Unstable-Funcons-beta: Multithreading *

The PLanCompS Project

Multithreading.cbs | PLAIN | PRETTY

OUTLINE

Multithreading Initialisation Activation Execution Termination Scheduling Entities Initialisation Activation Execution Termination Scheduling

Multithreading

Datatype	thread-ids
Datatype	threads
Funcon	thread-joinable
Funcon	thread-detached]

Initialisation

[Funcon initialise-multithreading]

Activation

Funcon	multithread
Funcon	thread-activate
Funcon	thread-detach]

Execution

Funcon	current-thread
Funcon	thread-atomic
Funcon	thread-yield
Funcon	thread-spin
Funcon	thread-suspend
Funcon	thread-resume]

^{*}Suggestions for improvement: plancomps@gmail.com.

Reports of issues: https://github.com/plancomps/CBS-beta/issues.

Termination

Funcon	thread-terminate
Funcon	is-thread-terminated
Funcon	thread-value
Funcon	thread-join
Funcon	thread-exterminate]

Scheduling

update-thread-stepping
update-thread-schedule
current-thread-schedule
is-thread-preemptible
thread-preemptible
thread-cooperative]

A thread consists of code that can be executed concurrently with code of other threads. The progress of the execution of the threads may be determined cooperatively by threads themselves, or by a preemptive scheduler (or by both).

Threads can be activated by the initial program or by other threads, and share access to the same entities (in contrast to processes). Synchronisation between threads can avoid interference (e.g., data races) arising from concurrent shared access. Synchronisation can also ensure *sequential consistency* of threads, where any concurrent execution corresponds to some (possibly unfair) interleaving of their separate execution steps. Synchronisation can be achieved by various kinds of locks and notifications.

A thread is a value containing a thunk. When a thread has been activated, execution of the body of the thunk can be interleaved with that of other activated threads, possibly subject to scheduling and synchronisation.

Activation of a thread generates a fresh thread-id for referring to it:

Auxiliary Datatype thread-ids ::= thread-id(_: atoms)

A thread is called joinable when other threads can wait for its termination. A joinable thread contains a list of the threads that are currently waiting to join it. A non-joinable thread is called detached:

Auxiliary Datatype threads ::= thread(_: thunks(values), _: (lists thread-ids)?)

Funcon thread-joinable(TH : thunks(values)) : \Rightarrow threads \rightarrow thread(TH, [])

Funcon thread-detached(TH : thunks(values)) : \Rightarrow threads \rightsquigarrow thread(TH)

In names of funcons and entities, and in informal explanations, a reference to a 'thread' generally concerns a thread-id, rather than a value of type threads. The only funcons that compute threads are thread-joinable(TH) and thread-detached(TH); thread-activate(THR) is the only funcon that takes an argument of type threads.

The thunk contained in a thread can be formed directly from a computation X by thunk closure X. Alternatively, supply(F, V) forms a thunk by supplying an argument value V to a function F without executing F (in contrast to apply(F, V), which forces the evaluation of the body of F).

The current state of a thread is either active, suspended, terminated, or deleted.

• Activation makes a thread active.

- An active thread can be suspended, and subsequently resumed.
- An active or suspended thread can be terminated.
- A thread can be deleted.

The following mutable entities represent the states of all activated threads.

Entities The thread-map contains all active and suspended threads:

Entity $\langle _, thread-map(_: maps(thread-ids, threads)) \rangle \longrightarrow \langle _, thread-map(_: maps(thread-ids, threads)) \rangle$

The active-thread-set distinguishes between active and suspended threads:

Entity	$\langle _, active-thread-set(_: sets(thread-ids)) \rangle \longrightarrow$
	$\langle _$, active-thread-set(_ : sets(thread-ids)) \rangle
Funcon	is-some-thread-active : \Rightarrow booleans
Rule	(is-some-thread-active, active-thread-set(ATS)) \longrightarrow
	not is-equal(ATS, { })
Funcon	is-some-thread-suspended : \Rightarrow booleans
Rule	$\langle { m is-some-thread-suspended, active-thread-set(ATS), thread-map(TM)} angle \longrightarrow$
	not is-equal(ATS, dom TM)

The thread-stepping entity identifies the thread whose step is currently being executed. When defined, it identifies an active thread:

Entity $\langle _, \text{thread-stepping}(_: \text{thread-ids?}) \rangle \longrightarrow \langle _, \text{thread-stepping}(_: \text{thread-ids?}) \rangle$

The terminated-thread-map contains the values computed by terminated joinable threads:

Entity $\langle _, terminated-thread-map(_: maps(thread-ids, values)) \rangle \longrightarrow \langle _, terminated-thread-map(_: maps(thread-ids, values)) \rangle$

Deleted threads are not contained in any of the above entities. Terminated detached threads are always deleted.

