverse-engineer some knowledge about the sequence's internal implementation. In this particular implementation, the sequence uses chunked allocation of 64 elements at a time, so the maximum of 20 given to the constructor is rounded up to 64. Thereafter, the sequence extends its internal

buffer space by another 64 elements whenever the length is incremented beyond a multiple of 64.

The same code, when run on a different ORB, might produce this output:

```
Initial maximum: 20
New maximum: 21
New maximum: 22
New maximum: 23
...
New maximum: 255
New maximum: 256
```

In this implementation, the sequence simply allocates buffer space as needed for each element.

For both implementations, whenever the maximum value changes, the actual octets *may* be relocated in memory, but they also may stay where they are, depending on the sequence implementation and the specific memory allocator in use.

Be careful not to interpret too much into the maximum constructor and the behavior of sequences.

- The mapping does not guarantee that the maximum constructor will preallocate memory at the time it is called. Instead, allocation may be delayed until the first element is created.
- The mapping does not guarantee that the maximum constructor will allocate memory for exactly the requested number of elements. It may allocate more.
- The mapping does not guarantee that the maximum constructor will use a single allocation to accommodate the requested number of elements. It may allocate sequence elements in several discontinuous buffers.
- The mapping does not guarantee that sequence elements occupy a contiguous region of memory. To avoid the cost of relocating elements, the sequence may add new discontinuous buffer space as it is extended.
- The mapping does not guarantee that extending the length of a sequence immediately default-constructs the newly created elements. Although this would be far-fetched, the mapping implementation could delay construction until a new element is first assigned to and at that point create the element using its copy constructor.

It should be clear that the maximum constructor is no more than a hint to the implementation of the sequence. If you create a sequence and have advance knowledge of the expected number of elements, then by all means, use the



maximum constructor. It may help to get better run-time performance from the sequence. Otherwise, do not bother.

Do not maintain pointers to sequence elements. If you do, you need to be extremely careful about reallocation. Usually, the trouble is not worth it.

### Using the Data Constructor

The data constructor allows you to assign a preallocated buffer to a sequence. The main use of the data constructor is to efficiently transmit binary data as an octet sequence without having to use bitwise copying. There are a number of problems associated with the data constructor, and we recommend that you do not use it unless you have an overriding reason; you may wish to skip this section and continue reading on page 194. Still, we describe the data constructor for completeness.

The signature of the data constructor depends on the sequence element type. For example, for the sequence of strings shown on page 180, the signature is as follows:

```
StrSeq(           // IDL: typedef sequence<string> StrSeq;
    CORBA::ULong   max,
    CORBA::ULong   len,
    char **        data,
    CORBA::Boolean release = 0
);
```

On the other hand, for a sequence of octets, the data constructor's signature becomes

```
BinaryFile(      // IDL: typedef sequence<octet> BinaryFile;
    CORBA::ULong   max,
    CORBA::ULong   len,
    CORBA::Octet * data,
    CORBA::Boolean release = 0
);
```

Note that the data parameter is of type pointer to element. The idea is that you can provide a pointer to a buffer full of elements and have the sequence use that buffer for its internal storage. To see why this may be useful, consider the following scenario.

Imagine you have a GIF image in a file and want to transmit that image to a remote server. The file contents are binary and need to get to the server without being tampered with in transit, so you decide to send the image as an octet sequence:<sup>4</sup>

```
typedef sequence<octet> BinaryFile;

interface BinaryFileExchange {
    void          send(in BinaryFile f, in string file_name);
    BinaryFile    fetch(in string file_name);
};
```

On a UNIX system, a simple version of the code to initialize the sequence for transmission might look something like this (for simplicity, we have omitted error checking):

```
int fd;
fd = open("image.gif", O_RDONLY); // Open file for reading
struct stat st;
fstat(fd, &st); // Get file attributes
CORBA::Octet * buf;
buf = new CORBA::Octet[st.st_size]; // Allocate file buffer
read(fd, buf, st.st_size); // Read file contents

BinaryFile image_seq(st.st_size); // Create octet sequence
image_seq.length(st.st_size); // Set length of sequence

// Fill sequence
for (off_t i = 0; i < st.st_size; i++)
    image_seq[i] = buf[i];

delete[] buf; // Don't need buffer anymore
close(fd); // Done with file

// Send octet sequence to server...
```

The image file might be several hundred kilobytes long, but the preceding code copies the file contents into the octet sequence one byte at a time. Even if the sequence's subscript operator is inlined, this approach is still massively inefficient.

We can avoid this problem by using the data constructor:

```
// Open file and get attributes as before...
CORBA::Octet * buf;
buf = new CORBA::Octet[st.st_size]; // Allocate file buffer
read(fd, buf, st.st_size); // Read file contents
```

---

4. A word of caution here: sending a binary file as shown will not work once the file size exceeds an ORB-dependent limit. We discuss how to get around this in Section 18.7.

```

close(fd); // Done with file

// Initialize sequence with buffer just read
BinaryFile image_seq(st.st_size, st.st_size, buf, 0);

// Send octet sequence to server...

delete[] buf; // Deallocate buffer

```

The interesting line here is the call to the data constructor:

```
BinaryFile image_seq(st.st_size, st.st_size, buf, 0);
```

This call initializes both the maximum and the length of the sequence to the size of the file, passes a pointer to the buffer, and sets the `release` flag to false. The sequence now uses the passed buffer for its internal storage, thereby avoiding the cost of initializing the sequence one byte at a time. Setting the `release` flag to false indicates that we want to retain responsibility for memory management of the buffer. The sequence does not deallocate the buffer contents. Instead, the preceding code does this explicitly by calling `delete[]` when the sequence contents are no longer needed.

If you set the `release` flag to true, the sequence takes ownership of the passed buffer. In that case, the buffer must have been allocated with `alloca`, and the sequence deallocates the buffer with `free`:

```

// Open file and get attributes as before...
CORBA::Octet * buf;
buf = BinaryFile::alloca(st.st_size); // Allocate file buffer
read(fd, buf, st.st_size); // Read file contents

// Initialize, sequence takes ownership
BinaryFile image_seq(st.st_size, st.st_size, buf, 1);

close(fd); // Done with file

// Send octet sequence to server...

// No need to deallocate buf here, the sequence
// will deallocate it with BinaryFile::free()

```

The `alloca` and `free` member functions are provided to deal with non-uniform memory architectures (for uniform architectures, they are simply implemented in terms of `new[]` and `delete[]`). The `alloca` function returns a null pointer if it fails to allocate memory (it does not throw C++ or CORBA exceptions). It is legal to call `free` with a null pointer.

If you initialize a sequence with `release` set to true as shown earlier, you cannot make assumptions about the lifetime of the passed buffer. For example, a compliant (although inefficient) implementation may decide to immediately copy the sequence and deallocate the buffer. This means that after you have handed the buffer to the sequence, the buffer becomes private memory that is completely out of your control.

If the `release` flag is true and the sequence elements are strings, the sequence will release memory for the strings when it deallocates the buffer. Similarly, if the `release` flag is true and the sequence elements are object references, the sequence will call `CORBA::release` on each reference.

