The need for structured data

*Unstructured* data is arbitrary blob of bytes (for the storage system)
- Arbitrary blobs of bytes to be interpreted by programs
- Example systems: Chord, Memcached, GFS

Lots of data is *structured*
- Relationships between data items
- "Web scale" requires the ability to look up items and relationships quickly.
  - Billions of websites, TB of data
- Data should also be searchable, sortable, etc.
- Too hard to build applications without system support for such data/functions
Why not a commercial DBMS?

Existing systems simply could not scale
- Web data is orders of magnitude larger than “bank workloads”
- Some tried: FB used MySQL for years and had a team focused entirely on getting it to scale

Existing systems were hard to tune for modern workloads
- Web relationships are rich; bank transactions are narrow, non-overlapping
- Workloads evolve rapidly – roll out new features/products
- Different goals: Optimize cost -- don’t use high-end machines, tolerate failures
Relaxing SQL

Can improve performance by “relaxing” the guarantees of traditional DBMS systems. But relax what?

A - Availability  (No - Unavailable means we can’t serve websites)
C - Consistency (Yes - “eventually consistent” is good enough)
I - Isolation  (Mostly no - We don’t want malformed data)
D - Durability (Mostly no - Missing data can be a problem)
Relaxing consistency

Idea: Sacrifice strong consistency for improved performance

Particularly appealing to Web use cases -
- Search: can show older (~few hours) web results
- Social: can show out-of order newsfeed elements
- Ads: only need to maintain eventual count

“Eventual” is one form of relaxed consistency
- Merge different results into final result
- Easier to implement (not necessarily easy)
  - Requires merging or versioning
NoSQL Databases

Developed in early Web 2.0 period

Designed to scale laterally
    If you need more storage, provision more machines

Really more about non-relational DBs (noSQL follows)

Tend to not support many traditional DBMS properties
    Specifically, largely lack the ability to do joins
        Joins combine columns from different tables, require that relationships between data elements remain consistent
“Document-oriented” database

Specialized key-value store
• Specific focus on “semi-structured” data
• “Documents” fit a specific format, e.g., JSON, XML, etc
• Examples: MongoDB, couchDB, Microsoft’s CosmosDB, Amazon’s SimpleDB

Reduce space of queries to improve performance: range, regex, field

Core functions: CRUD
• Creation (or insertion)
• Retrieval (or query, search, read or find)
• Update (or edit)
• Deletion (or removal)
Some other NoSQL/Specialized DBs

• Object DBs
  • Basically document DBs but storing PL-defined objects instead
• GraphDBs
  • Focus on graph relations (rather than tabular ones)
  • Labels are first-class citizens in the DB

Key point: Lots of ways to optimize the interface (SQL or no) for specific workloads/data types.
Back to Spanner

Nature of data?

Consistency model?

Where is the trade-off?
Over to Liangyu and Xiangfeng