Some Concurrency Background
Issues with Asynchronous Code

Error Handling
Read/Write Conflicts
Communications between threads
   Joins
   Passing data back
Callback Hell
Callback Hell

JavaScript problem core.async proposes to solve

Will use examples from Node.js
Node.js

Runs on Chrome’s JavaScript runtime

Goal: fast, scalable networking applications

Event-driven non-blocking I/O
So lightweight & efficient
Path file = ...;
String fileContents = null;
try (InputStream in = Files.newInputStream(file);
    BufferedReader reader =
        new BufferedReader(new InputStreamReader(in))) {
    String line = null;
    while ((line = reader.readLine()) != null) {
        fileContents = fileContents + line;
    }
} catch (IOException x) {
    System.err.println(x);
}
return fileContents;
Blocking I/O - Clojure

(slrup "someFile.txt")

(slrup "http://www.sdsu.edu")
Non-Blocking I/O - Node.js

fs.readFile
  Reads a file asynchronously
  Need to provide function to process file contents

function processFooFile(error, fooFileContents) {
  if (error)
    throw error;
    Processes the file contents;
}

fs.readFile('filename.txt', 'utf-8', processFooFile)
function processFooFile(error, fooFileContents) {
    function processFoo&Bar(barError, barFileContents) {
        if (barError)
            throw barError;
        Process foo and bar contents here
    }

    if (error)
        throw error;
}

fs.readFile('bar.txt', 'utf-8', processFoo&Bar);

fs.readFile('foo.txt', 'utf-8', processFooFile)
Promise
Promise

one-time, single values pipe

(def p (promise))
(realized? p)               false
(deliver p 42)              #<core.promise$reify__1707@3f0ba812: 42>
(realized? p)               true
@p                           42
(deliver p 50)              nil
@p                           42
Promise

Simple way to send data back from thread
References
agents
Agents

Uncoordinated
Asynchronous - run in separate thread

I/O & functions with side affects are safe in agents
Agents are STM-aware
  Agents in transactions are only run once
Agents

Agents hold data

You send functions to agents to process the data

Processing is done in separate thread
Sending work to an Agent

send
    Sends to thread pool limited by cores on machine

send-off
    Sends to unlimited thread
Send

(send a f & args)  (def a (agent 500))
Apply f to agent a with args  (send a range 1000)
(apply f a args)  @a
How does one know when Agent is Done

(Await & agents)

(Await-for timeout-ms & agents)

(Def a (agent 50000))
(Send a #(Thread/sleep %))
(Await a)
@a
Exceptions in Agents

Agents are run on other thread

Exception in agents are not propagated back to main thread
agent-error

(def a (agent 1))
(send a inc)
@a 2
(throw (Exception. "something is wrong"))
(sendDate a)
(Exception)
(agent-error a) nil
(send a identity) Exception
Agent Error Handlers

(def a (agent nil
  :error-mode :continue
  :error-handler (fn [the-agent exception]
      (.println System/out (.getMessage exception))))))
Example use of Agents - logging changes

Watches are run on the current thread
I/O (logging) is slow

Use agent to do the logging

(defn log-reference
  [reference & writer-agents]
  (add-watch reference :log
    (fn [_ reference old new]
      (doseq [writer-agent writer-agents]
        (send-off writer-agent write new))))
The Write & some Agents

(defn write
    [^java.io.Writer w & content]
    (doseq [x (interpose " " content)]
        (.write w (str x))
    (.write w "\n")
    (.flush w)
    w)

(def console (agent *out*))
(def character-log (agent (clojure.java.io/writer "character-states.log" :append true)))
(def cat 5)
(log-reference (var cat) console character-log)
(def cat 10)
CSP

1978 - C. A. R. Hoare first described

Mathematical theory of concurrency
  Message passing & Channels

Used to specify & verify Concurrent systems
  T9000 Transputer

Influenced design of programming languages
  Occam
  Go
core.async

Added to Clojure 1.5

Provides independent threads of activity
   Communicating via queue-like channels

Supports
   Real threads & shared use of thread pools
   ClojureScript on JS engines (no threads)

Goals
   Simplify efficient server-side programs
   Simpler & more robust techniques for front-end ClojureScript programming
core.async Verses agents

Agents send functions to data

core.async sends data to functions
core.async

Not part of the standard library

:dependencies [[org.clojure/clojure "1.6.0"]
               [org.clojure/core.async "0.1.346.0-17112a-alpha"]]

For Examples

(ns basiclectures.basic-language.async-example
 (:require [clojure.core.async :as async]))
Channel

Communication link between producers and consumers

Channels can be
  Unbuffered
  Buffered
Types of Buffers

buffer
   blocks/parks when full

dropping-buffer
   While full drops items that are added

sliding-buffer
   While full drops oldest item when new item added
Producing a Channel

(chan)
(chan buf-or-n)

(chan 5) channel with buffer of size 5

(chan (buffer 3)) channel with buffer of size 3

(chan (dropping-buffer 6))

(chan (slidding-buffer 2))
Reading/Writing Channels

(>!! channel value)
  Writes value to channel
  Blocks if buffer is full (unless buffer is sliding or drop)

(<!! channel)
  Reads a value from channel
  Blocks if nothing is available
  Returns nil if channel is closed
Example

