

POSIX Shared Memory

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Outline

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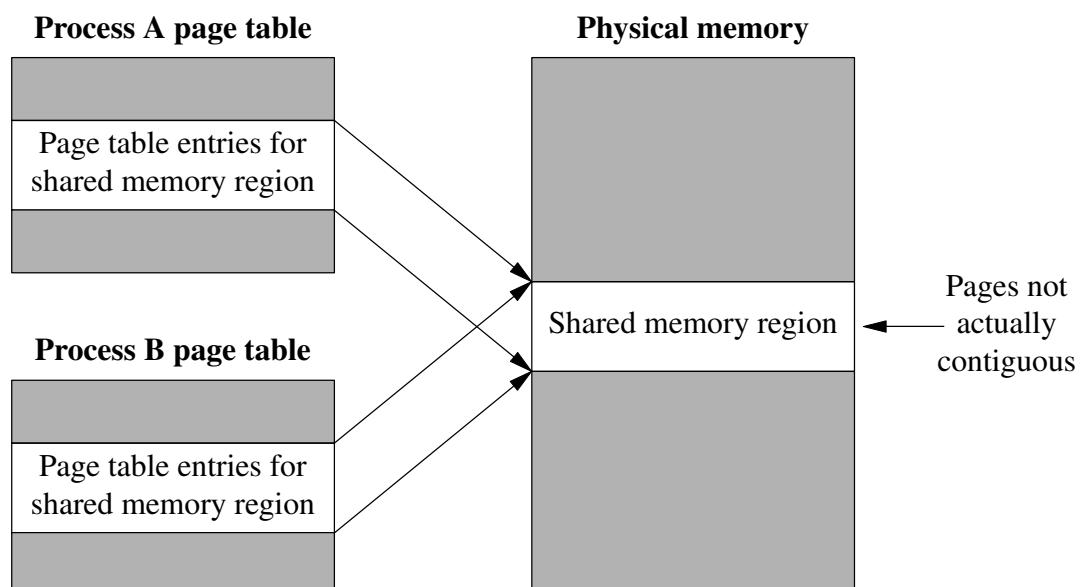
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Shared memory

- Data is exchanged by placing it in **memory pages shared by multiple processes**
 - Pages are **in user virtual address space** of each process



- **Data transfer is not mediated by kernel**
 - User-space copy makes data visible to other processes
 - ⇒ Very fast IPC
 - Compare with (e.g.) pipes and sockets:
 - Send requires copy from user to kernel memory
 - Receive requires copy from kernel to user memory
- But, **need to synchronize access** to shared memory
 - E.g., to prevent simultaneous updates
 - Commonly, semaphores are used



POSIX shared memory objects

- Implemented (on Linux) as files in a dedicated *tmpfs* filesystem
 - *tmpfs* == **memory-based filesystem** that employs swap space when needed
- Objects have **kernel persistence**
 - Objects exist until explicitly deleted, or system reboots
 - Can map an object, change its contents, and unmap
 - Changes will be visible to next process that maps object
- **Accessibility:** user/group owner + permission mask



POSIX shared memory APIs

- *shm_open()*: open existing shared memory (SHM) object/create and open new SHM object
 - Returns file descriptor that refers to open object
- *ftruncate()*: set size of SHM object
- *mmap()*: map SHM object into caller's address space
- *close()*: close file descriptor returned by *shm_open()*
- *shm_unlink()*: remove SHM object name, mark for deletion once all processes have closed
- *munmap()*: unmap SHM object (or part thereof) from caller's address space
- Compile with `cc -lrt`
 - (No longer needed since glibc 2.34)
- *shm_overview(7)* manual page



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Creating/opening a shared memory object: *shm_open()*

```
#include <fcntl.h>          /* Defines O_* constants */
#include <sys/stat.h>        /* Defines mode constants */
#include <sys/mman.h>
int shm_open(const char *name, int oflag, mode_t mode);
```

- Creates and opens a new object, or opens an existing object
- *name*: name of object (`/somename`)
- Returns file descriptor on success, or `-1` on error
 - This FD is used in subsequent APIs to refer to SHM
 - (The close-on-exec flag is automatically set for the FD)



