Lecture 16
Applying Thread Pools
Task Submission

• ExecutorService objects manage thread pools
• They also include methods for task submission
  – `void execute(Runnable command)`
    Executes the given command at some time in the future.
  – `<T> Future<T> submit(Callable<T> task)`
    Submits a value-returning task for execution and returns a Future representing the pending results of the task.
  – `Future<?> submit(Runnable task)`
    Submits a Runnable task for execution and returns a Future representing that task.
• ???
  – **Purpose of `submit()`** is to permit determination of status of task, collect return value
  – **Tasks have four phases:**
    • Created
    • Submitted
    • Started
    • Completed
  – Future includes `get()`, which can be used to collect return value / check completion
  – **Other methods in `Future` include** `boolean isDone()`
Callable vs. Runnable

• **Runnable**
  – Can be fed to `Thread constructor`
  – Cannot return value
  – Cannot throw checked exceptions

• **Callable**
  – Cannot be fed to `Thread constructor`
  – Can return value
  – Can throw checked exceptions (these are wrapped inside an `ExecutionException`)
Defining Task Boundaries

• Recall: tasks are “logical chunks of independent computation”
• Identifying good task boundaries allows for more concurrency
• Some applications (e.g. the web-server examples) have a natural notion of task (e.g. request)
• In other cases you may need to work some!
Defining Task Boundaries: An Example

• Example comes from JCIP pp. 124ff: page renderer
  – Page renderer is responsible for converting HTML code into something viewable in a web browser
  – Tasks include formatting text, downloading images

• What are good tasks for rendering?
public class SingleThreadRenderer {
    void renderPage(CharSequence source) {
        renderText(source);
        List<ImageData> imageData = new ArrayList<ImageData>();
        for (ImageInfo imageInfo : scanForImageInfo(source))
            imageData.add(imageInfo.downloadImage());
        for (ImageData data : imageData)
            renderImage(data);
    }
}

• Design decision: one task!
  – Text is rendered
  – Then images are downloaded, one-by-one
• Generally, this would yield poor responsiveness
  – Downloading images requires accessing network
  – Rendering text can be done locally
  – So image-processing would dominate!
public class FutureRenderer {
    private final ExecutorService executor = Executors.newCachedThreadPool();
    void renderPage(CharSequence source) {
        final List<ImageInfo> imageInfos = scanForImageInfo(source);
        Callable<List<ImageData>> task =
            new Callable<List<ImageData>>() {
                public List<ImageData> call() {
                    List<ImageData> result = new ArrayList<ImageData>;
                    for (ImageInfo imageInfo : imageInfos)
                        result.add(imageInfo.downloadImage());
                    return result;
                }
            };
        Future<List<ImageData>> future = executor.submit(task);
        renderText(source);
        try {
            List<ImageData> imageData = future.get();
            for (ImageData data : imageData)
                renderImage(data);
        } catch (InterruptedException e) {
            ...
        } catch (ExecutionException e) { ...
    }
}
Page Renderer(2): Observations

• There is some parallelism
  Text rendering, image downloading done in parallel

• Will this yield a big speed-up?
  Not for pages with lots of images!
  • Downloading of images is still done sequentially
  • The image downloading task could take much longer than text rendering
Page Renderer(3): More Tasks

• Each image can be downloaded independently!
• We can exploit this to refine task boundaries
  – One task for text
  – One task for each image
  – When each image download finishes, image can be rendered
• How can we wait for all the downloads?
  – One approach: loop
    • Iterate for the number of images
    • Perform a `get()` on each `Future`
    • But what if one image takes a lot longer to download
  – Better approach: `CompletionService`
CompletionService

• **Extends** `ExecutorService` **with a** *blocking completion queue*
  
  – When a task that has been submitted finishes, a `Future` for it is put in completion queue
  
  – A user of the completion service can extract next finished computation by performing `take()` on completion service

• This permits processing of task results in order that they were completed
public class Renderer {
    private final ExecutorService executor;
    Renderer(ExecutorService executor) { this.executor = executor; }
    void renderPage(CharSequence source) {
        final List<ImageInfo> info = scanForImageInfo(source);
        CompletionService<ImageData> completionService =
            new ExecutorCompletionService<ImageData>(executor);
        for (final ImageInfo imageInfo : info)
            completionService.submit(
                new Callable<ImageData>() {
                    public ImageData call() {
                        return imageInfo.downloadImage();
                    }
                });
        renderText(source);
        try {
            for (int t = 0, n = info.size(); t < n; t++) {
                Future<ImageData> f = completionService.take();
                ImageData imageData = f.get();
                renderImage(imageData);
            }
        } catch (InterruptedException e) {
            Thread.currentThread().interrupt();
        } catch (ExecutionException e) {
            throw launderThrowable(e.getCause());
        }
    }
}
Designing Thread Pools

