**Outline**

1. Cache coherence – the hardware view
2. Synchronization and memory consistency review
3. C11 Atomics
4. Avoiding locks

**Important memory system properties**

- **Coherence** – concerns accesses to a single memory location
  - Must obey program order if access from only one CPU
  - There is a total order on all updates
  - There is bounded latency before everyone sees a write
- **Consistency** – concerns ordering across memory locations
  - Even with coherence, different CPUs can see the same write happen at different times
  - Sequential consistency is what matches our intuition (As if instructions from all CPUs interleaved on one CPU)
  - Many architectures offer weaker consistency
  - Yet well-defined weaker consistency can still be sufficient to implement thread API contract from concurrency lecture

**Multicore Caches**

- **Performance requires caches**
  - Divided into chunks of bytes called lines (e.g., 64 bytes)
  - Caches create an opportunity for cores to disagree about memory
- **Bus-based approaches**
  - “Snoopy” protocols, each CPU listens to memory bus
  - Use write-through and invalidate when you see a write bits
  - Bus-based schemes limit scalability
- **Modern CPUs use networks (e.g., hypertransport, QPI)**
  - CPUs pass each other messages about cache lines

**MESI coherence protocol**

- **Modified**
  - One cache has a valid copy
  - That copy is dirty (needs to be written back to memory)
  - Must invalidate all copies in other caches before entering this state
- **Exclusive**
  - Same as Modified except the cache copy is clean
- **Shared**
  - One or more caches and memory have a valid copy
- **Invalid**
  - Doesn’t contain any data
- **Owned (for enhanced “MOESI” protocol)**
  - Memory may contain stale value of data (like Modified state)
  - But have to broadcast modifications (sort of like Shared state)
  - Can have both one owned and multiple shared copies of cache line

**Core and Bus Actions**

- **Core**
  - Read
  - Write
  - Evict (modified? must write back)
- **Bus**
  - Read: without intent to modify, data can come from memory or another cache
  - Read-exclusive: with intent to modify, must invalidate all other cache copies
  - Writeback: contents put on bus and memory is updated

**cc-NUMA**

- **Old machines used dance hall architectures**
  - Any CPU can “dance with” any memory equally
- **An alternative: Non-Uniform Memory Access (NUMA)**
  - Each CPU has fast access to some “close” memory
  - Slower to access memory that is farther away
  - Use a directory to keep track of who is caching what
- **Originally for esoteric machines with many CPUs**
  - But AMD and then Intel integrated memory controller into CPU
  - Faster to access memory controlled by the local socket (or even local die in a multi-chip module)
- **cc-NUMA = cache-coherent NUMA**
  - Rarely see non-cache-coherent NUMA (BBN Butterfly 1, Cray T3D)
Real World Coherence Costs

- See [David] for a great reference. Xeon results:
  - 3 cycle L1, 11 cycle L2, 44 cycle LLC, 355 cycle local RAM
- If another core in same socket holds line in modified state:
  - load: 109 cycles (LLC + 65)
  - store: 115 cycles (LLC + 71)
  - atomic CAS: 120 cycles (LLC + 76)
- If a core in a different socket holds line in modified state:
  - NUMA load: 289 cycles
  - NUMA store: 320 cycles
  - NUMA atomic CAS: 324 cycles
- But only a partial picture
  - Could be faster because of out-of-order execution
  - Could be slower if interconnect contention or multiple hops

Locking basics
mutex_t m;
lock(&m);
cnt = cnt + 1; /* critical section */
unlock(&m);

Only one thread can hold a mutex at a time
- Makes critical section atomic

Recall thread API contract
- All access to global data must be protected by a mutex
- Global = two or more threads touch data and at least one writes

Means must map each piece of global data to one mutex
- Never touch the data unless you locked that mutex
- But many ways to map data to mutexes

NUMA and spinlocks

- Test-and-set spinlock has several advantages
  - Simple to implement and understand
  - One memory location for arbitrarily many CPUs
- But also has disadvantages
  - Lots of traffic over memory bus (especially when > 1 spinner)
  - Not necessarily fair (same CPU acquires lock many times)
  - Even less fair on a NUMA machine
- Idea 1: Avoid spinlocks altogether (today)
  - Design lock that spins only on local memory
  - Also gives better fairness
- Idea 2: Reduce bus traffic with better spinlocks (next lecture)

