Motivation: Concurrency for All (Process Oriented Design)

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Co631 (Concurrency)
Motivation: Concurrency for All

- Nature is not serial...
- Components must compose...
- Nature is concurrent...
- It was 20 years ago today...
- Objects considered harmful...
- Modelling complex systems...
- Blood clotting...
Nature is not organised as a single thread of control:

```python
joe.eatBreakfast();
sue.washUp();
joe.driveToWork();
sue.phone(sally);
US.government.sue(bill);
sun.zap(office);
```
Nature has very large numbers of independent agents, interacting with each other in regular and chaotic patterns, at all levels of scale:

... nanite ... human ... astronomic ...
The networks are dynamic: growing, decaying and mutating internal topology (in response to environmental pressure and self-motivation):

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... nanite ... human ... astronomic ...
Motivation and Applications

- **Thesis**
  - Natural systems are robust, efficient, long-lived and continuously evolving. *We should take the hint!*
  - Look on concurrency as a **core design mechanism** – not as something difficult, used only to boost performance.

- **Some applications**
  - Hardware design and modelling.
  - Static embedded systems and parallel supercomputing.
  - Field-programmable embedded systems and dynamic supercomputing (e.g. SETI-at-home).
  - Dynamic distributed systems, eCommerce, operating systems and games.
  - Biological system and **nanite** modelling.
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Components must be *composeable* …

… and they must compose *simply*!
Components?

Mind you, just because components compose …

… doesn’t always mean that it makes sense …
Components?

… to compose them …

*Image courtesy of Philips TASS <http://www.tass.philips.com/>
If we understand A and B separately, we must be able to deduce *simply* their combined behaviour.

- Components? Components? Components?
- plug together
- no surprises
- A and B must be *composeable* …
Composition?

- Complex systems are *composed* from *less complex* components …
  - … which are *composed* from *simpler* components …
  - … which are *composed* from *simpler* components …
  - … etc …
- … which are *composed* from *simple* components.
Composition?

- Composition rules must be simple and yield no surprises.

- Whatever it is they encapsulate, components must have interfaces that are clean, complete and explicit.

- Hardware systems are forced (by physics/geometry) to be built like this.

- Software systems have no such constraints. We think we can do better than nature … and get into trouble.
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The Real World and Concurrency

Computer systems - to be of use in this world - need to model that part of the world for which it is to be used.

If that modeling can reflect the natural concurrency in the system … it should be *simpler*.

Yet concurrency is thought to be an *advanced* topic, *harder* than serial computing (which therefore needs to be mastered first).
This tradition is WRONG!

... which has (radical) implications on how we should educate people for computer science ...

... and on how we apply what we have learnt ...
What we want from Parallelism

- A powerful tool for *simplifying* the description of systems.

- *Performance* that spins out from the above, but is *not* the primary focus.

- A model of concurrency that is *mathematically clean*, yields no engineering surprises and scales well with system complexity.
Multi-Pong

Left: 147
Right: 193

NEVY GAME
RELEASE

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Multi-Pong

Diagram showing the components of Multi-Pong:
- **Scorer**
- **Left**
- **Right**
- **Control**
- **New Game**
- **Freeze**
- **Flasher**
- **Mouse**
- **Key Control**
- **Canvas**

The diagram illustrates the flow of interaction, highlighting the collision detection process.
Good News!

The good news is that we can worry about each process on its own. *A process interacts with its environment through its channels.* *It does not interact directly with other processes.*

Some processes have *serial* implementations - *these are just like traditional serial programs.*

Some processes have *parallel* implementations - *networks of sub-processes (think hardware).*

Our skills for serial logic sit happily alongside our new skills for concurrency - there is no conflict. *This will scale!*
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Twenty Years Ago ...

“... improved understanding and architecture independence were the goals of the design by Inmos of the occam multiprocessing language and the Transputer. The goals were achieved by implementation of the abstract ideas of process algebra and with an efficiency that is today almost unimaginable and certainly unmatchable.”

We have been extending the classical (CSP) 
occam language with ideas of mobility and 
dynamic network reconfiguration which are 
taken from Milner’s $\pi$-calculus (occam-$\pi$).

We have found ways of implementing these 
extensions that still involve significantly less 
resource overhead than that imposed by the 
higher level – but less structured, informal and 
non-compositional – concurrency primitives of 
existing languages (such as Java) or libraries 
(such as POSIX threads).
We have been extending the classical (CSP) occam language with ideas of mobility and dynamic network reconfiguration which are taken from Milner’s $\pi$-calculus (occam-$\pi$).

