W4118: OS Overview

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Outline

- OS definitions
- OS abstractions/concepts
- OS structure
- OS evolution
What is OS?

- “A program that acts as an intermediary between a user of a computer and the computer hardware.”

“stuff between”

User
App
OS
HW
Two popular definitions

- Top-down perspective: **hardware abstraction layer**, turn hardware into something that applications can use

- Bottom-up perspective: **resource manager/coordinator**, manage your computer’s resources
OS = hardware abstraction layer

- “standard library” “OS as virtual machine”
  - E.g. printf(“hello world”), shows up on screen
  - App issue system calls to use OS abstractions

- Why good?
  - Ease of use: higher level, easier to program
  - Reusability: provide common functionality for reuse
    - E.g. each app doesn’t have to write a graphics driver
  - Portability / Uniformity: stable, consistent interface, different OS/ver/hw look same
    - E.g. scsi/ide/flash disks

- Why hard?
  - What are the right abstractions?
Two popular definitions

- Top-down perspective: hardware abstraction layer, turn hardware into something that applications can use.

- Bottom-up perspective: resource manager/coordinator, manage your computer’s resources.
OS = resource manager/coordinator

- Computer has resources, OS must manage.
  - Resource = CPU, Memory, disk, device, bandwidth, ...

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Hardware
OS = resource manager/coordinator (cont.)

- Why good?
  - **Sharing/Multiplexing**: more than 1 app/user to use resource
  - **Protection**: protect apps from each other, OS from app
    - Who gets what when
  - **Performance**: efficient/fair access to resources

- Why hard? **Mechanisms vs policies**
  - **Mechanism**: how to do things
  - **Policy**: what will be done
  - **Ideal**: general mechanisms, flexible policies
    - Difficult to design right
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OS abstraction: process

- Running program, stream of running instructions + process state
  - A key OS abstraction: the applications you use are built of processes
    - Shell, powerpoint, gcc, browser, ...

- Easy to use
  - Processes are protected from each other
    - process = address space
  - Hide details of CPU, when&where to run
Unix process-related system calls

- **int fork (void)**
  - Create a copy of the invoking process
  - Return process ID of new process in “parent”
  - Return 0 in “child”

- **int execv (const char* prog, const char* argv[])**
  - Replace current process with a new one
  - prog: program to run
  - argv: arguments to pass to main()

- **int wait (int *status)**
  - wait for a child to exit
Simple shell

// parse user-typed command line into command and args
...

// execute the command
switch(pid = fork ()) {
    case -1: perror ("fork"); break;
    case 0: // child
        execv (command, args, 0); break;
    default: // parent
        wait (0); break; // wait for child to terminate
}
OS abstraction: **file**

- Array of bytes, persistent across reboot
  - Nice, clean way to read and write data
  - Hide the details of disk devices (hard disk, CDROM, flash ...)

- Related abstraction: **directory**, collection of file entries
Unix file system calls

- int open(const char *path, int flags, int mode)
  - Opens a file and returns an integer called a file descriptor to use in other file system calls
  - Default file descriptors
    - 0 = stdin, 1 = stdout, 2 = stderr

- int write(int fd, const char* buf, size_t sz)
  - Writes sz bytes of data in buf to fd at current file offset
  - Advance file offset by sz

- int close(int fd)

- int dup2 (int oldfd, int newfd)
  - makes newfd an exact copy of oldfd
  - closes newfd if it was open
  - two file descriptors will share same offset
Process communication: pipe

- `int pipe(int fds[2])`
  - Creates a one way communication channel
  - `fds[2]` is used to return two file descriptors
  - Bytes written to `fds[1]` will be read from `fds[0]`

- Often used together with `fork()` to create a channel between parent and child
xv6 shell

- sh.c
Outline

- OS definitions and functionalities
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OS structure

- **OS structure**: what goes into the *kernel*?
  - *Kernel*: most interesting part of OS
    - Privileged; can do everything ➔ must be careful
    - Manages other parts of OS

- **Different structures lead to different**
  - Performance, functionality, ease of use, security, reliability, portability, extensibility, cost, ...

- **Tradeoffs depend on technology and workload**
Monolithic

- Most traditional functionality in kernel

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<th>Kernel Interface to the Hardware</th>
<th>System Call Interface to the Kernel</th>
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Unix System Architecture
Microkernel

- Move functionality out of kernel

Minix 3 System Architecture
Virtual machine

- Export a fake hardware interface so that multiple OS can run on top.
Outline

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OS evolution

- Many outside factors affect OS

- User needs + technology changes ➔ OS must evolve
  - New/better abstractions to users
  - New/better algorithms to implement abstractions
  - New/better low-level implementations (hw change)

- Current OS: evolution of these things
Major trend in History

- **Hardware**: cheaper and cheaper
- **Computers/user**: increases

**Timeline**
- 70s: mainframe, 1 / organization
- 80s: minicomputer, 1 / group
- 90s: PC, 1 / user
70s: mainframe

- **Hardware:**
  - Huge, $$$$ slow
  - **IO:** punch card, line printer

- **OS**
  - simple library of device drivers (no resource coordination)
  - Human = OS: single programmer/operator programs, runs, debugs
  - One job at a time

- **Problem:** poor performance (utilization / throughput)
  Machine $$$$ but idle most of the time because programmer slow
Batch Processing

- **Batch**: submit group of jobs together to machine
  - Operator collects, orders, runs (resource coordinator)

- **Why good? can better optimize given more jobs**
  - Cover setup overhead
  - Operator quite skilled at using machine
  - Machine busy more (programmers debugging offline)

- **Why bad?**
  - Must wait for results for long time

- **Result**: utilization increases, interactivity drops
Spooling

- **Problem:** slow I/O ties up fast CPU
  - Input ➔ Compute ➔ Output
  - Slow punch card reader and line printer

- **Idea:** overlap one job’s IO with other jobs’ compute

- **OS functionality**
  - buffering, DMA, interrupts

- **Good:** better utilization/throughput
- **Bad:** still not interactive
Multiprogramming

- Spooling ➔ multiple jobs
- Multiprogramming
  - keep multiple jobs in memory, OS chooses which to run
  - When job waits for I/O, switch

- OS functionality
  - job scheduling, mechanism/policies
  - Memory management/protection

- Good: better throughput
- Bad: still not interactive
80s: minicomputer

- Hardware gets cheaper. 1 / group
- Need better interactivity, short response time

- Concept: timesharing
  - Fast switch between jobs to give impression of dedicated machine

- OS functionality:
  - More complex scheduling, memory management
  - Concurrency control, synchronization

- Good: immediate feedback to users
90s: PC

- Even cheaper. 1 / user
- Goal: easy of use, more responsive
- Do not need a lot of stuff

Example: DOS
- No time-sharing, multiprogramming, protection, VM
- One job at a time
- OS is subroutine again

Users + Hardware \(\rightarrow\) OS functionality
Current trends?

- **Large**
  - Users want more features
  - More devices
  - Parallel hardware
  - Result: large system, millions of lines of code

- **Reliability, Security**
  - Few errors in code, can recover from failures
  - At odds with previous trend

- **Small: e.g. handheld device**
  - New user interface
  - Energy: battery life
  - One job at a time. OS is subroutine again
Next lecture

- PC hardware and x86 programming