

Department I - C Plus Plus

Modern and Lucid C++ Advanced for Professional Programmers

Week 10 – Networking and Asynchronous Operations

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- **Recap Week 9**
- **Networking in C++**
- **Signal Handling**
- **Shared Data with ASIO**



- **Participants should ...**

- know the basics of communication with sockets
- be able to implement applications that communicate over a network
- be able to implement network IO with synchronous and asynchronous operation
- describe how to access shared data safely within ASIO



Recap Week 9



- **The C++ Memory Model defines**

- When the effect of an operation is visible to other threads
- How and when operations might be reordered

- **Visibility of effects:**

- *sequenced-before*: within a single thread
- *happens-before*: either sequenced-before or inter-thread happens-before
- *synchronizes-with*: inter-thread sync.

- **Note: Reads/writes in a single statement are “unsequenced”!**

```
std::cout << ++i << ++i; //don't know output
```

- **Memory orderings define when effects become visible**

- Sequentially-consistent
 - “Intuitive” and the default behavior
- Acquire/Release
 - Weaker guarantees than sequentially-consistent
- Consume (discouraged)
 - Slightly weaker than acquire-release
- Relaxed
 - No guarantees besides atomicity!



- **Sequential Consistency**

- Global execution order of operations
- Every thread observes the same order

- **Memory order flag**

- `std::memory_order_seq_cst`

- **Default behavior**

- **The latest modification (in the global execution order) will be available to a read**

```
std::atomic<bool> x, y;  
std::atomic<int> z;
```

Every function runs on its own thread

```
void write_x() {  
    x.store(true);  
}
```

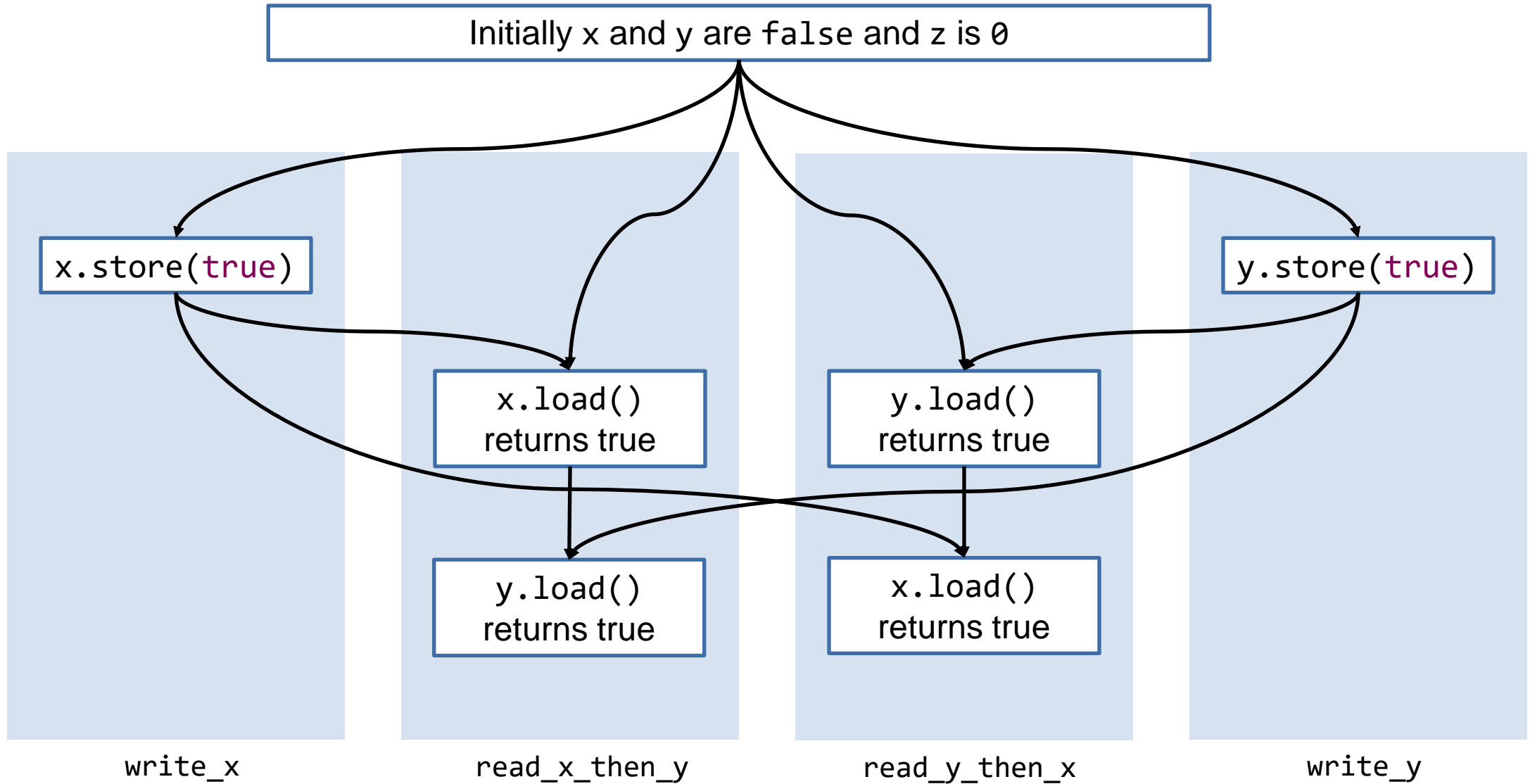
```
void read_x_then_y() {  
    while (!x.load());  
    if (y.load()) ++z;  
}
```

```
void write_y() {  
    y.store(true);  
}
```

```
void read_y_then_x() {  
    while (!y.load());  
    if (x.load()) ++z;  
}
```

What are possible values of z after the execution of all threads?





