Lock-based Concurrent Data Structures

CMPU 334 – Operating Systems
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Lock-based Concurrent Data structures

- Adding threads is a good way to parallelize your program
- Must be done correctly however
  - Adding locks to a data structure makes the structure thread safe
  - How locks are added determine both the correctness and performance of the data structure
  - Adding threads may actually slow down your code
Example: Concurrent Counters without Locks

• Single threaded

```c
typedef struct __counter_t {
    int value;
} counter_t;

void init(counter_t *c) {
    c->value = 0;
}

void increment(counter_t *c) {
    c->value++;
}

void decrement(counter_t *c) {
    c->value--;
}

int get(counter_t *c) {
    return c->value;
}
```
Example: Concurrent Counters with Locks

• Add a **single lock**
  • The lock is acquired when calling a routine that manipulates the data structure

```c
typedef struct __counter_t {
    int value;
    pthread_mutex_t lock;
} counter_t;

void init(counter_t *c) {
    c->value = 0;
    Pthread_mutex_init(&c->lock, NULL);
}

void increment(counter_t *c) {
    Pthread_mutex_lock(&c->lock);
    c->value++;
    Pthread_mutex_unlock(&c->lock);
}

void decrement(counter_t *c) {
    Pthread_mutex_lock(&c->lock);
    c->value--;
    Pthread_mutex_unlock(&c->lock);
}

int get(counter_t *c) {
    Pthread_mutex_lock(&c->lock);
    int rc = c->value;
    Pthread_mutex_unlock(&c->lock);
    return rc;
}
```

The performance costs of the simple approach

- Each thread updates a single shared counter
  - Each thread updates the counter one million times
  - iMac with four Intel 2.7GHz i5 CPUs
- Ideally threads complete just as quickly on multiple processors as a single thread does on one
  - Even though more work is done, it is done in parallel
  - The time taken to complete the task on each core is not increased
- For our example:
  - Single thread on one core: about 0.03 seconds
  - Two threads running concurrently: little over 5 seconds

Synchronized counter scales poorly
Approximate counter

- The approximate counter works by representing:
  - A single **logical counter**, via numerous local physical counters, **one per CPU core**
  - A single **global counter**
  - There are multiple **locks**
    - One for each local counter and one for the global counter

- Example: on a machine with four CPUs
  - Four local counters
  - One global counter
Basic idea of approximate counting

• When a thread running on a core wishes to increment the counter
  • It increments its local counter
  • Each CPU has its own local counter
    • Threads across CPUs can update local counters *without contention*
    • Therefore, counter updates are **scalable**
  • The local values are periodically transferred to the global counter
    • Acquire the global lock
    • Increment it by the local counter’s value
    • The local counter is then reset to zero
Approximation Threshold

• How often the local-to-global transfer occurs is determined by threshold $S$
  • The smaller $S$:
    • The more the counter behaves like the *non-scalable counter*
  • The bigger $S$:
    • The more scalable the counter
    • The further off the global value might be from the *actual count*
      • Worst case: $S \times \text{NUMCPUS}$
## Approximate counter example

- **Tracing the Approximate Counters**
  - The threshold $S$ is set to 5
  - There are threads on each of four CPUs
  - Each thread updates their local counters $L_1 \ldots L_4$

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>$L_1$</th>
<th>$L_2$</th>
<th>$L_3$</th>
<th>$L_4$</th>
<th>$G$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>5 $\rightarrow$ 0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5 (from $L_1$)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5 $\rightarrow$ 0</td>
<td>10 (from $L_4$)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
typedef struct __counter_t {
    int global; // global count
    pthread_mutex_t glock; // global lock
    int local[NUMCPUS]; // local count (per cpu)
    pthread_mutex_t llock[NUMCPUS]; // and locks
    int threshold; // update frequency
} counter_t;

// init: record threshold, init locks, init
// values of all local counts and global count
void init(counter_t *c, int threshold) {
    c->threshold = threshold;
    c->global = 0;
    pthread_mutex_init(&c->glock, NULL);

    int i;
    for (i = 0; i < NUMCPUS; i++) {
        c->local[i] = 0;
        pthread_mutex_init(&c->llock[i], NULL);
    }
}