String elements are deallocated by a call to `CORBA::string_free`, so you must allocate them with `CORBA::string_alloc`. The following example shows use of a sequence of strings with the `release` flag set to true. The code reads lines of text from a file, making each line a sequence element. Again, for brevity, we have not included any error handling. (The code also causes lines longer than 512 characters to be split, which we will assume is acceptable.)

```
char linebuf[512]; // Line buffer

CORBA::ULong len = 0; // Current sequence length
CORBA::ULong max = 64; // Initial sequence max
char ** strvec = StrSeq::allocbuf(max); // Allocate initial chunk
ifstream infile("file.txt"); // Open input file

infile.getline(linebuf, sizeof(linebuf)); // Read first line
while (infile) { // While lines remain
    if (len == max) {
        // Double size if out of room
        char ** tmp = StrSeq::allocbuf(max *= 2);
        for (CORBA::ULong i = 0; i < len; i++) {
            CORBA::string_free(tmp[i]);
            tmp[i] = CORBA::string_dup(strvec[i]);
        }
        StrSeq::freebuf(strvec);
        strvec = tmp;
    }
    strvec[len++] = CORBA::string_dup(linebuf); // Copy line
    infile.getline(linebuf, sizeof(linebuf)); // Read next line
}

StrSeq line_seq(max, len, strvec, 1); // Initialize seq

// From here, line_seq behaves like an ordinary string sequence:
```

```

for (CORBA::ULong i = 0; i < line_seq.length(); i++)
    cout << line_seq[i] << endl;

line_seq.length(len + 1); // Add a line
line_seq[len++] = CORBA::string_dup("last line");

line_seq[0] = CORBA::string_dup("first line"); // No leak here

```

This example illustrates the memory management rules. The buffer that is eventually handed to the string sequence is `strvec`. This buffer is initialized by a call to `StrSeq::allocbuf`, with sufficient room to hold 64 strings. During the loop reading the file, the code checks whether the current maximum has been reached; if it has, the code doubles the maximum (this requires reallocating and copying the vector). Each line is copied into the vector by deallocating the previous string element and calling `CORBA::string_dup`. When the loop terminates, `strvec` is a dynamically allocated vector of pointers in which each element points at a dynamically allocated string. This vector is finally used to initialize the sequence with the `release` flag set to true, so the sequence assumes ownership of the vector.

Once the sequence is initialized in this way, it behaves like an ordinary string sequence; that is, the elements are of type `String_mgr`, and they manage memory as usual. Similarly, the sequence can be extended or shortened and will take care of allocating and deallocating memory as appropriate.

Contrast this with a string sequence with `release` set to false:

```

// Assume that:
// argv[0] == "a.out"
// argv[1] == "first"
// argv[2] == "second"
// argv[3] == "third"
// argv[4] == "fourth"
{
    StrSeq myseq(5, 5, argv); // release flag defaults to 0
    myseq[3] = "3rd"; // No deallocation, no copy
    cout << myseq[3] << endl; // Prints "3rd"
} // myseq goes out of scope but deallocates nothing

cout << argv[1] << endl; // argv[1] intact, prints "first"
cout << argv[3] << endl; // argv[3] was changed, prints "3rd"

```

Because the `release` flag is false, the sequence uses shallow pointer assignment; it neither releases the target string "third" nor makes a copy of the source string "3rd". When the sequence goes out of scope, it does not release the

string vector, so the assignment's effect is visible beyond the lifetime of the sequence.

Be careful, though: assignment to a sequence element is not guaranteed to affect the original vector. By slightly modifying the preceding code, we get different behavior:

```
// Assume that:
// argv[0] == "a.out"
// argv[1] == "first"
// argv[2] == "second"
// argv[3] == "third"
// argv[4] == "fourth"
{
    StrSeq myseq(5, 5, argv); // release flag defaults to 0
    myseq[3] = "3rd";        // No deallocation, no copy
    cout << myseq[3] << endl; // Prints "3rd"
    myseq.length(10000);    // Force reallocation
    myseq[1] = "1st";        // Shallow assignment
    cout << myseq[1] << endl; // Prints "1st"
} // deallocate whatever memory was allocated by length(10000)

cout << argv[1] << endl; // prints "first" (not "1st")
cout << argv[3] << endl; // prints "3rd"
```

This example uses two assignments to sequence elements but separates them by a large increase in the length of the sequence. This increase in length is likely to cause reallocation. (It is not guaranteed to force reallocation. An implementation is free instead to allocate additional separate memory while keeping the original vector, even though such an implementation is unlikely.) The effect is that the first assignment (before reallocation) affects the original vector, but the second assignment (after reallocation) affects only an internal copy, which is deallocated when the sequence goes out of scope.

This example demonstrates that initializing a sequence with `release` set to false requires a lot of caution. Unless you are very careful, you will leak memory or lose the effects of assignments.

Never pass a sequence with `release` set to false as an `inout` parameter to an operation. Although the called operation can find out how the sequence was allocated, it will typically assume that `release` is set to true. If the actual sequence has `release` set to false, assignment to sequence elements by the called operation can result in deallocation of non-heap memory, typically causing a core dump.

### Manipulating the Sequence Buffer Directly

As you saw on page 180, sequences contain member functions to manipulate the buffer of a sequence directly. For the `BinaryFile` sequence, the generated code contains the following:

```
class BinaryFile {
public:
    // Other member functions here...
    void replace(
        CORBA::ULong    max,
        CORBA::ULong    length,
        CORBA::Octet *  data,
        CORBA::Boolean  release = 0
    );
    const CORBA::Octet * get_buffer() const;
    CORBA::Octet *      get_buffer(CORBA::Boolean orphan = 0);
    CORBA::Boolean      release() const;
};
```

These member functions let you directly manipulate the buffer underlying a sequence.

The `replace` member function permits you to change the contents of a sequence by substituting a different buffer. The meaning of the parameters is the same as that for the data constructor. Obviously, the same caveats apply here as for shortening or lengthening of a sequence: if you are holding pointers into a sequence buffer and replace the buffer, the pointers are likely to point at garbage afterward.

The `get_buffer` accessor function provides read-only access to the underlying buffer. (If you call `get_buffer` on a sequence that does not yet have a buffer, the sequence allocates a buffer first.) The `get_buffer` function is useful for efficient extraction of sequence elements. For example, you can extract a binary file without copying the sequence elements:

```
BinaryFile bf = ...; // Get an image file...
CORBA::Octet * data = bf.get_buffer(); // Get pointer to buffer
CORBA::ULong len = bf.length(); // Get length
display_gif_image(data, len); // Display image
```

This code obtains a pointer to the sequence data and passes the pointer to a display routine. The advantage here is that you can display the sequence contents without copying any elements.

The `get_buffer` modifier function provides read-write access to a sequence buffer. Its `orphan` argument determines who gets ownership of the

buffer. If `orphan` is `false` (the default), the sequence retains ownership and releases the buffer when it goes out of scope. If `orphan` is `true`, you become responsible for the returned buffer and must eventually deallocate it using `freebuf`.

