CS 242: Operating Systems
Concurrency Control
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1. CONCURRENCY CONTROL

The synchronization primitives we have seen so far are not as high-level as we might want them to be since they require programmers to explicitly synchronize, avoid deadlocks, and abort if necessary. Moreover, the high-level constructs such as mointors and path expressions do not give users of a shared object flexibiility in defining the unit of atomicity. We will study here a high-level technique, called concurrency control, which automatically ensures that concurrently interacting users do not execute inconsistent commands on a shared object. A variety of concurrency models defining different notions of consistency have been proposed. These models have been developed in the context of database management systems, operating systems, CAD tools, collaborative software engineering, and collaboration systems. We will focus here on the classical database models and the relatively newer operating system models.

2. TRANSACTION MODELS

The notion of concurrency control is closely tied to the notion of a "transaction". A transaction defines a set of "indivisible" steps, that is, commands with the Atomicity, Consistency, Isolation, and Durability (ACID) properties: [Recovery Survey]

Atomicity: Either all or none of the steps of the transaction occur so that the invariant of the shared object is maintained. A transaction is typically aborted by the system in response to failures but it may be aborted also by a user to "undo" the actions. In either case, the user is informed about the success or failure of the transaction.

Consistency: A transaction takes a shared object from one legal state to another, that is, maintains the invariant of the shared object.

Isolation: Events within a transaction are hidden from other concurrently executing transactions. Techniques for achieving isolation are called synchronization schemes. They determine how these transactions are scheduled, that is, what the relationships are between the times the different steps of these transactions. Isolation is required to ensure that concurrent transactions do not cause an illegal state in the shared object and to prevent cascaded rollbacks when a transaction aborts.

Durability: Once the system tells the user that a transaction has completed successfully, it ensures that values written by the database system persist until they are explicitly overwritten by other transactions.

It is the isolation property that relates the transaction concept with concurrency control. Therefore, we will focus mainly on synchronization schemes, which we will also call concurrency schemes.

3. SERIALIZABILITY

Serializability is the classical concurrency scheme. It ensures that a schedule for executing concurrent transactions is equivalent to one that executes the transactions serially in some order. It assumes that all accesses to the database are done

using read and write operations. A schedule is called "correct" if we can find a serial schedule that is "equivalent" to it. Given a set of transactions T1...Tn, two schedules S1 and S2 of these transactions are equivalent if the following conditions are satisfied:

Read-Write Synchronization: If a transaction reads a value written by another transaction in one schedule, then it also does so in the other schedule.

Write-Write Synchronization: If a transaction overwrites the value of another transaction in one schedule, it also does so in the other schedule.

These two properties ensure that there can be no difference in the effects of the two schedules. As an example, consider the schedule in Figure 1. It is equivalent

T1	T2
read (p1)	
write(p1)	
	read (p1)
	write (p1)
read(p2)	
write(p2)	
	read(p2)
	write(p2)

Figure 1

to a schedule in which T2 is executed after T1.

There are several approaches to enforcing serializability.

4. TWO-PHASE LOCKING

This approach [Gray CACM] locks data and assumes that a transaction is divided into a growing phase, in which locks are only acquired, and a shrinking phase, in which locks are only released. A transaction that tries to lock data that has been locked is forced to wait and may deadlock. The use of locks is illustrated in Figure 2.

5. INCREMENTAL SHARING

In the example above, transaction T2 was able to see incremental writes of T1. This approach increases the concurrency in the system but consider what happens if for some reason transaction T1 aborts. In this situation, the atomicity requirement implies that transactions such as T2 that have seen results of T1, transactions that have seen writes of these transactions, and so on must also be aborted. This problem is referred to as the problem of cascaded rollbacks, and locking schemes sometimes avoid this problem by unlocking data only at the end of the transaction.