[TLPI §54.2]

Creating/opening a shared memory object: *shm_open()*

```
#include <fcntl.h>          /* Defines O_* constants */
#include <sys/stat.h>        /* Defines mode constants */
#include <sys/mman.h>
int shm_open(const char *name, int oflag, mode_t mode);
```

oflag specifies flags controlling operation of call

- `O_CREAT`: create object if it does not already exist
- `O_EXCL`: (with `O_CREAT`) create object exclusively
 - Give error if object already exists
- `O_RDONLY`: open object for read-only access
- `O_RDWR`: open object for read-write access
 - NB: No `O_WRONLY` flag...
- `O_TRUNC`: truncate an existing object to zero length
 - Contents of existing object are destroyed



Creating/opening a shared memory object: *shm_open()*

```
#include <fcntl.h>          /* Defines 0_* constants */
#include <sys/stat.h>        /* Defines mode constants */
#include <sys/mman.h>
int shm_open(const char *name, int oflag, mode_t mode);
```

- *mode*: permission bits for new object
 - RWX for user / group / other
 - ANDed against complement of process umask
 -  Required argument; specify as 0 if opening existing object



Sizing a shared memory object

- New SHM objects have length 0
- We must set size using *ftruncate(fd, size)*
 - Bytes in newly extended object are initialized to 0
 - If existing object is shrunk, truncated data is lost
 - Typically, *ftruncate()* is called before *mmap()*
 - But the calls can also be in the reverse order
- Can obtain size of existing object using *fstat(fd, &statbuf)*
 - *st_size* field of *stat* structure



Mapping a shared memory object: *mmap()*

```
#include <sys/mman.h>
void *mmap(void *addr, size_t length, int prot, int flags,
           int fd, off_t offset);
```

- **Complex, general-purpose API** for creating **memory mapping** in caller's virtual address space
 - 15+ bits employed in *flags*
 - See TLPI Ch. 49 and *mmap(2)*
- We consider only use with POSIX SHM
 - In practice, only a few decisions to make
 - Usually just *length*, *prot*, and maybe *offset*



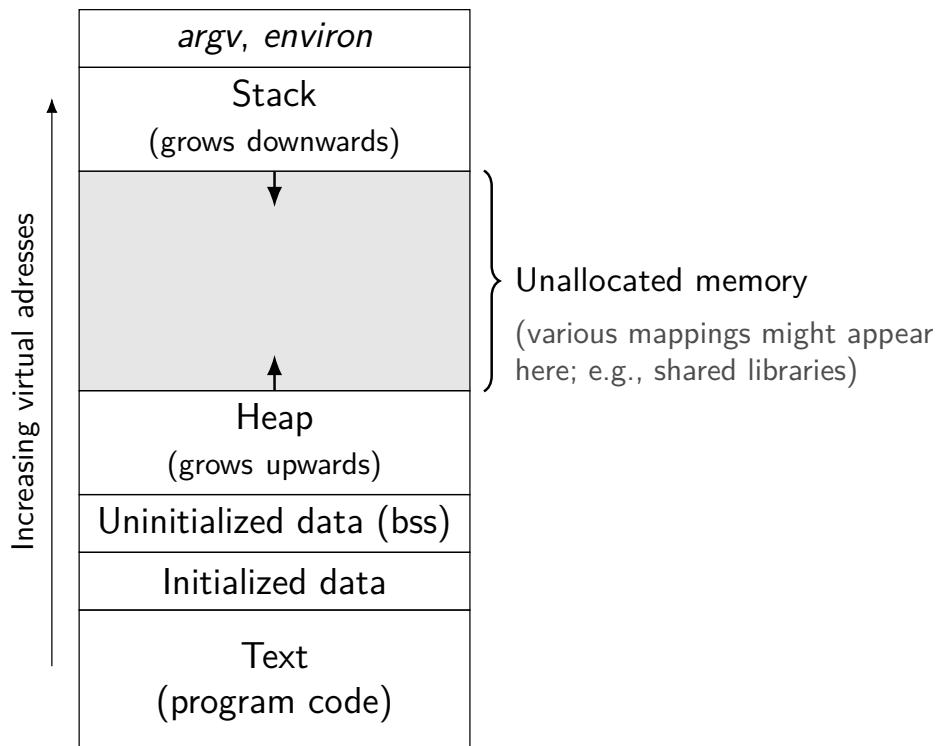
Mapping a shared memory object: *mmap()*

```
#include <sys/mman.h>
void *mmap(void *addr, size_t length, int prot, int flags,
           int fd, off_t offset);
```

