Threads and Concurrency in Java: Part 2
Waiting

- Synchronized methods introduce one kind of coordination between threads.
- Sometimes we need a thread to wait until a specific condition has arisen.
Waiting by “Polling”

- For example in a Counter class we might want to wait until the count is 0 or less.
- We could do this

```java
class Counter {
  private int count;

  public Counter(int count) { this.count = count; }

  synchronized void decrement() { count -= 1; }

  synchronized int getCount() { return count; }

  void waitForZeroOrLess() { // Polling loop
    while (getCount() > 0) /*do nothing*/;
  }
}
```

Note that `waitForZeroOrLess` is not synchronized.
Waiting by “Polling”

- Slightly improving this we can write

```java
void waitForZeroOrLess() { // Polling loop
    while (getCount() > 0 )
        Thread.yield();
}
```

which keeps the thread from hogging the CPU while polling.
Waiting by \textit{wait} and \textit{notifyAll}

- Better, we can have a thread \textit{wait} until it is notified that the condition has (or may have) come about.

- While waiting, the thread relinquishes ownership and waits until some later time.

- To wait, a thread sends the object a \textit{wait} message.

- To allow other threads to stop waiting, threads sends a \textit{notifyAll} message to the object.

- \textit{wait} and \textit{notifyAll} are methods of class Object.
The "Room metaphor"

Add a waiting room

When a thread in the room sends a \textit{wait} message, it leaves the room and enters the waiting room.

Later another thread enters.

It sends a \textit{notifyAll} message.

All threads in the waiting room move to the antechamber.

And so they can reenter when the room is empty.

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wait and notifyAll example.

class Counter {
    private int count;

    public Counter( int count ) { this.count = count; }

    synchronized void decrement() {
        count -= 1;
        if( count <= 0 ) notifyAll();
    }

    synchronized void waitForZero() {
        while( count > 0 ) {
            try { wait(); }
            catch( InterruptedException e ) {} 
        }
    }
}
A possible sequence

- One thread
  - Calls `waitForZero` enters the room
  - Sees count is 1.
  - calls `wait`, enters the waiting room
  - waits in waiting room
  - ...
  - ...
  - ...
  - ...
  - waits in antechamber
  - ...
  - ...
  - reenters the room
  - returns from wait
  - sees count is 0 and returns

- Another thread
  - Calls decrement enters the room.
  - count--
  - call `notifyAll` moving other thread to wait queue for the lock
  - returns leaving the room
Passing messages

- We want to pass messages between any number of producers and consumers executing on any number of threads.
Passing messages

- We want to pass messages between threads so that
  - Each message is received no more than once
  - No message is overwritten before it is received.
  - A receiver may have to wait until a new message is sent
  - A sender may have to wait until there is room in the queue
  - Up to 100 messages can be sent but not yet received.
Passing messages

- Receivers may need to wait.
  - Suppose the mailbox initially has no messages
Passing messages

- Producers may need to wait.
  - Suppose the capacity is 5 and the mailbox is full
Passing messages – incomplete

class Mailbox<MessageType> {
    private static final int CAP = 100;
    private Queue<MessageType> q = new Queue<MessageType>();
    // invariant: q.size() <= CAP

    public synchronized void send(MessageType mess) {
        // wait until q.size() < CAP
        q.put(mess);
    }

    public synchronized MessageType receive() {
        // wait until q.size() >= 0
        return q.take();
    }
}
Passing messages – add waits

class Mailbox<MessageType> {
    private static final int CAP = 100 ;
    private Queue<MessageType> q = new Queue<MessageType>() ;
    // invariant: q.size() <= CAP

    public synchronized void send(MessageType mess) {
        // wait until q.size()< CAP
        while(q.size()==CAP) {
            try { wait(); } catch( InterruptedException e ) {} 
        }
        q.put( mess ) ;
    } 

    public synchronized MessageType receive() {
        // wait until q.size() > 0
        while(q.size()==0) {
            try { wait(); } catch( InterruptedException e ) {} 
        }
        return q.take() ;
    } 
}
Passing messages – add notifications

class Mailbox<MessageType> {
    private static final int CAP = 100;
    private Queue<MessageType> q = new Queue<MessageType>();
    // invariant: q.size() <= CAP

    public synchronized void send(MessageType mess) {
        // wait until q.size()< CAP
        while (q.size() == CAP) {
            try { wait(); } catch (InterruptedException e) {}
        }
        q.put(mess); notifyAll();
    }

    public synchronized MessageType receive() {
        // wait until q.size() > 0
        while (q.size() == 0) {
            try { wait(); } catch (InterruptedException e) {}
        }
        notifyAll();
    }
}
Even better than wait and notifyAll

- As software gets more complex, using “wait” and “notifyAll” can be a bit awkward and is easy to mess up.
- An improvement is to use Dr. Norvell’s “monitor” package.
- See http://www.engr.mun.ca/~theo/Misc/monitors/monitors.html
Deadlock

- While waiting can solve “safety” issues
  - (e.g. ensuring noncorruption of data, nonduplication of messages, nonloss of messages),
- it can cause “liveness” problems.
- In particular
  - if one thread is waiting for another to do something, and
  - the other thread is waiting for the first to do something,
  - then we have “deadlock”
Deadlock Example

