Synchronization I

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Today’s Topics

- Synchronization problem
- Locks
Synchronization

- Threads cooperate in multithreaded programs
  - To share resources, access shared data structures
  - Also, to coordinate their execution

- For correctness, we have to control this cooperation
  - Must assume threads interleave executions arbitrarily and at different rates.
    - Scheduling is not under application writers’ control.
  - We control cooperation using synchronization.
    - Enables us to restrict the interleaving of execution.
  - (Note) This also applies to processes, not just threads.
    - And it also applies across machines in a distributed system.
The Classic Example (1)

- Withdraw money from a bank account
  - Suppose you and your girl(boy) friend share a bank account with a balance of 1,000,000won.
  - What happens if both go to separate ATM machines, and simultaneously withdraw 100,000won from the account?

```c
int withdraw (account, amount)
{
    balance = get_balance (account);
    balance = balance - amount;
    put_balance (account, balance);
    return balance;
}
```
The Classic Example (2)

- **Interleaved schedules**
  - Represent the situation by creating a separate thread for each person to do the withdrawals.
  - The execution of the two threads can be interleaved, assuming preemptive scheduling:

```plaintext
balance = get_balance (account);
balance = balance - amount;

balance = get_balance (account);
balance = balance - amount;
put_balance (account, balance);

put_balance (account, balance);
```

Execution sequence as seen by CPU

Context switch

Context switch
Synchronization Problem

Problem

- Two concurrent threads (or processes) access a shared resource without any synchronization.
- Creates a race condition:
  - The situation where several processes access and manipulate shared data concurrently.
  - The result is non-deterministic and depends on timing.
- We need mechanisms for controlling access to shared resources in the face of concurrency.
  - So that we can reason about the operation of programs.
- Synchronization is necessary for any shared data structure
  - buffers, queues, lists, etc.
Sharing Resources

- **Between threads**
  - Local variables are not shared.
    - Refer to data on the stack.
    - Each thread has its own stack.
    - Never pass/share/store a pointer to a local variable on another thread’s stack.
  - Global variables are shared.
    - Stored in static data segment, accessible by any thread.
  - Dynamic objects are shared.
    - Stored in the heap, shared through the pointers.

- **Between processes**
  - Shared-memory objects, files, etc. are shared.
Critical Sections (1)

- Critical sections
  - Critical sections are parts of the program that access shared memory or shared files or other shared resources.
  - We want to use mutual exclusion to synchronize access to shared resources in critical sections.
    - Only one thread at a time can execute in the critical section.
    - All other threads are forced to wait on entry.
    - When a thread leaves a critical section, another can enter.
  - Otherwise, critical sections can lead to race conditions.
    - The final result depends on the sequence of execution of the processes.
Critical Sections (2)

Requirements

• Mutual exclusion
  – At most one thread is in the critical section.

• Progress
  – If thread T is outside the critical section, then T cannot prevent thread S from entering the critical section.

• Bounded waiting (no starvation)
  – If thread T is waiting on the critical section, then T will eventually enter the critical section.

• Performance
  – The overhead of entering and exiting the critical section is small with respect to the work being done within it.
Critical Sections (3)

Mechanisms for building critical sections

- **Locks**
  - Very primitive, minimal semantics, used to build others.

- **Semaphores**
  - Basic, easy to get the hang of, hard to program with.

- **Monitors**
  - High-level, requires language support, implicit operations.
  - Easy to program with: Java “synchronized”

- **Messages**
  - Simple model of communication and synchronization based on (atomic) transfer of data across a channel.
  - Direct application to distributed systems.
Locks

- A lock is an object (in memory) that provides the following two operations:
  - acquire(): wait until lock is free, then grab it.
  - release(): unlock, and wake up any thread waiting in acquire()

- Using locks
  - Lock is initially free.
  - Call acquire() before entering a critical section, and release() after leaving it.
  - Between acquire() and release(), the thread holds the lock.
  - acquire() does not return until the caller holds the lock.
  - At most one thread can hold a lock at a time.

- Locks can spin (a spinlock) or block (a mutex).
Using Locks

```c
int withdraw (account, amount) {
    acquire (lock);
    balance = get_balance (account);
    balance = balance - amount;
    put_balance (account, balance);
    release (lock);
    return balance;
}
```

Critical section
Implementing Locks (1)

- An initial attempt

```c
struct lock { int held = 0; }

void acquire (struct lock *l) {
    while (l->held);
    l->held = 1;
}

void release (struct lock *l) {
    l->held = 0;
}
```

The caller “busy-waits”, or spins for locks to be released, hence spinlocks.

- Does this work?
Implementing Locks (2)

**Problem**

- Implementation of locks has a critical section, too!
  - The acquire/release must be atomic.
  - A recursion, huh?

- Atomic operation
  - Executes as though it could not be interrupted.
  - Code that executes “all or nothing”.