- **Custom types need to be trivially copyable**

- You can not have a custom copy ctor
- You can not have a custom move ctor
- You can not have a custom copy assignment operator
- You can not have a custom move assignment operator

- **Object can only be accessed as a whole**

- No member access operator in `std::atomic`

```
struct SimpleType {  
    int first;  
    float second;  
};
```

```
struct NonTrivialCctor {  
    NonTrivialCctor(NonTrivialCctor const&) {  
        std::cout << "copied!\n";  
    }  
};
```

```
struct NonTrivialMember {  
    int first;  
    std::string second;  
};
```



Networking in C++ (With ASIO)



- **Sockets are an abstraction of endpoints for communication**

- **TCP Sockets**

- Reliable
- Stream-oriented
- Requires connection setup

- **UDP Sockets**

- Packets might get lost or arrive out of order
- Datagram-oriented (max 65k)
- Sending/receiving possible without a connection



Primitive	Meaning
Socket	Create a new communication end point
Bind	Attach a local address to a socket
Listen	Announce willingness to accept connections
Accept	Block caller until a connection request arrives
Connect	Actively attempt to establish a connection
Send	Send some data over the connection
Receive	Receive some data over the connection
Close	Release the connection



- **Server**

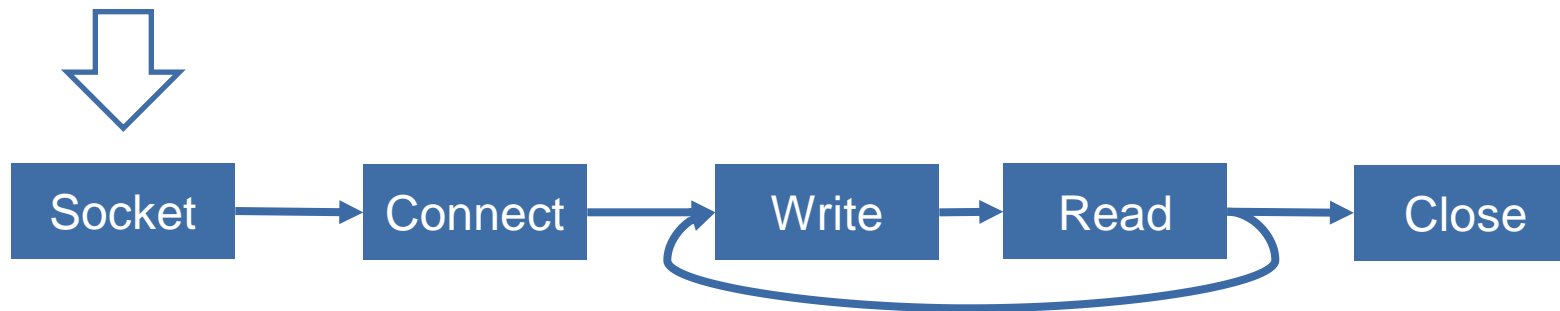


- **Client**



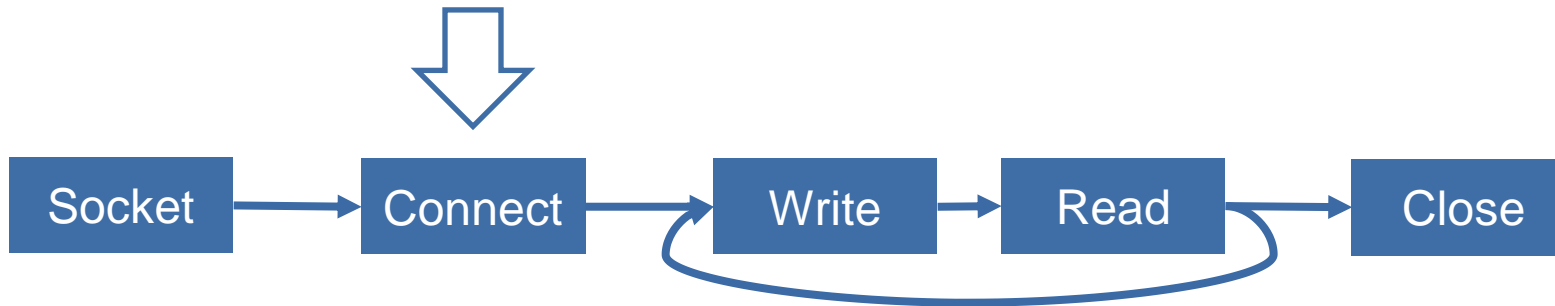
- All ASIO operations require an I/O context (more on that later)
- Create a TCP socket using the context

```
asio::io_context context{};  
asio::ip::tcp::socket socket{context};
```



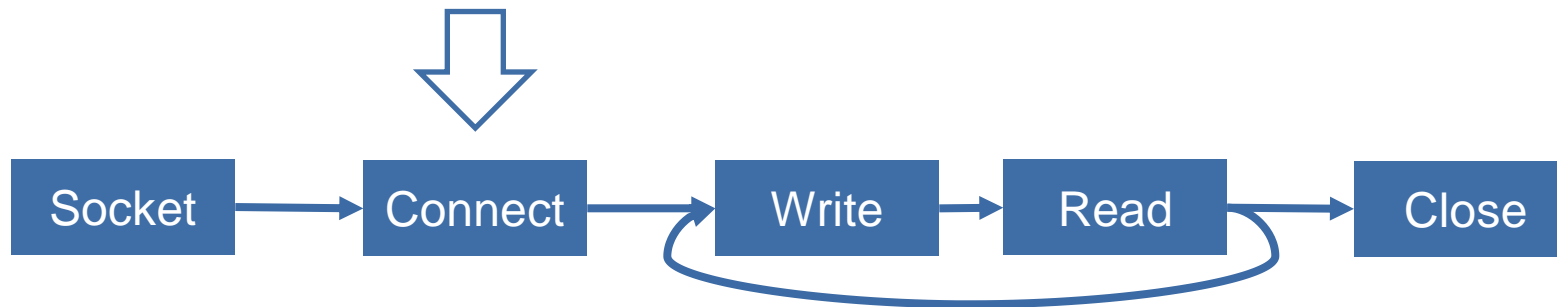
- If the IP address is known, an endpoint can be constructed easily
- `socket.connect()` tries to establish a connection to the given endpoint

```
auto address = asio::ip::make_address("127.0.0.1");  
auto endpoint = asio::ip::tcp::endpoint(address, 80);  
  
socket.connect(endpoint);
```



