Distributed Systems

13. Concurrency

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Why do we lock access?

- Locking (leasing) provides mutual exclusion
  - Only one process at a time can access the data (or service)
- Allows us to achieve *isolation*
  - Other processes will not see or be able to access intermediate results

Example:

```plaintext
Lock(table=checking_account, row=512348)
Lock(table=savings_account, row=512348)
checking_account.total = checking_account.total - 5000
checking_account.total = checking_account.total + 5000
Release(table=savings_account, row=512348)
Release(table=checking_account, row=512348)
```
Schedules

Transactions must be scheduled so that data is serially equivalent

How?

– Use mutual exclusion to ensure that only one transaction executes at a time
– Allow multiple transactions to execute concurrently
  • but ensure serializability
⇒ concurrency control

• schedule: valid order of interleaving
Two-phase locking

- Transactions run concurrently until they compete for the same resource
  - Only one will get to go … others wait

- Grab exclusive locks on a resource
  - Lock data that is used by the transaction (e.g., fields in a DB, parts of a file)
  - Lock manager

- Two-phase locking
  - phase 1: growing phase: acquire locks
  - phase 2: shrinking phase: release locks

- Transaction **not allowed** new locks after it has released a lock
  - This ensures serial ordering on resource access
Without 2-phase locking

Transaction 1

- Lock("name")
  name="Bob"
- Release("name")
- Lock("age")
  age=72
- Release("age")

Transaction 2

- Lock("name")
  name="Linda"
- Release("name")
- Lock("age")
  age=85
- Release("age")
- Read name,age
  name="Linda"
  age="72"

Transaction 3

- Read name,age
  name="Linda"
  age="72"
With 2-phase locking

Transaction 1
Lock("name")
  name="Bob"
Release("name")
Lock("age")
  age=72
Release("age")

Transaction 2
Lock("name")
  name="Linda"
Release("name")
Read name, age
  name="Linda"
  age="72"

Transaction 3
Lock("age")
  age=85
Release("age")

Cannot grab a lock if you already released any locks
With 2-phase locking

Transaction 1

Lock("name")
Lock("age")
name="Bob"
Release("name")
age=72
Release("age")

Transaction 2

Lock("name")
Lock("age")
name="Linda"
Release("name")
age=85
Release("age")

Transaction 3

Read name,age
name="Linda"
age="85"
Strict two-phase locking

• If a transaction aborts
  – Any other transactions that have accessed data from released locks (uncommitted data) have to be aborted
  – **Cascading aborts**

• Avoid this situation:
  – Transaction **holds all locks** until it commits or aborts

• **Strict two-phase locking**
Increasing concurrency: locking granularity

• Typically there will be many objects in a system
  – A typical transaction will access only a few of them
    (and is unlikely to clash with other transactions)

• *Granularity* of locking affects concurrency
  – Smaller amount locked → higher concurrency
Multiple readers/single writer

• Improve concurrency by supporting **multiple readers**
  – There is no problem with multiple transactions *reading* data from the same object
  – Only one transaction should be able to write to an object
    • and no other transactions should read that data

• Two types of locks: **read locks** and **write locks**
  – Set a *read lock* before doing a read on an object
    • A *read lock* prevents writing
  – Set a *write lock* before doing a write on an object
    • A *write lock* prevents reading and writing
  – Block (wait) if transaction cannot get the lock
Multiple readers/single writer

If a transaction has

- No locks for an object:
  - another transaction may obtain a *read* or *write* lock

- A *read* lock for an object:
  - another transaction may obtain a *read lock* but must wait for a *write* lock

- A *write* lock for an object:
  - another transaction will have to wait for a *read* or a *write* lock
Increasing concurrency: two-version locking

• A transaction can write *tentative versions* of objects
  – Others read from the original (committed) version

• *Read* operations wait if another transaction is committing the same object

• Allows for more concurrency than read-write locks
  – Transactions with writes risk waiting or rejection at commit
  – Transactions cannot commit if other uncompleted transactions have read the objects and committed
Two-version locking

- Three types of locks:
  1. *read* lock
  2. *write* lock
  3. *commit* lock
     - Transaction cannot get a *read* or *write* lock if there is a commit lock

- When the transaction coordinator receives a request to commit
  - Write locks: convert to *commit locks*
  - Read locks: wait until the transactions that set these locks have completed and locks are released

- Compare with read/write locks:
  - *read* operations are delayed only while transactions are committed
  - BUT *read* operations of one transaction can cause a delay in the committing of other transactions
Problems with locking

• Locks have an overhead: maintenance, checking

• Locks can result in deadlock

• Locks may reduce concurrency by having transactions hold the locks until the transaction commits (strict two-phase locking)
Optimistic concurrency control

• In many applications the chance of two transactions accessing the same object is low

• Allow transactions to proceed without obtaining locks

• Check for conflicts at commit time
  – Check versions of objects against versions read at start
  – If there is a conflict then abort and restart some transaction

• Phases:
  – Working phase: write results to a private workspace
  – Validation phase: check if there’s a conflict with other transactions
  – Update phase: make tentative changes permanent
Timestamp ordering

• Assign unique timestamp to a transaction when it begins

• Each object two timestamps associated with it:
  – Read timestamp: updated when the object is read
  – Write timestamp: updated when the object is written

• Good ordering:
  – Object’s read and write timestamps will be older than the current transaction if it wants to write an object
  – Object’s write timestamps will be older than the current transaction if it wants to read an object

• Abort and restart transaction for improper ordering
Leasing versus Locking

• Common approach:
  – Get a lock for exclusive access to a resource

• But locks are not fault-tolerant

• It’s safer to use a lock that expires instead
  – Lease = lock with a time limit

• Lease time: Trade-offs
  – Long leases with possibility of long wait after failure
  – Or short leases that need to be renewed frequently

• Danger of leases
  – Possible loss of transactional integrity
Hierarchical Leases

• For fault tolerance, leases should be granted by consensus
• But consensus protocols aren’t super-efficient
• Compromise: use a hierarchy
  – Use consensus as an election algorithm to elect a coordinator
  – Coordinator is granted a lease on a large set of resources
    • Coarse-grained locking: large regions; long time periods
  – Coordinator hands out sub-leases on those resources
    • Fine-grained locking: small regions (objects); short time periods
• When the coordinator’s lease expires
  – Consensus algorithm is run again
The End