Distributed Systems - Overview

• some systems background/context
• some legal/social context
• development of technology – DS evolution
• ** DS fundamental characteristics **
• software structure for a node
• model/architecture/engineering for a DS
• architectures for large-scale DS
  federated administration domains
  integrated domain-independent services
  detached, ad-hoc groups
Costly Failures in Large-Scale Systems

- **UK Stock Exchange** - share trading system
  - abandoned 1993, cost £400M
- **CA automated childcare support**
  - pended 1997, cost $300M
- **US tax system modernisation**
  - scrapped 1997, cost $4B
- **UK ASSIST**, statistics on welfare benefits
  - terminated 1994, cost £3.5M
- **London Ambulance Service Computer Aided Despatching (LASCAD)** scrapped 1992, cost £7.5M, 20 lives lost in 2 days
Why high public expectation?

Web experience

- e.g. information services: trains, postcodes, phone numbers
- e.g. online banking
- e.g. airline reservation
- e.g. conference management
- e.g. online shopping and auction

Properties: read mostly, server model, client-server paradigm, closely coupled, synchronous interaction (request-reply), single-purpose, (often) private sector
Public-Sector Systems
healthcare, police, social services, immigration, passports, DVLA (driver + vehicle licensing), court-case workflow, tax, independent living for the aged and disabled, ...

• bespoke and complex
• large scale
• many types of client (many roles)
• web portal interface, but often not web-service model
• long timescale, high cost
• ubiquitous and mobile computing – still under research
• former policy of competition and independent procurement
• current policy requiring interoperation
• legislation and government policy

Introduction & Overview
Some Legal/Policy Requirements - 1

“patients may specify who may see, and not see, their electronic health records (EHRs)” - exclusions

“only the doctor with whom the patient is registered (for treatment) may e.g. prescribe drugs, read the patient’s EHR, etc.” - relationships

“the existence of certain sensitive components of EHRs must be invisible, except to explicitly authorised roles”
Some Legal/Policy Requirements - 2

“buses should run to time and bus operators will be punished if published timetables are not met.”

so bus operators refuse to cooperate in traffic monitoring, even though monitoring could show that delay is often not their fault.
Data Protection Legislation

Gathered data that identifies individuals must not be stored:

CCTV cameras: software must not recognise people and store identities with images
(thermal imaging (infra-red) - just monitor/count)

Vehicle number plate recognition: must not be associated with people then stored with identities
(only police allowed to look up)

Police records: accusations that are not upheld?

Sally Geeson murder - previous army records of LC Atkinson
Soham murders – previous police records of Huntley;
Govt. now require interaction between counties

UK Freedom of Information Act: Jan 2005
Rapidly Developing and New Technology

- can’t ever design a “second system”, it’s always possible to do more next time
- rapid obsolescence - incremental growth not sustainable long-term (unlike e.g. telephone system)
  - a current software engineering research area
- but big-bang deployment is a bad idea
  design for incremental deployment
- mobile workers in healthcare, police, utilities etc.
  - integration of wired and wireless networks
- ubiquitous computing: integration of camera and sensor data
DS history: technology-driven evolution

- Fast, reliable (interconnected) LANs (e.g. Ethernet, Cambridge Ring) made DS possible in 1980s

- Early research was on distribution of OS functionality
  1. terminals + multiaccess systems
  2. terminals + pool of processors + dedicated servers (Cambridge CDCS)
  3. Diskless workstations + servers (Stanford)
  4. Workstations + servers (Xerox PARC)

- Now WANs are fast and reliable, ……. 
1. LAN as terminal switch to multiaccess systems

2 terminals + processor pool + servers

2. LAN as a switch to multiaccess systems

3. Diskless workstations + servers

4. Workstations + servers

Introduction & Overview
Technology-driven evolution – comms.