- Suppose we have a bank account class

```java
class Account {
    private int balance = 0.0;

    public synchronized void addFunds(int amount) {
        balance += amount;
    }

    public void transfer(int amount, Account toAccount) {
        if (balance >= amount) {
            toAccount.addFunds(amount);
            balance -= amount;
        } else { ... }
    }
    ...
}
```
Deadlock Example

- There is a subtle problem here.
- The intent is that one should not be able to transfer out of an account more money than it has. (A safety problem.)
- But, if two threads attempt to transfer from the same account at about the same time, then they might both succeed, even though the final balance will be negative.
- To fix this, we make transfer synchronized.
Deadlock Example

class Account {
  private int balance = 0;

  public synchronized void addFunds(int amount) {
    balance += amount;
  }

  public synchronized void transfer(int amount, Account toAccount)
  {
    if (balance >= amount) {
      toAccount.addFunds(amount);
      balance -= amount;
    } else {
      ...
    }
    ...
  }
}
Deadlock Example

- But now deadlock is possible.
- Suppose thread 0 tries to transfer from account x to account y.
- At roughly the same time thread 1 attempts to transfer from account y to account x
A possible sequence

- **Thread 0**
  - calls `x.transfer(100, y)`
  - obtains a lock on `x`
  - calls `y.addFunds()`
  - waits for lock on `y`
  - waits for lock on `y`
  - waits for lock on `y`
  - waits for lock on `y`
  - ad infinitum

- **Thread 1**
  - calls `y.transfer(50, x)`
  - obtains a lock on `y`
  - calls `x.addFunds()`
  - waits for lock on `x`
  - waits for lock on `x`
  - waits for lock on `x`
  - waits for lock on `x`
  - ad infinitum

The Threads are now deadlocked!
A solution to deadlock

- One solution is to always lock objects in a particular order.
- e.g. give each lockable object a globally unique #
- The following example uses synchronized blocks

```java
public void transfer ( int amount, Account toAccount ) {
    boolean choice = this.serialNum() <= toAccount.serialNum();
    synchronized (choice ? this : toAccount) {
        synchronized (choice ? toAccount : this) {
            if (balance >= amount) {
                toAccount.addFunds(amount);
                balance -= amount;
            } else {
                ...}
        }
    }
}
```
Testing Concurrent Programs

- You can not effectively test concurrent programs to show that they are error free.
- Because of race conditions, a test may pass millions of times “by chance”.
- Tests that fail are useful. *They tell us we have a bug.*
- Tests that pass only tell us that it is *possible* for the code to compute the correct result.
Testing: A True Story

- I wanted to illustrate how race conditions can cause data corruption.
- So I wrote a program with two threads sharing an int variable $x$.
  - Initially $x$ was set to 0
  - One thread incremented $x$ a thousand times
  - The other thread decremented $x$ a thousand times.
class Incrementor extends Thread {
    public void run() {
        for(int i=0 ; i < 1000; ++i) ++x ; }
}

class Decrementor extends Thread {
    public void run() {
        for(int i=0 ; i < 1000; ++i) --x ; }
}
Testing: A True Story

- I ran the two threads concurrently
  System.out.println( "The initial value of x is: " + x ) ;
  
Thread p = new Incrementor();
Thread q = new Decrementor();
p.start(); q.start();

// Wait for threads to finish using “joins” (not shown)

System.out.println( "After "+1000+" increments and "+1000+" decrements" ) ;
System.out.println( "the final value of x is: " + x ) ;

- What do you think happened?
Testing: A True Story

- Here’s the output:
  
The initial value of x is: 0
  After 1000 increments and 1000 decrements
  the final value of x is: 0

- Even though I deliberately wrote a faulty program and gave it 1 thousand chances to fail the test, it passed anyway..
  - I tried 10,000. Then 100,000.
  - Same result
Testing: A True Story

- And why did it pass?
  - The JVM happened to give each thread time slices so long that the incrementing thread completed its 100,000 increments before the main thread had a chance to even start the decrementing thread.

- Changing to 1,000,000 increments and decrements revealed the bug.
Testing: A True Story

- I had fallen victim to **optimism**.
- I had optimistically assumed that such an **obvious** bug would cause a **thorough** test to fail.
- If tests designed to reveal **blatant** bugs, *which we know are in the program*, fail to reveal them, should we expect testing to reliably reveal subtle bugs we do not know about?
If you can’t test, then what?

- The good news is that
  - although testing is insufficient to reveal bugs,
  - there are design and analysis techniques that allow you to prove your programs correct.
Concurrency

What every computer engineer needs to know about concurrency:

Concurrency is to untrained programmers as matches are to small children.

It is all too easy to get burned.

- Race conditions
- Deadlock
- Insufficiency of testing
Summary of terminology

- **concurrency**: multiple agents running at the same time, interacting
- **thread**: an independent path of control
- **Thread**: a Java class representing threads
- **race condition**: a hazard caused by the unpredictability of execution timing
- **synchronized access**: locking of objects to obtain exclusive access
- **wait** and **notifyAll**: threads may wait until notified
- **deadlock**: a cycle of threads mutually waiting for each other
- **safety property**: a property that says something (bad) will never happen
- **liveness property**: a property that says something (good) will eventually happen