CS 31: Intro to Systems
Misc. Threading

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Next Lab / Course Survey

• Lauri (academic support coordinator) will send a course survey link
  – ~15 minutes in lab to fill it out

• I will NOT see survey results until grades are submitted. Please be honest / constructive!

• I will be told how many people have completed the survey. If > 90% of class, I’ll drop another quiz/absence.

• Remaining time for coding/debugging GOL
Agenda

• Classic thread patterns

• Pthreads primitives and examples of other forms of synchronization:
  – Condition variables
  – Barriers
  – RW locks
  – Message passing

• Message passing: alternative to shared memory
Common Thread Patterns

- Producer / Consumer (a.k.a. Bounded buffer)

- Thread pool (a.k.a. work queue)

- Thread per client connection
The Producer/Consumer Problem

- Producer produces data, places it in shared buffer
- Consumer consumes data, removes from buffer
- Cooperation: Producer feeds Consumer
  - How does data get from Producer to Consumer?
  - How does Consumer wait for Producer?
Producer/Consumer: Shared Memory

shared int buf[N], in = 0, out = 0;

**Producer**
while (TRUE) {
    buf[in] = Produce();
    in = (in + 1)%N;
}

**Consumer**
while (TRUE) {
    Consume(buf[out]);
    out = (out + 1)%N;
}

- Data transferred in shared memory buffer.
Producer/Consumer: Shared Memory

shared int buf[N], in = 0, out = 0;

Producer
while (TRUE) {
    buf[in] = Produce ();
    in = (in + 1)%N;
}

Consumer
while (TRUE) {
    Consume (buf[out]);
    out = (out + 1)%N;
}

• Data transferred in shared memory buffer.

• Is there a problem with this code?
  A. Yes, this is broken.
  B. No, this ought to be fine.
This producer/consumer scenario requires synchronization to...

shared int buf[N], in = 0, out = 0;

**Producer**
while (TRUE) {
    buf[in] = Produce ();
    in = (in + 1)%N;
}

**Consumer**
while (TRUE) {
    Consume (buf[out]);
    out = (out + 1)%N;
}

A. Avoid deadlock

B. Avoid double writes or empty consumes of buf[] slots

C. Protect a critical section with mutual exclusion

D. Copy data from producer to consumer
Adding Semaphores

shared int buf[N], in = 0, out = 0;
shared sem filledslots = 0, emptyslots = N;

**Producer**
while (TRUE) {
    wait (X);
    buf[in] = Produce ()
    in = (in + 1)%N;
    signal (Y);
}

**Consumer**
while (TRUE) {
    wait (Z);
    Consume (buf[out])
    out = (out + 1)%N;
    signal (W);
}

• Recall semaphores:
  – wait(): decrement sem and block if sem value < 0
  – signal(): increment sem and unblock a waiting process (if any)
Suppose we now have two semaphores to protect our array. Where do we use them?

shared int buf[N], in = 0, out = 0;
shared sem filledslots = 0, emptyslots = N;

**Producer**
while (TRUE) {
    wait (X);
    buf[in] = Produce ();
    in = (in + 1)%N;
    signal (Y);
}

**Consumer**
while (TRUE) {
    wait (Z);
    Consume (buf[out]);
    out = (out + 1)%N;
    signal (W);
}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer choice</th>
<th>X</th>
<th>Y</th>
<th>Z</th>
<th>W</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>emptyslots</td>
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<tr>
<td>B.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>C.</td>
<td>filledslots</td>
<td>emptyslots</td>
<td>emptyslots</td>
<td>filledslots</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Add Semaphores for Synchronization

shared int buf[N], in = 0, out = 0;
shared sem filledslots = 0, emptyslots = N;

**Producer**
while (TRUE) {
    wait (emptyslots);
    buf[in] = Produce ();
    in = (in + 1)%N;
    signal (filledslots);
}

**Consumer**
while (TRUE) {
    wait (filledslots);
    Consume (buf[out]);
    out = (out + 1)%N;
    signal (emptyslots);
}

- Buffer empty, Consumer waits
- Buffer full, Producer waits
- Don’t confuse synchronization with mutual exclusion
Synchronization: More than Mutexes

• “I want to block a thread until something specific happens.”
  – Condition variable: wait for a condition to be true
Condition Variables

• In the pthreads library:
  – pthread_cond_init: Initialize CV
  – pthread_cond_wait: Wait on CV
  – pthread_cond_signal: Wakeup one waiter
  – pthread_cond_broadcast: Wakeup all waiters

• Condition variable is associated with a mutex:
  1. Lock mutex, realize conditions aren’t ready yet
  2. Temporarily give up mutex until CV signaled
  3. Reacquire mutex and wake up when ready
Condition Variable Pattern

while (TRUE) {
    //independent code

    lock(m);
    while (conditions bad)
        wait(cond, m);

    //proceed knowing that conditions are now good
    signal (other_cond); // Let other thread know
    unlock(m);
}

Synchronization: More than Mutexes

• “I want to block a thread until something specific happens.”
  – Condition variable: wait for a condition to be true

• “I want all my threads to sync up at the same point.”
  – Barrier: wait for everyone to catch up.
Barriers

• Used to coordinate threads, but also other forms of concurrent execution.

