

# Linking

## Oct. 26, 2009

### Topics

- Static linking
- Object files
- Static libraries
- Loading
- Dynamic linking of shared libraries

# Linker Puzzles

```
int x;  
p1() {}
```

```
p1() {}
```

---

```
int x;  
p1() {}
```

```
int x;  
p2() {}
```

---

```
int x;  
int y;  
p1() {}
```

```
double x;  
p2() {}
```

---

```
int x=7;  
int y=5;  
p1() {}
```

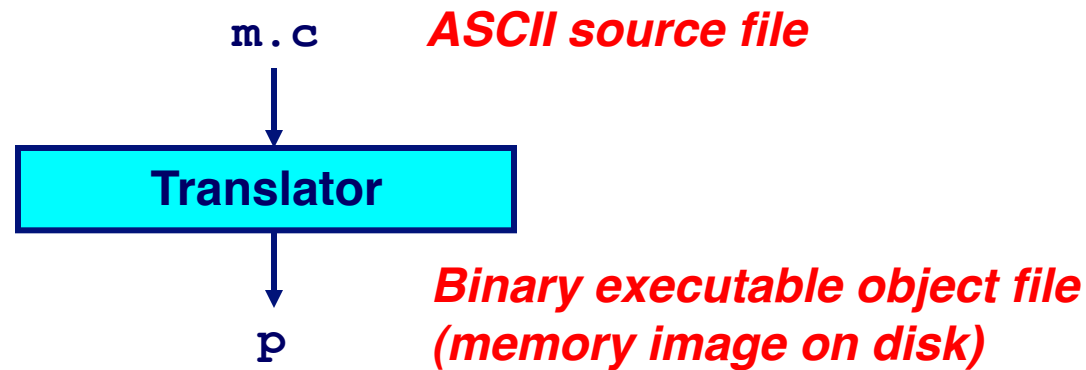
```
double x;  
p2() {}
```

---

```
int x=7;  
p1() {}
```

```
int x;  
p2() {}
```

# A Simplistic Program Translation Scheme



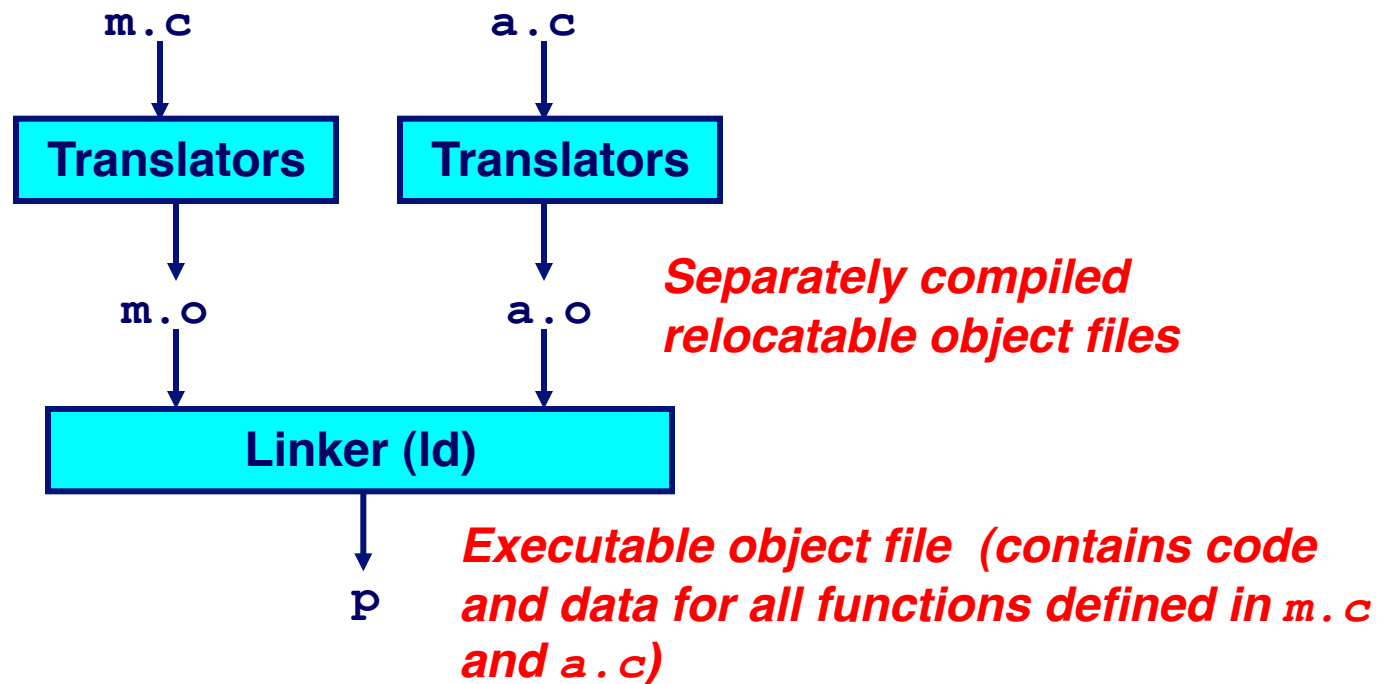
## Problems:

- **Efficiency:** small change requires complete recompilation
- **Modularity:** hard to share common functions (e.g. `printf`)

## Solution:

- **Static linker (or linker)**

# A Better Scheme Using a Linker



# Translating the Example Program

**Compiler driver** coordinates all steps in the translation and linking process.

- Typically included with each compilation system (e.g., gcc)
- Invokes preprocessor (cpp), compiler (cc1), assembler (as), and linker (ld).
- Passes command line arguments to appropriate phases

**Example: create executable p from m.c and a.c:**

```
bass> gcc -O2 -v -o p m.c a.c
cpp [args] m.c /tmp/cca07630.i
cc1 /tmp/cca07630.i m.c -O2 [args] -o /tmp/cca07630.s
as [args] -o /tmp/cca076301.o /tmp/cca07630.s
<similar process for a.c>
ld -o p [system obj files] /tmp/cca076301.o /tmp/cca076302.o
bass>
```

# What Does a Linker Do?

## Merges object files

- Merges multiple relocatable (.o) object files into a single executable object file that can be loaded and executed by the loader.