Scheduling information for each thread may affect the interleaving of thread steps:

Entity $\langle _, thread-schedule(_: sets(ground-values)) \rangle \longrightarrow \langle _, thread-schedule(_: sets(ground-values)) \rangle$

Scheduling can change dynamically between preemptive and cooperative.

Initialisation The entities used to model multithreading need initialising:

The initial values are generally quite obvious:

Auxiliary Funcon initialise-thread-map : \Rightarrow null-type

Rule initialise-thread-map \longrightarrow (null-value, thread-map(map()))

Auxiliary Funcon initialise-active-thread-set : \Rightarrow null-type

Rule initialise-active-thread-set \longrightarrow (null-value, active-thread-set{ })

Auxiliary Funcon initialise-thread-stepping : \Rightarrow null-type

Rule initialise-thread-stepping \longrightarrow (null-value, thread-stepping())

Auxiliary Funcon initialise-terminated-thread-map : \Rightarrow null-type

Rule initialise-terminated-thread-map \longrightarrow (null-value, terminated-thread-map(map()))

Auxiliary Funcon initialise-thread-schedule : \Rightarrow null-type

Rule initialise-thread-schedule \longrightarrow (null-value, thread-schedule{ })

Activation Multithreading can start by activating a single thread, which can then activate further threads:

Funcon multithread($_:\Rightarrow$ values) : \Rightarrow values

multithread X forms a joinable thread from thunk closure X and activates it. On normal termination of all threads, it gives the value computed by X. On abrupt termination (caused by a thread step, or by the failure of the check that all threads have terminated) the reason for it:

Rule multithread X ↔
sequential(
 initialise-multithreading,
 give(
 thread-activate thread-joinable thunk closure X,
 handle-abrupt(
 sequential(
 while-true(
 is-some-thread-active,
 sequential(update-thread-stepping, thread-step)),
 check not is-some-thread-suspended,
 thread-value given),
 given))))

The update-thread-stepping funcon determines the thread-id for the next step, which may depend on whether the previous step has yielded, on its preemptibility, and on the current scheduling.

A thread can activate the execution of thread-activates:

Funcon thread-activate(_: threads) : \Rightarrow thread-ids

When a thread is activated, a fresh thread-id is generated, and the thread is included in the thread-map and the active-thread-set:

 $\begin{array}{c} \mbox{thread-id}(\mbox{fresh-atom}) \longrightarrow TI \\ \mbox{map-unite}(\{TI \mapsto THR\}, TM) \rightsquigarrow TM' \\ \mbox{set-unite}(\{TI\}, ATS) \rightsquigarrow ATS' \\ \hline \hline \mbox{(thread-activate}(THR : threads), thread-map(TM), active-thread-set(ATS)) \longrightarrow \\ \hline \mbox{(TI, thread-map}(TM'), active-thread-set(ATS')) \\ \hline \end{array}$

A joinable thread can be detached after its activation, discarding its list of joining threads:

Funcon thread-detach(_: thread-ids) : \Rightarrow null-type

When the thread has not yet terminated, it remains in the thread-map:

When the thread has already terminated, detaching it deletes it from the terminated-thread-map:

 $Rule \quad \frac{\text{is-in-set}(TI, \text{dom } TMV) == (\text{true})}{\langle \text{thread-detach}(TI : \text{thread-ids}), \text{terminated-thread-map}(TMV) \rangle \longrightarrow} \\ \langle \text{null-value, terminated-thread-map}(TMV') \rangle$

(A funcon for making a detached thread joinable could be defined similarly.)

Execution The thread-stepping is undefined only before multithreading starts, and when all non-terminated threads are suspended.

