Chapter 2

Processes and Threads

Last lecture review

- Resource Descriptors
  - File
  - Process
- Process Vs Threads (more elaboration today)
- fork() Vs exec()
Process

- ‘Heavy-weight’ unit of computation
- Process descriptor
  - Object program (Program text)
  - Data segment
  - Process Status Word (PSW) – executing, waiting, ready
  - Resources acquired

Thread

- Thread: light-weight process
  - OS maintains minimal internal state information
- Usually instantiated from a process
- Each thread has its OWN unique descriptor
  - Data, Thread Status Word (TSW)
- SHARES with the parent process (and other threads)
  - Program text
  - Resources
  - Parent process data segment
Process Vs Threads

- Processes require substantial more OS overhead in creation and maintenance

![Diagram of process vs threads]

Taken from Modern Operating Systems, 2nd Ed, Tanenbaum, 2001

wait()

- Used by parent process to wait on ONE child process to finish
- int wait(&status);
- return value of wait is the process id of child process that just finished
- if no child processes, wait returns -1 immediately
wait() ... ctd

- wait returns value if child process
  - called function exit()... or terminated normally
  - gets terminated by a signal
  - returns exit status of child in variable status

waitpid()

- Used by parent to wait on a specific child process to terminate indicated by pid
- int waitpid(pid, &status, options)
- pid: process id of the child process parent waits on
pipes

- One form of inter-process communication (IPC)
- follows message-passing paradigm of IPC

pipes....ctd

int fds[2];
retval = pipe(fd);

- creates two file descriptors, one for reading, the second for writing
pipes...ctd

```
int fds[2]; char s[100];
retval = pipe(fds);
pid = fork();
if(pid != 0){ /* parent process */
    write(fds[1], "hello", 6);
}
else { /* child process */
    read(fds[0], s, 100);
    printf("Read %s\n", s);
}
```

What are pthreads?

- A standardized programming interface
- For UNIX systems, specified by the IEEE POSIX 1003.1c standard (1995).
- Implementations which adhere to this standard are referred to as POSIX threads, or Pthreads.
Why pthreads over fork()?

- Primary reason is performance gains
- Less OS overhead in creating a new thread
- All threads use same address space, so communication between threads is easier
- $gcc -o firstthread firstthread.c -lpthread

pthread creation

- Use `pthread_create` function
  
  `pthread_create(thread, attr, routine, arg)`

  - `thread`: Name of this thread
  - `attr`: Thread attributes
  - `routine`: function that gets executed once thread is started
  - `arg`: A single argument to be passed to routine, cast as pointer of type void, passed by reference.
    - For multiple arguments, bundle them up in a struct and pass struct to routine
First pthread program

```c
#include <pthread.h>
#include <stdio.h>
#define NUM_THREADS 5
int main()
{
    pthread_t threads[NUM_THREADS];
    int rc, t;
    for(t=0; t < NUM_THREADS; t++){
        printf("Creating thread %d\n", t);
        rc = pthread_create(&threads[t], NULL, PrintHello,
                           (void *)t);
    }
    pthread_exit(NULL);
}
```

First pthread program... ctd

```c
void *PrintHello(void *threadid)
{
    printf("%d: Hello World!\n", threadid);
    pthread_exit(NULL);
}
```

- `pthread_exit(void *status)`: Used to explicitly terminate a thread
- Thread can use the `status` variable to specify its status; pass data to `joining` threads
**pthreads... ctd**

- `pthread_join()` : Analogous to `wait()` for processes.
- Allows threads to `join` to form single thread of execution

#include <pthread.h>  
#include <stdio.h>

int main(void) {  
    int N = 8;
    pthread_t hThread;  
    int fact;
    pthread_create(&hThread, NULL, (void *)ChildThread,  
                   (void *)&N);
    pthread_join(hThread, (void *)&fact);

    printf("Factorial of N = %d\n", fact);  
    return 0;
}
Second example... ctd

```c
void ChildThread(int N) {
    int i; int fact = 1;

    for(i=1;i<=N;++i)
    {
        fact*=i; 
    }

    pthread_exit((void *)fact);
}
```

Reference for pthreads

- Posix threads programming
  http://www.llnl.gov/computing/tutorials/workshops/workshop/pthreads/MAIN.html#Pthread
- Introduction to pthreads
  http://phoenix.liunet.edu/~mdevi/pthread/Intro.htm