You need to exercise caution if you decide to use the `get_buffer` modifier. The modifier enables you to assign to sequence elements in place. However, if the elements are strings, wide strings, or object references, you need to check the release flag of the sequence (returned by the `release` member function). If the release flag is `false`, you must not deallocate elements before assigning to them. If the release flag is `true`, you must deallocate sequence elements before assigning to them. The deallocation functions are `CORBA::string_free`, `CORBA::wstring_free`, and `CORBA::release`, depending on whether the sequence elements are strings, wide strings, or object references. (Other element types require no memory management from you.)

After you have taken ownership of the buffer from a sequence, the sequence reverts to the same state it would have if it had been constructed by its default constructor. If you attempt to remove ownership of a buffer from a sequence whose release flag is `false`, `get_buffer` returns a null pointer.

### 6.14.2 Mapping for Bounded Sequences

The mapping for bounded sequences is identical to the mapping for unbounded sequences except that the maximum is hard-wired into the generated class. For example:

```
typedef sequence<double, 100> DoubleSeq;
```

This results in the following class:

```
class DoubleSeq_var;

class DoubleSeq {
public:
    DoubleSeq();
    DoubleSeq(
        CORBA::ULong    len,
        CORBA::Double * data,
        CORBA::Boolean  release = 0
    );
    ~DoubleSeq();

    DoubleSeq(const DoubleSeq &);
```



```

DoubleSeq &                operator=(const DoubleSeq &);

CORBA::Double &           operator[](CORBA::ULong idx);
const CORBA::Double &     operator[](CORBA::ULong idx) const;

CORBA::ULong              length() const;
void                      length(CORBA::ULong newlen);
CORBA::ULong              maximum() const;

Boolean                   release() const;
void                      replace(
                           CORBA::ULong    length,
                           CORBA::Double * data,
                           CORBA::Boolean  release = 0
                           );
CORBA::Double *           get_buffer() const;
CORBA::Double *           get_buffer(CORBA::Boolean orphan = 0);
static CORBA::Double *    allocbuf(CORBA::ULong nelems);
static void                freebuf(CORBA::Double * data);

typedef DoubleSeq_var _var_type;
};

```

As you can see, the only differences between a bounded sequence and an unbounded sequence are that for a bounded sequence, the maximum constructor is missing and that the data constructor does not accept a maximum parameter. (The maximum value of 100 is generated into the source code for the class.)

Attempts to set the length of a bounded sequence beyond the maximum result in undefined behavior, usually a core dump. Calls to `allocbuf` need not specify a number of elements that is the same as the sequence bound.

### 6.14.3 Sequence Limitations

#### Insertion and Deletion of Elements

An annoying aspect of the sequence mapping is that you can change the length of a sequence only at its tail. To insert an element somewhere in the middle, you must open a gap by copying the elements to the right of the insertion point. The following helper function preinserts an element into a sequence at a nominated position. Passing an index value equal to the length of the sequence appends the element at the tail. The function assumes that only legal index values in the range 0 to `length() - 1` will be passed:

```

template<class Seq, class T>
void
pre_insert(Seq & seq, const T & elmt, CORBA::ULong idx)
{
    seq.length(seq.length() + 1);
    for (CORBA::ULong i = seq.length() - 1; i > idx; i--)
        seq[i] = seq[i - 1];
    seq[idx] = elmt;
}

```

This code extends the sequence by one element, opens a gap by copying elements from the insertion point to the tail over by one position, and then assigns the new element.

Similar code is required for removal of an element, in which you need to close the gap that is left behind at the deletion point:

```

template<class Seq>
void
remove(Seq & seq, CORBA::ULong idx)
{
    for (CORBA::ULong i = idx; i < seq.length() - 1; i++)
        seq[i] = seq[i + 1];
    seq.length(seq.length() - 1);
}

```

Insertion and removal operations on sequences have  $O(n)$  run-time performance. This performance becomes unacceptable if frequent insertions or deletions are made, particularly for long sequences with elements of complex type. In such a case, you are better off using a more suitable data structure instead of trying to manipulate sequence elements in place.

For example, you can use an STL set or multiset to perform insertions and deletions in  $O(\log n)$  time. After the set is in its final state, simply create an equivalent sequence by copying the contents of the set in a single pass. This technique is particularly useful if you need to make many updates to a sequence but want to keep the sequence in sorted order.

### Using the Data Constructor with Complex Types

The data constructor is of limited value if a sequence contains elements of user-defined complex type. Consider the following IDL:

```

typedef string      Word;
typedef sequence<Word> Line;
typedef sequence<Line> Document;

```

This IDL represents a line of text as a sequence of words, and a document as a sequence of lines. The problem for the data constructor is that we have no idea how the C++ class for a sequence of words is represented internally. For example, the sequence class will almost certainly have private data members that point at the dynamic memory for the sequence buffer. It follows that we cannot write a sequence value into a binary file and read the file later to reconstruct the sequence. By the time the file is read, the private pointer values of the sequence will likely point at the wrong memory locations.

You can use the sequence data constructor to create a sequence of complex values, but the sequence elements of the vector must be created by memberwise assignment or copy. For example:

```
Line * docp = Document::allocbuf(3);    // Three-line document
Line tmp;                               // Temporary line

tmp.length(4);                          // Initialize first line
tmp[0] = CORBA::string_dup("This");
tmp[1] = CORBA::string_dup("is");
tmp[2] = CORBA::string_dup("line");
tmp[3] = CORBA::string_dup("one.");
docp[0] = tmp;                           // Assign first line

tmp.length(1);                          // Initialize second line
tmp[0] = CORBA::string_dup("Line2");
docp[1] = tmp;                           // Assign second line

tmp[0] = CORBA::string_dup("Line3");
docp[2] = tmp;                           // Assign third line

Document my_doc(3, 3, docp, 1);         // Use data constructor
// ...
```

This code is correct, but use of the data constructor no longer offers any advantage in performance (because the sequence elements cannot be created by reading them from a binary file or by copying memory). For this reason, you should avoid using the data constructor for anything except sequences of simple types and for sequences of string literals with the `release` flag set to `false`.

#### 6.14.4 Rules for Using Sequences

Here are some rules for safe use of sequences.

- Do not make assumptions about when constructors or destructors run. The implementation of the sequence mapping is free to delay construction or destruction of elements for efficiency reasons. This means that your code must not rely on side effects from construction or destruction. Simply assume that elements are copy-constructed during the first assignment, default-constructed during the first access, and destroyed when a sequence is shortened or goes out of scope. In that way, you will not get any unpleasant surprises.
- Never pass a sequence to a function for modification if the `release` flag is false. If the sequence does not own its buffer, the called function will most likely cause memory leaks if it modifies sequence elements.
- Avoid using the data constructor for elements of complex type. For complex types, the data constructor does not offer any advantages but makes the source code more complex.
- Remember that increasing the length of a sequence beyond the current maximum may cause relocation of elements in memory.
- Do not index into a sequence beyond the current length.
- Do not increase the length of a bounded sequence beyond its bound.
- Do not use the data constructor or the buffer manipulation functions unless you really need to. Direct buffer manipulation is fraught with potential memory management errors, and you should first convince yourself that any savings in performance justify the additional coding and testing effort.