• Often found in simulations that have discrete rounds. (e.g., game of life)
Barrier Example, N Threads

shared barrier b;

init_barrier(&b, N);

create_threads(N, func);

void *func(void *arg) {
    while (…) {
        compute_sim_round()
        barrier_wait(&b)
    }
}

 Barrier (0 waiting)
Barrier Example, N Threads

shared barrier b;
init_barrier(&b, N);
create_threads(N, func);

void *func(void *arg) {
    while (...) {
        compute_sim_round()
        barrier_wait(&b)
    }
}

Threads make progress computing current round at different rates.

Barrier (0 waiting)
Barrier Example, N Threads

shared barrier b;

init_barrier(&b, N);

create_threads(N, func);

void *func(void *arg) {
    while (...) {
        compute_sim_round()
        barrier_wait(&b)
    }
}

Threads that make it to barrier must wait for all others to get there.
shared barrier b;

init_barrier(&b, N);

create_threads(N, func);

void *func(void *arg) {
    while (...) {
        compute_sim_round()
        barrier_wait(&b)
    }
}

Barrier allows threads to pass when N threads reach it.
shared barrier b;

init_barrier(&b, N);

create_threads(N, func);

void *func(void *arg) {
    while (...) {
        compute_sim_round()
        barrier_wait(&b)
    }
}

Threads compute next round, wait on barrier again, repeat...

Barrier (0 waiting)

T0  T1  T2  T3  T4
Synchronization: More than Mutexes

• “I want to block a thread until something specific happens.”
  – Condition variable: wait for a condition to be true

• “I want all my threads to sync up at the same point.”
  – Barrier: wait for everyone to catch up.

• “I want my threads to share a critical section when they’re reading, but still safely write.”
  – Readers/writers lock: distinguish how lock is used
Readers/Writers

- Readers/Writers Problem:
  - An object is shared among several threads
  - Some threads only read the object, others only write it
  - We can safely allow multiple readers
  - But only one writer

- `pthread_rwlock_t`:
  - `pthread_rwlock_init`: initialize rwlock
  - `pthread_rwlock_rdlock`: lock for reading
  - `pthread_rwlock_wrlock`: lock for writing
Common Thread Patterns

- Producer / Consumer (a.k.a. Bounded buffer)
- Thread pool (a.k.a. work queue)
- Thread per client connection
Thread Pool / Work Queue

• Common way of structuring threaded apps:
Thread Pool / Work Queue

- Common way of structuring threaded apps:

Queue of work to be done:
Thread Pool / Work Queue

• Common way of structuring threaded apps:

Queue of work to be done: Farm out work to threads when they’re idle.
Thread Pool / Work Queue

• Common way of structuring threaded apps:

Queue of work to be done: 

Thread Pool

As threads finish work at their own rate, they grab the next item in queue.

Common for “embarrassingly parallel” algorithms.

Works across the network too!
Thread Per Client

• Consider Web server:
  – Client connects
  – Client asks for a page:
    • http://web.cs.swarthmore.edu/~kwebb/cs31
    • “Give me /~kwebb/cs31”
  – Server looks through file system to find path (I/O)
  – Server sends back html for client browser (I/O)

• Web server does this for MANY clients at once
Thread Per Client

• Server “main” thread:
  – Wait for new connections
  – Upon receiving one, spawn new client thread
  – Continue waiting for new connections, repeat...

• Client threads:
  – Read client request, find files in file system
  – Send files back to client
  – Nice property: Each client is independent
  – Nice property: When a thread does I/O, it gets blocked for a while. OS can schedule another one.
Message Passing

• Operating system mechanism for IPC
  – send (destination, message_buffer)
  – receive (source, message_buffer)

• Data transfer: in to and out of kernel message buffers

• Synchronization: can’t receive until message is sent
Suppose we’re using message passing, will this code operate correctly?

/* NO SHARED MEMORY */

**Producer**

```c
int item;

while (TRUE) {
    item = Produce ();
    send (Consumer, &item);
}
```

**Consumer**

```c
int item;

while (TRUE) {
    receive (Producer, &item);
    Consume (item);
}
```

A. No, there is a race condition.
B. No, we need to protect *item*.
C. Yes, this code is correct.
This code is correct and relatively simple. Why don’t we always just use message passing (vs semaphores, etc.)?

/* NO SHARED MEMORY */

Producer
int item;

while (TRUE) {
    item = Produce ();
    send (Consumer, &item);
}

Consumer
int item;

while (TRUE) {
    receive (Producer, &item);
    Consume (item);
}

A. Message passing copies more data.
B. Message passing only works across a network.
C. Message passing is a security risk.
D. We usually do use message passing!
Issues with Message Passing

• Who should messages be addressed to?
  – ports (mailboxes) rather than processes/threads

• What if it wants to receive from anyone?
  – \texttt{pid} = receive (*, \texttt{msg})

• Synchronous (blocking) vs. asynchronous (non-blocking)
  – Typically, send is non-blocking, receive is blocking

• Kernel buffering: how many sends w/o receives?

• Good paradigm for IPC over networks
Summary

• Many ways to solve the same classic problems
  – Producer/Consumer: semaphores, CVs, messages

• There’s more to synchronization than just mutual exclusion!
  – CVs, barriers, RWlocks, and others.

• Message passing doesn’t require shared mem.
  – Useful for “threads” on different machines.