6. MULTIVERSION TIMESTAMP ORDERING

A problem with 2PL is that it can lead to deadlocks. Reed's multiversion timestamp ordering scheme [Reed Atomic] solves this problem by ordering transactions and aborting transactions that access data out of order. It also increases the concurrency in the system by never making a read operation block or a write operation block for

T1	T2
lock(p1)	
read(p1)	
	lock(p1)
write(p1)	
lock(p2)	
unlock (p1)	
	read (p1)
	write(p1)
	lock(p2)
	unlock(p1)
read(p2)	
write(p2)	
unlock (p2)	
	read(p2)
	write(p2)
	unlock(p2)

Figure 2

another write operation, thereby never making a readonly or a writeonly transaction wait.

It assigns transactions timestamps when they are started, which are used to order these transactions. Moreover, it associates each data item with readtimestamps and timestamped versions. A readtimestamp is associated with a data item whenever a transaction reads the data item and is the same as the timestamp of the reading transaction. A timestamped version is created whenever a transaction writes a new value to the data item and has the timestamp of the writing transaction. The following steps occur when a transaction accesses the database:
If the operation is a read, then it is allowed, and the version read is the one with the largest timestamp less than the timestamp of the reading transaction. The timestamp of the reading transaction is added to the item.
If the operation is a write, then a new version of the data item is created with the timestamp of the writing transaction as long as no transaction with a more recent timestamp has read a version of the item with an older timestamp than that of the writing transaction. If this check fails, the writing transaction is aborted and restarted.

This approach will support the schedule shown in Figure 1 by making sure T2 sees the values written by T1.

7. OPTIMISTIC CONCURRENCY CONTROL

The previous schemes do incremental synchronization checks on each read/write– by using explicit locks or timestamps. There are several disadvantages of incremental checks:

Incremental checks can be expensive, specially when they involve accessing slow secondary memory.

They are an unnecessary overhead when there are no conflicts (consider readonly transactions).

They can reduce concurrency unnecessarily (because locks are kept longer than necessary to avoid cascaded aborts) or lead to cascaded aborts (consider Figure 1).

Optimistic concurrency control [Kung Robinson] divides a transaction into a read phase, a validation phase, and a writing phase. During (a) the read phase, a transaction performs writes on local buffers and no checking takes place, (b) validation phase, the system does synchronization checking, and (c) the write phase, the local writes are made global. It assigns each transaction a unique timestamp at the end of its read phase. A transaction TI is validated if one of the following conditions can be established for all transactions TJ with later timestamps:

Transaction TI completes its write phase before transaction TJ begins its read phase.

Transaction TJ does not read any of the items written by TI and transaction TI finishes its write phase before transaction TJ begins its write phase.

Transaction TJ does not read or write any items written by TI.

Transactions are aborted when validation cannot be done. In the example of Figure 1, one of the two transactions would be aborted. This approach works well when there are no conflicts (hence the term optimistic) but wastes work when there are conflicts. Aborting of transactions is a severe problem when the transactions are long and interactive, when manual/automatic merging is a better alternative.

8. VARIABLE GRANULARITY LOCKING

In the design of a locking-based concurrency control mechanism, the granularity of locking must be determined. One simple, popular approach is to support coarse-grained concurrency control which allows only one user to execute commands In comparison to schemes that chooser finer locking granularity, it is space efficient in that it stores only one lock per application, and time inefficient in that it requires only one lock to be checked on each access. However, it limits the concurrency in the application when different components of an object can be manipulated independently. It is sometimes useful to support a compromise between fine-grain and coarse-grain locking by offering *variable-grained locking*. A simple method for supporting variable-grain locking is to allow transactions to lock both leaf and non-leaf nodes. A lock on a non-leaf node applies to all the leaf-level items in the subtree rooted by the node. We can define two types or modes of locks: shared locks and exclusive locks, which do not allow other transactions from writing and accessing, respectively, the locked data structure.

This approach has two related problems. First, it is inefficient in that when a transaction tries to lock a node, the system must check the lock status of all nodes in the subtree rooted by the node and the path from the node to the root. Second, it does not allow transactions to use exceptions in lock specifications such as lock all nodes in this tree with shared locks except this one in the exclusive mode. Transactions are forced to either take a conservative approach and lock the entire tree using a stronger lock than necessary or use a large number of locks.

