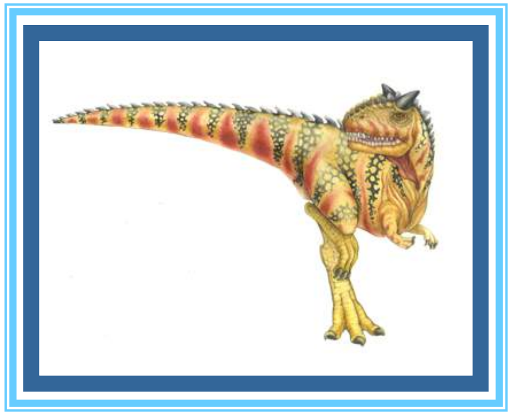
Chapter 4: Threads



Chapter 4: Threads

- Overview
- Multicore Programming
- Multithreading Models
- Thread Libraries
- Implicit Threading
- Threading Issues
- Operating System Examples

Objectives

- To introduce the notion of a thread—a fundamental unit of CPU utilization that forms the basis of multithreaded computer systems
- To discuss the APIs for the Pthreads, Windows, and Java thread libraries
- To explore several strategies that provide implicit threading
- To examine issues related to multithreaded programming
- To cover operating system support for threads in Windows and Linux

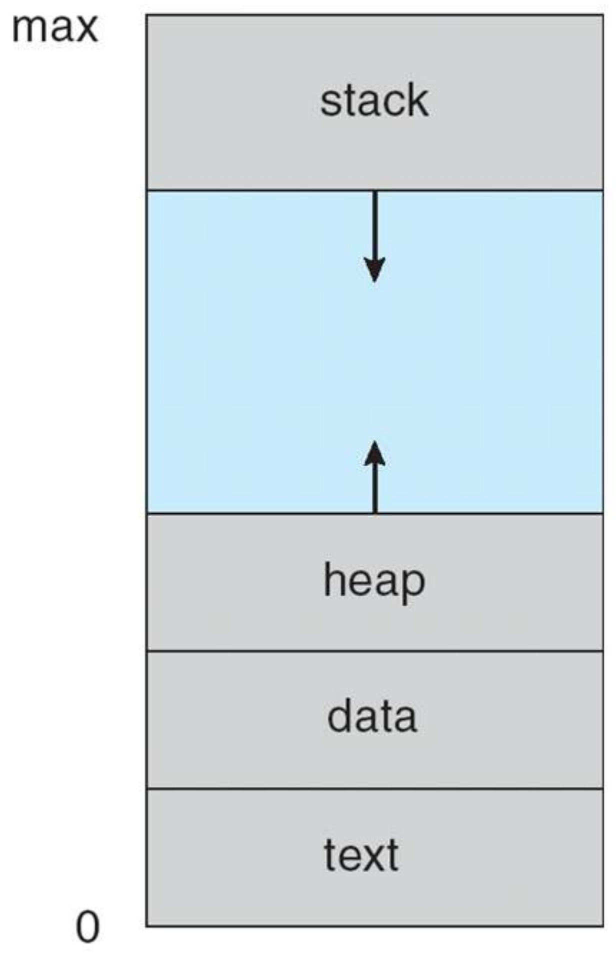
Motivation

- Most modern applications are multithreaded
- Threads run within application
- Multiple tasks with the application can be implemented by separate threads
  - Update display
  - Fetch data
  - Spell checking
  - Answer a network request
- Process creation is heavy-weight while thread creation is light-weight
- Can simplify code, increase efficiency
- Kernels are generally multithreaded

