DATABASE PERFORMANCE AND INDEXES
Many situations where query performance needs to be improved
- e.g. as data size grows, query performance degrades and tuning needs to be performed
- Extreme cases: data warehouses with millions or billions of rows to aggregate and summarize

To optimize queries effectively, we must understand what the database is doing under the hood
- e.g. “Why are correlated subqueries slow to evaluate?”
  - Because an inner query must be evaluated for each row considered by the outer query. Thus, a good idea to avoid!
Next two lectures will explore how most databases evaluate queries

- Specifically, how are relational algebra operations implemented, and what optimizations do they employ?
- As usual, there are always exceptions! (e.g. MySQL)
- Important to be aware of, so you understand each DBMS’ limitations

Today, will concentrate more on data storage and access methodologies

Next time, explore relational algebra implementations

These are built on top of topics covered today
First rule of database performance: **Disk access is the most expensive thing databases do!**

- Accessing data in memory can be 10-100ns
- Accessing data on disk can be up to 10s of ms
  - That’s 5-6 orders of magnitude difference!
  - Even solid-state drives are 10s-100s of μs (1000x slower)

- Unfortunately, disk IO is usually unavoidable
  - Usually the data simply doesn’t fit into memory...
  - Plus, the data needs to be persistent for when the DB is shut down, or when the server crashes, etc.

- DBs work very hard to minimize the amount of disk IO
Planning and Optimization

- When the query planner/optimizer gets your query:
  - It explores many equivalent plans, estimating their cost (primarily IO cost), and chooses the least expensive one
  - Considers many options in evaluating your query:
    - What access paths does it have to the data you want?
    - What algorithms can it use for selects, joins, sorting, etc?
    - What is the nature of the data itself?
      - i.e. statistics generated by the database, directly from your data
- The planner will do the best it can... 😊
  - Sometimes it can’t find a fast way to run your query
  - Also depends on sophistication of the planner itself
    - e.g. if planner doesn’t know how to optimize certain queries, or if executor doesn’t implement very advanced algorithms
Databases usually store each table in its own file.

File IO is performed in fixed-size **blocks** or **pages**.
- Common page size is 4KB or 8KB; can often tune this value.
- Disks can read/write entire pages faster than small amounts of bytes or individual records.
- Also makes it much easier for the database to manage pages of data in memory.
  - The **buffer manager** takes care of this very complicated task.

Each block in the file contains some number of records.

Frequently, individual records can vary in size…
- (due to variable-size types: VARCHAR, NUMERIC, etc.)
Table Data Storage (2)

- Individual blocks have internal structure, to manage:
  - Records that vary in size
  - Records that are deleted
  - Where and how to add a new record to the block, if there is space for it

- The table file itself also has internal structure:
  - Want to make sure common operations are fast!
    - “I want to insert a new row. Which block has space for it, or do I have to allocate a new block at the end of the file?”
Record Organization

- Should table records be organized in a specific way?
  - Example: records are kept in sorted order, using a key
    - Called a **sequential file organization**
    - Would be much faster to find records based on the key
    - Would be much faster to do range queries as well
    - *Definitely* complicates the storage of records!
      - Can’t predict order records will be added or deleted
      - Often requires periodic reorganization to ensure that records remain physically sorted on the disk

- Could also hash records based on some key
  - Called a **hashing file organization**
  - Again, speeds up access based on specific values
  - Similar organizational challenges arise over time…
The most common file organization is random! 😊

- Called a heap file organization
- Every record can be placed anywhere in the table file, wherever there is space for the record
- Virtually all databases provide heap file organization
- Usually perfectly sufficient, except for most demanding applications
Given that DBs normally use heap file organization, how does the DB evaluate a query like:

```sql
SELECT * FROM account
WHERE account_id = 'A-591';
```

A simple approach:
- Search through the entire table file, looking for all rows where value of `account_id` is A-591
- This is called a **file scan**, for obvious reasons

This will be slow, but it’s all we can do so far…

Need a way to optimize accesses like this
Table Indexes

- Most queries use a small number of rows from a table.
  - Need a faster way to look up those values, besides scanning through entire data file.

- Approach: build an index on the table.
  - Each index is associated with a specific column or set of columns in the table, called the search key for the index.
  - Queries involving those columns can often be made much faster by using the index on those columns.
  - (Queries not using those columns will still use a file scan 😞)

- Index is always structured in some way, for fast lookups.
  - Index is much smaller than the actual table itself.
    - Much faster to search within the index (fewer IO operations).
Index Characteristics

- Many different varieties of indexes, with different access characteristics
  - What kind of lookup is most efficient for the kind of index?
  - How costly is it to find a particular item, or a set of items?
    - e.g. a query retrieving records with a range of values

- Indexes do impose both a time and space overhead
  - Indexes must be kept up to date! Frequently, they slow down update operations, while making selects faster.

