CSE 486/586 Distributed Systems
Failure Detectors

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Recap

• Three most important things
  – Read the documentation.
  – Do it; write your code.
  – Learn how to debug.
• Android programming model
  – Event-driven
  – Hidden main() calls appropriate callbacks depending on
events from outside.
• Main components
  – Activity, Service, ContentProvider, and BroadcastReceiver

Today’s Question

• How do we handle failures?
  – Cannot answer this fully (yet!)
• You’ll learn new terminologies, definitions, etc.
• Let’s start with some new definitions.

Two Different System Models

• Synchronous Distributed System
  • Each message is received within bounded time
  • Each step in a process takes \( \text{lb} < \text{time} < \text{ub} \)
  • (Each local clock’s drift has a known bound)
• Examples: Multiprocessor systems

• Asynchronous Distributed System
  • No bounds on message transmission delays
  • No bounds on process execution
  • (The drift of a clock is arbitrary)
• Examples: Internet, wireless networks, datacenters, most
real systems
• These are used to reason about how protocols would
behave, e.g., in formal proofs.

Failure Model

• What is a failure?
• We’ll consider: \text{process omission failure}
  • A process disappears.
  • Permanently: \text{crash-stop (fail-stop)} – a process halts and
does not execute any further operations
  • Temporarily: \text{crash-recovery} – a process halts, but then
recovers (reboots) after a while
• We will focus on \text{crash-stop failures}
  • They are easy to detect in synchronous systems
  • Not so easy in asynchronous systems

Why, What, and How

• Why design a failure detector?
  – First step to failure handling
• What do we want from a failure detector?
  – No miss (completeness)
  – No mistake (accuracy)
• How do we design one?
What is a Failure Detector?

needs to know about \( p_j \)'s failure
\( (p_i \) is a non-faulty process or alive process)

\( p_i \)

\( p_j \)

There are two styles of failure detectors.

I. Ping-Ack Protocol

- \( p_i \) queries \( p_j \) once every \( T \) time units
- If \( p_j \) does not respond within another \( T \) time units of being sent the ping, \( p_i \) detects/declares \( p_j \) as failed

\( p_i \)

\( p_j \)

\( \text{ping} \)

\( \text{ack} \)

If \( p_j \) fails, then within \( T \) time units, \( p_i \) will send a ping message. \( p_i \) will time out within another \( T \) time units.

Worst case Detection time = \( 2T \)
The waiting time \( 'T' \) can be parameterized.

II. Heartbeating Protocol

- \( p_j \) maintains a sequence number
- \( p_j \) sends \( p_i \) a heartbeat with incremented seq. number after every \( T \) time units

\( p_i \)

\( p_j \)

If \( T \gg \) round trip time of messages, then worst case detection time \( \approx 3T \) (why?)
The '3' can be changed to any positive number since it is a parameter.

In a Synchronous System

- The Ping-Ack and Heartbeat failure detectors are always correct. For example,
  - Ping-Ack: set waiting time 'T' to be \( > \) round-trip time upper bound
  - Heartbeat: set waiting time '3T' to be \( > \) round-trip time upper bound
- The following property is guaranteed:
  - If a process \( p_j \) fails, then \( p_i \) will detect its failure as long as \( p_i \) itself is alive
  - Its next ack/heartbeat will not be received (within the timeout), and thus \( p_i \) will detect \( p_j \) as having failed
Failure Detector Properties

• What do you mean a failure detector is "correct"?
• Completeness = every process failure is eventually detected (no misses)
• Accuracy = every detected failure corresponds to a crashed process (no mistakes)
• What is a protocol that is 100% complete?
• What is a protocol that is 100% accurate?
• Completeness and Accuracy
  – Can both be guaranteed 100% in a synchronous distributed system (with reliable message delivery in bounded time)
  – Can never be guaranteed simultaneously in an asynchronous distributed system

Completeness and Accuracy in Asynchronous Systems

• Impossible because of arbitrary message delays, message losses
  – If a heartbeat/ack is dropped (or several are dropped) from pj, then pj will be mistakenly detected as failed => inaccurate detection
  – How large would the T waiting period in ping-ack or 3*T waiting period in heartbeating, need to be to obtain 100% accuracy?
  – In asynchronous systems, delay/losses on a network link are impossible to distinguish from a faulty process
• Heartbeating – satisfies completeness but not accuracy (why?)
• Ping-Ack – satisfies completeness but not accuracy (why?)