- A resolver resolves host names to end points (for TCP IP address and port)
- `asio::connect()` tries to establish a connection to given end point(s)
 - It tries `connect()` of the socket for each endpoint to establish a connection

```
asio::ip::tcp::resolver resolver{context};  
auto endpoints = resolver.resolve(domain, "80");  
  
asio::connect(socket, endpoints);
```



- **Transmit / Receive functions need sources or destinations buffers**

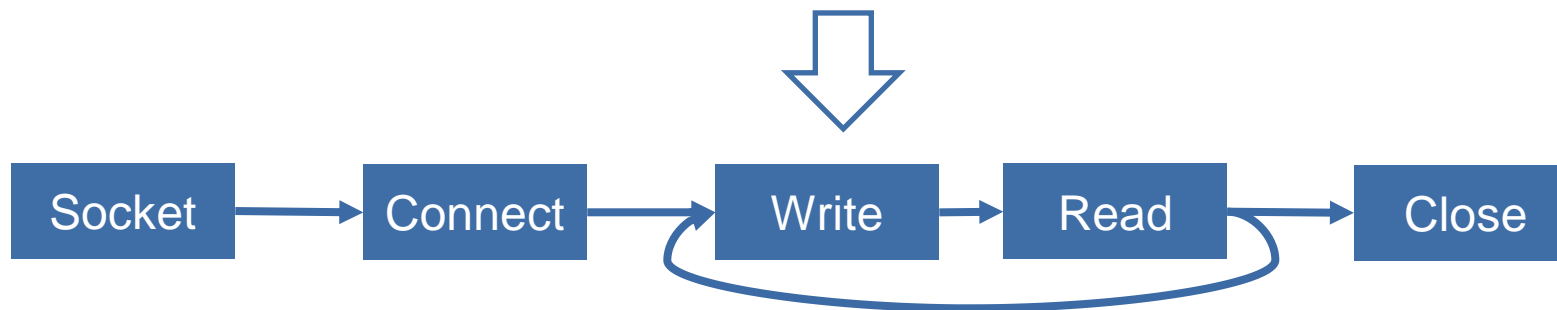
- ASIO generally does not manage memory for you!
- Fixed size buffers using `asio::buffer()`
 - Must provide at least as much memory as you would like to read
 - Can use several standard containers as a backend
 - Pointer + Size combinations are also available
- Dynamically sized buffers using `asio::dynamic_buffer()`
 - For use with `std::string` and `std::vector`
- Streambuf buffers using `asio::streambuf`
 - Works with `std::istream` and `std::ostream`



- **asio::write()** sends the data to the peer the socket is connected to
 - It returns when all data is sent or an error occurred (exception: asio::system_error)

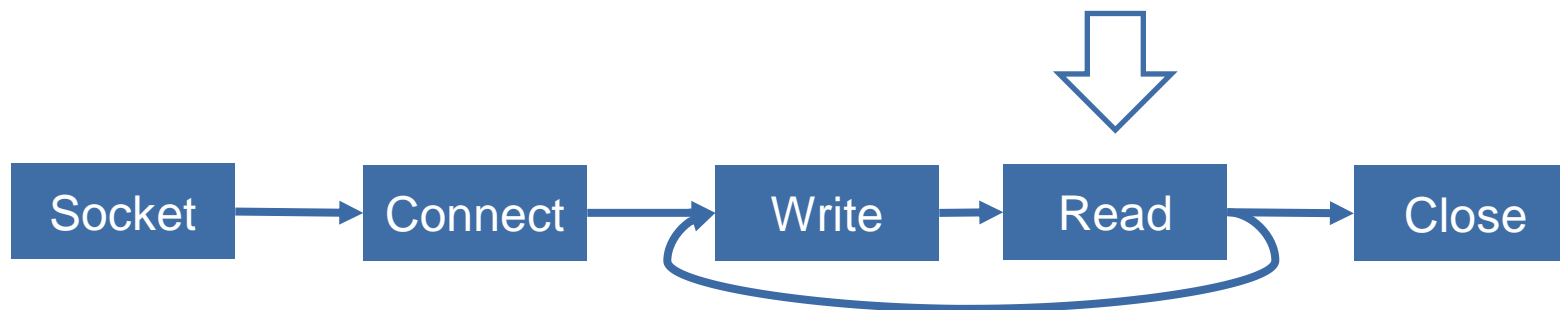
```
std::ostream request{};
request << "GET / HTTP/1.1\r\n";
request << "Host: " << domain << "\r\n";
request << "\r\n";

asio::write(socket, asio::buffer(request.str()));
```



- **`asio::read()` receives data sent by the peer the socket is connected to**
 - It returns when the read-buffer is full or an error occurred
- **The error code is set if a problem occurs or the stream has been closed (`asio::error::eof`)**
 - If you don't pass an "out-parameter" for the error, the error will be thrown as `std::system_error`

```
constexpr size_t bufferSize = 1024;  
std::array<char, bufferSize> reply{};  
asio::error_code errorCode{};  
auto readLength = asio::read(socket, asio::buffer(reply.data(), bufferSize), errorCode);
```



- **asio::read also allows you to specify completion conditions**

- `asio::transfer_all()` – Default behavior, transfer all available data or until the buffer is full
- `asio::transfer_at_least(std::size_t bytes)` – Read at least bytes number of bytes (may transfer more)
- `asio::transfer_exactly(std::size_t bytes)` – Read exactly bytes number of bytes

