Version control

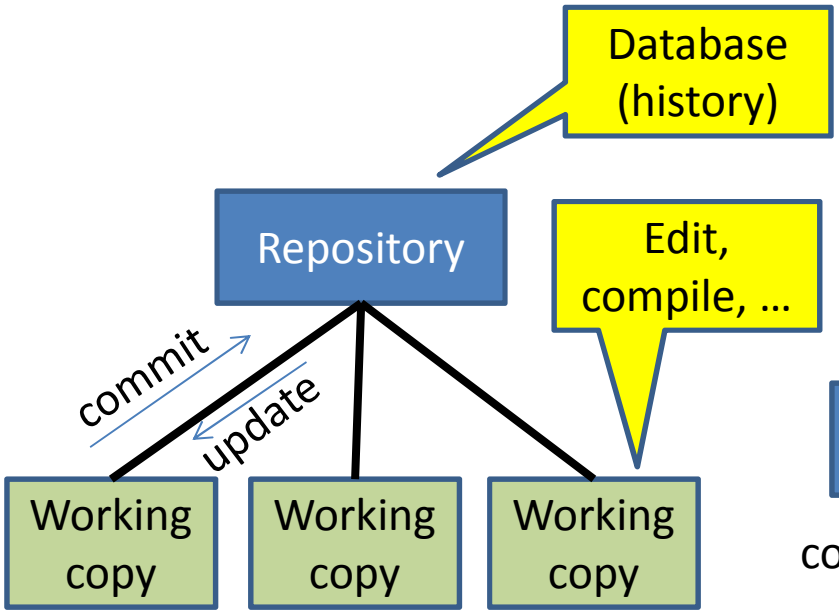
CSE 403

Goals of a version control system

- Keep a history of your work
  - Explain the purpose of each change
  - Checkpoint specific versions (known good state)
  - Recover specific state (fix bugs, test old versions)
- Coordinate/merge work between team members (or yourself, on multiple computers)

