Lecture 15: Abstract vs. Real Performance

“Everything You Ever Wanted to Know About HJLib but Were Too Afraid to Ask”

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Functional Approach to Parallelism

• “Functional”: futures, future tasks, streams, data-driven tasks and futures
• “Not-so functional”: async tasks and finish scopes, tasks that modify shared memory
• Advantages to functional approach
  • Easier to reason about
  • Don’t have to worry about data races
  • Leads to compact, elegant, easy to read code
  • Easy to scale to massively parallel (because you don’t need to worry about data races)
• Disadvantages
  • May be more expensive to execute (blocking future.get() vs. simply reading a shared memory location)
  • May need copying of data structures to avoid data races and mutation
  • Hard to scale to massively parallel (because of overheads)
Abstract vs. Real Performance

• Abstract performance
  • Focus on operation counts for WORK and CPL, regardless of actual execution time
  • Ignore the nitty-gritty of task creation and execution overhead
  • Same “performance” regardless of the machine

• Real performance
  • Lots of things happening “under the hood”
  • Operating system, runtime and hardware all have an impact
  • Process creation/execution vs. thread creation/execution vs. task creation/execution
  • Tasks could be blocked, waiting on some event
  • Complex matter, but important to at least have a general idea of the costs
```java
private static double recursiveMaxParallel(final double[] inX, final int start, final int end)
    throws SuspendableException
{
    if (end - start == 2) {
        doWork(1);
        return 1/inX[end - 1] + 1/inX[start];
    } else {
        var bottom = future(() -> recursiveMaxParallel(inX, start, (end + start) / 2));
        var top = future(() -> recursiveMaxParallel(inX, (end+start) / 2, end));
        var bVal = bottom.get();
        var tVal = top.get();
        doWork(1);
        return bVal + tVal;
    }
}
```

Test Results

- edu.rice.comp322.Lab4CorrectnessTest
- testReciprocalParallelism2Futures
- testReciprocalParallelism4Futures
- testReciprocalParallelism8Futures
- testReciprocalMaxParallelism

4 sec 459 ms
Cutoff Strategy for Recursive Task Parallelism

```java
private static double recursiveMaxParallelCutoff(final double[] inX, final int start, final int end, final int threshold) throws SuspendableException {
    if (end - start <= threshold) {
        double sum = 0.0;
        for (int i = start; i < end; i++) {
            doWork(1);
            sum = sum + 1 / inX[i];
        }
        return sum;
    } else {
        var bottom = future(() -> recursiveMaxParallelCutoff(inX, start, (end + start) / 2, threshold));
        var top = future(() -> recursiveMaxParallelCutoff(inX, (end + start) / 2, end, threshold));
        var bVal = bottom.get();
        var tVal = top.get();
        doWork(1);
        return bVal + tVal;
    }
}
```

Execution with threshold 6400 took 56 milliseconds.
Execution with threshold 12800 took 54 milliseconds.
Execution with threshold 25600 took 4 milliseconds.
Execution with threshold 51200 took 3 milliseconds.
Execution with threshold 102400 took 6 milliseconds.
Execution with threshold 204800 took 10 milliseconds.
HJ-lib Compilation and Execution Environment

Java 11 IDE ➔ Foo.java ➔ Java compiler ➔ Foo.class ➔ java Foo ➔ HJ-lib Program Output

HJ-lib source program is a standard Java 11 program

Java compiler translates Foo.java to Foo.class, along with calls to HJ-lib with lambda parameters (async, finish, future, etc)

HJ runtime initializes m worker threads
(value of m depends on options or default value)

HJ Abstract Performance Metrics (enabled by appropriate options)

All the “magic” happens here!
Looking under the hood - let’s start with the hardware

Main Memory (DRAM)
How does a process run on a single core?

Processes are managed by OS kernel
- Important: the kernel is not a separate process, but rather runs as part of some user process

Control flow passes from one process to another via a context switch

Context switches between two processes can be very expensive!
Source: COMP 321 lecture on Exceptional Control Flow (Alan Cox)
What happens when we execute a Java program

• A Java program executes in a single Java Virtual Machine (JVM) process with multiple threads

• Threads associated with a single process can share the same data

• Java main program starts with a single thread (T1), but can create additional threads (T2, T3, T4, T5) via library calls

• Java threads may execute concurrently on different cores, or may be context-switched on the same core

Figure source: COMP 321 lecture on Concurrency (Alan Cox)
Thread-level Context Switching on the same processor core

- Thread context switch is cheaper than a process context switch, but is still expensive (just not “very” expensive!)
- It would be ideal to just execute one thread per core (or hardware thread context) to avoid context switches

Figure source: COMP 321 lecture on Concurrency (Alan Cox)
Now, what happens is a task-parallel Java program (e.g., HJ-lib, Java Fork/Join, etc.)

