

# Advanced Databases

## Transactions

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WS 2023/24

Version November 22, 2023

Adapted from slides for textbook "Database System Concepts"  
by Silberschatz, Korth, Sudarshan  
<http://codex.cs.yale.edu/avi/db-book/db6/slide-dir/index.html>

## Outline

- 1 Transaction Concept
- 2 Concurrent Executions
- 3 Serializability
- 4 Recoverability
- 5 Implementation of Isolation / SQL

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## Transaction Concept

- A **transaction** is a **unit of program execution** that accesses and possibly updates various data items.
- E.g., transaction to transfer \$50 from account A to account B:
  1. **read**(A)
  2.  $A := A - 50$
  3. **write**(A)
  4. **read**(B)
  5.  $B := B + 50$
  6. **write**(B)
- **Two main issues** to deal with:
  - Failures of various kinds, such as **hardware failures** and system crashes
  - **Concurrent execution** of multiple transactions

## Required Properties of a Transaction/1

- E.g., transaction to transfer \$50 from account A to account B:
  1. **read**(A)
  2.  $A := A - 50$
  3. **write**(A)
  4. **read**(B)
  5.  $B := B + 50$
  6. **write**(B)
- **Atomicity requirement**
  - If the transaction fails after step 3 and before step 6, money will be “lost” leading to an **inconsistent database state**
    - Failure could be due to software or hardware
  - The system should ensure that updates of a **partially executed transaction** are not reflected in the database
- **Durability requirement** — once the user has been notified that the transaction has completed (i.e., the transfer of the \$50 has taken place), the **updates** to the database by the transaction **must persist** even if there are software or hardware failures.

## Required Properties of a Transaction/2

- **Consistency requirement** in above example:
  - The sum of A and B is unchanged by the execution of the transaction
- **In general**, consistency requirements include
  - **Explicitly specified integrity constraints** such as primary keys and foreign keys
  - **Implicit integrity constraints**
    - e.g., sum of balances of all accounts, minus sum of loan amounts must equal value of cash-in-hand
- A transaction, **when starting** to execute, must see a **consistent database**.
- During transaction execution the database may be **temporarily inconsistent**.
- When the transaction **completes successfully** the database must be **consistent**
  - Erroneous transaction logic can lead to inconsistency

## Required Properties of a Transaction/3

- **Isolation requirement** — if between steps 3 and 6 (of the fund transfer transaction), another transaction T2 is allowed to access the partially updated database, it will see an **inconsistent database** (the sum  $A + B$  will be less than it should be).

T1	T2
1. <b>read</b> (A)	
2. $A := A - 50$	
3. <b>write</b> (A)	
	<b>read</b> (A), <b>read</b> (B), <b>print</b> (A + B)
4. <b>read</b> (B)	
5. $B := B + 50$	
6. <b>write</b> (B)	

- Isolation can be ensured trivially by running transactions **serially**.
- However, executing multiple transactions **concurrently** has significant benefits.

## ACID Properties

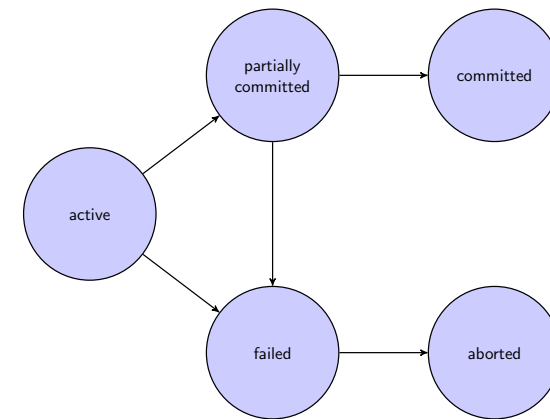
A **transaction** is a unit of program execution that accesses and possibly updates various data items. **To preserve the integrity** of data the database system must ensure:

- **Atomicity**. Either **all operations** of the transaction are properly reflected in the database **or none** are.
- **Consistency**. Execution of a transaction **in isolation** preserves the **consistency** of the database.
- **Isolation**. Although multiple transactions may execute concurrently, each transaction must be **unaware of other concurrently executing transactions**. Intermediate transaction results must be hidden from other concurrently executed transactions.
  - That is, for every pair of transactions  $T_i$  and  $T_j$ , it appears to  $T_i$  that either  $T_j$  finished execution before  $T_i$  started, or  $T_j$  started execution after  $T_i$  finished.
- **Durability**. **After a transaction completes successfully**, the changes it has made to the **database persist**, even if there are system failures.

## Transaction State/1

- **Active** — the **initial state**; the transaction stays in this state while it is executing
- **Partially committed** — after the **final statement** has been executed.
- **Failed** — after the discovery that **normal execution can no longer proceed**.
- **Aborted** — after the transaction has been **rolled back and the database restored** to its state prior to the start of the transaction.  
Two options after it has been aborted:
  - **Restart the transaction**
    - can be done only if no internal logical error
  - **Kill the transaction**
- **Committed** — after **successful completion**.

## Transaction State/2



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- 1 Transaction Concept
- 2 **Concurrent Executions**
- 3 Serializability
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## Concurrent Executions

- Multiple transactions are allowed to run **concurrently** in the system.  
Advantages are:
  - **Increased processor and disk utilization**, leading to better transaction throughput, e.g., one transaction can be using the CPU while another is reading from or writing to the disk
  - **Reduced average response time** for transactions: short transactions need not wait behind long ones.
- **Concurrency control schemes**
  - mechanisms to **achieve isolation**
  - **control the interaction** among the concurrent transactions in order to prevent them from destroying the consistency of the database

## Schedules

- **Schedule** — a **sequence** of instructions that specify the **chronological order** in which instructions of **concurrent transactions** are executed
  - A schedule for a set of transactions must **consist of all instructions** of those transactions.
  - Must **preserve the order** in which the instructions appear in each individual transaction.
- A transaction that successfully completes its execution will have a **commit instruction** as the last statement.
- A transaction that fails to successfully complete its execution will have an **abort instruction** as the last statement.

## Schedule 1

- Let  $T_1$  transfer \$50 from  $A$  to  $B$ , and  $T_2$  transfer 10% of the balance from  $A$  to  $B$ .
- An example of a **serial** schedule in which  $T_1$  is followed by  $T_2$ :

$T_1$	$T_2$
read(A)	
$A := A - 50$	
write(A)	
read(B)	
$B := B + 50$	
write(B)	
commit	
	read(A)
	$temp := A * 0.1$
	$A := A - temp$
	write(A)
	read(B)
	$B := B + temp$
	write(B)
	commit

## Schedule 2

- A **serial** schedule in which  $T_2$  is followed by  $T_1$ :

$T_1$	$T_2$
	read(A)
	$temp := A * 0.1$
	$A := A - temp$
	write(A)
	read(B)
	$B := B + temp$
	write(B)
	commit
read(A)	
$A := A - 50$	
write(A)	
read(B)	
$B := B + 50$	
write(B)	
commit	

## Schedule 3

- Let  $T_1$  and  $T_2$  be the transactions defined previously. The following schedule is **not a serial schedule**, but it is **equivalent** to Schedule 1.

$T_1$	$T_2$
read(A)	
$A := A - 50$	
write(A)	
	read(A)
	$temp := A * 0.1$
	$A := A - temp$
	write(A)
read(B)	
$B := B + 50$	
write(B)	
commit	
	read(B)
	$B := B + temp$
	write(B)
	commit

Note — In schedules 1, 2 and 3, the sum “ $A + B$ ” is preserved.