Completeness or Accuracy? (in Asynchronous System)

• Most failure detector implementations are willing to tolerate some inaccuracy, but require 100% completeness.
• Plenty of distributed apps designed assuming 100% completeness, e.g., p2p systems
  – "Err on the side of caution".
  – Processes not "stuck" waiting for other processes
• But it's ok to mistakenly detect once in a while since
  – the victim process need only rejoin as a new process
• Both Heartbeating and Ping-Ack provide
  – Probabilistic accuracy (for a process detected as failed, with some probability close to 1.0 (but not equal), it is true that it has actually crashed).

Failure Detection in a Distributed System

• That was for one process pj being detected and one process pi detecting failures
• Let's extend it to an entire distributed system
• Difference from original failure detection is
  – We want failure detection of not merely one process (pj), but all processes in system

CSE 486/586 Administrivia

• PA2 will be out by this weekend.
• Please use Piazza; all announcements will go there.
  – If you want an invite, let me know.
• Please come to my office during the office hours!
  – Give feedback about the class, ask questions, etc.
Centralized Heartbeat

Ring Heartbeat

All-to-All Heartbeat

Efficiency of Failure Detector: Metrics
- **Bandwidth**: the number of messages sent in the system during steady state (no failures)
  - Small is good
- **Detection Time**: Time between a process crash and its detection
  - Small is good
- **Scalability**: Given the bandwidth and the detection properties, can you scale to a 1000 or million nodes?
  - Large is good
- **Accuracy**: Large is good (lower inaccuracy is good)

Accuracy Metrics
- **False Detection Rate**: Average number of failures detected per second, when there are in fact no failures
  - Fraction of failure detections that are false
  - Tradeoffs: If you increase the T waiting period in ping-ack or 3*T waiting period in heartbeating what happens to:
    - Detection Time?
    - False positive rate?
    - Where would you set these waiting periods?

Other Types of Failures
- Let’s discuss the other types of failures
- Failure detectors exist for them too (but we won’t discuss those)
Processes and Channels

Other Failure Types

• Communication omission failures
  – Send-omission: loss of messages between the sending process and the outgoing message buffer (both inclusive)
    » What might cause this?
  – Channel omission: loss of message in the communication channel
    » What might cause this?
  – Receive-omission: loss of messages between the incoming message buffer and the receiving process (both inclusive)
    » What might cause this?

Other Failure Types

• Arbitrary failures
  – Arbitrary process failure: arbitrarily omits intended processing steps or takes unintended processing steps.
  – Arbitrary channel failures: messages may be corrupted, duplicated, delivered out of order, incur extremely large delays; or non-existent messages may be delivered.

• Above two are Byzantine failures, e.g., due to hackers, man-in-the-middle attacks, viruses, worms, etc.
• A variety of Byzantine fault-tolerant protocols have been designed in literature!

Omission and Arbitrary Failures

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class of failure</th>
<th>Affects</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fail-stop</td>
<td>Process</td>
<td>Process halts and remains halted. Other processes may detect this state.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Omission</td>
<td>Channel</td>
<td>A message inserted in an outgoing message buffer never arrives at the other end's incoming message buffer.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Send-omission</td>
<td>Process</td>
<td>A process completes a send, but the message is not put in its outgoing message buffer.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Receive-omission</td>
<td>Process</td>
<td>A message is put in a process's incoming message buffer, but that process does not receive it.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arbitrary</td>
<td>Process or</td>
<td>Process or channel exhibits arbitrary behaviour: it may</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Byzantine)</td>
<td>Channel</td>
<td>send/transmit arbitrary messages at arbitrary times, commit omissions; a process may stop or take an incorrect step.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Summary

• Failure detectors are required in distributed systems to keep system running in spite of process crashes
• Properties – completeness & accuracy, together unachievable in asynchronous systems but achievable in synchronous systems
  – Most apps require 100% completeness, but can tolerate inaccuracy
• 2 failure detector algorithms - heartbeating and ping
• Distributed FD through heartbeating: centralized, ring, all-to-all
• Metrics: bandwidth, detection time, scale, accuracy
• Other types of failures
• Next: the notion of time in distributed systems

Acknowledgements

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