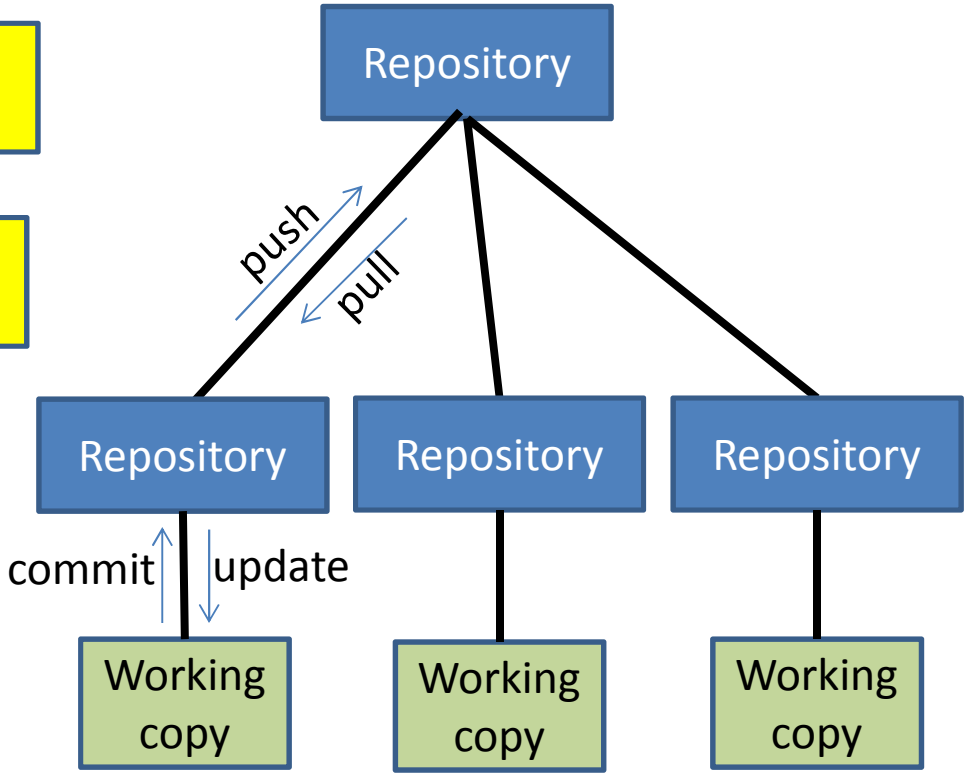
Varieties of version control system

Centralized VCS



- One repository
- Many working copies

Distributed VCS

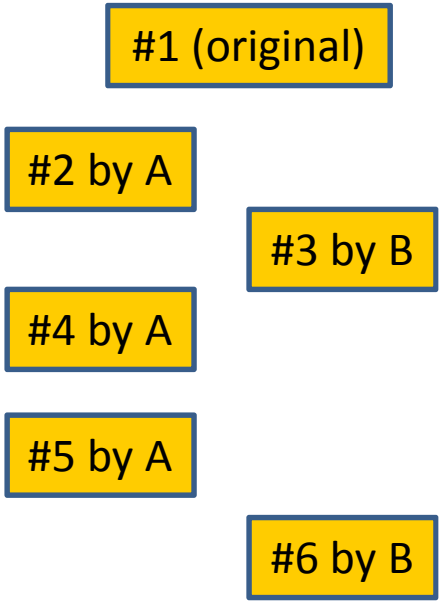


- Many repositories
- One working copy per repository

(More complicated topologies are possible)

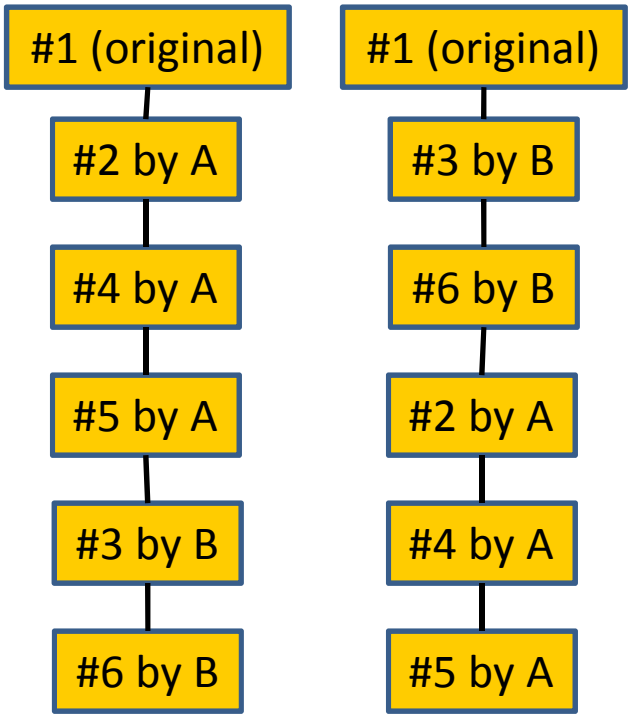
Version control history

Reality



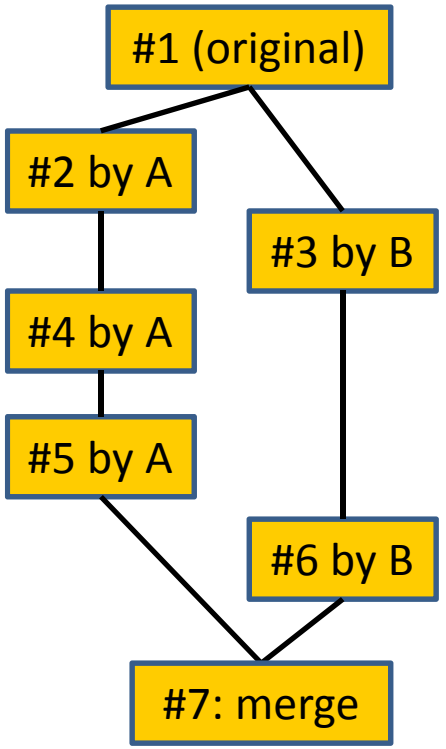
Centralized VCS

(one of these)



