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# Improving `atomic_ref` of Non Lock-free Types

```
git clone git@github.com:dsunder/draft.git dsunder-draft
cd dsunder-draft
git checkout atomic_ref_alt
```

## Motivation

Many implementations do not support the current specification of `atomic_ref` for non lock-free types. Also, using an `atomic_ref` of an insufficiently aligned object of a lock-free type can fail silently, leading to subtle and difficult to debug errors.

There are proposals [*citation needed*] to remove non lock-free `atomic_ref` from freestanding. However, since implementations are not required to support lock-free atomic operations, these proposals remove the ability of using `atomic_ref` in portable code.

The following proposal extends the `atomic_ref` specification to allow more implementations to fully support `atomic_ref` on objects which are not lock-free. This proposal preserves the existing behavior of `atomic_ref` in implementations which can support the current specification while enabling additional implementations.

## Proposed Wording

[Editor's note: Make the following changes in [atomics.ref.generic].]

```
namespace std {
    struct atomic_ref_prefer_user_lock_t {
        explicit constexpr atomic_ref_prefer_user_lock_t() noexcept = default;
    };

    struct atomic_ref_assume_lock_free_t {
        explicit constexpr atomic_ref_assume_lock_free_t() noexcept = default;
    };

    inline constexpr atomic_ref_prefer_user_lock_t atomic_ref_prefer_user_lock{};
    inline constexpr atomic_ref_assume_lock_free_t atomic_ref_assume_lock_free{};
}

namespace std {

    template<class T, class LockT=unspecified> struct atomic_ref {
    private:
        T* ptr; // exposition only
        lock_type* ulock; // exposition only
    public:
        using lock_type = LockT;
        using value_type = T;
        static constexpr bool is_always_lock_free = implementation-defined;
        static constexpr bool never_requires_user_lock = implementation-defined;
        static constexpr size_t required_lock_free_alignment = implementation-defined;

        static bool is_lock_free(const T &) noexcept;
        static bool requires_user_lock(const T &) noexcept;

        atomic_ref& operator=(const atomic_ref&) = delete;

        explicit atomic_ref(T&) noexcept;
        atomic_ref(T&, atomic_ref_assume_lock_free_t) noexcept;

        atomic_ref(T&, lock_type&) noexcept;
        atomic_ref(T&, lock_type&, atomic_ref_prefer_user_lock_t) noexcept;

        atomic_ref(const atomic_ref&) noexcept;

        T operator=(T) const noexcept;
        operator T() const noexcept;

        bool is_lock_free() const noexcept;
        void store(T, memory_order = memory_order_seq_cst) const noexcept;
        T load(memory_order = memory_order_seq_cst) const noexcept;
        T exchange(T, memory_order = memory_order_seq_cst) const noexcept;
        bool compare_exchange_weak(T&, T,
                                   memory_order, memory_order) const noexcept;
```

```

    bool compare_exchange_strong(T&, T,
                                memory_order, memory_order) const noexcept;
    bool compare_exchange_weak(T&, T,
                                memory_order = memory_order_seq_cst) const noexcept;
    bool compare_exchange_strong(T&, T,
                                memory_order = memory_order_seq_cst) const noexcept;
};

template<class T>
atomic_ref(T&) -> atomic_ref<T>;

template<class T>
atomic_ref(T&, atomic_ref_assume_lock_free_t) ->
    atomic_ref<T, atomic_ref_assume_lock_free_t>;

template<class T, class Lock>
atomic_ref(T&, Lock&) -> atomic_ref<T, Lock>;

template<class T, class Lock>
atomic_ref(T&, Lock&, atomic_ref_prefer_user_lock_t) ->
    atomic_ref<T, Lock>;
}

```

[Editor's note: Make the following changes in [atomics.ref.operations].]

<sup>1</sup> The type `lock_type` can either:

- (1.1) — be equivalent to `atomic_ref_assume_lock_free_t`, or
- (1.2) — the type `lock_type` meets the *Cpp17BasicLockable* requirements.

