

Name Space Management in C++

Bjarne Stroustrup

AT&T Bell Laboratories
Murray Hill, New Jersey 07974

ABSTRACT

This is a proposal for a mechanism for defining name spaces in such a way that users can compose programs from separately developed fragments (libraries) without worrying too much about names used for different classes or functions in different fragments. The scheme is based on namespace declarations for gathering otherwise global declarations into a separate name space, qualification for explicit access to a namespace, and using declarations for implicit access to a namespace. Two alternative designs, one without using and one where a namespace is a kind of class, are discussed in appendices.

1 The Problem

Like C, C++ provides a single global name space into which every name that doesn't conveniently fit into a class or a function must be entered. This makes it (unnecessarily) difficult to write program fragments that can be linked together without fear of name clashes. For example:

```
// my.h:
char f(char);
int f(int);
class String { /* ... */ };

// your.h:
char f(char);
double f(double);
class String { /* ... */ };
```

Given these definitions, a third party cannot easily use both `my.h` and `your.h`.

Note that some of these names will appear in object code and that some programs will be shipped without source. This implies that "macro-like" schemes that change the appearance of programs without actually changing the names presented to a linker are insufficient. Further, I assume that there are too many linkers and too many object code formats around to make it feasible to change them. For a solution to be useful for us it must require only facilities provided by almost all current linkers. This implies that disambiguation must be compiled into the object code by providers of program fragments. In particular, library providers will have to use a technique that allows users to disambiguate. I foresee no problems getting library providers to cooperate – that is, to use a name space resolution scheme – because they (partly through their users) are the main sufferers in the current situation.

Workarounds

There are several workarounds. For example:

```
// my.h:
char my_f(char);
int my_f(int);
class my_String { /* ... */ };
```

```
// your.h:
char yo_f(char);
double yo_f(double);
class yo_String { /* ... */ };
```

This approach is not uncommon, but it is quite ugly and – unless the prefix strings are short – quite unpleasant for the user. Macro hackery can make this approach even nastier (or even nicer, if you happen to like macros):

```
// my.h:
#define my(X) myprefix_##X

char my(f)(char);
int my(f)(int);
class my(String) { /* ... */ };
```

```
// your.h:
#define yo(X) your_##X

char yo(f)(char);
double yo(f)(double);
class yo(String) { /* ... */ };
```

The idea is to allow longer prefixes in the real name used for linkage while leaving the names used in the program short. As with all macro schemes, this creates a problem for tools: Either the tool keeps track of the mapping (complicating the tool) or the user will have to do so (complicating programming and maintenance).

An alternative approach – often preferred by people who dislike macros – is to wrap related information into a class:

```
// my.h:
class My {
public:
    static char f(char);
    static int f(int);
    class String { /* ... */ };
};

// your.h:
class Your {
public:
    static char f(char);
    static double f(double);
    class String { /* ... */ };
};
```

Unfortunately, this approach suffers from many little inconveniences. Not all global declarations can be simply transferred into a class and some change their meaning if you do so. For example, global functions and variables must be specified as static members to avoid semantic changes and the function bodies and initializers must in general be separated from their declarations:

```
int f(int) { /* ... */ }
char a[] = "asdfg";
```

cannot become simply:

```
class Nice_try {
    int f(int) { /* ... */ }
    char a[] = "asdfg";
};
```

but must be reworked into:

```
class better_but_not_nice {
public:
    static int f(int);
    static char a[];
};

int better_but_not_nice::f(int) { /* ... */ }
char better_but_not_nice::a[] = "asdfg";
```

Furthermore, there is no way of making use of these “wrapped” declarations as notationally conveniently as use of ordinary globals. For example:

```
void h()
{
    int a = f(2);
    String s = "asdf"
}
```

looks noticeably cleaner than

```
void h()
{
    int a = my_f(2);
    my_String s = "asdf"
}
```

and

```
void h()
{
    int a = My::f(2);
    My::String s = "asdf"
}
```

especially when the prefix has to be repeated hundreds of times in a source file. There is no way of saying “in this program I use the names from the My library.” For a further discussion of classes and namespaces, see Appendix B.

Ideals for a solution

There are many mechanisms that can be used to provide solutions to namespace problems. Indeed most languages can claim to have at least the rudiments of one. For example, C has its static functions, Pascal its nested scopes, C++ its classes, but we need to go to languages such as PL/I, Ada, Modula-2, Modula-3, ML, and CLOS for more complete solutions.

So what would a good namespace mechanism give us in C++? A lengthy and voluminous discussion of the extensions working group mailing list provided a list:

- [1] The ability to link two libraries without name clashes.
- [2] The ability to introduce names without fear of clashing with someone else’s names (e.g. names used in a library I haven’t heard of or names I haven’t heard of in a library I though I knew).
- [3] The ability to add a name to the implementation of a library without affecting its users.
- [4] The ability to select names from two different libraries even if those two libraries use the same names.
- [5] The ability to resolve name clashes without modifying source code statements (i.e. through declarations manipulating the name space resolution).
- [6] The ability to add a name to a namespace without fear of causing a quiet change to code using other namespaces (we cannot provide such a guarantee for code using the namespace being added to).
- [7] The ability to avoid clashes among name space names (in particular, the ability to have the “real” or linkage name longer than the name used in user code).
- [8] The ability to use the name space mechanism to deal with the standard libraries.
- [9] C and C++ compatibility.

- [10] No added cost in link-time or run-time for the users of namespaces.
- [11] No added verbosity for the users of namespaces compared to users of global names.
- [12] The ability to indicate more explicitly where a name is supposed to come from in code using the name.

In addition, a good solution must be simple. We might define “simple” as:

- [1] A mechanism that can be explained to the degree needed for serious use in less than ten minutes. (Explaining any mechanism to the satisfaction of language lawyers will take much longer).
- [2] Something a C++ compiler writer can implement in less than two weeks.

In addition, there are some properties that have been asked for but that I don’t propose to support directly with new features:

- [1] The ability to take binaries with clashing link names and link them together. (This can be done by tools in all systems, but I don’t see a language mechanism that could easily be implemented without significant effort or overhead on *all* systems). See also §1 and §7.
- [2] The ability to provide arbitrary synonyms for names used in libraries. (Existing mechanisms, such as typedef, references, and macros, provide mechanisms for providing synonyms in many cases). See also Appendix C.

Naturally, it is possible to add criteria to these lists and no two people will agree to the exact importance of the criteria, but these lists give an idea of the complexity of the problem and the demands that a solution must meet.

As I work through the proposed namespace mechanism, its uses, its possible misuses, possible alternative designs, and details, you will probably get lost at times. Let me therefore state that the proposed solution is fundamentally simple. It provides four new mechanisms:

- [1] A mechanism for defining a scope that holds what have traditionally been global declarations in C and C++: a namespace. Such scopes can be named and a namespace’s members can be named using the traditional notation for class members: `namespace_name::member_name`. In fact, a class scope can be seen as a special case of a namespace scope.
- [2] A mechanism for defining a local synonym for a namespace name.
- [3] A mechanism to allow explicitly specified members of a namespace to be accessed without the explicit `namespace::qualification`: a *using-declaration*.
- [4] A mechanism to allow all members of a namespace to be accessed without the explicit `namespace_name::qualification`: a *using-directive*.