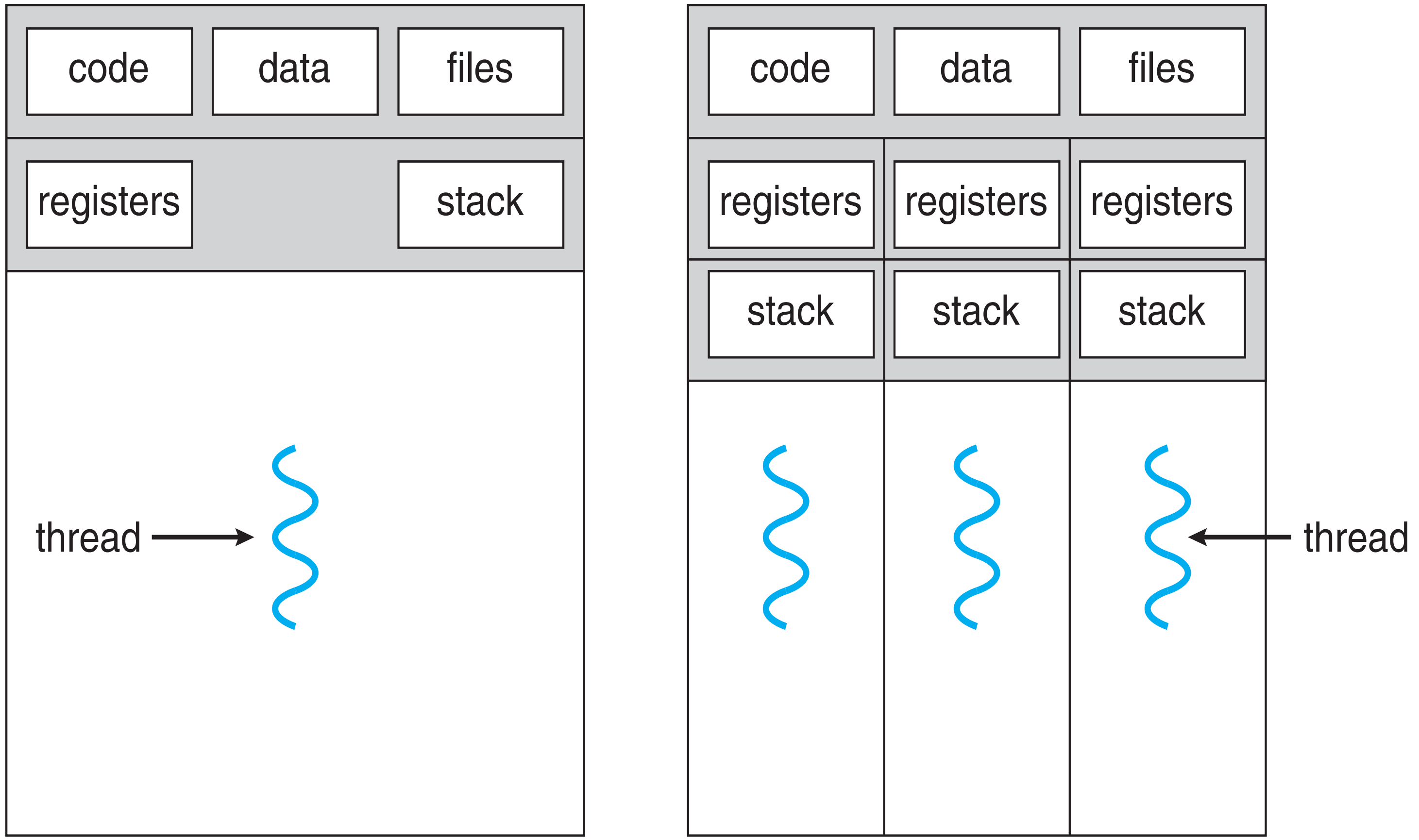
Thread

- Unit of CPU Utilization
- Threads have
  - Thread ID
  - program counter
  - register set
  - stack
- Shares with other OS resources such as
  - open files
  - signals
  - code
  - data section

Virtual Memory



Single and Multithreaded Processes



single-threaded process

multithreaded process

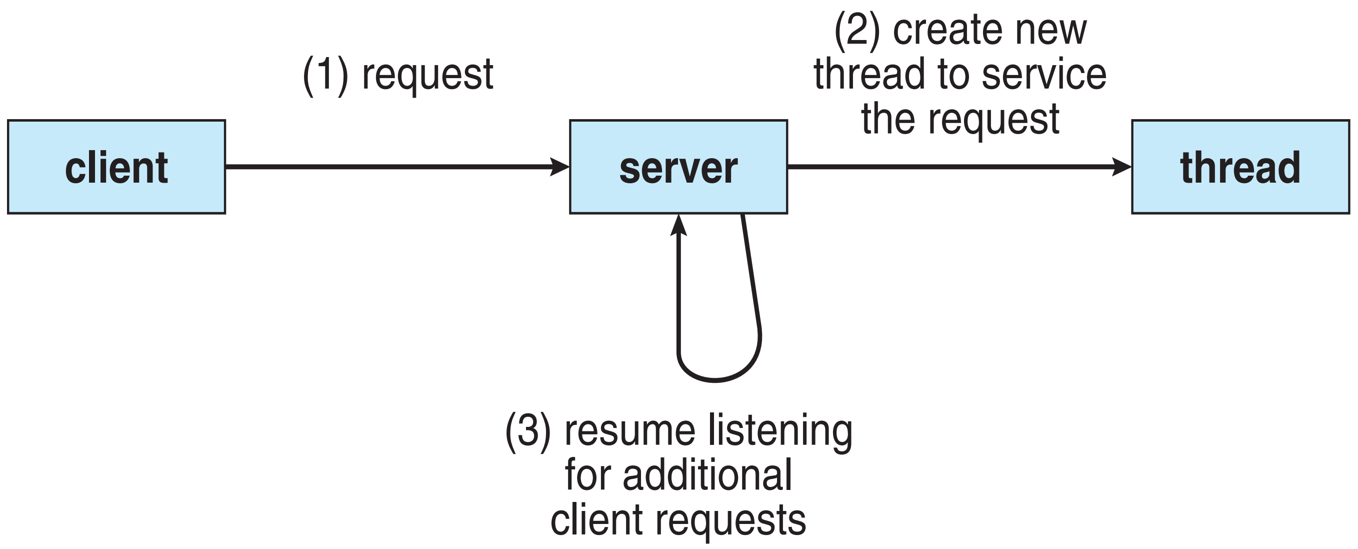
Hyper Threading

- Intel and Sun technology
- Puts the threading concept in hardware
- Two logical processors per core,
- Each has its own processor state.