As a result, we can run applications with the order of millions of concurrent processes on modestly powered PCs. We have plans to extend the system, without sacrifice of too much efficiency and none of logic, to simple clusters of workstations, wider networks such as the Grid and small embedded devices.
In the interests of proveability, we have been careful to preserve the distinction between the original static point-to-point synchronised communication of occam and the dynamic asynchronous multiplexed communication of $\pi$-calculus; in this, we have been prepared to sacrifice the elegant sparsity of the $\pi$-calculus.

We conjecture that the extra complexity and discipline introduced will make the task of developing, proving and maintaining concurrent and distributed programs easier.
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Java Monitors – Concerns

- Easy to learn - but very difficult to apply … safely …

- Monitor methods are tightly interdependent - their semantics compose in complex ways … the whole skill lies in setting up and staying in control of these complex interactions …

- Threads have no structure … there are no threads within threads …

- Big problems when it comes to scaling up complexity …
Objects Considered Harmful

Most objects are dead - they have no life of their own.

All methods have to be invoked by an external thread of control - they have to be caller oriented …

… a somewhat curious property of ‘object oriented’ design.
The object is at the mercy of any thread that sees it.

Nothing can be done to prevent method invocation ...

... even if the object is not in a fit state to service it. The object is not in control of its life.
Each single thread of control snakes around objects in the system, bringing them to life *transiently* as their methods are executed.

Threads cut across object boundaries leaving spaghetti-like trails, *paying no regard to the underlying structure.*
Each object is at the mercy of any thread that sees it. Nothing can be done to prevent method invocation ... even if the object is not in a fit state to service it. The object is not in control of its life.

Big problems occur when multiple threads hit the same object.
Errors in claiming/releasing locks is probably the main reason our systems fail …

Too much locking and we get deadlock …

Too little locking and race hazards slowly corrupt …

Sorting this out requires controlling all possible interleavings … which is exponential in the number of threads …
Compare this design structure ...
Multi-Pong

left

right

scorer

... against this one

collision detect

control

new game

freeze

flasher

mouse

keycontrol

canvas
... for example ...
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Modelling Bio-Mechanisms

- **In-vivo ⇔ In-silico**
  - One of the UK ‘Grand Challenge’ areas.
  - Move *life-sciences* from *description* to *modelling / prediction*.
  - Example: the Nematode worm.
  - Development: from fertilised cell to adult (with virtual experiments).
  - Sensors and movement: *reaction to stimuli*.
  - Interaction between organisms and other pieces of environment.

- **Modelling technologies**
  - Communicating process networks – fundamentally good fit.
  - Cope with growth / decay, combine / split (evolving topologies).
  - Mobility and location / neighbour awareness.
  - Simplicity, dynamics, performance and safety.

- **occam-π (and JCSP)**
  - Robust and lightweight – good theoretical support.
  - ~10,000,000 processes with useful behaviour in useful time.
  - Enough to make a start …
Modelling Nannite-Assemblies

- **TUNA: Theory Underpinning Nanotech Assemblies**
  - Active *nano-devices* that manipulate the world at *nano-scale* to have *macroscopic* effects (e.g. through assembling artifacts).
  - Need vast numbers of them – but these can grow (exponentially).
  - Need capabilities to design, program and control complex and dynamic networks – build desired artifacts, not undesired ones.
  - Need a theory of dynamic networks and emergent properties.

- **Implementation Technologies**
  - Communicating process networks – fundamentally good fit.
  - Cope with growth / decay, combine / split (evolving topologies).
  - Mobility and location / neighbour awareness.
  - Simplicity, dynamics, performance and safety.

- **occam-π (and JCSP)**
  - Robust and lightweight – good theoretical support.
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**Funded 😊😊😊 ... York, Surrey and Kent**
Mobility and Location Awareness

- Classical communicating process applications
  - Static network structures.
  - Static memory / silicon requirements (pre-allocated).
  - Great for hardware design and software for embedded controllers.
  - Consistent and rich underlying theory – CSP.

- Dynamic communicating processes – some questions
  - *Mutating topologies*: how to keep them safe?
  - *Mobile channel-ends and processes*: dual notions?
  - *Simple operational semantics*: low overhead implementation? Yes.
  - *Process algebra*: combine the best of CSP and the $\pi$-calculus? Yes.
  - *Refinement*: for manageable system verification … can we keep?
  - *Location awareness*: how can mobile processes know where they are, how can they find each other and link up?
  - *Programmability*: at what level – individual processes or clusters?
  - *Overall behaviour*: planned or emergent?
Location (Neighbourhood) Awareness

The Matrix

Mobile Agents
Location (Neighbourhood) Awareness
Location (Neighbourhood) Awareness
Location (Neighbourhood) Awareness
Mobility and Location Awareness

- **The Matrix**
  - A network of (mostly passive) server processes.
  - Responds to client requests from the mobile agents and, occasionally, from *neighbouring* server nodes.
  - Deadlock avoided (in the matrix) *either* by one-place buffered server channels *or* by pure-client slave processes (one per matrix node) that ask their server node for elements (e.g. mobile agents) and forward them to neighbouring nodes.
  - Server nodes only see neighbours, maintain registry of currently located agents (and, maybe, agents on the neighbouring nodes) and answer queries from local agents (including moving them).