- *fd*: file descriptor specifying object to map
 - Use FD returned by *shm_open()*
 - **Note:** once *mmap()* returns, *fd* can already be closed without affecting the mapping
- *addr*: address at which to place mapping in caller's virtual address space
 - Let's look at a picture...



Process memory layout (simplified)



Mapping a shared memory object: *mmap()*

```
include <sys/mman.h>
void *mmap(void *addr, size_t length, int prot, int flags,
           int fd, off_t offset);
```

- **addr**: address at which to place mapping in caller's virtual address space
 - But, this address may already be occupied
 - Therefore, kernel takes **addr** as only a **hint**
 - **Ignored** if address is already occupied
 - **addr == NULL** ⇒ let system choose address
 - Normally use **NULL** for POSIX SHM objects
- ***mmap()*** returns address actually used for mapping
 - Treat this like a **normal C pointer**
- On error, ***mmap()*** returns **MAP_FAILED**



Mapping a shared memory object: *mmap()*

```
include <sys/mman.h>
void *mmap(void *addr, size_t length, int prot, int flags,
           int fd, off_t offset);
```

- *length*: size of mapping
 - Normally should be \leq size of SHM object
 - System rounds up to multiple of system page size
 - *sysconf(_SC_PAGESIZE)*
- *offset*: starting point of mapping in underlying file or SHM object
 - Must be multiple of system page size
 - Commonly specified as 0 (map from start of object)



Mapping a shared memory object: *mmap()*

```
include <sys/mman.h>
void *mmap(void *addr, size_t length, int prot, int flags,
           int fd, off_t offset);
```

- *prot*: memory protections
 - \Rightarrow set protection bits in page-table entries for mapping
 - (Protections can later be changed using *mprotect(2)*)
 - *PROT_READ*: for read-only mapping
 - *PROT_READ | PROT_WRITE*: for read-write mapping
 - Must be consistent with access mode of *shm_open()*
 - E.g., can't specify *O_RDONLY* to *shm_open()* and then *PROT_READ | PROT_WRITE* for *mmap()*
 - Also *PROT_EXEC*: contents of memory can be executed



