



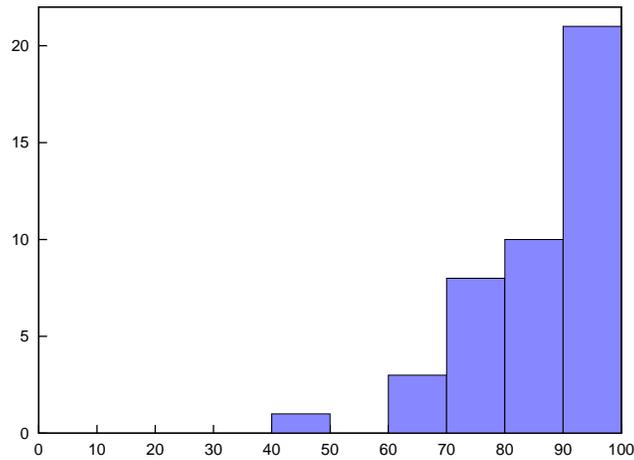
Department of Electrical Engineering and Computer Science

MASSACHUSETTS INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY

6.828 Fall 2010

Quiz II Solutions

Mean 85 Median 89 Std. dev 11.09



I Short Paper Questions

You are using an xsyncfs file system as described in the paper “Rethink the Sync.” You run the following program with its standard output connected to your terminal. Initially, the file xyzzzy does not exist.

```
int main(void)
{
    // O_CREAT means create the file if it doesn't already exist.
    // O_WRONLY means open for writing.
    int fd = open("xyzzzy", O_CREAT | O_WRONLY);
    write(fd, "one", 4);
    write(fd, "two", 4);
    close(fd);
    printf("done");
    return 0;
}
```

1. [8 points]: Sadly a power failure occurs just after you start the program, and you do not see done on the console. You restart the system (including the file system’s recovery procedure) and look at file xyzzzy. Write yes or no after each line, depending on whether it is possible state for xyzzzy.

- xyzzzy is empty **Yes**
- xyzzzy contains just one **Yes**
- xyzzzy contains just two **No**
- xyzzzy contains onetwo **Yes**

Suppose now that you delete xyzzzy and run the same program with its output redirected to file plugh:

```
$ program > plugh
```

2. [8 points]: Again, the power fails just after you start the program, and you don’t see any output on your console. After restart you see that file plugh contains done. Which states for file xyzzzy are possible now?

- xyzzzy is empty **No**
- xyzzzy contains just one **No**
- xyzzzy contains just two **No**
- xyzzzy contains onetwo **Yes**

The paper “A Comparison of Software and Hardware Techniques for x86 Virtualization” describes techniques by which a software VMM can detect guest kernel modifications to the guest’s page tables. The VMM needs to be aware of such modifications so that the VMM can reflect them in the “shadow” page table that the VMM installs in the real hardware `%cr3`. Indicate whether each of the following statements are true or false about the the paper’s description of how the VMWare software VMM deals with PTE writes:

3. [6 points]:

True / ~~False~~: The VMM uses binary translation (BT) to insert instructions before every guest kernel memory-referencing instruction to detect whether the instruction modifies a PTE.

~~True~~ / False : The VMM write-protects the pages that make up the guest’s page tables.

True / ~~False~~: Each guest kernel modification of a PTE results in a page fault to the VMM.

True / ~~False~~: The shadow page table is identical to the guest kernel’s page table, except that some PTE’s present or writable bits differ.

Mark each of the following statements according to whether it accurately reflects the content of the paper “Efficient System-Enforced Deterministic Parallelism.”

4. [8 points]:

True / ~~False~~: The output of a program on Determinator cannot be influenced by any factors other than the program code itself.

True / ~~False~~: A given program on Determinator always interleaves the execution of memory read and write instructions from different CPUs in the same order.

True / ~~False~~: A program run on Determinator cannot have any bugs relating to concurrency.

True / ~~False~~: The Determinator file system is implemented using Puts and Gets between the file system server and its clients.

~~True~~ / False : Each Get in a parent must be matched by a Ret in the corresponding child.

True / ~~False~~: A parent can use Get to observe the contents of a child space’s memory at any time.

II Concurrency and RCU

After taking 6.828, Ben is fascinated with concurrency, and decides to implement concurrent stacks. He starts with the following correct serial implementation of a stack:

```
1 elem_t *head;    // the top of the stack
2
3 void push(int key, int value)
4 {
5     elem_t *e = malloc(sizeof(*e));
6     e->next = head;
7     e->key = key;
8     e->value = value;
9     head = e;    // Put it on the stack
10 }
11
12 elem_t *pop(void)
13 {
14     elem_t *e = head;
15     if (e) head = e->next;
16     return e;
17 }
18
19 elem_t *search(int key)
20 {
21     for (elem_t *e = head; e; e = e->next) {
22         if (e->key == key) {
23             return e;
24         }
25     }
26     return NULL;
27 }
```

Ben wants to run this code on his multicore computer. The cores share a cache-coherent memory and Ben places `head`, `freelist`, etc. in shared memory, so that different cores can push and pop from the shared stack.