---

## 6.15 Mapping for Arrays

---

IDL arrays map to C++ arrays of the corresponding element type. String elements are mapped to `String_mgr` (or some other type proprietary to the mapping implementation). The point is that string elements are initialized to the empty string but otherwise behave like a `String_var` (that is, manage memory). For example:

```
typedef float   FloatArray[4];
typedef string  StrArray[15][10];

struct S {
    string  s_mem;
    long    l_mem;
};
typedef S     StructArray[20];
```

This maps to C++ as follows:

```

typedef CORBA::Float      FloatArray[4];
typedef CORBA::Float      FloatArray_slice;
FloatArray_slice *       FloatArray_alloc();
FloatArray_slice *       FloatArray_dup(
                          const FloatArray_slice *
                          );
void                      FloatArray_copy(
                          FloatArray_slice *       to,
                          const FloatArray_slice *   from
                          );
void                      FloatArray_free(FloatArray_slice *);

typedef CORBA::String_mgr StrArray[15][10];
typedef CORBA::String_mgr StrArray_slice[10];
StrArray_slice *         StrArray_alloc();
StrArray_slice *         StrArray_dup(const StrArray_slice *);
void                      StrArray_copy(
                          StrArray_slice *       to,
                          const StrArray_slice *   from
                          );
void                      StrArray_free(StrArray_slice *);

struct S {
    CORBA::String_mgr  s_mem;
    CORBA::Long        l_mem;
};
typedef S              StructArray[20];
typedef S              StructArray_slice;
StructArray_slice *   StructArray_alloc();
StructArray_slice *   StructArray_dup(
                      const StructArray_slice *
                      );
void                  StructArray_copy(
                      StructArray_slice *       to,
                      const StructArray_slice *   from
                      );
void                  StructArray_free(StructArray_slice *);

```

As you can see, each IDL array definition generates a corresponding array definition in C++. This means that you can use IDL array types just as you use any other array type in your code. For example:

```
FloatArray my_f = { 1.0, 2.0, 3.0 };
my_f[3] = my_f[2];

StrArray my_str;
my_str[0][0] = CORBA::string_dup("Hello"); // Transfers ownership
my_str[0][1] = my_str[0][0];              // Deep copy

StructArray my_s;
my_s[0].s_mem = CORBA::string_dup("World"); // Transfers ownership
my_s[0].l_mem = 5;
```

To dynamically allocate an array, you must use the generated allocation and deallocation functions (use of `new[ ]` and `delete[ ]` is not portable):

```
// Allocate 2-D array of 150 empty strings
StrArray_slice * sp1 = StrArray_alloc();

// Assign one element
sp1[0][0] = CORBA::string_dup("Hello");

// Allocate copy of sp1
StrArray_slice * sp2 = StrArray_dup(sp1);

StrArray x; // 2-D array on the stack
StrArray_copy(x, sp1); // Copy contents of sp1 into x

StrArray_free(sp2); // Deallocate
StrArray_free(sp1); // Deallocate
```

The allocation functions return a null pointer to indicate failure and do not throw CORBA or C++ exceptions.

The allocation functions use the array slice type that is generated. The slice type of an array is the element type of the first dimension (or, for a two-dimensional array, the row type). In C++, array expressions are converted to a pointer to the first element and the slice types make it easier to declare pointers of that type. For an array type `T`, a pointer to the first element can be declared as `T_slice *`. Because IDL arrays map to real C++ arrays, you can also use pointer arithmetic to iterate over the elements of an array.

The `StrArray_copy` function deep-copies the *contents* of an array. Neither the source nor the target array need be dynamically allocated. This function effectively implements assignment for arrays. (Because IDL arrays are mapped to C++ arrays and C++ does not support array assignment, the mapping cannot provide an overloaded operator for array assignment.)

## 6.16 Mapping for Unions

IDL unions cannot be mapped to C++ unions; variable-length union members (such as strings) are mapped to classes, but C++ does not permit unions to contain class members with non-trivial constructors. In addition, C++ unions are not discriminated. To get around this, IDL unions map to C++ classes. For example:

```
union U switch (char) {
case 'L':
    long    long_mem;
case 'c':
case 'C':
    char    char_mem;
default:
    string  string_mem;
};
```

The corresponding C++ class has an accessor and a modifier member function for each union member. In addition, there are member functions to control the discriminator and to deal with initialization and assignment:

```
class U_var;

class U {
public:
    U();
    U(const U &);
    ~U();
    U & operator=(const U &);

    CORBA::Char    _d() const;
    void           _d(CORBA::Char);

    CORBA::Long    long_mem() const;
    void           long_mem(CORBA::Long);
    CORBA::Char    char_mem() const;
    void           char_mem(CORBA::Char);
    const char *   string_mem() const;
    void           string_mem(char *);
    void           string_mem(const char *);
    void           string_mem(const CORBA::String_var &);

    typedef U_var _var_type;
};
```

As with other IDL generated types, there may be additional member functions in the class. If there are, these functions are internal to the mapping implementation and you should pretend they do not exist.<sup>5</sup>

### 6.16.1 Union Initialization and Assignment

As with other complex IDL types, a union has a constructor, a copy constructor, an assignment operator, and a destructor.

```
U()
```

The default constructor of a union performs no application-visible initialization of the class. This means that you must explicitly initialize the union before reading any of its contents. You are not even allowed to read the discriminator value of a default-constructed union.

```
U(const U &)
U & operator=(const U &)
```

The copy constructor and assignment operator make deep copies, so if a union contains a string, the string contents are copied appropriately.

```
~U()
```

The destructor destroys a union. If the union contains a variable-length member, the memory for that member is deallocated correctly. Destroying an uninitialized default-constructed union is safe.

### 6.16.2 Union Member and Discriminator Access

To activate or assign to a union member, you invoke the corresponding modifier member function. Assigning to a union member also sets the discriminator value. You can read the discriminator by calling the `_d` member function. For example:

```
U my_u; // 'my_u' is not initialized
my_u.long_mem(99); // Activate long_mem
assert(my_u._d() == 'L'); // Verify discriminator
assert(my_u.long_mem() == 99); // Verify value
```

---

5. We delay explanation of the `_var_type` definition in this class until Section 18.14.1, where we show an example of its use.



In this example, the union is not initialized after default construction. Calling the modifier function for the member `long_mem` initializes the union by activating that member and setting its value. As a side effect, assigning to a member via the modifier function also sets the discriminator value. The preceding code tests the discriminator value in an assertion to verify that the union works correctly. It also reads the value of `long_mem` by calling its accessor member function. Because we just set the value to 99, the accessor must of course return that value. The code tests this with another assertion.