// update: usually, just grab local lock and update
// local amount once local count has risen by
// ‘threshold’, grab global lock and transfer local
// values to it
void update(counter_t *c, int threadID, int amt) {
    int cpu = threadID % NUMCPUS;
    pthread_mutex_lock(&c->llock[cpu]);
    c->local[cpu] += amt; // assumes amt > 0
    // transfer to global
    if (c->local[cpu] >= c->threshold) {
        pthread_mutex_lock(&c->glock);
        c->global += c->local[cpu];
        pthread_mutex_unlock(&c->glock);
        c->local[cpu] = 0;
    }
    pthread_mutex_unlock(&c->llock[cpu]);
}

// get: just return global amount
// (which may not be perfect)
int get(counter_t *c) {
    pthread_mutex_lock(&c->glock);
    int val = c->global;
    pthread_mutex_unlock(&c->glock);
    return val; // only approximate!
}
Importance of the threshold value $S$

- Four threads each increment a counter 1 million times on four CPUs
  - Low $S \rightarrow$ Performance is **poor**, the global count is always quite **accurate**
  - High $S \rightarrow$ Performance is **excellent**, the global count **lags**

![Scaling of Approximate Counters](image)
Concurrent Linked Lists

// basic node structure
typedef struct __node_t {
    int key;
    struct __node_t *next;
} node_t;

// basic list structure (one used per list)
typedef struct __list_t {
    node_t *head;
    pthread_mutex_t lock;
} list_t;

void List_Init(list_t *L) {
    L->head = NULL;
    pthread_mutex_init(&L->lock, NULL);
}

int List_Insert(list_t *L, int key) {
    pthread_mutex_lock(&L->lock);
    node_t *curr = L->head;
    while (curr) {
        if (curr->key == key) {
            pthread_mutex_unlock(&L->lock);
            return 0; // success
        }
        curr = curr->next;
    }
    pthread_mutex_unlock(&L->lock);
    return -1; // failure
}

int List_Lookup(list_t *L, int key) {
    pthread_mutex_lock(&L->lock);
    node_t *curr = L->head;
    while (curr) {
        if (curr->key == key) {
            pthread_mutex_unlock(&L->lock);
            return 0; // success
        }
        curr = curr->next;
    }
    pthread_mutex_unlock(&L->lock);
    return -1; // failure
}

head

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Concurrent Linked Lists

• The code **acquires** a lock in the insert routine upon entry
• The code **releases** the lock upon exit
  • If `malloc()` happens to **fail**, the code must also **release the lock** before failing the insert
  • This kind of exceptional control flow has been shown to be **quite error prone**
• **Solution**: The lock and release **only surround** the actual critical section in the insert code
malloc is thread safe

man malloc
...

ATTRIBUTES

For an explanation of the terms used in this section, see attributes(7).

+-----------------------------------+-----------------+--------+
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interface</th>
<th>Attribute</th>
<th>Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
+-----------------------------------+-----------------+--------+
| malloc(), free(), calloc, realloc | Thread safety   | MT-Safe|
|          |                   |        |
+-----------------------------------+-----------------+--------+

man 7 attributes
...

MT-Safe

MT-Safe or Thread-Safe functions are safe to call in the presence of other threads. MT, in MT-Safe, stands for Multi Thread.

Being MT-Safe does not imply a function is atomic, nor that it uses any of the memory synchronization mechanisms POSIX exposes to users. It is even possible that calling MT-Safe functions in sequence does not yield an MT-Safe combination. For example, having a thread call two MT-Safe functions one right after the other does not guarantee behavior equivalent to atomic execution of a combination of both functions, since concurrent calls in other threads may interfere in a destructive way.