(def test-channel (async/chan 2))

(async/>!! test-channel "hello there")

(async/<!! test-channel)
Running in other Threads

futures
async/thread
go block
async/thread

(thread & body)

Runs body in separate thread

(async/thread (println "Hello"))

(def adder (async/thread (+ 1 2)))

(async/<! adder) returns 3
(defn producer
  [channel name]
  (doseq [x [1 2 "end"]]
    (do
      (Thread/sleep 100)
      (println name "producing " x)
      (async/>!! channel x))
    (async/close! channel))

(let [channel (async/chan 7)]
  (println "Start")
  (async/thread (producer channel "a"))
  (async/thread (producer channel "b"))
  (async/thread (consumer channel)))
Issues

How to tell consumer we are done?

Producers sue thread even when they are idle
Using Atom

(defn consumer
 [channel]
 (let [input (atom "start")]
   (while @input
     (do
       (reset! input (async/<!! channel))
       (println "consumming" @input)))))
go blocks

(go & body)

Executes body using thread in thread pool

When body blocks thread is released

When body unblocks run on a thread

ClojureScript
  Required to use channels
  Run on event loop
go blocks

(async/go (println "hello"))

(def adder (async/go (+ 1 2)))

(async/<!! adder)
go blocks

<!  use to read from channel instead of <!!

>!  use to write to channel instead of >!

(let [c (async/chan)]
  (async/go (>! c "hello"))
  (assert (= "hello" (async/<!! (async/go (<! c)))))
  (close! c))
(let [c (async/chan)]
  (async/go (>! c "hello")))

(defn hello
  [channel]
  (async/>!! channel "hello"))

(let [c (async/chan)]
  (async/go (hello c)))
Producer Example

(let [channel (async/chan 7)]
  (println "Start")
  (async/go (producer channel "a"))
  (async/go (producer channel "b"))
  (async/go (consumer channel)))
go blocks are lightweight

(let [n 1000
      cs (repeatedly n async-chan)
      begin (System/currentTimeMillis)]
(doseq [c cs] (async/go (async/>! c "hi")))

(dotimes [i n]
  (let [[v c] (async/alts!! cs)]
    (assert (= "hi" v)))
  (println "Read" n "msgs in" (- (System/currentTimeMillis) begin) "ms"))
alts!! & alts!

(alts! channels & {:as opts}

Takes value from one of the channels that have data

(let [c1 (async/chan)
    c2 (async/chan)]
  (async/thread (while true
    (let [[v ch] (async/alts!! [c1 c2])]
      (println "Read" v "from" ch)))))
  (async/>!! c1 "hi")
  (async/>!! c2 "there"))

(let [c1 (async/chan)
    c2 (async/chan)]
  (async/thread (while true
    (let [[v ch] (async/alts! [c1 c2])]
      (println "Read" v "from" ch)))))
  (async/go (async/>! c1 "hi")
  (async/go (async/>! c2 "there")))

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map, reduce, filter on Channels

(def simple-chan (async/chan 2))
(def inc-chan (async/map< inc simple-chan))

(async/>!! inc-chan 1)
(async/<!! inc-chan) returns 2
Rock Paper Scissors Example

(def MOVES [:rock :paper :scissors])

(defn winner
  "Based on two moves, return the name of the winner."
  [[name1 move1] [name2 move2]]
  (cond
   (= move1 move2) "no one"
   (= move2 (BEATS move1)) name1
   :else name2))
(defn report
  "Report results of a match to the console."
  [[name1 move1] [name2 move2] winner]
  (println)
  (println name1 "throws" move1)
  (println name2 "throws" move2)
  (println winner "wins!")
(defn rand-player
  "Create a named player and return a channel to report moves."
  [name]
  (let [out (async/chan)]
    (async/go (while true (async/>! out [name (rand-nth MOVES)])))
  out))
Judging results

(defn judge
  "Given two channels on which players report moves, create and return an
  output channel to report the results of each match as [move1 move2 winner]."
  [p1 p2]
  (let [out (async/chan)]
    (async/go
      (while true
        (let [m1 (async/<! p1)
               m2 (async/<! p2)]
          (async/>! out [m1 m2 (winner m1 m2)])))
    out))
Playing single game

(defn init
  "Create 2 players (by default Alice and Bob) and return an output channel of match results."
  ([] (init "Alice" "Bob"))
  ([n1 n2] (judge (rand-player n1) (rand-player n2)))))

(defn play
  "Play by taking a match reporting channel and reporting the results of the latest match."
  [out-chan]
  (apply report (async/<!! out-chan)))

(play (init))
Playing Multiple Games

(defn play-many
  "Play n matches from out-chan and report a summary of the results."
  [out-chan n]
  (loop [remaining n
         results {}]
    (if (zero? remaining)
      results
      (let [[m1 m2 winner] (async/<!! out-chan)]
        (recur (dec remaining)
           (merge-with + results {winner 1}))))))
Multiple Games

(play-many game 10000) {"Alice" 3323, "Bob" 3326, "no one" 3351}

"Elapsed time: 650.433 msecs"
rock paper scissors lizard spock

Try modifying code to play “rock paper scissors lizard spock”