Funcon current-thread : \Rightarrow thread-ids Rule (current-thread, thread-stepping(TI)) \longrightarrow TI

current-thread is only intended for use in threads:

Rule \langle current-thread, thread-stepping() $\rangle \rightarrow$ fail

Stepping The funcon thread-step executes a single step of the thread identified by thread-stepping:

Auxiliary Funcon thread-step : \Rightarrow null-type

Whenever THR executes a step and THR' represents the remaining steps, the thread-map is updated to map TI to THR'.

If the body of the thread can make a step, so can thread-step:

Rule
$$\frac{\operatorname{lookup}(TM, TI) \rightsquigarrow \operatorname{thread}(\operatorname{thunk} \operatorname{abstraction}(X), L^{?})}{\langle X, \operatorname{thread-stepping}(TI), \operatorname{thread-map}(TM) \rangle \longrightarrow}{\langle X', \operatorname{thread-stepping}(TI^{?}), \operatorname{thread-map}(TM') \rangle}$$

if-true-else(
is-in-set(TI, dom TM'),
map-override({TI \mapsto thread(thunk abstraction(X'), L^{?})}, TM'),
TM') \rightsquigarrow
TM''
 $\langle \operatorname{thread-step}, \operatorname{thread-stepping}(TI), \operatorname{thread-map}(TM) \rangle \longrightarrow}{\langle \operatorname{null-value}, \operatorname{thread-stepping}(TI^{?}), \operatorname{thread-map}(TM'') \rangle}$

The only other case for a next step is when a thread has terminated normally, and is to be removed from the executing thread map.

If it is detached, its computed value is discarded:

lookup(TM, TI) \rightsquigarrow thread(thunk abstraction(X)) $X \rightsquigarrow (V : values)$ map-delete(TM, {TI}) $\rightsquigarrow TM'$ set-difference(ATS, $\{TI\}$) \rightsquigarrow ATS' \langle thread-step, active-thread-set(ATS), thread-stepping(TI), thread-map(TM) $\rangle \rightarrow$ (null-value, active-thread-set(ATS'), thread-stepping(), thread-map(TM'))

If the thread is joinable, all its joining threads are resumed, and its computed value is made available in the terminated-thread-map:

lookup(TM, TI) \rightsquigarrow thread(thunk abstraction(X), [TI^*]) $X \rightsquigarrow (V : values)$ map-delete(TM, {TI}) $\rightsquigarrow TM'$ set-unite(set-difference(ATS, $\{TI\}$), $\{TI^*\}$) \rightsquigarrow ATS' map-unite(TVM, { $TI \mapsto V$ }) $\rightsquigarrow TVM'$ (thread-step, active-thread-set(ATS), thread-stepping(TI), thread-map(*TM*), terminated-thread-map(*TVM*)) \rightarrow (null-value, active-thread-set(ATS'), thread-stepping(), thread-map(TM'), terminated-thread-map(TVM')

Sync atomicity thread-atomic(X) computes X in a single transition. Assuming that the potentially interfering effects of X may only be updates on the store, thread suspension and/or resumption, and abrupt termination, and that X always terminates, the outcome of thread-atomic(X) is the same as that of computing X without preemption.

(The funcon atomic(X) generalises thread-atomic(X) to allow X with arbitrary effects. When the CBS notation " \rightarrow >1; \rightarrow >2" for composing transitions has been implemented by the interpreter generation tools, uses of thread-atomic(X) are to be replaced by atomic(X).)

