Memory Management

- We’re beginning a new multiple-lecture topic
  - goals of memory management
    - convenient abstraction for programming
    - isolation between processes
    - allocate scarce memory resources between competing processes, maximize performance (minimize overhead)
  - mechanisms
    - physical vs. virtual address spaces
    - page table management, segmentation policies
    - page replacement policies
Virtual Memory from 10,000 feet

• The basic abstraction that the OS provides for memory management is virtual memory (VM)
  – VM enables programs to execute without requiring their entire address space to be resident in physical memory
    • program can also execute on machines with less RAM than it “needs”
  – many programs don’t need all of their code or data at once (or ever)
    • e.g., branches they never take, or data they never read/write
    • no need to allocate memory for it, OS should adjust amount allocated based on its run-time behavior
  – virtual memory isolates processes from each other
    • one process cannot name addresses visible to others; each process has its own isolated address space

• VM requires hardware and OS support
  – MMU’s, TLB’s, page tables, …
In the beginning…

• First, there was batch programming
  – programs used physical addresses directly
  – OS loads job, runs it, unloads it

• Then came multiprogramming
  – need multiple processes in memory at once
    • to overlap I/O and computation
  – memory requirements:
    • protection: restrict which addresses processes can use, so they can’t stomp on each other
    • fast translation: memory lookups must be fast, in spite of protection scheme
    • fast context switching: when swap between jobs, updating memory hardware (protection and translation) must be quick
Virtual Addresses

• To make it easier to manage memory of multiple processes, make processes use virtual addresses
  – virtual addresses are independent of location in physical memory (RAM) that referenced data lives
    • OS determines location in physical memory
  – instructions issued by CPU reference virtual addresses
    • e.g., pointers, arguments to load/store instruction, PC, …
  – virtual addresses are translated by hardware into physical addresses (with some help from OS)

• The set of virtual addresses a process can reference is its address space
  – many different possible mechanisms for translating virtual addresses to physical addresses
    • we’ll take a historical walk through them, ending up with our current techniques
Old technique #1: Fixed Partitions

• Physical memory is broken up into fixed partitions
  – all partitions are equally sized, partitioning never changes
  – hardware requirement: base register
    • physical address = virtual address + base register
    • base register loaded by OS when it switches to a process
  – how can we ensure protection?

• Advantages
  – simple, ultra-fast context switch

• Problems
  – internal fragmentation: memory in a partition not used by its owning process isn’t available to other processes
  – partition size problem: no one size is appropriate for all processes
    • fragmentation vs. fitting large programs in partition
Fixed Partitions (K bytes)

3K base register

offset virtual address

+ physical memory

partition 0
partition 1
partition 2
partition 3
partition 4
partition 5
Old technique #2: Variable Partitions

- Obvious next step: physical memory is broken up into variable-sized partitions
  - hardware requirements: base register, limit register
  - physical address = virtual address + base register
  - how do we provide protection?
    - if (physical address > base + limit) then… ?

- Advantages
  - no internal fragmentation
    - simply allocate partition size to be just big enough for process
    - (assuming we know what that is!)

- Problems
  - external fragmentation
    - as we load and unload jobs, holes are left scattered throughout physical memory
Variable Partitions

offset

virtual address

<?

yes

no

raise protection fault

limit register

P3’s size

base register

P3’s base

physical memory

partition 0

partition 1

partition 2

partition 3

partition 4
Modern technique: Paging

- Solve the external fragmentation problem by using fixed sized units in both physical and virtual memory
User’s Perspective

- Processes view memory as a contiguous address space from bytes 0 through N
  - virtual address space (VAS)
- In reality, virtual pages are scattered across physical memory frames
  - virtual-to-physical mapping
  - this mapping is invisible to the program
- Protection is provided because a program cannot reference memory outside of it’s VAS
  - the virtual address 0xDEADBEEF maps to different physical addresses for different processes
Paging

• Translating virtual addresses
  – a virtual address has two parts: virtual page number & offset
  – virtual page number (VPN) is index into a page table
  – page table entry contains page frame number (PFN)
  – physical address is PFN::offset

• Page tables
  – managed by the OS
  – map virtual page number (VPN) to page frame number (PFN)
    • VPN is simply an index into the page table
  – one page table entry (PTE) per page in virtual address space
    • i.e., one PTE per VPN
Paging example

• assume 32 bit addresses
  – assume page size is 4KB (4096 bytes, or $2^{12}$ bytes)
  – VPN is 20 bits long ($2^{20}$ VPNs), offset is 12 bits long

• let’s translate virtual address 0x13325328

  – VPN is 0x13325, and offset is 0x328
  – assume page table entry 0x13325 contains value 0x03004
    • page frame number is 0x03004
    • VPN 0x13325 maps to PFN 0x03004
  – physical address = PFN::offset = 0x03004328
Page Table Entries (PTEs)

- PTE’s control mapping
  - the valid bit says whether or not the PTE can be used
    - says whether or not a virtual address is valid
    - it is checked each time a virtual address is used
  - the reference bit says whether the page has been accessed
    - it is set when a page has been read or written to
  - the modify bit says whether or not the page is dirty
    - it is set when a write to the page has occurred
  - the protection bits control which operations are allowed
    - read, write, execute
  - the page frame number determines the physical page
    - physical page start address = PFN << (#bits/page)
Paging Advantages

• Easy to allocate physical memory
  – physical memory is allocated from free list of frames
    • to allocate a frame, just remove it from its free list
  – external fragmentation is not a problem!
    • complication for kernel contiguous physical memory allocation
      – many lists, each keeps track of free regions of particular size
      – regions’ sizes are multiples of page sizes
      – “buddy algorithm”

• Easy to “page out” chunks of programs
  – all chunks are the same size (page size)
  – use valid bit to detect references to “paged-out” pages
  – also, page sizes are usually chosen to be convenient multiples of disk block sizes
Paging Disadvantages

- Can still have internal fragmentation
  - process may not use memory in exact multiples of pages

- Memory reference overhead
  - 2 references per address lookup (page table, then memory)
  - solution: use a hardware cache to absorb page table lookups
    • translation lookaside buffer (TLB) – next class

- Memory required to hold page tables can be large
  - need one PTE per page in virtual address space
  - 32 bit AS with 4KB pages = $2^{20}$ PTEs = 1,048,576 PTEs
  - 4 bytes/PTE = 4MB per page table
    • OS’s typically have separate page tables per process
    • 25 processes = 100MB of page tables
  - solution: page the page tables (!!!)
    • (ow, my brain hurts…more later)