Diagnostics required if `lock_type` is equivalent to `atomic_ref_assume_lock_free_t` and the implementation does not provide lock-free atomic operations for objects of type `T` aligned to `required_lock_free_alignment`.

<sup>2</sup> `atomic_ref` instances referencing the same value of `ptr` and `unlock` are called *equivalent*. Concurrent access to the same value through equivalent `atomic_ref` instances does not create a data race (??). [Note: Concurrent access to the value directly, or through a non-equivalent `atomic_ref` instance, can introduce a data race. — end note]

<sup>3</sup> For all `atomic_ref` member functions excluding static methods, constructors, the destructor, and `is_lock_free()` the following statement is true:

- (3.1) — If `unlock` points to a valid `lock_type` object which meets the *Cpp17BasicLockable* requirements then the implementation will use `unlock` to atomically perform these methods. [Note: If `lock_type` does not meet the *Cpp17BasicLockable* requirements then these methods can introduce a data race. — end note]
- (3.2) — If `unlock` is equivalent to `nullptr` and `requires_user_lock(obj)` is `false` then the implementation will ensure that these methods happen atomically.
- (3.3) — Otherwise, use of any of these methods can introduce a data race.

```
static constexpr bool is_always_lock_free;
```

<sup>4</sup> The static data member `is_always_lock_free` is `true` if the `atomic_ref` type's operations are always lock-free, and `false` otherwise.

```
static constexpr size_t required_lock_free_alignment;
```

<sup>5</sup> The alignment required for an object to be referenced lock-free by an atomic reference, which is at least `alignof(T)`. If the implementation does not support lock-free operations on objects of type `T` then `required_lock_free_alignment` is 0.

<sup>6</sup> [Note: Hardware could require an object referenced by an `atomic_ref` to have stricter alignment (??) than other objects of type `T`. Further more, whether operations on an `atomic_ref` are lock-

free could depend on the alignment of the referenced object. For example, lock-free operations on `std::complex<double>` could be supported only if aligned to `2*alignof(double)`. — *end note*

```
static constexpr bool never_requires_user_lock;
```

7 Is `true` if an implementation never requires the user to provide a lock for objects of type `T` and `false` otherwise.

```
static is_lock_free(T& obj) noexcept;
```

*Returns:* Returns `true` if atomic operations on the object referenced by `obj` can be lock-free or if the `lock_type` type is equivalent to `atomic_ref_assume_lock_free_t`.

```
static requires_user_lock(T& obj) noexcept;
```

*Returns:* Returns `false` if `lock_type` is equivalent to either `atomic_ref_assume_lock_free_t`. Otherwise, returns `true` if `atomic_ref` requires the user to provide a valid reference to a `lock_type` object when constructing an `atomic_ref` from `obj`.

```
explicit atomic_ref(T& obj) noexcept;
```

8 ~~*Requires:* The referenced object shall be aligned to `required_lock_free_alignment`.~~

9 ~~*Effects:* Constructs an atomic reference that references the object.~~

If `requires_user_lock(obj)` is `true` calls `std::terminate()`. Otherwise, equivalent to:

```
ptr = std::addressof(obj);
unlock = nullptr;
```

10 *Throws:* Nothing.

```
atomic_ref(T& obj, atomic_ref_assume_lock_free_t);
```

11 *Expects:* `is_lock_free(obj)` is `true`.