## Schedule 4

- The following concurrent schedule does not preserve the sum of "A + B"

$T_1$	$T_2$
read(A)	
$A := A - 50$	
	read(A)
	$temp := A * 0.1$
	$A := A - temp$
	write(A)
	read(B)
write(A)	
read(B)	
$B := B + 50$	
write(B)	
commit	
	$B := B + temp$
	write(B)
	commit

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## Concurrent Executions

- Basic Assumption** — Each transaction preserves database consistency.
- Thus, **serial execution** of a set of transactions **preserves database consistency**.
- A (possibly concurrent) schedule is **serializable** if it is **equivalent to a serial schedule**. Different forms of schedule equivalence give rise to the notions of:
  - conflict serializability
  - view serializability

## Simplified model of transactions

- We ignore **operations** other than **read** and **write** instructions
- We assume that transactions may perform **arbitrary computations** on data in **local buffers** in between reads and writes.
- Our simplified **schedules consist of only read** and **write** instructions.

## Conflicting Instructions

- Let  $l_i$  and  $l_j$  be two Instructions of transactions  $T_i$  and  $T_j$  respectively. Instructions  $l_i$  and  $l_j$  **conflict** if and only if there exists some **item  $Q$  accessed by both  $l_i$  and  $l_j$ , and at least one of these instructions wrote  $Q$ .**
  - $l_i = \text{read}(Q)$ ,  $l_j = \text{read}(Q)$ .  $l_i$  and  $l_j$  don't conflict.
  - $l_i = \text{read}(Q)$ ,  $l_j = \text{write}(Q)$ . They conflict.
  - $l_i = \text{write}(Q)$ ,  $l_j = \text{read}(Q)$ . They conflict.
  - $l_i = \text{write}(Q)$ ,  $l_j = \text{write}(Q)$ . They conflict.
- Intuitively, a conflict between  $l_i$  and  $l_j$  **forces a (logical) temporal order** between them.
- If  $l_i$  and  $l_j$  are **consecutive** in a schedule and they **do not conflict**, their results would remain the same even if they had been interchanged in the schedule.

## Conflict Serializability/1

- If a schedule  $S$  can be transformed into a schedule  $S'$  by a series of swaps of non-conflicting instructions, then  $S$  and  $S'$  are **conflict equivalent**.
- A schedule  $S$  is conflict serializable if it is **conflict equivalent** to a serial schedule.

## Conflict Serializability/2

- Schedule 3 and (serial) Schedule 6 are conflict equivalent, therefore Schedule 3 is serializable.

$T_1$	$T_2$
$\text{read}(A)$	
$\text{write}(A)$	
	$\text{read}(A)$
	$\text{write}(A)$
$\text{read}(B)$	
$\text{write}(B)$	
	$\text{read}(B)$
	$\text{write}(B)$

Table: Schedule 3

$T_1$	$T_2$
$\text{read}(A)$	
$\text{write}(A)$	
$\text{read}(B)$	
$\text{write}(B)$	
	$\text{read}(A)$
	$\text{write}(A)$
	$\text{read}(B)$
	$\text{write}(B)$

Table: Schedule 6

## Conflict Serializability/3

- Example of a schedule that is **not conflict serializable**:

$T_3$	$T_4$
$\text{read}(Q)$	
	$\text{write}(Q)$
$\text{read}(Q)$	

- We are **unable to swap instructions** in the above schedule to obtain either the serial schedule  $\langle T_3, T_4 \rangle$ , or the serial schedule  $\langle T_4, T_3 \rangle$ .

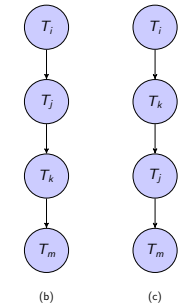
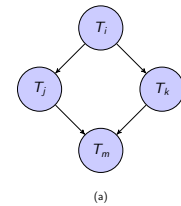
## Precedence Graph

- Consider some **schedule** of a set of transactions  $T_1, T_2, \dots, T_n$
- Precedence graph** — a direct graph where the vertices are the transactions (names).
- We draw an **arc** from  $T_i$  to  $T_j$  if the **two transaction conflict**, and  $T_i$  accessed the data item on which the conflict arose earlier.
- We may **label the arc by the item** that was accessed.
- Example**



