Concurrent systems

Lecture 3: CCR, monitors, and concurrency in practice

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Reminder from last time

- General mutual exclusion: how to [not] do it
- Hardware support for mutual exclusion
- Semaphores for **mutual exclusion**, **process synchronisation**, and **resource allocation**
- Two-party and generalised producer-consumer relationships
- Multi-reader single-writer locks

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From last time: Semaphores summary

- Powerful abstraction for implementing concurrency control:
  - mutual exclusion & condition synchronization
- Better than read-and-set()… **but** correct use requires considerable care
  - e.g. forget to wait(), can corrupt data
  - e.g. forget to signal(), can lead to infinite delay
  - generally get more complex as add more semaphores

Semaphores are a low-level implementation primitive
They say what to do, not what the programmer's goal are

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This time

- Alternatives to simple semaphores/locks:
  - Conditional critical regions (CCRs); Monitors
  - Condition variables; signal-and-wait vs. signal-and-continue semantics
- Concurrency primitives in practice
- Concurrency primitives wrap-up

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Conditional Critical Regions

- Implementing synchronisation with locks is difficult
  - Only the developer knows what data is protected by which locks
- One early (1970s) effort to address this problem was CCRs
  - Variables can be explicitly declared as ‘shared’
  - Code can be tagged as using those variables, e.g.

```
shared int A, B, C;
region A, B {
    await( /* arbitrary condition */);
    // critical code using A and B
}
```

- Compiler automatically declares and manages underlying primitives for mutual exclusion or synchronization
  - e.g. wait/signal, read/await/advance, …
- Easier for programmer (c/f previous implementations)

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CCR example: Producer-Consumer

```
shared int buffer[N];
shared int in = 0; shared int out = 0;
```

```
// producer thread
while(true) {
  item = produce();
  region in, out, buffer {
    await((in-out) < N);
    buffer[in % N] = item;
    in = in + 1;
  }
}
```

```
// consumer thread
while(true) {
  region in, out, buffer {
    await((in-out) > 0);
    item = buffer[out%N];
    out  = out + 1;
  }
  consume(item);
}
```

- Explicit (scoped) declaration of critical sections
  - automatically acquire mutual exclusion lock on region entry
- Powerful **await**(): any evaluable predicate

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CCR pros and cons

- On the surface seems like a definite step up
  - Programmer focuses on **variables** to be protected, compiler generates appropriate semaphores (etc)
  - Compiler can also check that shared variables are never accessed outside a CCR
  - (still rely on programmer annotating correctly)
- But **await**(<expr>) is problematic…
  - What to do if the (arbitrary) <expr> is not true?
  - very difficult to work out when it becomes true?
  - Solution was to leave region & try to re-enter: this is busy waiting, which is very inefficient…

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Monitors

- **Monitors** are similar to CCRs (implicit mutual exclusion), but modify them in two ways
  - Waiting is limited to explicit **condition variables**
  - All related routines are combined together, along with initialization code, in a single construct
- Idea is that only one thread can ever be executing 'within' the monitor
  - If a thread invokes a monitor method, it will block (queue) if there is another thread active inside
  - Hence all methods within the monitor can proceed on the basis that mutual exclusion has been ensured

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Example Monitor syntax

```
monitor <foo> {

 // declarations of shared variables

 // set of procedures (or methods)
 procedure P1(...) { ... }
 procedure P2(...) { ... }
 ...
 procedure PN(...) { ... }

 {
    /* monitor initialization code */
 }

}
```

All related data and methods kept together

Invoking any procedure causes an [implicit] mutual exclusion lock to be taken

Shared variables can be initialized here

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Condition Variables

- Mutual exclusion not always sufficient
  – e.g. may need to wait for a condition to occur
- Monitors allow condition variables
  – Explicitly declared & managed by programmer
  – Support three operations:

```
wait(cv) {
   suspend thread and add it to the queue
   for cv; release monitor lock
}
signal(cv) {
   if any threads queued on cv, wake one;
}
broadcast(cv) {
   wake all threads queued on cv;
}
```

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Monitor Producer-Consumer solution?

```
monitor ProducerConsumer {
 int in, out, buf[N];
 condition notfull, notempty;

 procedure produce(item) {
   if( (in-out) == N) wait(notfull);
   buf[in % N] = item;
   if( (in-out) == 0) signal(notempty);
   in = in + 1;
 }
 procedure int consume() {
   if( (in-out) == 0) wait(notempty);
   item = buf[out % N];
   if( (in-out) == N) signal(notfull);
   out = out + 1;
 }
 /* init */ { in = out = 0; }
}
```

If buffer is full (in==out+N), must wait for consumer

If buffer was full (in==out), signal the consumer

If buffer is empty (in==out), must wait for producer

If buffer **was** full before, signal the producer

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Does this work?