## Resolves external references

- As part of the merging process, resolves external references.
  - **External reference**: reference to a symbol defined in another object file.

## Relocates symbols

- Relocates symbols from their relative locations in the .o files to new absolute positions in the executable.
- Updates all references to these symbols to reflect their new positions.
  - References can be in either code or data
    - » `code: a (); /* reference to symbol a */`
    - » `data: int *xp=&x; /* reference to symbol x */`

# Why Linkers?

## Modularity

- Program can be written as a collection of smaller source files, rather than one monolithic mass.
- Can build libraries of common functions (more on this later)
  - e.g., Math library, standard C library

## Efficiency

- Time:
  - Change one source file, compile, and then relink.
  - No need to recompile other source files.
- Space:
  - Libraries of common functions can be aggregated into a single file...
  - Yet executable files and running memory images contain only code for the functions they actually use.

# Executable and Linkable Format (ELF)

Standard binary format for object files

Derives from AT&T System V Unix

- Later adopted by BSD Unix variants and Linux

One unified format for

- Relocatable object files (.o),
- Executable object files
- Shared object files (.so)

Generic name: ELF binaries

Better support for shared libraries than old a.out formats.



# ELF Object File Format

## Elf header

- Magic number, type (.o, exec, .so), machine, byte ordering, etc.

## Program header table

- Page size, virtual addresses memory segments (sections), segment sizes.

## .text section

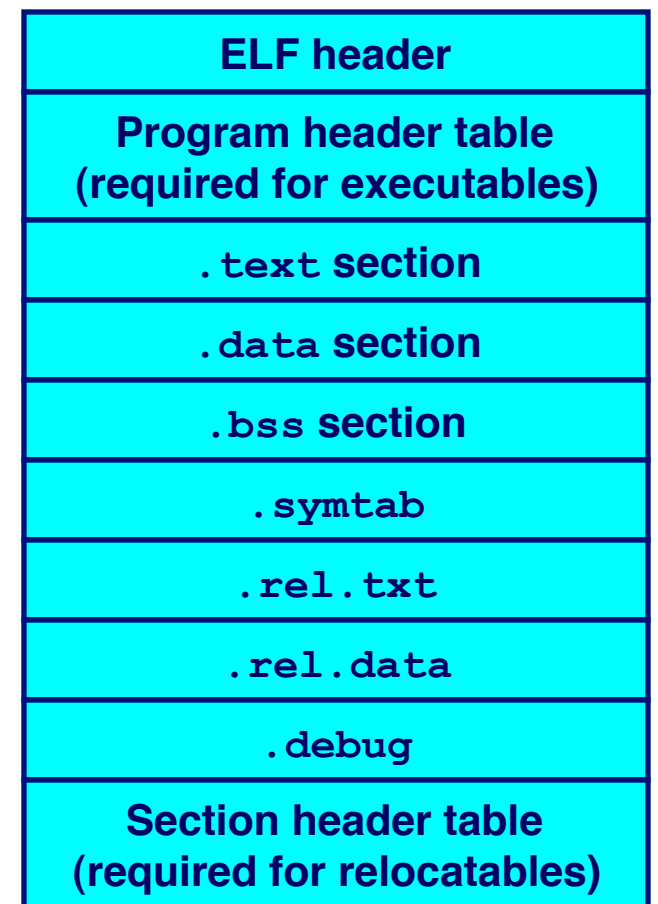
- Code

## .data section

- Initialized (static) data

## .bss section

- Uninitialized (static) data
- “Block Started by Symbol”
- “Better Save Space”
- Has section header but occupies no space



# ELF Object File Format (cont)

## **.symtab section**

- Symbol table
- Procedure and static variable names
- Section names and locations

## **.rel.text section**

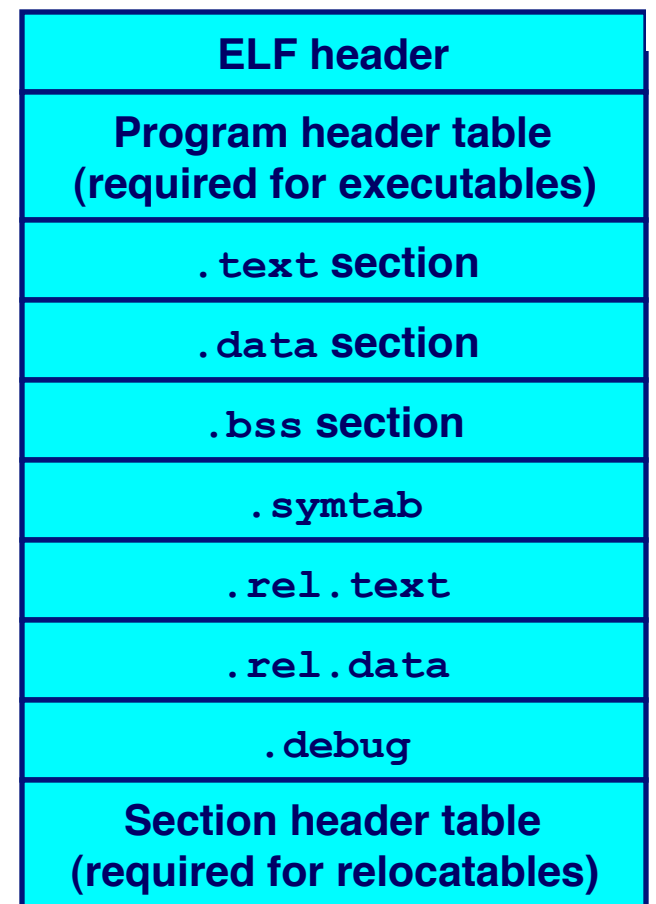
- Relocation info for .text section
- Addresses of instructions that will need to be modified in the executable
- Instructions for modifying.

