Designs, Lessons and Advice from Building Large Distributed Systems

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Computing shifting to really small and really big devices

UI-centric devices

Large consolidated computing farms
Google’s data center at The Dalles, OR
The Machinery

Servers
- CPUs
- DRAM
- Disks

Racks
- 40-80 servers
- Ethernet switch

Clusters
Architectural view of the storage hierarchy

One server

DRAM: 16GB, 100ns, 20GB/s
Disk: 2TB, 10ms, 200MB/s
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Local rack (80 servers)
- DRAM: 1TB, 300us, 100MB/s
- Disk: 160TB, 11ms, 100MB/s
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Cluster (30+ racks)
- DRAM: 30TB, 500us, 10MB/s
- Disk: 4.80PB, 12ms, 10MB/s
Storage hierarchy: a different view

A bumpy ride that has been getting bumpier over time
Reliability & Availability

• Things will crash. Deal with it!
  – Assume you could start with super reliable servers (MTBF of 30 years)
  – Build computing system with 10 thousand of those
  – *Watch one fail per day*

• Fault-tolerant software is inevitable

• Typical yearly flakiness metrics
  – 1-5% of your disk drives will die
  – Servers will crash at least twice (2-4% failure rate)
The Joys of Real Hardware

Typical first year for a new cluster:

~0.5 overheating (power down most machines in <5 mins, ~1-2 days to recover)
~1 PDU failure (~500-1000 machines suddenly disappear, ~6 hours to come back)
~1 rack-move (plenty of warning, ~500-1000 machines powered down, ~6 hours)
~1 network rewiring (rolling ~5% of machines down over 2-day span)
~20 rack failures (40-80 machines instantly disappear, 1-6 hours to get back)
~5 racks go wonky (40-80 machines see 50% packetloss)
~8 network maintenances (4 might cause ~30-minute random connectivity losses)
~12 router reloads (takes out DNS and external vips for a couple minutes)
~3 router failures (have to immediately pull traffic for an hour)
~dozens of minor 30-second blips for dns
~1000 individual machine failures
~thousands of hard drive failures
slow disks, bad memory, misconfigured machines, flaky machines, etc.

Long distance links: wild dogs, sharks, dead horses, drunken hunters, etc.
Understanding downtime behavior matters
Understanding downtime behavior matters
Understanding downtime behavior matters
Understanding fault statistics matters
Understanding fault statistics matters

Can we expect faults to be independent or correlated?
Are there common failure patterns we should program around?
Google Cluster Environment

- Cluster is 1000s of machines, typically one or handful of configurations
- File system (GFS) + Cluster scheduling system are core services
- Typically 100s to 1000s of active jobs (some w/1 task, some w/1000s)
  - mix of batch and low-latency, user-facing production jobs
• Master manages metadata
• Data transfers happen directly between clients/chunkservers
• Files broken into chunks (typically 64 MB)
GFS Usage @ Google

• 200+ clusters
• Many clusters of 1000s of machines
• Pools of 1000s of clients
• 4+ PB Filesystems
• 40 GB/s read/write load
  – (in the presence of frequent HW failures)
Google: Most Systems are Distributed Systems

• Distributed systems are a must:
  – data, request volume or both are too large for single machine
    • careful design about how to partition problems
    • need high capacity systems even within a single datacenter

  – multiple datacenters, all around the world
    • almost all products deployed in multiple locations

  – services used heavily even internally
    • a web search touches 50+ separate services, 1000s machines
Many Internal Services

• Simpler from a software engineering standpoint
  – few dependencies, clearly specified (Protocol Buffers)
  – easy to test new versions of individual services
  – ability to run lots of experiments

• Development cycles largely decoupled
  – lots of benefits: small teams can work independently
  – easier to have many engineering offices around the world
Protocol Buffers

- Good protocol description language is vital
- Desired attributes:
  - self-describing, multiple language support
  - efficient to encode/decode (200+ MB/s), compact serialized form

Our solution: Protocol Buffers (in active use since 2000)

```protobuf
message SearchResult {
  required int32 estimated_results = 1;  // (1 is the tag number)
  optional string error_message = 2;
  repeated group Result = 3 {
    required float score = 4;
    required fixed64 docid = 5;
    optional message<WebResultDetails> = 6;
    ...
  }
}
```
Protocol Buffers (cont)