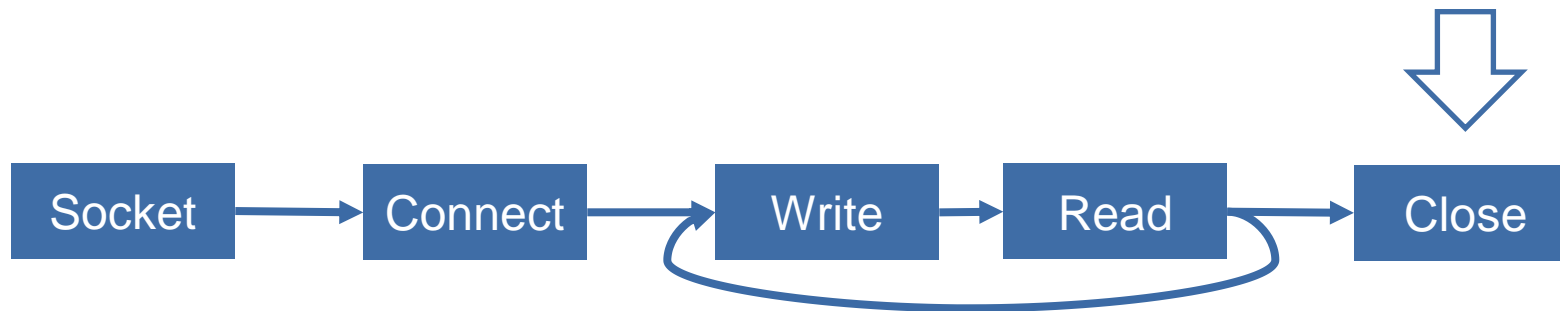
- **asio::read_until allows you to specify conditions on the data being read**

- Simple matching of characters or strings
- More complex matching using `std::regex`
- Also allows you to specify a callable object
 - Expects `std::pair<iterator, bool> operator()(iterator begin, iterator end)`
- May read more! You need to work with the number of bytes returned by the call



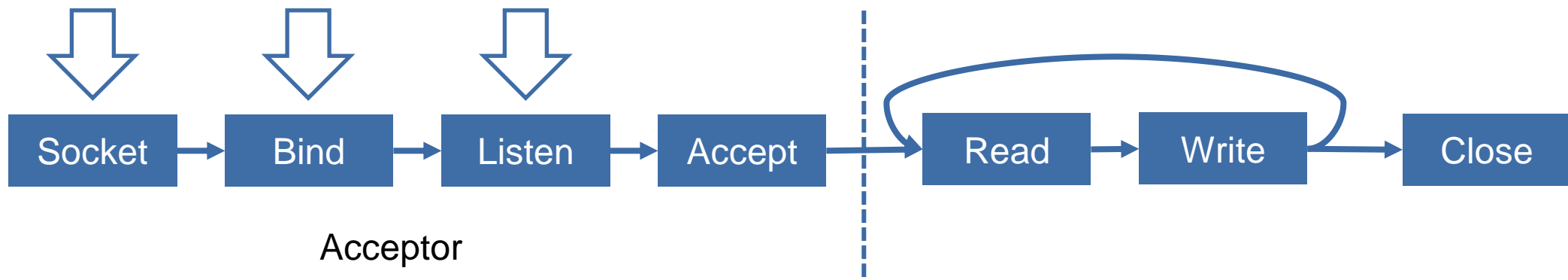
- `shutdown()` closes the read/write stream associated with the socket, indicating to the peer that no more data will be received/sent
- The destructor of the socket cancels all pending operations and destroys the object

```
socket.shutdown(asio::ip::tcp::socket::shutdown_both);  
socket.close();
```



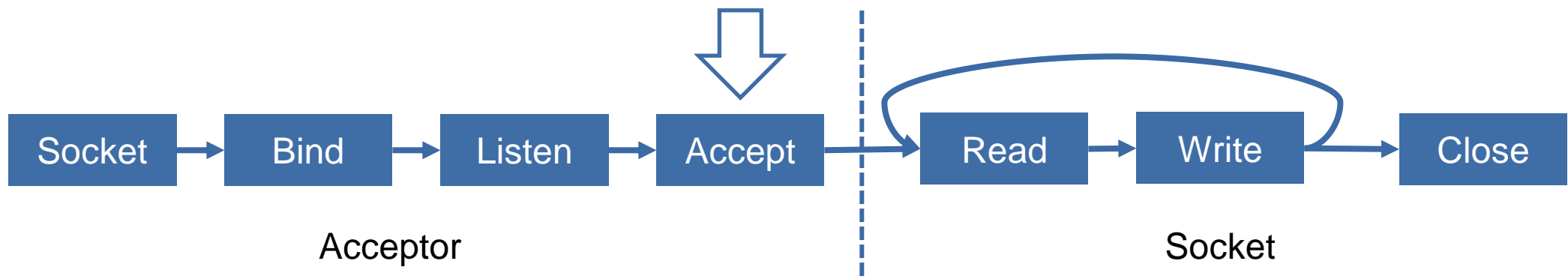
- An acceptor is a special socket responsible for establishing incoming connections
- In ASIO the acceptor is bound to a given local end point and starts listening automatically

```
asio::io_context context{};  
asio::ip::tcp::endpoint localEndpoint{asio::ip::tcp::v4(), port};  
asio::ip::tcp::acceptor acceptor{context, localEndpoint};
```