Gray et al [Gray granularity] describe a scheme that addresses these problems. In addition to the basic or explicit locks, shared and exclusive, it associates non-leaf nodes with *intention locks*. An intention lock on a node served two purposes: First, it summarizes the locked status of its descendents, thereby reducing the need to check their individual locked statuses when the node is to be locked. Second, it

allows exception-based specification.

Now a transaction is required to put intention locks on all ancestors of a node before it puts a basic or explicit (shared or exclusive) lock on the node. Three kinds of intention locks are defined:

Intention Shared (IS) - it is put on a node if some descendent of the node is to be locked in the shared mode.

Intention Exclusive (IX) - it is put on a node if some descendent of the node is to be locked in the exclusive mode.

Shared Intention Exclusive (ISX) - it is put one a node if all children of a node are to be locked in the shared mode except for some children that are to be explicitly locked in the exclusive mode.

Thus, before putting a shared (exclusive) lock on a node, a transaction must put an IS or ISX (IX or ISX) lock on all parents of the node. Conversely, it must release the locks in a leaf to root order.

The following compatibility matrix determines if a transaction can lock a node that is already locked by another transaction:

	IS	IX	S	SIX	X
IS	Y	Y	Y	Y	N
IX	Y	Y	N	N	N
S	Y	N	Y	N	N
SIX	Y	N	N	N	N
X	N	N	N	N	N

Compatibility Matrix

9. NESTED TRANSACTIONS

So far, our units of concurrency (transactions) have been required to also be units of atomicity, consistency, isolation, and durability. These properties are not orthogonal and several concurrency schemes support concurrency units (also called transactions) with only some of these properties

Nested transactions is one such concurrency scheme. [Moss] It supports top-level transactions with all of the ACID properties. In addition, to support concurrent execution of independent actions (such as modification to two different procedures of a program) within these transactions, it allows a top-level transaction to root a tree of nested transactions.

Like top-level transactions, nested transactions have the following properties:
A transaction is serializable with respect to its siblings, that is, accesses to shared resources by sibling transactions have to obey the read-write and write-write synchronization rules.
A transaction is a unit of recovery, that is, it can be aborted independently of its siblings (modula the problem of cascaded aborts).
A transaction is a unit of atomicity, that is, either all or none of the effects of its actions occur.

In addition, they have the following properties which stem from the fact that unlike top-level transactions they have parents:
A nested transaction's actions are not considered to conflict with its parent's actions. Thus, it can lock a resource locked by its parent as long as none of its siblings have locked it (in an incompatible mode).
A nested transaction can lock a datum in some mode only if its parent has locked the datum in the same mode.
A parent transaction's actions are considered to conflict with its child's actions but not vice versa. Thus, it cannot access a resource if a child's lock prohibits the access. Thus, the child's lock wins.
An abort by a child transaction does not automatically abort the parent transaction. The parent is free to try alternative nested transactions.
A commit by a child transaction releases the locks held by it to its parent and makes its actions be part of action set of its parent transaction. Thus, when the parent commits, it commits not only those actions it performed directly but also those performed by its descendents.

Notice, a nested transaction is not a unit of consistency or durability since it does not on its own leave the database in a consistent state.

10. TRANSACTIONS ON OBJECTS

So far, we have considered concurrency schemes for synchronizing accesses to shared databases - that is, shared objects supporting only read/write operations. Object transactions are concurrency schemes for synchronizing accessed to shared objects on which arbitrary operations can be supported. [Schwarz Spector]

How should concurrency schemes be adapted when accesses are made to shared objects? The answer depends on how much of the application semantics is available to the concurrency scheme. To understand the nature of such a concurrency scheme, let us introduce the notion of a dependency relation, D (X,Y), which is a relation formed between transactions based on the order in which they execute certain kinds of operations, defined by X and Y, on a shared object. A transaction Tj depends on transaction Ti with respect to a dependency relation D

$$\text{Tj} <_D \text{Tj}$$

if Ti performs an X operation before Tj performs a Y operation.

