Locks

Jin-Soo Kim (jinsookim@skku.edu)
Computer Systems Laboratory
Sungkyunkwan University
http://csl.skku.edu
The Classic Example (1)

- **Withdrawing money from a bank account**
  - Suppose you and your girl (or 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)

- The execution of the two threads can be interleaved, assuming preemptive scheduling:

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

Context switch

Execution sequence as seen by CPU
The Real Example

extern int g;
void inc()
{
    g++;
}

movl 0x1000, %eax
addl $1, %eax
movl %eax, 0x1000

movl 0x1000, %eax
addl $1, %eax
movl %eax, 0x1000

context switch

movl 0x1000, %eax
addl $1, %eax
movl %eax, 0x1000

context switch

movl 0x1000, %eax
addl $1, %eax
movl %eax, 0x1000
Sharing Resources

- Local variables are not shared among threads
  - 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 among threads
  - Stored in static data segment, accessible by any thread

- Dynamic objects are shared among threads
  - Stored in the heap, shared through the pointers

- Also, processes can share memory (shmemp)
Synchronization Problem

- Concurrency leads to non-deterministic results
  - Two or more concurrent threads accessing a shared resource create a race condition
  - The output of the program is not deterministic; it varies from run to run even with same inputs, depending on timing
  - Hard to debug ("Heisenbugs")

- We need synchronization mechanisms for controlling access to shared resources
  - Synchronization restricts the concurrency
  - Scheduling is not under programmer’s control
Concurrency in the Kernel

User Space

Kernel

Hardware

interrupt handlers

background kernel threads

system call handlers
Critical Section

- A critical section is a piece of code that accesses a shared resource, usually a variable or data structure

```assembly
movl 0x1000, %eax
addl $1, %eax
movl %eax, 0x1000
```

- Need mutual exclusion for critical sections
  - Execute the critical section atomically (all-or-nothing)
  - 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
Locks

- A lock is an object (in memory) that provides mutual exclusion with the following two operations:
  - `acquire()`: wait until lock is free, than 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
  - `acquire()` does not return until the caller holds the lock
  - On `acquire()`, a thread can spin (spinlock) or block (mutex)
  - At most one thread can hold a lock at a time
Using Locks

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

▪ Correctness
  • **Mutual exclusion**: only one thread in critical section at a time
  • **Progress** (deadlock-free): if several threads want to enter the critical section, must allow one to proceed
  • **Bounded waiting** (starvation-free): must eventually allow each waiting thread to enter

▪ Fairness
  • Each thread gets a fair chance at acquiring the lock

▪ Performance
  • Time overhead for a lock without and with contentions (possibly on multiple CPUs)?
An Initial Attempt

- An initial implementation of a spinlock

```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

- Does this work?
Implementing Locks

- **Software-only algorithms**
  - Dekker’s algorithm (1962)
  - Peterson’s algorithm (1981)
  - Lamport’s Bakery algorithm for more than two processes (1974)

- **Hardware atomic instructions**
  - Test-And-Set
  - Compare-And-Swap
  - Load-Linked (LL) and Store-Conditional (SC)
  - Fetch-And-Add

- **Controlling interrupts**
Software-only Algorithm

- The second attempt to implement spinlocks
  - Note: each load and store instruction is atomic

```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;
}
```

- Does this work?
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;
}
```
Test-And-Set

- Atomic instructions
  - read-modify-write operations guaranteed to be executed “atomically”
- Test-And-Set instruction
  - Returns the old value of a memory location while simultaneously updating it to the new value
  - e.g. xchg in x86: exchange register/memory with register

```c
int TestAndSet (int *v, int new) {
    int old = *v;
    *v = new;
    return old;
}
```
Using Test-And-Set

- A simple spinlock using Test-And-Set instruction
  - Refer to spinlock.h and spinlock.c in xv6

```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;
}
```

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

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

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

- Supported in x86, Sparc, etc.
  - Update the memory location with the new value only when its old value equals to the “expected” value
  - e.g. cmpxchg in x86: compare and exchange

```c
int CompareAndSwap (int *v, int expected, int new) {
    int old = *v;
    if (old == expected)
        *v = new;
    return old;
}

void acquire (struct lock *l) {
    while (CompareAndSwap(&l->held, 0, 1));
}
```
LL & SC

- Supported in MIPS, Alpha, PowerPC, ARM, etc.
  - Load-Locked(LL) fetches a value from memory
  - Store-Conditional(SC) succeeds with returning 1 if no intervening store to the address has taken place
  - Otherwise, SC returns 0 without updating the memory

```c
void acquire (struct lock *l) {
    while (1) {
        while (LL(&l->held));
        if (SC(&l->held), 1)) return;
    }
}

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

- Supported in x86, etc.
  - Atomically increments a value while returning the old value
  - e.g. `xadd` in x86: exchange and add

```c
int FetchAndAdd (int *v, int a) {
    int old = *v;
    *v = old + a;
    return old;
}
```
Ticket Locks Using Fetch-And-Add

- First get a ticket and wait until its turn
- Provides bounded waiting

```c
struct lock {
    int ticket = 0;
    int turn = 0;
};

void acquire (struct lock *l) {
    int myturn = FetchAndAdd(&l->ticket, 1);
    while (l->turn != myturn);
}

void release (struct lock *l) {
    l->turn = l->turn + 1;
}
```
Controlling Interrupts (1)

- Disable interrupts for critical sections

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

- Disabling interrupts blocks external events that could trigger a context switch (e.g. timer)
- The code inside the critical section will not be interrupted
- There is no state associated with the lock
- Can two threads disable interrupts simultaneously?
Controlling Interrupts (2)

- **Pros**
  - Simple
  - Useful for a single-processor system

- **Cons**
  - Only available to kernel
    - What not provide them as system calls?
  - Insufficient on multi-processor systems
    - Back to atomic instructions
  - When the critical section is long, important interrupts can be delayed or lost (e.g. timer, disks, etc.)
  - Slower than executing atomic instructions on modern CPUs
Summary

- Spinlocks are 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

- Spinlocks (and disabling interrupts on a single CPU) are primitive synchronization mechanisms
  - They are used to build higher-level synchronization constructs