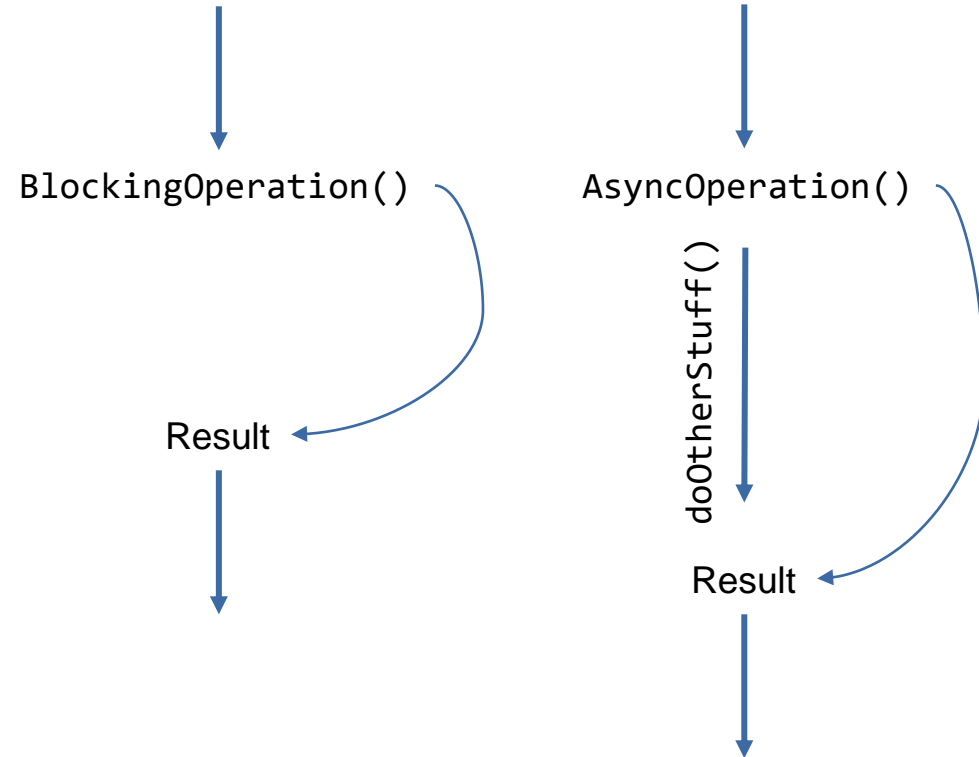


- The `accept()` member function blocks until a client tries to establish a connection (with connect)
- It returns a new socket through which the connected client can be reached

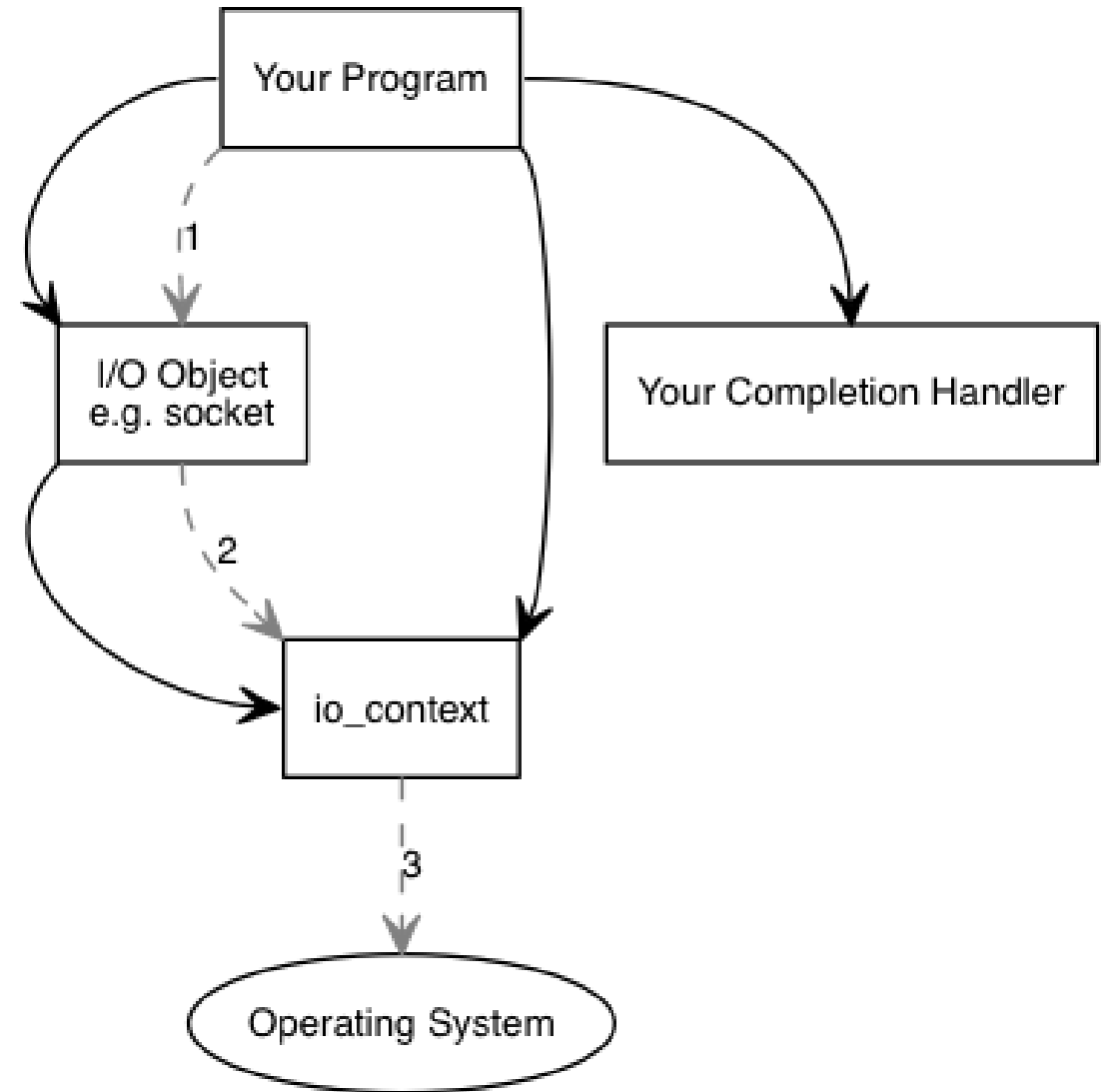
```
asio::ip::tcp::endpoint peerEndpoint{};  
asio::ip::tcp::socket peerSocket = acceptor.accept(peerEndpoint);
```