Auxiliary Funcon thread-atomic($_:\Rightarrow$ values) : \Rightarrow values

	$\langle X, \text{store}(\sigma), \text{active-thread-set}(ATS), \text{thread-stepping}(TI) \rangle \xrightarrow{\text{abrupted}()} \langle X', \text{store}(\sigma'), \text{active-thread-set}(ATS'), \text{thread-stepping}(TI') \rangle$
Rule	$\langle \text{thread-atomic}(X'), \text{store}(\sigma'), \text{active-thread-set}(ATS'), \text{thread-stepping}(TI') \rangle \xrightarrow{\text{abrupted}()} \langle V, \text{store}(\sigma''), \text{active-thread-set}(ATS''), \text{thread-stepping}(TI''?) \rangle$
	$\langle \text{thread-atomic}(X), \text{store}(\sigma), \text{active-thread-set}(ATS), \text{thread-stepping}(TI) \rangle \xrightarrow{\text{abrupted}()} \langle V, \text{store}(\sigma''), \text{active-thread-set}(ATS''), \text{thread-stepping}(TI''?) \rangle$
	$\langle X, \text{store}(\sigma), \text{active-thread-set}(ATS), \text{thread-stepping}(TI) \rangle \xrightarrow{\text{abrupted}()} \langle X', \text{store}(\sigma'), \text{active-thread-set}(ATS'), \text{thread-stepping}(TI') \rangle$
Rule	$\langle \text{thread-atomic}(X'), \text{store}(\sigma'), \text{active-thread-set}(ATS'), \text{thread-stepping}(TI') \rangle \xrightarrow{\text{abrupted}(A)} \langle V, \text{store}(\sigma''), \text{active-thread-set}(ATS''), \text{thread-stepping}(TI''?) \rangle$
	$\langle \text{thread-atomic}(X), \text{store}(\sigma), \text{active-thread-set}(ATS), \text{thread-stepping}(TI) \rangle \xrightarrow{\text{abrupted}(A)} \langle V, \text{store}(\sigma''), \text{active-thread-set}(ATS''), \text{thread-stepping}(TI''?) \rangle$
Dulo	$X \xrightarrow{\text{abrupted}(A)} X'$
Rule	thread-atomic(X) $\xrightarrow{\text{abrupted}(A)}$ thread-atomic(X')
	$X \xrightarrow{\text{abrupted}()} (V : \text{values})$
Kule	thread-atomic(X) $\xrightarrow{\text{abrupted}()} V$
Rule	$X \xrightarrow{\operatorname{abrupted}(A)} (V : \operatorname{values})$
	thread-atomic(X) $\xrightarrow{\text{abrupted}(A)}$ thread-atomic(V)
Rule	thread-atomic(V : values) $\longrightarrow V$

Note that if the execution of thread-atomic(X) involves thread-yield() or thread-suspend(), this makes thread-stepping undefined, so it has to be the final step of X.

Yielding A thread can yield execution:

Funcon thread-yield(_: thread-ids?): \Rightarrow null-type

When the argument thread-id is omitted, the next thread to be executed is left undefined, to be determined by the scheduler:

Rule thread-yield() \rightarrow (null-value, thread-stepping())

When the argument thread-id is TI, it has to be an active thread:

Ruleis-in-set(TI, ATS) == (true)
$$\langle$$
thread-yield(TI : thread-ids), active-thread-set(ATS) $\rangle \longrightarrow$ \langle null-value, thread-stepping(TI) \rangle Ruleis-in-set(TI, ATS) == (false) \langle thread-yield(TI : thread-ids), active-thread-set(ATS) $\rangle \longrightarrow$ fail

thread-spin(X) repeatedly executes X while it fails, allowing interleaving with other threads.

Funcon thread-spin(
$$X : \Rightarrow$$
 values) : \Rightarrow values
 \rightsquigarrow else(
 X ,
sequential(thread-yield(), thread-spin(X)))

Suspension and resumption A thread may suspend one or more threads that are currently being executed:

Funcon thread-suspend(_: thread-ids⁺) :
$$\Rightarrow$$
 null-type
is-in-set(*TI*, {*TI*⁺}) == (false)
is-subset({*TI*⁺}, *ATS*) == (true)
set-difference(*ATS*, {*TI*⁺}) \Rightarrow *ATS'*
(thread-suspend(*TI*⁺ : thread-ids⁺), thread-stepping(*TI*), active-thread-set(*ATS*)) ----
(null-value, thread-stepping(*TI*), active-thread-set(*ATS'*))

If TI^+ includes the current thread, suspension is accompanied by yielding:

is-in-set(
$$TI$$
, { TI^+ }) == (true)
is-subset({ TI^+ }, ATS) == (true)
set-difference(ATS , { TI^+ }) $\rightsquigarrow ATS$

 $\langle null-value, thread-stepping(), active-thread-set(ATS') \rangle$

(Deadlock occurs if the last non-suspended thread suspends itself.)

A thread may resume any number of suspended threads:

Funconthread-resume(_: thread-ids*) :
$$\Rightarrow$$
 null-typeis-in-set(TI, {TI*}) == (false)set-intersect(ATS, {TI*}) == { }RuleRule \langle thread-resume(TI* : thread-ids*), thread-stepping(TI), active-thread-set(ATS) $\rangle \rightarrow$ \langle null-value, thread-stepping(TI), active-thread-set(ATS') \rangle

Termination If the thread-map becomes empty, and there are no suspended threads, the entire multithread computation terminates normally. If it becomes empty while suspended threads remain to be executed, this is regarded as deadlock, and the computation fails.