I believe this suffices to meet the criteria above. In addition, it solves a long-standing problem with access to base class members from a derived class scope (see §10) and renders `static` redundant as used for global names (see §9).

The text suggested for addition to the reference manual (§11) is about one page and a half and makes some existing text about classes redundant.

2 Namespaces

Consider a language construct specifically providing name spaces:

```
namespace A {  
    void f(int);  
    void f(char);  
    class String { /* ... */ };  
    // ...  
}
```

The names declared within the *namespace* braces are in namespace A and do not collide with global names or names in any other name space. The semantics of declarations (including definitions) in a name space are exactly that of global declarations except that the scope of their names are restricted to the name space.

To use a name from a namespace A you can either explicitly qualify it

```
A::String s;
```

or import it into a scope

```
using A::String;
String s;          // meaning A::String
```

A *using-declaration* that mentions a namespace member `NS::m` declares a local name `m` that can be used to access whatever object, type, functions, etc., is named by `m` in `NS`. One can import either a single name or a set of names from a namespace:

```
using X::f;          // import f from X
using X::{f, g, h};  // import f, g, and h from X
```

See §11 for a grammar.

Redundant using declarations are allowed just like other redundant declarations.

The usual scope rules apply:

```
void g(int i)
{
    using A::String;

    String s = "asdf";

    if (i) {
        extern void h();
        using A::f;

        // we can use h() and f() here
    }
    else {
        // h() and f() are not in scope here

        struct String // hides A::String
        { /* ... */ };

        String ss;     // local String
    }

    // h() and f() are not in scope here

    String s2 = "asdf"; // A::string
}
```

Once a name is declared locally with a *using-declaration*, ambiguity detection and overload resolution apply as usual. For example:

```
extern void f(double);
using A::f;

void hh()
{
    f(2.0);          // ::f(double)
    f(1);             // A::f(int)
    A::f(2.0);        // A::f(int)
    ::f(1);           // A::f(int)
    // there are three f()s declared in the
    // global scope (one declared with
    // 'extern,' two with 'using') ambiguity
    // resolution choses the f(int)
    f('c');          // A::f(char)
}
```

Note that `using A::f` brings in all `fs` from `A`. See also §5.

It is an error to declare `X::m` unless `X` is a namespace and there is an `m` in `X`. In `X::m`, it is known that `X` must be a namespace name because it precedes `::`. Thus, following the rule for class names (ARM §5.1), `X` can be found even if it has been hidden by a local non-namespace name:

```
namespace X {
    int m1;
    int m2;
}

int Y;

void f()
{
    int X;
    using X::m1;    // ok (the local X isn't a namespace name)

    int m2;
    using X::m2;    // error: two declarations of m2 in f()

    using X::m3;    // error: no m3 in X

    using Y::m;      // error: no namespace Y in scope
    using Z::m;      // error: no namespace Z in scope
}
```

using Complete Namespaces

Mentioning every name from a namespace that one wants to use explicitly in a *using-declaration* can be tedious. Long lists of names are also potentially error-prone because they tend to be incomplete and not resilient to changes in the namespace they refer to. Consequently, it is possible to make all names from a namespace available without qualification or specific mention of individual names. For example:

```
void g(int i)
{
    using A;
    String s = "asdf";
}
```

or equivalently

```
using A;

void g(int i)
{
    String s = "asdf";
}
```

The using of a complete namespace simply makes the names from the namespace available as if they had been declared without a namespace at the point where their namespace was declared; it does *not* define local aliases for the names in the namespace. One might think as a *using-directive* as granting a key that allows a namespace to be opened when found during a name lookup. For example, a namespace

```
namespace A {
    int a, b;
};
```

looks like plain

```
int a, b;
```

to code for which

```
using A;
```

is in scope. In this, a *using-directive* differs from a *using-declaration* of specific names. For example:

```
namespace X {
    int i, j, k;
};

int k;

void f1()
{
    int i = 0;
    using X;           // make names from X accessible
    i++;               // local i
    j++;               // X::j
    k++;               // error: X::k or global k ?
}

void f2()
{
    int i = 0;
    using X::i;         // error: i declared twice in f2()
    using X::j;
    using X::k;         // hides global k
    i++;
    j++;               // X::j
    k++;               // X::k
}
```

For more name resolution details see §5. Note that the meaning of a *using-directive* doesn't depend on exactly where it is placed as long as it is in scope. For example,

```
using X;           // make names from X accessible

void f1()
{
    int i = 0;
    i++;           // local i
    j++;           // X::j
    k++;           // error: X::k or global k ?
}
```

is equivalent to the definition of `f1()` above.

The main reason for having *namespace-declarations* introduce local aliases and *namespace-directives* not to is to ensure that whenever a name is explicitly named in a local declaration then that declaration determines the meaning of that name in the local context without interference from other declarations of that name in other contexts.

3 How to Use Namespaces

A supplier, say a library vendor, will present an interface to a set of services in the form of a namespace. For example:

```
namespace my_library {
    // classes
    // typedefs
    // global variable declarations
    // templates
    // global function declarations
    // consts
    // inline functions
    // etc.
}
```

Typically, this will be placed in a header file so that a user includes the namespace like this:

```
#include "my_library.h"
```

```
// use my_library
```

To actually access the library facilities, the user has several choices. One can crudely and effectively make all the names from the library available in the global scope:

```
#include "my_library.h"
using my_library;
```

This is equivalent to a traditional `#include` of a header file that doesn't use name spaces. After

```
using my_library;
```

every name from `my_library` is available without qualification. If used, names from `my_library` that clash with other global names clash (and the compiler detects the clashes). Overload resolution applies as usual to functions defined both in the namespace and in the scope where the `using` declaration appears.

A more selective approach will be taken by users who worry about name clashes, about function name resolution, or about documenting which facilities from `my_library` are used. For example:

```
#include "my_library.h"
using my_library::(String, f); // String and f from my_library
                               // can be used from here on:

String s;           // my_library::String

void g()
{
    f();             // my_library::f
    // ...
}

void h()
{
    using my_library::g; // h() can also use my_library::g

    g();             // my_library::g
    f();             // my_library::f
    // ...
}
```

Namespace Aliases

If the repetition of the namespace name gets tedious a synonym can be introduced:

```
#include "my_library.h"
namespace lib = my_library;

using lib::(String, f); // lib::String and lib::f
                       // can be used from here on

String s;           // lib::String

void g()
{
    f();             // lib::f
    // ...
}
```



```
void h()
{
    using lib::g; // lib::g can be used
                  // from here on in h()

    g(); // lib::g
    f(); // lib::f
    // ...
}
```

In addition to notational convenience the use of a synonym also makes it easier to change libraries. For example, changing the first two lines of my program (only) to:

```
#include "your_library.h"
namespace lib = your_library;
```

will ensure that all of the code uses `your_library`. We considered using `typedef` for introducing synonyms for namespaces, but a namespace isn't a type. You can introduce as many synonyms for a namespace as you like, but the real name of the namespace – as known to the linker – is still the original name (only).

