Shared Memory Programming: Threads and OpenMP

Lecture 6

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Outline

• Parallel Programming with Threads
• Parallel Programming with OpenMP
  • See parlab.eecs.berkeley.edu/2012bootcampagenda
  • 2 OpenMP lectures (slides and video) by Tim Mattson
  • openmp.org/wp/resources/
  • computing.llnl.gov/tutorials/openMP/
  • portal.xsede.org/online-training
  • www.nersc.gov/assets/uploads/XE62011OpenMP.pdf
  • Slides on OpenMP derived from: U.Wisconsin tutorial, which in turn were from LLNL, NERSC, U. Minn, and OpenMP.org
    • See tutorial by Tim Mattson and Larry Meadows presented at SC08, at OpenMP.org; includes programming exercises
  • (There are other Shared Memory Models: CILK, TBB...)
• Performance comparison
• Summary

Recall Programming Model 1: Shared Memory

• Program is a collection of threads of control.
  • Can be created dynamically, mid-execution, in some languages
• Each thread has a set of private variables, e.g., local stack variables
• Also a set of shared variables, e.g., static variables, shared common blocks, or global heap.
  • Threads communicate implicitly by writing and reading shared variables.
  • Threads coordinate by synchronizing on shared variables

Parallel Programming with Threads
Shared Memory Programming

Several Thread Libraries/systems
- PTHREADS is the POSIX Standard
  - Relatively low level
  - Portable but possibly slow; relatively heavyweight
- OpenMP standard for application level programming
  - Support for scientific programming on shared memory
  - openmp.org
- TBB: Thread Building Blocks
  - Intel
- CILK: Language of the C "ilk"
  - Lightweight threads embedded into C
- Java threads
  - Built on top of POSIX threads
  - Object within Java language

Common Notions of Thread Creation

- cobegin/coend
  - Statements in block may run in parallel
  - cobegins may be nested
  - Scoped, so you cannot have a missing coend
- fork/join
  - Forked procedure runs in parallel
  - Wait at join point if it's not finished
  - Future expression evaluated in parallel
  - Attempt to use return value will wait
- future
  - Cobegin cleaner than fork, but fork is more general
  - Futures require some compiler (and likely hardware) support

Overview of POSIX Threads

- POSIX: Portable Operating System Interface
  - Interface to Operating System utilities
- PThreads: The POSIX threading interface
  - System calls to create and synchronize threads
  - Should be relatively uniform across UNIX-like OS platforms
- PThreads contain support for
  - Creating parallelism
  - Synchronizing
  - No explicit support for communication, because shared memory is implicit; a pointer to shared data is passed to a thread

Forking Posix Threads

Signature:
```c
int pthread_create(pthread_t *,
const pthread_attr_t *,
void * (*)(void *),
void *);
```
Example call:
```c
errcode = pthread_create(&thread_id; &thread_attribute &thread_fun; &fun_arg);
```
- thread_id is the thread id or handle (used to halt, etc.)
- thread_attribute various attributes
  - Standard default values obtained by passing a NULL pointer
  - Sample attributes: minimum stack size, priority
- thread_fun the function to be run (takes and returns void*)
- fun_arg an argument can be passed to thread_fun when it starts
- errcode will be set nonzero if the create operation fails
**Simple Threading Example**

```c
void* SayHello(void *foo) {
    printf( "Hello, world!\n" );
    return NULL;
}

int main() {
    pthread_t threads[16];
    int tn;
    for(tn=0; tn<16; tn++) {
        pthread_create(&threads[tn], NULL, SayHello, NULL);
    }
    for(tn=0; tn<16; tn++) {
        pthread_join(threads[tn], NULL);
    }
    return 0;
}
```

Compile using gcc -lpthread

**Loop Level Parallelism**

- Many scientific applications have parallelism in loops
  - With threads:
    - `my_stuff[n][n];`
    ```c
    for (int i = 0; i < n; i++)
        for (int j = 0; j < n; j++)
            pthread_create(&update_cell[i][j], ..., my_stuff[i][j]);
    ```
  - But overhead of thread creation is nontrivial
  - `update_cell` should have a significant amount of work
  - \(1/p\)-th of total work if possible

**Some More Pthread Functions**

- `pthread_yield();`
  - Informs the scheduler that the thread is willing to yield its quantum, requires no arguments.