12 *Effects:* Equivalent to:

```
ptr = std::addressof(obj);
unlock = nullptr;
```

13 *Throws:* Nothing.

```
atomic_ref(T& obj, lock_type& lk);
```

14 *Effects:* Equivalent to:

```
ptr = std::addressof(obj);
unlock = requires_user_lock(obj) ? std::addressof(lk) : nullptr;
```

15 *Throws:* Nothing.

```
atomic_ref(T& obj, lock_type& lk, atomic_ref_prefer_user_lock_t);
```

16 *Effects:* Equivalent to:

```
ptr = std::addressof(obj);
unlock = std::addressof(lk);
```

17 *Throws:* Nothing.

```
atomic_ref(const atomic_ref& ref) noexcept;
```

18 ~~*Effects:* Constructs an atomic reference that references the object referenced by `ref`.~~ Equivalent to:

```
ptr = ref.obj;
unlock = ref.unlock;
```

```
void store(T desired, memory_order order = memory_order_seq_cst) const noexcept;
```

19 ~~*Requires:*~~ *Expects:* The `order` argument shall not be `memory_order_consume`, `memory_order_acquire`, nor `memory_order_acq_rel`.

20 *Effects:* Atomically replaces the value referenced by `*ptr` with the value of `desired`. Memory is affected according to the value of `order`.

T load(memory\_order order = memory\_order\_seq\_cst) const noexcept;

21 ~~Requires:~~ Expects: The order argument shall not be memory\_order\_release nor memory\_order\_acq\_rel.

*Effects:* Memory is affected according to the value of order.

22 *Returns:* Atomically returns the value referenced by \*ptr.

T exchange(T desired, memory\_order order = memory\_order\_seq\_cst) const noexcept;

23 *Effects:* Atomically replaces the value referenced by \*ptr with desired. Memory is affected according to the value of order. This operation is an atomic read-modify-write operation (??).

24 *Returns:* Atomically returns the value referenced by \*ptr immediately before the effects.

bool compare\_exchange\_weak(T& expected, T desired,  
memory\_order success, memory\_order failure) const noexcept;

bool compare\_exchange\_strong(T& expected, T desired,  
memory\_order success, memory\_order failure) const noexcept;

bool compare\_exchange\_weak(T& expected, T desired,  
memory\_order order = memory\_order\_seq\_cst) const noexcept;

bool compare\_exchange\_strong(T& expected, T desired,  
memory\_order order = memory\_order\_seq\_cst) const noexcept;

25 ~~Requires:~~ Expects: The failure argument shall not be memory\_order\_release nor memory\_order\_acq\_rel.

26 *Effects:* When only one memory\_order argument is supplied, the value of success is order, and the value of failure is order except that a value of memory\_order\_acq\_rel shall be replaced by the value memory\_order\_acquire and a value of memory\_order\_release shall be replaced by the value memory\_order\_relaxed.

Equivalent to atomically performing the following:

```
alignas(std::max(sizeof(T), required_lock_free_alignment)) std::byte old[sizeof(T)];
memcpy(old, ptr, sizeof(T));
bool result = 0 == memcmp(std::addressof(expected), old, sizeof(T));
if (result) memcpy(ptr, std::addressof(desired), sizeof(T));
else memcpy(std::addressof(expected), old, sizeof(T));
return result;
```

27 If return value of the operation is true, memory is affected according to the value of success and this operation is an atomic read-modify-write operation (??) on the value referenced by \*ptr. Otherwise memory is affected according to the value of failure and this operation is an atomic load operation on \*ptr.

Retrieves the value in expected. It then atomically compares the value representation of the value referenced by \*ptr for equality with that previously retrieved from expected, and if true, replaces the value referenced by \*ptr with that in desired. When only one memory\_order argument is supplied, the value of success is order, and the value of failure is order except that a value of memory\_order\_acq\_rel shall be replaced by the value memory\_order\_acquire and a value of memory\_order\_release shall be replaced by the value memory\_order\_relaxed. If and only if the comparison is false then, after the atomic operation, the value in expected is replaced by the value read from the value referenced by \*ptr during the atomic comparison. If the operation returns true, these operations are atomic read-modify-write operations (??) on the value referenced by \*ptr. Otherwise, these operations are atomic load operations on that memory.

28 *Returns:* The result of the comparison.

