Concurrent systems

Lecture 5: Liveness and Priority Guarantees

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(Thanks to Dr Robert N. M. Watson)

Reminder from last time

- **Multi-Reader Single-Writer** (MRSW) locks
- Alternatives to semaphores/locks:
  - **Conditional critical regions (CCRs)**
  - **Monitors**
  - **Condition variables**
  - **Signal-and-wait** vs. **signal-and-continue** semantics
- Concurrency primitives in practice
- Concurrency primitives wrap-up

From last time: primitives summary

- Concurrent systems require means to ensure:
  - **Safety** (mutual exclusion in critical sections), and
  - **Progress** (condition synchronization)
- Spinlocks (busy wait); semaphores; CCRs and monitors
  - Hardware primitives for synchronisation
  - Signal-and-Wait vs. Signal-and-Continue
- Many of these are still used in practice
  - Subtle minor differences can be dangerous
  - Require care to avoid bugs – e.g., “lost wakeups”
- More detail on implementation in additional material on web page.

Progress is particularly difficult, in large part because of primitives themselves, which is the topic of this lecture

This time

- **Liveness properties**
- **Deadlock**
  - Requirements
  - Resource allocation graphs and detection
  - Prevention – the **Dining Philosophers Problem** – and recovery
- **Thread priority** and the **scheduling problem**
- **Priority inversion**
- **Priority inheritance**

Liveness properties

- From a theoretical viewpoint must ensure that we eventually make progress, i.e. want to avoid
  - **Deadlock** (threads sleep waiting for one another), and
  - **Livelock** (threads execute but make no progress)
- Practically speaking, also want good performance
  - **No starvation** (single thread must make progress)
  - (more generally may aim for **fairness**)
  - **Minimality** (no unnecessary waiting or signalling)
- The properties are often at odds with safety :-(

(Compositional) Deadlock

- Set of **k** threads go asleep and cannot wake up
  - each can only be woken by another who's asleep!
- Real-life example (Kansas, 1920s):

  "When two trains approach each other at a crossing, both shall come to a full stop and neither shall start up again until the other has gone."
- In concurrent programs, tends to involve the taking of mutual exclusion locks, e.g.:

```
// thread 1
lock(X);
 ...
 lock(Y);
 // critical section
 unlock(Y);
```

```
// thread 2
lock(Y);
  ...
  if(<cond>) {
    lock(X);
    ...
```

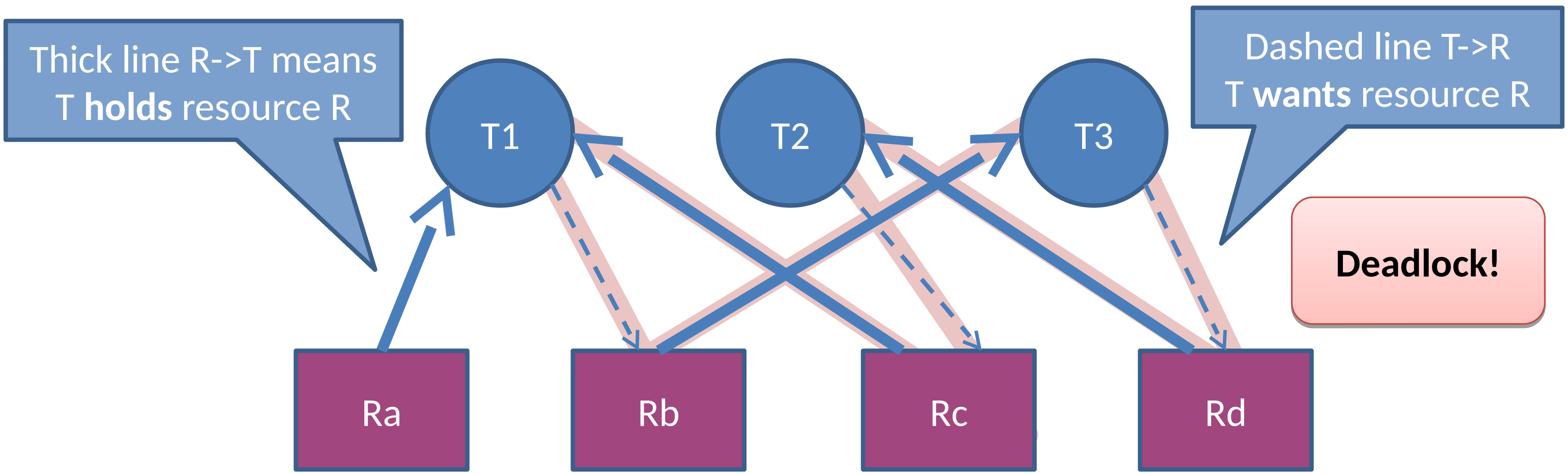
Risk of **deadlock** if both threads get here simultaneously