5. [8 points]: Ben is pretty sure this code cannot run correctly on a multicore computer. That is, if two threads on different cores concurrently invoke `search`, `push`, and `pop`, then there can be races. To refresh Ben's mind, please give an example of a non-benign race in Ben's code.

Answer: Consider the following interleaving of two threads, performing a push and a pop respectively. After this, the popped element will still appear in the stack.

```
6 e->next = head;
7 e->key = key;
8 e->value = value;
14 elem_t *e = head;
15 if (e) head = e->next;
9 head = e;
```

Ben decides to make the implementation correct using a read-write lock. Here are the locked versions of push and search:

```
struct rwlock rwlock;

void locked_push(int key, int value)
{
    acquire_write(&rwlock);
    push(key, value);
    release_write(&rwlock);
}

elem_t *locked_search(int key)
{
    acquire_read(&rwlock);
    elem_t *e = search(key);
    release_read(&rwlock);
    return e;
}
```

Ben implements read/write locks correctly: either one writer can acquire the lock in write mode, or several readers can acquire the lock in read mode. The acquire parts of his read/write lock are. You don't need to understand them in detail.

```
struct rwlock {
    spinlock_t l;
    volatile unsigned nreader;
};

void acquire_read(struct rwlock *rl)
{
    spin_lock(&rl->l);
    atomic_increment(&rl->nreader);
    spin_unlock(&rl->l);
}

void acquire_write(struct rwlock *rl)
{
    spin_lock(&rl->l);
    while (rl->nreader) /* spin */ ;
}
```

6. [6 points]: If Ben invokes many `locked_search`'s concurrently, why does the version with a read/write lock perform better than if Ben had used a regular spin lock?

Answer: The read/write lock allows searches to proceed in parallel, whereas a spinlock serializes all search operations.

7. [6 points]: Ben observes that even with a read/write lock and no concurrent `push`'s or `pop`'s, 48 concurrent `locked_search`'s run slower than 48 concurrent `search`'s. Explain briefly why.

Answer: `acquire_read` is itself serialized because it briefly holds a spinlock, which incurs overhead in `locked_search`.

Inspired by the RCU paper (“Read-copy update” by McKenney et al.), Ben decides to create an RCU-like list implementation, but based on time instead of quiescent states. He adds two fields to `struct elem_t` (time and `delayed_next`) and introduces the following RCU functions:

```
elem_t *delayed_freelist;
int safe_time[NUMCPU];

void rcu_free(elem_t *e)
{
    e->time = time_since_boot();
    e->delayed_next = delayed_freelist;
    delayed_freelist = e;
    rcu_gc();
}

void rcu_safe(void)
{
    safe_time[mycpu] = time_since_boot();
}

void rcu_gc(void) { /* .. see below .. */ }
```

When a thread wants to free an element, it calls `rcu_free` to inform RCU that it is done with the element. The element cannot be reused yet, because other threads may have a reference to it, so `rcu_free` adds the element to the `delayed_freelist`. When a thread has no references to any element, it informs RCU by calling `rcu_safe`. You can assume that `time_since_boot` is very cheap to execute. The `rcu_gc` function frees elements that are safe to free (i.e., elements that cannot be in use by any thread).

An example of how these functions are intended to be used is as follows:

```
void thread1(void) {
    elem_t *e;
    while (1) {
        acquire_write(&rwlock);
        if ((e = pop())) {
            compute1(e);
            rcu_free(e);
        }
        rcu_safe();
        release_write(&rwlock);
    }
}

void thread2(void) {
    elem_t *e;
    while (1) {
        if ((e = search(random())))
            compute2(e);
        rcu_safe();
    }
}
```

This code assume there is a list with many elements. Thread 1 repeatedly pops an element from this list, computes with it, `rcu_free`'s it, and informs RCU it has no references to any element. Thread 2 searches the list, computes with the found element, and informs RCU it has no references to any element.

8. [8 points]: Why must RCU delay free operations? Give an example scenario and an explanation of what might go wrong if RCU didn't delay free operations.

Answer: A writer thread could free an element and the memory for that element could be reused for something else while a reader thread is in the process of computing with that element. RCU free delays actually freeing the element until no reader thread could possibly be using it.

9. [10 points]: Complete pseudocode for the RCU garbage collector (`rcu_gc`) that frees all elements from the delayed free list that can safely be freed (use `free` to free the individual elements).

```
void rcu_gc(void)
{

    // Find the minimum value in the safe_time array
    min_safe = array_min(safe_time, NUMCPU)

    // Free elements who's free time is less than the minimum safe time
    for each element e in delayed_freelist
        if e->time < min_safe
            remove e from delayed_freelist
            free e

}
```

Consider the following two variations on thread2 (differences underlined):

```
void thread2_unlocked(void) {
    elem_t *e;
    while (1) {
        int key = random();
        if ((e = search(key))) {
            compute2(e);
        }
        // No rcu_safe();
    }
}
```

```
void thread2_locked(void) {
    elem_t *e;
    while (1) {
        int key = random();
        if ((e = locked_search(key))) {
            compute2(e);
        }
    }
}
```

10. [8 points]: Assuming no concurrent push's or pop's, would 48 concurrent thread2's perform as fast as 48 concurrent thread2_unlocked's, as slow as 48 concurrent thread2_locked's, or somewhere between? Explain briefly.