To change the active member of a union, you can use the modifier for a different member to assign to that member:

```
my_u.char_mem('X'); // Activate and assign to char_mem
// Discriminator is now 'c' or 'C', who knows...
my_u._d('C');      // Now it is definitely 'C'
```

Activating the member `char_mem` sets the discriminator value accordingly. The problem in this case is that there are two legal discriminator values: `'c'` and `'C'`. Activating the member `char_mem` sets the discriminator to one of these two values, but you have no way of knowing which one (the choice is implementation-dependent). The preceding code example explicitly sets the value of the discriminator to `'C'` after activating the member.

You cannot set the discriminator value if that would deactivate or activate a member:

```
my_u.char_mem('X'); // Activate and assign char_mem
assert(my_u._d() == 'c' || my_u._d() == 'C');
my_u._d('c');      // OK
my_u._d('C');      // OK
my_u._d('X');      // Illegal, would activate string_mem
```

The preceding example shows that you can set the discriminator only to a value that is consistent with the currently active union member (the only legal values here are `'c'` and `'C'`). Setting the discriminator value to anything else results in undefined behavior, and many implementations will deliberately force a core dump to let you know that your program contains a serious run-time error.

Setting the default member of the union leaves the discriminator in a partially undefined state:

```
my_u.string_mem(CORBA::string_dup("Hello"));
// Discriminator value is now anything except 'c', 'C', or 'L'.
assert(my_u._d() != 'c' && my_u._d() != 'C' && my_u._d() != 'L');
```

The implementation of the union type picks a discriminator value that is legal for the default member, but, again, the precise value chosen is implementation-dependent.

This behavior can be inconvenient, for example during tracing. Suppose you have trace statements throughout your code that print the discriminator value to the display at various points. A problem arises if the default member `string_mem` is active in the union, because the value of the discriminator can be any character except `'c'`, `'C'`, and `'L'`. This makes it entirely possible for the discriminator to contain non-printable characters, such as a form feed, escape, or Ctrl-S. Depending on the display you are using, these characters may cause undesirable effects. For example, an escape character can cause the display to clear its screen or switch into block mode, and a Ctrl-S typically acts as a flow-control character that suspends output.

In general, the default case and multiple case labels for the same union member do not assign a definite value to the discriminator of the union. We recommend that you use these IDL features with caution. Usually, you can express the desired design in some other way and avoid the potentially awkward coding issues involved.

The preceding example also illustrates another important point. String members inside a union behave like a `String_var`. In particular, the modifier function for the member `string_mem` is overloaded for `const char *`, `char *`, and `String_var &`. As always, the `char *` modifier takes ownership of the assigned string, whereas the `const char *` and `String_var` modifiers make deep copies:

```
U my_u;

// Explicit copy
my_u.string_mem(CORBA::string_dup("Hello"));

// Free "Hello", copy "World"
my_u.string_mem((const char *)"World");

CORBA::String_var s = CORBA::string_dup("Again");
// Free "World", copy "Again"
my_u.string_mem(s);

// Free "Again", activate long_mem
my_u.long_mem(999);

cout << s << endl;      // Prints "Again"
```

For dynamically allocated unions, use `new` and `delete`:

```
U * up = new U;
up->string_mem(CORBA::string_dup("Hello"));
// ...
delete up;
```

On architectures with non-uniform memory management, the ORB generates class-specific allocation and deallocation operators for the union, so you can still safely use `new` and `delete`.

### 6.16.3 Unions without a default Case

Here is a union that can be used to simulate optional parameters (see page 67):

```
union AgeOpt switch (boolean) {
case TRUE:
    unsigned short age;
};
```

This union does not have an explicit default case but has an implicit default member when the discriminator is `FALSE`. If a union has an implicit default member, the mapping generates an additional `_default` member function for the corresponding C++ class:

```
class AgeOpt_var;

class AgeOpt {
public:
    AgeOpt();
    AgeOpt(const AgeOpt &);
    ~AgeOpt();
    AgeOpt & operator=(const AgeOpt &);

    CORBA::Boolean _d() const;
    void _d(CORBA::Boolean);

    CORBA::UShort age() const;
    void age(CORBA::UShort);

    void _default();

    typedef AgeOpt_var _var_type;
};
```

The mapping follows the normal rules but also adds the `_default` member function. (It is a little unfortunate that a union *without* a `default` case has an extra member function called `_default`. You have to get used to this.) The `_default` member function activates the implicit default member of the union and sets the discriminator value accordingly:

```
AgeOpt my_age;
my_age._default(); // Set discriminator to false
```

In this case, the only legal default value for the discriminator is 0 (which represents false). Note that the following code is illegal:

```
AgeOpt my_age;
my_age._d(0); // Illegal!
```

This code has undefined behavior, because it is illegal to activate a union member by setting the discriminator. (The non-existent implicit default member of the union is considered a member.)

Similarly, you cannot reset an initialized union to the default member by setting the discriminator. You must instead use the `_default` member function:

```
AgeOpt my_age;
my_age.age(38); // Sets discriminator to 1
my_age._d(0); // Illegal!!!
my_age._default(); // Much better!
```

Here is another interesting union, taken from the Trading Service Specification [21]:

```
enum HowManyProps { none, some, all };

union SpecifiedProps switch (HowManyProps) {
case some:
    PropertyNameSeq prop_names;
};
```

This union permits two different discriminator values for the no-value case: `none` and `all`. Suppose you want to initialize the union to set the discriminator value to `none`. Again, you must use the `_default` member function:

```
SpecifiedProps sp;
sp._default(); // Activate implicit default member
// Discriminator is now none or all
sp._d(none); // Fix discriminator
```

The call to `_default` is necessary. Without it, we would attempt to activate the implicit default member by setting the discriminator, and that is illegal.

### 6.16.4 Unions Containing Complex Members

If a union contains a member that is of type `any` or contains a member that is a structure, union, sequence, or fixed-point type, the generated class contains three member functions for each union member instead of the usual two member functions. Consider the following union:

```
struct Details {
    double weight;
    long    count;
};

typedef sequence<string> TextSeq;

union ShippingInfo switch (long) {
case 0:
    Details packaging_info;
default:
    TextSeq other_info;
};
```

This union has two members: one is a structure and the other one is a sequence. The generated class contains all the member functions we discussed previously but has *three* member functions for each union member:

```
class ShippingInfo {
public:
    // Other member functions as before...

    const Details & packaging_info() const;           // Accessor
    void          packaging_info(const Details &);    // Modifier
    Details &     packaging_info();                   // Referent

    const TextSeq & other_info() const;               // Accessor
    void          other_info(const TextSeq &);        // Modifier
    TextSeq &     other_info();                       // Referent
};
```

As with simple types, the union contains accessor functions that return the value of a member. (To avoid unnecessary data copying, accessors for complex types return the value by constant reference.) Also, as with simple types, each member has a modifier function that makes a deep copy.

The referent member function returns a non-constant reference to the union member and exists for efficiency reasons. For large types, such as sequences, it is inefficient to change a member by calling its accessor followed by its modifier,

because both functions make deep copies. The referent permits you to modify the value of a union member in place without copying:

```
ShippingInfo info = ...; // Assume we have an initialized union...

if (info._d() != 0) { // other_info is active
    TextSeq & s = info.other_info(); // get ref to other_info

    // We can now modify the sequence while it is
    // inside the union without having to copy
    // the sequence out of the union and back in again...
    for (CORBA::ULong i = 0; i < s.length(); i++) {
        // Modify sequence elements...
    }
}
```

Of course, if you obtain a reference to a union member, that member must currently be active (otherwise the behavior is undefined). Once you have a reference to a member, you must take care to use it only for as long as its corresponding member remains active. If you activate a different union member and use a reference to a previously active member, you are likely to end up with a core dump.