Requirements for deadlock

- Like all concurrency bugs, deadlock may be rare (e.g. imagine **<cond>** is mostly false)
- In practice there are four necessary conditions
  1. **Mutual Exclusion**: resources have bounded **#owners**
  2. **Hold-and-Wait**: can acquire **R**x and wait for **R**y
  3. **No Preemption**: keep **R**x until you release it
  4. **Circular Wait**: cyclic dependency
- Require all four to hold for deadlock
  – But most modern systems always satisfy 1, 2, 3
- Tempting to think that his applies only to locks …
  – But it also can occur for many other resource classes whose allocation meets conditions: memory, CPU time, …

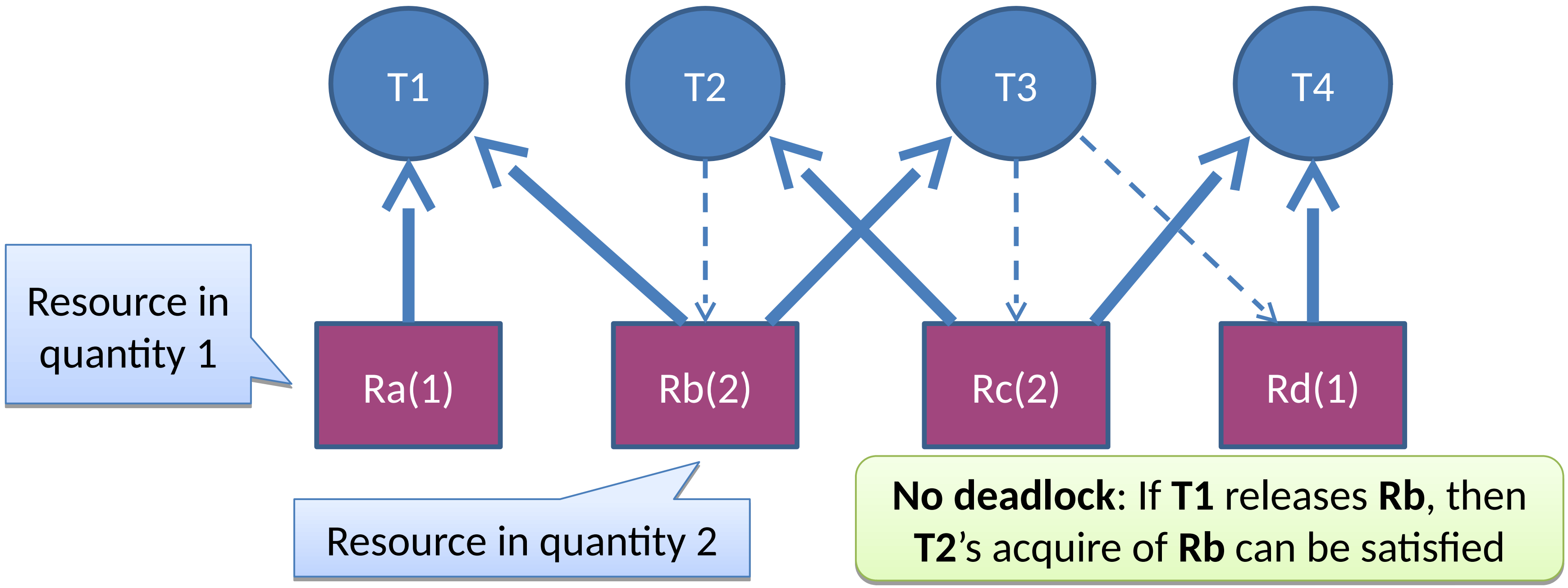
Resource allocation graphs

- Graphical way of thinking about deadlock:
  - **Circles** are threads (or processes)
  - **Boxes** are single-owner resources (e.g. mutexes)
  - Edges show **lock hold** and **wait** conditions
  - A **cycle** means we (will) have deadlock.



