CSE 451: Operating Systems
Spring 2006

Module 10
Memory Management

John Zahorjan
zahorjan@cs.washington.edu
Allen Center 534

Goals of memory management

- Allocate scarce memory resources among competing processes, maximizing memory utilization and system throughput
- Provide a convenient abstraction for programming (and for compilers, etc.)
- Provide isolation between processes
  - we have come to view “addressability” and “protection” as inextricably linked, even though they’re really orthogonal

Tools of memory management

- Base and limit registers
- Swapping
- Paging (and page tables and TLBs)
- Segmentation (and segment tables)
- Page fault handling => Virtual memory
- The policies that govern the use of these mechanisms

Today’s desktop and server systems

- The basic abstraction that the OS provides for memory management is virtual memory (VM)
  - VM enables programs to execute without requiring their entire address space to be resident in physical memory
    - program can also execute on machines with less RAM than it “needs”
  - many programs don’t need all of their code or data at once (or ever)
    - e.g., branches they never take, or data they never read/write
    - no need to allocate memory for it, OS should adjust amount allocated based on run-time behavior
  - virtual memory isolates processes from each other
    - one process cannot name addresses visible to others; each process has its own isolated address space

- Virtual memory requires hardware and OS support
  - MMU’s, TLB’s, page tables, page fault handling, …
- Typically accompanied by swapping, and at least limited segmentation

A trip down Memory Lane …

- Why?
  - Because it’s instructive
  - Because embedded processors (98% or more of all processors) typically don’t have virtual memory
- First, there was job-at-a-time batch programming
  - programs used physical addresses directly
  - OS loads job (perhaps using a relocating loader to “offset” branch addresses), runs it, unloads it
  - what if the program wouldn’t fit into memory?
    - manual overlays!
- An embedded system may have only one program!

- Swapping
  - save a program's entire state (including its memory image) to disk
  - allows another program to be run
  - first program can be swapped back in and re-started right where it was
- The first timesharing system, MIT's "Compatible Time Sharing System" (CTSS), was a uni-programmed swapping system
  - only one memory-resident user
  - upon request completion or quantum expiration, a swap took place
  - bow wow wow … but it worked!

- Then came multiprogramming
  - multiple processes/jobs in memory at once
    - to overlap I/O and computation
  - memory management requirements:
    - protection: restrict which addresses processes can use, so they can't stomp on each other
    - fast translation: memory lookups must be fast, in spite of the protection scheme
    - fast context switching: when switching between jobs, updating memory hardware (protection and translation) must be quick

Virtual addresses for multiprogramming

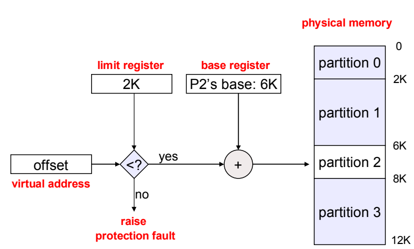
- To make it easier to manage memory of multiple processes, make processes use virtual addresses (which is *not* what we mean by "virtual *memory*" today!)
  - virtual addresses are independent of location in physical memory (RAM) where referenced data lives
    - OS determines location in physical memory
  - instructions issued by CPU reference virtual addresses
    - e.g., pointers, arguments to load/store instructions, PC …
  - virtual addresses are translated by hardware into physical addresses (with some setup from OS)

- The set of virtual addresses a process can reference is its address space
  - many different possible mechanisms for translating virtual addresses to physical addresses
    - we'll take a historical walk through them, ending up with our current techniques
- Note: We are not yet talking about paging, or virtual memory – only that the program issues addresses in a virtual address space, and these must be "adjusted" to reference memory (the physical address space)
  - for now, think of the program as having a contiguous virtual address space that starts at 0, and a contiguous physical address space that starts somewhere else

Old technique #1: Fixed partitions

- Physical memory is broken up into fixed partitions
  - all partitions are equally sized, partitioning never changes
  - hardware requirement: base register, limit register
    - physical address = virtual address + base register
    - base register loaded by OS when it switches to a process
  - how do we provide protection?
    - if (physical address > base + limit) then… ?
- Advantages
  - Simple
- Problems
  - internal fragmentation: the fixed size partition is larger than what was requested
  - external fragmentation: two small partitions left, but one big job – what sizes should the partitions be??