- `pthread_exit(void *value);`
  - Exit thread and pass value to joining thread (if exists)

- `pthread_join(pthread_t *thread, void **result);`
  - Wait for specified thread to finish. Place exit value into *result.

**Recall Data Race Example**

- Problem is a race condition on variable `s` in the program
- A race condition or data race occurs when:
  - two processors (or two threads) access the same variable, and at least one does a write.
  - The accesses are concurrent (not synchronized) so they could happen simultaneously
Basic Types of Synchronization: Barrier

Barrier -- global synchronization
- Especially common when running multiple copies of the same function in parallel
- SPMD "Single Program Multiple Data"
- simple use of barriers -- all threads hit the same one
  work_on_my_subgrid();
  barrier;
  read_neighboring_values();
  barrier;
- more complicated -- barriers on branches (or loops)
  if (tid % 2 == 0) {
    work1();
    barrier
  } else {
    barrier
  }
- barriers are not provided in all thread libraries

Creating and Initializing a Barrier
- To (dynamically) initialize a barrier, use code similar to this (which sets the number of threads to 3):
  
  ```c
  pthread_barrier_t b;
  pthread_barrier_init(&b, NULL, 3);
  ```
- The second argument specifies an attribute object for finer control; using NULL yields the default attributes.
- To wait at a barrier, a process executes:
  ```c
  pthread_barrier_wait(&b);
  ```

Basic Types of Synchronization: Mutexes

Mutexes -- mutual exclusion aka locks
- threads are working mostly independently
- need to access common data structure
  ```c
  lock *l = alloc_and_init();    /* shared */
  acquire(l);
  access data
  release(l);
  ```
- Locks only affect processors using them:
  - If a thread accesses the data without doing the acquire/release, locks by others will not help
- Java and other languages have lexically scoped synchronization, i.e., synchronized methods/blocks
  - Can't forget to say "release"
- Semaphores generalize locks to allow k threads simultaneous access; good for limited resources

Mutexes in POSIX Threads
- To create a mutex:
  ```c
  #include <pthread.h>
  pthread_mutex_t amutex = PTHREAD_MUTEX_INITIALIZER;
  // or pthread_mutex_init(&amutex, NULL);
  ```
- To use it:
  ```c
  int pthread_mutex_lock(amutex);
  int pthread_mutex_unlock(amutex);
  ```
- To deallocate a mutex
  ```c
  int pthread_mutex_destroy(pthread_mutex_t *mutex);
  ```
- Multiple mutexes may be held, but can lead to problems:
  ```c
  thread1
  lock(a) lock(b)
  thread2
  lock(b) lock(a)
  ```
- Deadlock results if both threads acquire one of their locks, so that neither can acquire the second
Summary of Programming with Threads

- POSIX Threads are based on OS features
  - Can be used from multiple languages (need appropriate header)
  - Familiar language for most of program
  - Ability to shared data is convenient

- Pitfalls
  - Data race bugs are very nasty to find because they can be intermittent
  - Deadlocks are usually easier, but can also be intermittent

- Researchers look at transactional memory an alternative
- OpenMP is commonly used today as an alternative

Parallel Programming in OpenMP

A Programmer’s View of OpenMP

- OpenMP is a portable, threaded, shared-memory programming specification with “light” syntax
  - Exact behavior depends on OpenMP implementation!
  - Requires compiler support (C, C++ or Fortran)

- OpenMP will:
  - Allow a programmer to separate a program into serial regions and parallel regions, rather than T concurrently-executing threads.
  - Hide stack management
  - Provide synchronization constructs

- OpenMP will not:
  - Parallelize automatically
  - Guarantee speedup
  - Provide freedom from data races
Motivation – OpenMP

```c
int main() {
    // Do this part in parallel
    printf("Hello, World!\n");
    return 0;
}
```