Amdahl’s law

\[ T(n) = T(1) \left( B + \frac{1}{n}(1 - B) \right) \]

- Expected speedup limited when only part of a task is sped up
- \( T(n) \): the time it takes \( n \) CPU cores to complete the task
- \( B \): the fraction of the job that must be serial
- Even with massive multiprocessors, \( \lim_{n \to \infty} = B \cdot T(1) \)
- Places an ultimate limit on parallel speedup
- Problem: synchronization increases serial section size

Locking granularity

- Consider two lookup implementations for global hash table:
  struct list *hash_tbl[1021];

  coarse-grained locking
  mutex_t m;
  :
  mutex_lock(&m);
  struct list_elem *pos = list_begin (hash_tbl[hash(key)]);
  /* ... walk list and find entry ... */
  mutex_unlock(&m);

  fine-grained locking
  mutex_t bucket_lock[1021];
  :
  int index = hash(key);
  mutex_lock(&bucket_lock[index]);
  struct list_elem *pos = list_begin (hash_tbl[index]);
  /* ... walk list and find entry ... */
  mutex_unlock(&bucket_lock[index]);

- Which implementation is better?
Locking granularity (continued)

- Fine-grained locking admits more parallelism
  - E.g., imagine network server looking up values in hash table
  - Parallel requests will usually map to different hash buckets
  - So fine-grained locking should allow better speedup
- When might coarse-grained locking be better?

Readers-writers problem

- Recall a mutex allows access in only one thread
- But a data race occurs only if
  - Multiple threads access the same data, and
  - At least one of the accesses is a write
- How to allow multiple readers or one single writer?
  - Need lock that can be shared amongst concurrent readers
- Can implement using other primitives (next slides)
  - Keep integer \( i \) — # or readers or \(-1\) if held by writer
  - Protect \( i \) with mutex
  - Sleep on condition variable when can’t get lock

Implementing shared locks

struct sharedlk {
  int i;  /* # shared lockers, or -1 if exclusively locked */
  mutex_t m;
  cond_t c;
};

void AcquireExclusive (sharedlk *sl) {
  lock (&sl->m);
  while (sl->i) { wait (&sl->m, &sl->c); }
  sl->i = -1;
  unlock (&sl->m);
}

void AcquireShared (sharedlk *sl) {
  lock (&sl->m);
  while (sl->i > 0) { wait (&sl->m, &sl->c); }
  sl->i++;
  unlock (&sl->m);
}

void ReleaseShared (sharedlk *sl) {
  lock (&sl->m);
  if (!--sl->i)
    signal (&sl->c);
  unlock (&sl->m);
}

void ReleaseExclusive (sharedlk *sl) {
  lock (&sl->m);
  sl->i = 0;
  broadcast (&sl->c);
  unlock (&sl->m);
}

Implementing shared locks (continued)

- Any issues with this implementation?
  - Prone to starvation of writer (no bounded waiting)
  - How might you fix?
Review: Test-and-set spinlock

struct var {
    int lock;
    int val;
};

void atomic_inc (var *v) {
    while (test_and_set (&v->lock))
        ;
    v->val++;
    v->lock = 0;
}

void atomic_dec (var *v) {
    while (test_and_set (&v->lock))
        ;
    v->val--;
    v->lock = 0;
}

Is this code correct without sequential consistency?

Memory reordering danger

- Suppose no sequential consistency (& don’t compensate)
- Hardware could violate program order

Ordering requirements

void atomic_inc (var *v) {
    while (test_and_set (&v->lock))
        ;
    v->val++;
    /* danger */
    v->lock = 0;
}

- Must ensure all CPUs see the following:
  1. v->lock = 1 ran before v->val was read and written
  2. v->lock = 0 ran after v->val was written
- How does #1 get assured on x86?
  - Recall test_and_set uses xchgl %eax,(%edx)
- How to ensure #2 on x86?

