Bayou: Replication with Weak Inter-Node Connectivity

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CS GZ03 / M030
28th October 2015
Context: Availability vs. Consistency

- NFS, Ivy, 2PC all had single points of failure; not available under failures
- Paxos allows view-change to elect primary, thus state machine replication
  - Strong consistency model: all operations in same order at all replicas, always appearance of single system-wide order for all operations
  - Strong reachability requirement: majority of nodes must be reachable by leader
- If reachability weaker, can we provide any consistency when we replicate?
Bayou:
Calendar Application Case Study

• Today’s lecture:
  – Bayou’s office calendar application as case study in ordering and conflicts in a distributed system with poor connectivity

• Each calendar entry: room, time, and set of participants

• Want everyone to see same set of entries (eventually)
  – else, users may double-book room, avoid using unoccupied room, &c.
Traditional Calendar Application: One Central Server

- Ordering of users’ requests: only one copy, server picks order
- Conflict resolution: server checks for conflicts (i.e., “is this room already booked during this period?”) before accepting updates
  - Returns error to user if conflict; user decides what to do
What’s Wrong with Central Server?

• Want my calendar on my iPhone
  – i.e., each user wants database replicated on his PDA or laptop
  – No master copy

• iPhone has only intermittent connectivity
  – 3G expensive when roaming, WiFi not everywhere; no connectivity on many flights
  – Bluetooth useful for direct contact with other calendar users’ PDAs, but very short range
Simple Proposal: Swap Complete DBs

- Suppose two users in Bluetooth range
- Each sends entire calendar DB to other, as with “classic” Palm or iPhone sync
- Possibly lots of network bandwidth
- What if conflict, i.e., two concurrent meetings?
  - iPhone sync just keeps both meetings!
  - Want to do better: automatic conflict resolution
Automatic Conflict Resolution

- Can’t just view DB items as bits—too little information to resolve conflicts!
  - “Both files have changed” can falsely conclude entire DBs conflict
  - “Distinct record in each DB changed” can falsely conclude no conflict

- Want to build intelligent DB app that knows how to resolve conflicts
  - More like users’ updates: read DB, think, change request to eliminate conflict
  - Must ensure all nodes resolve conflicts in same way to keep replicas consistent
Insight: Ordering of Updates

- Maintain ordered list of updates at each node
- Make sure every node holds same updates
- Make sure every node applies updates in same order
- Make sure updates are deterministic function of DB contents
- If we obey above, “sync” really just a simple merge of two ordered lists!
What’s in a Write?

• Each node’s ordered list of writes: write log

• Suppose calendar update takes form:
  – “10 AM meeting, Room 6.12, Mark and Brad”
  – **Sufficient for our goal?**

• Better: “1-hour meeting, Room 6.12, Mark and Brad, at 9, else 10, else 11”
  – Also include unique ID: <local-time-stamp, originating-node-ID>
What’s in a Write?

**Instructions for write** more than data to write
Write log really an “instruction” for calendar program
Want all nodes to execute **same instructions in same order,** eventually

• Better: “1-hour meeting, Room 6.12, Mark and Brad, at 9, else 10, else 11”
  – Also include unique ID: <local-time-stamp, originating-node-ID>
Write Log Example

- \langle 701, A \rangle: Node A asks for meeting M1 to occur at 10 AM, else 11 AM
- \langle 770, B \rangle: Node B asks for meeting M2 to occur at 10 AM, else 11 AM
- Let’s agree to sort by write ID (e.g., \langle 701, A \rangle)
- As “writes” spread from node to node, nodes may initially apply updates in different orders
Write Log Example (2)

- Each newly seen write merged into log
- Log replayed
  - May cause calendar displayed to user to change!
  - i.e., all entries really “tentative,” nothing stable
- After everyone has seen all writes, everyone will agree (contain same state)
Global Time Synchronization Impossible

• Does this mean that globally ordering writes by local timestamps impossible?
• No—timestamps just allow agreement on order
  – Nodes may have wrong clocks
  – OK, so long as users don’t expect writes to reach calendar in real-time order made
Timestamps for Write Ordering: Limitations

• Ordering by write ID arbitrarily constrains order
  – Never know if some write from past hasn’t yet reached your node
  – So all entries in log must be tentative forever
  – And you must store entire log forever
• Problem: how can we allow committing a tentative entry?
  – So we can have meetings and trim logs
Criteria for Committing Writes

• For log entry X to be committed, everyone must agree on:
  – Total order of all previous committed entries
  – Fact that X is next in total order
  – Fact that all uncommitted entries are “after” X
How Bayou Agrees on Total Order of Committed Writes

• One node designated “primary replica”
• Primary marks each write it receives with permanent CSN (commit sequence number)
  – That write is committed
  – Complete timestamp is <CSN, local-TS, node-id>
• Nodes exchange CSNs
• CSNs define total order for committed writes
  – All nodes eventually agree on total order
  – Uncommitted writes come after all committed writes
Showing Users that Writes Have Committed

- Still not safe to show users that an appointment request has committed
- Entire log up to newly committed entry must be committed
  - else there might be earlier committed write a node doesn’t know about!
  - …and upon learning about it, would have to re-run conflict resolution

- Result: committed write not stable unless node has seen all prior committed writes
Showing Users that Writes Have Committed