## **.rel.data section**

- Relocation info for .data section
- Addresses of pointer data that will need to be modified in the merged executable

## **.debug section**

- Info for symbolic debugging (`gcc -g`)



# Example C Program

m.c

```
int e=7;

int main() {
    int r = a();
    exit(0);
}
```

a.c

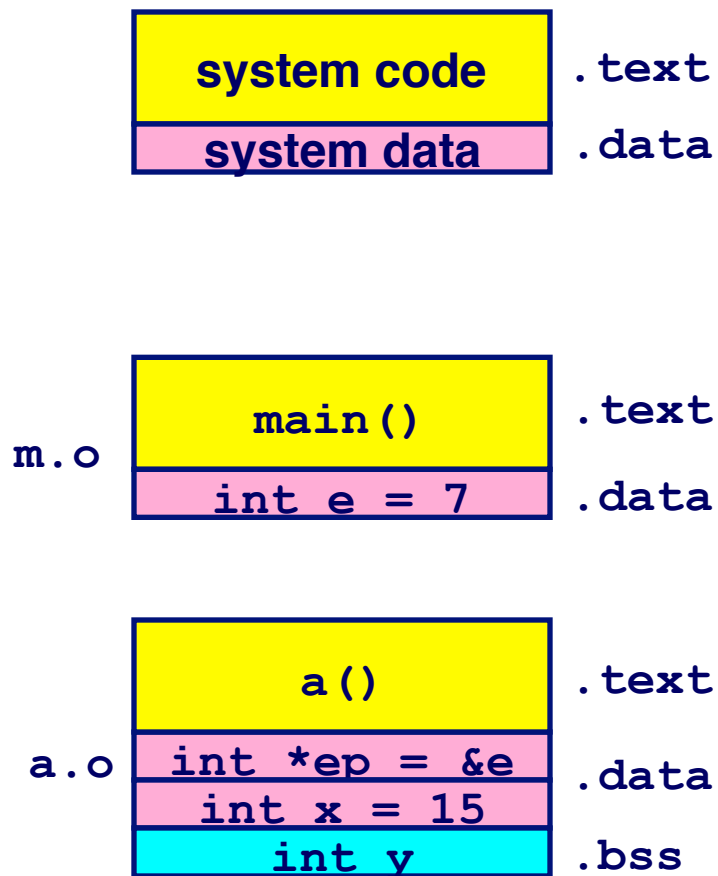
```
extern int e;

int *ep=&e;
int x=15;
int y;

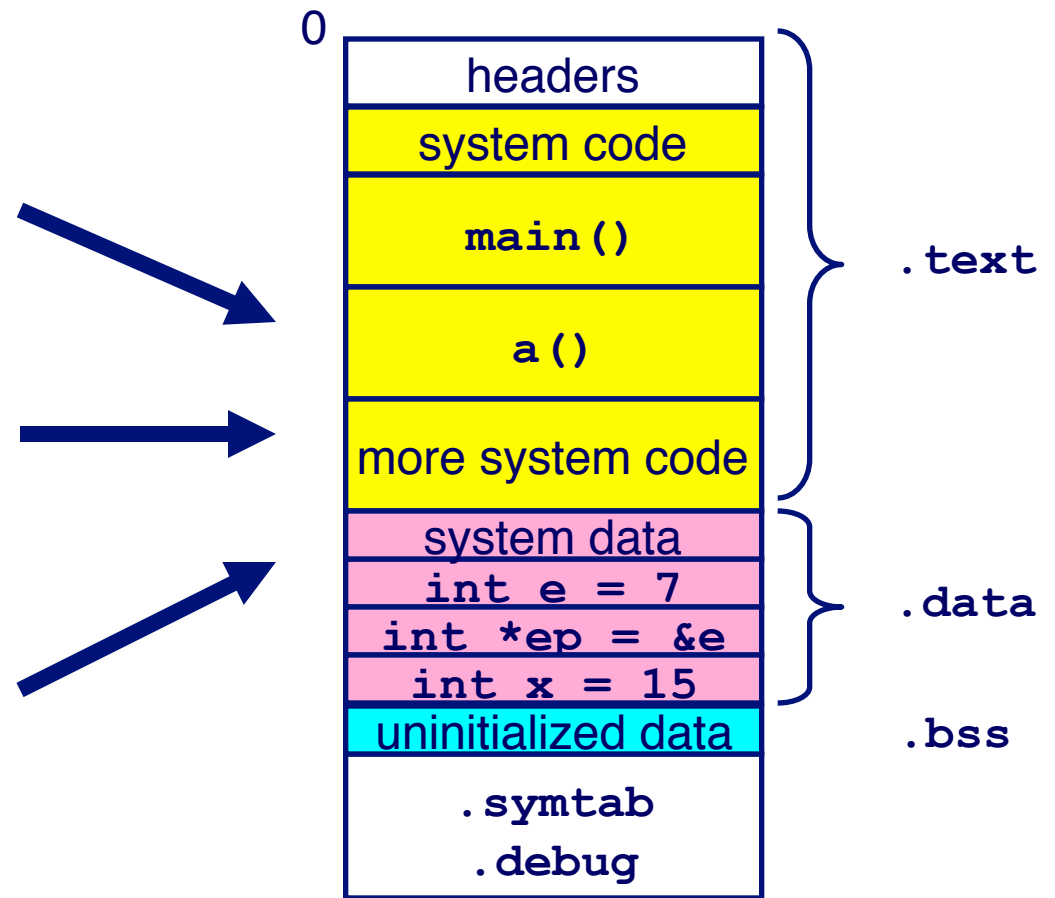
int a() {
    return *ep+x+y;
}
```