If the execution of an individual thread terminates normally, the body of its thunk gives its computed value. The thread is removed from the thread-map, and the computed value is added to the terminated-thread-map.

Abrupt termination of a thread body causes immediate abrupt termination of the entire multithread computation. This can be avoided by wrapping the bodies of all threads in appropriate handlers for abrupt termination.

A thread can terminate itself or another thread, optionally specifying its computed value:

Funcon thread-terminate(_: thread-ids, _: values?) : \Rightarrow null-type

When the thread is detached, no value is specified:

$$Rule \quad \begin{aligned} & \text{lookup}(TM, TI') \rightsquigarrow \text{thread}(\text{thunk abstraction } X) \\ & \text{map-delete}(TM, \{TI'\}) \rightsquigarrow TM' \\ & \text{set-difference}(ATS, \{TI'\}) \rightsquigarrow ATS' \\ & \text{when-true}(\text{not is-equal}(TI, TI'), TI) \rightsquigarrow TI^? \\ & \hline (\text{thread-terminate}(TI' : \text{thread-ids}), \text{thread-stepping}(TI), \\ & \text{thread-map}(TM), \text{active-thread-set}(ATS) \rangle \longrightarrow \\ & \text{(null-value, thread-stepping}(TI^?), \\ & \text{thread-map}(TM'), \text{active-thread-set}(ATS') \rangle \end{aligned}$$

When the thread is joinable, its value has to be specified:

 $Rule \qquad \begin{array}{l} \mbox{lookup}(TM, TI') \rightsquigarrow \mbox{thread}((\mbox{thunk abstraction } X), [TI^*]) \\ \mbox{map-delete}(TM, \{TI'\}) \rightsquigarrow TM' \\ \mbox{set-unite}(\mbox{set-difference}(ATS, \{TI'\}), \{TI^*\}) \rightsquigarrow ATS' \\ \mbox{map-unite}(TVM, \{TI' \mapsto V\}) \rightsquigarrow TVM' \\ \mbox{when-true}(\mbox{not is-equal}(TI, TI'), TI) \rightsquigarrow TI? \\ \mbox{when-true}(\mbox{not is-equal}(TI, TI'), TI) \rightsquigarrow TI? \\ \mbox{(thread-terminate}(TI' : \mbox{thread-ids}, V : \mbox{values}), \mbox{thread-stepping}(TI), \\ \mbox{thread-map}(TM), \mbox{terminated-thread-map}(TVM), \mbox{active-thread-set}(ATS)) \longrightarrow \\ \mbox{(null-value, \mbox{thread-stepping}(TI'), \\ \mbox{thread-map}(TM'), \mbox{terminated-thread-map}(TVM'), \mbox{active-thread-set}(ATS')) \end{array}$

A thread can test whether a joinable thread has terminated:

Funconis-thread-terminated(_: thread-ids) : \Rightarrow booleansRule(is-thread-terminated(TI : thread-ids), terminated-thread-map(TVM)) \rightarrow is-value(map-lookup(TVM, TI))

If so, it can get the computed value:

Funcon	thread-value(_ : thread-ids) : \Rightarrow values
Rule	$\langle \text{thread-value}(TI : \text{thread-ids}), \text{terminated-thread-map}(TVM) \rangle \longrightarrow$
	checked map-lookup(TVM, TI)

Joining a thread may cause suspension:

Funcon thread-join(_: thread-ids) : ⇒ null-type
lookup(*TM*, *TI'*)
$$\rightsquigarrow$$
 thread(*TH*, [*TI**])
map-override({*TI'* \mapsto thread(*TH*, [*TI**, *TI*])}, *TM*) \rightsquigarrow *TM'*
set-difference(*ATS*, {*TI*}) \rightsquigarrow *ATS'*
(thread-join(*TI'* : thread-ids), thread-map(*TM*), thread-stepping(*TI*),
active-thread-set(*ATS*)) \rightarrow
(null-value, thread-map(*TM'*),
thread-stepping(), active-thread-set(*ATS'*))

