

[OT] Re: Asking if elements in struct arre zero

Source: http://coding.derkeiler.com/Archive/C_CPP/comp.lang.c/2003-11/1577.html

From: Arthur J. O'Dwyer (*ajo_at_nospam.andrew.cmu.edu*)

Date: 11/08/03

Date: Fri, 7 Nov 2003 21:42:46 -0500 (EST)

On Fri, 7 Nov 2003, Keith Thompson wrote:

>

> *Programmer Dude* <*Chris@Sonnack.com*> writes:

>> *What, besides source code, would be easier to read in monospace?*

>> *Can you name any real book set in monospace? Do you wonder why not?*

I have seen books in Borders stores set in monospace. The ones I'm thinking of are not "art" books, either. They're mathematical monographs bound in flimsy paper covers, often with the symbols drawn in by hand and then Xeroxed. See below for why this is a good thing.

>> *How about K&R? If monospace is so great, why didn't they use it in*

>> *their book? After all, it's *about* C source. If ANY book deserved*

>> *to be set in mono, seems K&R would be a good choice.*

>>

>> *Yet, it wasn't.*

>

> *Agreed. When they published K&R, it was well worth it to go to the*

> *effort of formatting it in a variable-width font, as is done for most*

> *books. It might have been easier and cheaper to use a plain*

> *typewriter font; I'm glad they went to the extra effort to make it*

> *more readable.*

Keith is right: plain ASCII text is one of the easiest media to format readably. It's not that plain text is easier to read than proportionally formatted text; it's that one can more easily (to use a resident Brit's phrase) make a pig's breakfast of proportionally formatted stuff.

For paper stuff, typewriting or even text editing is often cheaper than word processing, too, as Keith points out. That's one reason why those monographs were fixed-pitch --- cost. (Another reason, I suppose, would be the substance-over-aesthetics attitude Keith described.)

> *When I post to Usenet, it's not worth my time to do that kind of*

> *formatting. If HTML postings were generally supported, I suppose I*

- > *could go to the effort of specifying that I want this paragraph to be*
- > *in a variable-width font, and use <pre>...</pre> for code samples, and*
- > *actual *boldface* and underlining where it's appropriate, and so on.*
- > *Quite frankly, it's not worth the effort.*

I completely agree. Your newsreader, that lets you read HTML mail — does it let you compose HTML mail, too? Easily? Without a lot of fussy clicking of buttons and so on? — You know, it probably does. But is it really *easier* to hit Ctrl-B instead of Shift-8 when I mean *bold*, or Ctrl-U instead of Shift[-]? I don't think it is. And if the editor were to really give you control of the process, the composition of HTML messages could easily take much longer than the composition of messages free from <meta> tags, hyperlinks, and what-have-you.

- > *The content of what I write*
- > *is what's important (or unimportant, as the case may be). If you want*
- > *to use a newsreader that lets you read it in your favorite font, feel*
- > *free; I'm not interested in adding extraneous formatting information.*

In fact, I'm willing to bet that *some* news archive out there on the Web will do that sort of trivial formatting for you. ISTR that Google automatically hyperlinkifies URLs in Usenet posts, although it doesn't go so far as to edit in *bold* tags or /italic/ <i> tags. (That's a good, tractable AI problem right there.)

<snip>

- > > *What drawbacks? Seriously. Given the ability to drop into mono*
- > > *anytime you want/need to, what drawbacks are there that would*
- > > *outweigh the obvious benefits (benefits enjoyed by just about*
- > > *every single technical manual, book or magazine you've ever read).*
- >
- > *Just about every single technical manual, book, or magazine I've ever*
- > *read was produced by professionals. Just about every Usenet posting*
- > *I've ever read was not. Look at how much trouble we have with posters*
- > *not following the simple plain text standards we have now. I don't*
- > *want to give the trolls the ability to shout at me in 36-point*
- > *blinking magenta wingdings.*

HEAR HEAR!

(See, couldn't that have been a hell of a lot more annoying in HTML?)

Nor do I really want to give spammers the ability to count hits on Usenet postings, like HTML mail has given them the ability to count hits on private email.

I suspect that HTML will never make it into Usenet. Those interested in making their correspondences look pretty are usually simply not interested in public discourse.

comp.lang.c: [OT] Re: Asking if elements in struct are zero

my \$.02,
-Arthur