Suppliers

Library suppliers need to provide an implementation for the facilities offered by the interface. Typically, this will involve including the header containing the namespace declaration (just like users do) and then use qualification in the definition of types, functions, objects, etc.:

```
#include "my_library.h"

void my_library::f()
{
    // ...
}

int my_library::a = 7;
```

Alternatively, an implementor can wrap the definitions in a namespace declaration:

```
#include "my_library.h"

namespace my_library {

    void f() // define my_library::f()
    {
        // ...
    }

    int a = 7; // define my_library::a
}
```

Here `f()` and `a` are defined in the scope of `X`.

A `using` declaration gives access to namespace names only when looking for a *use* of a name; it does not affect definitions of new types, objects, functions, etc. For example:

```
#include "my_library.h"
using my_library;

void f() // define ::f(), not mylibrary::f()
{
    // ...
}
```

does *not* define `mylibrary::f()` but a global `f()`. This could of course be different from what the

programmer expected, but that mistake will lead to an undefined `mylibrary::f()` which will eventually be detected. Also, global functions (not in namespaces) should become far less common than they are today. Had the opposite decision – that `using` allowed unqualified functions to define members of a namespace – been taken, a programmer would never have been sure whether an apparently global function really was global. Its definition could have been captured by some unknown declaration in some namespace.

Typically, only a subset of the declarations in an implementation are part of the header(s) given to users as the interface(s). The implementor will therefore put additional names into a namespace and will also gain access to additional information from other name spaces needed by the implementation (only). For example:

```
#include "my_library.h" // interface part of library namespace

namespace my_library { // implementation details
    // ...
}

using my_library; // convenient access to all of my_library

#include "helper1"
#include "helper2"

using helper1; // or apply ``using`` selectively
using helper2; // or apply ``using`` selectively

// ...
```

This kind of distributed specification of members of a namespace can be used to supply several header files for a system (describing different aspects of it) without having to use several different name spaces.

Alternatively, implementors may choose to keep implementation details in their own namespace:

```
#include "my_library.h"

namespace my_library_impl { // implementation details
    using my_library;
    // ...
}

using my_library_impl; // convenient access to all of my_library

#include "helper1"
#include "helper2"

using helper1; // or apply ``using`` selectively
using helper2; // or apply ``using`` selectively

// ...
```

This makes the separation between the interface and the implementation clearer and will therefore often be the better implementation technique.

4 Multiple Namespaces

Consider two namespaces using the same name:

```
namespace A {
    class String { /* ... */ };
    // ...
}
```

```
namespace B {  
    class String { /* ... */ };  
    // ...  
}  
  
using A;  
using B;  
  
String s; // error: A::String or B::String
```

Clearly, the unqualified use of `String` is an error. However, should it be an error to say

```
using A;  
using B;
```

when `A` and `B` both have a `String`? That is, do we check for inconsistent using declarations or inconsistent uses? We check for inconsistent uses (only). This is in line with other places in the language – for example, overloading and name resolution where multiple inheritance is used – where we outlaw actual errors only, and not potential errors. Also, a user that worries about potential name clashes can minimize then by detailed inclusions:

```
using A::String;  
using B::f;  
  
String s; // ok: A::String
```

Note that applying `using` to individual names can lead to clashes at the point of the `using` declaration:

```
using A::String;  
using B::String;           // error: Two definitions of String  
class String { ... };     // error: Three definitions of String
```

One way of thinking of this is that a

```
using A;
```

declaration enters a reference to `A` in the local scope that is searched and checked whenever a lookup is done in the local scope. A more specific declaration

```
using A::(f, g);
```

actually enters `f` and `g` into the local scope. Naturally, implementors have a variety of techniques at their service so this may not actually be the way an implementation really works – it will simply look that way to a user.

So, how does a user resolve a clash caused by multiple *using-directives*?:

```
using A;  
using B;  
  
String s; // error: A::String or B::String
```

One way would be to modify the code:

```
A::String s;
```

but that is not always feasible or convenient. The alternative of changing the *using-directives* to more specific *using-declarations* was mentioned above, but there is a third alternative: Use a *using-declaration* and an extra scope to resolve the ambiguity:

```
using A;
using B;

namespace Mine { // namespace introduced to allow declaration of String

    using A::String;

    String s; // A::String

    // ...
}
```

Old Code

I expect that it will be common to take code that does not use namespaces and convert it to use them. An old program or an old library will typically consist of a couple of header files containing class declarations, constants, templates, inline functions, etc., and a set of .c files containing the definition of functions, global variables etc.

The conversion can be done only by changing the source code and (re)compiling. The first step in the conversion would be to wrap the header files, excluding their includes of other headers in namespace declarations and other declarations meant to be declared elsewhere. For example:

```
// Mine.h:
// not using namespace

#include <iostreams>
#include "foob.h"

extern int a;
const int c = 7;
// ...
extern g(); // not one of mine; I'm just using g()
// ...
void f();
inline int frob() { return c+99; }
```

becomes

```
// Mine.h:
// now namespace Mine

#include <iostreams>
#include "foob.h"

namespace Mine {
    extern int a;
    const int c = 7;
    // ...
} // namespace Mine

extern g(); // not one of mine; I'm just using g()

namespace Mine {
    // ...
    void f();
    inline int frob() { return c+99; }
} // namespace Mine
```

I like the indentation, but realistically, it will often not be done when converting hundreds of lines of declarations. Had distributed specification of members of a namespace not been allowed we would have had to reorder this header.

Next we need to ensure that the definitions in the .c files match up with the declarations now in the

namespace Mine. This can be done by any of the techniques mentioned in §4. However, someone doing a conversion that is not part of a significant rewrite will want to minimize the modifications to the code. This can be done by wrapping the files, excluding declarations of supporting functions, variables, etc., from elsewhere, in

```
namespace Mine {  
    // ...  
}
```

This ensures that functions that are not named in the header `Mine.h` don't escape into the global name space.

5 Name Resolution

The naming rules associated with this name space proposal are designed to provide a user a choice between notational convenience and safety in the access to functions in a name space. Consider:

```
// my old program:  
  
void f(double);  
  
void g()  
{  
    f(1);    // calls f(double)  
    f(1.0);  // calls f(double)  
}
```

Let us introduce a namespace A into this program:

```
// my old program:      // now modified  
  
void f(double);  
  
namespace A {  
    void f(int);  
    void g();  
}  
  
using A; // make A's names available  
  
void h()  
{  
    f(1);    // calls f(double)    // no, now calls f(int)!  
    f(1.0);  // calls f(double)    // still  
    A::f(1); // calls f(int)  
    g();     // calls A::g()  
}
```

The namespace was not only defined (by the namespace declaration), but also used (by the using declaration). This implied a change of meaning of the program (according to the rules of overload resolution) exactly as would have been the case if the function `f(int)` had been declared without the name space mechanism. This is correct and desirable behavior if you consider the functions from A at the same logical level as the global functions. This will typically be the case when all of the global functions are in fact imported from some name space or other or if the global functions are intended to supplement the functions supplied by a library.