- Different kinds of indexes impose different overheads:
  - How much time to add a new item to the index?
  - How much time to delete an item from the index?
  - How much additional space does the index take up?
Index Characteristics (2)

- Two major categories of indexes:
  - **Ordered indexes** keep values in a sorted order
  - **Hash indexes** divide values into bins, using a hash function
- Many variations within these two categories!
- **Example:** dense vs. sparse indexes
  - A **dense index** includes every single value from the source column(s). Faster lookups, but a larger space overhead.
  - A **sparse index** only includes some of the values. Lookups require searching more records, but index is smaller.
- The indexes we are covering today are dense indexes
  - Heap files are in random order, so an index won’t help us very much unless it includes every value from the table
Indexes are usually stored in files separate from the actual table data

- Indexes are also read/written as blocks
  - (Same reasons as before…)

Indexes use record pointers to reference specific records in the table file

- Simply consists of the block number the record is in, and the offset of the record within that block

Index records contain values (or hashes), and one or more pointers to table records with those values
Index Implementations (2)

- Virtually all databases provide ordered indexes, using some kind of balanced tree structure
  - $B^+$-tree and B-tree indexes, typically referred to as “btree” indexes
- Some databases also provide hash indexes
  - More complex to manage than ordered indexes, so not very common in open-source databases
- Several other kinds of indexes as well:
  - Bitmap indexes – to speed up queries on multiple keys
    - Also less common in open-source databases
  - R-tree indexes – to make spatial queries very fast
    - With ubiquity of geospatial data, quite common these days
B⁺-Tree Indexes

- A very widely used ordered index storage format
- Manages a balanced tree structure
  - Every path from root to leaf is the same length
  - Generally remains efficient for selects, even with inserts and deletes occurring
- Can consume significant space, since individual nodes can be up to half empty!
- Index updates for insert and delete can be slow…
  - Tree structure must be updated properly
- Performance benefits on queries more than outweigh these costs!
B⁺-Tree Indexes (2)

- Each tree node has up to $n$ children
  - Simplification: $n$ is fixed for the entire tree
- Each node stores $n$ pointers and $n - 1$ values
  
  | $P_1$ | $K_1$ | $P_2$ | $K_2$ | $P_3$ | ... | $P_{n-1}$ | $K_{n-1}$ | $P_n$ |

  - $K_i$ are search-key values, $P_i$ are record pointers
  - Values are kept in sorted order: if $i < j$ then $K_i < K_j$
  - All nodes (except root) must be at least half full
- Size of $n$ depends on block size, search-key size, and record pointer size, but it is usually large!
  - Example: 4KB blocks, 4B record pointers, 4B integer keys
  - $n$ will be $>500$! B⁺-tree indexes are shallow, broad trees.
B⁺-Tree Leaf Nodes

- For leaf nodes:

<p>| | | | | | | | | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>$P_1$</td>
<td>$K_1$</td>
<td>$P_2$</td>
<td>$K_2$</td>
<td>$P_3$</td>
<td>$\ldots$</td>
<td>$P_{n-1}$</td>
<td>$K_{n-1}$</td>
<td>$P_n$</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

$P_i$ points to record(s) with key value $K_i$,
$P_n$ points to next leaf in sequence (i.e. leaf whose first value is $K_n$)

- Pointer $P_i$ refers to record(s) with search-key value $K_i$
- If search key is a candidate key, $P_i$ points to the record with key value $K_i$
- If search key isn’t a candidate key, $P_i$ points to a collection of pointers to all records with key value $K_i$

- No two leaves have overlapping ranges
- Leaves can be arranged in sequential order
- Pointer $P_n$ points to the next leaf in sequential order
B⁺-Tree Non-Leaf Nodes

- For non-leaf nodes:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>K₁</th>
<th>P₂</th>
<th>K₂</th>
<th>P₃</th>
<th>...</th>
<th>Pₙ₋₁</th>
<th>Kₙ₋₁</th>
<th>Pₙ</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

- All pointers $P_i$ refer to other B⁺-tree nodes

- For $1 < i < n$:
  - Pointer $P_i$ points to subtree containing search-key values of at least $K_{i-1}$, but less than $K_i$

- For $i = 1$ or $i = n$:
  - Pointer $P_1$ points to subtree containing search-key values less than $K_1$
  - Pointer $P_n$ points to subtree containing search-key values at least $K_{n-1}$
Example $B^+$-Tree

- A simple $B^+$-tree, with $n = 3$

Queries are straightforward
- Inserts may require one or more nodes to be split
- Deletes may require one or more nodes to be merged
B$^+$-Trees and String Keys

- String columns are problematic for indexing
  - Frequently specified to have large/variable-size values
  - Large keys reduce branching factor of each node, increasing tree depth and access cost
  - Large keys can also interfere with tree restructuring

- Simple solution: don’t use the entire string! 😊
  - Can use prefix compression technique
  - Non-leaf nodes only store a prefix of the search string
  - Size of prefix must be large enough to distinguish reasonably well between values in each subtree
    - Otherwise, can’t effectively narrow down records to consider
Indexes and Queries

- Indexes provide an alternate access path to specific records in a table
  - If looking for a specific value or range of values, use the index to find where to start looking in the table file