- Depends on implementation of **wait**() & **signal**()
- Imagine two threads, T1 and T2
  - T1 enters the monitor and calls **wait**(C) – this suspends T1, places it on the queue for C, and unlocks the monitor
  - Next T2 enters the monitor, and invokes **signal**(C)
  - Now T1 is unblocked (i.e. capable of running again)…
  - … but can only have one thread active inside a monitor!
- If we let T2 continue (so-called "signal-and-continue"), T1 must queue for re-entry to the monitor
  - And no guarantee it will be *next* to enter
- Otherwise T2 must be suspended ("signal-and-wait"), allowing T1 to continue…

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Signal-and-Wait ("Hoare Monitors")

- Consider a queue **E** to enter monitor
  - If monitor is occupied, threads are added to **E**
  - May not be FIFO, but should be fair
- If thread T1 waits on C, added to queue **C**
- If T2 enters monitor & signals, waking T1
  - T2 is added to a new queue **S** "in front of" **E**
  - T1 continues and eventually exits (or re-waits)
- Some thread on **S** chosen to resume
  - Only admit a thread from **E** when **S** is empty

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Signal-and-Wait pros and cons

- We call signal() exactly when condition is true, then directly transfer control to waking thread
  - Hence condition will still be true!
- But more difficult to implement…
- And can be difficult to reason about (a call to signal *may or may not* result in a context switch)
  - Hence we must ensure that any invariants are maintained at time we invoke **signal**()
- With these semantics, example on ~~p14~~ p11 is broken:
  - we **signal**() before incrementing in/out

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Signal-and-Continue

- Alternative semantics introduced by Mesa programming language (Xerox PARC)
- An invocation of **signal**() moves a thread from the condition queue **C** to the entry queue **E**
  - Invoking threads continues until exits (or waits)
- Simpler to build… but now not guaranteed that condition is true when resume!
  - Other threads may have executed after the signal, but before you continue

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Signal-and-Continue example

- Consider multiple producer-consumer threads
  1. P1 enters. Buffer is full so blocks on queue for **C**
  2. C1 enters.
  3. P2 tries to enter; occupied, so queues on **E**
  4. C1 continues, consumes, and signals **C** ("notfull")
  5. P1 unblocks; monitor occupied, so queues on **E**
  6. C1 exits, allowing P2 to enter
  7. P2 fills buffer, and exits monitor
  8. P1 resumes and tries to add item – BUG!
- Hence must *re-test condition*:
  - i.e. while((in-out) == N) wait(notfull);

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Monitors: summary

- Structured concurrency control
  - groups together shared data and methods
  - (today we'd call this object-oriented)
- Considerably simpler than semaphores (~~or event counts~~), but still perilous in places
- May be overly conservative sometimes:
  - e.g. for MRSW cannot have >1 reader in monitor
  - Typically must work around with entry and exit methods (BeginRead(), EndRead(), BeginWrite(), etc)
- Exercise: sketch a MRSW monitor implementation

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Concurrency in practice

- Seen a number of abstractions for concurrency control
  - Mutual exclusion and condition synchronization
- Next let's look at some concrete examples:
  - Linux, FreeBSD kernels
  - POSIX pthreads (C/C++ API)
  - Java
  - C#

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Example: Linux kernel

- Kernel provides spinlocks & semaphores
  – Spinlocks busy wait so only hold for short time
  – (dynamically optimized out on UP kernels)

```
DEFINE_SPINLOCK(mylock);
spin_lock_irqsave(&mylock, flags);
// do stuff (not much!)
spin_lock_irqrestore(&mylock, flags);
```

- Gradual migration to mutexes – we'll see why shortly
- Also get *reader-writer* spinlock variants
  - allows many readers or a single writer
  - (mostly deprecated now in favor of RCU)