Prefer Global Names

However, the names from a namespace will often be the interface to a library and simply included by some `#include` directive by a user that never actually looked carefully at the contents of the included file. In that case, the user might want to give priority to global functions and then it makes sense to use functions from a name space only in their qualified form:

```
// my old program:  // now modified

void f(double);

namespace A {
    void f(int);
    void g();
}

// no ``using A;``

void g()
{
    f(1);      // calls f(double) // still
    f(1.0);    // calls f(double) // still
    A::f(1);   // calls f(int);
    g();
}
```

This can be useful where a minor modification is made to an existing program and preservation of behavior is essential. However, being explicit for some calls only can lead to surprises because the overload resolution mechanism has been effectively disabled.

Prefer “Own” Names

Another approach involves wrapping the “local” code into a namespace to ensure that “local” declarations are given priority over names from other namespaces:

```
// my old program:      // now modified

namespace A {
    void f(int);
    void g();
}

namespace Mine {

    void f(double);
    using A;

    void g()
    {
        f(1);      // calls f(double)
        f(1.0);    // calls f(double)
        A::f(1);   // calls f(int)
        g();
    }
}
```

This technique of wrapping one’s own functions in a namespace has three important properties:

- [1] You no longer pollute the global space with your own names.
- [2] A change in included namespaces such as A no longer affects working code (even where using A was used) because the local declarations are given priority.
- [3] It allows me to be explicit about what names are my own. Note that global names coming from include files are often not controlled by their user so considering all global names “my own” would often be a poor assumption.

Again, the technique of wrapping one’s own code in a namespace uses the scope rules to limit the effectiveness of the ambiguity control mechanism and can therefore be dangerous. An alternative view is that disabling overloading in this way enhances safety.

Overload Resolution

Note that a `using` declaration introduces every function of a given name into a new scope. This is essential to preserve the designer's intentions about their use. For example:

```
namespace A {
    void f(int);
    void f(char);
}
```

It is clearly the intent of the designer of A that `f(97)` should call `f(int)` and `f('a')` should call `f(char)`. Allowing selective inclusion of `f(int)` and `f(char)` into a scope would lay the user open to subtle and unnecessary errors. For example:

```
void g()
{
    using A::f(int); // not allowed, but ``what if?``
    f('a');         // calls f(int), probably wrong
}
```

When converting old code it is essential that overload resolution apply across namespace boundaries. Consider:

```
// my.h:
int f(int);
// ...

// your.h:
double f(double);
// ...

// x.c
#include my.h
#include your.h

// ...

void g()
{
    f(1);    // calls f(int)
    f(1.0);  // calls f(double)
}
```

after the obvious conversion to namespaces this will work as before:

```
// my.h:
namespace my {
    int f(int);
    // ...
}

// your.h:
namespace your {
    double f(double);
    // ...
}
```

```
// x.c
#include my.h
#include your.h

use my;
use your;

// ...

void g()
{
    f(1);    // calls f(int)
    f(1.0);  // calls f(double)
}
```

Similarly, using a namespace for my.h only will not change the meaning.

C Struct Hack

I do not propose to extend the C compatibility hack of allowing the same name for a class and a non-class names to apply across name spaces. For example

```
class X { public: /* ... */ X(); /* ...*/ };
void X(int);

void f()
{
    struct X a;
    X(1);      // function call
}
```

This cannot be rewritten as

```
namespace A {
    class X { public: /* ... */ X(); /* ...*/ };
}
namespace B {
    void X(int);
}

using A;
using B;

void f()
{
    struct X a;    // error
    X(1);          // error
}
```

The reason to disallow this is partly a wish not to perpetuate the C struct hack, partly to ensure that a C++ syntax checker isn't required to do ambiguity resolution. Consequently, a use of a name that is found as a type name in one namespace and as non-type name in another is an error.

Dispersed namespace definitions

Consider:


```
namespace A { void f(); }

using A;

void f1()
{
    g();    // error: no g() declared
}

namespace A { void g(); }

void f2()
{
    g();    // ok? ok!
}
```

The second call of `g` is ok because “`using A;`” is a directive to look into `A` whenever a name lookup is done, not a directive to enter the names from `A` at the point of the `using` declaration into the current scope. On the other hand

```
namespace A { void f(); }

using A::g;
```

is an error because there is no `A::g` to refer to. Similarly, definition of names not already declared in a namespace is not allowed. For example:

```
void A::g() { /* ... */ } // error: no g in A
```

The reason not to allow addition of a new name into a namespace `A` simply by defining it `using A::` is to protect against misspellings, misunderstandings as to which namespace a name belongs to, etc.

Lookup Details

Using a namespace name before it has been declared is not allowed in order to make it possible to catch typos: For example:

```
// no previous definition of A
using A;    // error: A undefined
```

The same effect can be achieved with dispersed namespace definition:

```
namespace A { }
using A;    // fine
// ...
namespace A { /* ... */ }
```

This makes it possible to write mutual references between namespaces:

```
namespace B { }

namespace A {
    using B;
    // ...
}

namespace B {
    using A;
    // ...
}
```

Fortunately, it is trivial for implementations to avoid infinite loops by simply never using the same namespace twice in a single lookup.

Global Scope

Consider

```
int a;

void f()
{
    int a;
    a++;    // local a
    ::a++;  // global a
}
```

If we wrap a namespace around this and add yet another variable called a we get:

```
int a;

namespace X {
    int a;

    void f()
    {
        int a;
        a++;    // local a
        X::a++; // X::a
        ::a++;  // X::a or global a ? global a !
    }
}
```

In other words, we have to decide whether qualification by `::` means “global” or “in the nearest enclosing namespace.” The former would ensure that wrapping arbitrary code in a namespace implied no change of meaning. However, that would leave the genuinely global name inaccessible, so I propose the latter meaning so that `::a` refers to a name found in the global scope (including, of course, names imported into the global scope by *using-declarations* and *using-directives*).

