CS 241 Honors
Concurrent Data Structures

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What to go over

- Terminology
- What is lock free
- Example of Lock Free
- Transactions and Linerazability
- The ABA problem
- Drawbacks
- Use Cases

Terminology

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- Atomic instructions - Instructions that happen in one step to the CPU or not at all. Some examples are atomic_add, atomic_compare_and_swap.

Atomic Compare and Swap?

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```c
int atomic_cas(int *addr, int *expected,
 int value){
    if(*addr == *expected){
        *addr = value;
        return 1; //swap success
    }else{
        *expected = *addr;
        return 0; //swap failed
    }
}
```

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But this all happens atomically!

Types of Data Structures

- Blocking Data Structures
- Lock-Free Data Structures
- Bounded-Wait Data Structures
- Wait-Free Data Structures

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- Well defined critical secions
- Built in Linearizability (To Be Explained)

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Disadvantages

- Slower under high contention, Mutexes are not scalable across cores
- Lower priority processes often get locks
- Deadlock! Convoy Effect!
- Preemption/Signal Handler Safety

Blocking Structures

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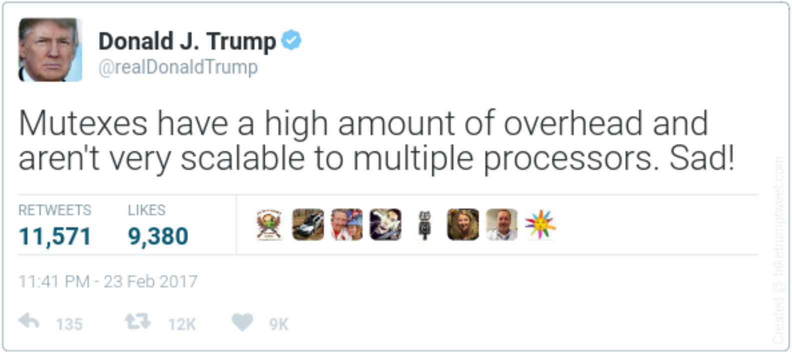

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Disadvantages

- Critical Section a little harder
- Harder to debug
- Can get really complicated

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- Gaurenteed work after some point
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Disadvantages

- Not always possible
- Hard to gaurentee
- Can get *really* complicated

Building a lock free Data Structure

Alright, let's make a queue. What do we have to think about? Well there are two types of threads. Those pushing things on to the thread, and taking off the thread.

Starting out - No Code but Ownership

A fundamental way to solve race conditions is to ask yourself the question "who owns this piece of memory". If you make sure that one thread has access to the piece of memory at once.
For the sake of not sitting here for days about lock free structures, we will assume that we have a fast, lock free malloc.

Ownership?

We want to introduce the idea that a thread owns a piece of memory. This is to avoid race conditions. So, there is going to be a shared part of memory and a part only visible to the thread. We are going to do all of our initialization in our memory part and then with one or two atomic instructions that are carefully placed, we are going to complete the swap and finish the function.

Lock Free initialization

```
typedef struct node;
typedef struct queue;
new_queue()
destory_queue()
```

Lock Free Enqueue

```
void enqueue(queue *fifo, void *val){
    node *pkg = malloc(sizeof(*pkg));
    pkg->data = val;
    pkg->next = NULL;
    node *ptr;
    int succeeded = 0;
    while(!succeeded){
        node *none = NULL;
        ptr = fifo->tail;
        succeeded = cas(&ptr->next, none, pkg)
        if(!succeeded){
            cas(&fifo->next, &ptr, ptr->next);
        }
    }
    cas(&fifo->tail, &ptr, package);
}
```

Lock Free Dequeue

```
node* dequeue(queue *fifo){
    node *start = &fifo->head;
    while(!atomic_cas(&fifo->head, start, &fifo
        start = atomic_load(&fifo->head);
        if(start == NULL){
            return NULL;
        }
        // May do sleeping here
    }
    //You now have exclusive access
    return start;
}
```

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3. You can see this in the previous example.

Lock Free Enqueue

```
node *package = malloc(sizeof(*package));
package->data = val;
package->next = NULL;
node *ptr;
...
```

Lock Free Enqueue

```
begin_transaction(queue);
queue_pop(queue);
queue_push(queue, 1);
queue_push(queue, 2);
queue_push(queue, 3);
end_transaction(queue); // Results pushed
```

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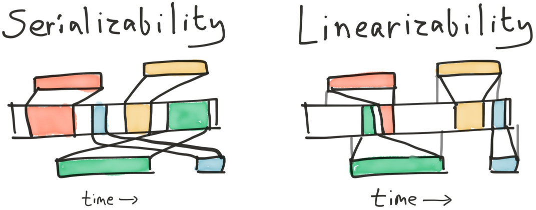
2. You also may have to deal with a transaction failing because the queue may have run out of space.
3. This is mainly a tool for the people using the lock free data structures keep track of their operations.

Linearizability & Serializability



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4. But sometimes we need stronger consistency models.

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4. Think of a stock market application that needs to tell which monetary transaction happend first. We need the application to be fast but we need to know who bought and sold first

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4. Some cases there are no ways of preventing this problem, especially in a language like C without automagic garbage collection.

ABA Problem