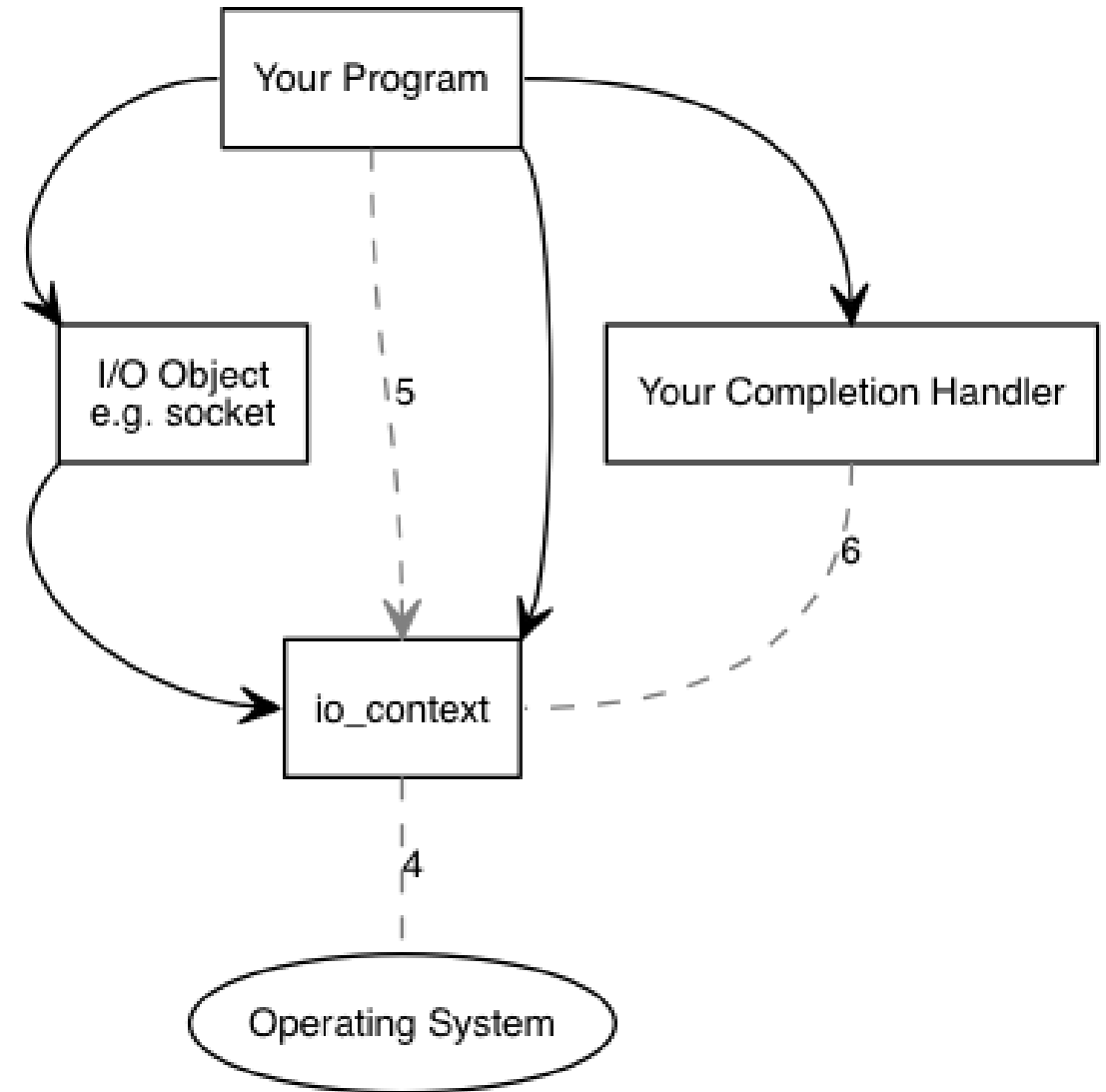
- **Using synchronous operations blocks the current thread**
- **No other operations can be executed while being blocked**
- **Asynchronous operations allow further processing of other requests while the async operation is executed (being blocked or making progress)**
- **Most operating systems support asynchronous IO operations**



1. The program invokes an async operation on an I/O object and passes a completion handler as a callback
2. The I/O object delegates the operation and the callback to its `io_context`
3. The operating system performs the asynchronous operation



4. The operating system signals the `io_context` that the operation has been completed
5. When the program calls `io_context::run()` the remaining asynchronous operations are performed (wait for the result of the operating system)
6. Still inside `io_context::run()` the completion handler is called to handle the result (or error) of the asynchronous operation



- **Async read operations**

- `asio::async_read`
- `asio::async_read_until`
- `asio::async_read_at`

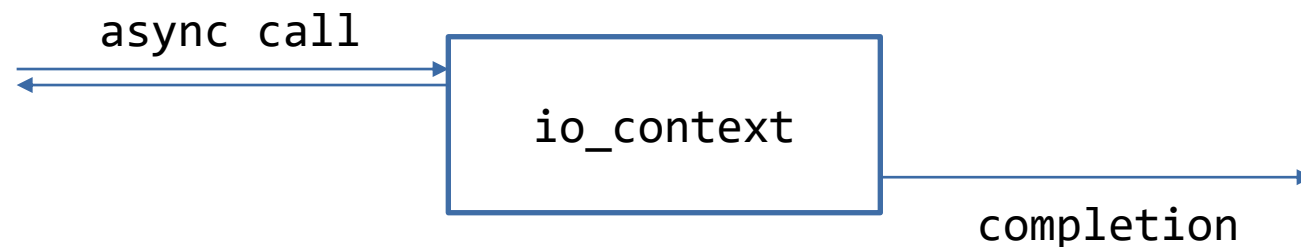
- **Async write operations**

- `asio::async_write`
- `asio::async_write_at`

- **They return immediately**

- **The operation is processed by the executor associated with the stream's `asio::io_context`**