Note that *using-directives* can cause clashes between global names and names in a namespace:

```
int a;

namespace X {
    int a;
}

int i1 = a; // global a

using X;

int i2 = a;    // error: X::a or global a ?
int i3 = ::a; // error: X::a or global a ?
```

Overloading and Namespaces

One of the most vigorously debated issues about namespace was: Should functions overload across namespaces and if so should overloading somehow be restricted compared with “ordinary” overloading? This proposal suggests that overloading across namespaces be allowed according to the usual overloading rules. Where that is not desirable I can either refrain from using *using-declarations* and *using-directives*, or wrap my functions in a separate namespace (§4). The reason for allowing overloading across namespaces are:

- [1] I feel overloading together with ambiguity control is an important convenience (function with the same name and unrelated names doesn’t clash, so that I don’t have to take action to resolve such clashes; say, by renaming functions) and protection (calls that are ambiguous according to the usual C++ rules are caught).
- [2] Overloading across `#include` header boundaries exists in current practice and overloading across namespace boundaries is essential to maintain current practices and upgrade current code.
- [3] Use of overloaded operators, especially current uses of `<<` becomes quite difficult if overloading

across namespaces is not supported.

- [4] The option *not* to overload is available in a convenient form (use explicit qualification or express a local preference by a *using-declaration*).

6 Nested Namespaces

One obvious use of namespaces is to wrap a complete set of declarations and definitions in a separate namespace:

```
namespace X {  
    // all my declarations  
}
```

The list of declarations will in general contain namespace declarations. Thus, for practical reasons – as well as for the simple reason that constructs ought to nest unless there is a strong reason for them not to – nested namespaces are allowed. For example:

```
namespace X {  
    namespace Y {  
        void f();  
        // ...  
    }  
    // ...  
}
```

A user of X can use names from Y only through explicit qualification or an appropriate using declaration:

```
f();           // error: no f in global scope  
X::f();        // error: no f in X  
X::Y::f();     // fine  
using X;  
Y::f();        // fine  
using Y;  
f();           // fine
```

or alternatively

```
using X::Y;  
f();           // fine
```

Naturally, using can be used within a namespace. For example:

```
namespace A {  
    void f();  
}  
  
namespace B {  
    namespace C {  
        void g();  
    }  
    void h();  
    using A;           // make A's names visible through B  
    using C;           // make C's names visible through B  
}  
  
void k()  
{  
    using B;  
    f();               // B::f == A::f  
    g();               // B::g == B::C::f  
    h();               // B::h  
}
```

This implies that namespace names are type names from the point of view of a parser and thus not a new implementation burden.

Note that using a namespace A from within a namespace B does not make A itself a member of B:

```
namespace A {
    void f();
}

namespace B {
    using A;          // make A's names visible through B
    void f();
    void g();
}

void h()
{
    B::A::f(); // error: No A in B
    B::f();    // ok
    using B;
    f();       // error: ambiguous
}
```

The reason that `B::f` doesn't lead to an ambiguity with `A::f` is that `f` is found in `B` so that there is no need to look out into the global scope – where `A::f` would have been found because of the `using A`.

To contrast, the plain `f()` is ambiguous because the `using B` in `h()` plus the `using A` in `B` implies that both `A::f` and `B::f` are seen when the global scope is considered looking for `f()` outside `h()`.

Using a non-local name from within a namespace is equivalent to having qualified it with the namespace name when looking:

```
void B::g()
{
    f(); // ok: B::f
}
```

As seen from `B::g()`, `f` is the local name `B::f` so there is no need to look “out” into the global scope – where `A::f` would have been found because of the `using A`.

7 Namespace Names

The name of a global namespace must be unique among the global names in a program. For example:

```
namespace Foo {
    // ...
}

void Foo(); // error: name clash
```

This implies that the problem of name clashes has been “moved out” one level rather than solved in general. This is acceptable because it reduces the number of names that can clash by a couple of orders of magnitude and also because there is a class of non-clashing names that can be used for namespace names. I imagine that company names and names of major libraries will be popular as namespace names. Such names are kept distinct by commercial law and also by strong interests in keeping product names separate and widely known. A namespace called `bs` might work in a local environment but would be ill-chosen for world-wide use. However, `ATT`, `Rational`, and `IBM` will only clash provided there already are other problems with those names†. Allowing the user to disambiguate clashing names in the absence of source code requires tools that cannot be portable because they will have to operate on object code format and obey local linkage conventions. However, in many environments it is not too hard to write a tool that converts an object file to another that is equivalent except that different names are used. This can allow a particular user to overcome problems that cannot be solved in general.

Using longer names will help avoid clashes, but more or less requires the use of synonyms:

† There are – or at least there used to be – two companies with the legal name ‘Rational’ in the USA.

```
namespace American_Telephone_and_Telegraph {  
    // ...  
}  
namespace ATT = American_Telephone_and_Telegraph;
```

Such names would make implementation harder and/or more expensive (in time and/or space) given the usual state of linker technology.

One might consider avoiding clashes between namespace names and other names by requiring uses of namespace names to be prefixed by the keyword `namespace` much as C structure tags have to be prefixed by the keyword `struct`. I consider that too ugly. To see that, rewrite the examples in this paper to consistently use `namespace` as a prefix or read a large C program that does not use `typedef` or `#define` to minimize `struct` as a prefix.

Note that the name of a namespace can be “re-used” within a namespace, but such a name will cause a name clash if used unadorned in the global scope. For example:

```
namespace X {  
    class X {  
        // ...  
    };  
    // ...  
}  
  
X::X a;    // no problem so far  
  
using X;   // no problem so far  
  
X b;       // error: namespace X and class X used in same scope
```

8 Standard Libraries

Consider:

```
#include <iostream.h>  
#include <string.h>  
  
int main()  
{  
    char* p = "Hello, world!"  
    cout << p << ' ' << strlen(p) << '\n';  
}
```

This had better work as expected. However, we would also like to use `iostreams` and C-style strings without polluting the global namespace.

This can be done like this: First take the current `<string.h>` and use it to write a new header that we might call `_string.h`:

```
// _string.h:  
  
namespace Clib {  
    extern "C"  
        // contents of C <string.h>  
}
```

and use this to define a new `string.h`:

```
// string.h:  
  
#include <_string.h>  
using Clib;
```

This assumes that all standard C libraries are in a single namespace and have C linkage, but that is not

essential for this discussions.

Given this, the program above will compile – meaning that we haven't broken any old code. Someone who wants to use C-style strings without polluting the global name space might write:

```
#include <iostream.h>
#include <_string.h>

int main()
{
    char* p = "Hello, world!"
    cout << p << ' ' << Clib::strlen(p) << '\n';
}
```

If namespaces are implemented using a name encoding technique one might consider having a Clib namespace special in the sense that it, rather than names in the global name space had unencoded names. One might then dump all C program fragments for which we don't have source into Clib or some equivalent Chack name space.