- Considerations
  - How big?
  - What execution policy?
- Decisions about these considerations are influenced by several factors
  - Task dependencies
    - Some tasks are independent
    - Some require results of other tasks
    - Some tasks will even spawn other tasks whose results they need
  - Task thread-confinement assumptions
    - Some tasks assume thread-confinement
      - Legacy single-threaded code
      - Efficiency
    - Such tasks should run in a single-threaded thread pool
  - Variability in task execution times, responsiveness requirements
    - Some tasks may run much longer than others
    - Other tasks may need quick turnarounds
  - Tasks that assume thread-specific knowledge
    - Some tasks may make assumptions about the specific thread on which they are running (e.g. if there is a ThreadLocal variable)
    - Such tasks must be handled carefully in thread-pool setting
Thread Starvation Deadlock

• An issue affecting pool sizing
• Suppose you have a fixed-size pool (say, 10)
  – Suppose 10 tasks are running, so no free threads
  – Suppose further that each of these tasks submits a task to the pool and then blocks awaiting the result
• Deadlock!
  – Each of 10 task-threads is blocking
  – There are no threads to handle new tasks on which they are blocking
  – No thread can make progress
public class ThreadDeadlock {
    ExecutorService exec = Executors.newSingleThreadExecutor();
    public class LoadFileTask implements Callable<String> { … }
    public class RenderPageTask implements Callable<String> {
        public String call() throws Exception {
            Future<String> header, footer;
            header = exec.submit(new LoadFileTask("header.html"));
            footer = exec.submit(new LoadFileTask("footer.html"));
            String page = renderBody();
            // Will deadlock -- task waiting for result of subtask
            return header.get() + page + footer.get();
        }
        private String renderBody() {
            // Here's where we would actually render the page
            return "";
        }
    }
}

- Thread pool in this case has one thread
- RenderPageTask spawns off two other tasks: one for page header, one for footer
- Deadlock!
Dealing with Thread-Starvation Deadlock

• Thread-starvation deadlock happens when
  – Pool-size is bounded
  – There are task dependencies: tasks can block waiting for results of other tasks

• If an application has these features, either:
  – Make pool size unbounded
  – Make pool large enough to handle anticipated dependencies (risky!)
  – DOCUMENT REASONS FOR DECISION!
Sizing Thread Pools

• Want to avoid thread pools that are “too big” or “too small”
  – Too big: contention among threads for memory, other resources
  – Too small: bad throughput
• We have already seen one consideration for sizing thread pools: thread-deadlock starvation
• Other considerations
  – Are tasks compute or I/O intensive?
  – How many processors on system?
  – How much memory do tasks need?
  – What other possibly scarce resources (e.g. JDBC connections) are needed?
• Note
  – Sometimes you have different classes of tasks that must be run, with different profiles
  – You can use multiple thread pools and tune each independently!
Determining Thread-Pool Sizes

- Some variables
  - $N_{\text{CPU}}$: number of CPUs
  - $U_{\text{CPU}}$: desired utilization ($0 \leq U_{\text{CPU}} \leq 1$)
  - $W/C$: ratio of wait time to compute time
  - $N_{\text{threads}}$: number of threads

- For compute-intensive applications (i.e. $W/C$ is low), good rule is $N_{\text{threads}} = N_{\text{CPU}} + 1$
  - Every task blocks for some reason or another, usually (page fault, etc.)
  - Having one more thread than CPU ensures efficiency

- In general, if cycles are important resource, and threads are homogeneous, independent, then $N_{\text{threads}} = N_{\text{CPU}} \times U_{\text{CPU}} \times (1 + W/C)$

- Example
  - Suppose
    - $N_{\text{CPU}} = 8$ (8-core machine)
    - $U_{\text{CPU}} = 0.5$ (machine is free $\frac{1}{2}$ of time to deal with other applications)
    - $W/C = 2$ (so threads wait on average $\frac{2}{3}$ of time they are running)
  - Then $N_{\text{threads}} = 8 \times 0.5 \times (1 + 2) = 12$.

- Resources besides cycles can be dealt with similarly
Other Size Considerations

• If some tasks are long-running, and others are not, and you want to use one thread pool, then:
  – Ensure number of threads is larger than number of long-running tasks
  – Otherwise, all threads eventually run long-running tasks
  – Bad for throughput, responsiveness of shorter tasks

• In this case, if you know which tasks are long-running, separate thread pools for longer, shorter tasks makes sense
Thread-Pool Execution Policies

- Executors include thread-pool execution policy
- Executors returned by `Executors.newXXXThreadPool()`, etc. include built-in execution policies
- These methods all use a base implementation given in class `ThreadPoolExecutor`
  - To customize execution policy, you can call the `ThreadPoolExecutor` constructor yourself
  - The parameters to the constructor allow you to modify the execution policy in a variety of ways
Using ThreadPoolExecutor

- General constructor for this class has following form

```java
ThreadPoolExecutor (  
    int corePoolSize,  
    int maximumPoolSize,  
    long keepAliveTime,  
    TimeUnit unit,  
    BlockingQueue<Runnable> workQueue,  
    ThreadFactory threadFactory,  
    RejectedExecutionHandler handler )
```