If a joinable thread has already terminated, the terminated-thread-map holds its value:

Rule
$$\frac{\text{is-value}(\text{lookup}(TVM, TI')) == \text{true}}{\langle \text{thread-join}(TI' : \text{thread-ids}), \text{terminated-thread-map}(TVM) \rangle \longrightarrow \text{null-value}}$$

Trying to join a detached thread fails:

$$Rule \quad \frac{\text{lookup}(TM, TI') \rightsquigarrow \text{thread}(TH)}{\langle \text{thread-join}(TI' : \text{thread-ids}), \text{thread-map}(TM) \rangle \longrightarrow}$$
fail
$$lookup(TM, TI') == ()$$

$$Rule \quad \frac{\text{lookup}(TVM, TI') == ()}{\langle \text{thread-join}(TI' : \text{thread-ids}), \text{thread-map}(TM), \text{terminated-thread-map}(TVM) \rangle \longrightarrow}$$
fail

Extermination of a thread both terminates it and prevents its subsequent inspection.

Funcon thread-exterminate(_: thread-ids) :
$$\Rightarrow$$
 null-type
 $TI' \neq TI$
map-delete(TM , { TI' }) $\rightsquigarrow TM'$
map-delete(TVM , { TI' }) $\rightsquigarrow TVM'$
set-difference(ATS , { TI' }) $\rightsquigarrow ATS'$
(thread-exterminate(TI' : thread-ids), thread-map(TM), thread-stepping(TI),
terminated-thread-map(TVM), active-thread-set(ATS)) \rightarrow
(null-value, thread-map(TM'), thread-stepping(TI),
terminated-thread-map(TVM'), active-thread-set(ATS'))

Scheduling A scheduler determines the interleaving of thread execution, based on mutable information regarding features such as preemptibility, priority, and time-sharing.

The next thread scheduled for execution is an active thread, or undefined when there are no active threads. It may be the same thread that last made a step.

(The following definitions allow update-thread-stepping to update thread-stepping to any valid thread. They are to be replaced by declarations of built-in funcons, allowing exploration of different interleavings using oracles.)

Funcon update-thread-stepping : \Rightarrow null-type

When thread-stepping is *TI* and that thread is not preemptible, update-thread-stepping has no effect:

Rule $\frac{\text{is-thread-preemptible}(TI) \longrightarrow \text{false}}{\langle \text{update-thread-stepping}, \text{thread-stepping}(TI) \rangle \longrightarrow \text{null-value}}$

When thread-stepping is TI and that thread is preemptible, or when thread-stepping is undefined, update-thread-stepping may set it to any active TI':

	is-thread-preemptible(TI) \longrightarrow (true)
Dula	some-element(ATS) \rightsquigarrow TI'
Ruie	\langle update-thread-stepping, thread-stepping(<i>TI</i>), active-thread-set(<i>ATS</i>) $\rangle \longrightarrow$
	$\langle null-value, thread-stepping(TI') \rangle$
Dulo	some-element(ATS) $\rightsquigarrow TI'$
киle	\langle update-thread-stepping, thread-stepping(), active-thread-set(ATS) $\rangle \longrightarrow$
	$\langle null-value, thread-stepping(TI') \rangle$

When there are no active threads, update-thread-stepping ensures that thread-stepping is undefined:

```
Rule (update-thread-stepping, thread-stepping(TI?), active-thread-set{ }) \rightarrow (null-value, thread-stepping())
```

Scheduling information for each thread can be inspected and updated:

Funconupdate-thread-schedule(_: sets(ground-values)) : \Rightarrow null-typeRuleupdate-thread-schedule(VS : sets(ground-values)) \rightarrow \langle null-value, thread-schedule(VS) \rangle

Funcon	current-thread-schedule : \Rightarrow sets(ground-values)
Rule	$\langle current-thread-schedule, thread-schedule(VS) angle \longrightarrow VS$
Datatype	thread-preemtibilities ::= thread-preemptible thread-cooperative
Funcon	is-thread-preemptible(_ : thread-ids) : \Rightarrow booleans \rightarrow not is-in-set(thread-cooperative, current-thread-schedule)

For now, all threads are preemptible unless the scheduling includes cooperative.

The representation of scheduling information is left open here, together with the details of how it affects the result of update-thread-stepping.