- **A completion handler is called when the operation is done**



- **asio::async_read_until** (the call returns immediately)
 - Reads from asynchronous stream
 - Into a buffer
 - Until a specific character is encountered
 - Then it calls the completion handler
- **The completion handler is a callable taking an asio::error_code and a std::size_t as arguments**

```
auto readCompletionHandler = [] (asio::error_code ec, std::size_t length) {  
    //...  
};  
  
asio::async_read_until(socket, buffer, '\n', readCompletionHandler);
```



- **asio::async_write (the call returns immediately)**
 - Writes to an asynchronous stream
 - The data from a buffer
 - Until all data has been written or an error occurs
 - Then it calls the completion handler
- **The completion handler is a callable taking an asio::error_code and a std::size_t as arguments**

```
auto writeCompletionHandler = [] (asio::error_code ec, std::size_t length) {  
    //...  
};  
  
asio::async_write(socket, buffer, writeCompletionHandler);
```



```
struct Server {  
    using tcp = asio::ip::tcp;  
    Server(asio::io_context & context, unsigned short port)  
        : acceptor{context, tcp::endpoint{tcp::v4(), port}}{  
        accept();  
    }  
  
private:  
    void accept() {  
        auto acceptHandler = [this] (asio::error_code ec, tcp::socket peer) {  
            if (!ec) {  
                auto session = std::make_shared<Session>(std::move(peer));  
                session->start();  
            }  
            accept();  
        };  
        acceptor.async_accept(acceptHandler);  
    }  
    tcp::acceptor acceptor;  
};
```



```
void accept() {  
    auto acceptHandler = [this] (asio::error_code ec, tcp::socket peer) {  
        if (!ec) {  
            auto session = std::make_shared<Session>(std::move(peer));  
            session->start();  
        }  
        accept();  
    };  
    acceptor.async_accept(acceptHandler);  
}
```

- **Creates an accept handler that is called when an incoming connection has been established**
 - The second parameter is the socket of the newly connected client
 - A Session object is created (on the heap) to handle all communication with the client
 - `accept()` is called to continue accepting new inbound connection attempts
- **The accept handler is registered to handle the next accept asynchronously**



```
Server(asio::io_context & context, unsigned short port)
    : acceptor{context, tcp::endpoint{tcp::v4(), port}}{
    accept();
}
```

- The constructor creates the server
- It initializes its acceptor with the given `io_context` and port
- It calls `accept` for registering the accept handler for the next incoming connection attempt
 - This function does not block



```
int main() {  
    asio::io_context context{};  
    Server server{context, 1234};  
    context.run();  
}
```

- **Create an io_context**
 - It has an associated executor that handles the asynchronous calls
- **Create the server on port 1234**
- **Run the executor of the io_context until no async operation is left**
 - Since we already have an async_accept request pending this operation does not return immediately
 - We will keep the this run() call busy
- **It is important that the server object lives as long as async operations on it are processed**



- **Constructor**

- Stores the socket with the client connection

- **start() initiates the first async read**

- **read() invokes async reading**

- **write() invokes async writing**

- Called by the handler in read

- **The fields store the data of the session**

- **Why enable_shared_from_this?**

```
struct Session
    : std::enable_shared_from_this<Session> {
    explicit Session(asio::ip::tcp::socket socket);
    void start() {
        read();
    }

private:
    void read();
    void write(std::string data);

    asio::streambuf buffer{};
    std::istream input{&buffer};
    asio::ip::tcp::socket socket;
};
```



- **The session object would die at the end of the accept handler**
 - Thus it needs to be allocated on the heap

```
//In the accept handler
if (!ec) {
    auto session = std::make_shared<Session>(std::move(peer));
    session->start();
}
```

- **The handlers need to keep the object alive**

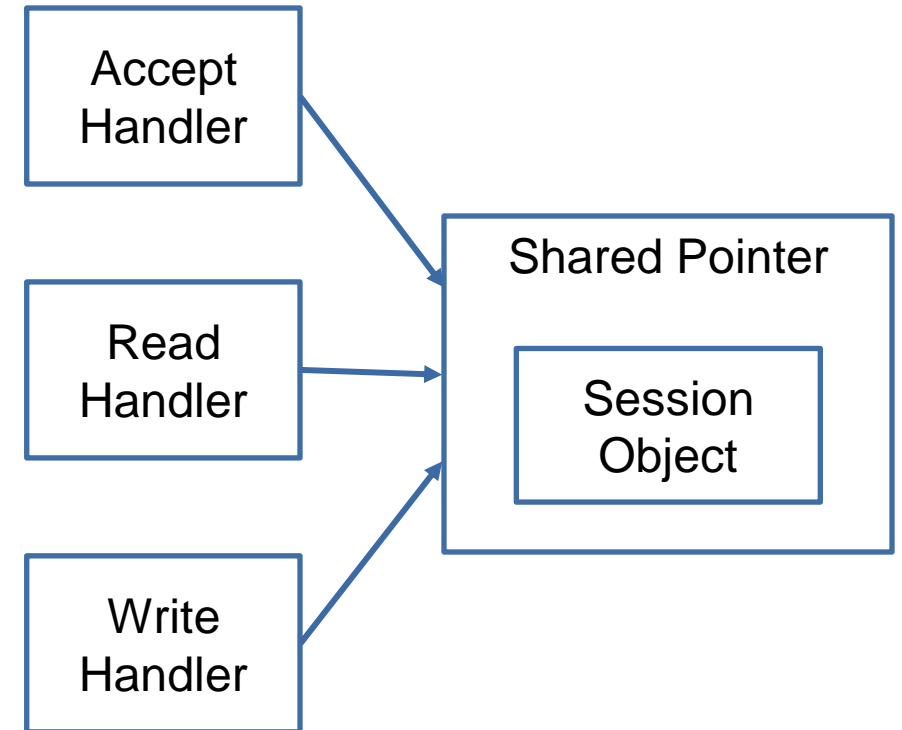
```
//In the accept handler
void Session::read() {
    auto handler = [self = shared_from_this()](error_code ec, size_t length) {
        //...
    };
}
```



```
auto session = std::make_shared<Session>(std::move(peer));  
session->start();
```

```
void Session::read() {  
    auto readCompletionHandler = [self = shared_from_this()]
```

```
void Session::write(std::string input) {  
    auto data = std::make_shared<std::string>(input);  
    auto writeCompletionHandler = [self = shared_from_this(), data]
```



```
void WebServer::accept() {  
    auto acceptHandler = [this] (asio::error_code ec, tcp::socket peer) {  
        if (!ec) {  
            auto session = std::make_shared<Session>(std::move(peer));  
            session->start();  
        }  
    };  
    acceptor.async_accept(acceptHandler);  
}
```



```
void WebServer::accept() {  
    auto acceptHandler = [this] (asio::error_code ec, tcp::socket peer) {  
        if (!ec) {  
            auto session = std::make_shared<Session>(std::move(peer));  
            session->start();  
        }  
    };  
    acceptor.async_accept(acceptHandler);  
}
```