```
void enqueue(queue *fifo, void *val){
    node *pkg = malloc(sizeof(*pkg));
    pkg->data = val;
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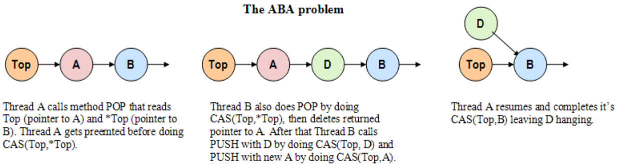

The ABA problem
Top
A
B
Top
A
D
B
D
Top
B
Thread A calls method POP that reads Top (pointer to A) and *Top (pointer to B). Thread A gets preemted before doing CAS(Top,*Top).
Thread B also does POP by doing CAS(Top,*Top), then deletes returned pointer to A. After that Thread B calls PUSH with D by doing CAS(Top, D) and PUSH with new A by doing CAS(Top,A).
Thread A resumes and completes it's CAS(Top,B) leaving D hanging.

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2. Our dequeue instead of returning the item returns the entire node.
3. That means the ABA problem has a near zero chance of actually occuring with high probability if the user doesn't free the node until after they are done using it.

Drawbacks

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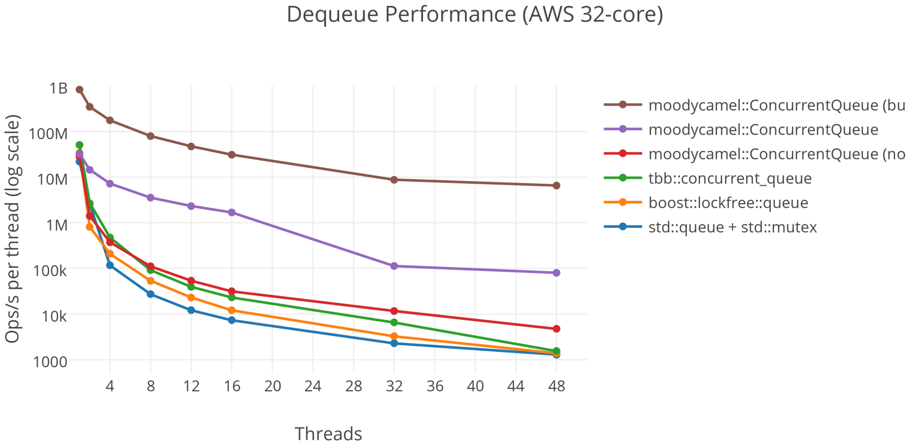
3. Sometimes they can't always work
4. Sometimes they are slower

Drawbacks



Dequeue Performance (AWS 32-core)
Ops/s per thread (log scale)
1B
100M
10M
1M
100k
10k
1000
4
8
12
16
20
24
28
32
36
40
44
48
Threads
moodycamel::ConcurrentQueue (bu
moodycamel::ConcurrentQueue
moodycamel::ConcurrentQueue (no
tbb::concurrent_queue
boost::lockfree::queue
std::queue + std::mutex

Benefits

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5. This means (given we execute on average 10 atomics on average) that we expect 98% of the time that we execute 500 or less instructions. This may seem like a lot, but computers are exeucting billions every second, they're good.

Use Cases

1. RabbitMQ/Apache Kafka is a distributed message queue that uses a queue similar to the one we described to distribute messages to a group of nodes.
2. Apache Spark and Hadoop use this for consensus, finger tables, and communicating and joining results together.
3. Every distributed (and a lot of non-distributed) databases use lock-free data structures to service SQL queries or read/write form disks
4. HPC uses them to manage concurrency (Possible MPI)

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Bonus! Why Spurious Wakeups Happen

1. Ever wonder *why* spurious wakeups happen?
2. Well y'all are masters at lock free data structures now so you can guess.
3. Let's take the Windows NT way of implementing a condition variable.
4. The real problem with CVs are broadcast.

Windows NT

```
struct CV {
    linked_list waiters;
}

void wait(cv, mtx) { // mtx must be locked
    enqueue(cv.waiters, self());
    m.Release();
    self().sema.wait();
    m.Acquire();
}
```

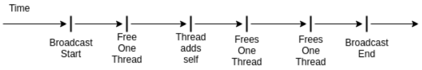
Not Interesting

```
void signal(cv) {
    if (waiters != null) {
        waiters.sema.post();
        cas(waiters, waiters, waiters.next);
    }
}
```

Interesting

```
void broadcast(cv) {
    while (waiters != null) {
        waiters.sema.post();
        cas(waiters, waiters, waiters.next);
    }
}
```

Interesting



Questions?

Thanks for sticking along!