- Query planner looks for indexes on relevant columns when optimizing your query

- Query from before:
  ```sql
  SELECT * FROM account
  WHERE account_id='A-591';
  ```

- If there is an index on account_id column, planner can use an index scan instead of a file scan
  - Execution plan is annotated with these kinds of details
Databases create many indexes automatically
- DB will create an index on the primary key columns, and sometimes on foreign key columns too
- Makes it much faster for DB to enforce key and referential integrity constraints

Many of your queries already use these indexes!
- Lookups on primary keys, and joins on primary/foreign key columns

Sometimes queries use columns that don’t have indexes
- e.g. SELECT * FROM account WHERE balance >= 3000;

How do we tell what indexes the DB uses for a query?
How do we create additional indexes on our tables?
Most databases have an **EXPLAIN**-type command

- Performs query planning and optimization phases, then outputs details about the execution plan
- Reports, among other things, what indexes are used

**MySQL EXPLAIN command:**

```sql
EXPLAIN SELECT * FROM account
WHERE account_id = 'A-591';
```

+----+---------------+----------+---------------+---------------------+--------+-----+-----+--------+-------+---------------------+--------+-------+-------+--------+--------+-------+-------+
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>id</th>
<th>select_type</th>
<th>table</th>
<th>type</th>
<th>possible_keys</th>
<th>key</th>
<th>key_len</th>
<th>ref</th>
<th>rows</th>
<th>Extra</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>SIMPLE</td>
<td>account</td>
<td>const</td>
<td>PRIMARY</td>
<td>PRIMARY</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>const</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
+----+---------------+----------+---------------+-------------------+--------+---------+------+------+-------+

This query uses primary key index to look up the record

MySQL knows that the result will be one row, or no rows
More interesting result with a different account ID:

```
EXPLAIN SELECT * FROM account
    WHERE account_id = 'A-000';
```

MySQL planner uses the primary key index to discern that the specified ID doesn’t appear in the `account` table!

Another query against `account`:

```
EXPLAIN SELECT * FROM account
    WHERE balance >= 3000;
```

No index available to use for this column
Adding Indexes to Tables

- If many queries reference columns that don’t have indexes, and performance becomes an issue:
  - Create additional indexes on a table to help the DB
- Usually specified with `CREATE INDEX` commands
- To speed up queries on account balances:
  ```sql
  CREATE INDEX idx_balance ON account (balance);
  ```
  - Database will create the index file and populate it from the current contents of the `account` relation
  - *(this could take some time for really large tables…)*
- Can also create multi-column indexes
- Can specify many options, such as the index type
  - Virtually all databases create `BTREE` indexes by default
MySQL allows you to specify indexes in the CREATE TABLE command itself…

…not many other DBs support this, so it’s not portable.

Any drawbacks to putting an index on account balances?

It’s a bank. Account balances change all the time.

Will definitely incur a performance penalty on updates (but, it probably won’t be terribly substantial…)
Verifying Index Usage

- **Very important** to verify that your new index is actually being used!
  - If your query doesn’t use the index, best to get rid of it!
    
    ```sql
    EXPLAIN SELECT * FROM account
    WHERE balance >= 3000;
    ```

    | id | select_type | table   | type | possible_keys | key  | key_len | ref | rows | Extra       |
    |----|-------------|---------|------|--------------|------|---------|-----|------|-------------|
    | 1  | SIMPLE      | account | ALL  | idx_balance  | NULL | NULL    | NULL | 60   | Using where |

- Hmm, MySQL doesn’t use the index for this query.
  - If other expensive queries use it, makes sense to keep it (e.g. the rank query would use this index)
  - Otherwise, just get rid of it and keep your updates fast
Indexes on Large Values

- Large keys seriously degrade index performance
- Example: B-trees and B+-trees
  - Biggest benefit is very large branching factor of each node
  - Large key-values will dramatically reduce the branching factor, deepening the tree and increasing IO costs
- Can specify indexes on only the first $N$ characters/bytes of a string/LOB value
  
  ```sql
  CREATE INDEX idx_name ON customer (cust_name(5));
  ```
  - Only uses first five characters for customer-name index
  - If most values differ in first $N$ bytes, index will be much smaller and faster for both updates and queries
  - If values don’t differ much, index won’t do much good
Indexes and Performance Tuning

- Adding indexes to a schema is a common task in many database projects.
- As a performance-tuning task, usually occurs after DB contains some data, and queries are slow.
  - Always avoid premature optimization!
  - Always find out what the DB is doing first!
- Indexes impose an overhead in both space and time.
  - Speeds up selects, but slows down all modifications.
- Always need to verify that a new index is actually being used by the database. If not, get rid of it!
Next time: SQL Query Evaluation II

Overview of how most relational algebra operators are implemented, including common-case optimizations

Midterm time is a-comin’…

Next Monday, November 5, is midterm review
Come to class, watch the video, get the slides, whatever.
Midterm will be available towards end of next week
No assignment due the week of the midterm