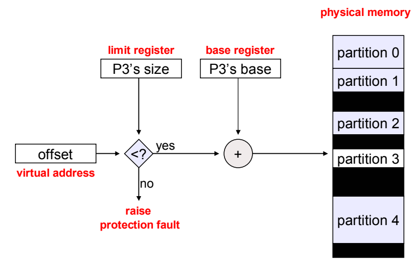
Mechanics of fixed partitions



Old technique #2: Variable partitions

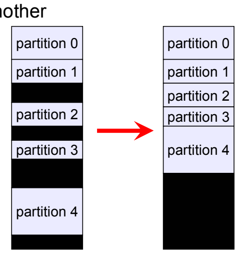
- Obvious next step: physical memory is broken up into variable-sized partitions
  - hardware requirements: base register, limit register
  - physical address = virtual address + base register
  - how do we provide protection?
    - if (physical address > base + limit) then… ?
- Advantages
  - no internal fragmentation
    - simply allocate partition size to be just big enough for process (assuming we know what that is!)
- Problems
  - external fragmentation
    - as we load and unload jobs, holes are left scattered throughout physical memory
    - slightly different than the external fragmentation for fixed partition systems

Mechanics of variable partitions



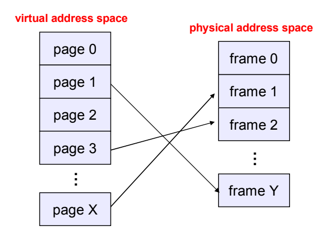
Dealing with fragmentation

- Swap a program out
- Re-load it, adjacent to another
- Adjust its base register
- "Lather, rinse, repeat"
- Ugh



Modern technique: Paging

- Solve the external fragmentation problem by using fixed sized units in both physical and virtual memory



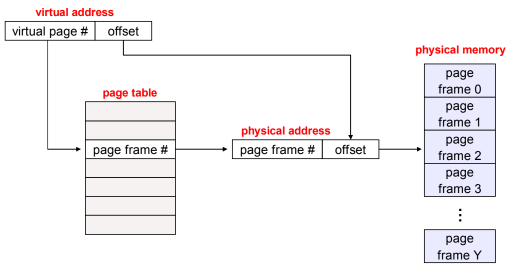
User's perspective

- Processes view memory as a contiguous address space from bytes 0 through N
  - virtual address space (VAS)
- In reality, virtual pages are scattered across physical memory frames – not contiguous as earlier
  - virtual-to-physical mapping
  - this mapping is invisible to the program
- Protection is provided because a program cannot reference memory outside of its VAS
  - the virtual address 0xDEADBEEF maps to different physical addresses for different processes
- Note: Assume for now that all pages of the address space are resident in memory – no "page faults"

Address translation

- Translating virtual addresses
  - a virtual address has two parts: virtual page number & offset
  - virtual page number (VPN) is index into a page table
  - page table entry contains page frame number (PFN)
  - physical address is PFN::offset
- Page tables
  - managed by the OS
  - map virtual page number (VPN) to page frame number (PFN)
    - VPN is simply an index into the page table
  - one page table entry (PTE) per page in virtual address space
    - i.e., one PTE per VPN

Mechanics of address translation



Example of address translation

- Assume 32 bit addresses
  - assume page size is 4KB (4096 bytes, or 2^{12} bytes)
  - VPN is 20 bits long (2^{20} VPNs), offset is 12 bits long
- Let's translate virtual address 0x13325328
  - VPN is 0x13325, and offset is 0x328
  - assume page table entry 0x13325 contains value 0x03004
    - page frame number is 0x03004
    - VPN 0x13325 maps to PFN 0x03004
  - physical address = PFN::offset = 0x03004328

Page Table Entries (PTEs)

