

Architecture Requirements for the Buzz System

Git: https://github.com/FrikkieSnyman/Phase2_Group3B

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Contents

1	Architectural Requirements	2
1.1	Scope of Architectural Responsibilities	2
1.2	Quality Requirements	2
1.3	Architecture Constraints	4
2	Architectural Patterns or Styles	5
3	Architectural Tactics or Strategies	6
3.1	Scalability	6
3.2	Performance Requirements	6
3.3	Maintainability	6
3.4	Reliability and Availability	6
3.5	Security	7
3.6	Monitorability and Auditability	7
3.7	Testability	7
3.8	Usability	7
3.9	Integrability	7
4	Use of Reference Architectures and Frameworks	8
5	Access and Integration Channels	8
5.1	Human Access Channel - Website	8
5.1.1	Requirements	8
5.1.2	Technologies	8
5.1.3	Protocols	8
5.2	Human Access Channel - Smartphone Apps	9
5.3	System Access Channels	9
5.4	Integration Channel - Authentication	9
5.4.1	Technologies and Protocols	9
5.5	Integration Channel - Database	9
5.5.1	Technologies and protocols	9
6	Technologies	10

1 Architectural Requirements

1.1 Scope of Architectural Responsibilities

Database as mode of persistence:

In the scope of the BUZZ system and taking into consideration the type of data the system should store, we have concluded to make use of a Relational Database Management System (RDBMS). The BUZZ system will store only structured data with strong relations between content (e.g. Threads and Social Tags). Persistence of data is also closely related to the auditability of the BUZZ system, hence deleted threads will not be removed completely from the database, but instead be archived (marked as hidden) for possible later retrieval.

Communication:

The BUZZ system will primarily be a web-based application accessible through any web browser, hence our focus on communication between the servers and the application should take place over **HTTP**(Hyper Text Transfer Protocol) requests and responses. This will also ensure that our system is more adaptable when there is a possibility of expanding the application system to support an Android based mobile application.

Any request that the server receives and processes should then be replied to the application (processed information should be reported back) using **JSON**(Javascript Object Notation). Our team has chosen this technology as our response communication based on the possibility of expanding the system to support other technologies such as mobile applications. When the response is sent as JSON, there is more effective **SoC** (Separation of Concern) and all access channels that requires access to the server will effectively have the same information passed back to them.

1.2 Quality Requirements

- **Scalability:** Scalability is of extreme importance.

No assumptions can be made on the strength and size of the servers that the BUZZ system will be hosted on and hence need to be scalable at any point in time. We also have to take into account that there will be a small margin of growth in users as the years go by since the University allows for this growth (an estimate of 10%) in their student admission numbers.

- **Performance Requirements:** Performance is a very important requirement as the system must be able to accommodate thousands of users and threads.

The system will mostly be run on large servers capable of servicing an entire university, however performance must still be considered.

- **Maintainability:** Maintainability is very important to the system as any failure of a key component could result in loss of data or the inability to use the system.
- **Reliability and Availability:** The reliability and availability of the system is important for all users, i.e. The students, tutors, lecturers, and administrative staff.

If the system is unavailable, then users would not be able to access the required information on the system. This could have serious implications on all users. It is thus

imperative to minimise system downtime, thus maximising system availability.

- **Security:** The security of the system is important for all users, i.e. The students, tutors, lecturers, and administrative staff.

The purpose of security is to protect the information stored in the system, whether it be the systems information or user data, and prevent unauthorised access to and/or modification of the information.

- **Monitorability and Auditability:** The system will be monitored by the administrative staff and users that are specifically assigned the role of maintenance.

This will help ensure that users abide by the netiquette and plagiarism policies.

- **Testability:**

Testability is of medium importance in the system. The system needs to be tested before it goes online.

What could be tested for:

- User profiles should be successfully created and have the correct information in them.
- Users privileges correspond to their user rank.
- Security breaches.
- All services provide the correct output if given certain input.

- **Usability:**

User experience is an important aspect in the system. The users should be able to easily identify all the elements of the system as well as be able to use them with ease.

Participation will increase if the interface is easy to understand and easy to use.

A navigation bar needs to be implemented so that the users can easily navigate to where they want to be.

Readability is also a very important aspect in the system. Using a font that is easily readable can greatly increase users experience. Choosing the correct colour scheme is also important.

Users should be able to:

- Know how to use the system without any serious assistance.
- Learn how to use new concepts if the system was to be upgraded.
- Remember how to use the system after the first use.
- Like the system.
- Give feedback.

- **Integrability:**

Integrability is of medium importance. It will be used for security reasons and portability reasons.

The system will need to be easily integrable with other database software. If the current database software fails then the system will need to be able to switch database software in order to continue logging all incoming and outgoing data.

If the web service fails, then the system must be easily portable to another web service (different versions of software).

The abstract factory pattern can be used to easily port the system to another environment.

1.3 Architecture Constraints

2 Architectural Patterns or Styles

Three-tier Model: The architectural responsibilities that need to be addressed for the BUZZ system to be fully operational can be implemented in a multi-tiered fashion. This can be referred to as the model-view-controller approach or the three-tier approach which consists of persistence, logic/processing/communication and presentation. This approach is ideal for the BUZZ system as it is an on-line forum web application that will make use of each tier for related aspects of the system. This approach allows various users to make use of BUZZ through various clients such as a smartphone and a desktop computer. An example to highlight an advantage of using the three-tier system approach can be a user being able to access BUZZ on various devices. The model and the control layer will remain unchanged while the view will have to be modified to accommodate these clients. This setup will ultimately help with integration with various systems and it will help with portability between various clients.