### 6.16.5 Rules for Using Unions

Here are some rules for using unions safely.

- Never attempt to access a union member that is inconsistent with the discriminator value. This is just common sense. Unions are not meant to be used as a backdoor mechanism for type casts. To safely read the value of a union member, first check the discriminator value. It is common to check the discriminator in a switch statement and to process each union member in a different branch of the switch. Be careful if you obtain a reference to a union member. The reference stays valid only for as long as its member remains active.
- Do not assume that union members overlay one another in memory. In C and C++, you are guaranteed that union members overlay one another in memory. However, no such guarantee is provided by the C++ mapping for IDL unions. A compliant ORB may keep all union members active simultaneously, or it may overlay some union members but not others. This behavior allows the ORB to intelligently adjust the behavior of a union depending on its member

types. (For some member types, keeping them active simultaneously may be more efficient.)

- Do not make assumptions about when destructors run. The C++ mapping does not state when members should be destroyed. If you activate a new union member, the previous member's destructor may be delayed for efficiency reasons. (It may be cheaper to delay destruction until the entire union is destroyed, especially if members occupy only a small amount of memory.) You should write your code as if each member were destroyed the instant it is deactivated. In particular, do not expect a union member to retain its value if it is deactivated and reactivated later.

## 6.17 Mapping for Recursive Structures and Unions

Consider the following recursive union:

```
union Link switch (long) {
  case 0:
    typeA          ta;
  case 1:
    typeB          tb;
  case 2:
    sequence<Link> sc;
};
```

The union contains a recursive member `sc`. Assume that you would like to activate the `sc` member of this union so that `sc` is an empty sequence. As you saw earlier, the only way to activate a union member is to pass a value of the member's type to its accessor. However, `sc` is of anonymous type, so how can you declare a variable of that type?

The C++ mapping deals with this problem by generating an additional type definition into the union class:

```
class Link {
public:
    typedef some_internal_identifier _sc_seq;

    // Other members here...
};
```

The generated class defines the type name `_sc_seq` to give a name to the otherwise anonymous sequence type. In general, if a union `u` contains a

member `mem` of anonymous type, the type of `mem` has the name `u :: _mem_seq`. You can use this type name to correctly activate the recursive member of a union:

```
Link::_sc_seq myseq;           // myseq is empty
Link mylink;                  // uninitialized union
mylink.sc(myseq);             // activate sc
```

The same mapping rule applies to recursive structures. If a structure `s` contains an anonymous sequence member `mem`, the type of `mem` is `s :: _mem_seq`.

## 6.18 Mapping for Type Definitions

IDL type definitions map to corresponding type definitions at the C++ level. If a single IDL type results in multiple C++ types, each C++ type has a corresponding type definition. Aliasing of type definitions is preserved. If function declarations are affected by aliasing, a corresponding function using the alias name is defined (usually as an inline function):

```
typedef string      StrArray[4];
typedef StrArray   Address;
```

This definition maps as follows:

```
typedef CORBA::String_mgr  StrArray[4];
typedef CORBA::String_mgr  StrArray_slice;
StrArray_slice *           StrArray_alloc();
StrArray_slice *           StrArray_dup(const StrArray_slice *);
void                       StrArray_free(StrArray_slice *);

typedef StrArray           Address;
typedef StrArray_slice    Address_slice;

Address_slice *           Address_alloc()
                          { return StrArray_alloc(); }

Address_slice *           Address_dup(
                          const Address_slice * p
                          ) { return StrArray_dup(p); }

void                       Address_free(Address_slice * p)
                          { StrArray_free(p); }
```

The preceding code looks complicated, but it really means that aliases for types can be used in exactly the same way as the original type. For example, with the



preceding mapping, you can use `StrArray` and `Address` interchangeably in your code.

## 6.19 User-Defined Types and `_var` Classes

As shown earlier in Table 6.2 on page 155, the IDL compiler generates a `_var` class for every user-defined structured type. These `_var` classes serve the same purpose as `String_var`; that is, they take on memory management responsibility for a dynamically allocated instance of the underlying type.

Figure 6.3 shows the general idea of the generated `_var` class for an IDL type `T`, where `T` is a structure, union, or sequence. An instance of a `_var` class holds a private pointer to an instance of the underlying type. That instance is assumed to be dynamically allocated and is deallocated by the destructor when the `_var` instance goes out of scope.

The `_var` class acts as a smart pointer that wraps the underlying type. The overloaded indirection operator delegates member function calls on the `_var` instance to the underlying instance. Consider the following code fragment, which assumes that `T` is a sequence type:

```

class T_var {
public:
    T_var();
    T_var(T *);
    T_var(const T_var &);
    ~T();
    T_var & operator=(T *);
    T_var & operator=(const T_var &);
    T * operator->();
    const T * operator->() const;
    // etc...
private:
    T * myT;
};

```

```

class T { // or struct T
public:
    // Public members of T...
};

```

**Figure 6.3.** `_var` class for structures, unions, and sequences.

```

{
    T_var sv = new T;    // T is a sequence, sv assumes ownership
    sv->length(1);      // operator-> delegates to underlying T
    // ...
} // ~T_var() deallocates sequence

```

This example illustrates that instances of a `_var` class behave much like ordinary C++ class instance pointers. The difference is that `_var` classes also manage memory for the underlying type.

### 6.19.1 `_var` Classes for Structures, Unions, and Sequences

The following code shows the general form of `_var` classes for structures, unions, and sequences. (Depending on the exact underlying type, there may be additional member functions, which we discuss shortly.)

```

class T_var {
public:
    T_var();
    T_var(T *);
    T_var(const T_var &);
    ~T_var();

    T_var &    operator=(T *);
    T_var &    operator=(const T_var &);

    T *        operator->();
    const T *  operator->() const;

    operator T &();
    operator const T &() const;

    TE &        operator[](CORBA::ULong);           // For sequences
    const TE & operator[](CORBA::ULong) const;    // For sequences

    // Other member functions here...
private:
    T * myT;
};

```

`T_var()`

The default constructor initializes the internal pointer to the underlying instance to null. As a result, you cannot use a default-constructed `_var` instance until after you have initialized it.

```
T_var(T *)
```

The pointer constructor assumes that the passed pointer points to a dynamically allocated instance and takes ownership of the pointer.

```
T_var(const T_var &)
```

The copy constructor makes a deep copy of both the `T_var` and its underlying instance of type `T`. This means that assignment to a copy-constructed `T_var` affects only that copy and not the instance it was copied from.

```
~T_var()
```

The destructor deallocates the instance pointed to by the internal pointer.

```
T_var & operator=(T *)
```