- **The Agents**
  - Attached to one node of the Matrix at a time.
  - Sense presence of other agents – on local or neighbouring nodes.
  - Interact with other local agents – must use agent-specific protocol to avoid deadlock. May decide to reproduce, split or move.
  - Local (or global) **sync barriers** to maintain sense of time.
A Thesis and Hypothesis

- **Thesis**
  - Natural systems are concurrent at all levels of scale. Central points of control do not remain stable for long.
  - Natural systems are robust, efficient, long-lived and continuously evolving. *We should take the hint!*  
  - Natural mechanisms should map on to simple engineering principles with low cost and high benefit. Concurrency is a natural mechanism.
  - We should look on concurrency as a core design mechanism — not as something difficult, used only to boost performance.
  - Computer science took a wrong turn once. Concurrency should not introduce the algorithmic distortions and hazards evident in current practice. It should hasten the construction, commissioning and maintenance of systems.

- **Hypothesis**
  - The wrong turn can be corrected and this correction is needed now.
Putting CSP into practice ...

KRoC

http://www.cs.ukc.ac.uk/projects/ofa/kroc/
Putting CSP into practice ...

http://www.cs.ukc.ac.uk/projects/ofa/jcsp/
CSP for Java™ (JCSP) 1.0-rc1 API Specification

This document is the specification for the JCSP core API.

See:

Description

Packages

jcsp.awt
This provides CSP extensions for all java.awt components -- GUI events and widget configuration map to channel communications.

jcsp.lang
This provides classes and interfaces corresponding to the fundamental primitives of CSP.

jcsp.plugNplay
This provides an assortment of plug-and-play CSP components to wire together (with object-carrying wires) and reuse.

jcsp.plugNplay.ints
This provides an assortment of plug-and-play CSP components to wire together (with int-carrying wires) and reuse.

jcsp.util
This provides classes and interfaces to customise the semantics of object channels.

jcsp.util.ints
This provides classes and interfaces to customise the semantics of int channels.
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Case Study: blood clotting

**Haemostasis:** we consider a greatly simplified model of the formation of blood clots in response to damage in blood vessels.

**Platelets** are passive quasi-cells carried in the bloodstream. They become *activated* when a balance between chemical suppressants and activators shift in favour of activation.

When activated, they become *sticky* …

We are just going to model the clumping together of such sticky activated platelets to form *clots*.

To learn and refine our modelling techniques, we shall start with a simple one-dimensional model of a bloodstream.
Platelet Model (‘busy’ CA)

Space is represented as a pipeline of cell processes. Activated (i.e. sticky) platelets are generated and injected into the pipeline at a user-determined randomised rate. They move through the cells at speeds inversely proportional to the size of the clot in which they become embedded – these speeds are randomised slightly. Clots that bump together stay together.

The cells do all the work and work all the time, even when empty. Platelets/clots pass through them – at which times, the cells compute part of their life-cycle.

Platelets/clots are not directly modelled as processes.
Platelet Model (‘busy’ CA)
Platelet Model (‘busy’ CA)

Key:
- - - -> Phase 0
- - - - - -> Phase 1
Platelet Model ('busy' CA)

Key:

Phase 0
Platelet Model (‘busy’ CA)

Key: 

...........→ Phase 1
Platelet Model (‘busy’ CA)
PROC cell (BYTE my.visible.state, BOOL running, BARRIER draw, CHAN CELL.CELL l.in?, l.out!, r.in?, r.out!)

... local declarations / initialisation (phase 0)

WHILE running

SEQ

SYNC draw -- phase 1

... PAR-I/O exchange of full/empty state

... if full,

... discover clump size (pass count through)

... if head,

... decide on move (non-deterministic choice)

... if move, tell empty cell ahead

... else receive decision on move from cell ahead

... if not tail, pass decision back

... if tail and move, become empty

... else if clump behind exists and moves, become full

SYNC draw -- phase 0

... update my.visible.state
Platelet Model (Visualisation)
Platelet Model (‘busy’ CA)

**Performance:** each **cell** has to work harder if full (carrying a **platelet**). Also, **clot** sizes are recomputed every cycle – so large clumps increase the cost. (2.4 GHz. P IV ‘*mobile*’).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Generate probability (n / 256)</th>
<th>Cell cycle time (ns)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>650</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>660</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>670</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>680</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>700</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>740</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32</td>
<td>1070 (<strong>total jam</strong>)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Platelet Model (‘busy’ → ‘lazy’ CA)

Scaling problem: every cell is active every cycle – regardless of whether it contains a platelet. This works well for systems with up to ~100K cells.