- WANs *quickly* became as high bandwidth and reliable as LANs

- Distributed database research such as *data-shipping vs query-shipping* became obsolete in the 1990s

- Web services created new problems – flash crowds

- Bandwidth had become high, but *latency* was and remains a problem, due to end-system processing time for huge numbers of clients

- See lecture DS-7: content storage and delivery for web servers
How to think about Distributed Systems

- fundamental characteristics
- software structure for a node
- model/architecture/engineering for a system
DS fundamental characteristics

1. Concurrent execution of components
2. Independent failure modes
3. Transmission delay
4. No global time

Implications:
2, 3 - can’t know why there’s no reply – node/comms. failure and/or node/comms. congestion
4 - can’t use locally generated timestamps for ordering distributed events
1, 3 - inconsistent views of state/data when it’s distributed
1 - can’t wait for quiescence to resolve inconsistencies
single node - software structure

Support for distributed software may be:

special case: directly by OS in a homogeneous cluster (distributed OS design) – not the focus of this course

general case: by a software layer (middleware) above potentially heterogeneous OS
Distributed application structure – email, news, ftp

- client’s email interface (MUA)
  - SMTP
    - simple mail transfer protocol
  - OS comms. interface

unique names required: see lecture DS-5
clients: jmb25@cl.cam.ac.uk
messages: messageID

specific application protocol

standard comms. supporting all applications
Distributed application structure – web documents

unique names required: originally for documents
URLs universal resource locators
http://www.cl.cam.ac.uk/...
built above DNS naming, see lecture DS-5

specific application protocol

A browser interface came to be used for general distributed applications

W3C standards for Web Services – see lectures DS-4, DS-7
Distributed application structure – general support example

RPC is an early example of a protocol above which distributed applications may be developed. RPC examples: ISO-ODP, OSF-DCE
A middleware also includes services above the RPC layer
Open and proprietary middleware

- **Open**: evolution is controlled by standards bodies (e.g. ISO, NIST) or consortia (e.g. OMG, W3C). Requests for proposals (RFPs) are issued, draft specifications published with RFCs (requests for comments). Compromise is common.

- **Closed, proprietary**: can be changed by the owner (clients need to buy a new release). Consistency across versions is not guaranteed. Plus “embrace, enhance, extinguish”.

**Related issues:**

- **single/multi language**: can components be written in different languages and interoperate?

- **open interoperability**: is desirable across middlewares (including different implementations of the same MW)
DS Design: model, architecture, engineering

Programming model of distributed computation:

• What are the named entities? objects, components, services,..

• How is communication achieved?
  - synchronous/blocking (request-response) invocation
    e.g. client-server model
  - asynchronous messages e.g. event notification model
  - one-to-one, one-to-many?

• Are the communicating entities closely or loosely coupled?
  - must they share a programming context?
  - must they be running at the same time?
System **architecture**: the framework within which the entities in the model interoperate

- **Naming**
- **Location** of named objects
- **Security** of communication, as required by applications
- **Authentication** of participants
- **Access control / authorisation**
- **Replication** to meet requirements for reliability, availability

May be defined within *administration domains*.

Need to consider *multi-domain systems* and interoperation within and between domains
System **engineering**: implementation decisions

- Placement of functionality: client libraries, user agents, servers, wrappers/interception
- Replication for failure tolerance, performance, load balancing —> consistency issues
- Optimisations e.g. caching, batching
- Selection of standards e.g. XML, X.509
- What “**transparencies**” to provide at what level:
  (transparent = hidden from application developer: needn’t be programmed for, can’t be detected when running).
  distribution transparency: location? failure? migration?
    may not be achievable or may be too costly
Architectures for Large-Scale, Networked Systems

Individual user using globally available service

Single administration domain

Federated administration domains

Independent, external services - to be integrated

Detached, ad-hoc, anonymous groups;
anonymous principals, issues of trust and risk
Federated administration domains: Examples

- national healthcare services:
  many hospitals, clinics, primary care practices.
- national police services:
  43 county police forces (52 with Scotland),
- global company:
  branches in London, Tokyo, New York, Berlin, Paris..
- transport
  County Councils responsible for cities, some roads
- active city:
  fire, police, ambulance, healthcare services.
  mobile workers
  sensor networks e.g. for traffic/pollution monitoring
Federated domains - characteristics

• **names**: administered per domain (users, roles, services, data-types, messages, sensors, ….)