Hyper Threading

- Each logical processor can be halted, interrupted or directed to execute a specified thread, independently from the other logical processor sharing the same physical core.
- Hyper-threading works by duplicating certain sections of the processor—those that store the architectural state, but not duplicating the main execution resources (CPU).
  - Source: www.wikipedia.org

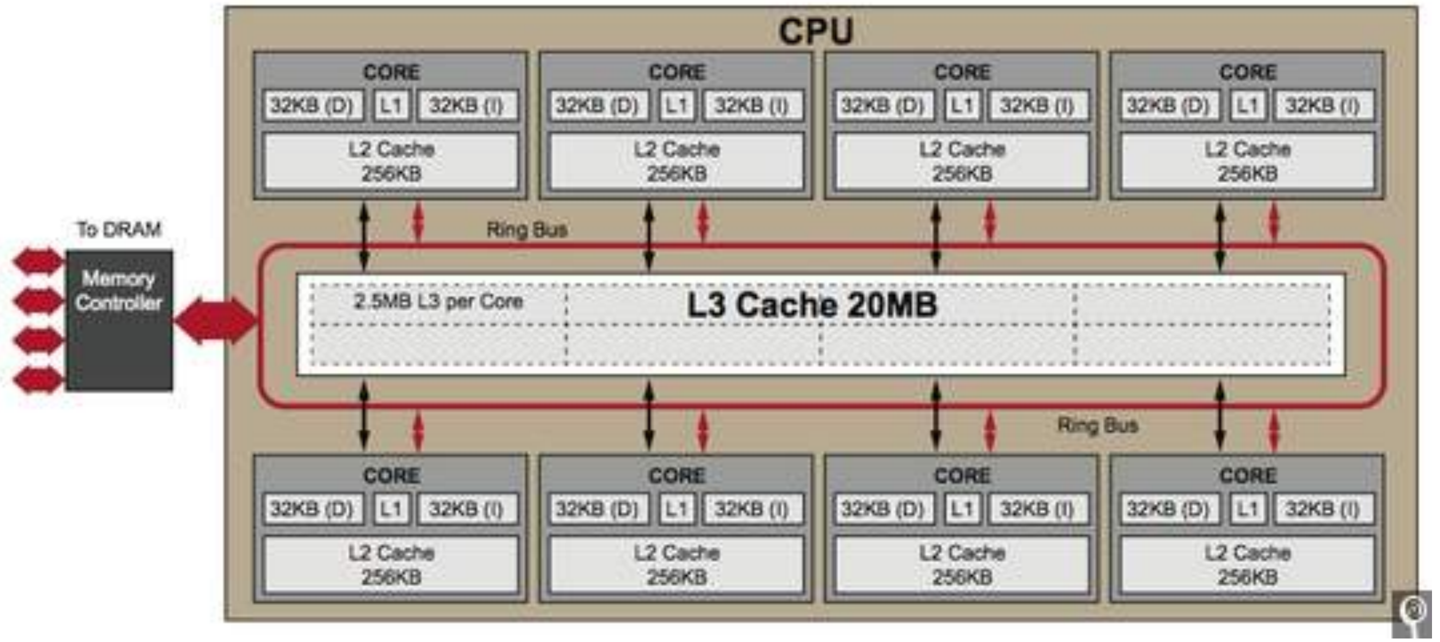
Multithreaded Server Architecture


(1) request
(2) create new thread to service the request
client
server
thread
(3) resume listening for additional client requests

Benefits

- **Responsiveness –** may allow continued execution if part of process is blocked, especially important for user interfaces
- **Resource Sharing –** threads share resources of process, easier than shared memory or message passing
- **Economy –** cheaper than process creation, thread switching lower overhead than context switching
- **Scalability –** process can take advantage of multiprocessor architectures. More specifically, multi core.

Multi Core Processor



Multicore Programming

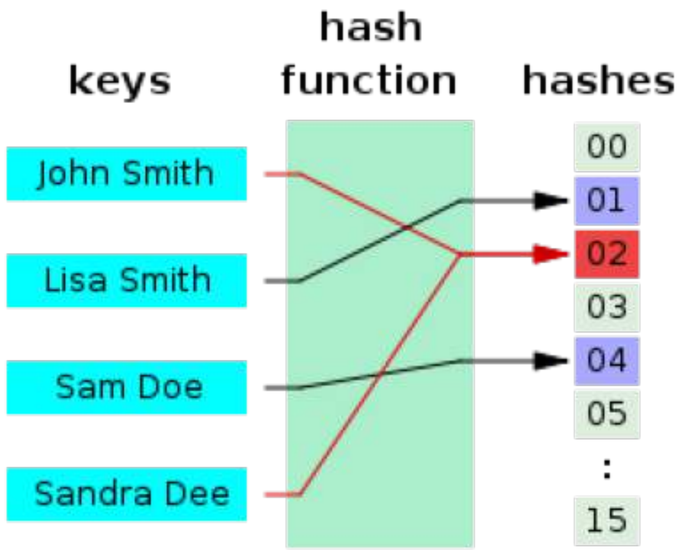
- **Multicore** or **multiprocessor** systems put pressure on programmers, challenges include:
  - **Dividing activities**
  - **Balance**
  - **Data splitting**
  - **Data dependency**
  - **Testing and debugging**
- ***Parallelism*** implies a system can perform more than one task simultaneously
- ***Concurrency*** supports more than one task making progress
  - Single processor / core, scheduler providing concurrency

Multicore Programming (Cont.)