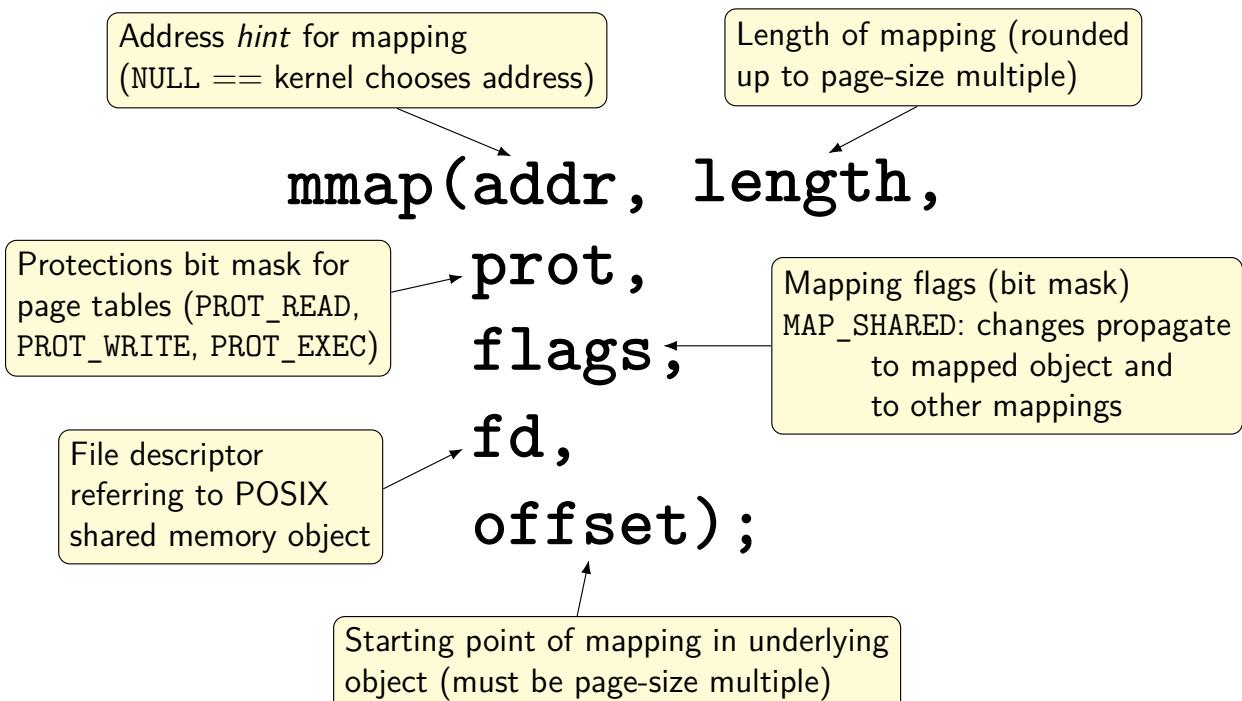
Mapping a shared memory object: `mmap()`

```
include <sys/mman.h>
void *mmap(void *addr, size_t length, int prot, int flags,
           int fd, off_t offset);
```

- *flags*: bit flags controlling behavior of call
 - POSIX SHM objects: need only `MAP_SHARED`
 - `MAP_SHARED` == make caller's modifications to mapped memory visible to other processes mapping same object



`mmap()` arguments for POSIX shared memory



Example: pshm/pshm_create_simple.c

```
./pshm_create_simple /shm-object-name size
```

- Create a SHM object with given name and size



Example: pshm/pshm_create_simple.c

```
size_t size = atoi(argv[2]);  
  
int fd = shm_open(argv[1], O_CREAT | O_EXCL | O_RDWR, S_IRUSR|S_IWUSR);  
ftruncate(fd, size);  
  
void *addr = mmap(NULL, size, PROT_READ | PROT_WRITE, MAP_SHARED, fd, 0);
```

- ➊ SHM object created with RW permission for user, opened with read-write access mode
- ➋ *fd* returned by *shm_open()* is used in *ftruncate()* + *mmap()*
- ➌ Same *size* is used in *ftruncate()* + *mmap()*
- ➍ *mmap()* not necessary, but demonstrates how it's done
- ➎ Mapping protections *PROT_READ | PROT_WRITE* consistent with *O_RDWR* access mode



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Using shared memory objects

- Address returned by *mmap()* can be used just like any C pointer
 - Usual approach: treat as pointer to some structured type
- Can read and modify memory via pointer

Example: pshm/pshm_write.c

```
./pshm_write /shm-name string
```

- Open existing SHM object *shm-name* and copy *string* to it



Example: pshm/pshm_write.c

```
int fd = shm_open(argv[1], O_RDWR, 0);
size_t len = strlen(argv[2]);
ftruncate(fd, len);
printf("Resized to %ld bytes\n", (long) len);

char *addr = mmap(NULL, len, PROT_READ | PROT_WRITE, MAP_SHARED,
                     fd, 0);
close(fd);           /* 'fd' is no longer needed */

printf("copying %ld bytes\n", (long) len);
memcpy(addr, argv[2], len);
```

- ① Open existing SHM object
- ② Resize object to match length of command-line argument
- ③ Map object at address chosen by system
- ④ Copy *argv[2]* to object (without '\0')
- ⑤ SHM object is closed and unmapped on process termination