## Testing for Conflict Serializability

- A schedule is **conflict serializable** if and only if its **precedence graph** is **acyclic**.
- Cycle-detection algorithms** exist which take order  $n^2$  time, where  $n$  is the number of vertices in the graph.
  - (Better algorithms take order  $n + e$  where  $e$  is the number of edges.)
- If the precedence graph is acyclic, the serializability order can be obtained by a **topological sorting** of the graph.
  - That is, a **linear order consistent with the partial order** of the graph.
  - For example, a serializability order for the schedule (a) would be one of either (b) or (c)



## View Serializability/1

- Let  $S$  and  $S'$  be two schedules with the same set of transactions.  $S$  and  $S'$  are **view equivalent** if the following **three conditions** are met, for each data item  $Q$ ,
  - If in schedule  $S$ , transaction  $T_i$  reads the initial value of  $Q$ , then in schedule  $S'$  also transaction  $T_i$  must read the initial value of  $Q$ .
  - If in schedule  $S$  transaction  $T_i$  executes  $read(Q)$ , and that value was produced by transaction  $T_j$  (if any), then in schedule  $S'$  also transaction  $T_i$  must read the value of  $Q$  that was produced by the same  $write(Q)$  operation of transaction  $T_j$ .
  - The transaction (if any) that performs the final  $write(Q)$  operation in schedule  $S$  must also perform the final  $write(Q)$  operation in schedule  $S'$ .
- As can be seen, view equivalence is also **based purely on reads and writes** alone.

## View Serializability/2

- A schedule  $S$  is **view serializable** if it is view equivalent to a **serial schedule**.
- Every **conflict serializable schedule** is also **view serializable**.
- Below is a schedule which is **view-serializable but not conflict serializable**.

$T_{27}$	$T_{28}$	$T_{29}$
$read(Q)$	$write(Q)$	
$write(Q)$		$write(Q)$

- What serial schedule is above equivalent to?
- Every view serializable schedule that is not conflict serializable has **blind writes**.

## Test for View Serializability

- The **precedence graph** test for conflict serializability cannot be used directly to test for view serializability.
  - Extension to **test for view serializability** has **cost exponential** in the size of the precedence graph.
- The problem of checking if a schedule is view serializable falls in the class of **NP-complete problems**.
  - Thus, existence of an efficient algorithm is *extremely* unlikely.
- However, practical algorithms that just check some **sufficient conditions** for view serializability can still be used.

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## More Complex Notions of Serializability

- The schedule below produces the same outcome as the serial schedule  $\langle T_1, T_5 \rangle$ , yet is **not conflict equivalent or view equivalent** to it.

$T_1$	$T_5$
read(A)	
$A := A - 50$	
write(A)	
	read(B)
	$B := B - 10$
	write(B)
read(B)	
$B := B + 50$	
write(B)	
	read(A)
	$A := A + 10$
	write(A)

- If we start with  $A = 1000$  and  $B = 2000$ , the final result is 960 and 2040
- Determining such equivalence requires analysis of operations other than read and write.

## Recoverable Schedules

- **Recoverable schedule** — if a transaction  $T_j$  reads a data item previously written by a transaction  $T_i$ , then the commit operation of  $T_i$  **must** appear before the commit operation of  $T_j$ .
- The **following schedule is not recoverable**:  $T_9$  reads  $A$  written by  $T_8$  but commits before  $T_8$ .

$T_8$	$T_9$
read(A)	
write(A)	
	read(A)
	$C \leftarrow A$
	write(C)
	commit
	read(B)

- If  $T_8$  aborts,  $T_9$  has read and copied an **inconsistent database state**.
- Database **must** ensure that schedules are recoverable.