Note also that nested includes are very common. In general, this implies that either the headers must contain using declarations or else the users must provide using declarations for namespaces indirectly included. For example:

```
// h1.h:
#include "h11.h"
#include "h12.h"
namespace h1 {
    // ...
}
```

Here the user might have to say

```
include "h1.h"
using h1;
using h11;
using h12;
```

This will in some cases be a violation of an abstraction because the user sees h1 as a single set of services and not as a composite. If so, h1.h can be rewritten to

```
// h1.h:
#include "h11.h"
#include "h12.h"
namespace h1 {
    using h11;
    using h12;
    // ...
}
```

to allow

```
include "h1.h"
using h1;
```

9 Eliminating Global static

It is often useful to wrap a set of declarations in a namespace simply to avoid interference from declarations in header files or to avoid having the names used interfere with global declarations in other compilation units. For example:

```
#include <header.h>
namespace Mine {
    int a;
    void f() { /* ... */ }
    int g() { /* ... */ }
}
```

However, in such cases we aren't really interested in the name of the namespace as long as it doesn't clash with other namespace names. To serve that need more elegantly we could allow a namespace to be unnamed:

```
#include <header.h>
namespace {
    int a;
    void f() { /* ... */ }
    int g() { /* ... */ }
}
```

Except for overloading by names in the header, this is equivalent to

```
#include <header.h>

static int a;
static void f() { /* ... */ }
static int g() { /* ... */ }
```

Such overloading is usually undesirable and also easily achievable when desired:

```
namespace {
#include <header.h>
    int a;
    void f() { /* ... */ }
    int g() { /* ... */ }
}
```

Therefore, I propose that we deprecate the use of `static` for control of visibility of global names. That would leave `static` with a single meaning: statically allocated, don't replicate.

An unnamed namespace is unique to its compilation unit. A name from an unnamed namespace can be accessed without qualification after its point of declaration.

10 Implications for Derived Classes

It has been suggested that a namespace should be a kind of class, but I don't think that is a good idea (see Appendix B). The opposite, that a class is a kind of namespace, seems almost obviously true. I'm assuming that a class is a namespace in the sense that all operations supported for namespaces can be applied with the same meaning to a class. This implies simplicity, generality, while minimizing implementation effort. Let me consider some implications:

```
class B {
public:
    f(char);
};

class D : public B {
public:
    f(int);
};

void f(D& d)
{
    f('c'); // calls D::f(int)
}
```

This resolves as ever. There is a new explanation, though: D is a namespace. The namespace D is nested in the namespace B so D::f(int) hides B::f(char) so D::f(int) is called.

Now if you don't like that you can try this:

```
class B {
public:
    f(char);
};

class D : public B {
public:
    f(int);
    using B::f;      // bring B::f into D and enable overloading
};

void f(D& d)
{
    d.f('c'); // calls D::f(char) !
}
```

We suddenly have a choice.

Similarly

```
struct A { void f(int); };
struct B { void f(double); };

struct C : A, B {
    void g() {
        f(1);      // error: A::f(int) or B::f(double)
        f(1.0);    // error: A::f(int) or B::f(double)
    }
};
```

When considering C nested in A we find the one alternative and when considering C nested in B we find the other, and there is no rule specifying default overloading across namespaces. Again, using can help:

```
struct C : A, B {
    using A;
    using B;
    void g() {
        f(1);      // A::f(int)
        f(1.0);    // B::f(double)
    }
};
```

Also consider:

```
class B {
public:
    f(char);
};

class D : private B {
public:
    using B::f;
};
```

This achieves what currently requires use of an access specification:

```
class D : private B {
public:
    B::f;
};
```

Thus, using declarations make access specifications redundant.

11 Definition of Namespaces Features

This is a first cut at a reference manual style definition of namespaces.

To integrate namespaces into the reference manual text namespaces must be defined before classes and the aspects of classes that relates to name lookup must be rephrased in terms of namespaces.

Namespaces

The grammar for the namespace constructs is:

```
namespace-definition:
    namespace identifieropt { declaration-listopt }

namespace-alias-definition:
    namespace identifier = namespace-name ;

using-declaration:
    using namespace-name :: identifier ;
    using namespace-name :: ( using-list ) ;

using-directive:
    using namespace-name ;

namespace-name:
    identifier
    namespace-name :: identifier

using-list:
    name
    using-list , name
```

An *identifier* in a *namespace-name* must have been specified to refer to a namespace by being the *identifier* in a *namespace-definition* or a *namespace-alias-definition*.

The *identifier* in a *namespace-alias-definition* may not be defined elsewhere in its scope and defines a synonym for the *namespace-name* mentioned. The *identifier* in a *namespace-definition* must either be undefined in its scope or be a *namespace-name* defined in a *namespace-definition* in the same scope. All namespaces with the same *namespace-name* in the same scope are considered part of the same namespace. All global namespaces with the same *namespace-name* are considered part of the same namespace. An *identifier* used as a global *namespace-name* cannot be used as the name of any other global namespace, template, type, function, object, or value in the program.

A *namespace-definition* or a *namespace-alias-definition* is a *declaration*. The *identifiers* mentioned after `::` in a *using-declaration* must have been declared in the namespace named by the *namespace-name*.

A *namespace-definition* can only be occur at the global scope or within another namespace. A *using-declaration* or a *using-directive* can be used as a *declaration-statement*, a *member-declaration*, at the global scope, or within another namespace.

All unnamed namespaces within a compilation unit are treated as one namespace “the unnamed namespace” and treated as if it had a name that is unique in a program. A name from an unnamed namespace can be accessed without qualification after its point of declaration.

Members of a namespace can be defined within that namespace. Members of a named namespace can also be defined using explicit qualification.

Comments on the Grammar

Note that a *name* need not be a simple *identifier*; for example, it can be an *operator-name*.

Silly typing errors will inevitably arise from the syntactic similarity of the namespace constructs to other C++ constructs. I propose we allow an optional semicolon after a global declaration to lessen the frustration. This would be a kind of “empty declaration” to match the empty statements.

The keywords `namespace` and `using` were chosen in the hope of minimizing clashes with identifiers.

I considered several alternatives for a syntax for specific *using-declarations*. The minimal syntax is

simply a *namespace-name* followed by a list of *identifiers*:

```
using A f String g
```

However, that seemed too minimal, too error-prone, and out of line with the way lists are represented elsewhere in the C++ grammar so after a few experiments I settled the namespace name followed by `::` followed by either a single name or a comma separated list enclosed in parentheses:

```
using A::f;
using A::(f, String, g);
```

The former is obvious; the latter simply avoids repetition of the `A::`. The types of the names `f`, `String`, and `g` are found in `A`.

Explicit Qualification

A name defined in a namespace can be accessed qualified by a *namespace-name* for its namespace using the `::` operator. A qualified name can be used as a *dname* in a definition. In that case, the definition from the point of the qualification until the end of the declaration is considered in the scope of the namespace. For example:

```
namespace X {
    typedef int I;
    I f(I);
}

X::I X::f(I a) { /* ... */ } // correct
I X::f(I a) { /* ... */ }    // error: return type not in scope
```

using

The member names specified in a *using-declaration* are defined in the scope in which the *using-declaration* appears. The names thus declared are aliases for their original declarations so that the *using-declaration* does not affect the type, linkage, etc. of the members referred to. A *using-declaration* is not a definition, thus redundant *using-declarations* of a name are allowed.