29 *Remarks:* A weak compare-and-exchange operation may fail spuriously. That is, even when the contents of memory referred to by expected and ptr are equal, it may return false and store back to expected the same memory contents that were originally there. [Note: This spurious failure enables implementation of compare-and-exchange on a broader class of machines, e.g., load-locked store-conditional machines. A consequence of spurious failure is that nearly all uses of weak compare-and-exchange will be in a loop. When a compare-and-exchange is in a loop, the weak version will yield

better performance on some platforms. When a weak compare-and-exchange would require a loop and a strong one would not, the strong one is preferable. — *end note*

[Editor's note: Make the following changes in [atomics.ref.int].]

```
namespace std {
    template<class LockT> struct atomic_ref<integral, LockT> {
    private:
        integral* ptr; // exposition only
        lock_type* ulock; // exposition only
    public:
        using lock_type = LockT;
        using value_type = integral;
        using difference_type = value_type;
        static constexpr bool is_always_lock_free = implementation-defined;
        static constexpr bool never_requires_user_lock = implementation-defined;
        static constexpr size_t required_lock_free_alignment = implementation-defined;

        static bool is_lock_free(const T &) noexcept;
        static bool requires_user_lock(const T &) noexcept;

        atomic_ref& operator=(const atomic_ref&) = delete;

        explicit atomic_ref(T&) noexcept;
        atomic_ref(integral&, atomic_ref_assume_lock_free_t) noexcept;

        atomic_ref(integral&, lock_type&) noexcept;
        atomic_ref(integral&, lock_type&, atomic_ref_prefer_user_lock_t) noexcept;

        atomic_ref(const atomic_ref&) noexcept;

        integral operator=(integral) const noexcept;
        operator integral() const noexcept;

        bool is_lock_free() const noexcept;
        void store(integral, memory_order = memory_order_seq_cst) const noexcept;
        integral load(memory_order = memory_order_seq_cst) const noexcept;
        integral exchange(integral,
            memory_order = memory_order_seq_cst) const noexcept;
        bool compare_exchange_weak(integral&, integral,
            memory_order, memory_order) const noexcept;
        bool compare_exchange_strong(integral&, integral,
            memory_order, memory_order) const noexcept;
        bool compare_exchange_weak(integral&, integral,
            memory_order = memory_order_seq_cst) const noexcept;
        bool compare_exchange_strong(integral&, integral,
            memory_order = memory_order_seq_cst) const noexcept;

        integral fetch_add(integral,
            memory_order = memory_order_seq_cst) const noexcept;
        integral fetch_sub(integral,
            memory_order = memory_order_seq_cst) const noexcept;
        integral fetch_and(integral,
            memory_order = memory_order_seq_cst) const noexcept;
        integral fetch_or(integral,
            memory_order = memory_order_seq_cst) const noexcept;
        integral fetch_xor(integral,
            memory_order = memory_order_seq_cst) const noexcept;

        integral operator++(int) const noexcept;
```

```

    integral operator--(int) const noexcept;
    integral operator++() const noexcept;
    integral operator--() const noexcept;
    integral operator+=(integral) const noexcept;
    integral operator-=(integral) const noexcept;
    integral operator&=(integral) const noexcept;
    integral operator|=(integral) const noexcept;
    integral operator^=(integral) const noexcept;
};
}