- Automatically generated language wrappers
- Graceful client and server upgrades
  - systems ignore tags they don't understand, but pass the information through
    (no need to upgrade intermediate servers)
- Serialization/deserialization
  - high performance (200+ MB/s encode/decode)
  - fairly compact (uses variable length encodings)
  - format used to store data persistently (not just for RPCs)
- Also allow service specifications:

```java
service Search {
  rpc DoSearch(SearchRequest) returns (SearchResponse);
  rpc DoSnippets(SnippetRequest) returns (SnippetResponse);
  rpc Ping(EmptyMessage) returns (EmptyMessage) {
    { protocol=udp; }
  }
}
```

Designing Efficient Systems

Given a basic problem definition, how do you choose the "best" solution?
• Best could be simplest, highest performance, easiest to extend, etc.

Important skill: ability to estimate performance of a system design
  – without actually having to build it!
Numbers Everyone Should Know

L1 cache reference 0.5 ns
Branch mispredict 5 ns
L2 cache reference 7 ns
Mutex lock/unlock 25 ns
Main memory reference 100 ns
Compress 1K bytes with Zippy 3,000 ns
Send 2K bytes over 1 Gbps network 20,000 ns
Read 1 MB sequentially from memory 250,000 ns
Round trip within same datacenter 500,000 ns
Disk seek 10,000,000 ns
Read 1 MB sequentially from disk 20,000,000 ns
Send packet CA->Netherlands->CA 150,000,000 ns
How long to generate image results page (30 thumbnails)?

Design 1: Read serially, thumbnail 256K images on the fly

\[30 \text{ seeks} \times 10 \text{ ms/seek} + 30 \times 256K / 30 \text{ MB/s} = 560 \text{ ms}\]
Back of the Envelope Calculations

How long to generate image results page (30 thumbnails)?

Design 1: Read serially, thumbnail 256K images on the fly
   30 seeks * 10 ms/seek + 30 * 256K / 30 MB/s = 560 ms

Design 2: Issue reads in parallel:
   10 ms/seek + 256K read / 30 MB/s = 18 ms
   (Ignores variance, so really more like 30-60 ms, probably)
Back of the Envelope Calculations

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(Ignores variance, so really more like 30-60 ms, probably)

Lots of variations:
- caching (single images? whole sets of thumbnails?)
- pre-computing thumbnails
- ...

Back of the envelope helps identify most promising…
Write Microbenchmarks!

- Great to understand performance
  - Builds intuition for back-of-the-envelope calculations
- Reduces cycle time to test performance improvements

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Benchmark</th>
<th>Time(ns)</th>
<th>CPU(ns)</th>
<th>Iterations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BM_VarintLength32/0</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>2916666666</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BM_VarintLength32Old/0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>124660869</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BM_VarintLength64/0</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>80000000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BM_VarintEncode64/0</td>
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<td>16</td>
<td>39822222</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BM_VarintEncode64Old/0</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>31165217</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Know Your Basic Building Blocks

Core language libraries, basic data structures, protocol buffers, GFS, BigTable, indexing systems, MySQL, MapReduce, …

Not just their interfaces, but understand their implementations (at least at a high level)

If you don’t know what’s going on, you can’t do decent back-of-the-envelope calculations!
Encoding Your Data

• CPUs are fast, memory/bandwidth are precious, ergo…
  – Variable-length encodings
  – Compression
  – Compact in-memory representations

• Compression/encoding very important for many systems
  – inverted index posting list formats
  – storage systems for persistent data

• We have lots of core libraries in this area
  – Many tradeoffs: space, encoding/decoding speed, etc. E.g.:
    • Zippy: encode@300 MB/s, decode@600MB/s, 2-4X compression
    • gzip: encode@25MB/s, decode@200MB/s, 4-6X compression
Designing & Building Infrastructure

Identify common problems, and build software systems to address them in a general way

