Last Class: Web Caching

- Use web caching as an illustrative example
- Distribution protocols
  - Invalidate versus updates
  - Push versus Pull
  - Cooperation between replicas

Today: More on Consistency

- Eventual consistency and Epidemic protocols
- Consistency protocols
  - Primary-based
  - Replicated-write

- Putting it all together
  - Final thoughts
Eventual Consistency

• Many systems: one or few processes perform updates
  – How frequently should these updates be made available to other read-only processes?
• Examples:
  – DNS: single naming authority per domain
  – Only naming authority allowed updates (no write-write conflicts)
  – How should read-write conflicts (consistency) be addressed?
  – NIS: user information database in Unix systems
    • Only sys-admins update database, users only read data
    • Only user updates are changes to password

Eventual Consistency

• Assume a replicated database with few updaters and many readers
• Eventual consistency: in absence of updates, all replicas converge towards identical copies
  – Only requirement: an update should eventually propagate to all replicas
  – Cheap to implement: no or infrequent write-write conflicts
  – Things work fine so long as user accesses same replica
  – What if they don’t:
Client-centric Consistency Models

- Assume read operations by a single process $P$ at two different local copies of the same data store
  - Four different consistency semantics
- **Monotonic reads**
  - Once read, subsequent reads on that data items return same or more recent values
- **Monotonic writes**
  - A write must be propagated to all replicas before a successive write by the same process
  - Resembles FIFO consistency (writes from same process are processed in same order)
- **Read your writes**: read(x) always returns write(x) by that process
- **Writes follow reads**: write(x) following read(x) will take place on same or more recent version of x

Epidemic Protocols

- Used in Bayou system from Xerox PARC
- **Bayou**: weakly connected replicas
  - Useful in mobile computing (mobile laptops)
  - Useful in wide area distributed databases (weak connectivity)
- **Based on theory of epidemics** (*spreading infectious diseases*)
  - Upon an update, try to “infect” other replicas as quickly as possible
  - Pair-wise exchange of updates (*like pair-wise spreading of a disease*)
  - Terminology:
    - Infective store: store with an update it is willing to spread
    - Susceptible store: store that is not yet updates
- Many algorithms possible to spread updates
Spreading an Epidemic

- **Anti-entropy**
  - Server $P$ picks a server $Q$ at random and exchanges updates
  - Three possibilities: only push, only pull, both push and pull
  - Claim: A pure push-based approach does not help spread updates quickly (Why?)
    - Pull or initial push with pull work better
- **Rumor mongering** (aka gossiping)
  - Upon receiving an update, $P$ tries to push to $Q$
  - If $Q$ already received the update, stop spreading with prob $1/k$
  - Analogous to “hot” gossip items => stop spreading if “cold”
  - Does not guarantee that all replicas receive updates
    - Chances of staying susceptible: $s = e^{-(k+1)/(1-s)}$

Removing Data

- Deletion of data items is hard in epidemic protocols
- Example: server deletes data item $x$
  - No state information is preserved
    - Can’t distinguish between a deleted copy and no copy!
- Solution: death certificates
  - Treat deletes as updates and spread a death certificate
    - Mark copy as deleted but don’t delete
    - Need an eventual clean up
      - Clean up dormant death certificates
Implementation Issues

- Two techniques to implement consistency models
  - Primary-based protocols
    - Assume a primary replica for each data item
    - Primary responsible for coordinating all writes
  - Replicated write protocols
    - No primary is assumed for a data item
    - Writes can take place at any replica

Remote-Write Protocols

- Traditionally used in client-server systems

W1. Write request  R1. Read request
W2. Forward request to server for x  R2. Forward request to server for x
W3. Acknowledge write completed  R3. Return response
W4. Acknowledge write completed  R4. Return response
Remote-Write Protocols (2)

- Primary-backup protocol
  - Allow local reads, sent writes to primary
  - Block on write until all replicas are notified
  - Implements sequential consistency

Local-Write Protocols (1)

- Primary-based local-write protocol in which a single copy is migrated between processes.
  - Limitation: need to track the primary for each data item
Local-Write Protocols (2)

- Primary-backup protocol in which the primary migrates to the process wanting to perform an update

Replicated-write Protocols

- Relax the assumption of one primary
  - No primary, any replica is allowed to update
  - Consistency is more complex to achieve
- Quorum-based protocols
  - Use voting to request/acquire permissions from replicas
  - Consider a file replicated on $N$ servers
  - Update: contact at least $(N/2+1)$ servers and get them to agree to do update (associate version number with file)
  - Read: contact majority of servers and obtain version number
    - If majority of servers agree on a version number, read
Gifford’s Quorum-Based Protocol

Three examples of the voting algorithm:

a) A correct choice of read and write set
b) A choice that may lead to write-write conflicts
c) A correct choice, known as ROWA (read one, write all)

Final Thoughts

- Replication and caching improve performance in distributed systems
- Consistency of replicated data is crucial
- Many consistency semantics (models) possible
  - Need to pick appropriate model depending on the application
  - Example: web caching: weak consistency is OK since humans are tolerant to stale information (can reload browser)
  - Implementation overheads and complexity grows if stronger guarantees are desired