Example: pshm/pshm_read.c

```
./pshm_read /shm-name
```

- Open existing SHM object *shm-name* and write the characters it contains to *stdout*



Example: pshm/pshm_read.c

```
int fd = shm_open(argv[1], O_RDONLY, 0);

struct stat sb;
fstat(fd, &sb);

char *addr = mmap(NULL, sb.st_size, PROT_READ, MAP_SHARED, fd, 0);

close(fd);           /* 'fd' is no longer needed */

write(STDOUT_FILENO, addr, sb.st_size);
write(STDOUT_FILENO, "\n", 1);
```

- Open existing SHM object
- Use *fstat()* to discover size of object
- Map the object, using size from *fstat()* (in *sb.st_size*)
- Write all bytes from object to *stdout*, followed by newline



Pointers in shared memory

A little care is required when storing pointers in SHM:

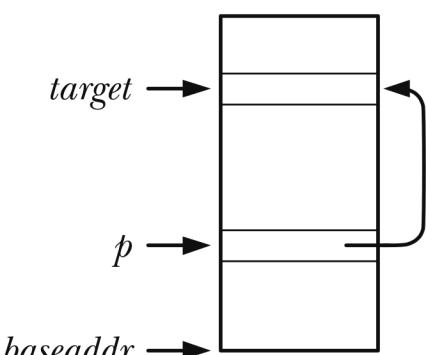
- Assuming we let system choose address at which to place SHM (as is recommended practice)
- ⇒ SHM may be placed at different address in each process
- Suppose we want to build dynamic data structures, with pointers inside shared memory...
 - E.g., linked list
- ⇒ Must **use relative offsets**, not absolute addresses
 - Absolute address has no meaning if mapping is at different location in another process



Pointers in shared memory

- Suppose we have situation at right
 - baseaddr* is start of shared memory region
 - Want to store pointer to *target* in **p*
- ⚠ Wrong way:

```
*p = target
```



- Correct method (relative offset):

```
*p = target - baseaddr;
```

- To dereference “pointer”:

```
target = baseaddr + *p;
```



The `/dev/shm` filesystem

On Linux:

- `tmpfs` filesystem used to implement POSIX SHM is mounted at `/dev/shm`
- Can list objects in directory with `ls(1)`
 - `ls -l` shows permissions, ownership, and size of each object

```
$ ls -l /dev/shm
-rw----- 1 mtk mtk 4096 Oct 27 13:58 myshm
-rw----- 1 mtk mtk    32 Oct 27 13:57 sem.mysem
```

- POSIX named semaphores are also visible in `/dev/shm`
 - As small SHM objects with names prefixed with “`sem.`”
- Can delete objects with `rm(1)`



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Synchronizing access to shared memory

- Accesses to SHM object by different processes must be synchronized
 - Prevent simultaneous updates
 - Prevent read of partially updated data
- Semaphores are a common technique
- POSIX unnamed semaphores are often convenient, since:
 - Semaphore can be placed inside shared memory region
 - (And thus, automatically shared)
 - We avoid task of creating name for semaphore



Synchronizing access to shared memory

- Other synchronization schemes are possible
 - E.g., if using SHM to transfer large data volumes:
 - Using semaphore pair to force alternating access is expensive (two context switches on each transfer!)
 - Divide SHM into (logically numbered) blocks
 - Use pair of pipes to exchange metadata about filled and emptied blocks (also integrates with *poll()*/*epoll!*)



Example: synchronizing with unnamed semaphores

- Example application maintains sequence number in SHM object
- Source files:
 - `pshm/pshm_seqnum.h`: defines structure stored in SHM object
 - `pshm/pshm_seqnum_init.c`:
 - Create and open SHM object
 - Initialize semaphore and (optionally) sequence number inside SHM object
 - `pshm/pshm_seqnum_get.c`:
 - Open existing SHM object
 - Display current value of sequence number
 - (Optionally) increase sequence number value



Example: `pshm/pshm_seqnum.h`

```
#include <sys/mman.h>
#include <fcntl.h>
#include <semaphore.h>
#include <sys/stat.h>
#include "tlpi_hdr.h"

struct shmbuf {      /* Shared memory buffer */
    sem_t sem;          /* Semaphore to protect access */
    int seqnum;         /* Sequence number */
};
```