```

[Editor's note: Make the following changes in [atomics.ref.float].]

```

namespace std {
    template<class LockT> struct atomic_ref<floating-point, LockT> {
    private:
        floating-point* ptr; // exposition only
        lock_type* ulock; // exposition only
    public:
        using lock_type = LockT;
        using value_type = floating-point;
        using difference_type = value_type;
        static constexpr bool is_always_lock_free = implementation-defined;
        static constexpr bool never_requires_user_lock = implementation-defined;
        static constexpr size_t required_lock_free_alignment = implementation-defined;

        static bool is_lock_free(const T &) noexcept;
        static bool requires_user_lock(const T &) noexcept;

        atomic_ref& operator=(const atomic_ref&) = delete;

        explicit atomic_ref(T&) noexcept;
        atomic_ref(floating-point&, atomic_ref_assume_lock_free_t) noexcept;

        atomic_ref(floating-point&, lock_type&) noexcept;
        atomic_ref(floating-point&, lock_type&, atomic_ref_prefer_user_lock_t) noexcept;

        atomic_ref(const atomic_ref&) noexcept;

        floating-point operator=(floating-point) noexcept;
        operator floating-point() const noexcept;

        bool is_lock_free() const noexcept;
        void store(floating-point, memory_order = memory_order_seq_cst) const noexcept;
        floating-point load(memory_order = memory_order_seq_cst) const noexcept;
        floating-point exchange(floating-point,
                                memory_order = memory_order_seq_cst) const noexcept;
        bool compare_exchange_weak(floating-point&, floating-point,
                                   memory_order, memory_order) const noexcept;
        bool compare_exchange_strong(floating-point&, floating-point,
                                      memory_order, memory_order) const noexcept;
        bool compare_exchange_weak(floating-point&, floating-point,
                                    memory_order = memory_order_seq_cst) const noexcept;
        bool compare_exchange_strong(floating-point&, floating-point,
                                      memory_order = memory_order_seq_cst) const noexcept;

        floating-point fetch_add(floating-point,
                                memory_order = memory_order_seq_cst) const noexcept;
        floating-point fetch_sub(floating-point,
                                memory_order = memory_order_seq_cst) const noexcept;

        floating-point operator+=(floating-point) const noexcept;
        floating-point operator-=(floating-point) const noexcept;

```

```
};
}
```

[Editor's note: Make the following changes in [atomics.ref.pointer].]

```
namespace std {
    template<class T, class LockT> struct atomic_ref<T*, LockT> {
    private:
        T** ptr; // exposition only
        lock_type* ulock; // exposition only
    public:
        using lock_type = LockT;
        using value_type = T*;
        using difference_type = ptrdiff_t;
        static constexpr bool is_always_lock_free = implementation-defined;
        static constexpr bool never_requires_user_lock = implementation-defined;
        static constexpr size_t required_lock_free_alignment = implementation-defined;

        static bool is_lock_free(const T &) noexcept;
        static bool requires_user_lock(const T &) noexcept;

        atomic_ref& operator=(const atomic_ref&) = delete;

        explicit atomic_ref(T&) noexcept;
        atomic_ref(T*, atomic_ref_assume_lock_free_t) noexcept;

        atomic_ref(T*, lock_type&) noexcept;
        atomic_ref(T*, lock_type&, atomic_ref_prefer_user_lock_t) noexcept;

        atomic_ref(const atomic_ref&) noexcept;

        T* operator=(T*) const noexcept;
        operator T*() const noexcept;

        bool is_lock_free() const noexcept;
        void store(T*, memory_order = memory_order_seq_cst) const noexcept;
        T* load(memory_order = memory_order_seq_cst) const noexcept;
        T* exchange(T*, memory_order = memory_order_seq_cst) const noexcept;
        bool compare_exchange_weak(T*&, T*,
                                   memory_order, memory_order) const noexcept;
        bool compare_exchange_strong(T*&, T*,
                                     memory_order, memory_order) const noexcept;
        bool compare_exchange_weak(T*&, T*,
                                   memory_order = memory_order_seq_cst) const noexcept;
        bool compare_exchange_strong(T*&, T*,
                                     memory_order = memory_order_seq_cst) const noexcept;

        T* fetch_add(difference_type, memory_order = memory_order_seq_cst) const noexcept;
        T* fetch_sub(difference_type, memory_order = memory_order_seq_cst) const noexcept;

        T* operator++(int) const noexcept;
        T* operator--(int) const noexcept;
        T* operator++() const noexcept;
        T* operator--() const noexcept;
        T* operator+=(difference_type) const noexcept;
        T* operator-=(difference_type) const noexcept;
    };
}
```