Resource allocation graphs (2)

- Can generalize to resources which can have **K** distinct users (c/f semaphores)
- Absence of a cycle means no deadlock…
  – but presence only means *may encounter* deadlock, e.g.



Resource allocation graphs (3)

- Another generalisation is for threads to have several possible ways forward and that are able to select according to which locks have already been taken.

- Read up on generalised AND-OR wait-for graphs for those interested (link will be on course web site).
- [This slide non-examinable].

Deadlock Design Approaches

1. Ensure it never happens
   – Deadlock (static) prevention (using code structure rules)
   – Deadlock (dynamic) avoidance (cycle finding or Banker's Alg)
2. Let it happen, but recover
   – Deadlock (dynamic) detection & recovery
3. Ignore it!
   – The so-called "**Ostrich Algorithm**" ;-)
   – "Have you tried turning it off and back on again?"
   – Very widely used in practice!

Deadlock Static Prevention

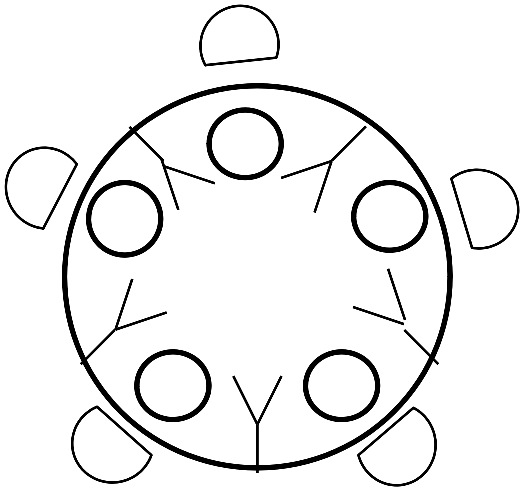
1. **Mutual Exclusion**: resources have bounded **#owners**
   – Could always allow access… but probably unsafe ;-(
   – However can help e.g. by using MRSW locks
2. **Hold-and-Wait**: can get **R**x and wait for **R**y
   – Require that we request all resources simultaneously; deny the request if *any* resource is not available now
   – But must know maximal resource set in advance = hard?
3. **No Preemption**: keep **R**x until you release it
   – Stealing a resource generally unsafe (but see later)
4. **Circular Wait**: cyclic dependency
   – Impose a partial order on resource acquisition
   – Can work: but requires programmer discipline
   – Lock order enforcement rules used in many systems e.g., FreeBSD WITNESS – static and dynamic orders checked

Example: Dining Philosophers

- 5 philosophers, 5 forks, round table…

```
Semaphore forks[] = new Semaphore[5];
```

```
while(true) {          // philosopher i
   think();
   wait(fork[i]);
   wait(fork[(i+1) % 5];
   eat();
   signal(fork[i]);
   signal(fork[(i+1) % 5];
}
```



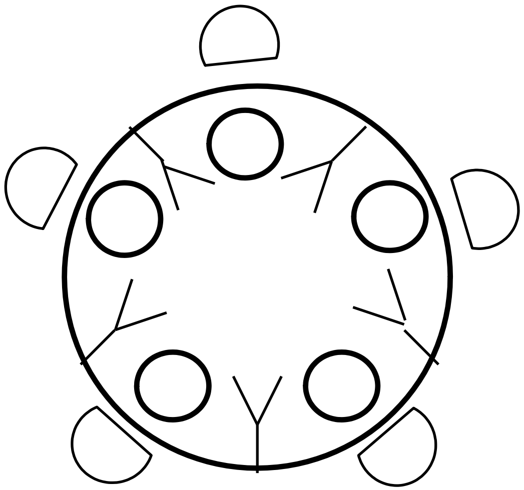
- Possible for everyone to acquire ‘left’ fork
  - Q: what happens if we swap order of **wait**()s?

