Semaphores, Locks & Conditions

4010-441

Principles of Concurrent System Design

Intrinsic vs. Explicit Locks

- Pre Java 5.0 only ***intrinsic*** mechanisms were available for coordinating access to shared data.
  - **synchronized**
  - **volatile**

How do synchronized and volatile differ in providing thread-safe access to shared data?

What are the limitations of using synchronized as a locking mechanism?

Semaphores and Locks

- Java 5+ added Semaphores Locks and Conditions
  - ***Explicit*** locking
  - Semaphores and Locks operate like synchronized, but:
    - Need not be nested
    - Can pass a lock from object to object within a thread
  - Conditions - wait for one of many possible states to arise
    - Condition associated with specific lock for atomicity control.
    - Conditions only available via factory in Lock

Semaphore

- Implements a general semaphore.
- Initialize with a number of permits.
- Permits can be acquired and released.
- Block on acquire if no permits remain (until one released).
- Interface abstract:

```
public class Semaphore {
  public Semaphore( int permits ) ;
  public Semaphore( int permits; boolean fair ) ;

  public void acquire() ;
  public void acquire( int npermits ) ;

  public void release() ;
  public void release( int npermits ) ;

  // other methods exists – see java.util.concurrent.Semaphore
}
```

Fixed Resource Control Using Semaphores

```
class Resource { . . . }
class ResourcePool {
  private final int NR ;
  private final Resource pool[] ;
  private final boolean used[] ;
  private final Semaphore available ;
  public ResourcePool(int nr) {
    NR = nr ;
    pool = new Resource[NR] ;
    used = new boolean[NR] ;
    available = new Semaphore(NR) ;
  }
  public Resource get() {
    available.acquire() ;
    return nextResource() ;
  }
  public synchronized void put(Resource r) {
    int index = find(r, pool) ;
    used[index] = false ;
    available.release() ;
  }
  private synchronized Resource nextResource() { . . . }
  private int find(Resource r) { . . . }
}
```

The Lock Interface

- Timed or polled lock acquisition
- Locks must be released in finally block to prevent deadlock in the case of an exception thrown in guarded code
- Responsive to interruption – locking can be used in within cancellable activities.
- **How does this differ from intrinsic (synchronized) locking?**

```
public interface Lock {
   public void lock() ;
   public void unlock() ;
   public Condition newCondition() ;

   public void lockInterruptibly();
   public boolean tryLock();
   public boolean tryLock(long time, TimeUnit unit);
}
```

java.util.concurrent.lock

- Interfaces
  - Lock
  - ReadWriteLock
  - Condition
- Provided Classes
  - ReentrantLock (Lock)
  - ReentrantReadWriteLock (ReadWriteLock)
    - ReentrantReadWriteLock . ReadLock (Lock w/o Conditions)
    - ReentrantReadWriteLock . WriteLock (Lock)
  - AbstractQueuedSynchronizer
    - AbstractQueuedSynchronizer . ConditionObject (Condition)
  - LockSupport

Typical Lock Usage

```
class X {
   private final Lock lock = new ReentrantLock( fair );

   // Other class stuff . . .

   void m() {
       lock.lock();  // block until lock is acquired
       try {
           // ... method body
       } finally {
           lock.unlock()
       }
   }
}
```

ReadWriteLock

- Builtin support for the readers / writers problem:
  - Assume a data structure which is read much more frequently than it is written.
  - No reason to forbid multiple concurrent reads.
  - But cannot overlap reads and writes.
  - Use distinct but related locks

```
public interface ReadWriteLock {
    Lock readLock() ;
    Lock writeLock() ;
}
```

ReadWriteLock Use

```
public class Example {
    private final ReadWriteLock rwl = new ReentrantReadWriteLock( fair );
```

Reader Method Structure

```
public void read() {
    rwl.readLock().lock()
    try {
        // read your heart out
        // other threads may be
        // reading as well
    } finally {
        rwl.readLock().unlock() ;
    }
}
```

Writer Method Structure

```
public void write() {
    rwl.writeLock().lock()
    try {
        // Current thread can write
        // but no other thread is
        // reading or writing.
    } finally {
        rwl.writeLock().unlock() ;
    }
}
```

Locks Using Semaphores

```
class MyLock implements Lock {
  private final Semaphore mutex = new Semaphore(1) ;
  public void lock() {
    mutex.acquire() ;
  }
  public void unlock() {
    mutex.release() ;
  }
  public Condition newCondition() {
    return new MyCondition( this ) ;
  }
  // Other lock methods
}
```

Conditions Using Semaphores

```
class MyCondition implements Condition {
  private int nwaiters = 0 ;
  private final MyLock myLock ;
  private final Semaphore myWaitSema = new Semaphore(0) ;
  public MyCondition(MyLock lock) {
    myLock = lock ;
  }
  public void await() {
    nwaiters++ ;
    myLock.unlock() ;
    myWaitSema.acquire() ;
    myLock.lock() ;
  }
  public void notify() {
    if ( nwaiters > 0 ) {
      nwaiters-- ;
      myWaitSema.release() ;
    }
  }
  // Other condition methods
}
```

Performance & Fairness

- ***Fair*** locks – threads acquire a lock in order requested
- ***Nonfair*** locks – permits ***barging***, running threads can jump ahead of threads waiting to acquire a lock
- Intrinsic locks (usually) implemented as nonfair
- ReentrantLock offers a constructor option.
- **Why not just implement all locks as fair?**

Intrinsic or Explicit?

- ReentrantLock or synchronized?
- As of Java 6 intrinsic locking performs on par with explicit locking in terms of scalability (number of threads contending for lock)
- Favor Reentrant only when advanced features (timing, polled, interruptible, fairness) is required.
- Favor synchronized for simplicity