A *using-directive* specifies that the names in the namespace can be used in the scope in which the *using-directive* appears exactly as if the names from the namespace had been declared outside a namespace at the point where their namespace was declared.

A *using-declaration* or a *using-directive* does not affect names being declared.

Classes

The scope of a class is a namespace. The scope of a derived class is nested in the scope of each of its base classes. Qualification and *using* apply to classes exactly as to (other) namespaces except that *using-declarations* and *using-directives* must refer to accessible base classes and/or accessible members of base classes. A namespace that is not a class cannot be defined within a class. A namespace that is a class cannot have names added by further namespace declarations.

The *access-specifier* syntax is deprecated.

Static

The use of `static` at the global scope or within a namespace that is not a class is deprecated.

12 Implementation and Compatibility Issues

An implementation of this proposal can be done in the compiler only. Basically, the link-time aspects namespaces can be implemented as a formalization of the old add-a-prefix-to-names techniques for avoiding global name clashes. No linker support beyond support for long names is necessary. On the other hand, linker support can provide more convenient and potentially more efficient alternatives to the use of long names.

It is possible to implement namespaces without breaking link-compatibility.

No run-time support is needed.

The implementation of `using` implies that the name lookup mechanism will have to search multiple scopes (namespaces) when looking for declarations and apply the overloading rules to names from different name spaces. This strongly resembles what has to be done for lookup in multiple inheritance hierarchies so C++ compilers already have the internal mechanisms needed to support `using`.

Except for clashes with the new keywords `namespace` and `using` there should be no source compatibility problems. Placing standard libraries in namespaces could have compatibility implications, but it seems that placing suitable `using` declarations in standard headers will ensure that no existing program changes its meaning.

13 Acknowledgements

This proposal has its origins in discussions on name space control that has taken place over the last couple of years at standards meetings, conferences, and in particular on the extension group mail reflector. Here is a list of people I know contributed: Dag Brück, John Bruns, Steve Dovich, Philippe Gautron, Tony Hansen, Peter Juhl, Andrew Koenig, Eric Krohn, Doug McIlroy, Richard Minner, Martin O'Riorden, John Skaller, Jerry Schwarz, Mark Terrible, and Mike Vilot. I know this list is incomplete; please mail me if I forgot you.

14 Appendix A : A Simpler Alternative

I have tried to be comprehensive, and that always leads to a perception of complexity. After all, you don't have to have seen the really warped examples to use an language feature. However, the `namespace` and `using` proposal is more complex than I like and several further extensions has been suggested.

Three simplifications have also been suggested:

- [1] Making a namespace a kind of class.
- [2] Don't have a `using` declaration.
- [3] Making a namespace declaration imply `using`.

Option [1] is discussed in Appendix B below. This section considers [2] and [3].

No `using`

Consider [2]; that is, a namespace is defined as described above, but to use a namespace we must use explicit qualification (there is no `using` declaration).

This makes it significantly harder to use a namespace than not to use it. Consider having to write `Clib::` in front of every use of a standard C library function. I think that this would be intolerable and would lead to demands that "common and important" libraries should be "special" in the sense that their names should be "truly global." Unfortunately, everyone would demand that privilege for their library and sloppy practice would prevail. It would be too much of a convenience to ignore the namespace feature. I have no faith in our ability to preach "good manners" where "bad manners" provide a significant convenience.

Some convenience could be achieved through the introduction of aliases:

```
namespace X {  
    // ...  
}  
  
typedef X::String string;  
int& v = X::v;
```

However, if such declarations find their way into common use (especially if they appear in standard header files) we have lost the benefits of namespaces by explicitly polluting the global name space again. If instead we made the introduction of local synonyms easier we would have reinvented `using`.

Implicit `using`

Consider [3]; that is, a namespace defined is as described above, but the declaration of a namespace implies a `using` so that every name is accessible directly by its non-qualified name.

Not having an explicit `using` declaration is a significant simplification, but we lose the ability to selectively include names from a namespace.

```
namespace X {
    class String { /* ... */ };
    int f(int);
}

namespace Y {
    class String { /* ... */ };
    double f(double);
}

void f()
{
    String s = "asdf";           // error: ambiguous
    X::String s = "asdf";        // ok
    Y::String s = "asdf";        // ok
    typedef X::String String;    // from now on String means
                                // X::String

    f(1);      // call X::f(int)
    f(1.0);    // call Y::f(double)
    Y::f(1);   // call Y::f(double)
    X::f(1.0); // call X::f(int)
    int (&f)(int) = X::f; // from now on f means
                        // X::f
}
```

Clearly, the ambiguity control provides some protection against surprises and typedefs and references can be used to compensate for the lack of selective using declarations. However, it cannot be guaranteed that adding a namespace to an existing program doesn't change the meaning. Consider:

```
int f(int);

// ...

void h()
{
    f(1.0); // calls f(int)
}
```

Adding a namespace Y might change its meaning (as specified by the overload resolution rules):

```
int f(int);

// ...

namespace Y {
    double f(double);
    // ...
}

// ...

void h()
{
    f(1.0); // calls f(int) // no longer:
                // now it calls Y::f(double)
}
```

Is this an acceptable cost to make saving us from using declarations?

Note that because the lookup rules for namespaces with implicit using are almost identical to the lookup rules for namespaces plus explicit using declarations, there isn't a significant difference in the

implementation difficulty of the two variants.

15 Appendix B: Namespaces and Classes

A class is a type. A class is also a mechanism for grouping declarations in a separate scope. As shown in §1 a class can be used for name management though it is not ideal. However, could the class concept be extended to become a convenient mechanism for name space control thus rendering namespace redundant or allowing namespace to be defined as a kind of class? Actually, of course it *could*, the real questions are “should it?” and “how different from other classes would a namespace have to be?”

I don’t have a “killer argument” for or against namespaces as classes, but my view is that on balance equating namespace and class is more trouble than it is worth; that is why this section is an appendix and not a proposal.

Having a namespace be a kind of class in a manner similar to the way unions and structs are classes might minimize the set of concepts a user had to learn and maximize the uniformity of the language rules. So consider defining a namespace as a class from which no objects can be created, but that is an object itself (much like an anonymous union is). To ease discussion, let us call such a class a module to distinguish it from namespace as discussed above. However, if we actually decided to go with a namespace as a class variant I think that “namespace” might still be the better keyword.

Thus defined, a module need not have the restrictions on membership specified for other classes to make object creation manageable. For example, a module can have template members (a necessity). A module can’t have operator new and delete functions because there is only one (implicitly allocated) object of the module “type.” However, a module constructor might be useful, as might a module destructor. Please note, however, that a module could only have one constructor and that would almost certainly have to be a default constructor. A module might also have virtual functions, though, because there seem no reason not to give the unique object representing the module a virtual function table. Derived modules could provide overriding functions.