- Types of parallelism
  - **Data parallelism** – distributes subsets of the same data across multiple cores, same operation on each
  - **Task parallelism** – distributing threads across cores, each thread performing unique operation
- As # of threads grows, so does architectural support for threading
  - CPUs have cores as well as ***hardware threads***
  - Consider Oracle SPARC T4 with 8 cores, and 8 hardware threads per core
- http://www.zdnet.com/article/understanding-task-and-data-parallelism-3039289129/
- http://www.intel.com/content/www/us/en/embedded/products/xeon/overview.html

Hashing

- One way encryption. What does that mean?
- Data goes into hash function, mixed and has a unique number representing the hash.
- Because of the hash function, it is difficult to reconstruct the original input.
- Easier and more efficient to store the hash.
- Passwords, images, digital signatures.
- Since the number are big, collisions are rare.



John The Ripper

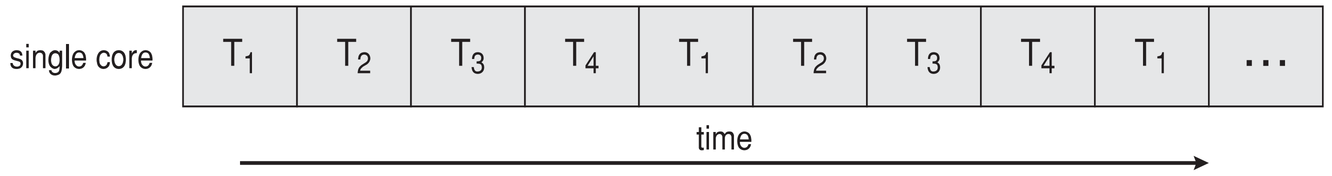
- Password cracker
- People tend to use common passwords
- http://www.passwordrandom.com/most-popular-passwords
- Passwords are hashed.
- People tend to use common passwords.
- If you have a list of passwords, pre hash them, and save the hashes, solving them might be practical.
- Rainbow tables contain a lot of pre hashed words.
- John The Ripper takes a hash and compares it to its list of words.
- Back to threads, if we were able to use threading, this would go faster.

GPU

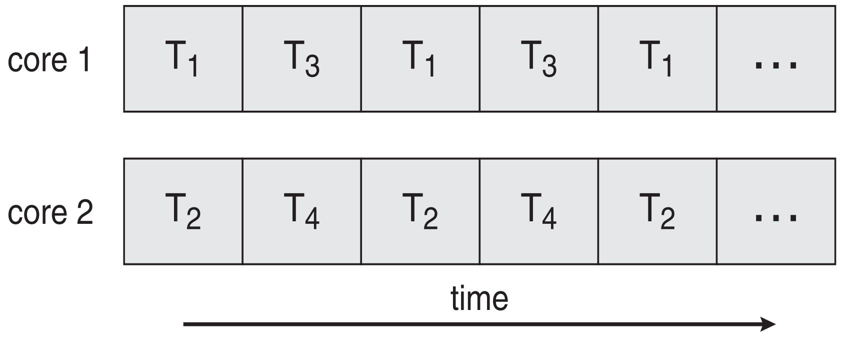
- http://www.nvidia.com/object/what-is-gpu-computing.html
- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZrJeYFxpUyQ

Concurrency vs. Parallelism

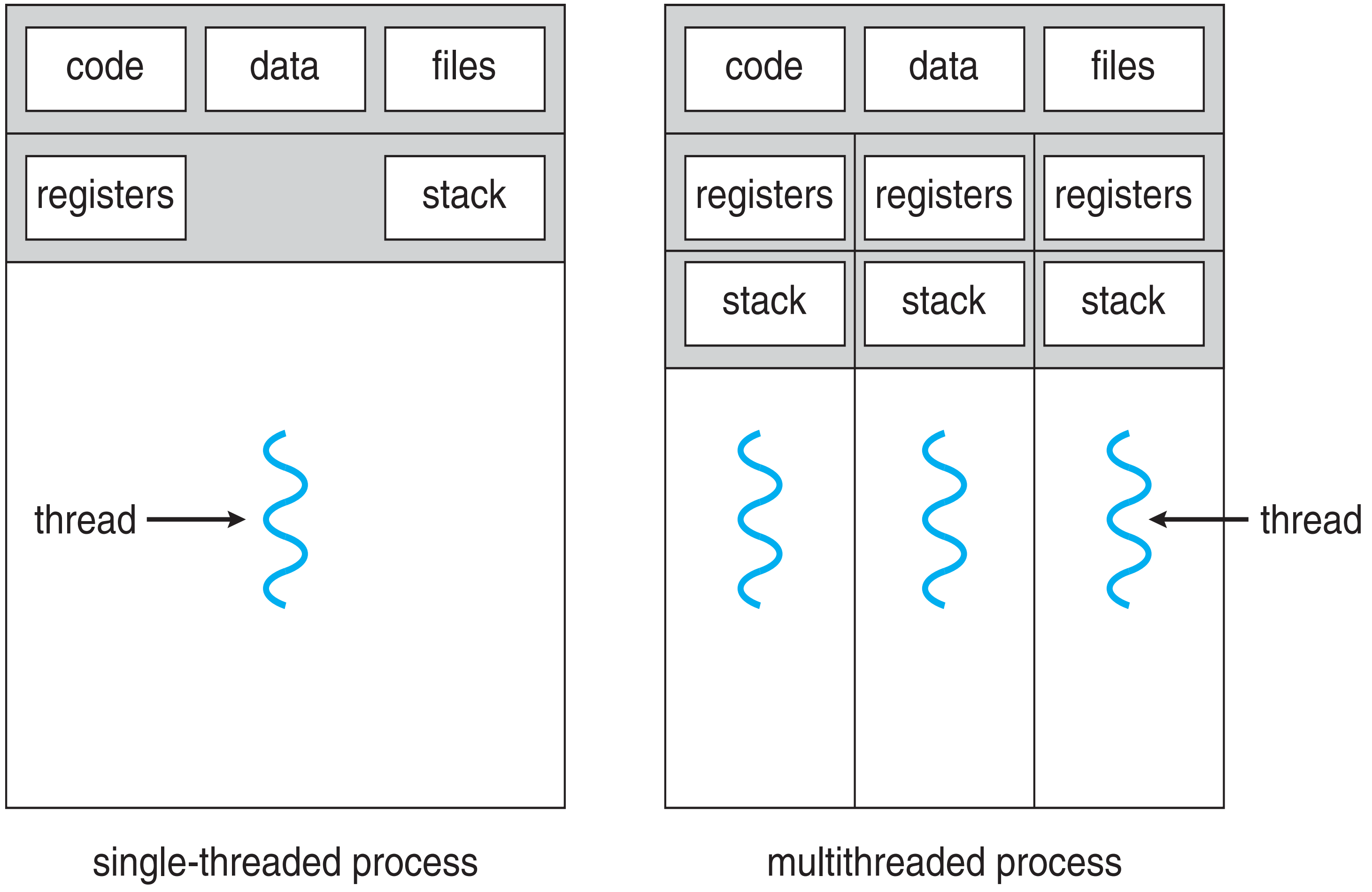
- **Concurrent execution on single-core system:**



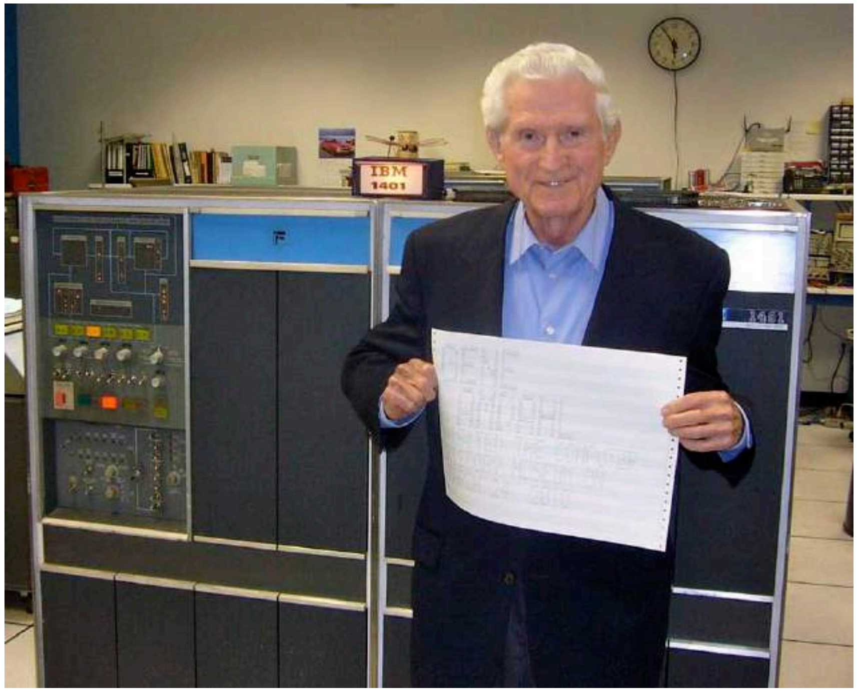
- **Parallelism on a multi-core system:**



Single and Multithreaded Processes



Gene Amdahl



Amdahl's Law

- Identifies performance gains from adding additional cores to an application that has both serial and parallel components
- *S* is serial portion
- *N* processing cores

$$speedup \leq \frac{1}{S + \frac{(1-S)}{N}}$$

- That is, if application is 75% parallel / 25% serial, moving from 1 to 2 cores results in speedup of 1.6 times
- As *N* approaches infinity, speedup approaches 1 / *S*

Serial portion of an application has disproportionate effect on performance gained by adding additional cores

- But does the law take into account contemporary multicore systems?