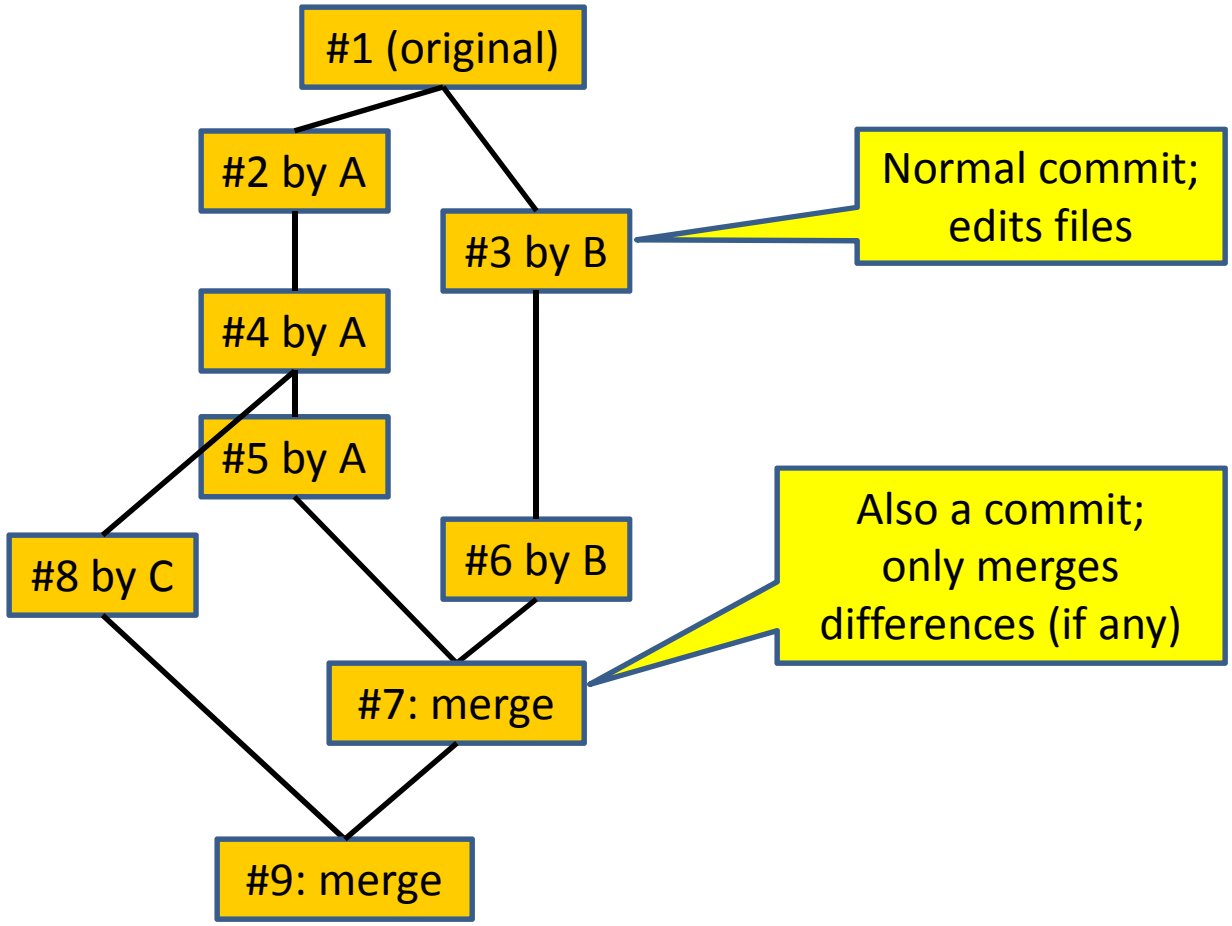
- Rewrites history
- Multiple visible commits per dev.

Distributed VCS



- Preserves history
- Multiple commits, one visible push per dev.