# Merging Relocatable Object Files into an Executable Object File

## Relocatable Object Files

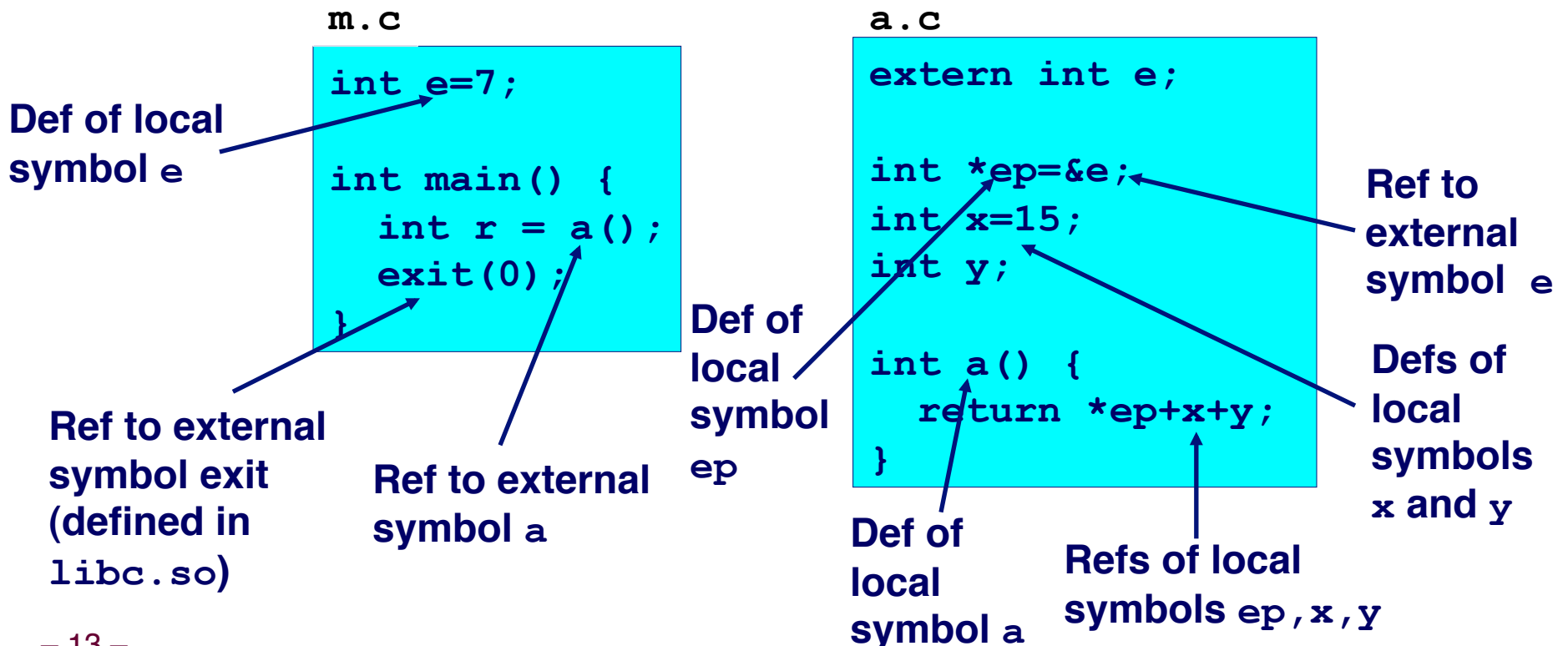


## Executable Object File



# Relocating Symbols and Resolving External References

- **Symbols** are lexical entities that name functions and variables.
- Each symbol has a **value** (typically a memory address).
- Code consists of symbol **definitions** and **references**.
- References can be either **local** or **external**.



# m.o Relocation Info

m.c

```
int e=7;

int main() {
    int r = a();
    exit(0);
}
```

Disassembly of section .text:

```
00000000 <main>: 00000000 <main>:
    0:   55                pushl   %ebp
    1:   89 e5            movl    %esp,%ebp
    3:   e8 fc ff ff ff  call   4 <main+0x4>
                                4: R_386_PC32  a
    8:   6a 00            pushl   $0x0
    a:   e8 fc ff ff ff  call   b <main+0xb>
                                b: R_386_PC32  exit
    f:   90                nop
```

Disassembly of section .data:

```
00000000 <e>:
    0:   07 00 00 00
```

source: objdump

# a.o Relocation Info (.text)

a.c

```
extern int e;

int *ep=&e;
int x=15;
int y;

int a() {
    return *ep+x+y;
}
```

Disassembly of section .text:

00000000 <a>:

0:	55		pushl	%ebp
1:	8b 15 00 00 00		movl	0x0,%edx
6:	00			
				3: R_386_32 ep
7:	a1 00 00 00 00		movl	0x0,%eax
				8: R_386_32 x
c:	89 e5		movl	%esp,%ebp
e:	03 02		addl	(%edx),%eax
10:	89 ec		movl	%ebp,%esp
12:	03 05 00 00 00		addl	0x0,%eax
17:	00			
				14: R_386_32 y
18:	5d		popl	%ebp
19:	c3		ret	

# a.o Relocation Info (.data)

a.c

```
extern int e;  
  
int *ep=&e;  
int x=15;  
int y;  
  
int a() {  
    return *ep+x+y;  
}
```

Disassembly of section .data:

00000000 <ep>:

0: 00 00 00 00

0: R\_386\_32 e

00000004 <x>:

4: 0f 00 00 00



# Executable After Relocation and External Reference Resolution (.text)

```
08048530 <main>:
 8048530:      55                pushl   %ebp
 8048531:      89 e5            movl   %esp,%ebp
 8048533:      e8 08 00 00 00   call   8048540 <a>
 8048538:      6a 00            pushl   $0x0
 804853a:      e8 35 ff ff ff   call   8048474 <_init+0x94>
 804853f:      90                nop

08048540 <a>:
 8048540:      55                pushl   %ebp
 8048541:      8b 15 1c a0 04   movl   0x804a01c,%edx
 8048546:      08
 8048547:      a1 20 a0 04 08   movl   0x804a020,%eax
 804854c:      89 e5            movl   %esp,%ebp
 804854e:      03 02            addl   (%edx),%eax
 8048550:      89 ec            movl   %ebp,%esp
 8048552:      03 05 d0 a3 04   addl   0x804a3d0,%eax
 8048557:      08
 8048558:      5d                popl   %ebp
 8048559:      c3                ret
```

# Executable After Relocation and External Reference Resolution(.data)

m.c

```
int e=7;

int main() {
    int r = a();
    exit(0);
}
```

a.c

```
extern int e;

int *ep=&e;
int x=15;
int y;

int a() {
    return *ep+x+y;
}
```

Disassembly of section .data:

```
0804a018 <e>:
  804a018:          07 00 00 00

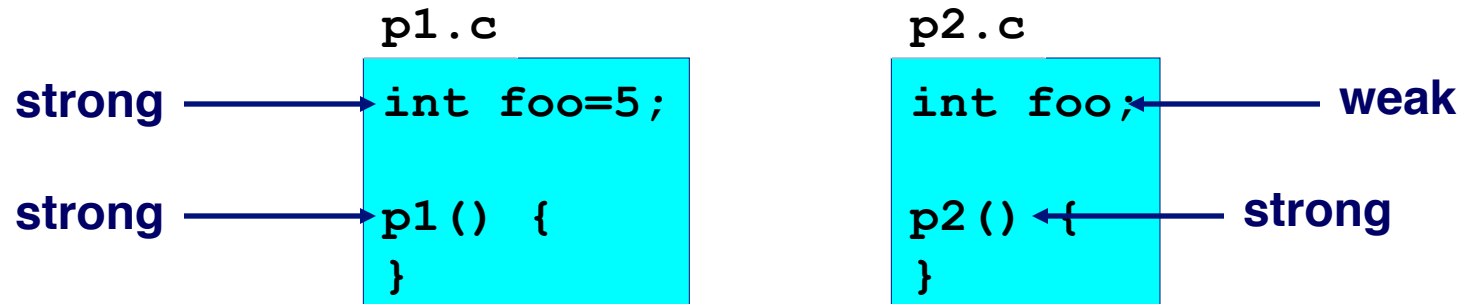
0804a01c <ep>:
  804a01c:          18 a0 04 08

0804a020 <x>:
  804a020:          0f 00 00 00
```

# Strong and Weak Symbols

Program symbols are either strong or weak

- **strong**: procedures and initialized globals
- **weak**: uninitialized globals



# Linker's Symbol Rules

**Rule 1. A strong symbol can only appear once.**

**Rule 2. A weak symbol can be overridden by a strong symbol of the same name.**

- references to the weak symbol resolve to the strong symbol.

**Rule 3. If there are multiple weak symbols, the linker can pick an arbitrary one.**

# Linker Puzzles

```
int x;  
p1() {}
```

```
p1() {}
```

Link time error: two strong symbols (p1)

---

```
int x;  
p1() {}
```

```
int x;  
p2() {}
```

References to `x` will refer to the same uninitialized int. Is this what you really want?

---

```
int x;  
int y;  
p1() {}
```

```
double x;  
p2() {}
```

Writes to `x` in `p2` might overwrite `y`!  
Evil!

---

```
int x=7;  
int y=5;  
p1() {}
```

```
double x;  
p2() {}
```

Writes to `x` in `p2` will overwrite `y`!  
Nasty!

---

```
int x=7;  
p1() {}
```

```
int x;  
p2() {}
```

References to `x` will refer to the same initialized variable.

Nightmare scenario: two identical weak structs, compiled by different compilers with different alignment rules.

# Packaging Commonly Used Functions

How to package functions commonly used by programmers?

- Math, I/O, memory management, string manipulation, etc.

