Synchronization

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Chapter 5: Roadmap

5.1 Concurrency
   Appendix A.1
5.2 Hardware mutex
5.3 Semaphores
5.4 Monitors
5.5 Messages
5.6 Reader-Writer

Part II
- Chapter 3: Processes
- Chapter 4: Threads
- Chapter 5: Concurrency
- Chapter 6: Deadlocks
Inter-Process Communication (IPC)

- IPC enables exchange of information between threads/processes
- Two main approaches
  - Shared memory
  - Messages
- **Shared memory**
  - Primary method to pass data between threads
  - Much faster than messages
  - However, requires protection against concurrent modification to shared data
- **Messages**
  - Data copied through a kernel buffer
  - OS provides exclusion
  - Can be used between hosts in distributed applications (e.g., pipes, network sockets)
- Pipes already covered, now deal with shared-memory IPC
Motivation

- Most examples will be in C++ style pseudocode
  - See MSDN for detailed usage of functions
- Start with two threads
  - Shared class passed to each thread
  - Thread1 computes a+b and saves into a
  - Thread2 does the same, but saves into b
- What is the outcome?

```cpp
class Shared {
    int a;
    int b;
};

Shared::Thread1 ()
a += b

Shared::Thread2 ()
b += a

main ()
    Shared st;
    st.a = 1
    st.b = 2
    CreateThread (st.Thread1)
    CreateThread (st.Thread2)
    print (st.a, st.b)
```

- Prints (1,2) and quits
  - Need to wait for threads
  - Assuming this problem is fixed, what is the result?
Motivation

• Analyze the various execution paths
  - Two threads concurrently execute this:

  thread 1
  Shared::Thread1()
  1)  a += b

  thread 2
  Shared::Thread2()
  2)  b += a

• CPU trace:

  ver 1
  1)  a = 3, b = 2
  2)  a = 3, b = 5
  main prints (3,5)

  ver 2
  1)  a = 4, b = 3
  2)  a = 1, b = 3
  main prints (4,3)

  ver 3
  1) reads a,b into registers
  2) reads a,b into registers
  1) computes sum, saves a = 3
  2) computes sum, saves b = 3
  main prints (3,3)

  non-deterministic result that depends on who gets there first (race condition)

  unintended result (depends on compiler)
Motivation

• How about the next example
  - Now both variables are modified, threads print their values

thread 1

Shared::Thread1 (
1)    a += b
2)    b += a
3)    print (a, b)

thread 2

Shared::Thread2 (
4)    a = 2*a + b
5)    b = a + 2*b
6)    print (a, b)

• CPU trace:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ver 1</th>
<th>ver 2</th>
<th>ver 3</th>
<th>ver 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1) a = 3, b = 2</td>
<td>1) a = 3, b = 2</td>
<td>1) a = 3, b = 2</td>
<td>1) a = 3, b = 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2) a = 3, b = 5</td>
<td>4) a = 8, b = 2</td>
<td>2) a = 3, b = 5</td>
<td>4) a = 8, b = 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3) prints (3,5)</td>
<td>2) a = 8, b = 10</td>
<td>4) a = 11, b = 5</td>
<td>3) prints (8,10)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4) a = 11, b = 5</td>
<td>5) a = 8, b = 28</td>
<td>5) a = 11, b = 21</td>
<td>3) prints (8,28)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5) a = 11, b = 21</td>
<td>3) prints (8,28)</td>
<td>6) prints (11,21)</td>
<td>5) a = 8, b = 28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6) prints (11,21)</td>
<td>6) prints (8,28)</td>
<td>6) prints (11,21)</td>
<td>6) prints (8,28)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Motivation

- Example (cont’d)
  - How many possible execution traces?
  - Build an execution tree:

Generalization: for two threads with m and n instructions respectively, the number of possible ways to interleave them:

\[
\binom{m+n}{m}
\]

For \( m = n = 100 \), this is \( 10^{59} \)

symmetric subtree omitted

ver1
ver3
ver4
ver2
Motivation

• Actual tree is deeper since we have to consider each assembly-level instruction
  − Even most basic $c = a + b$ may be implemented as 4 CPU instructions: load (reg1, a), load(reg2, b), add(reg1, reg2), store (c, reg1)
  − Also could be load(reg, a), add(reg, b), store (c, reg)

• Because of this, synchronization bugs may be compiler-specific
  − Some may only appear in debug or release mode

• Conclusion: proper synchronization is mandatory for access to shared memory

• However, not all access needs protection
  − Required only if data is modified by at least one thread
**Terminology**

- **Critical section**
  - Piece of code that is sensitive to concurrent events in other threads
- **Critical sections require synchronization to exclude other threads from damaging data**
- **Atomic operation**
  - Set of instructions that cannot be interrupted by another thread
- **Single CPU instruction is always atomic**
  - Is the code above safe?
- **Nope, L2/L3 cache coherency problems on multi-core platforms**
  - Result unpredictable
- **Also, compiler may split this into multiple instructions**
  - Possible in debug mode
- **Deadlock**
  - Infinite wait for events or some conditions
Deadlock Illustrated
**Terminology**

- **Livlock**
  - Non-stop activity that typically changes *shared state*, but makes no progress
  - Unlike deadlock, which makes no change to shared variables
- **Elevator example:**
  - Every time a button is pressed, elevator responds by moving towards the floor where it was pressed
  - New button commands *preempt* old ones
  - Selfish customers
Terminology

- **Mutual exclusion (mutex)**
  - Data structure that allows only one thread in its critical section at one time

- **Multiple critical sections within a thread possible**

- **Race condition**
  - Situation where the outcome depends on the order of thread execution
  - Hw1-part3: robots race to find the exit; found solution is non-deterministic
  - Sometimes acceptable

- **Busy-spinning**
  - A while loop that tests variable(s) until some condition is reached
  - Not used often in user space, but parts of the kernel rely on it

- **Work starvation**
  - Certain threads are under-utilized (ready to run, but no work)
Terminology

- **Work starvation (cont’d)**
  - Caused by unbalanced job partitioning or OS scheduler giving less CPU time to certain threads

- Assuming the OS is well-designed, only the former issue is of concern

- **Examples**
  - Hw1-part3: one thread deposits new rooms in the queue, then immediately grabs them all back for exploration

- Threads sort keys concurrently, where thread i gets keys whose upper k bits are i

- Does this search loop require a mutex:

```c
while (exit not found)
  x = U.pop();
  Explore(x);
```

- Yes since U.pop() modifies the underlying data structure

- Should Explore(x) be inside a mutex?