User Threads and Kernel Threads

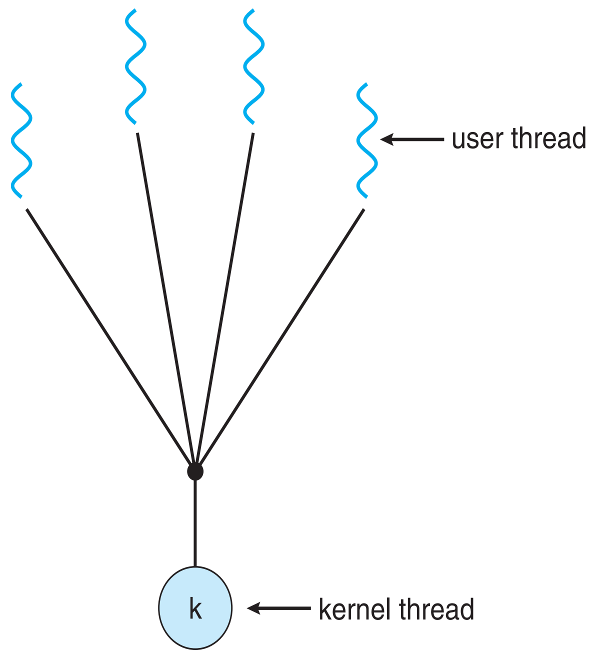
- **User threads** - management done by user-level threads library
- Three primary thread libraries:
  - POSIX **Pthreads**
  - Windows threads
  - Java threads
- **Kernel threads** - Supported by the Kernel
- Examples – virtually all general purpose operating systems, including:
  - Windows
  - Solaris
  - Linux
  - Tru64 UNIX
  - Mac OS X

Multithreading Models

- Many-to-One
- One-to-One
- Many-to-Many

Many-to-One

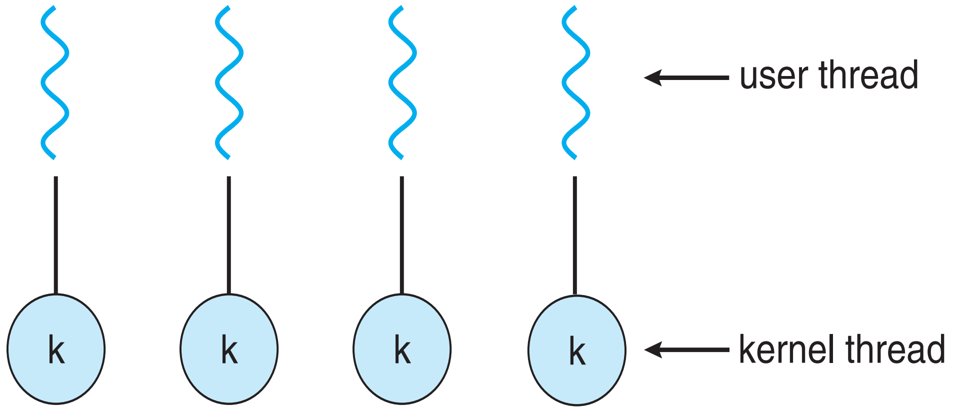
- Many user-level threads mapped to single kernel thread
- One thread blocking causes all to block
- Multiple threads **may not run in parallel** on muticore system because only one may be in kernel at a time
- Few systems currently use this model
- Examples:
  - **Solaris Green Threads**
  - **GNU Portable Threads**



Traffic Jam

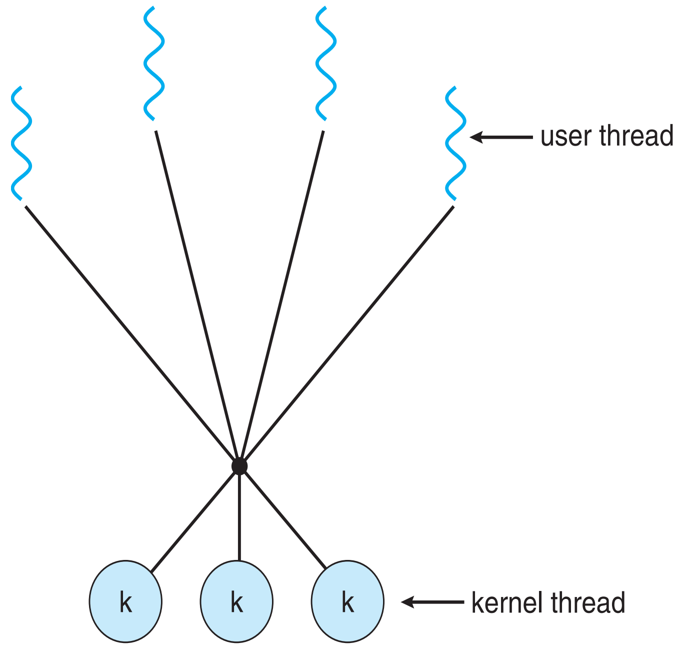
One-to-One

- Each user-level thread maps to kernel thread
- Creating a user-level thread creates a kernel thread
- More concurrency than many-to-one
- Number of threads per process sometimes restricted due to overhead
- Examples
  - Windows
  - Linux
  - Solaris 9 and later