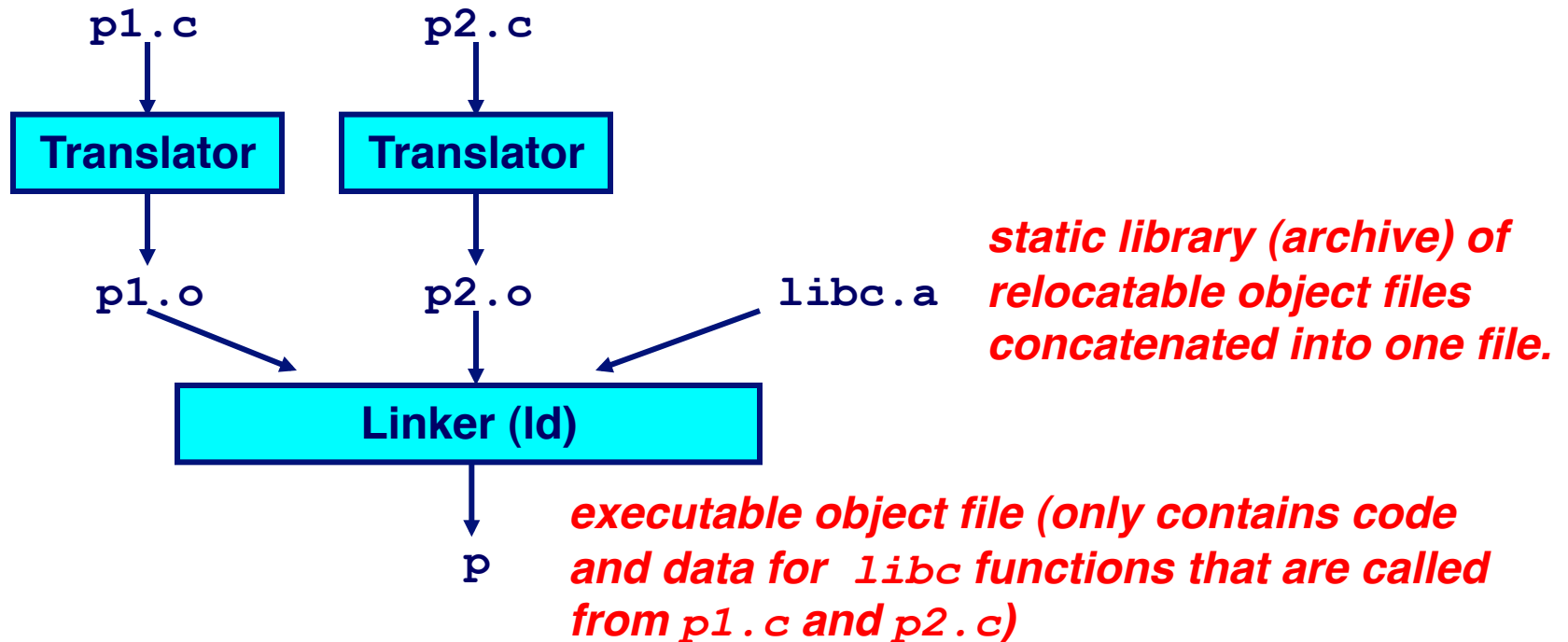
Awkward, given the linker framework so far:

- Option 1: Put all functions in a single source file
  - Programmers link big object file into their programs
  - Space and time inefficient
- Option 2: Put each function in a separate source file
  - Programmers explicitly link appropriate binaries into their programs
  - More efficient, but burdensome on the programmer

**Solution:** *static libraries* (.a archive files)

- Concatenate related relocatable object files into a single file with an index (called an archive).
- Enhance linker so that it tries to resolve unresolved external references by looking for the symbols in one or more archives.
- If an archive member file resolves reference, link into executable.

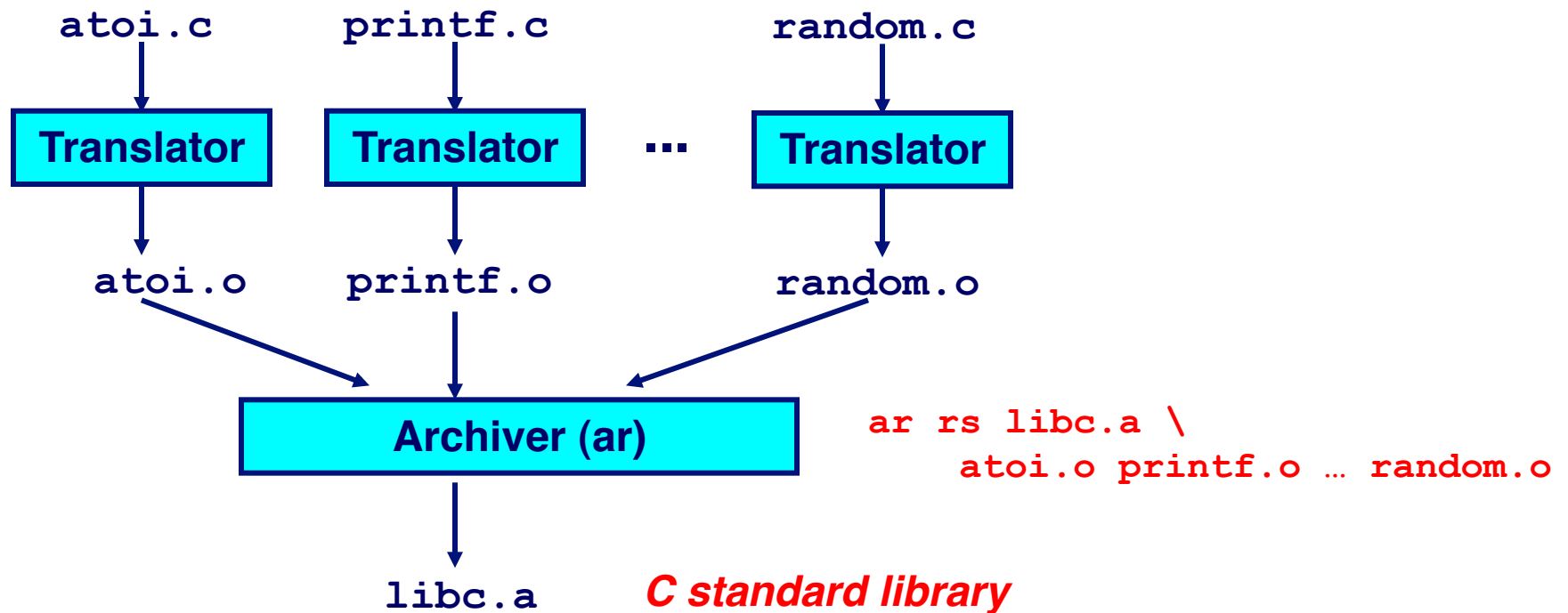
# Static Libraries (archives)



Further improves modularity and efficiency by packaging commonly used functions [e.g., C standard library (`libc`), math library (`libm`)]

Linker selectively only the `.o` files in the archive that are actually needed by the program.

