Distributed Systems


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A note about relevancy

This describes the Google search cluster architecture in the mid 2000s. The search infrastructure was overhauled in 2010.

Nevertheless, the lessons are still valid and this demonstrates how incredible scalability has been achieved using commodity computers by exploiting parallelism.
Search flow

What needs to happen when you do a search?

- DNS lookup
- Submit query
- Receive request
- Parse query
- Search the web
- Rank results
- Return response
Some statistics

• 3.5 billion searches/day – trillions per year

• Volume grows ~10% per year – ability to scale is crucial

• 16-20% of searches have never been issued before
  – Caching won’t help much

• Average user session < 1 minute

• Hundreds of billions of web pages indexed
  – Index > 100 million gigabytes ($10^{17}$ bytes)

• 60% of searches are done via a mobile device
What is needed?

• A single Google search query
  – Reads 10s-100s of terabytes of data
  – Uses tens of billions of CPU cycles

• Environment needs to support tens of thousands of queries per second

• Environment must be
  – Fault tolerant
  – Economical (price-performance ratio matters)
  – Energy efficient (this affects price; watts per unit of performance matters)

• Parallelize the workload
  – CPU performance matters less than price/performance ratio
Best Practices?

Secure your IT infrastructure with large enterprise servers

Unlock the full potential of your data with the servers designed to meet mission-critical workloads while maintaining privacy across your entire hybrid cloud environment.

Meet the IBM large enterprise servers

Ensure that your infrastructure is ready to unlock new business opportunities with high-performance servers that ensure data privacy and security across your hybrid cloud.

“Enterprise-grade” components
Key design principles

• Have **reliability reside in software**, not hardware
  – Use low-cost (unreliable) commodity PCs to build a high-end cluster
  – Replicate services across machines & detect failures

• Design for **best total throughput**, not peak server response time
  – Response time can be controlled by parallelizing requests
  – Rely on replication: this helps with availability too

• **Price/performance ratio** more important than peak performance
Life of a query – step 1: DNS

• User’s browser must map google.com to an IP address

• “google.com” comprises multiple clusters distributed worldwide
  – Each cluster contains thousands of machines

• DNS-based load balancing
  – Select cluster by taking user’s geographic & network proximity into account
  – Load balance across clusters

1. Contact DNS server(s) to find the DNS server responsible for google.com
2. Google’s DNS server returns addresses based on location of request
3. Contact the appropriate cluster
Life of a query – step 2: Send HTTP request

- IP address corresponds to a load balancer within a cluster

- **Load balancer**
  - Monitors the set of **Google Web Servers (GWS)**
  - Performs local load balancing of requests among available servers

- **GWS** machine receives the query
  - Coordinates the execution of the query
  - Formats results into an HTML response to the user
Step 3. Find documents via inverted index

Index Servers

- Map each query word → \{list of document IDs\} (this is the hit list)
  - Inverted index generated from web crawlers → MapReduce

- Intersect the hit lists of each per-word query
  - Compute relevance score for each document
  - Determine set of documents
  - Sort by relevance score
Parallel search through an inverted index

- Inverted index is 10s of terabytes
- Search is parallelized
  - Index is divided into *index shards*
    - Each index shard is built from a randomly chosen subset of documents
    - Pool of machines serves requests for each shard
    - Pools are load balanced
  - Query goes to one machine per pool responsible for a shard
- Final result is ordered list of document identifiers (*docids*)
Sharded & Replicated Index Servers

Shard 0

PC
PC
PC
PC
PC

Shard 1

PC
PC
PC
PC
PC

Shard 2

PC
PC
PC
PC
PC

Shard 3

PC
PC
PC
PC
PC

Shard N

PC
PC
PC
PC
PC
Step 4. Get title & URL for each docid

For each docid, the GWS looks up

- Page title
- URL
- Relevant text: document summary specific to the query

This is handled by document servers (docservers)
Parallelizing document lookup

• Like index lookup, document lookup is partitioned & parallelized
• Documents distributed into smaller shards
  – Each shard = subset of documents
• Pool of load-balanced servers responsible for processing each shard

*Together, document servers access a cached copy of the entire web!*
Additional operations

• In parallel with search:
  – Send query to a spell-checking system
  – Send query to an ad-serving system to generate ads

• When all the results are in, GWS generates HTML output:
  – Sorted query results
    • With page titles, summaries, and URLs
    • Ads
    • Spelling correction suggestions
Lesson: exploit parallelism

• Instead of looking up matching documents in a large index
  – Do many lookups for documents in smaller indices
  – Merge results together: merging is simple & inexpensive

• Divide the stream of incoming queries
  – Among geographically-distributed clusters
  – Load balance among query servers within a cluster

• Linear performance improvement with more machines
  – Shards don’t need to communicate with each other
  – Increase # of shards across more machines to improve performance
Updating & scaling are easy

Updates

• Updates infrequent compared to reads

• Load balancers make updating easy
  – Take the system out of the load balancer during the update
  – No need to worry about data integrity and locks

• Shards don’t need to communicate with each other

Scaling

• Add more shards as # of documents grows

• Add more replicas if throughput increase is needed
Summary

• Use software to achieve reliability
• Use replication for high throughput
• Price-performance is more important than peak CPU
• Use commodity hardware
The End