Programming for Electrical and Computer Engineers

Introducing C

Origins of C

• C is a by-product of UNIX, developed at Bell Laboratories by Ken Thompson, Dennis Ritchie, and others.
• Thompson designed a small language named B.
• B was based on BCPL, a systems programming language developed in the mid-1960s.
Origins of C

- By 1971, Ritchie began to develop an extended version of B.
- He called his language NB ("New B") at first.
- As the language began to diverge more from B, he changed its name to C.
- The language was stable enough by 1973 that UNIX could be rewritten in C.

Standardization of C

- **K&R C**
  - De facto standard
- **C89/C90**
  - ANSI standard X3.159-1989 (completed in 1988; formally approved in December 1989)
  - International standard ISO/IEC 9899:1990
- **C99**
  - International standard ISO/IEC 9899:1999
  - Incorporates changes from Amendment 1 (1995)
C-Based Languages

- **C++** includes all the features of C, but adds classes and other features to support object-oriented programming.
- **Java** is based on C++ and therefore inherits many C features.
- **C#** is a more recent language derived from C++ and Java.
- **Perl** has adopted many of the features of C.

Properties of C

- Low-level
- Small
- Permissive
Strengths of C

- Efficiency
- Portability
- Power
- Flexibility
- Standard library
- Integration with UNIX

Weaknesses of C

- Programs can be error-prone.
- Programs can be difficult to understand.
- Programs can be difficult to modify.
Effective Use of C

• Learn how to avoid pitfalls.
• Use software tools (lint, debuggers) to make programs more reliable.
• Take advantage of existing code libraries.
• Adopt a sensible set of coding conventions.
• Avoid “tricks” and overly complex code.
• Stick to the standard.