# Creating Static Libraries



**Archiver allows incremental updates:**

- Recompile function that changes and replace .o file in archive.



# Commonly Used Libraries

## `libc.a` (the C standard library)

- 8 MB archive of 900 object files.
- I/O, memory allocation, signal handling, string handling, data and time, random numbers, integer math

## `libm.a` (the C math library)

- 1 MB archive of 226 object files.
- floating point math (sin, cos, tan, log, exp, sqrt, ...)

```
% ar -t /usr/lib/libc.a | sort
```

```
...
```

```
fork.o
```

```
...
```

```
fprintf.o
```

```
fpu_control.o
```

```
fputc.o
```

```
freopen.o
```

```
fscanf.o
```

```
fseek.o
```

```
fstab.o
```

```
...
```

```
% ar -t /usr/lib/libm.a | sort
```

```
...
```

```
e_acos.o
```

```
e_acosf.o
```

```
e_acosh.o
```

```
e_acoshf.o
```

```
e_acoshl.o
```

```
e_acosl.o
```

```
e_asin.o
```

```
e_asinf.o
```

```
e_asinl.o
```

```
...
```

# Using Static Libraries

## Linker's algorithm for resolving external references:

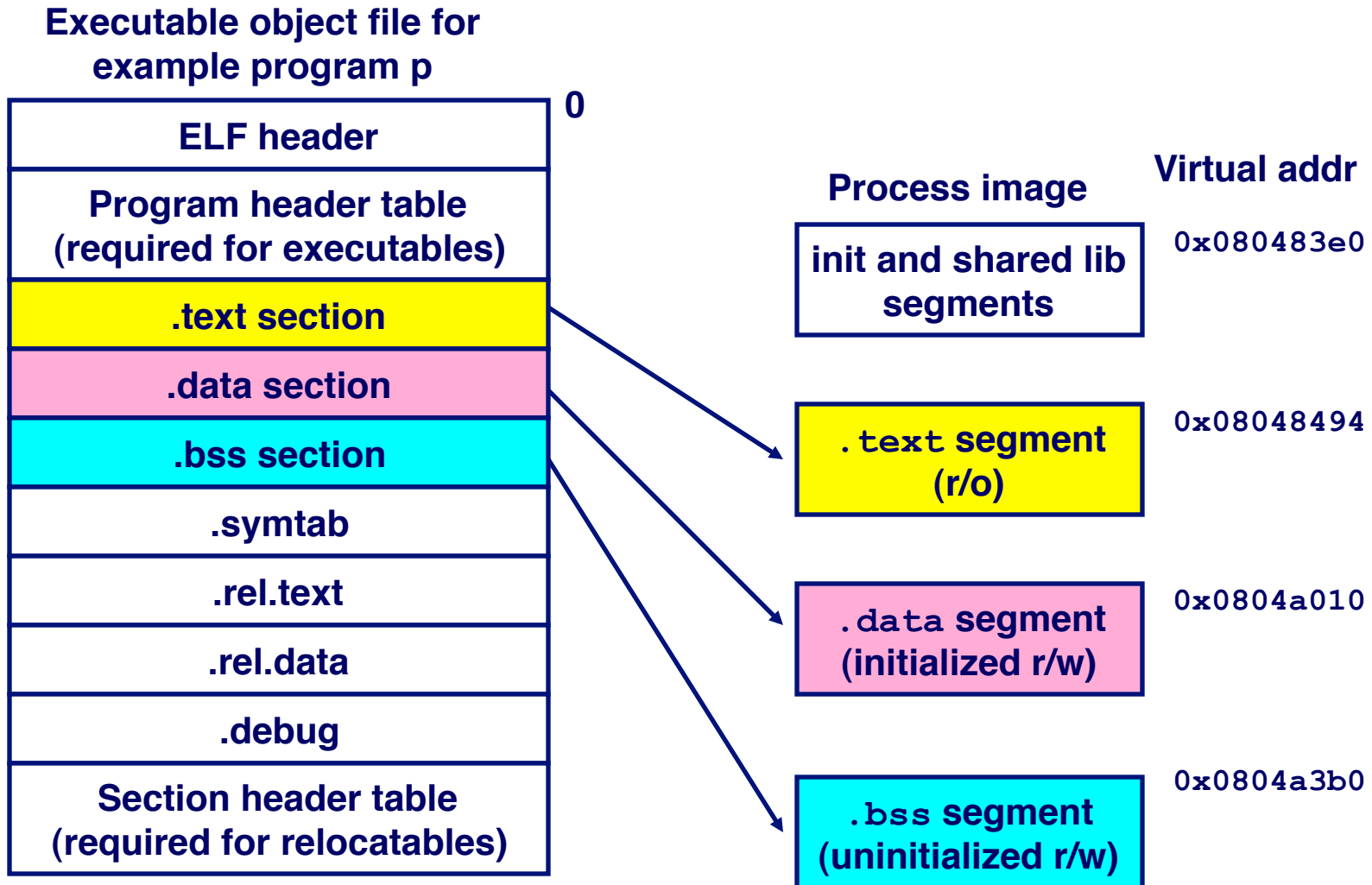
- Scan .o files and .a files in the command line order.
- During the scan, keep a list of the current unresolved references.
- As each new .o or .a file obj is encountered, try to resolve each unresolved reference in the list against the symbols in obj.
- If any entries in the unresolved list at end of scan, then error.