• **authentication**: users administered within a domain

• **communication**: needed *within* and *between* domains

• **security**: per-domain firewall-protection

• **policies**: specified per domain e.g. for communication, access control *intra and inter-domain*, plus some external policies to satisfy government, legal and institutional requirements

• **high trust** and accountability within a domain, known trust between domains
Independent, External Services - Examples

- commercial web-based services
e.g. online banking, airline booking etc.

- national services used by police and others
e.g. DVLA, court-case workflow

- national health services
e.g. national Electronic Health Record (EHR) service

- e-science (grid) databases and generic services
e.g. astronomical, transport, medical *databases*
for *computation* (e.g. XenoServices), or *storage*

- e-science may support “virtual organisations” –
collaborating groups across several domains
Independent, external services - characteristics

- **naming and authentication**
  may be of individuals via trusted third parties (TTPs) and/or via home domain of client

- **access control policies**
  related to client roles in domains and/or individuals
  support for "virtual organisations" spanning domains

- **need for: accounting, charging, audit**
  these may be done by trusted third parties
  a basis for mutual **trust** (service done, client paid)

- **trust**
  based on evidence of behaviour
  clients exchange experiences, services monitor and record
  assume full connectivity, e.g. TTPs can authenticate/identify
Examples of detached ad hoc groups and the need for trust

• Commuters regularly play cards on the train
• Auctions – build up trust of an ID through small honoured purchases, then default on a big one
• E-purse purchases – trust in system
• Recommendations: e.g. in a tourist scenario - restaurants, places to visit. Recommendations of people and their skills.
• Wireless routing via peers:
  routing of messages P2P rather than by dedicated brokers – reliability, confidentiality, altruism
• Trust has a context – skills may not transfer
e.g. drivers of cars, trains, planes ...
3. Detached, ad-hoc, anonymous groups

- e.g. connected by wireless
- can’t assume trusted third-parties (CAs) accessible
- can’t assume knowledge of names and roles, identity likely to be by key/pseudonym
- new identities can be generated (by detected villains)

- parties need to decide whether to interact
- each has a trust policy and a trust engine
- each computes whether to proceed – policy is based on:
  - accumulated trust information
    (from recommendations and evidence from monitoring)
  - risk (resource-cost) and likelihood of possible outcomes
Promising Approaches for Large-Scale Systems

- Roles for scalability
- Parametrised roles for expressiveness, scalability, simplicity
- RBAC for services, service-managed objects, including the communication service
- Policy specification and change management
- Policy-driven system management

- Asynchronous, loosely-coupled communication
  publish/subscribe for scalability
  event-driven paradigm for ubiquitous computing
- Database integration – how best to achieve it?

And don’t forget:
- Mobile users
- Sensor network integration
Opera Group – research themes
(objects policy events roles access control)

• Access Control (OASIS RBAC)
  Open Architecture for Securely Interworking Services
• Policy expression and management
• Event-driven systems (CEA, Hermes)
  EDSAC21: event-driven, secure application control for the 21st Century
• Trust and risk in global computing (EU SECURE)
  secure collaboration among ubiquitous roaming entities
• TIME: Traffic Information Monitoring Environment
  TIME-EACM event architecture and context management
• CareGrid: dynamic trust domains for healthcare applications
• SmartFlow: Extendable event-based middleware
• PAL: personal and social communications services for health and lifestyle monitoring.

see: www.cl.cam.ac.uk/research/srg/opera
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