REST: Since the BUZZ system will be in the form of an online discussion forum, a constant connection between server and client is not needed. Typically a user will request an action to be performed or simply request a page for viewing. A user may spend time only reading a thread and not actually utilize the network in which case the server should only wait for a request, deliver it, and then wait again. In this way we can use the REST technique to lighten the burden on the server side and free up unnecessary network traffic.

3 Architectural Tactics or Strategies

3.1 Scalability

When scalability is desired at some point it could be achieved by producing a light version of the system, which could be used on smaller systems which could be achieved by:

- Removing features not required by private users such as simplifying administration of users.
- Limiting the number of users or threads created to reduce overhead on the system.
- Remove some security or authentication features which would likely not be need on small, private servers.
- Implementation of load balancing strategies.

3.2 Performance Requirements

Performance can be enhanced in the following ways:

- Reducing overhead by having unimportant processes such as profile editing suspended in times of high usage.
- Archiving old posts while using faster access storage for newer or more active threads.
- Removing very old posts to reduce the storage requirements of the system.
- Prioritize the requests of users with higher priveleges such as lecturers and administrators.

3.3 Maintainability

Maintainability can be achieved by:

- Having up to date backups of the data in the system to be used in the event of data loss due to hardware failure.
- Having the system modularised in such a way that one component failing will not affect other components.

3.4 Reliability and Availability

Reliability and Availability of a system is essential, this could be achieved by:

- Identifying ways to prevent system failure, and if the system does fail, have measures in place to start a failover, so that the system is still accessible.
- Detecting if there are problems with the system, in order to do maintenance on the system before the system fails.
- Identifying ways to recover from system failures, e.g. have backups and rollback functionality so that no data is lost.
- Identifying ways to handle the system when external systems, to which the system is connected, i.e communication networks, external databases,etc. are unavailable. This could be done by having some sort of offline system functionality, or having ways to switch between various external systems.

3.5 Security

In order to enforce security:

- The system should enforce authentication and authorization of users to prevent spoofing of users identities.
- Input validation is important in preventing damage caused by malicious input.
- Sensitive data should be encrypted and user activity, i.e. Guest and Authorised users, should be monitored to prevent loss or damage of data.
- The system should log all user interaction with the system, this would be beneficial when auditing the system.
- The system should have multiple safe guards in order to protect access to data.
- System timeouts could be considered, in the unlikely event of DOS or DDOS attacks.

3.6 Monitorability and Auditability

To help with the Monitorability and Auditability of the system:

- Track all changes made by all users.
- Any infringement of these policies should be captured/logged for later use by the administrative staff.
- The audit logs would be made accessible to the administrative staff through specific requests to the system.

3.7 Testability

3.8 Usability

3.9 Integrability

4 Use of Reference Architectures and Frameworks

5 Access and Integration Channels

To facilitate and simplify the communication between the BuzzSystem and various access channels all of these access channels should send requests using the http protocol. A specific module in the Buzz System should handle all http requests and return JSON objects containing the needed data from other modules. The structuring and responses of these http requests should be clearly documented enabling the easy addition of more access channels.

5.1 Human Access Channel - Website

The main human access channel for the Buzz System will be an web-based front end. It will be referred to as BuzzWeb in the rest of this document for easy distinction between it and the BuzzSystem.

5.1.1 Requirements

- BuzzWeb should be cross-browser compatible.
- BuzzWeb should be viewable on devices of different size using responsive web design.
- It should conform to the newest HTML5 and CSS3 standards.
- Techniques like Ajax should be used to submit content and periodically fetch new content from the server without refreshing the whole page.

5.1.2 Technologies

BuzzWeb will use several popular web technologies:

- HTML5
- CSS3
- JSON
- JavaScript:
 - JQuery
 - JQueryUI
 - Google Code Prettify
 - Ajax
- Bootstrap for responsive design

5.1.3 Protocols

The main protocol used to communicate with the BuzzSystem will be http, preferably over an encrypted connection (so https).

This will happen in two ways:

- The user's browser will send an http GET request to a specific page. The BuzzSystem will respond with static html content.
- BuzzWeb will send an asynchronous http POST request to the server which will respond with an JSON object. The client-side JavaScript will parse these JSON objects and create and return applicable html where necessary.

5.2 Human Access Channel - Smartphone Apps

Creating an Smartphone Apps for the Buzz System is not part of this project's scope, but these apps will also be able to communicate with the BuzzSystem using http requests with the same structure as those BuzzWeb uses.

5.3 System Access Channels

There are no system access channels that form part of the scope of this project at the moment, but any system access channels should also use the http protocol to communicate with the BuzzSystem. An example might be a later integration of the BuzzSystem with the Department of Computer Science's marking system.

5.4 Integration Channel - Authentication

The BuzzSystem will integrate with the Computer Science ldap repository to authenticate users and obtain user roles and module information.

5.4.1 Technologies and Protocols

The LDAP (Lightweight Directory Access Protocol) Protocol will be used to obtain user and module information from the Computer Science Department's ldap repository.

5.5 Integration Channel - Database

The Buzz System will integrate with an Relational database to store its content.

5.5.1 Technologies and protocols

The system will use MySQL and the MySQL JDBC driver or a siliar databse system.

6 Technologies