Module 11
Virtual Memory, Page Faults, Demand Paging, and Page Replacement

Reminder: Mechanics of address translation

Reminder: Page Table Entries (PTEs)

Paged virtual memory

Page faults

Demand paging
Page replacement

• When you read in a page, where does it go?
  – if there are free page frames, grab one
  • what data structure might support this?
  – if not, must evict something else
  • this is called page replacement

• Page replacement algorithms
  – try to pick a page that won’t be needed in the near future
  – try to pick a page that hasn’t been modified (thus saving the disk write)
  – OS typically tries to keep a pool of free pages around so that allocations don’t inevitably cause evictions
  – OS also typically tries to keep some “clean” pages around, so that even if you have to evict a page, you won’t have to write it
  • accomplished by pre-writing when there’s nothing better to do
  • Much more on this later!

How do you “load” a program?

• Create process descriptor (process control block)
• Create page table
• Put address space image on disk in page-sized chunks
• Build page table (pointed to by process descriptor)
  – all PTE valid bits ‘false’
  – an analogous data structure indicates the disk location of the corresponding page
• when process starts executing:
  • instructions immediately fault on both code and data pages
  • faults taper off, as the necessary code/data pages enter memory

Oh, man, how can any of this possibly work?

• Locality!
  – temporal locality
    • locations referenced recently tend to be referenced again soon
  – spatial locality
    • locations near recently references locations are likely to be referenced soon (think about why)
• Locality means paging can be infrequent
  – once you’ve paged something in, it will be used many times
  – on average, you use things that are paged in
  – but, this depends on many things:
    • degree of locality in the application
    • page replacement policy and application reference pattern
    • amount of physical memory vs. application “footprint” or “working set”

Evicting the best page

• The goal of the page replacement algorithm:
  – reduce fault rate by selecting best victim page to remove
    – “system” fault rate or “program” fault rate??
  – the best page to evict is one that will never be touched again
    – duh
    – “never” is a long time
    – Belady’s proof: evicting the page that won’t be used for the longest period of time minimizes page fault rate
• Rest of this module:
  – survey a bunch of page replacement algorithms
  – for now, assume that a process pages against itself, using a fixed number of page frames

#1: Belady’s Algorithm

• Provably optimal: lowest fault rate (remember SJF?)
  – evict the page that won’t be used for the longest time in future
• Why is Belady’s algorithm useful?
  – as a yardstick to compare other algorithms to optimal
    • if Belady’s isn’t much better than yours, yours is pretty good
    – how could you do this comparison?
• Is there a best practical algorithm?
  – no; depends on workload
• Is there a worst algorithm?
  – no, but random replacement does pretty badly
  • don’t laugh – there are some other situations where OS’s use near-random algorithms quite effectively!

#2: FIFO

• FIFO is obvious, and simple to implement
  – when you page in something, put it on the tail of a list
  – evict page at the head of the list
• Why might this be good?
  – maybe the one brought in longest ago is not being used
• Why might this be bad?
  – then again, maybe it is being used
  – have absolutely no information either way
• In fact, FIFO’s performance is typically lousy
• In addition, FIFO suffers from Belady’s Anomaly
  – there are reference strings for which the fault rate increases when the process is given more physical memory
#3: Least Recently Used (LRU)

- LRU uses reference information to make a more informed replacement decision
  - idea: past experience gives us a guess of future behavior
  - on replacement, evict the page that hasn't been used for the longest amount of time
- LRU looks at the past, Belady's wants to look at future
- How is LRU different from FIFO?
  - when does LRU do well?
    - when is it lousy?

Example bad case: looping through array

![amount of physical memory](image)

#3: LRU continued

- Implementation
  - to be perfect, must grab a timestamp on every memory reference, put it in the PTE, order or search based on the timestamps …
  - way too $$ in memory bandwidth, algorithm execution time, etc.
  - so, we need a cheap approximation …

Approximating LRU

- Many approximations, all use the PTE’s referenced bit
  - keep a counter for each page
  - at some regular interval, for each page, do:
    - if ref bit = 0, increment the counter (hasn’t been used)
    - if ref bit = 1, zero the counter (has been used)
  - regardless, zero ref bit
  - the counter will contain the # of intervals since the last reference to the page
  - page with largest counter is least recently used
- Some architectures don’t have PTE reference bits
  - can simulate reference bit using the valid bit to induce faults
    - hack, hack, hack