- Some of parameters are easy to describe
  - `corePoolSize`
    Target number of threads to keep in pool, even when there are no tasks
  - `maximumPoolSize`
    Maximum number of threads that can be active at one time
  - `keepAliveTime`
    Thread that is idle for this amount of time can be “reaped” (i.e. killed) if number of threads is bigger than `corePoolSize`
  - `unit`
    Time unit for interpreting `keepAliveTime` (`TimeUnit` is an enum data type)
ThreadPoolExecutor: workQueue

- Work queue stores tasks that are awaiting a thread from the thread pool
- Default for `Executors.newFixedThreadPool()`, `Executors.singleThreadExecutor()`:
  - `LinkedBlockingQueue`
    - Unbounded, so no task ever “turned away”
    - Blocks when empty, so threads idle by blocking when there are no tasks
    - Queues are FIFO, meaning tasks executed in order in which they arrive
- Default for `Executors.newCachedThreadPool()`: `SynchronousQueue`
  - The executors returned by this method use an unbounded number of threads
  - `SynchronousQueue` has capacity 0!
    - When a new task arrives, synchronous queue hands it off immediately to a thread in the thread pool
    - The executor creates a new worker thread if necessary in this case
- For more control over execution order, can use `PriorityQueue` for work queue
  - Tasks executed in priority, rather than arrival, order
- To bound number of waiting tasks, can use a bounded queue (e.g. `ArrayBlockingQueue`)
  - In this case, must decide what to do if queue is full!
  - This decision becomes the saturation policy (what to do when work queue is saturated)
  - Note: if there are inter-task dependencies, and either thread pool or work queue is bounded, then thread-starvation deadlock is possible
ThreadPoolExecutor: **handler**

- If work queue is bounded, the saturation policy determines what to do when queue is full and a new task arrives
- This is the purpose of the **handler** parameter to the `ThreadPoolExecutor` constructor
  - **handler** has type `RejectedExecutionHandler`
  - It is also called when executor has been shutdown and a new task arrives
  - It can also be set after executor is constructed by calling `setRejectedExecutionHandler()`
Saturation Policies (cont.)

- ThreadPoolExecutor implements several saturation policies as (static) classes matching RejectedExecutionHandler interface
  - **AbortPolicy** (this is the default)
    execute() throws RejectedExecutionException if queue is full
  - **DiscardPolicy**
    execute() silently discards newest task
  - **DiscardOldestPolicy**
    - execute() discards task at head of work queue (i.e. next one up for execution) and tries to resubmit current task
    - Beware if work queue is a priority queue!
  - **CallerRunsPolicy**
    - execute() runs the task in the thread calling execute()
    - This helps give worker threads time to catch up, since new invocations of execute will be blocked from that thread!
ThreadPooExecutor: threadFactory

• Executors need to create new threads from time to time
• The threadFactory parameter to ThreadPoolExecutor constructor determines how this is done
  – There is a default
  – Customizing threadFactory allows you to do common start-up / tear-down actions, assign common names, etc.
• threadFactory must implement interface:
  public interface ThreadFactory {
    Thread newThread(Runnable r);
  }
• How executor uses thread factory
  – When a new worker thread is needed, executor calls threadFactory with a private Runnable
  – This Runnable is typically an infinite loop that takes tasks (also Runnables!) from the work queue and invokes their run() methods
  – Note that worker threads are not passed tasks methods directly when they are created!
public class MyThreadFactory implements ThreadFactory {
    private final String poolName;
    public MyThreadFactory(String poolName) {
        this.poolName = poolName;
    }
    public Thread newThread(Runnable runnable) {
        return new MyAppThread(runnable, poolName);
    }
}
public class MyAppThread extends Thread {
    public static final String DEFAULT_NAME = "MyAppThread";
    private static final AtomicInteger created = new AtomicInteger();
    private static final AtomicInteger alive = new AtomicInteger();
    public MyAppThread(Runnable r) {
        this(r, DEFAULT_NAME);
    }
    public MyAppThread(Runnable runnable, String name) {
        super(runnable, name + "-" + created.incrementAndGet());
        setUncaughtExceptionHandler( ... );
    }
    public void run() {
        ... try {
            alive.incrementAndGet();
            super.run();
        } finally { alive.decrementAndGet(); }
    }
    public static int getThreadsCreated() { return created.get(); }
    public static int getThreadsAlive() { return alive.get(); }
    public static boolean getDebug() { return debugLifecycle; }
    public static void setDebug(boolean b) { debugLifecycle = b; }
}
Customizing `ThreadPoolExecutor` at Run-Time

• Parameters passed in during construction of `ThreadPoolExecutor` can also be inspected, modified using getters, setters

• This can be dangerous!

• `Executors` class includes factory method, `unconfigurableExecutorService()`, that removes access to getters, setters