



Condition Variables

Don Porter

Portions courtesy Emmett Witchel



Synchronization

- Now that you have seen locks, is that all there is?
- No, but what is the “right” way to build a parallel program?
 - People are still trying to figure that out.
- Compromises:
 - between making it easy to modify shared variables AND
 - restricting when you can modify shared variables.
 - between really flexible primitives AND
 - simple primitives that are easy to reason about.



Moving Beyond Locks

- Synchronizing on a condition.
 - When you start working on a synchronization problem, first define the mutual exclusion constraints, then ask “when does a thread wait”, and create a separate synchronization variable representing each constraint.
- Bounded Buffer problem – producer puts things in a fixed sized buffer, consumer takes them out.
 - What are the constraints for bounded buffer?
 - 1) only one thread can manipulate buffer queue at a time (*mutual exclusion*)
 - 2) consumer must wait for producer to fill buffers if none full (*scheduling constraint*)
 - 3) producer must wait for consumer to empty buffers if all full (*scheduling constraint*)



Beyond Locking

- Locks ensure mutual exclusion
- Bounded Buffer problem – producer puts things in a fixed sized buffer, consumer takes them out.
 - Synchronizing on a condition.

```
Class BoundedBuffer{  
    ...  
    void* buffer[];  
    pthread_mutex_t lock;  
    int count = 0;  
}
```

What is wrong
with this?

```
BoundedBuffer::Deposit(c){  
    pthread_mutex_lock(&lock);  
    while (count == n); //spin  
    Add c to the buffer;  
    count++;  
    pthread_mutex_unlock(&lock);  
}
```

```
BoundedBuffer::Remove(c){  
    pthread_mutex_lock(&lock);  
    while (count == 0); // spin  
    Remove c from buffer;  
    count--;  
    pthread_mutex_unlock(&lock);  
}
```



Beyond Locks

```
Class BoundedBuffer{  
    ...  
    void* buffer[];  
    pthread_lock_t lock;  
    int count = 0;  
}
```

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}
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```
BoundedBuffer::Remove(c){  
    while (count == 0); // spin  
    pthread_mutex_lock(&lock);  
    Remove c from buffer;  
    count--;  
    pthread_mutex_unlock(&lock);  
}
```



Beyond Locks

```
Class BoundedBuffer{  
    ...  
    void* buffer[];  
    pthread_lock_t lock;  
    int count = 0;  
}
```

What is wrong
with this?

```
BoundedBuffer::Deposit(c){  
    if (count == n) sleep();  
    pthread_mutex_lock(&lock);  
    Add c to the buffer;  
    count++;  
    pthread_mutex_unlock(&lock);  
    if(count == 1) wakeup(remove);  
}
```

```
BoundedBuffer::Remove(c){  
    if (count == 0) sleep();  
    pthread_mutex_lock(&lock);  
    Remove c from buffer;  
    count--;  
    pthread_mutex_unlock(&lock);  
    if(count==n-1) wakeup(deposit);  
}
```



Beyond Locks

```
Class BoundedBuffer{  
    ...  
    void* buffer[];  
    pthread_lock_t lock;  
    int count = 0;  
}
```

What is wrong
with this?

```
BoundedBuffer::Deposit(c){  
    pthread_mutex_lock(&lock);  
    if (count == n) sleep();  
    Add c to the buffer;  
    count++;  
    if(count == 1) wakeup(remove);  
    pthread_mutex_unlock(&lock);  
}
```

```
BoundedBuffer::Remove(c){  
    pthread_mutex_lock(&lock);  
    if (count == 0) sleep();  
    Remove c from buffer;  
    count--;  
    if(count==n-1) wakeup(deposit);  
    pthread_mutex_unlock(&lock);  
}
```



Beyond Locks

```
Class BoundedBuffer{  
    ...  
    void* buffer[];  
    pthread_lock_t lock;  
    int count = 0;  
}
```

What is wrong
with this?

