155. Min Stack

Medium Stack Design

Leetcode Link

Problem Description

The problem requires designing a stack data structure with not only the standard operations - `push`, `pop`, and `top` - but also the ability to retrieve the minimum element present in the stack at any time, all in constant time O(1). This is quite challenging because the standard stack data structure does not keep track of the minimum element, and searching for the minimum element typically requires O(n) time where n is the number of elements in the stack.

To summarize, `MinStack` class should support these operations:

- `MinStack()` constructor that initializes the stack.
- `push(int val)` that adds an element to the stack.
- `pop()` that removes the element at the top of the stack.
- `top()` that retrieves the element at the top of the stack without removing it.
- `getMin()` that retrieves the minimum element present in the stack.

Each of these operations must be done in O(1) time complexity.

Intuition

To maintain the minimum element information in constant time, we need a strategy that keeps track of the minimum at each state of the stack. The solution uses two stacks:

- The first stack `stk1` behaves like a normal stack, holding all the elements.
- The second stack `stk2` keeps track of minimum elements. Each element in `stk2` corresponds to the minimum element of `stk1` up to that point.

With each `push`, we insert the value into `stk1` and also update the `stk2` with the minimum of the new value and the current minimum, which is the top element of `stk2`.

Upon `pop`, we simply remove the top elements from both `stk1` and `stk2`. Given `stk2` is always in sync with `stk1` but only storing minimums, it ensures that `stk2`'s top always represents the current minimum of `stk1`.

`top` is straightforward as we return the top element of `stk1` whereas `getMin` returns the top element of `stk2`.

This design allows for the stack to operate as normal while having a supporting structure, `stk2`, that efficiently tracks the minimum element. Thus, all the required operations run in constant time, fulfilling the problem constraints.

Solution Approach

The solution involves using two stacks to keep track of the minimum element in conjunction with the main stack operations. Here is how the solution is implemented for each function of the `MinStack` class:

`__init__(self)`

- Initialize two empty lists, `self.stk1` and `self.stk2`. The first list `self.stk1` is used as the primary stack to store the values. The second list `self.stk2` serves as an auxiliary stack to store the minimum values seen so far.
- Append `inf` (infinity) to `self.stk2` to handle the edge case when the first element is pushed onto the stack.

`push(self, val: int)`

- Append the value `val` to the primary stack `self.stk1`.
- To maintain the minimum in `self.stk2`, append the minimum of the new value `val` and the last element in `self.stk2` (which is the current minimum) to `self.stk2`.

`pop(self)`

- Pop the top element from `self.stk1`, which is the standard stack operation.
- Similarly, pop the top element from `self.stk2`. This ensures that after the pop operation, the minimum value is updated correspondingly in `self.stk2`.

`top(self)`

- Return the top element of `self.stk1` by accessing the last element in the list `self.stk1[-1]` without removing it. This is the standard 'peek' operation in stack.

`getMin(self)`

- Return the top element of `self.stk2` by accessing the last element in the list `self.stk2[-1]`. Since `self.stk2` is maintained in a way that the top always contains the minimum element of the stack, this gives us the current minimum in constant time.

In conclusion, the algorithm leverages an auxiliary stack `self.stk2` that mirrors the push and pop operations of the primary stack `self.stk1`. It cleverly keeps track of the minimum element at each level of the stack as elements are added and removed, which allows for constant time retrieval of the minimum element. This elegant solution satisfies the constraints of the problem statement and ensures that all operations - `push`, `pop`, `top`, and `getMin` — remain constant time `O(1)` operations.

Example Walkthrough

Let's walk through a small example to illustrate the solution approach.

1. Construct a `MinStack`. Initially, both `stk1` and `stk2` are empty:

```
1  stk1: []
2  stk2: [inf]
```

`inf` in `stk2` is used as a placeholder to simplify the push operation even when the stack is empty.