- Header file used by `pshm/pshm_seqnum_init.c` and `pshm/pshm_seqnum_get.c`
- Includes headers needed by both programs
- Defines **structure used for SHM object**, containing:
 - **Unnamed semaphore** that guards access to sequence number
 - **Sequence number**



Example: pshm/pshm_seqnum_init.c

```
./pshm_seqnum_init /shm-name [init-value]
```

- Create and open SHM object
- Reset semaphore inside object to 1 (i.e., semaphore available)
- Initialize sequence number



Example: pshm/pshm_seqnum_init.c

```
shm_unlink(argv[1]);
int fd = shm_open(argv[1], O_CREAT | O_EXCL | O_RDWR, S_IRUSR | S_IWUSR);

ftruncate(fd, sizeof(struct shmbuf));
struct shmbuf *shmp = mmap(NULL, sizeof(struct shmbuf),
                           PROT_READ | PROT_WRITE, MAP_SHARED, fd, 0);
sem_init(&shmp->sem, 1, 1);
if (argc > 2)
    shmp->seqnum = atoi(argv[2]);
```

- ① Delete previous instance of SHM object, if it exists
- ② Create and open SHM object
- ③ Use *ftruncate()* to adjust size of object to match structure
- ④ Map object, using size of structure
- ⑤ Initialize semaphore state to “available”
 - *pshared* specified as 1, for process sharing of semaphore
- ⑥ If *argv[2]* supplied, initialize sequence # to that value
 - Newly extended bytes of SHM object are initialized to 0



Example: pshm/pshm_seqnum_get.c

```
./pshm_seqnum_get /shm-name [run-length]
```

- Open existing SHM object
- Fetch and display current value of sequence number in SHM object *shm-name*
- If *run-length* supplied, add to sequence number



Example: pshm/pshm_seqnum_get.c

```
int fd = shm_open(argv[1], O_RDWR, 0);  
  
struct shmbuf *shmp = mmap(NULL, sizeof(struct shmbuf),  
                           PROT_READ | PROT_WRITE, MAP_SHARED, fd, 0);
```

- Open existing SHM object
- Map object, using size of *shmbuf* structure



Example: pshm/pshm_seqnum_get.c

```
sem_wait(&shmp->sem);
printf("Current value of sequence number: %d\n", shmp->seqnum);

if (argc > 2) {
    int runLength = atoi(argv[2]);
    if (runLength <= 0)
        fprintf(stderr, "Invalid run-length\n");
    else {
        sleep(3); /* Make update slow */
        shmp->seqnum += runLength;
        printf("Updated sequence number\n");
    }
}
sem_post(&shmp->sem);
```

- Reserve semaphore before touching sequence number
- Display current value of semaphore
- If (nonnegative) *argv[2]* provided, add to sequence number
 - Sleep during update, to see that other processes are blocked
- Release semaphore



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API summary

```
int shm_open(const char *name, int oflag, mode_t mode);
    // Open or create and open shared memory object
    // Returns file descriptor

int ftruncate(int fd, off_t length);
    // Set size of shared memory object referred to by 'fd'

void *mmap(void *addr, size_t length, int prot,
    int flags, int fd, off_t offset);
    // Map SHM object referred to by 'fd'

int fstat(int fd, struct stat *statbuf);
    // Retrieve 'stat' structure describing SHM object
    // (e.g., statbuf->st_size is object size)

int sem_init(sem_t *sem, int pshared, unsigned int value);
    // Initialize POSIX unnamed semaphore

// Operations on POSIX semaphores:
int sem_post(sem_t *sem);           // Increment
int sem_wait(sem_t *sem);         // Decrement
```