#4: LRU Clock

- AKA Not Recently Used (NRU) or Second Chance
  - replace page that is “old enough”
  - logically, arrange all physical page frames in a big circle (clock)
  - a “clock hand” is used to select a good LRU candidate
    - sweep through the pages in circular order like a clock
    - if ref bit is off, it hasn’t been used recently, we have a victim
      - so, what is minimum “age” if ref bit is off?
      - if the ref bit is on, turn it off and go to next page
  - arm moves quickly when pages are needed
  - low overhead if have plenty of memory
  - if memory is large, “accuracy” of information degrades
    - add more hands to fix

Allocation of frames among processes

- FIFO and LRU Clock each can be implemented as either local or global replacement algorithms
  - local
    - each process is given a limit of pages it can use
    - it “pages against itself” (evicts its own pages)
  - global
    - the “victim” is chosen from among all page frames, regardless of owner
    - processes’ page frame allocation can vary dynamically
- Issues with local replacement?
- Issues with global replacement?
  - Linux uses global replacement

- Hybrid algorithms
  - local replacement
  - an explicit mechanism for adding or removing page frames


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### The working set model of program behavior

- **Definition:**
  - \( \text{WS}(t,w) = \{ \text{pages } P \text{ such that } P \text{ was referenced in the time interval } (t, t-w) \} \)
  - \( t \): time
  - \( w \): working set window (measured in page refs)
  - A page is in the working set (WS) only if it was referenced in the last \( w \) references.
  - Obviously, the working set (the particular pages) varies over the life of the program.
  - So does the working set size (the number of pages in the WS).

### Working set size

- The working set size, \( |WS(t,w)| \), changes with program locality:
  - During periods of poor locality, more pages are referenced.
  - Within that period of time, the working set size is larger.

- Intuitively, the working set must be in memory, otherwise you’ll experience heavy faulting (thrashing).
  - When people ask “How much memory does Firefox need?”, really they’re asking “What is Firefox’s average (or worst case) working set size?”

### #5: Hypothetical Working Set algorithm

- Estimate \( |WS(0,w)| \) for a process.
- Allow that process to start only if you can allocate it that many page frames.
- Use a local replacement algorithm (LRU Clock?) to make sure “the right pages” (the working set) are occupying the process’s frames.
- Track each process’s working set size, and re-allocate page frames among processes dynamically.

- Problem? Solution?
- What the heck is \( w \)?

### #6: Page Fault Frequency (PFF)

- **PFF** is a variable-space algorithm that uses a more ad hoc approach.
- Attempt to equalize the fault rate among all processes, and to have a “tolerable” system-wide fault rate.
  - Monitor the fault rate for each process.
  - If fault rate is above a given threshold, give it more memory.
    - So that it faults less.
  - If the fault rate is below threshold, take away memory.
    - Should fault more, allowing someone else to fault less.

### Thrashing

- **Thrashing** is when the system spends most of its time servicing page faults, little time doing useful work.
  - Could be that there is enough memory but a lousy replacement algorithm (one incompatible with program behavior).
  - Could be that memory is over-committed:
    - Too many active processes.
Where is life interesting?

- Not if system has too much memory
  - page replacement algorithm doesn’t much matter (over-provisioning)
- Not if system has too little memory
  - page replacement algorithm doesn’t much matter (over-committed)
- Life is only interesting on the border between over-provisioned and over-committed
- Networking analogies
  - Aloha Network as an example of thrashing
  - over-provisioning as an alternative to Quality of Service guarantees

Summary

- Virtual memory
- Page faults
- Demand paging
  - don’t try to anticipate
- Page replacement
  - local, global, hybrid
- Locality
  - temporal, spatial
- Working set
- Thrashing

Page replacement algorithms

- #1: Belady’s – optimal, but unrealizable
- #2: FIFO – replace page loaded furthest in the past
- #3: LRU – replace page referenced furthest in the past
  - approximate using PTE reference bit
- #4: LRU Clock – replace page that is “old enough”
- #5: Working Set – keep the working set in memory
- #6: Page Fault Frequency – grow/shrink number of frames as a function of fault rate