OpenMP Tasks

Remember OpenMP Sections?

Sections are independent blocks of code, able to be assigned to separate threads if they are available.

```c
#pragma omp parallel sections
{
  #pragma omp section
  {
    Task 1
  }
  #pragma omp section
  {
    Task 2
  }
}
```

There is an implied barrier at the end

OpenMP sections are static, that is, they are good if you know, when you are writing the program, how many of them you will need.

It would be nice to have something more Dynamic

It would be nice to have something more dynamic. Imagine a capability where you can write something to do down on a Post-It® note, accumulate the Post-It notes, then have all of the threads together execute that set of tasks.

You would also like to not have to know, ahead of time, how many of these Post-It notes you will write. That is, you want the total number to be dynamic.

Well, congratulations, you have just invented OpenMP Tasks!

OpenMP Tasks

• An OpenMP task is a single line of code or a structured block which is immediately “written down” in a list of tasks.
• The new task can be executed immediately, or it can be deferred.
• If the if clause is used and the argument evaluates to 0, then the task is executed immediately, superseding whatever else that thread is doing.
• There has to be an existing parallel thread team for this to work. Otherwise one thread ends up doing all tasks and you don’t get any contribution to parallelism.
• One of the best uses of this is to process elements of a linked list or a tree.

You can create a task barrier with:

```c
#pragma omp taskwait
```

Tasks are very much like OpenMP Sections, but Sections are static, that is, the number of sections is set when you write the code, whereas Tasks can be created anytime, and in any number, under control of your program’s logic.
If You Run This a Number of Times, You Get This:
(Uh-oh, what Happened?)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Run #</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>A</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. Why do we not get the same output every time?
2. Why do we get 4 things printed when we only have print statements in 2 tasks?

Not so simple, huh?

The first answer is easy. Unless you make some special arrangements, the order of execution of the different tasks is *undefined*.

The second answer is that we actually asked the two threads to each put two tasks on the sticky notes, for a total of four. How can we get only one thread to do this?

1. When using Tasks, you want:
   1. One thread to write the things to do down on the sticky notes
   2. All threads to execute the sticky notes

But, if you run this, the order of printing will still be non-deterministic. If you care about order, do this:

```c
omp_set_num_threads( 2 );
#pragma omp parallel
{
    #pragma omp single
    {
        #pragma omp task
        fprintf( stderr, "A\n" );
        #pragma omp taskwait
        #pragma omp task
        fprintf( stderr, "B\n" );
        #pragma omp taskwait
    }
}
```

Causes all tasks to wait until they are completed
Causes all tasks to wait until they are completed
A Better OpenMP Task Example:
Processing each Element of a Linked List

```c
#pragma omp parallel default(none)
{
#pragma omp single default(none)
{
    element *p = listHead;
    while( p != NULL )
    {
#pragma omp task firstprivate(p)
        Process( p );
        p = p->next;
    }
}
#pragma omp taskwait
}
```

Without this `#pragma`, each thread will have to do a full traversal of the linked list – bad idea!

Without this `#pragma`, thread #0 will have to do everything

Without this `#pragma`, each thread will have to do a full traversal of the binary tree – bad idea!

```
#pragma omp parallel
#pragma omp single
Traverse( root );
#pragma omp taskwait
```

Put this here if you want to wait for all tasks to finish being executed before proceeding

Put this here if you want to wait for all nodes to be traversed before proceeding

Without this `#pragma`, we would like to traverse it as quickly as possible.
- We are assuming that we do not need to traverse it in any order.
- We just need to visit all nodes.

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• We are assuming that we do not need to traverse it in any order.
• We just need to visit all nodes.

```
# This is common in graph algorithms, such as searching.
# If the tree is binary and is balanced, then the maximum depth of the
# tree is \log_2(# of Nodes)

• Strategy at each node:
  1. follow one descendent node
  2. follow the other descendent node
  3. process the node you’re at
```

This order could be re-arranged, depending on what you are trying to do

Without this `#pragma`, thread #0 will have to do everything

Without this `#pragma`, each thread will have to do a full traversal of the binary tree – bad idea!
**Parallelizing a Binary Tree Traversal with Tasks**

```c
void Traverse( Node *n )
{
    if( n->left  !=  NULL )
    {
        #pragma omp task firstprivate(n) untied
        Traverse( n->left );
    }

    if( n->right  !=  NULL )
    {
        #pragma omp task firstprivate(n) untied
        Traverse( n->right );
    }

    #pragma omp taskwait
    Process( n );
}
```

Put this here if you want to wait for both branches to be traversed before processing the parent node.

**Benchmarking a Binary Task-driven Tree Traversal**

```c
#define NUM  1024*1024
void Process( Node *n )
{
    for( int i = 0; i < NUM; i++ )
    {
        n->value = pow( n->value, 1.01 );
    }
}
```

**Parallelizing a Binary Tree Traversal with Tasks: Tied**

```c
Traverse( A );
```

Threads: 8 16 8 1

**Traverse( A );**
Parallelizing a Binary Tree Traversal with Tasks: *Untied* (g++ 11.4)

Traverse(A);

How Evenly Tasks Get Assigned to Threads *g++* vs. *icpc*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Thread #</th>
<th>Number of Tasks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Thread #</th>
<th>Number of Tasks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

How Evenly Tasks Get Assigned to Threads *Tied* vs. *Untied*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Thread #</th>
<th>Number of Tasks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>3071</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>3071</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>2048</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Thread #</th>
<th>Number of Tasks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>1999</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2068</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>2035</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>2089</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Performance vs. Number of Threads

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th># Threads</th>
<th>Nodes Processed Per Second</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Points</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Number of Tree Levels
Parallelizing a Tree Traversal with Tasks:
Summary

- Tasks get spread among the current “thread team”
- Tasks can execute immediately or can be deferred. They are executed at “some time”.
- Tasks can be moved between threads, that is, if one thread has a backlog of tasks to do, an idle thread can come steal some workload.
- Tasks are more dynamic than sections. The task paradigm would still work if there was a variable number of children at each node.