• Important not to try to be all things to all people
  – Clients might be demanding 8 different things
  – Doing 6 of them is easy
  – …handling 7 of them requires real thought
  – …dealing with all 8 usually results in a worse system
    • more complex, compromises other clients in trying to satisfy everyone

Don't build infrastructure just for its own sake
• Identify common needs and address them
• Don't imagine unlikely potential needs that aren't really there
• Best approach: use your own infrastructure (especially at first!)
  – (much more rapid feedback about what works, what doesn't)
Design for Growth

Try to anticipate how requirements will evolve
  keep likely features in mind as you design base system

Ensure your design works if scale changes by 10X or 20X
  but the right solution for X often not optimal for 100X
Interactive Apps: Design for Low Latency

• Aim for low avg. times (happy users!)
  – 90%ile and 99%ile also very important
  – Think about how much data you’re shuffling around
    • e.g. dozens of 1 MB RPCs per user request -> latency will be lousy

• Worry about variance!
  – Redundancy or timeouts can help bring in latency tail
• Judicious use of caching can help
• Use higher priorities for interactive requests
• Parallelism helps!
Making Applications Robust Against Failures

Canary requests
Failover to other replicas/datacenters
Bad backend detection:
   stop using for live requests until behavior gets better
More aggressive load balancing when imbalance is more severe

Make your apps do something reasonable even if not all is right
   – Better to give users limited functionality than an error page
Add Sufficient Monitoring/Status/Debugging Hooks

All our servers:

• Export HTML-based status pages for easy diagnosis
• Export a collection of key-value pairs via a standard interface
  – monitoring systems periodically collect this from running servers
• RPC subsystem collects sample of all requests, all error requests, all requests >0.0s, >0.05s, >0.1s, >0.5s, >1s, etc.

• Support low-overhead online profiling
  – cpu profiling
  – memory profiling
  – lock contention profiling

If your system is slow or misbehaving, can you figure out why?
MapReduce

• A simple programming model that applies to many large-scale computing problems

• Hide messy details in MapReduce runtime library:
  – automatic parallelization
  – load balancing
  – network and disk transfer optimizations
  – handling of machine failures
  – robustness
  – improvements to core library benefit all users of library!
Typical problem solved by MapReduce

- Read a lot of data
- **Map**: extract something you care about from each record
- Shuffle and Sort
- **Reduce**: aggregate, summarize, filter, or transform
- Write the results

Outline stays the same, map and reduce change to fit the problem
Example: Rendering Map Tiles

**Input**
- Geographic feature list
  - I-5
  - Lake Washington
  - WA-520
  - I-90
  - ...

**Map**
- Emit each to all overlapping latitude-longitude rectangles
  - (0, I-5)
  - (1, I-5)
  - (0, Lake Wash.)
  - (1, Lake Wash.)
  - (0, WA-520)
  - (1, I-90)
  - ...

**Shuffle**
- Sort by key (key = Rect. Id)
  - Render tile using data for all enclosed features

**Output**
- Rendered tiles
  - (0, I-5)
  - (0, Lake Wash.)
  - (0, WA-520)
  - ...
  - (1, I-5)
  - (1, Lake Wash.)
  - (1, I-90)
  - ...

Google Map of Seattle area with roads I-5, I-90, and WA-520.
Parallel MapReduce

- Input data
- Master
- Partitioned output

Diagram showing the process of MapReduce with multiple Map and Reduce stages.
Parallel MapReduce

For large enough problems, it’s more about disk and network performance than CPU & DRAM.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Aug, ‘04</th>
<th>Mar, ‘06</th>
<th>Sep, '07</th>
<th>Sep, '09</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of jobs</td>
<td>29K</td>
<td>171K</td>
<td>2,217K</td>
<td>3,467K</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average completion time (secs)</td>
<td>634</td>
<td>874</td>
<td>395</td>
<td>475</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Machine years used</td>
<td>217</td>
<td>2,002</td>
<td>11,081</td>
<td>25,562</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Input data read (TB)</td>
<td>3,288</td>
<td>52,254</td>
<td>403,152</td>
<td>544,130</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intermediate data (TB)</td>
<td>758</td>
<td>6,743</td>
<td>34,774</td>
<td>90,120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Output data written (TB)</td>
<td>193</td>
<td>2,970</td>
<td>14,018</td>
<td>57,520</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average worker machines</td>
<td>157</td>
<td>268</td>
<td>394</td>
<td>488</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
MapReduce in Practice

• Abstract input and output interfaces
  – lots of MR operations don’t just read/write simple files
    • B-tree files
    • memory-mapped key-value stores
    • complex inverted index file formats
    • BigTable tables
    • SQL databases, etc.
  • ...