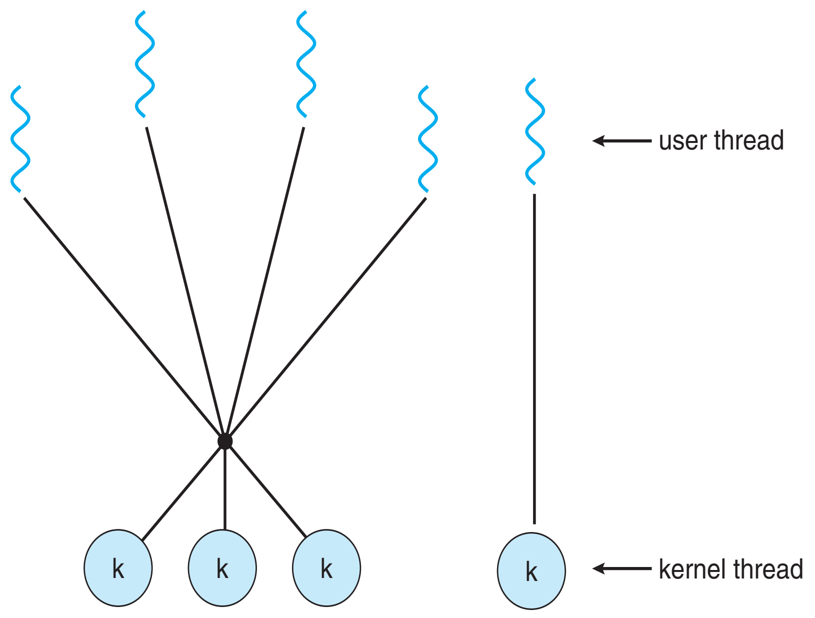
Many-to-Many Model

- Allows many user level threads to be mapped to many kernel threads
- Allows the operating system to create a sufficient number of kernel threads
- Solaris prior to version 9
- Windows with the *ThreadFiber* package



Two-level Model

- Similar to M:M, except that it allows a user thread to be **bound** to kernel thread
- Examples
  - IRIX
  - HP-UX
  - Tru64 UNIX
  - Solaris 8 and earlier



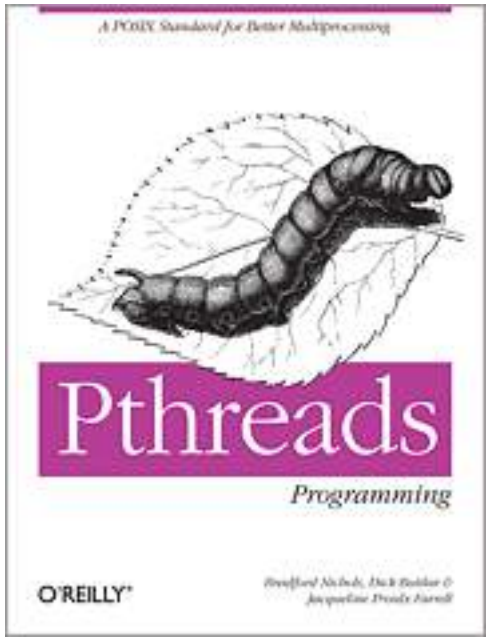
  - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dpT-8C-QeCY

Thread Libraries

- **Thread library** provides programmer with API for creating and managing threads
- Two primary ways of implementing
  - Library entirely in user space
  - Kernel-level library supported by the OS

Pthreads

- May be provided either as user-level or kernel-level
- A POSIX standard (IEEE 1003.1c) API for thread creation and synchronization
- ***Specification***, not ***implementation***
- API specifies behavior of the thread library, implementation is up to development of the library
- Common in UNIX operating systems (Solaris, Linux, Mac OS X)


A POSIX Standard for Better Multiprocessing
Pthreads
Programming
O'REILLY
Bradford Nichols, Dick Buttlar & Jacqueline Proulx Farrell

Pthreads Example

```
#include <pthread.h>
#include <stdio.h>

int sum; /* this data is shared by the thread(s) */
void *runner(void *param); /* threads call this function */

int main(int argc, char *argv[])
{
   pthread_t tid; /* the thread identifier */
   pthread_attr_t attr; /* set of thread attributes */

   if (argc != 2) {
      fprintf(stderr,"usage: a.out <integer value>\n");
      return -1;
   }
   if (atoi(argv[1]) < 0) {
      fprintf(stderr,"%d must be >= 0\n",atoi(argv[1]));
      return -1;
   }
```

Pthreads Example (Cont.)

```
   /* get the default attributes */
   pthread_attr_init(&attr);
   /* create the thread */
   pthread_create(&tid,&attr,runner,argv[1]);
   /* wait for the thread to exit */
   pthread_join(tid,NULL);

   printf("sum = %d\n",sum);
}

/* The thread will begin control in this function */
void *runner(void *param)
{
   int i, upper = atoi(param);
   sum = 0;

   for (i = 1; i <= upper; i++)
      sum += i;

   pthread_exit(0);
}
```