1	1	1	2	20
V	R	M	prot	page frame number

- PTE's control mapping
  - the valid bit says whether or not the PTE can be used
    - says whether or not a virtual address is valid
    - it is checked each time a virtual address is used
  - the referenced bit says whether the page has been accessed
    - it is set when a page has been read or written to
  - the modified bit says whether or not the page is dirty
    - it is set when a write to the page has occurred
  - the protection bits control which operations are allowed
    - read, write, execute
  - the page frame number determines the physical page
    - physical page start address = PFN

Paging advantages

- Easy to allocate physical memory
  - physical memory is allocated from free list of frames
    - to allocate a frame, just remove it from the free list
  - external fragmentation is not a problem!
    - managing variable-sized allocations is a huge pain in the neck
      - "buddy system"
- Leads naturally to virtual memory
  - entire program need not be memory resident
  - take page faults using "valid" bit
  - but paging was originally introduced to deal with external fragmentation, not to allow programs to be partially resident

Paging disadvantages

- Can still have internal fragmentation
  - process may not use memory in exact multiples of pages
- Memory reference overhead
  - 2 references per address lookup (page table, then memory)
  - solution: use a hardware cache to absorb page table lookups
    - translation lookaside buffer (TLB) – next class
- Memory required to hold page tables can be large
  - need one PTE per page in virtual address space
  - 32 bit AS with 4KB pages = 2^{20} PTEs = 1,048,576 PTEs
  - 4 bytes/PTE = 4MB per page table
    - OS's typically have separate page tables per process
    - 25 processes = 100MB of page tables
  - solution: page the page tables (!!!)
    - (ow, my brain hurts…more later)

Segmentation
(We will be back to paging soon!)

- Paging
  - mitigates various memory allocation complexities (e.g., fragmentation)
  - view an address space as a linear array of bytes
  - divide it into pages of equal size (e.g., 4KB)
  - use a page table to map virtual pages to physical page frames
    - page (*logical*) => page frame (*physical*)
- Segmentation
  - partition an address space into *logical* units
    - stack, code, heap, subroutines, …
  - a virtual address is <segment #, offset>

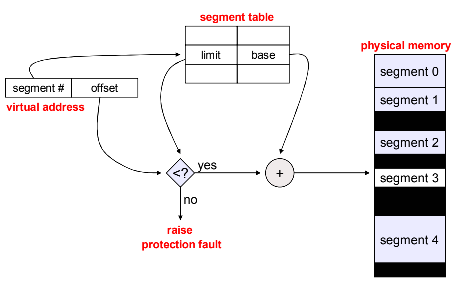
What's the point?

- More "logical"
  - absent segmentation, a linker takes a bunch of independent modules that call each other and linearizes them
  - they are really independent; segmentation treats them as such
- Facilitates sharing and reuse
  - a segment is a natural unit of sharing – a subroutine or function
- A natural extension of variable-sized partitions
  - variable-sized partition = 1 segment/process
  - segmentation = many segments/process

Hardware support

- Segment table
  - multiple base/limit pairs, one per segment
  - segments named by segment #, used as index into table
    - a virtual address is <segment #, offset>
  - offset of virtual address added to base address of segment to yield physical address

Segment lookups



Pros and cons

- Yes, it's "logical" and it facilitates sharing and reuse
- But it has all the horror of a variable partition system
  - except that linking is simpler, and the "chunks" that must be allocated are smaller than a "typical" linear address space
- What to do?

Combining segmentation and paging

- Can combine these techniques
  - x86 architecture supports both segments and paging
- Use segments to manage logical units
  - segments vary in size, but are typically large (multiple pages)
- Use pages to partition segments into fixed-size chunks
  - each segment has its own page table
    - there is a page table per segment, rather than per user address space
  - memory allocation becomes easy once again
    - no contiguous allocation, no external fragmentation

Segment #	Page #	Offset within page

Offset within segment

- Linux:
  - 1 kernel code segment, 1 kernel data segment
  - 1 user code segment, 1 user data segment
  - N task state segments (stores registers on context switch)
  - 1 "local descriptor table" segment (not really used)
  - all of these segments are paged
- Note: this is a very limited/boring use of segments!