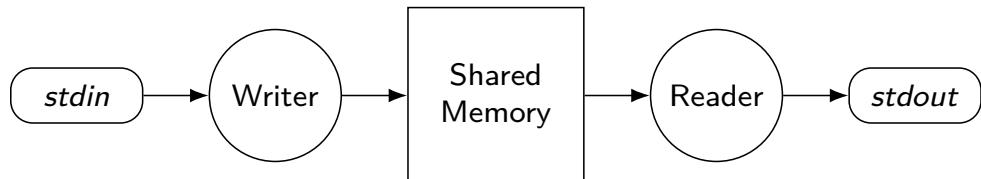
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Exercises

1 Write two programs that exchange a stream of data of arbitrary length via a POSIX shared memory object [Shared header file: `pshm/pshm_xfr.h`]:

- The “writer” creates and initializes the shared memory object and semaphores used by both programs, and then reads blocks of data from `stdin` and copies them a block at a time to the shared memory region [Template: `pshm/ex.pshm_xfr_writer.c`].
- The “reader” copies each block of data from the shared memory object to `stdout` [Template: `pshm/ex.pshm_xfr_reader.c`].



Note the following points:

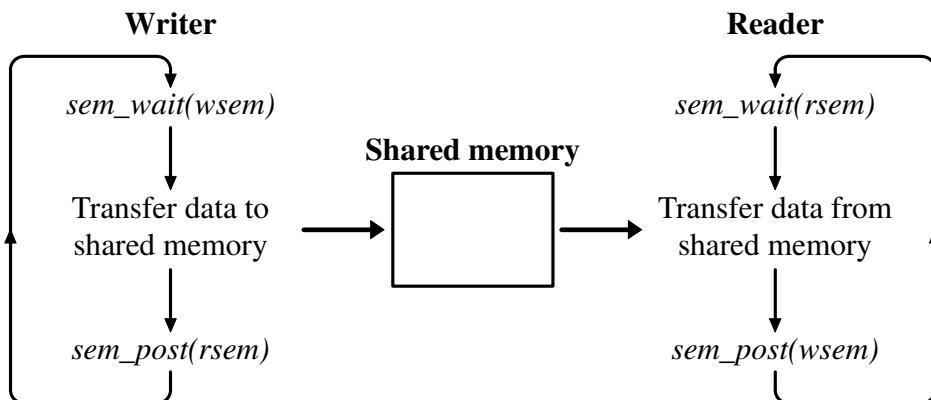
- Use the structure defined in `pshm/pshm_xfr.h` for your shared memory.

[Exercise continues on next page]



Exercises

- You must ensure that the writer and reader have **exclusive, alternating access** to the shared memory region (so that, for example, the writer does not copy new data into the region before the reader has copied the current data to `stdout`). The following diagram shows how two semaphores can be used to achieve this. The semaphores should be initialized as `wsem=1` and `rsem=0`, so that the writer has first access to the shared memory.



(The simplest approach is to use two **unnamed** semaphores stored inside the shared memory object; see the structure definition in `pshm/pshm_xfr.h`.)

[Exercise continues on next page]



Exercises

- When the “writer” reaches end of file, it should provide an indication to the “reader” that there is no more data. To do this, maintain a byte-count field in the shared memory region which the “writer” uses to inform the “reader” how many bytes are to be written. Setting this count to 0 can be used to signal end-of-file. Once it has sent the last data block, the “writer” should unlink the shared memory object.
- Test your programs using a large file that contains random data:

```
$ dd if=/dev/urandom of=infile count=100000
$ ./ex.pshm_xfr_writer < infile &
$ ./ex.pshm_xfr_reader > outfile
$ diff infile outfile
```

There is also a target in the `Makefile` for performing this test:

```
make pshm_xfr_test
```

[An optional exercise follows on the next page]



Exercises

- 2 Create a file of a suitable size (e.g., 512 MB in the following):

```
$ dd if=/dev/urandom of=/tmp/infile count=1000000
```

Then edit the `BUF_SIZE` value in the `pshm/pshm_xfr.h` header file to vary the value from 10'000 down to 10 in factors of 10, in each case measuring the time required for the reader to complete execution:

```
$ ./ex.pshm_xfr_writer < /tmp/infile &
$ time ./ex.pshm_xfr_reader > /dev/null
```

What is the reason for the variation in the time measurements?