Consider first the situation when the concurrency scheme has no semantic information, that is, has no information regarding the effect of an operation on an object. In this situation, we must assume that an operation can perform arbitrary actions. Let us define one operation kind, any, and the dependency relation:

$$D = D(\text{any}, \text{any})$$

Then, a transaction schedule is serializable if this dependency relation does not introduce any cycles, that is, if transaction Ti performs an operation on an object before transaction Tj, then Tj does not perform an operation on the object before transaction Ti.

Also, assume that we wish to prevent cascaded aborts. Then we need to ensure that a transaction performs an operation on a shared object only if all transactions that have accessed the object have committed.

Now assume that we know which operations are reads and which are writes. We can define four dependency relations:

```
D1 = D(R, R)
D2 = D(R, W)
D3 = D(W, R)
D4 = D(W, W)
```

The dependency D1 is insignificant in that it cannot be observed. So to guarantee serializability of a schedule, we just have to ensure that it does not create cycles in the dependency relation D2 U D3 U D4, which is more liberal than D = D1 U D2 U D3 U D4. Thus, this scheme will allow the schedule of Figure 3 but not Figure 4.

T1	T2
R(O1)	
	R(O1)
W(O1)	

Figure 3

but not

To ensure that there are no cascaded aborts, we have to ensure only that no D3 dependencies exist among overlapping transactions, which is again more liberal than ensuring no dependencies exist.

Finally, assume that we know type-specific semantics of the operations. In this case, it is possible that we can have an even more liberal scheme for ensuring serializability and no cascading aborts. Consider the example of a queue supporting the QEnter (q, e) (abbreviated as E(e)), and QDelete (q) (denoted below as D(e)), where e is the element deleted operations. We can define the following dependency relations:

```
D1 = D (E(e), E(e'))
D2 = D (E(e), D(e'))
D3 = D (E(e), D(e))
D4 = D (D(e), E(e'))
D5 = D (D(e), D(e'))
```

In this case, the dependencies D2 and D4 are insignificant. Thus, assuming that queue, Q, has elements A and B, schedule of Figure 5 is serializable: If we were to model QEnter as a write and QDelete as a read followed by a write, then this schedule would not have been allowed. Since T1 <D2 T2 dependency is insignificant, this schedule is indeed serializable. Similarly, to prevent cascaded aborts, we

T1	T2
R(O1)	
	W(O1)
W(O1)	

Figure 4

T1	T2
E(C)	
	D(A)
E(D)	

Fugure 5

have to ensure no D3 and D5 dependencies occur among interleaving transactions. The dependency D1 is insignificant since and is similar to the W,W dependency.

A locking-based scheme for supporting this scheme must support locks of the form LockClass(data) where LockClass corresponds to operation type and data corresponds to explicit or implicit operand of the operation. The compatibility matrix of Figure 6 describes a locking scheme for Queues: Here we assume, that

	E(e)	D(e)
E(e)	NA	NA
E(e')	N	Y
D(e)	N	NA
D(e')	Y	N

Fugure 6

QEnter must ask for a lock on the element to be added, which is held till the end of transaction. Similarly, QDelete must ask for a lock on the head of the queue, which is also held until end of transaction. This scheme allows a transaction entering items to interleave its steps with one removing items.

We may further refine our transaction model by defining a weaker notion of consistency than serializability. This constraint is too strong in some situations. Let us return to our example of queues. We may want to use the queue as simply a buffer between producer and consumer processes. FIFO queues used as buffers ensure that items are removed in the order in which they are entered. We may be satisfied with weakly-FIFO queues– queues that allow items to be removed out of order but ensure there is no starvation. For such data structures, we can ignore the D1 and D5 conflicts, that is, we can allow transactions to overlap their entries and removals in a non-serial way. Thus, the only relationship we serialize is the D3 relationship. The locking scheme changes to Figure 7: This scheme

	E(e)	D(e)
E(e)	NA	NA
E(e')	Y	Y
D(e)	N	NA
D(e')	Y	Y

Fugure 7

allows transactions entering and deleting items to interleave their steps but is not serializable.