• Low-level MR interfaces are in terms of byte arrays
  – Hardly ever use textual formats, though: slow, hard to parse
  – Most input & output is in encoded Protocol Buffer format

• See “MapReduce: A Flexible Data Processing Tool” (to appear in upcoming CACM)
BigTable: Motivation

• Lots of (semi-)structured data at Google
  – URLs:
    • Contents, crawl metadata, links, anchors, pagerank, …
  – Per-user data:
    • User preference settings, recent queries/search results, …
  – Geographic locations:
    • Physical entities (shops, restaurants, etc.), roads, satellite image data, user annotations, …

• Scale is large
  – billions of URLs, many versions/page (~20K/version)
  – Hundreds of millions of users, thousands of q/sec
  – 100TB+ of satellite image data
Basic Data Model

• Distributed multi-dimensional sparse map
  \((row, column, timestamp) \rightarrow cell\ contents\)

• Rows are ordered lexicographically
• Good match for most of our applications
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Basic Data Model

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Tablets & Splitting

“aaa.com”
“cnn.com”
“cnn.com/sports.html”
“contents:”
“<html>…”
“language:”
“website.com”
“website.com”
“zuppa.com/menu.html”
BigTable System Structure

- Bigtable Cell
  - Bigtable tablet server
  - Bigtable tablet server
  - Bigtable tablet server
  - ...
BigTable System Structure

Bigtable Cell

Bigtable master
performs metadata ops + load balancing

Bigtable tablet server  Bigtable tablet server  ...  Bigtable tablet server
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Bigtable tablet server

- serves data

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Bigtable tablet server
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... Bigtable tablet server

Cluster scheduling system
handles failover, monitoring

GFS

Lock service
BigTable System Structure

Bigtable Cell

- **Bigtable master**
  - performs metadata ops + load balancing

Bigtable tablet server

- serves data

... (repeated 3 times)

- Bigtable tablet server
  - serves data

---

Cluster scheduling system

- handles failover, monitoring

GFS

- holds tablet data, logs

Lock service
BigTable System Structure

Bigtable Cell

- **Bigtable master**: performs metadata ops + load balancing
- **Bigtable tablet server**: serves data
- **Cluster scheduling system**: handles failover, monitoring
- **GFS**: holds tablet data, logs
- **Lock service**: holds metadata, handles master-election
BigTable System Structure

Bigtable Cell

Bigtable master
- performs metadata ops +
  - load balancing

Bigtable tablet server
- serves data

Cluster scheduling system
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Lock service
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Bigtable client
- Bigtable client library
BigTable System Structure

**Bigtable Cell**
- Bigtable tablet server
  - serves data

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- performs metadata ops + load balancing

**GFS**
- holds tablet data, logs

**Cluster scheduling system**
- handles failover, monitoring

**Bigtable client**
- Bigtable client library
- read/write
- Open()

**Lock service**
- holds metadata, handles master-election

**Bigtable tablet server**
- serves data
BigTable System Structure

Bigtable Cell

Bigtable tablet server

serves data

Bigtable master

performs metadata ops + load balancing

Bigtable tablet server

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Bigtable tablet server

... serves data

Bigtable tablet server

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holds tablet data, logs

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Bigtable client library

metadata ops

read/write

Open()
BigTable Status

- Design/initial implementation started beginning of 2004
- Production use or active development for 100+ projects:
  - Google Print
  - My Search History
  - Orkut
  - Crawling/indexing pipeline
  - Google Maps/Google Earth
  - Blogger
  - ...
- Currently ~500 BigTable clusters
- Largest cluster:
  - 70+ PB data; sustained: 10M ops/sec; 30+ GB/s I/O
BigTable: What’s New Since OSDI’06?