Name Lookup

We could give a module “implicit using” as suggested in variant [3] above, but that is out of character for a class, so we must consider if a using declaration is needed. It is needed for the reasons given in the discussion of variant [2] above. In other words, lookup issues are not affected by having a module as class compared to the namespace (non-class) proposal.

Distributed Specification

The key difference is that a class (interface) is specified in one place and a namespace as specified above can be added to wherever necessary. Thus a module has a unique (centralized) interface whereas a namespace does not specify a limited set of names defined in a unique place.

Is this different important and if so in which ways? At first glance, *not* being distributed looks like a serious problem. However, derived modules and/or using declarations can be used to provide most benefits of extensibility. For example, say module X is given and I really want to add to it:

```
module X {  
    // ...  
};
```

I can simply derive from X:

```
module Y : public X {  
    // ...  
};
```

Anything within Y can now use X’s public and protected names as conveniently as X’s own functions, and my users can use X’s and the names I added through Y as conveniently as if I had added to X directly.

The same effect can be achieved through using:

```
module Y {  
    using X;  
    // ...  
};
```

In fact, this is the way one would simulate inheritance in the namespace proposal.

We generally try to avoid having object definitions in headers, especially objects that are meant to be unique. Since a module defines a unique object, yet it will typically live in a header to allow its use, module definitions would be unique in the language (and thus different from other classes and a likely source of controversy and confusion). The implementation support for modules would be unique also. However, any technique used to obtain a unique virtual function table can be used.

Are there any definite and significant benefits from having a unique definition of a module compared to the distributed definitions of a namespace? I see none. If they exist, they ought to have something to do with initialization (see below).

Class specific Features

Let's consider class specific features to see if they help in name space management. Constructors and destructors help with initialization and cleanup, but there is no really good way to specify initialization order for global objects in different compilation units. Maybe the module concept could help? Consider:

```
// X.h  
module X {  
    A a;  
    B b;  
};  
  
// X.c  
B B::b = g(/*args*/);  
A X::a = f(/*args*/);
```

Ordinary class rules say that member a should be constructed before member b. However, ordinary global object initialization rules say that B::b's initializer should be executed before X::a's. We could resolve this (one way or the other or as an error), but having a namespace as a class actually added a problem rather than helping us by providing a existing rule to resolve the issue. Further, unless we introduce something new (not already in our class concept) the module concept does not help with initialization order problems.

Derived modules and virtual module functions seems an intriguing concept. However, derived modules can be simulated trivially by namespaces and using, and I have trouble seeing any important uses of module virtual functions. All I can come up with for Modules seems to be just as well handled by a class with a unique object:

```
class X { /* ... */ } X;
```

The essential power of derived classes comes when objects are manipulated through interfaces defined as base classes referred to through pointers and references. Having a single anonymous object only cramps my style.

Classes interact with templates and I can think of some really nice uses for template modules and for module names as template arguments. However, there is nothing particularly difficult in extending the template concept to allow template namespaces so this isn't an argument for or against namespaces as classes.

Global Declarations vs Member Declarations

Currently a class member cannot be given C linkage. This must be allowed for modules. For example:

```
module M {  
    extern "C" void f(int);  
};
```

Similarly, module member templates must be allowed. For example:

```
module M {
    extern "C" void f(int);
    template<class T> class Y { /* ... */ };
    template<class T> f(T*) { /* ... */ };
};
```

The idea of wrapping a namespace declaration around a complete .c file does not have an equivalent for modules. That would have required the suspension of the rules for what initializers can appear in classes and of the rule that member functions defined within a class are inline by default.

Conclusions

A class is a type. A namespace is a more fundamental concept than classes. There is no significant benefit in merging the two concepts. There are several minor problems with treating a namespace as a class (all can be overcome). On balance, it is better to build the concept of a class on the concept of a namespace rather than the other way around.

16 Appendix C: Possible Further Extensions

Naturally, many extensions to the namespace and using proposal have been suggested. For example, several ideas have been along making namespaces more like classes or more like modules; these are considered in Appendix B. Here, I will just mention some variants of using.

A using declaration brings one or more names into the current namespace.

Renaming

However, what if I don't like the names chosen by the designer of the namespace. Maybe using should allow me to choose a synonym that is more to my taste. For example:

```
using g = A::f;
```

I think this would be a frill because C++ already has ways of expressing synonyms:

```
// no using

typedef A::String String;
int& m = A::n;
int (&g)() = A::f;
```

We don't have a general way of expressing synonyms independently of the type of the function, type, object, etc. named. If we want such a mechanism I suggest we look at ways of generalizing typedef. I don't plan to pursue this, though.

The reason for that is partly that I don't see a need for it, but primarily that I dislike chasing chains of aliases while maintaining code. If the name I see spelled *f* is really the *g* defined in the header which actually is described as *h* in the documentation and what is called *k* in your code then we have a problem. Naturally, this would be an extreme case, but not out of line with examples created by macro-aficionados. Every renaming requires understanding of a mapping for both users and tools.

The introduction of synonyms can be useful and occasionally close to essential. I don't see a need for extending the mechanism provided beyond the ability to introduce aliases for namespace names, though. Further features would simply encourage (mis)use of synonyms.

Exclusion

It was also suggested that we might like to include all names from a namespace except an explicitly named set. For example:

```
using A::(!f); // all of A except f
using B::(!g); // all of A except g

f(10);        // B::f
// ...
g(20);        // A::g
```

The idea is that if we find a clash arising from a plain

```
using A;    // A has f and g
using B;    // B has f and g

f(10);      // error: A::f or B::f?
// ...
g(20);      // error: A::g or B::g?
```

we simply modify the *using-directive* to exclude the “offending” names.

The problem with this solution is that it is indirect and brittle. We do not say what we want, but what we don’t want. That poorly documents our intention and leaves room for the ambiguity to reappear if we add another namespace that again defines the excluded name. That scenario isn’t unlikely for popular names such as `String`, `Boolean`, etc.

The solution is brittle because adding a name in one of the namespaces may still break code or change the meaning of a program.

prefer

To compensate for the weaknesses of “exclusion” its logical complement, an explicit expression of preference, was suggested:

```
using A;    // A has f and g
using B;    // B has f and g

prefer A; // meaning: in case of clashes use names from A
```

Unfortunately, this approach still suffers from being brittle and in a sense from being too powerful. Having “preferred” namespace A over namespace B adding a name to A can change the meaning of a program or make it stop compiling (just as in the case of “exclusion”). The problem is that we have expressed an general preference for A rather than simply resolving existing ambiguities. This also means that preferring `A::f` and `B::f` isn’t possible. One could remedy this by allowing preference for individual names to be expressed, but now the `prefer` mechanism is starting to elaborate exactly along the lines of `using`.

The proposal handles this example without added features through *using-declarations* in a namespace introduced to allow the disambiguation (see §5).

```
using A;    // A has f and g
using B;    // B has f and g

namespace {
    using A::g;    // hides other g
    using B::f;    // hides other f

    f(10);        // B::f
    // ...
    g(20);        // A::g
}
```