## Cascading Rollbacks

- **Cascading rollback**: a single transaction failure leads to a **series of transaction rollbacks**.
- Consider the following schedule where none of the transactions has yet committed (so the schedule is recoverable):

$T_{10}$	$T_{11}$	$T_{12}$
read(A)		
read(B)		
write(A)		
	read(A)	
	write(A)	
		read(A)
abort		

If  $T_{10}$  fails,  $T_{11}$  and  $T_{12}$  must also be rolled back.

- Can lead to the **undoing of a significant amount of work**.

## Cascadeless Schedules

- **Cascadeless schedules** — for each pair of transactions  $T_i$  and  $T_j$  such that  $T_j$  reads a data item previously written by  $T_i$ , the commit operation of  $T_i$  appears before the read operation of  $T_j$ .
- Every cascadeless schedule is **also recoverable**.
- Example of a schedule that is **NOT** cascadeless:

$T_{10}$	$T_{11}$	$T_{12}$
read(A)		
read(B)		
write(A)		
	read(A)	
	write(A)	
		read(A)
abort		

- It is *desirable* to restrict the schedules to those that are cascadeless.

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## Concurrency Control and Recoverability

- A database must provide a mechanism that will **ensure** that **all possible schedules** are both:
  - **conflict serializable**
  - **recoverable** and **preferably cascadeless**
- A policy in which only one transaction can execute at a time generates **serial schedules**, but provides a poor degree of concurrency.
- Concurrency-control schemes **tradeoff** between the amount of **concurrency** they allow and the amount of **overhead** that they incur.
- **Protocols** that assure serializability and recoverability are required:
  - testing a schedule for serializability after it has executed (e.g., cycle detection in precedence graphs) is too late!
  - tests for serializability help us understand why a concurrency control protocol is correct

## Weak Levels of Consistency

- Some applications are willing to live with weak levels of consistency, allowing schedules that are not serializable, e.g.,
  - a read-only transaction that wants to get an approximate total balance of all accounts
  - database statistics computed for query optimization can be approximate
- Such transactions need not be serializable with respect to other transactions.
- Tradeoff accuracy for performance

## Undesirable Phenomena of Concurrent Transactions

- Dirty read
  - transaction reads data written by concurrent uncommitted transaction
  - problem: read may return a value that was never in the database because the writing transaction aborted
- Non-repeatable read
  - different reads on the same item within a single transaction give different results (caused by other transactions)
  - e.g., concurrent transactions  $T_1: x = R(A), y = R(A), z = y - x$  and  $T_2: W(A = 2 * A)$ , then  $z$  can be either zero or the initial value of  $A$  (should be zero!)
- Phantom read
  - repeating the same query later in the transaction gives a different set of result tuples
  - other transactions can insert new tuples during a scan
  - e.g., “Q: get accounts with *balance* > 1000” gives two tuples the first time, then a new account with *balance* > 1000 is inserted by an other transaction; the second time  $Q$  gives three tuples

## Isolation Guarantees (SQL Standard)

- Read uncommitted: dirty, non-repeatable, phantom
  - reads may access uncommitted data
  - writes do not overwrite uncommitted data
- Read committed: non-repeatable, phantom
  - reads can access only committed data
  - cursor stability: in addition, read is repeatable within single SELECT
- Repeatable read: phantom
  - phantom reads possible
- Serializable:
  - none of the undesired phenomenas can happen

## Transaction Definition in SQL

- Data manipulation language must include a construct for specifying the set of actions that comprise a transaction.
- In SQL, a transaction begins implicitly.
  - BEGIN [TRANSACTION ISOLATION LEVEL ...]
  - Isolation levels: read committed, read uncommitted, repeatable read, serializable
- A transaction in SQL ends by:
  - COMMIT commits current transaction and begins a new one.
  - ROLLBACK causes current transaction to abort.
- Typically, an SQL statement commits implicitly if it executes successfully
  - Implicit commit can be turned off by a database directive, e.g. in JDBC, `connection.setAutoCommit(false)`;