Example: Dining Philosophers

- (one) Solution: always take lower fork first

```
Semaphore forks[] = new Semaphore[5];
```

```
while(true) {          // philosopher i
   think();
   first = MIN(i, (i+1) % 5);
   second = MAX(i, (i+1) % 5);
   wait(fork[first]);
   wait(fork[second];
   eat();
   signal(fork[second]);
   signal(fork[first]);
}
```



- Now even if 0, 1, 2, 3 are held, 4 will not acquire final fork.

Deadlock Dynamic Avoidance

- Prevention aims for deadlock-free "by design"
- **Deadlock avoidance** is a dynamic scheme:
  - Assumption: We know maximum possible resource allocation for every process / thread
  - Assumption: A process granted all desired resources will **complete**, **terminate**, and **free its resources**
  - Track actual allocations in real-time
  - When a request is made, only grant if guaranteed no deadlock even if all others take max resources
- E.g. **Banker's Algorithm**
  - Not really useful in general as need *a priori* knowledge of **#processes/threads**, and their max resource needs.

Deadlock detection (anticipation)

- **Deadlock detection** is a dynamic scheme that determines if deadlock exists (or would exist if we granted a request)
  - **Principle**: At a some moment in execution, examine resource allocations and graph
  - Determine if there is **at least one** plausible sequence of events in which all threads could make progress
  - I.e., check that we are not in an **unsafe state** in which no further sequences can complete without deadlock
- When only a single instance of each resource, can explicitly check for a cycle:
  - Keep track which object each thread is waiting for
  - From time to time, iterate over all threads and build the resource allocation graph
  - Run a cycle detection algorithm on graph $O(n^2)$
- Or use Banker's Alg if have multi-instance resources (more difficult)

Banker's Algorithm (1)

- Have **m** distinct resources and **n** threads
- **V**[0:m-1], vector of **currently** available resources
- **A**, the *m* x *n* resource allocation matrix, and **R**, the *m* x *n* (outstanding) request matrix
  - $\mathbf{A}_{i,j}$ is the number of objects of type *j* **owned** by *i*
  - $\mathbf{R}_{i,j}$ is the number of objects of type *j* **needed** by *i*
- Proceed by successively marking rows in **A** for threads that are not part of a deadlocked set
  - If we cannot mark all rows of **A** we have deadlock

Optimistic assumption: if we can fulfill thread *i*'s request $\mathbf{R}_i$, then it will run to completion and release held resources for other threads to allocate.

Banker's Algorithm (2)

- Mark all zero rows of **A** (since a thread holding zero resources can't be part of deadlock set)
- Initialize a working vector **W**[0:m-1] to **V**
  - **W**[] describes any free resources at start, **plus** any resources released by a hypothesized sequence of satisfied threads freeing and terminating
- Select an unmarked row *i* of **A** s.t. **R**[*i*] <= **W**
  - (i.e. find a thread who's request can be satisfied)
  - Set **W** = **W** + **A**[i]; mark row *i*, and repeat
- Terminate when no such row can be found
  - Unmarked rows (if any) are in the deadlock set

Banker's Algorithm: Example 1

- Five threads and three resources (none free)

	A			R			V		
	X	Y	Z	X	Y	Z	X	Y	Z
T0	~~0~~	~~1~~	~~0~~	0	0	0	0	0	0
T1	~~2~~	~~0~~	~~0~~	2	0	2			
T2	~~3~~	~~0~~	~~3~~	0	0	0			
T3	~~2~~	~~1~~	~~1~~	1	0	0			
T4	~~0~~	~~0~~	~~1~~	0	0	2			

W		
X	Y	Z
7	2	5

- Find an unmarked row, mark it, and update **W**
  - T0, T2, T3, T4, T1

At the end of the algorithm, all rows are marked: the deadlock set is empty.

Banker's Algorithm: Example 2

- Five threads and three resources (none free)

	A			R			V		
	X	Y	Z	X	Y	Z	X	Y	Z
T0	~~0~~	~~1~~	~~0~~	0	0	0	0	0	0
T1	2	0	0	2	0	2			
T2	3	0	3	0	0	**1**			
T3	2	1	1	1	0	0			
T4	0	0	1	0	0	2			

W		
X	Y	Z
0	1	0

Cannot find a row in R <= W!!