```
BoundedBuffer::Deposit(c){  
    while(1) {  
        pthread_mutex_lock(&lock);  
        if(count == n) {  
            pthread_mutex_unlock(&lock);  
            continue;}  
        Add c to the buffer;  
        count++;  
        pthread_mutex_unlock(&lock);  
        break;  
    }  
}
```

```
BoundedBuffer::Remove(c){  
    while(1) {  
        pthread_mutex_lock(&lock);  
        if (count == 0) {  
            pthread_mutex_unlock(&lock);  
            continue;  
        }  
        Remove c from buffer;  
        count--;  
        pthread_mutex_unlock(&lock);  
        break;  
    }  
}
```




Introducing Condition Variables

- Correctness requirements for bounded buffer producer-consumer problem
 - Only one thread manipulates the buffer at any time (mutual exclusion)
 - Consumer must wait for producer when the buffer is empty (scheduling/synchronization constraint)
 - Producer must wait for the consumer when the buffer is full (scheduling/synchronization constraint)
- Solution: **condition variables**
 - An abstraction that supports conditional synchronization
 - Condition variables are associated with a monitor lock
 - Enable threads to wait inside a critical section by releasing the monitor lock.



Condition Variables: Operation

- Three operations
 - `int pthread_cond_wait(pthread_cond_t *cond, pthread_mutex_t *mutex);`
 - Aka “wait()”
 - Release lock
 - Go to sleep
 - Reacquire lock upon return
 - `int pthread_cond_signal(pthread_cond_t *cond);`
 - Aka “notify” or “signal”
 - Wake up a waiter, if any
 - `int pthread_cond_broadcast(pthread_cond_t *cond);`
 - Aka “notifyall” or “broadcast”
 - Wake up all the waiters
- Implementation
 - Requires a per-condition variable queue to be maintained
 - Threads waiting for the condition wait for a notify()

Wait() specifies a lock to be released as a parameter



Using Condition Variables: An Example

- Coke machine as a shared buffer
- Two types of users
 - Producer: Restocks the coke machine
 - Consumer: Removes coke from the machine
- Requirements
 - Only a single person can access the machine at any time
 - If the machine is out of coke, wait until coke is restocked
 - If machine is full, wait for consumers to drink coke prior to restocking
- How will we implement this?
 - What is the class definition?
 - How many lock and condition variables do we need?



Coke Machine Example

```
Class CokeMachine{  
    ...  
    Storge for cokes (buffer)  
    pthread_mutex_t lock;  
    int count = 0;  
    pthread_cond_t notFull, notEmpty;  
}
```

```
CokeMachine::Deposit(){  
    pthread_mutex_lock(&lock);  
    while (count == n) {  
        pthread_cond_wait(&notFull,  
                           &lock); }  
    Add coke to the machine;  
    count++;  
    pthread_cond_notify(&notEmpty);  
    pthread_mutex_unlock(&lock);  
}
```

```
CokeMachine::Remove(){  
    pthread_mutex_lock(&lock);  
    while (count == 0) {  
        pthread_cond_wait(&notEmpty,  
                           &lock); }  
    Remove coke from to the machine;  
    count--;  
    pthread_cond_notify(&notFull);  
    pthread_mutex_unlock(&lock);  
}
```



Word to the Wise...

- Always wait and notify condition variables with the mutex held.
- Period.
 - Fine print: There are cases where notification outside of a lock can be safe, but the code tends to be fragile, error-prone, and easy for another developer to break.
 - In many cases you can lose notifications and hang (liveness)
 - Moreover there is no clear advantage to breaking this convention. So just don't do it.



Summary

- Non-deterministic order of thread execution → concurrency problems
 - Multiprocessing
 - A system may contain multiple processors → cooperating threads/processes can execute simultaneously
 - Multi-programming
 - Thread/process execution can be interleaved because of time-slicing
- Goal: Ensure that your concurrent program works under ALL possible interleaving
- Define synchronization constructs and programming style for developing concurrent programs
 - Locks → provide mutual exclusion
 - Condition variables → provide conditional synchronization