Distributed VCS history



Working copy can be `updated` to any revision in the history

Advantages of a distributed VCS

- checkpoint work without publishing to teammates
- commit, examine history when not connected to the network
- more accurate history
- more effective merging algorithms

Less important in CSE 403:

- share changes selectively with teammates
- flexibility in repository organization and workflow
- faster performance

A DVCS prohibits* some operations

- No update if uncommitted changes exist
  - must commit first
- No push if not ahead of remote
  - must pull & merge first
- No partial update (e.g., updating just one directory)
  - update gets all changes in a changeset (= a commit)

- Rationale:
  - Maintain more accurate, complete history
  - Keep all users in sync
  - Avoid painful conflicts
  - Avoid loss of work

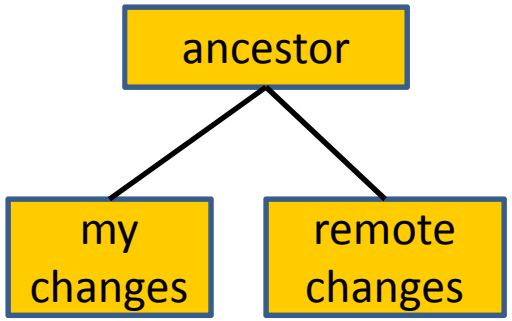
Coordinating with others

- **`pull`** incorporates others' changes into your repository
  - (**`update`** is distinct: it incorporates changes from your repository into your working copy)
- If you are behind, nothing more to do
  - Behind = your history is a prefix of master history
- If you have made changes in parallel, you must merge
  - Merge = create a new version incorporating all changes

Two types of merges

- Conflict-free
  - Changes are to different files or different lines of a file
  - "Conflict-free" is a textual, not semantic, notion
    - Could yield compile errors or test failures
- Conflicting
  - Simultaneous changes to the same lines of a file
  - Requires manual conflict resolution

Resolving conflicts



- There are three versions of the file:
- You decide which version to keep or how to merge them
- Many merge tools exist
- Configure your DVCS to use the merge tool that you prefer
  - Practice this ahead of time!

- Don't panic! Instead, think.
- You can always bail out of the merge and start over again (because you have the full local and remote history)

Popular DVCSes

- Git (`git`)
- Mercurial (`hg`)
- Others: Bazaar, Darcs, …

- Essentially identical functionality
- Mercurial has a better-designed command set
  - more logical, easier to learn and use, errors are less likely
- Git is faster on huge projects
  - you won't notice a difference on your project
- Git is more popular
- Free hosting is available for both: GitHub, BitBucket, Google Code, etc.

Hints

- Don’t forget to update after you pull
  - `git pull` does pull, merge, and update
    - Not symmetric with `git push`, but usually does what you want
  - `hg pull` just pulls (symmetric with `hg push`)
  - `hg fetch` does pull, merge, and update
  - `hg pull -u` does pull and update (fails if merge is needed)
- To use DVCS just like Subversion:

```
svn update = hg fetch
           = git pull
svn commit = hg commit; hg push
           = git commit; git push
```

Binary files are not diffable

- The history database records changes, not the entire file every time you commit
  - The diff algorithm works line-by-line
- Avoid binary files (especially simultaneous editing)
  - Word .doc files
- Do not commit generated files
  - Binaries (e.g., .class files), etc.
  - Wastes space in repository
  - Causes merge conflicts

Commit often

- Make many small commits, not one big one
- Easier to understand, review, merge, revert
- How to make many small commits:
  - Do only one task at a time
    - commit after each one
  - Do multiple tasks in one clone
    - Commit only a subset of files
    - Error-prone
  - Create a new clone for each simultaneous task
    - Can have as many as you like
  - Create a branch for each simultaneous task
    - Somewhat more efficient
    - Somewhat more complicated and error-prone
    - Easier to share unfinished work with teammates

Synchronize with teammates often

- Pull/fetch often
  - Avoid getting behind the master or your teammates
- Push as often as practical
  - Don’t destabilize the master build
  - Automatic testing on each push is a good idea

More ways to avoid merge conflicts

- Modularize your work
  - Divide work so that individuals or subteams “own” a module
  - Other team members only need to understand its specification
  - Requires good documentation and testing
- Communicate about changes that may conflict
  - But don’t overwhelm the team in such messages