- **accept() should very likely be called at the end of the handler**
- **Otherwise only a single connection from a client will be possible**



```
void Session::read() {  
    auto readCompletionHandler = [this] (asio::error_code ec, std::size_t length) {  
        if (ec) {  
            //error handling  
        }  
        int number{};  
        if (input >> number) {  
            input.ignore(std::numeric_limits<std::streamsize>::max(), '\\n');  
            write(createReply(number));  
        }  
    };  
    asio::async_read_until(socket, buffer, '\\n', readCompletionHandler);  
}
```



```
void Session::read() {  
    auto readCompletionHandler = [self = shared_from_this()] (asio::error_code ec, std::size_t length) {  
        if (ec) {  
            //error handling  
        }  
        int number{};  
        if (self->input >> number) {  
            self->input.ignore(std::numeric_limits<std::streamsize>::max(), '\n');  
            self->write(self->createReply(number));  
        }  
    };  
    asio::async_read_until(socket, buffer, '\n', readCompletionHandler);  
}
```

- It is likely that the shared pointer to the this object needs to be captured unless the session is stored somewhere else
- It needs to live longer than the operations performed on it



Signal Handling



- **Most operating systems support signals**

- Signals provide asynchronous notifications
- Signals are used to
 - Gracefully terminate a program
 - Communicate errors
 - Notify about traps

- **The C++ standard defines a portable subset**

- `#include <csignal>`

Signal	Description
SIGTERM	Termination requested
SIGSEGV	Invalid memory access
SIGINT	User interrupt
SIGILL	Illegal Instruction
SIGABRT	Abnormal termination (e.g. <code>std::abort</code>)
SIGFPE	Floating-point Exception

- **Operating systems may provide additional signals**

- However: They are not portable!



- **ASIO provides signal handling**

- asio::signal_set defines a set of signals to wait for
- signal_set.wait(handler)
- signal_set.async_wait(handler)

- **The signal handler receives**

- The signal that occurred
- An error if the wait was aborted

- **Useful to cleanly stop server applications**

```
#include <asio.hpp>

#include <csignal>
#include <iostream>

int main() {
    auto context = asio::io_context{};

    auto signals = asio::signal_set{context, SIGINT, SIGTERM};
    signals.async_wait([&](auto error, auto sig) {
        if (!error) {
            std::cout << "received signal: " << sig << '\n';
        } else {
            std::cout << "signal handling aborted\n";
        }
    });

    context.run();
}
```



Accessing Shared Data



- **Multiple async operations can be in flight**
 - E.g. reading from multiple sockets
- **All completion handlers are dispatched through `asio::io_context`**
 - Handlers run on a thread executing `io_context.run()`
 - Multiple threads can call `run()` on the same `asio::io_context`!
- **What could go wrong?**

```
int main() {  
    auto context = asio::io_context{};  
  
    // start some async operations  
  
    auto runners = std::vector<std::thread>{};  
  
    for(int i{}; i < 4; ++i) {  
        runners.push_back(std::thread{[&]{  
            context.run();  
        }});  
    }  
  
    for_each(runners.begin(), runners.end(),  
            [](auto & runner){  
                runner.join();  
            });  
}
```



```
// globally accessible
```

```
auto results = std::vector<int> { };
```

```
// in connection class
```

```
asio::async_read(socket, asio::buffer(buffer), [&](auto err, auto bytes) {  
    auto result = parse(buffer);  
    results.push_back(result);  
});
```



```
// globally accessible
```

```
auto results = std::vector<int> { };
```

```
// in connection class
```

```
asio::async_read(socket, asio::buffer(buffer), [&](auto err, auto bytes) {  
    auto result = parse(buffer);  
    results.push_back(result); // <<< POSSIBLE DATA RACE!!!  
});
```



- **Strands are a mechanism to ensure sequential execution of handlers**

- Implicit Strands

- if only one thread calls `io_context.run()`
- or program logic ensures only one operation is in progress at a time

- Explicit Strands

- Objects of type `asio::strand<...>`
- Created using `asio::make_strand(executor)`
- Or `asio::make_strand(execution_context)`
- Applied to handlers using `asio::bind_executor(strand, handler)`



```
// globally accessible

auto results = std::vector<int> { };
auto strand = asio::make_strand(context);

// in connection class

asio::async_read(socket, asio::buffer(buffer),
    asio::bind_executor(strand, [&](auto err, auto bytes) {
        auto result = parse(buffer);
        results.push_back(result); // <<< No more data race
    }));
```



Summary



- **Until the C++ standard specifies the networking TS (>C++20) you have to rely on external implementations (like ASIO)**
- **ASIO is best used to implement asynchronous operations (available in boost or standalone)**
- **The asynchronous programming model has special pitfalls in non-garbage collected environments**