2. Push the value `5` onto the stack.

```
1  push(5)
```

`stk1` now holds: `[5]` `stk2` updates its minimum value by comparing the current minimum (`inf`) and `5`, choosing the smaller one: `[inf, 5]`

3. Push the value `3` onto the stack.

```
1  push(3)
```

`stk1` now holds: `[5, 3]` `stk2` updates: `[inf, 5, 3]` as `3` is the new minimum.

4. Push the value `7` onto the stack.

```
1  push(7)
```

`stk1` now holds: `[5, 3, 7]` `stk2` updates by comparing `3` (current minimum in `stk2`) and `7`, which results in: `[inf, 5, 3, 3]` (since `3` is smaller).

5. Retrieve the current minimum.

```
1  getMin()
```

The top of `stk2` gives us the minimum: `3`.

6. Pop the top element off the stack.

```
1  pop()
```

After popping, `stk1` holds: `[5, 3]` And `stk2` synchronously pops as well to maintain the minimum: `[inf, 5, 3]`.

7. Retrieve the new current minimum.

```
1  getMin()
```

With the last `7` removed, the new top of `stk2` and thus the current minimum is now: `3`.

8. Retrieve the top element.

```
1  top()
```

The top of `stk1` gives us the last pushed value which is not removed yet: `3`.

By following the above steps for each operation, it is demonstrated that the auxiliary stack `stk2` accurately keeps track of the minimum elements for the primary stack `stk1` at each point of operation, ensuring that `getMin()` can always retrieve the current minimum in constant time, `O(1)`.

Python Solution

```python
class MinStack:
    def __init__(self):
        # Initialize two stacks: one to hold the actual stack values,
        # and the other to keep track of the minimum value at any given point.
        self.stk1 = []
        self.stk2 = [float('inf')]  # Initialize with infinity to handle edge case for the first element pushed

    def push(self, val: int) -> None:
        # Add the value to the main stack
        self.stk1.append(val)
        # Add the minimum value to the min_stack which is the minimum of the new value and the current minimum
        self.stk2.append(min(val, self.stk2[-1]))

    def pop(self) -> None:
        # Remove the top value from both main stack and min_stack
        self.stk1.pop()
        self.stk2.pop()

    def top(self) -> int:
        # Return the top value of the main stack
        return self.stk1[-1]

    def get_min(self) -> int:
        # Return the current minimum value which is the top value of the min_stack
        return self.stk2[-1]

# Example of how the MinStack class can be used:
# min_stack = MinStack()
# min_stack.push(1)
# min_stack.push(2)
# min_stack.push(0)
# print(min_stack.get_min())  # returns 0
# min_stack.pop()
# print(min_stack.top())      # returns 2
# print(min_stack.get_min())  # returns 1
```

Java Solution

```java
class MinStack {
    // stk1 keeps track of all the elements in the stack.
    // stack.Deque<Integer> stack = new ArrayDeque<>();
    //
    // minValuesStack keeps track of the minimum values at each state of the stack.
    private Deque<Integer> minValuesStack = new ArrayDeque<>();

    // Constructor initializes the minValuesStack with the maximum value an integer can hold.
    public MinStack() {
        minValuesStack.push(Integer.MAX_VALUE);
    }

    // Method to push an element onto the stack. Updates the minimum value as well.
    public void push(int val) {
        // Push the value onto the stack.
        stack.push(val);
        // Push the smaller between the current value and the current minimum onto the minValuesStack.
        minValuesStack.push(Math.min(val, minValuesStack.peek()));
    }

    // Method to remove the top element from the stack. Also updates the minimum value.
    public void pop() {
        // Remove the top element of the stack.
        stack.pop();
        // Remove the top element of the minValuesStack, which corresponds to the minimum at that state.
        minValuesStack.pop();
    }

    // Method to retrieve the top element of the stack without removing it.
    public int top() {
        // Peek the top element of the stack.
        return stack.peek();
    }

    // Method to get the current minimum value in the stack.
    public int getMin() {
        // Peek the top element of the minValuesStack, which is the current minimum.
        return minValuesStack.peek();
    }
}
```