For TUNA, we will need to be working in 3D (say, ~10M cells), modelling many different types of agent with much richer rules of engagement.

These automata must become ‘lazy’, whereby only processes with things to do remain in the computation.
Platelet Model (‘busy’ $\rightarrow$ ‘lazy’ CA)

Logical problem: the rules for the different stages in the life cycle of platelets, or clots, are coded into different cycles of the cells. Each cell sees lots of different platelets – sometimes bunched together as clots – and operates on them as they pass through.

No process directly models the development of a single clot. The following system addresses this. The cell processes are pure servers, not enrolled on the time-synchronising barrier. Their clients are clot processes, generated dynamically, that are enrolled on the barrier and use that barrier to synchronise access to the cell servers with their generator and the display.

The cell processes are only worked as clot boundaries pass over them.
Platelet Model (‘busy’ → ‘lazy’ CA)

To manage this, we need to move **barriers** to **FORK**ed processes. The general solution is given by making **barriers** **MOBILE**.

Their **clients** are enrolled on **cell** servers where the generator and the display synchronise access to the **cell** servers with their generator and the display.
occam-π includes mobile barrier types:

MOBILE BARRIER b:
SEQ
  b := MOBILE BARRIER
  ...
  logic involving SYNC b

Whenever a barrier is constructed, the process doing the construction becomes enrolled.

Whenever a defined barrier variable is overwritten or goes out of scope, the process holding it resigns.

Channels may carry mobile barriers as components of their messages (occam-π PROTOCOLs).

Whenever a barrier is communicated (e.g. to a forked process), the receiving process dynamically enrolls and the sending process resigns (unless a CLONE is sent).
Forking Processes with Barriers
Forking Processes with Barriers

FORKING

\( \chi \)

\( P \)

\( P \)

\( P \)

\( b \)

occam-\( \pi \) view
Platelet Model (‘lazy’ CA)
Platelet Model (‘lazy’ CA)
Platelet Model (‘lazy’ CA)
Platelet Model (‘lazy’ CA)
Platelet Model (‘lazy’ CA)
Platelet Model ('lazy' CA)
Platelet Model (‘lazy’ CA)
Platelet Model ('lazy' CA)

cell → clot → cell → clot

draw → keywatch → display → screen

phase 1
Platelet Model (‘lazy’ CA)
Platelet Model (‘lazy’ CA)
Platelet Model ('lazy' CA)

- gen
- clot
- cell
- cell
- cell
- cell
- cell
- keywatch
- display
- screen
- draw

Phase 1
Platelet Model (‘lazy’ CA)
Platelet Model (‘lazy’ CA)
Platelet Model (‘lazy’ CA)

Performance: a cell only works when a clot boundary moves through. Run-time depends only on the number of clots; the clot sizes are now irrelevant (2.4 GHz. P IV-M).

<table>
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<tr>
<td>0</td>
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<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32</td>
<td>1070 (total jam)</td>
<td>0 (total jam)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Clot Frequency by Position by Size

2000 clots, probability 1/256
Clot Frequency by Position by Size

2000 clots, probability 2/256

frequency

reporting position

clot size
Clot Frequency by Position by Size

2000 clots, probability 3/256
Clot Frequency by Position by Size

2000 clots, probability 4/256

frequency

reporting position

clot size

10000
1000
100
10
1

10000
1000
100
10
1
Clot Frequency by Position by Size

2000 clots, probability 5/256

frequency

reporting position

clot size

10000
1000
100
10
1
10000
1000
100
10
1
0
20
10
Clot Frequency by Position by Size

2000 clots, probability 6/256

frequency

reporting position

clot size

10000
1000
100
10
1

10000
1000
100
10
1
Clot Frequency by Position by Size

2000 clots, probability 7/256

frequency

reporting position

clot size
Clot Frequency by Position by Size

2000 clots, probability 8/256

frequency

reporting position

clot size
Clot Frequency by Position by Size

2000 clots, probability 9/256

frequency

reporting position
clot size

10000
1000
100
10
1
10000
1000
100
10
1

10000
8000
6000
4000
2000
0
80
60
40
20
0
Maximum Clot Size by Position

The graph shows the maximum clot size by reporting position. Each line represents a different reporting position, with the legend indicating the specific position (e.g., 1/256, 2/256, etc.). The y-axis represents the maximum clot size on a logarithmic scale, ranging from 1 to 10,000. The x-axis represents the reporting position, ranging from 0 to 10,000.
3-D Bloodstream
3-D Bloodstream
3-D Bloodstream
3-D Bloodstream
3-D Bloodstream
3-D Bloodstream
3-D Bloodstream
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