## Problem:

- Command line order matters!
- Moral: put libraries at the end of the command line.

```
bass> gcc -L. libtest.o -lmine
bass> gcc -L. -lmine libtest.o
libtest.o: In function `main':
libtest.o(.text+0x4): undefined reference to `libfun'
```

# Loading Executable Binaries



# Shared Libraries

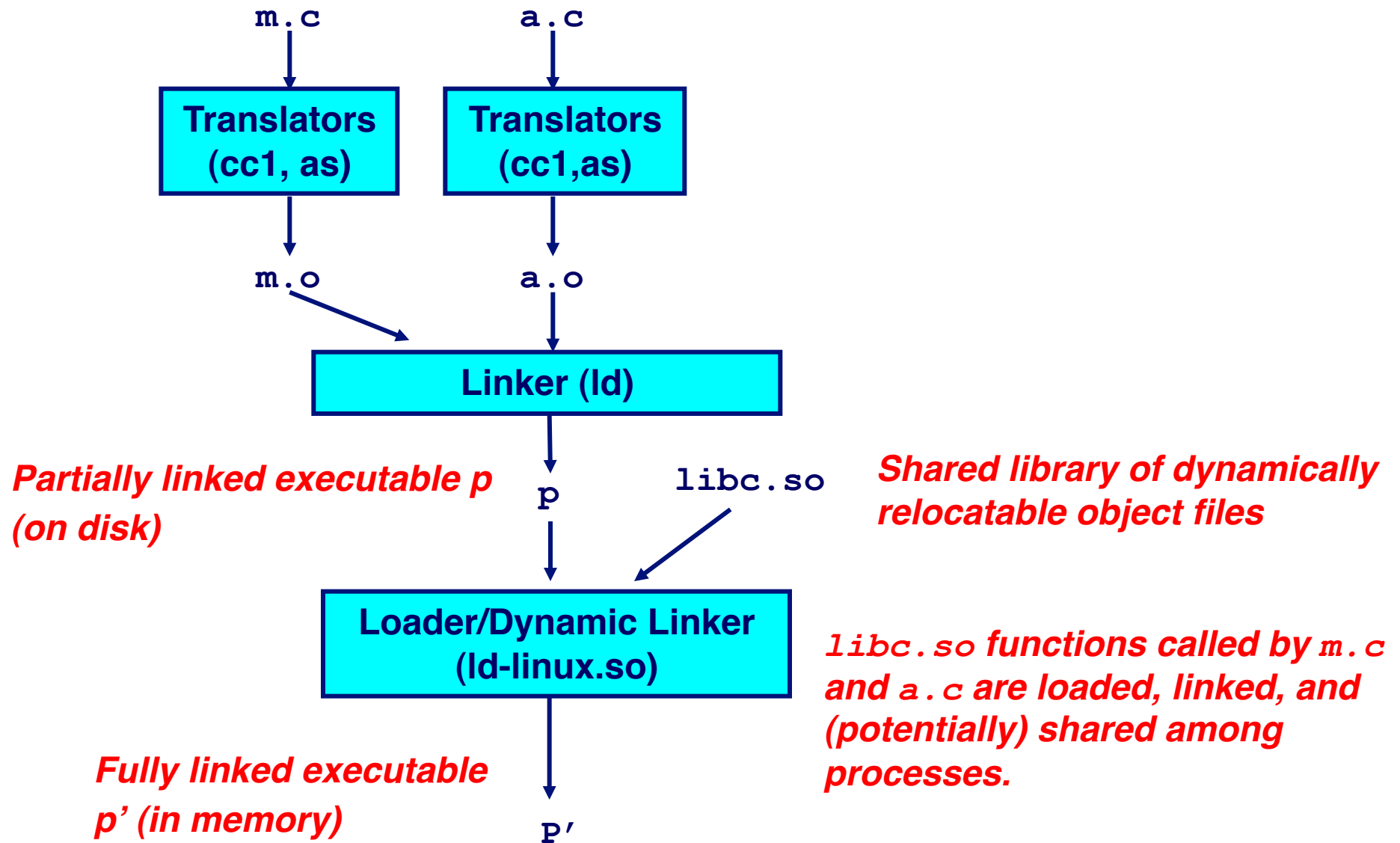
## Static libraries have the following disadvantages:

- Potential for duplicating lots of common code in the executable files on a filesystem.
  - e.g., every C program needs the standard C library
- Potential for duplicating lots of code in the virtual memory space of many processes.
- Minor bug fixes of system libraries require each application to explicitly relink

## Solution:

- **Shared libraries** (dynamic link libraries, DLLs) whose members are dynamically loaded into memory and linked into an application at run-time.
  - Dynamic linking can occur when executable is first loaded and run.
    - » Common case for Linux, handled automatically by `ld-linux.so`.
  - Dynamic linking can also occur after program has begun.
    - » In Linux, this is done explicitly by user with `dlopen()`.
    - » Basis for High-Performance Web Servers.
  - Shared library routines can be shared by multiple processes.

# Dynamically Linked Shared Libraries



# The Complete Picture