C++ Solution

```cpp
#include <stack>
#include <climits> // needed for INT_MAX
using namespace std;

class MinStack {
public:
    // Constructor initializes the auxiliary stack with the maximum integer value.
    MinStack() {
        minValuesStack.push(INT_MAX);
    }

    // Pushes a value onto the stack and updates the minimum value stack.
    void push(int val) {
        mainStack.push(val);
        // Push the current minimum value onto the auxiliary stack.
        // Compares the new value with the current top of the minValuesStack.
        minValuesStack.push(min(minValues, minValuesStack.top()));
    }

    // Pops the top element from both the main stack and the minimum value stack.
    void pop() {
        mainStack.pop();
        minValuesStack.pop();
    }

    // Retrieves the top element of the main stack.
    int top() {
        return mainStack.top();
    }

    // Retrieves the current minimum value from the auxiliary stack.
    int getMin() {
        return minValuesStack.top();
    }

private:
    // Main stack to store the elements.
    stack<int> mainStack;
    // Auxiliary stack to store the minimum values.
    stack<int> minValuesStack;
};

/**
 * Your MinStack object will be instantiated and called as such:
 * MinStack* obj = new MinStack();
 * obj->push(val);
 * obj->pop();
 * int param_3 = obj->top();
 * int param_4 = obj->getMin();
 */
```

Typescript Solution

```typescript
let stack: number[] = []; // This is the primary stack for storing numbers.
let minStack: number[] = [Infinity]; // This stack keeps track of the minimum values.

/**
 * Pushes a number onto the stack and updates the minStack appropriately.
 * @param {number} val - The value to be pushed onto the stack.
 */
function push(val: number): void {
    stack.push(val);
    minStack.push(Math.min(val, minStack[minStack.length - 1]));
}

/**
 * Removes the element on top of the stack and also updates the minStack.
 */
function pop(): void {
    stack.pop();
    minStack.pop();
}

/**
 * Retrieves the element on top of the stack.
 * @return {number} The top element of the stack.
 */
function top(): number {
    return stack[stack.length - 1];
}

/**
 * Retrieves the minimum element from the stack.
 * @return {number} The current minimum value in the stack.
 */
function getMin(): number {
    return minStack[minStack.length - 1];
}
```

Time and Space Complexity

The provided Python code defines a class `MinStack` which implements a stack that, in addition to the typical push and pop operations, can retrieve the smallest element in the stack in constant time.

Time Complexity:

- `__init__`: Initializing the `MinStack` involves setting up two lists (stacks), which is an `O(1)` operation.
- `push`: This method appends a new element to the `stk1` and computes the minimum with the last element of `stk2` to append to `stk2`. Both operations are `O(1)` since appending to a list in Python and retrieving the last element have constant time complexity.
- `pop`: Here, we pop from both `stk1` and `stk2`, which are `O(1)` operations since popping from the end of a list in Python has constant time complexity.
- `top`: This method simply returns the last element of `stk1`, which is an `O(1)` operation.
- `getMin`: Returning the last element of `stk2`, which is the current minimum, is also an `O(1)` operation.

Overall, all of the operations of the `MinStack` class run in constant time, so we have `O(1)` time complexity for push, pop, top, and getMin methods.

Space Complexity:

- The space complexity of the `MinStack` class is mainly due to the space used by the two stacks `stk1` and `stk2`. Assuming `n` is the number of elements pushed into the stack:
  - `stk1` grows linearly with the number of elements pushed, so it has a space complexity of `O(n)`.
  - `stk2` also grows with each push operation. Even though it's used to keep the minimum value at each state, it does in pair with the `stk1`, so its size also corresponds to the number of elements pushed, which makes it `O(n)` as well.

Therefore, the overall space complexity of the `MinStack` class is `O(n)` where `n` is the number of elements in the stack.