

ECE 3574: Applied Software Design

InterProcess Communication with Pipes and Sockets

Spring 2017

Today we are going to look at concurrent programming using multiple OS processes.

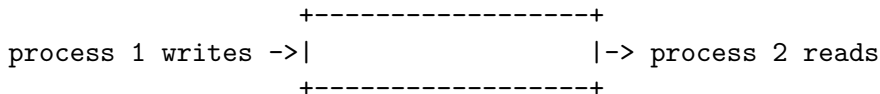
- ▶ communicating processes
- ▶ Unix and Windows pipes
- ▶ Unix `fork` + pipes
- ▶ Cross-platform IPC using `QProcess` and `QLocalSocket`

A reoccurring theme in concurrent programming is the idea of communication over a channel.

Depending on how these are implemented they go by many names:

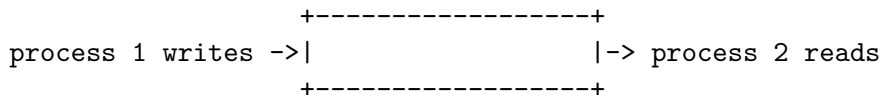
- ▶ Pipes
- ▶ Sockets
- ▶ Message Queues
- ▶ Channels
- ▶ Signals

The idea is simple.

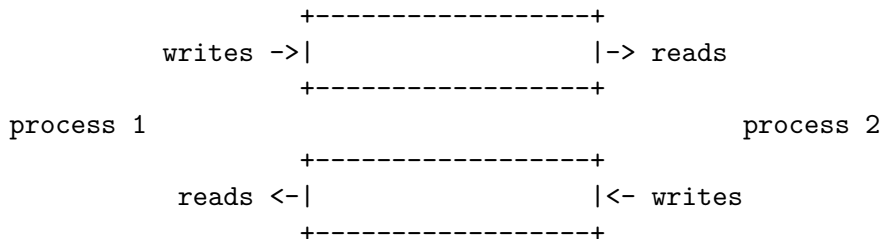


Communication may be half-duplex or full-duplex

Half-Duplex



Full-Duplex



The message sent over the channel can take various forms

- ▶ the message may be just text
- ▶ the message might be a binary stream (exchange serialized objects)
- ▶ the message might be a function to call (Remote Procedure Call)

We will focus on simple messages for now and look at data serialization later.

The exact semantics of these communication channels varies by platform

Examples on Unix:

- ▶ Pipes (Anonymous and Named)
- ▶ Sockets
- ▶ Message Queues

Examples on Windows:

- ▶ Pipes (Anonymous and Named)
- ▶ Sockets
- ▶ COM

A central tenant of Unix systems is that programs should be small and composable.

The primary way this is done is using Pipes.

Example: search through all my CMake based projects looking for ones that expect a test to fail.

```
find ~ -name CMakeLists.txt -print | xargs grep WILL_FAIL
```

The | character is a pipe. It connects the standard output of one program to the standard input of the next, forming a simple half-duplex channel.

```

+-----+
find stdout ->|               |-> stdin of xargs
+-----+

```

Example: Unix Pipes

- ▶ `#include <unistd.h>`
- ▶ create a pipe with `pipe` giving two integer file descriptors
- ▶ read from one, write to the other

See example code.

That's dumb, what is that good for?

We combine that with `fork`, which makes a copy of the current process, called the *child*.

The *parent* and *child* process communicate over shared pipe descriptors.

See example code.

A cross-platform solution using Qt

The process on Unix using sockets is similar to pipes.
Both have rough equivalents on Windows.
Lets use Qt to do it cross-platform

QProcess

- ▶ QProcess is a Qt class that abstracts a process. You can start them, hijack stdin and stdout, and get their exit status.

See example code

- ▶ QLocalSocket is a class that abstracts a local socket. On Windows this is a named pipe and on Unix this is a local domain socket, but it does not matter to us. The idea is to use QProcess similar to fork and use QLocalSocket to setup the communication.

See example code.

Case Study: Message Passing Interface (MPI)

High-Performance Computing is all about leveraging multiple processing units, be they cores, CPUs, or multiple machines. One approach uses separate processes that communicate over sockets by passing messages. This is standardized as MPI (there are a few different implementations).

Next Actions and Reminders

- ▶ Read about Qt shared memory