Programming Model – Concurrent Loops

- OpenMP easily parallelizes loops
  - Requires: No data dependencies (reads/write or write/write pairs) between iterations!
- Preprocessor calculates loop bounds for each thread directly from serial source

```c
#pragma omp parallel for
for( i=0; i < 25; i++ )
{    
    printf("Foo");
}
```

Motivation – OpenMP

```c
int main() {
    omp_set_num_threads(16);
    // Do this part in parallel
    #pragma omp parallel
    {
        printf("Hello, World!\n");
    }
    return 0;
}
```

Programming Model – Loop Scheduling

- `schedule` clause determines how loop iterations are divided among the thread team; no one best way
  - `static([chunk])` divides iterations statically between threads (default if no hint)
    - Each thread receives `[chunk]` iterations, rounding as necessary to account for all iterations
    - Default `[chunk]` is `ceil(# iterations / # threads)`
  - `dynamic([chunk])` allocates `[chunk]` iterations per thread, allocating an additional `[chunk]` iterations when a thread finishes
    - Forms a logical work queue, consisting of all loop iterations
    - Default `[chunk]` is 1
  - `guided([chunk])` allocates dynamically, but `[chunk]` is exponentially reduced with each allocation
Programming Model – Data Sharing

- Parallel programs often employ two types of data
  - Shared data, visible to all threads, similarly named
  - Private data, visible to a single thread (often stack-allocated)
- PThreads:
  - Global-scoped variables are shared
  - Stack-allocated variables are private
- OpenMP:
  - shared variables are shared
  - private variables are private

```c
// shared, globals
int bigdata[1024];

void* foo(void* bar) {
  #pragma omp critical
  { /* Calculation goes here */ }
}
```

Programming Model - Synchronization

- OpenMP Synchronization
  - OpenMP Critical Sections
    - Named or unnamed
    - No explicit locks / mutexes
  - Barrier directives
    - #pragma omp barrier
  - Explicit Lock functions
    - #pragma omp lock
  - Single-thread regions within parallel regions
    - master, single directives

```c
#pragma omp critical
{ /* Critical code here */ }
#pragma omp barrier
omp_set_lock( lock l ); /* Code goes here */
omp_unset_lock( lock l );
#pragma omp single /* Only executed once */
```

Microbenchmark: Grid Relaxation (Stencil)

```c
for( t=0; t < t_steps; t++) {
  #pragma omp parallel for
  shared(grid,x_dim,y_dim) private(x,y)
  for( x=0; x < x_dim; x++) {
    for( y=0; y < y_dim; y++) {
      grid[x][y] = /* avg of neighbors */
    }
  }
  // Implicit Barrier Synchronization
  temp_grid = grid;
  grid = other_grid;
  other_grid = temp_grid;
}
```

Microbenchmark: Structured Grid

- ocean_dynamic – Traverses entire ocean, row-by-row, assigning row iterations to threads with dynamic scheduling.
- ocean_static – Traverses entire ocean, row-by-row, assigning row iterations to threads with static scheduling.
- ocean_squares – Each thread traverses a square-shaped section of the ocean. Loop-level scheduling not used—loop bounds for each thread are determined explicitly.
- ocean_pthreads – Each thread traverses a square-shaped section of the ocean. Loop bounds for each thread are determined explicitly.
**Evaluation**

- OpenMP scales to 16-processor systems
  - Was overhead too high?
    - In some cases, yes (when too little work per processor)
  - Did compiler-generated code compare to hand-written code?
    - Yes!
  - How did the loop scheduling options affect performance?
    - `dynamic` or `guided` scheduling helps loops with variable iteration runtimes
    - `static` or predicated scheduling more appropriate for shorter loops
- OpenMP is a good tool to parallelize (at least some!) applications

**OpenMP Summary**

- OpenMP is a compiler-based technique to create concurrent code from (mostly) serial code
- OpenMP can enable (easy) parallelization of loop-based code
  - Lightweight syntactic language extensions
- OpenMP performs comparably to manually-coded threading
  - Scalable
  - Portable
- Not a silver bullet for all (more irregular) applications
- Lots of detailed tutorials/manuals on-line