

B3CC: Concurrency

08: Software Transactional Memory (2)

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Recap

- An approach to implementing *atomic blocks*
 - Effects become visible to other threads all at once
 - Actions within an `atomically :: STM a -> IO a` block are executed isolated from all other threads
 - Execute optimistically: roll-back changes and retry when a conflict is detected
 - Offers *composable* blocking and atomicity

Recap

```
import Control.Concurrent.STM

data STM a
instance Monad STM

atomically :: STM a -> IO a
retry      :: STM a
orElse     :: STM a -> STM a -> STM a

newTVar    :: a -> STM (TVar a)
readTVar   :: TVar a -> STM a
writeTVar  :: TVar a -> a -> STM ()
```

(and a few more, but we won't discuss those here)

STM as a building block (II)

Concurrent Map

Key-value map

- The goal:
 - A key-value map that can be accessed concurrently by multiple threads
 - Basic interface:

```
data CMap k v
```

```
insert :: Ord k => k -> v -> CMap k v -> CMap k v
```

```
lookup :: Ord k => k -> CMap k v -> Maybe v
```

Option #1

- A regular (pure) key-value map in a mutable box
 - Simple, safe
 - No concurrency!

```
import Control.Concurrent.MVar
import qualified Data.Map as M

data CMap k v = CMap (MVar (M.Map k v))

insert :: Ord k => k -> v -> CMap k v -> IO ()
lookup :: Ord k => k -> CMap k v -> IO (Maybe v)
```

Option #2

- A pure map in a box, but this time using STM
 - Safe concurrent lookup
 - Insertion updates the entire tree (*all* other threads must retry) → no concurrency while writing

```
import Control.Concurrent.STM
import qualified Data.Map as M

data CMap k v = CMap (TVar (M.Map k v))

insert :: Ord k => k -> v -> CMap k v -> STM ()
lookup :: Ord k => k -> CMap k v -> STM (Maybe v)
```

Option #3

- A pure map with mutable values
 - Allows values to be read and adjusted (mutated) concurrently
 - Fixed key set

```
import Control.Concurrent.STM
import qualified Data.Map as M
```

```
data CMap k v = CMap (M.Map k (TVar v))
```

```
adjust :: Ord k => (v -> v) -> k -> CMap k v -> STM ()
lookup :: Ord k => k -> CMap k v -> STM (Maybe v)
```


Option #4

- A pure map *in a box* with mutable values
 - Allows values to be read and adjusted (mutated) concurrently
 - Allows insertion, but it clashes with everything else

```
import Control.Concurrent.STM
import qualified Data.Map as M

data CMap k v = CMap (TVar (M.Map k (TVar v)))

insert :: Ord k => k -> v -> CMap k v -> STM ()
adjust :: Ord k => (v -> v) -> k -> CMap k v -> STM ()
lookup :: Ord k => k -> CMap k v -> STM (Maybe v)
```

Option #5

- Implement the data structure ourselves
 - Goal: Fully concurrent insertion and lookup
 - Updates to disjoint parts of the tree do not conflict with each other

```
data CMap k v = CMap (TVar (Node k v))
data Node k v
    = Bin (CMap k v) k (TVar v) (CMap k v)
    | Tip

insert :: Ord k => k -> v -> CMap k v -> STM ()
adjust :: Ord k => (v -> v) -> k -> CMap k v -> STM ()
lookup :: Ord k => k -> CMap k v -> STM (Maybe v)
```

Option #5

- Lookup a value in the map

- Standard recursive traversal
- What about insert? Does rebalancing the tree break our concurrency?

```
data CMap k v = CMap (TVar (Node k v))
data Node k v
    = Bin (CMap k v) k (TVar v) (CMap k v)
    | Tip
```

```
lookup :: Ord k => k -> CMap k v -> STM (Maybe v)
lookup key (CMap ref) = readTVar ref >>= go
  where
    go Tip = return Nothing
    go (Bin l k v r) =
      case compare key k of
        LT -> lookup key l
        GT -> lookup key r
        EQ -> Just <$> readTVar v
```

Summary

What can we not do with STM?

- STM offers *composable* blocking and atomicity
 - Concurrent programming without locks!
- But, there are also things that it can *not* do compared to using locks
 - Fairness: all blocked threads are woken up when a TVar changes
 - No progress guarantee
 - Threads can not communicate *that* they are blocking

Performance considerations

- atomically works by accumulating a log of `writeTVar` and `readTVar` operations; this has consequences:
 - Discarding the effects of the transaction is easy: delete the log
 - Each `readTVar` must search the log for an earlier `readTVar/writeTVar`: naively $O(n)$
 - A transaction that called `retry` is woken up whenever one of the `TVars` in its read set changes
 - A long running transaction can re-execute indefinitely because it is repeatedly aborted by shorter transactions: starvation
- Most abstractions have a runtime cost...

IORefs as a building block (II)

Lockfree concurrent queue

Unbounded queue

- The goal:
 - As before, but implement a lock-free queue
 - Creating a new empty queue is similar to before, but both ends point to Cons cell as a sentinel value

```
data Queue a =  
    Queue (IORef (List a))  
          (IORef (List a))  
  
data List a = Null  
            | Cons a (IORef (List a))
```


enqueue

- To add an element to the queue

1. Create the new cell holding the value, with next pointing to Null

2. Keep trying until done:

1. Read the tail from the queue

2. Read the next node from the tail

3. Does the next node point to Null?

- The tail pointed to the last node: try to link our node at the end of the queue (CAS); otherwise

- Somebody else beat us extending the tail; help out by trying to swing the tail to the next node (CAS)

3. Try to swing the tail to the inserted node; this might fail but that is okay (CAS)

```
data Queue a =  
    Queue (IORef (List a))  
          (IORef (List a))  
  
data List a = Null  
            | Cons a (IORef (List a))
```

dequeue

- To remove an element from the queue

1. Read the head and tail pointers

2. Are head and tail equal?

- Empty, or outdated tail?

Read head.next; if CONS, advance tail (CAS) and try again. If Null, queue is empty.

3. Read head.next.value

4. Advance head (CAS); if this fails, another thread has already claimed this node, so try again

```
data Queue a =  
    Queue (IORef (List a))  
          (IORef (List a))  
  
data List a = Null  
            | Cons a (IORef (List a))
```

Queue comparison

- Michael–Scott queue vs. MVar-based queue
 - Advantages:
 - Lock-free
 - Faster
 - Disadvantages:
 - No fairness
 - Trickier to implement