Answer: thread2 will perform very nearly as fast as thread2_unlocked (this is what's cool about RCU). There is slight overhead from maintaining safe_time that thread2 incurs over thread2_unlocked.

III Network driver

Late one night, Ben Bitdiddle is tooling away at his E100 receive implementation for the network lab. For reference, the receive frame descriptor (RFD) format is

Command word						Status word			
EL	S	000000000	H	SF	000	C	0	OK	Status bits
Link address									
Reserved									
0	0	Size				EOF	F	Actual count	

He implements receive as follows:

```
// The number of RFD's in the receive ring
#define NUM_RFDS 16
// Pointers to the RFD's in the receive ring
static struct rfd *rfd_ring[NUM_RFDS];
// The index of the next RFD to read a packet from
static unsigned int rfd_tail;

// Receive one packet and store it in to buf.
int e100_receive(char *buf)
{
    struct rfd *rfd = rfd_ring[rfd_tail % NUM_RFDS];
    if (!(rfd->status & RFD_STATUS_C))
        // No packets in receive ring
        return 0;
    // Clear completed ("C") bit
    rfd->status = 0;
    // Copy packet data
    int actualCount = rfd->actualCount & 0x3FFF;
    memmove(buf, rfd->data, actualCount);
    // Move to the next entry in the ring
    rfd_tail++;
    return actualCount;
}
```

Ben tests his implementation using the echo server and finds that it works. Proud of his succinct implementation, he shows it off to Louis Reasoner, who spots a bug.

11. [8 points]: Louis points out to Ben that he needs to manipulate the suspend (“S”) bits in the RFD’s, so Ben sets the S bit on `rfd_ring[NUM_RFDS-1]` during initialization and adds the following code just after the `memmove` in `e100_receive`:

```
// Set the suspend bit on this RFD
rfd->command = RFD_COMMAND_S;
// Clear the suspend bit on the previous RFD
rfd_ring[(rfd_tail + NUM_RFDS - 1)%NUM_RFDS]->command = 0;
```

Give an example of a problem that Ben’s addition prevents.

Answer: Without Ben’s addition, if `e100_receive` fails to keep up with the incoming packets, the E100 will overwrite packets in the ring. If it overwrites a packet that `e100_receive` is in the process of copying out of the ring, the driver will return a corrupted packet. (Note that Ben’s addition does not prevent *dropped* packets. Before his addition, overwritten packets could be considered dropped; after his addition, the RU will drop packets if the ring overflows.)

12. [8 points]: Ben again tests his code using the echo server. Now confident in his implementation, Ben shows it off to Alyssa P. Hacker, who informs Ben that, while the change he just made was important, it missed something: just after clearing the suspend bit on the previous RFD, he needs to issue an “RU resume” command. Give an example of a problem that Alyssa’s addition fixes.

Answer: Without Alyssa’s addition, if more than `NUM_RFDS` packets arrive before `e100_receive` is able to process them, the RU will suspend permanently and drop packets for the rest of eternity. Resuming the RU tells it that more RFD’s are available.

IV 6.828

We'd like to hear your opinions about 6.828, so please answer the following questions. (Any answer, except no answer, will receive full credit.)

13. [2 points]: In the second half of the term, we read papers instead of xv6 source code. Which papers did you like? (We read ext3 Journaling, Rethink the Sync, Eliminating Receive Live-lock, KeyKOS, Singularity, Anderson Locks, RCU, Barrelfish, Determinator, Software vs Hardware Virtualization, SMP-ReVirt, and Ksplice.)

Answer: Rethink the Sync, Anderson locks, Ksplice.

14. [2 points]: With respect to the labs since quiz 1, are those labs too time consuming, too short, or are they about right? (Lab 4 was COW fork, preemptive multitasking, and IPC; lab 5 was the file system; lab 6 was the network; and lab 7 was the shell and project.)

Answer: About right, but more time for lab 7 would be good.

15. [2 points]: Now that you have completed 6.828, what is the best aspect of 6.828?

Answer: Labs. How streamlined the infrastructure was. Watching ls run on JOS. 6.828 staff. Diverse array of material covered.

16. [2 points]: Now that you have completed 6.828, what is the worst aspect of 6.828?

Answer: That I can't take 6.828 again. The pipe buffer size was too small. There should be a tutorial on using gdb. Printing out papers. The relevance of some papers is unclear. Boring papers. Quiz 1.

End of Quiz

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