• Lots of work on scaling
• Service clusters, managed by dedicated team
• Improved performance isolation
  – fair-share scheduler within each server, better accounting of memory used per user (caches, etc.)
  – can partition servers within a cluster for different users or tables

• Improved protection against corruption
  – many small changes
  – e.g. immediately read results of every compaction, compare with CRC.
    • Catches ~1 corruption/5.4 PB of data compacted
BigTable Replication (New Since OSDI’06)

• Configured on a per-table basis

• Typically used to replicate data to multiple BigTable clusters in different data centers

• *Eventual consistency model*: writes to table in one cluster eventually appear in all configured replicas

• Nearly all user-facing production uses of BigTable use replication
BigTable Coprocessors (New Since OSDI’06)

• Arbitrary code that runs next to each tablet in table
  – as tablets split and move, coprocessor code automatically splits/moves too

• High-level call interface for clients
  – Unlike RPC, calls addressed to rows or ranges of rows
    • coprocessor client library resolves to actual locations
  – Calls across multiple rows automatically split into multiple parallelized RPCs

• Very flexible model for building distributed services
  – automatic scaling, load balancing, request routing for apps
Example Coprocessor Uses

• Scalable metadata management for Colossus (next gen GFS-like file system)

• Distributed language model serving for machine translation system

• Distributed query processing for full-text indexing support

• Regular expression search support for code repository
Current Work: Spanner

- Storage & computation system that spans all our datacenters
  - single global namespace
    - Names are independent of location(s) of data
    - Similarities to Bigtable: tables, families, locality groups, coprocessors, ...
    - Differences: hierarchical directories instead of rows, fine-grained replication
    - Fine-grained ACLs, replication configuration at the per-directory level

- support mix of strong and weak consistency across datacenters
  - Strong consistency implemented with Paxos across tablet replicas
  - Full support for distributed transactions across directories/machines

- much more automated operation
  - system automatically moves and adds replicas of data and computation based on constraints and usage patterns
  - automated allocation of resources across entire fleet of machines
Design Goals for Spanner

- Future scale: $\sim 10^6$ to $10^7$ machines, $\sim 10^{13}$ directories, $\sim 10^{18}$ bytes of storage, spread at 100s to 1000s of locations around the world, $\sim 10^9$ client machines

- zones of semi-autonomous control
- consistency after disconnected operation
- users specify high-level desires:
  
  “99%ile latency for accessing this data should be <50ms”
  
  “Store this data on at least 2 disks in EU, 2 in U.S. & 1 in Asia”
Adaptivity in World-Wide Systems

- **Challenge**: automatic, dynamic world-wide placement of data & computation to minimize latency and/or cost, given constraints on:
  - bandwidth
  - packet loss
  - power
  - resource usage
  - failure modes
  - ...  

- **Users specify high-level desires**:
  - “99%ile latency for accessing this data should be <50ms”
  - “Store this data on at least 2 disks in EU, 2 in U.S. & 1 in Asia”
Many applications need state replicated across a wide area
  – For reliability and availability

Two main choices:
  – consistent operations (e.g. use Paxos)
    • often imposes additional latency for common case
  – inconsistent operations
    • better performance/availability, but apps harder to write and reason about in this model

Many apps need to use a mix of both of these:
  – e.g. Gmail: marking a message as read is asynchronous, sending a message is a heavier-weight consistent operation
Building Applications on top of Weakly Consistent Storage Systems

- Challenge: General model of consistency choices, explained and codified
  - ideally would have one or more “knobs” controlling performance vs. consistency
  - “knob” would provide easy-to-understand tradeoffs

- Challenge: Easy-to-use abstractions for resolving conflicting updates to multiple versions of a piece of state
  - Useful for reconciling client state with servers after disconnected operation
  - Also useful for reconciling replicated state in different data centers after repairing a network partition
Thanks! Questions...?

Further reading:


• Malewicz et al. Pregel: A System for Large-Scale Graph Processing. PODC, 2009.

• Schroeder, Pinheiro, & Weber. DRAM Errors in the Wild: A Large-Scale Field Study. SEGMETRICS’09.


These and many more available at: http://labs.google.com/papers.html