Implementing Locks (3)

- **Solutions**
  - Software-only algorithms
    - Dekker’s algorithm (1962) (cf. Exercises 6.1)
    - Peterson’s algorithm (1981)
    - Lamport’s Bakery algorithm for more than two processes (1974)
  - Hardware atomic instructions
    - Test-and-set, compare-and-swap, etc.
  - Disable/reenable interrupts
    - To prevent context switches
Software-only Algorithms

- Wrong algorithm
  - Mutual exclusion?
  - Progress?

```c
int interested[2];

void acquire (int process) { 
    int other = 1 - process;
    interested[process] = TRUE;
    while (interested[other]);
}

void release (int process) { 
    interested[process] = FALSE;
}
```
Peterson’s Algorithm

- Solves the critical section problem for two processes

```c
int turn;
int interested[2];

void acquire (int process) {
    int other = 1 - process;
    interested[process] = TRUE;
    turn = other;
    while (interested[other] && turn == other);
}

void release (int process) {
    interested[process] = FALSE;
}
```
Bakery Algorithm (1)

- **Multiple-process solution**
  - Before entering its critical section, process receives a sequence number.
  - Holder of the smallest number enters the critical section.
  - If processes \( P_i \) and \( P_j \) receive the same number, if \( i < j \), then \( P_i \) is served first; else \( P_j \) is served first.
  - The numbering scheme always generates numbers in increasing order of enumeration; i.e. 1,2,3,3,3,4,4,5...
Bakery Algorithm (2)

```c
int number[N];
int choosing[N];

#define EARLIER(a,b) \((number[a] < number[b]) || \((number[a] == number[b] && (a) < (b)))\)

int Findmax () {
    int i;
    int max = number[0];
    for (i = 1; i < N; i++)
        if (number[i] > max)
            max = number[i];
    return max;
}

void acquire (int me) {
    int other;
    choosing[me] = TRUE;
    number[me] = Findmax() + 1;
    choosing[me] = FALSE;
    for (other=0; other<N; other++)
    {
        while (choosing[other]);
        while (number[other] && EARLIER(other, me));
    }
}

void release (int me) {
    number[me] = 0;
}
```
Atomic Instructions (1)

- Test-and-Set

```c
int TestAndSet (int *v) {
    int rv = *v;
    *v = 1;
    return rv;
}
```

- Using Test-and-Set instruction

```c
void struct lock { int value = 0; }

void acquire (struct lock *l) {
    while (TestAndSet (&l->value));
}

void release (struct lock *l) {
    l->value = 0;
}
```
Atomic Instructions (2)

- Swap

```c
void Swap (int *v1, int *v2) {
    int temp = *v1;
    *v1 = *v2;
    *v2 = temp;
}
```

- Using Swap instruction

```c
void struct lock { int value = 0; }
void acquire (struct lock *l) {
    int key = 1;
    while (key == 1) Swap(&l->value, &key);
}
void release (struct lock *l) {
    l->value = 0;
}
```
Atomic Instructions (3)

- Locks using Test-and-Set with bounded-waiting

```c
struct lock { int value = 0; }
int waiting[N];

void acquire (struct lock *l, int me)
{
    int key;
    waiting[me] = 1;
    key = 1;
    while (waiting[me] && key)
        key = TestAndSet (&l->value);
    waiting[me] = 0;
}

void release (struct lock *l, int me)
{
    int next = (me + 1) % N;
    while ((next != me) &&
            !waiting[next])
        next = (next + 1) % N;
    if (next == me)
        l->value = 0;
    else
        waiting[next] = 0;
}
```
Problems with Spinlocks

- **Spinlocks**
  - Horribly wasteful!
    - If a thread is spinning on a lock, the thread holding the lock cannot make progress.
    - The longer the critical section, the longer the spin.
    - CPU cycle is wasted.
    - Greater the chances for lock holder to be interrupted through involuntary context switch.
  
- Only want to use spinlock as primitives to build higher-level synchronization constructs.
Disabling Interrupts (1)

- Implementing locks by disabling interrupts

```c
void acquire (struct lock *l) {
    cli(); // disable interrupts;
}
void release (struct lock *l) {
    sti(); // enable interrupts;
}
```

- Disabling interrupts blocks notification of external events that could trigger a context switch (e.g., timer)
- There is no state associate with the lock.
- Can two threads disable interrupts simultaneously?
Disabling Interrupts (2)

- What’s wrong?
  - Only available to kernel
    - Why not have the OS support these as system calls?
  - Insufficient on a multiprocessor
    - Back to atomic instructions
  - What if the critical section is long?
    - Can miss or delay important events.
      (e.g., timer, I/O)
  - Like spinlocks, only use to implement higher-level synchronization primitives.
Summary

- **Implementing locks**
  - Software-only algorithms
  - Hardware atomic instructions
  - Disable/reenable interrupts

- **Spinlocks and disabling interrupts are primitive synchronization mechanisms.**
  - They are used to build higher-level synchronization constructs.