Week 7: Distributed Lookup: Part 2: Amazon Dynamo
Amazon Dynamo

• Not exposed as a web service
  – Used to power parts of Amazon Web Services and internal services
  – Highly available, key-value storage system

• In an infrastructure with millions of components, something is always failing!
  – Failure is the normal case

• A lot of services within Amazon only need primary-key access to data
  – Best seller lists, shopping carts, preferences, session management, sales rank, product catalog
  – No need for complex querying or management offered by an RDBMS
    • Full relational database is overkill: limits scale and availability
    • Still not efficient to scale or load balance RDBMS on a large scale
Core Assumptions & Design Decisions

• Two operations: get and put
  – Binary objects (data) identified by a unique key
  – Objects tend to be small (< 1MB)

• Strongly consistent distributed databases provide poor availability
  – Use weaker consistency for higher availability

• Apps should be able to configure Dynamo for desired latency & throughput
  – Balance performance, cost, availability, durability guarantees

• At least 99.9% of read/write operations must be performed within a few hundred milliseconds:
  – Avoid routing requests through multiple nodes

• Dynamo can be thought of as a zero-hop DHT
Core Assumptions & Design Decisions

- **Incremental scalability**
  - System should be able to grow by adding a storage host (node) at a time

- **Symmetry**
  - Every node has the same set of responsibilities

- **Decentralization**
  - Favor decentralized techniques over central coordinators

- **Heterogeneity (mix of slow and fast systems)**
  - Workload partitioning should be proportional to capabilities of servers
Consistency & Availability

• Strong consistency & high availability cannot be achieved simultaneously

• Optimistic replication techniques – *eventually consistent* model
  – propagate changes to replicas in the background
  – can lead to conflicting changes that have to be detected & resolved

• When do you resolve conflicts?
  – **During writes**: traditional approach
    • Reject write if cannot reach all (or majority) of replicas – *but don't deal with conflicts*
  – **Resolve conflicts during reads**: Dynamo approach
    • Design for an "always writable" data store - highly available
    • read/write operations can continue even during network partitions
    • Rejecting customer updates won’t be a good experience
      – A customer should always be able to add or remove items in a shopping cart
Consistency & Availability

• Who resolves conflicts?
  – Choices: the *data store system* or the *application*?

• Data store
  – Application-unaware, so choices limited
  – Simple policy, such as "last write wins"

• Application
  – App is aware of the meaning of the data
  – Can do application-aware conflict resolution
  – E.g., merge shopping cart versions to get a unified shopping cart.

• Fall back on "last write wins" if app doesn't want to bother
Reads & Writes

Two operations:

• **get(key)** returns
  1. object or list of objects with conflicting versions
  2. context (resultant version per object)

• **put(key, context, value)**
  – stores replicas
  – **context**: ignored by the application but includes version of object
  – key is hashed with MD5 to create a 128-bit identifier that is used to determine the storage nodes that serve the key:
    
    \[
    \text{hash(key) identifies node}
    \]
Partitioning the data

• Break up database into chunks distributed over all nodes
  – Key to scalability

• Relies on **consistent hashing**
  – K/n keys need to be remapped, K = # keys, n = # slots

• Logical ring of nodes: just like Chord
  – Each node assigned a **random value** in the hash space: position in ring
  – Responsible for all hash values between its value and predecessor’s value
  – Hash(key); then walk ring clockwise to find first node with \text{position} > \text{hash}
  – Adding/removing nodes affects only immediate neighbors
Partitioning: Dynamo virtual nodes

- A physical node holds contents of multiple virtual nodes at multiple points in the ring
- In this example: 2 physical nodes running 5 virtual nodes

**Virtual Node 14:** keys 11, 12, 13, 14

**Virtual Node 10:** keys 9, 10

**Virtual Node 8:** keys 4, 5, 6, 7, 8

**Virtual Node 3:** keys 2, 3

**Virtual Node 1:** keys 15, 0, 1
Partitioning: virtual nodes

Advantage: balanced load distribution

- If a node becomes unavailable, load is evenly dispersed among available nodes
- If a node is added, it accepts an equivalent amount of load from other available nodes
- # of virtual nodes per system can be based on the capacity of that node
  - Makes it easy to support changing technology and addition of new, faster systems
Replication

• Storing/reading key-value data
  – Key is assigned a *coordinator* node (via hashing) ⇒ main node

• Replication
  – Data replicated on *N* hosts (*N* is configurable)
  – Coordinator oversees replication
  – Coordinator replicates keys at the *N-1* clockwise successor nodes in the ring
Dynamo Replication

Coordinator replicates keys at the $N-1$ clockwise successor nodes in the ring.

Example: $N=3$

- Node 14 holds replicas for Nodes 8 and 10
- Node 10 holds replicas for Node 3 and 8
- Node 8 holds replicas for Nodes 1 and 3
Availability & Consistency

• Configurable values
  – $R$: minimum # of nodes that must participate in a successful read operation
  – $W$: minimum # of nodes that must participate in a successful write operation

• Metadata to remember original destination
  – If a node was unreachable, the data is sent to another node in the ring
  – Metadata sent with the data states the original desired destination
  – Periodically, a node checks if the originally targeted node is alive
    • if so, it will transfer the object and may delete it locally to keep # of replicas in the system consistent

• Data center failure
  – System must handle the failure of a data center
  – Each object is replicated across multiple data centers
Versioning

• Not all updates may arrive at all replicas
  – Clients may modify or read stale data

• Application-based reconciliation
  – Each modification of data is treated as a new version

• Vector clocks are used for versioning
  – Capture causality between different versions of the same object
  – Vector clock is a set of (node, counter) pairs
  – Returned as a context from a `get()` operation and sent via `put()`
Dynamo Storage Nodes

Each node has three components

1. **Request coordination**
   - Node coordinator determined by hash(key)
   - Coordinator executes *get/put* requests on behalf of requesting clients
   - State machine contains all logic for identifying nodes responsible for a key, sending requests, waiting for responses, retries, processing retries, packaging response
   - Each state machine instance handles one request

2. **Membership and failure detection**

3. **Local persistent storage**
   - Different storage engines may be used depending on application needs
     - Berkeley Database (BDB) Transactional Data Store (most popular)
     - BDB Java Edition
     - MySQL (for large objects)
     - In-memory buffer with persistent backing store
Amazon S3 (Simple Storage Service)

Commercial service that implements many of Dynamo’s features

- Storage via web services interfaces (REST, SOAP, BitTorrent)
  - Stores more than 449 billion objects
  - 99.9% uptime guarantee (43 minutes downtime per month)
  - Proprietary design
  - Stores arbitrary objects up to 5 TB in size

- Objects organized into buckets and within a bucket identified by a unique user-assigned key

- Buckets & objects can be created, listed, and retrieved via REST or SOAP
  - http://s3.amazonaws/bucket/key

- Objects can be downloaded via HTTP GET or BitTorrent protocol
  - S3 acts as a seed host and any BitTorrent client can retrieve the file
  - reduces bandwidth costs

- S3 can also host static websites