Now wants one unit of resource **Z**

Threads T1, T2, T3 & T4 in deadlock set

- One minor tweak to T2's request vector…

Deadlock recovery

- What can we do when we detect deadlock?
- Simplest solution: kill something!
  - Ideally someone in the deadlock set ;-)
- Brutal, and not guaranteed to work
  - But sometimes the best (only) thing we can do
  - E.g. Linux OOM killer (better than system reboot?)
  - … Or not – often kills the X server!
- Could also resume from checkpoint
  - Assuming we have one
- In practice computer systems seldom detect or recover from deadlock: rely on programmer.

Note: “kill someone” breaks the **no preemption** precondition for deadlock.

Livelock

- **Deadlock** is at least 'easy' to detect by humans
  – System basically blocks & stops making any progress
- **Livelock** is less easy to detect as threads continue to run… but do nothing useful
- Often occurs from trying to be clever, e.g.:

```
// thread 1
lock(X);
 ...
 while (!trylock(Y)) {
   unlock(X);
   yield();
   lock(X);
 }
 ...
```

```
// thread 2
lock(Y);
  ...
  while(!trylock(X)) {
    unlock(Y);
    yield();
    lock(Y);
  }
  ...
```

Livelock if both threads get here simultaneously

Scheduling and thread priorities

- Which thread should run when >1 runnable? E.g., if:
  - A thread releases a contended lock and continues to run
  - CV broadcast wakes up several waiting threads
- Many possible **scheduling policies**; e.g.,
  - **Round robin** – rotate between threads to ensure progress
  - **Fixed priorities** – assign priorities to threads, schedule highest– e.g., **real-time** > **interactive** > **bulk** > **idle-time**
  - **Dynamic priorities** – adjust priorities to balance goals – e.g., boost priority after I/O to improve interactivity
  - **Gang scheduling** – schedule for patterns such as P-C
  - **Affinity** – schedule for efficient resource use (e.g., caches)
- Goals: latency vs. throughput, energy, "fairness", ...
  - NB: These competing goals cannot generally all be satisfied

Priority inversion

- Another liveness problem…
  - Due to interaction between locking and scheduler
- Consider three threads: **T1**, **T2**, **T3**
  - **T1** is high priority, **T2** medium priority, **T3** is low
  - **T3** gets lucky and acquires lock **L**…
  - … **T1** preempts **T3** and sleeps waiting for **L**…
  - … then **T2** runs, preventing **T3** from releasing **L**!
  - **Priority inversion**: despite having higher priority and no shared lock, **T1** waits for lower priority thread **T2**
- This is not deadlock or livelock
  - But not desirable (particularly in real-time systems)!
  - Disabled Mars Pathfinder robot for several months

Priority inheritance

- Typical solution is **priority inheritance**:
  - Temporarily boost priority of lock holder to that of the highest waiting thread
  - **T3** would have run with **T1**'s priority while holding a lock **T1** was waiting for – preventing **T2** from preempting **T3**
  - Concrete benefits to system interactivity
  - (some RT systems (like VxWorks) allow you specify on a per-mutex basis [to Rover's detriment ;-])
- Windows "solution"
  - Check if any ready thread hasn't run for 300 ticks
  - If so, double its quantum and boost its priority to 15
  - ☺

Problems with priority inheritance

- Hard to reason about resulting behaviour: **heuristic**
- Works for locks
  - More complex than it appears: propagation might need to be **propagated** across chains containing multiple locks
  - (How might we handle reader-writer locks?)
- How about condition synchronisation, res. allocation?
  - With locks, we know what thread holds the lock
  - Semaphores do not record which thread might issue a signal or release an allocated resource
  - Must compose across multiple waiting types: e.g., “waiting for a signal while holding a lock”
- Where possible, avoid the need for priority inheritance
  - Avoid sharing between threads of differing priorities

Summary + next time

- **Liveness** properties
- **Deadlock**
  - Requirements
  - Resource allocation graphs and detection
  - Prevention – the **Dining Philosophers Problem** – and recovery
- **Thread priority** and the **scheduling problem**
- **Priority inversion**
- **Priority inheritance**

- Next time:
  - Concurrency without shared data
  - Active objects; message passing
  - Composite operations; transactions
  - ACID properties; isolation; serialisability