The pointer assignment operator first deallocates the instance of type `T` currently held by the target `T_var` and then assumes ownership of the instance pointed to by its argument.

```
T_var & operator=(const T_var &)
```

The `T_var` assignment operator first deallocates the instance of type `T` currently held by the target `T_var` and then makes a deep assignment of both the `T_var` argument and the instance of type `T` that the argument points to.

```
T * operator->()  
const T * operator->() const
```

The indirection operator is overloaded to permit its use on both constant and non-constant instances of the underlying type. It returns a pointer to the underlying instance. This means that you can use the `T_var` to invoke any member function of the underlying type.

```
operator T &()  
const operator T &() const
```

These conversion operators permit a `T_var` to be used in places where a constant or non-constant reference to the underlying type is expected.

```
TE & operator[] (CORBA::ULong)
const TE & operator[] (CORBA::ULong) const
```

The subscript operators are generated if the `T_var` represents a sequence or an array. They permit you to index into a sequence as if the `T_var` were the actual sequence or array type. The operators exist for convenience, letting you avoid awkward expressions such as `sv->operator[] (0)`. (In this example, we assume that `TE` is the element type of the sequence.)

### 6.19.2 Simple Use of `_var` Classes

Let us consider a simple example of using the `_var` class for a sequence. The IDL definition of the sequence is

```
typedef sequence<string> NameSeq;
```

This generates two C++ types: `NameSeq`, which is the actual sequence, and `NameSeq_var`, which is the corresponding memory management wrapper. Here is a code fragment that illustrates use of `NameSeq_var` instances:

```
NameSeq_var ns; // Default constructor
ns = new NameSeq; // ns assumes ownership
ns->length(1); // Create one empty string
ns[0] = CORBA::string_dup("Bjarne"); // Explicit copy

NameSeq_var ns2(ns); // Deep copy constructor
ns2[0] = CORBA::string_dup("Stan"); // Deallocates "Bjarne"

NameSeq_var ns3; // Default constructor
ns3 = ns2; // Deep assignment
ns3[0] = CORBA::string_dup("Andrew"); // Deallocates "Stan"

cout << ns[0] << endl; // Prints "Bjarne";
cout << ns2[0] << endl; // Prints "Stan";
cout << ns3[0] << endl; // Prints "Andrew";

// When ns, ns2, and ns3 go out of scope,
// everything is deallocated cleanly...
```

As with `String_var`, the generated `_var` types are useful mainly to catch return values for dynamically allocated variable-length types. For example:

```
extern NameSeq * get_names(); // Returns heap-allocated instance
NameSeq_var nsv = get_names(); // nsv takes ownership
// No need to worry about deallocation from here on...
```

As you will see in Section 7.14, such allocation frequently happens when a client invokes an IDL operation. Using a `_var` instance to take ownership means that you need not constantly remember to deallocate the value at the correct time.

### 6.19.3 Some Pitfalls of Using `_var` Classes

Similar caveats apply to generic `_var` classes as apply to `String_var`. If you initialize a `_var` instance with a pointer or assign a pointer, you need to make sure that the pointer really points at dynamically allocated memory. Failure to do so results in disaster:

```
NameSeq names;                // Local sequence
// ...                        // Initialize sequence
NameSeq_var nsv(&names);      // Looming disaster!
NameSeq_var nsv(new NameSeq(names)); // Much better!
```

After you have assigned a pointer to a `_var` instance, you must be careful when dereferencing that pointer:

```
NameSeq_var famous = new NameSeq;
famous->length(1);
famous[0] = CORBA::string_dup("Bjarne");
NameSeq * fp = famous;                // Shallow assignment
NameSeq * ifp;
{
    NameSeq_var infamous = new NameSeq;
    infamous->length(1);
    infamous[0] = CORBA::string_dup("Bill");
    ifp = infamous;                    // Shallow assignment
    famous = infamous;                 // Deep assignment
}
cout << (*fp)[0] << endl; // Whoops, fp points nowhere
cout << (*ifp)[0] << endl; // Whoops, ifp points nowhere
```

These problems arise because assignment to a `_var` deallocates the previous underlying instance and so invalidates a pointer still pointing to that instance. Similarly, when a `_var` instance goes out of scope, it deallocates the underlying instance and invalidates any pointers still pointing at that instance.

In practice, such problems rarely occur because `_var` classes are used mainly to avoid memory leaks for return values and out parameters. You will see more examples of using `_var` classes in Section 7.14.12.

### 6.19.4 Differences Among Fixed- and Variable-Length Structures, Unions, and Sequences

The generated `_var` classes vary slightly in their interfaces depending on whether they wrap a fixed-length or a variable-length type. Normally, these differences are transparent to you. They exist to hide differences in parameter passing rules for fixed-length and variable-length types (we discuss this in more detail in Section 7.14.12).

All `_var` classes provide `in`, `inout`, `out`, and `_retn` member functions (with different signatures depending on whether the `_var` class wraps a variable- or a fixed-length type). In addition, `_var` classes for variable-length types have an extra conversion operator, whereas `_var` classes for fixed-length types provide an extra constructor and assignment operator.

#### Additional `T_var` Member Functions for Variable-Length Types

In addition to the member functions discussed on page 212, for a variable-length structure, union, or sequence of type `T`, the IDL compiler generates the following:

```
class T_var {
public:
    // Normal member functions here...

    // Member functions for variable-length T:
        operator T * &();
    const T &    in() const;
    T &          inout();
    T * &        out();
    T *          _retn();
};
```

```
operator T * &()
```

This additional conversion operator allows you to pass a variable-length `T_var` where a reference to a pointer to `T` is expected. This operator is used if `T_var` instances for variable-length types are passed as `out` parameters. We discuss this in detail in Section 7.14.

```
const T & in() const
T & inout()
T * & out()
```

These member functions allow you to explicitly pass a `T_var` as an `in`, `inout`, or `out` parameter instead of relying on default conversions. The functions are useful mainly if your compiler has defects relating to default conversions. You can also call these functions explicitly to improve code readability. If you pass a `T_var` instance to a function, it may not be immediately obvious whether the called function will modify the underlying value. By using these member functions, you can improve readability of the code:

```
StrSeq_var sv = ...;
some_func(sv);           // Passed as in, inout, or out?
some_func(sv.out());    // Much clearer...
```

The `out` member function deallocates the underlying instance of type `T` as a side effect to prevent memory leaks if the same `T_var` instance is passed to successive calls:

```
StrSeq_var sv = ...;
some_func(sv.out());    // Sets sv to heap-allocated instance.
some_func(sv.out());    // Deallocates previous instance, assumes
                        // ownership of new instance.
```

```
T * _retn()
```

This function returns the pointer to the underlying instance of type `T` and also relinquishes ownership of that pointer. It is useful mainly when you create a `T_var` to avoid memory leaks but then must transfer ownership of the underlying type (see page 168 for an example).

