Adjuncts to std::hash

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Abstract

Inspired by Lippincott’s paper [P0513R0] and subsequent correspondence with her, this paper proposes, for the standard library, a few templates of general use in connection with std::hash.

HASH, x. There is no definition for this word—nobody knows what hash is.
— Ambrose Bierce

He took the Who’s feast,
he took the Who pudding, he took the roast beast.
He cleared out that ice box as quick as a flash.
Why, the Grinch even took their last can of Who hash.
— Dr. Seuss (né Theodor Seuss Geisel)

1 Introduction

Lippincott’s paper [P0513R0], adopted¹ for C++17 in Issaquah, introduced new vocabulary to describe specializations of std::hash. Each is now “either disabled (‘poisoned’) or enabled (‘untainted’).”²

The paper also suggested “a standard trait hash_enabled<T>.” No such trait was formally proposed, however, because WG21 was at the time focussed on ballot resolution and other C++17 preparations.

To remedy that lack, this paper proposes that trait (under a slightly different name, however). It also proposes a few other adjuncts that seem generally useful to std::hash users.

¹Addressing the following issues and National Body comments: LWG 2543, FI 15, GB 69, and LWG 2791.
²While it is possible to code a hash specialization that is neither enabled nor disabled, such a specialization does not meet the std::hash requirements. See §4 for details.
2 Proposals

2.1 is_enabled_hash
The requirements for an enabled std::hash specialization are specified in [unord.hash]/4. We propose a corresponding new trait, is_enabled_hash, to decide at compile time whether a given specialization meets those specifications.

The following expository implementation exemplifies the trait’s proposed semantics:

```cpp
template< typename H >
struct is_enabled_hash : false_type { };

template< typename T >
requires is_default_constructible_v<hash<T>>
    and is_copy_constructible_v<hash<T>>
    and is_move_constructible_v<hash<T>>
    and is_copy_assignable_v<hash<T>>
    and is_move_assignable_v<hash<T>>
    and is_destructible_v<hash<T>>
    and is_swappable_v<hash<T>>
    and is_callable_v<hash<T>(T)> 
    and is_same_v<size_t, decltype(hash<T>(declval<T>()))>
    and is_same_v<size_t, decltype(hash<T>(declval<T &>()))>
    and is_same_v<size_t, decltype(hash<T>(declval<T const&>()))>
struct is_enabled_hash<hash_for<T>> : true_type { };
```

As part of this proposal, user specialization of this template is not permitted, just as is the case for nearly all type traits.

2.2 hash_for and is_hashable
Upon reviewing and approving a draft of the above-proposed trait, Lippincott commented:

Also, the question I imagine most people will want answered is “Can I hash T?” rather than “Is H an enabled hasher?” I’d like to add is_hashable as a shortcut . . .

The following expository implementation, a slight expansion of Lippincott’s code, illustrates the intended semantics of this proposed “shortcut”:

```cpp
template< typename T >  // exposition only
using uncvref_t = remove_cv_t< remove_reference_t<T> >;

template< class T >
using hash_for = hash< uncvref_t<T> >;

template< class T >
using is_hashable = is_enabled_hash< hash_for<T> >;

template< class T >
constexpr bool is_hashable_v = is_hashable<T>::value;
```

3See §4 for alternative designs.
4Lisa Lippincott: “Re: Follow-up to P0513R0.” Personal correspondence, 2016–12–09.
2.3 hash_value

Finally, Lippincott suggested: ⁵

And if it’s not there already, we could use a function for calculating hashes. Making every user instantiate, construct, and call the right specialization is for the birds.

The following expository implementation is adapted from Lippincott’s code; user specialization of this template, too, is not permitted. By design, attempted instantiation of this template for a type without an enabled hash yields an ill-formed program:

```cpp
template< class T >
  requires is_hashable_v<T>
size_t
hash_value( T&& t )
{
  return hash_for<T>()( std::forward<T>(t) );
}
```

Note that this proposed template shares its name with a seemingly-similar Boost facility. However, the corresponding Boost documentation states, ⁶ in pertinent part:

- “Generally shouldn’t be called directly by users . . . .”
- “This hash function is not intended for general use, and isn’t guaranteed to be equal during separate runs of a program . . . .”

The version proposed herein has no such design restrictions.

3 Proposed wording ⁷

3.1 Insert into the synopsis in [function.objects] (20.14) as shown.

```cpp
namespace std {
  ... // 20.14.14, hash function primary template and adjuncts
template <class T> struct hash;
template <class H> struct is_enabled_hash;
template <class T> using hash_for = hash< see below >;
template <class T> using is_hashable = is_enabled_hash< hash_for<T> >;
template <class T> constexpr bool is_hashable_v = is_hashable<T>::value;
template <class T> size_t hash_value(T&& t);
  ...
}
```

3.2 Retitle [unord.hash] as shown. (Note that there is a pre-existing discrepancy between this title and the corresponding entry in the synopsis (see above). We recommend that the Project Editor determine whether and how this mismatch should be resolved.)

20.14.14 Class template hash and adjuncts  [unord.hash]

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⁵Ibid.
⁷All proposed additions (there are no deletions) are relative to the post-Issaquah Working Draft [N4618]. Editorial notes are displayed against a gray background.
3.3 Append the following new text to the retitled [unord.hash].

    template <class H> struct is_enabled_hash;

5 Remarks: All specializations of this template shall meet the UnaryTypeTrait requirements [[meta.rqmts]] with a BaseCharacteristic of true_type if H is an enabled specialization of hash [[unord.hash]] and a BaseCharacteristic of false_type otherwise. [Note: The latter does not necessarily imply that H is a disabled specialization of hash.—end note] The behavior of a program that adds specializations for this template is undefined.

    template <class T> using hash_for = hash<see below>>;

6 Remarks: The template argument to hash shall correspond to remove_cv_t<remove_reference_t<T>>.

    template <class T> size_t hash_value(T&& t);

7 Requires: Participates in overload resolution only if is_hashable_v<T> is true.
8 Effects: Equivalent to: return hash_for<T>()(std::forward<T>(t));
9 Remarks: The behavior of a program that adds specializations for this template is undefined.

4 Alternatives

As we cited in §1, it is convenient to think of std::hash specializations as ‘either disabled (‘poisoned’) or enabled (‘untainted’).’ However, it is technically possible to code a specialization that meets neither definition. Of course, a program with such a specialization runs afoul of [namespace.std]:

    1 . . . . A program may add a template specialization for any standard library template to namespace std only if . . . the specialization meets the standard library requirements for the original template . . . .

To what lengths, if any, should the standard library go to diagnose such undefined behavior?

1. In particular, should we respicify the proposed is_enabled_hash trait as follows?
   - Have a BaseCharacteristic of true_type if template parameter H is an enabled specialization of hash;
   - have a BaseCharacteristic of false_type if H is a disabled specialization of hash; and
   - be ill-formed,8 otherwise.

2. Alternatively, instead of altering the is_enabled_hash specification, should we provide, in addition, an is_disabled_hash trait, specified as follows?
   - Have a BaseCharacteristic of true_type if template parameter H is a disabled specialization of hash;
   - have a BaseCharacteristic of false_type, otherwise.

5 Acknowledgments

Special thanks to Lisa Lippincott, who inspired essentially all of this proposed functionality. Thanks also to Andrey Semashev and the other readers of this paper’s pre-publication drafts for their thoughtful comments.

8This can be implemented via a judiciously-placed static_assert, for example.
6 Bibliography


7 Document history

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