

main() return type convention [was Re: Linux compiling]

Source: <http://coding.derkeiler.com/Archive/C/ CPP/alt.comp.lang.learn.c-cpp/2004-12/0123.html>

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Date: 12/06/04

Date: Mon, 06 Dec 2004 13:51:03 GMT

"Anand Hariharan" <<mailto:anand.hariharan@gmail.com>> wrote in message
news:22868227.0412031503.74a1bca7@posting.google.com...

> Alwyn <alwyn@blueyonder.co.uk> wrote in message
news:<pan.2004.12.03.07.51.36.638908@blueyonder.co.uk>...

> > On Thu, 02 Dec 2004 21:04:40 -0600, Jack Klein wrote:

> > >

<SNIP>

>

> What possibly annoys the gurus (like Jack) is that main's
> return type is something so easy to get it right, that they find
> it irksome when folks "refuse" to get it right.
>

I'm not sure folks so much 'refuse' as some just don't know any better. This is certainly applicable to novices and students who are simply following the examples provided to them by their teachers, and the authors of various programming books and tutorials.

In other situations, say professional developers targeting a single platform with a particular development tool [e.g. Win32 GUI applications using MS VC6++], standards-conformance may simply not be an issue. Instead, all that counts for them is that the compiler emit code that works reliably on the target platform, and whether it is standards-compliant or not, is moot.

According to:

<http://www.eskimo.com/~scs/readings/voidmain.960823.html>

it would seem that the practice commenced with professional developers taking steps to eliminate compiler errors or warnings [thus, inadvertently creating incorrect code], and was propagated via authors / teachers using such incorrect code in their examples.

>

> Sometimes, I speculate, that it might have something to do

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- > *with an antipathy towards Microsoft (VC6 almost enforces*
- > *void main, and MSDN is replete with void main examples)*
- >

And those code examples are very likely to remain there since 'old code never dies' :) !

- >
- > *and/or Sun (Java's equivalent of main returns void).*
- >

Although Java is, syntactically, in the C / C++ family of languages, you should not assume that idioms / conventions applicable to either of the former also apply to it [and vice versa].

As regards returning a value to the host operating system:

- * It is not performed via a 'return' from Java's 'main' equivalent
- * A programmer may specify a return code via the 'System.exit()' method [similar to exit() or std::exit()], but this is entirely optional – a default value is returned if such a value is required
- * The Java runtime [JVM] takes care of supplying a default return value to the operating system *on systems that require it*; a programmer cannot therefore write an application that behaves erratically due to a return value issue

Cheers,

Anthony Borla