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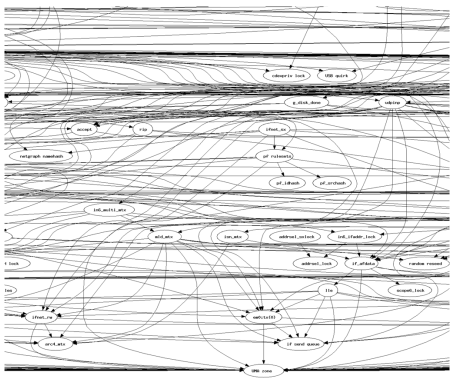
Example: FreeBSD kernel

- Kernel provides spin locks, mutexes, conditional variables, reader-writer + read-mostly locks
- A variety of deferred work primitives
  – "Fully preemptive" and highly threaded (e.g., interrupt processing in threads)
- Interesting debugging tools such as DTrace, lock contention measurement, lock-order checking
- Concurrency case study for our last lecture



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Example: pthreads

- Standard (POSIX) threading API for C, C++, etc
  - mutexes, condition variables and barriers
- Mutexes are essentially binary semaphores:

```
int pthread_mutex_init(pthread_mutex_t *mutex, ...);
int pthread_mutex_lock(pthread_mutex_t *mutex);
int pthread_mutex_trylock(pthread_mutex_t *mutex);
int pthread_mutex_unlock(pthread_mutex_t *mutex);
```

- A thread calling lock() blocks if the mutex is held
  - trylock() is a non-blocking variant: returns immediately; returns 0 if lock acquired, or non-zero if not.

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Example: pthreads

- Condition variables are Mesa-style:

```
int pthread_cond_init(pthread_cond_t *cond, ...);
int pthread_cond_wait(pthread_cond_t *cond,
                                   pthread_mutex_t
*mutex);
int pthread_cond_signal(pthread_cond_t *cond);
int pthread_cond_broadcast(pthread_cond_t *cond);
```

- No proper monitors: must manually code e.g.

```
pthread_mutex_lock(&M);
while(!condition)
   pthread_cond_wait(&C,&M);
// do stuff
if(condition) pthread_cond_broadcast(&C);
pthread_mutex_unlock (&M);
```

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Example: pthreads

- Barriers: explicit synchronization mechanism
  - Wait until all threads reach some point

```
int pthread_barrier_init(pthread_barrier_t *b, ...,  N);
int pthread_barrier_wait(pthread_barrier_t *b);
```

```
pthread_barrier_init(&B, ..., NTHREADS);
for(i=0; i<NTHREADS; i++)
   pthread_create(..., worker, ...);

worker() {
   while(!done) {
     // do work for this round
     pthread_barrier_wait(&B);
   }
}
```


Example: Java [original]

- Synchronization inspired by monitors
  - Objects already encapsulate data & methods!
- Mesa-style, but no explicit condition variables

```
public class MyClass {
   //
   public synchronized void myMethod() throws ...{
     while(!condition)
        wait();
     // do stuff
     if(condition)
        notifyAll();
   }
}
```

- Java 5 provides many additional options…

Example: C#

- Very similar to Java, tho explicit arguments

```
public class MyClass {
   //
   public void myMethod() {
     lock(this) {
        while(!condition)
            Monitor.Wait(this);
        // do stuff
        if(condition)
        Monitor.PulseAll(this);
     }
   }
}
```

- Also provides spinlocks, reader-writer locks, semaphores, barriers, event synchronization, …

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Concurrency Primitives: Summary

- Concurrent systems require means to ensure:
  - **Safety** (mutual exclusion in critical sections), and
  - **Progress** (condition synchronization)
- Seen spinlocks (busy wait); semaphores; ~~event counts / sequencers~~; CCRs and monitors
- Almost all of these are still used in practice
  - subtle minor differences can be dangerous
  - require care to avoid bugs

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Summary + next time

- Alternatives to simple semaphores/locks:
  - Conditional critical regions (CCRs); Monitors
  - Condition variables; signal-and-wait vs. signal-and-continue semantics
- Concurrency primitives in practice
- Concurrency primitives wrap-up

- Next time:
  - Problems with concurrency: deadlock, livelock, priorities
  - Resource allocation graphs; deadlock {prevention, detection, recovery}
  - Priority inversion; priority inheritence

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