Gcc extended asm syntax [FSF]

asm volatile (template-string : outputs : inputs : clobbers);

- Puts template-string in assembly language compiler output
  - Expands %0, %1, … (a bit like printf conversion specifiers)
  - Use “%x” for a literal % (e.g., “%xcr3” to specify cr3 register)

- inputs/outputs specify parameters as “constraint” (value)
  - int outvar, invar = 3;
  - asm ("movl %1, %0" : "x=" (outvar) : "r" (invar));
  - /* now outvar == 3 */

- clobbers lists other state that get used/overwritten
  - Special value “memory” prevents reordering with loads & stores
  - Serves as compiler barrier, as important as hardware barrier

- volatile indicates side effects other than result
  - Otherwise, gcc might optimize away if you don’t use result
Correct spinlock on alpha

- Recall implementation of `test_and_set` on alpha (with much weaker memory consistency than x86):
  ```
  _test_and_set:
  ldq_l v0, 0(a0)   # v0 = *lockp (LOCKED)
  bne v0, 1f, v0    # if (v0) return
  addq zero, 1, v0   # v0 = 1
  stq_c v0, 0(a0)    # *lockp = v0 (CONDITIONAL)
  beq v0, _test_and_set # if (failed) try again
  mb
  addq zero, zero, v0 # return 0
  1: ret zero, (ra), 1
  ```

- **Memory barrier instruction** `mb` (like `mfence`)
  - All processors will see that everything before `mb` in program order happened before everything after `mb` in program order

- **Need barrier before releasing spinlock as well:**
  ```
  asm volatile ("mb" ::: "memory");
  v->lock = 0;
  ```

Memory barriers/fences

- Fortunately, consistency need not overly complicate code
  - If you do locking right, only need a few fences within locking code
  - Code will be easily portable to new CPUs

- Most programmers should stick to mutexes

- But advanced techniques may require lower-level code
  - Later this lecture will see some wait-free algorithms
  - Also important for optimizing special-case locks (e.g., Linux kernel `rw_semaphore`, …)

- Algorithms often explained assuming sequential consistency
  - Must know how to use memory fences to implement correctly
  - E.g., see [Howells] for how Linux deals with memory consistency
  - Also, another plug for Why Memory Barriers

- Next: How C11 allows portable low-level code

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Background: C memory model [C11]

- **Within a thread, many evaluations are sequenced**
  - E.g., in "f1(); f2();", evaluation of f1 is sequenced before f2

- **Across threads, some operations synchronize with others**
  - E.g., releasing mutex m synchronizes with a subsequent acquire m

- **Evaluation A happens before B, which we'll write A \(\rightarrow\) B, when:**
  - A is sequenced before B (in the same thread),
  - A synchronizes with B,
  - A is dependency-ordered before B (ignore for now—means A has release semantics and B consumes semantics for same value), or
  - There is another operation X such that A \(\rightarrow\) X \(\rightarrow\) B.\(^1\)

- **Lots of variation in atomic instructions, consistency models, compiler behavior**
  - Changing the compiler or optimization level can invalidate code

- **Different CPUs today: Your laptop is x86, but cell phone ARM**
  - x86: Total Store Order Consistency Model, CISC
  - arm: Relaxed Consistency Model, RISC

- **Could make it impossible to write portable kernels and applications**

- **Fortunately, the C11 standard has builtin support for atomics**
  - Enable in GCC with the `-std=gnu11` flag (now the default)
  - Also available in C++11, but won’t discuss today

C11 Atomics: Big picture

- **C11 says behavior of a data race is undefined**
  - A write conflicts with a read or write of same memory location
  - Two conflicting operations race if not ordered by happens before
  - Undefined can be anything (e.g., delete all your files, …)

- **Spinlocks (and hence mutexes that internally use spinlocks) synchronize across threads**
  - Synchronization adds happens before arrows, avoiding data races

- **Yet hardware supports other means of synchronization**

- **C11 atomics provide direct access to synchronized lower-level operations**
  - E.g., can get compiler to issue `lock` prefix in some cases

\(^1\)Except chain of "\(\rightarrow\)" cannot end: …, dependency-ordered, sequenced before
C11 Atomics: Basics

- Include new `<stdatomic.h>` header
- **New _Atomic type qualifier:** e.g., _Atomic int foo;
  - Convenient aliases: atomic_bool, atomic_int, atomic_ullong, ...
  - Must initialize specially:
    ```
    #include <stdatomic.h>
    Atomic_int global_int = ATOMIC_VAR_INIT(140);
    Atomic_int* dyn = malloc(sizeof(*dyn));
    atomic_init(dyn, 140);
    ```
- Compiler emits read-modify-write instructions for atomics
  - E.g., ++, -=, |=, &=, ^=, ^=, +=, -= do what you would hope
  - Act atomically and synchronize with one another
- **Also functions including** atomic_fetch_add, atomic_compare_exchange_strong, ...