- HJ-lib runtime creates a *small number of worker threads*, typically one per core
- Workers push new tasks and "continuations" into a logical work queue
- Workers pull task/continuation work items from logical work queue when they are idle (remember greedy scheduling?)
Task-Parallel Model: Checkout Counter Analogy

- Think of each checkout counter as a processor core

Task-Parallel Model: Checkout Counter Analogy

• Think of each checkout counter as a processor core
• And of customers as tasks

All is well until a task blocks …

- A blocked task/customer can hold up the entire line
- What happens if each checkout counter has a blocked customer?

source: http://viper-x27.deviantart.com/art/Checkout-Lane-Guest-Comic-161795346
Approach 1: Create more worker threads (as in HJ-Lib’s Blocking Runtime)

- Creating too many worker threads can exhaust system resources (OutOfMemoryError)
- Leads to context-switch overheads when blocked worker threads get unblocked

source: http://www.deviantart.com/art/Randomness-5-90424754
Blocking Runtime (contd)

- Assume that there are five tasks (A1 … A5)
- Q: What happens if four tasks (say, A1 … A4) executing on workers w1 … w4 all wait on the same future that’s computed by A5?

future.get() operation

Static & instance fields are shared among tasks
• Assume that there are five tasks (A1 … A5)
• Q: What happens if four tasks (say, A1 … A4) executing on workers w1 … w4 all wait on the same future that’s computed by A5?
• A: Deadlock! (All four tasks will wait for task A5 to compute the future.)
• Blocking Runtime’s solution to avoid deadlock: keep task blocked on worker thread, and create a new worker thread when task blocks
Blocking Runtime (contd)

- Examples of blocking operations
  - End of finish
  - Future get
  - Barrier next

- Approach: Block underlying worker thread when task performs a blocking operation, and launch an additional worker thread

- Too many blocking operations can result in exceptions and/or poor performance, e.g.,
  - `java.lang.IllegalStateException: Error in executing blocked code! [89 blocked threads]`

- Maximum number of worker threads can be configured if needed
  - `HjSystemProperty.maxThreads.set(100);`
Approach 2: Suspend task continuations at blocking points (as in HJ-Lib’s Cooperative Runtime)

- Upon a blocking operation, the currently executing tasks suspends itself and yields control back to the worker.
- Task’s continuation is stored in the suspended queue and added back into the ready queue when it is unblocked.
- Pro: No overhead of creating additional worker threads.
- Con: Need to create continuations (enabled by -javaagent option).
Continuations

- A continuation can be a point immediately following a blocking operation, such as an end-finish, future get(), barrier/phaser next(), etc.

- Continuations are also referred to as task-switching points
  - Program points at which a worker may switch execution between different tasks (depends on scheduling policy)

```java
1. finish { // F1
2. async A1;
3. finish { // F2
4. async A3;
5. async A4;
6. }
7. S5;
8. }
```

Continuations
Cooperative Scheduling (view from a single worker)

Cooperative runtime automatically creates continuations at suspend points via bytecode instrumentation enabled by -javaagent

Useful work for some other task on same worker thread

Task-1
suspend
resume
suspend

Task-2
suspend

...
Any operation that contributes to unblocking a task can be viewed as an event e.g., task termination in finish, return from a future, signal on barrier, put on a data-driven-future, …
Why are Data-Driven Tasks (DDTs) more efficient than Futures?

- Consumer task blocks on get() for each future that it reads, whereas asyncAwait does not start execution until all Data-Driven Futures (DDFs) are available
  - An “asyncAwait” call does not block the worker, unlike a future.get()
  - No need to create a continuation for asyncAwait; a data-driven task is directly placed on the Suspended queue by default

- Therefore, DDTs can be executed on a Blocking Runtime without the need to create additional worker threads, or on a Cooperative Runtime without the need to create continuations
Abstract vs Real Performance in HJ-Lib

- **Abstract Performance**
  - Abstract metrics focus on operation counts for WORK and CPL, regardless of actual execution time

- **Real Performance**
  - HJlib uses ForkJoinPool implementation of Java Executor interface with Blocking or Cooperative Runtime (default)
Summary

- Functional approach is great, but sometimes can lead to performance issues
- Knowing what is happening “under the covers” can help you design better performing algorithms
- Cutoff strategy is a great way to balance parallelism and overhead for recursive task parallelism
- Depending on the runtime, your task parallel program may have some tasks that could block the whole CPU thread
- Processes are more expensive than threads, threads are more expensive than tasks
- In order to deliver performance, most runtimes assume they have a full control of OS threads
  - Don’t mix Java parallel Streams with HJLib constructs
  - Don’t mix Java threads with HJLib tasks and/or Java parallel Streams
  - An HJ runtime instance inside of its own Java thread is usually OK
  - A Java parallel Stream computation inside an HJ task is usually OK