Pthreads Code for Joining 10 Threads

```
#define NUM_THREADS 10

/* an array of threads to be joined upon */
pthread_t workers[NUM_THREADS];

for (int i = 0; i < NUM_THREADS; i++)
   pthread_join(workers[i], NULL);
```

Implicit Threading

- Growing in popularity as numbers of threads increase, program correctness more difficult with explicit threads
- Creation and management of threads done by compilers and run-time libraries rather than programmers
- Three methods explored
  - Thread Pools
  - OpenMP
  - Grand Central Dispatch /* Apple
- Other methods include Microsoft Threading Building Blocks (TBB), **`java.util.concurrent`** package

Thread Pools

- Create a number of threads in a pool where they await work
- Advantages:
  - Usually slightly faster to service a request with an existing thread than create a new thread
  - Allows the number of threads in the application(s) to be bound to the size of the pool
  - Separating task to be performed from mechanics of creating task allows different strategies for running task
    - i.e.Tasks could be scheduled to run periodically
- Windows API supports thread pools:

```
DWORD WINAPI PoolFunction(AVOID Param) {
   /*
    * this function runs as a separate thread.
    */
}
```

OpenMP

- Set of compiler directives and an API for C, C++, FORTRAN
- Provides support for parallel programming in shared-memory environments
- Identifies **parallel regions** – blocks of code that can run in parallel

```
#pragma omp parallel
```

Create as many threads as there are cores

```
#pragma omp parallel for
   for(i=0;i<N;i++) {
     c[i] = a[i] + b[i];
}
```

Run for loop in parallel

```
#include <omp.h>
#include <stdio.h>

int main(int argc, char *argv[])
{
  /* sequential code */

  #pragma omp parallel
  {
    printf("I am a parallel region.");
  }

  /* sequential code */

  return 0;
}
```

Grand Central Dispatch

- Apple technology for Mac OS X and iOS operating systems
- Extensions to C, C++ languages, API, and run-time library
- Allows identification of parallel sections
- Manages most of the details of threading
- Block is in “^{ }” - `^{ printf("I am a block"); }`
- Blocks placed in dispatch queue
  - Assigned to available thread in thread pool when removed from queue

Threading Issues

- The programmer must account for the following:
  - Semantics of **fork()** and **exec()** system calls
  - Signal handling
    - Synchronous and asynchronous
  - Thread cancellation of target thread
    - Asynchronous or deferred
  - Thread-local storage
  - Scheduler Activations

Semantics of fork() and exec()

- Does **`fork()`** duplicate only the calling thread or all threads?
  - Some UNIXes have two versions of fork
- **`exec()`** usually works as normal – replace the running process including all threads

Signal Handling

- **Signals** are used in UNIX systems to notify a process that a particular event has occurred.
- A **signal handler** is used to process signals
  1. Signal is generated by particular event
  2. Signal is delivered to a process
  3. Signal is handled by one of two signal handlers:
     1. default
     2. user-defined
- Every signal has **default handler** that kernel runs when handling signal
  - **User-defined signal handler** can override default
  - For single-threaded, signal delivered to process

Signal Handling (Cont.)

- Where should a signal be delivered for multi-threaded?
  - Deliver the signal to the thread to which the signal applies
  - Deliver the signal to every thread in the process
  - Deliver the signal to certain threads in the process
  - Assign a specific thread to receive all signals for the process

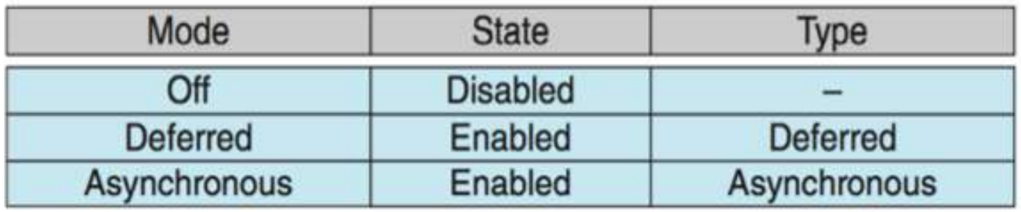
Thread Cancellation

- Terminating a thread before it has finished
- Thread to be canceled is **target thread**
- Two general approaches:
  - **Asynchronous cancellation** terminates the target thread immediately
  - **Deferred cancellation** allows the target thread to periodically check if it should be cancelled
- Pthread code to create and cancel a thread:

```
pthread_t tid;

/* create the thread */
pthread_create(&tid, 0, worker, NULL);

. . .

/* cancel the thread */
pthread_cancel(tid);
```

Thread Cancellation (Cont.)

- Invoking thread cancellation requests cancellation, but actual cancellation depends on thread state



Mode	State	Type
Off	Disabled	–
Deferred	Enabled	Deferred
Asynchronous	Enabled	Asynchronous

- If thread has cancellation disabled, cancellation remains pending until thread enables it
- Default type is deferred
  - Cancellation only occurs when thread reaches **cancellation point**
    - I.e. **`pthread_testcancel()`**
    - Then **cleanup handler** is invoked
- On Linux systems, thread cancellation is handled through signals

End of Chapter 4