Locking and atomic flags

- Implementations might use spinlocks internally for most atomics
  - Could interact badly with interrupt/signal handlers
  - Can check if ATOMIC_INT_LOCK_FREE, etc., macros defined
  - Fortunately modern CPUs don't require this
- **atomic_flag is a special type guaranteed lock-free**
  - Boolean value without support for loads and stores
  - Initialize with: atomic_flag mylock = ATOMIC_FLAG_INIT;
  - Only two kinds of operation possible:
    - _Bool atomic_flag_test_and_set(volatile atomic_flag *obj);
    - void atomic_flag_clear(volatile atomic_flag *obj);
  - Above functions guarantee sequential consistency (atomic operation serves as memory fence, too)

Exposing weaker consistency

```c
enum memory_order { /*...*/ };
_Bool atomic_flag_test_and_set_explicit(
    volatile atomic_flag *obj, memory_order order);
void atomic_flag_clear_explicit(
    volatile atomic_flag *obj, memory_order order);
C atomic_load_explicit(
    const volatile A *obj, memory_order order);
void atomic_store_explicit(
    volatile A *obj, C desired, memory_order order);
_Bool atomic_flag_test_and_set_explicit(
    volatile atomic_flag *obj, memory_order order);
``` 

- **Atomic functions have _explicit variants**
  - These guarantee coherence but not sequential consistency
  - May allow compiler to generate faster code

Types of memory fence

- _X-Y fence = operations of type _X sequenced before the fence happen before operations of type _Y sequenced after the fence

Example: Atomic counters

```c
_Atomic(int) packet_count;
void
recv_packet(...)
{ ...
    atomic_fetch_add_explicit(&packet_count, 1,
        memory_order_acquire);
    ...
}
```

- Need to count packets accurately
- Don't need to order other memory accesses across threads
- Relaxed memory order can avoid unnecessary overhead
  - Depending on hardware, of course (not x86)
Example: Producer, consumer 1

```c
struct message msg_buf;
_Atomic(_Bool) msg_ready;

void send(struct message *m) {
    msg_buf = *m;
    atomic_thread_fence(memory_order_release);
    /* Prior loads+stores happen before subsequent stores */
    atomic_store_explicit(&msg_ready, 1,
                          memory_order_relaxed);
}

struct message *recv(void) {
    _Bool ready = atomic_load_explicit(&msg_ready,
                                        memory_order_acquire);
    if (!ready)
        return NULL;
    atomic_thread_fence(memory_order_acquire);
    /* Prior loads happen before subsequent loads+stores */
    return &msg_buf;
}
```

Example: Producer, consumer 2

```c
struct message msg_buf;
_Atomic(_Bool) msg_ready;

void send(struct message *m) {
    msg_buf = *m;
    atomic_store_explicit(&msg_ready, 1,
                          memory_order_release);
}

struct message *recv(void) {
    _Bool ready = atomic_load_explicit(&msg_ready,
                                        memory_order_acquire);
    if (!ready)
        return NULL;
    return &msg_buf;
}
```

Example: Spinlock

```c
void spin_lock(atomic_flag *lock) {
    while(atomic_flag_test_and_set_explicit(lock,
                                            memory_order_acquire))
        ;
}

void spin_unlock(atomic_flag *lock) {
    atomic_flag_clear_explicit(lock, memory_order_release);
}
```

Recall producer/consumer (lecture 3)

```c
/* PRODUCER */
for (;;) {
    item *nextProduced = produce_item();
    mutex_lock (&mutex);
    while (count == BUF_SIZE)
        cond_wait (&nonfull, &mutex);
    buffer[in] = nextProduced;
    in = (in + 1) % BUF_SIZE;
    cond_signal (&nonempty, &mutex);
    mutex_unlock (&mutex);
}

/* CONSUMER */
for (;;) {
    mutex_lock (&mutex);
    while (count == 0)
        cond_wait (&nonempty, &mutex);
    nextConsumed = buffer[out];
    out = (out + 1) % BUF_SIZE;
    count--;cond_signal (&nonfull, &mutex);
    mutex_unlock (&mutex);
    consume_item (nextConsumed);
}
```