Bayou propagates writes between nodes to enforce this invariant
i.e., **Bayou propagates writes in order**

must be committed
– else there might be earlier committed write a node doesn’t know about!
– ...and upon learning about it, would have to re-run conflict resolution

• Result: **committed write not stable unless node has seen all prior committed writes**
Committed vs. Tentative Writes

• Can now show user if a write has committed
  – When node has seen every CSN up to that point, as guaranteed by propagation protocol

• Slow or disconnected node cannot prevent commits!
  – Primary replica allocates CSNs; global order of writes may not reflect real-time write times

• What about tentative writes, though—how do they behave, as seen by users?
Tentative Writes

- Two nodes may disagree on meaning of tentative (uncommitted) writes
  - Even if those two nodes have synced with each other!
  - Only CSNs from primary replica can resolve these disagreements permanently
Example: Disagreement on Tentative Writes

time

A

B

C

logs
Example: Disagreement on Tentative Writes

\[ W <0, C> \]
Example: Disagreement on Tentative Writes

A

B

C

W <0, C>

logs
Example: Disagreement on Tentative Writes

A

B

C

\[ W \langle 0, C \rangle \]

\[ W \langle 1, B \rangle \]
Example: Disagreement on Tentative Writes

```
time
  A
  B
  C

W <0, C>
W <1, B>
```

logs

- A
- B
- C

- <0, C>
- <1, B>
Example: Disagreement on Tentative Writes

A

B

C

W <0, C>

W <1, B>

W <2, A>

W <1, B>

<0, C>

<1, B>

<0, C>

logs
Example: Disagreement on Tentative Writes

- Time logs:
  - A: W <2, A>
  - B: W <1, B>
  - C: W <0, C>

- Logs:
  - 2, A: Blank
  - 1, B: Blank
  - 0, C: Blank
Example: Disagreement on Tentative Writes

- A: W <2, A>
- B: W <1, B>
- C: W <0, C>

sync (3)
Example: Disagreement on Tentative Writes

logs

time

A

B

C

W <1, B>

W <2, A>

sync (3)

W <0, C>

<1, B>

<2, A>

<1, B>

<2, A>

<0, C>
Example: Disagreement on Tentative Writes

- Time: A > B > C

- Logs:
  - A: <1, B>, <2, A>
  - B: <1, B>, <2, A>
  - C: <0, C>

- Sync:
  - Sync (3): B to A
  - Sync (4): A to B, B to C

- Writes:
  - W <0, C>
  - W <1, B>
  - W <2, A>
Example: Disagreement on Tentative Writes

W <0, C>
W <1, B>
W <2, A>

sync (3)
sync (4)

logs

<1, B>
<0, C>
<2, A>

A
B
C

time
Example: Disagreement on Tentative Writes

- **time**
- A
- B
- C

**Logs**
- A: <1, B> <2, A>
- B: <0, C> <1, B> <2, A>
- C: <0, C> <1, B> <2, A>

**Syncs**
- sync (3) between A and C
- sync (4) between B and C
Trimming the Log

- When nodes receive new CSNs, can discard all committed log entries seen up to that point
  - Update protocol guarantees CSNs received in order
- Instead, keep copy of whole database as of highest CSN
  - By definition, official committed database
  - Everyone does (or will) agree on contents
  - Entries never need go through conflict resolution
Trimming the Log

- When nodes receive new CSNs, can discard all committed log entries seen up to that point

**Result: no need to keep years of log data!**

- Instead, keep copy of whole database as of highest CSN
  - By definition, official committed database
  - Everyone does (or will) agree on contents
  - Entries never need go through conflict resolution
Ordering of Commits by Primary Replica

• Can primary commit writes in any order it pleases?
  – Suppose user creates appointment, then decides to delete it, or change attendee list
  – What order must these ops take in CSN order?
    • Create first, then delete or modify
    • Must be true in every node’s view of tentative log entries, too!

• Total order of writes must preserve order of writes made at each node
  – Not necessarily order among different nodes’ writes
How Does Primary Replica Commit Each Node’s Writes in Order?

- Nodes don’t quite use real-time clocks for timestamps—use Lamport logical clocks
  - Anytime see message with later timestamp than current time, set clock to after that timestamp
- All nodes send updates in order
- So primary receives updates in per-node causal order, and commits them in that order
Syncing with Trimmed Logs

• Suppose nodes discard all writes in log with CSNs
  – Just keep copy of “stable” DB, reflecting discarded entries

• Cannot receive writes that conflict with DB
  – Only could be if write has CSN less than a discarded CSN
  – Already saw all writes with lower CSNs in right order—if see them again, can discard!
Syncing with Trimmed Logs (2)

• To propagate to node X
  • If node X’s highest CSN less than mine:
    – Send X full stable DB
    – X uses that DB as starting point
    – X can discard all his CSN log entries
    – X can play his tentative writes into that DB
  • If node X’s highest CSN greater than mine:
    – X can ignore my DB!
Bayou: Summary

• Seems more useful than old Palm’s calendar!
  – Often disconnected when making appointments
  – Automatic conflict resolution convenient

• Not at all transparent to applications!
  – Very strange programming practices
  – Writes are code, not just bits!
  – Check for conflicts, resolve conflicts

• Doesn’t work for all apps
  – Bank account may be OK
  – But hard to imagine for source code repository!