Whole-program optimizations that could inline functions across library interfaces may expose unsafe reordering, and so performing inlining across the GNU C Library interface is not recommended. The documented MT-Safety status is not guaranteed under whole-program optimization. However, functions defined in user-visible headers are designed to be safe for inlining.
void List_Init(list_t *L) {
    L->head = NULL;
    pthread_mutex_init(&L->lock, NULL);
}

void List_Insert(list_t *L, int key) {
    // synchronization not needed
    node_t *new = malloc(sizeof(node_t));
    if (new == NULL) {
        perror("malloc");
        return;
    }
    new->key = key;

    // just lock critical section
    pthread_mutex_lock(&L->lock);
    new->next = L->head;
    L->head = new;
    pthread_mutex_unlock(&L->lock);
}

int List_Lookup(list_t *L, int key) {
    int rv = -1;
    pthread_mutex_lock(&L->lock);
    node_t *curr = L->head;
    while (curr) {
        if (curr->key == key) {
            rv = 0;
            break;
        }
        curr = curr->next;
    }
    pthread_mutex_unlock(&L->lock);
    return rv; // now both success and failure
}
Scaling Linked List

• Hand-over-hand locking (lock coupling)
  • Add a lock per node of the list instead of having a single lock for the entire list
  • When traversing the list:
    • First grabs the next node’s lock
    • And then releases the current node’s lock

• Enable a high degree of concurrency in list operations
  • However, in practice, the overheads of acquiring and releasing locks for each node of a list traversal is prohibitive
Michael and Scott Concurrent Queues

• There are two locks
  • One for the **head** of the queue
  • One for the **tail**
  • The goal of these two locks is to enable concurrency of *enqueue* and *dequeue* operations

• Add a dummy node
  • Allocated in the queue initialization code
  • Enable the separation of head and tail operations
Concurrent Queues (Cont.)

typedef struct __node_t {
    int value;
    struct __node_t *next;
} node_t;

typedef struct __queue_t {
    node_t *head;
    node_t *tail;
    pthread_mutex_t headLock;
    pthread_mutex_t tailLock;
} queue_t;

void Queue_Init(queue_t *q) {
    node_t *tmp = malloc(sizeof(node_t));
    tmp->next = NULL;
    q->head = q->tail = tmp;
    pthread_mutex_init(&q->headLock, NULL);
    pthread_mutex_init(&q->tailLock, NULL);
}

void Queue_Enqueue(queue_t *q, int value) {
    node_t *tmp = malloc(sizeof(node_t));
    assert(tmp != NULL);
    tmp->value = value;
    tmp->next = NULL;
    pthread_mutex_lock(&q->tailLock);
    q->tail->next = tmp;
    q->tail = tmp;
    pthread_mutex_unlock(&q->tailLock);
}

int Queue_Dequeue(queue_t *q, int *value) {
    pthread_mutex_lock(&q->headLock);
    node_t *tmp = q->head;
    node_t *newHead = tmp->next;
    if (newHead == NULL) {
        pthread_mutex_unlock(&q->headLock);
        return -1; // queue was empty
    }
    *value = newHead->value;
    q->head = newHead;
    pthread_mutex_unlock(&q->headLock);
    free(tmp);
    return 0;
}
Concurrent Hash Table

- Simple hash table
  - Does not resize
  - Built using the concurrent lists
- It uses a **lock per hash bucket** each of which is represented by a list

```c
#define BUCKETS (101)

typedef struct __hash_t {
  list_t lists[BUCKETS];
} hash_t;

void Hash_Init(hash_t *H) {
  int i;
  for (i = 0; i < BUCKETS; i++) {
    List_Init(&H->lists[i]);
  }
}

int Hash_Insert(hash_t *H, int key) {
  int bucket = key % BUCKETS;
  return List_Insert(&H->lists[bucket], key);
}

int Hash_Lookup(hash_t *H, int key) {
  int bucket = key % BUCKETS;
  return List_Lookup(&H->lists[bucket], key);
}
```
Performance of Concurrent Hash Table

• From 10,000 to 50,000 concurrent updates from each of four threads
  • iMac with four Intel 2.7GHz i5 CPUs

The simple concurrent hash table scales very well
Summary

• We looked at a few of the concurrent data structures out there
  • Counters
  • Lists
  • Queues
  • Hash Tables

• Tips
  • Be careful with acquiring and releasing locks around control flow changes
  • Enabling more concurrency does not necessarily increase performance
  • Premature optimization is the root of all evil! (Knuth’s Law)