### Additional `T_var` Member Functions for Fixed-Length Types

For a `T_var` for a fixed-length structure, union, or sequence of type `T`, the IDL compiler generates the following:

```
class T_var {
public:
    // Normal member functions here...

    // Member functions for fixed-length T:
        T_var(const T &);
T_var &    operator=(const T &);
const T &    in() const;
T &        inout();
T &        out();
T         _retn();
};
```

```
T_var(const T &)
T & operator=(const T &)
```

The additional constructor and assignment operator permit you to construct or assign a `T_var` from a `T`.

```
const T & in() const
T & inout()
T & out()
T _retn()
```

These member functions are provided to deal with defective compilers that cannot handle default conversions correctly. They also make the direction in which a parameter is passed explicit at the point of call, something that improves code readability.

The `out` and `_retn` member functions for fixed-length types do *not* relinquish ownership of the underlying type. They cannot do this because they do not return a pointer.

### 6.19.5 `_var` Types for Arrays

The `_var` types generated for arrays follow a similar pattern as those for structures, unions, and sequences. The differences are that `_var` types for arrays do not overload the indirection operator (it is not needed for arrays) and that the return types of some of the member functions are different. `_var` types for arrays with variable-length and fixed-length elements also have some differences.

#### Array `_var` Mapping for Arrays with Variable-Length Elements

It is easiest to illustrate the mapping with an example. Here we define a three-element array containing variable-length structures:

```
struct Fraction { // Variable-length structure
    double numeric;
    string alphabetic;
};
typedef Fraction FractArr[3];
```

This maps to the following C++ definitions:

```
struct Fraction {
    CORBA::Double numeric;
    CORBA::String_mgr alphabetic;
};
```



```

class Fraction_var {
public:
    // As before...
};

typedef Fraction FractArr[3];
typedef Fraction FractArr_slice;

FractArr_slice *      FractArr_alloc();
FractArr_slice *      FractArr_dup(const FractArr_slice *);
void                  FractArr_copy(
                        FractArr_slice *      to,
                        const FractArr_slice * from
                    );
void                  FractArr_free(FractArr_slice *);

class FractArr_var {
public:
                                FractArr_var();
                                FractArr_var(FractArr_slice *);
                                FractArr_var(const FractArr_var &);
                                ~FractArr_var();

    FractArr_var &              operator=(FractArr_slice *);
    FractArr_var &              operator=(const FractArr_var & rhs);

    Fraction &                  operator[] (CORBA::ULong);
    const Fraction &            operator[] (CORBA::ULong) const;

                                operator FractArr_slice *();
                                operator const FractArr_slice *() const;
                                operator FractArr_slice * &();

    const FractArr_slice *      in() const;
    FractArr_slice *            inout();
    FractArr_slice * &          out();
    FractArr_slice *            _retn();
};

```

If all this looks a little intimidating, remember that the various member functions do exactly the same things as for `_var` types for structures, unions, and sequences.

- The default constructor initializes the internal pointer to the underlying array to null.

- Constructors and assignment operators that accept an argument of type `FractArr_slice *` assume that the array was allocated with `FractArr_alloc` or `FractArr_dup`, and they take ownership of the passed pointer.
- The copy constructor and `FractArr_var` & assignment operator each make a deep copy.
- The destructor deallocates the array by calling `FractArr_free`.
- The subscript operators allow indexing into the array, so you can use a `FractArr_var` as if it were the actual array.
- The conversion operators permit passing the array as an `in`, `inout`, or `out` parameter (see Section 7.14.12).
- The explicit conversion functions `in`, `inout`, and `out` behave as for structures, unions, and sequences (see page 216).
- The `_retn` function permits you to relinquish ownership of the underlying type (see page 168 for an example).

All this means that you can use an array `_var` as if it were the actual array; you just need to remember that an array `_var` must be initialized with dynamically allocated memory.

```
const char * fractions[] = { "1/2", "1/3", "1/4" };

FractArr_var fal = FractArr_alloc();
for (CORBA::ULong i = 0; i < 3; i++) {           // Initialize fal
    fal[i].numeric = 1.0 / (i + 2);
    fal[i].alphabetic = fractions[i];          // Deep copy
}

FractArr_var fa2 = fal;                         // Deep copy
fa2[0].alphabetic = CORBA::string_dup("half"); // Explicit copy
fa2[1] = fa2[2];                               // Deep assignment

cout.precision(2);
for (CORBA::ULong i = 0; i < 3; i++) {         // Print fal
    cout << "fal[" << i << "].numeric = "
        << fal[i].numeric
        << ",\tfal[" << i << "].alphabetic = "
        << fal[i].alphabetic << endl;
}
cout << endl;
for (CORBA::ULong i = 0; i < 3; i++) {         // Print fa2
    cout << "fa2[" << i << "].numeric = "
```

```

        << fa2[i].numeric
        << ",\tfa2[" << i << "].alphabetic = "
        << fa2[i].alphabetic << endl;
    }

```

The output of this program is as follows:

```

fa1[0].numeric = 0.5,   fa1[0].alphabetic = 1/2
fa1[1].numeric = 0.33, fa1[1].alphabetic = 1/3
fa1[2].numeric = 0.25, fa1[2].alphabetic = 1/4

```

```

fa2[0].numeric = 0.5,   fa2[0].alphabetic = half
fa2[1].numeric = 0.25, fa2[1].alphabetic = 1/4
fa2[2].numeric = 0.25, fa2[2].alphabetic = 1/4

```

### Array `_var` Mapping for Arrays with Fixed-Length Elements

The mapping for `_var` types for arrays with fixed-length elements is almost identical to the mapping for `_var` types for arrays with variable-length elements. Here we define a three-element array containing fixed-length structures:

```

struct S {                // Fixed-length structure
    long   l_mem;
    char   c_mem;
};
typedef S StructArray[3];

```

The mapping for the corresponding `StructArray_var` type is as follows:

```

class StructArray_var {
public:
    StructArray_var();
    StructArray_var(StructArray_slice *);
    StructArray_var(const StructArray_var &);
    ~StructArray_var();

    StructArray_var & operator=(StructArray_slice *);
    StructArray_var & operator=(const StructArray_var & rhs);

    S & operator[] (CORBA::ULong);
    const S & operator[] (CORBA::ULong) const;

    operator StructArray_slice *();
    operator const StructArray_slice *() const;

    const StructArray_slice * in() const;

```

```
    StructArray_slice *      inout();  
    StructArray_slice *      out();  
    StructArray_slice *      _retn();  
};
```

The only differences between `_var` types for arrays with fixed-length and those for variable-length elements are that for fixed-length elements, the `out` member function returns a pointer instead of a reference to a pointer and that no user-defined conversion operator for `StructArray_slice * &` is defined. These differences originate in the different parameter passing rules for variable-length and fixed-length types. We discuss these rules in detail in Section 7.14.

---

## 6.20 Summary

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The basic C++ mapping defines how built-in types and user-defined types map to C++. Although some of the classes generated by the mapping have a large number of member functions, within a short time you will find yourself using them as you use any other data type. Even the memory management rules, which may seem complex right now, soon become second nature. When writing your code, keep in mind that you should be looking at the IDL definitions and not at the generated header files. In that way, you avoid getting confused by many internal details and cryptic work-arounds for different platforms and compilers.