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Eliminating locks

- One use of locks is to coordinate multiple updates of single piece of state
- How to remove locks here?
  - Factor state so that each variable only has a single writer
- Producer/consumer example revisited
  - Assume you have sequential consistency (or need fences)
  - Assume one producer, one consumer
  - Why do we need count variable, written by both?
    - To detect buffer full/empty
  - Have producer write in, consumer write out
  - Use in/out to detect buffer state
  - But note next example busy-waits, which is less good
Lock-free producer/consumer

```c
void producer (void *ignored) {
    for (;;) {
        item *nextProduced = produce_item ();
        while (((in + 1) % BUF_SIZE) == out) thread_yield ();
        atomic_thread_fence(memory_order_release);
        buffer[in] = nextProduced;
        atomic_thread_fence(memory_order_release);
        in = (in + 1) % BUF_SIZE;
    }
}

void consumer (void *ignored) {
    for (;;) {
        item *i;
        do {
            i = *stack;
            atomic_thread_fence(memory_order_acquire);
            nextConsumed = buffer[out];
            out = (out + 1) % BUF_SIZE;
            consume_item (nextConsumed);
        } while (!CAS (stack, i->next, i));
    }
}
```

[Note fences not actually needed because no relaxed atomics]

Example: non-blocking stack

```c
struct item {
    /* data */
    struct item *next;
};
typedef struct item *stack_t;
void atomic_push (stack_t *stack, item *i) {
    do {
        i->next = *stack;
    } while (!CAS (stack, i->next, i));
    *stack = i;
}

item *atomic_pop (stack_t *stack) {
    item *i;
    do {
        i = *stack;
    } while (!CAS (stack, i, i->next));
    return i;
}
```

Non-blocking synchronization

- **Design algorithm to avoid critical sections**
  - Any threads can make progress if other threads are preempted
  - Which wouldn’t be the case if preempted thread held a lock
- **Requires that hardware provide the right kind of atomics**
  - Simple test-and-set is insufficient
  - Atomic compare and swap is good: CAS (mem, old, new)
    - If *mem == old, then swap *mem—new and return true, else false
- **Can implement many common data structures**
  - Stacks, queues, even hash tables
- **Can implement any algorithm on right hardware**
  - Need operation such as atomic compare and swap
    (has property called consensus number \( \infty \) [Herlihy])
  - Entire kernels have been written without locks [Greenwald]

**Example: non-blocking stack**

```c
struct item {
    /* data */
    struct item *next;
};
typedef struct item *stack_t;
void atomic_push (stack_t *stack, item *i) {
    do {
        i->next = *stack;
    } while (!CAS (stack, i->next, i));
    *stack = i;
}

item *atomic_pop (stack_t *stack) {
    item *i;
    do {
        i = *stack;
    } while (!CAS (stack, i, i->next));
    return i;
}
```

**Wait-free stack issues**

- **“ABA” race in pop if other thread pops, re-pushes i**
  - Can be solved by counters or hazard pointers to delay re-use

**“Benign” races**

- Could also eliminate locks by having race conditions
- Maybe you think you care more about speed than correctness
- Some data is read way more often than written
- Routing tables consulted for each forwarded packet
- Data maps in system with 100+ disks (updated on disk failure)
- Optimize for the common case of reading without lock
  - E.g., global variable: routing_table *rt;
  - Call lookup (rt, route); with no lock
- Update by making copy, swapping pointer
  - routing_table *newrt = copy_routing_table (rt);
  - atomic_thread_fence (memory_order_release);
  - newrt = rt;
- But don’t do this [Vykov], [Boehm]! Not benign at all
  - Get undefined behavior—akin to out-of-bounds array access in C11
  - If needed for efficiency, use relaxed-memory-order atomics
- Is RCU really safe? Stay tuned next lecture...

**Read-copy update [McKenney]**

```c
i = *stack;
reg ← i→next
```

- Get undefined behavior—akin to out-of-bounds array access in C11
- If needed for efficiency, use relaxed-memory-order atomics
Next class

- The exciting conclusion of RCU
  - Spoiler: safe on all architectures except on alpha
- Building a better spinlock
- What interface should kernel provide for sleeping locks?
- Deadlock
- Scalable interface design