

RFC-028: Error Handling and Recovery

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Implementation: Proposed

Abstract

This RFC specifies error handling and recovery for the Library of Cyberspace: how vaults detect, report, and recover from failures while maintaining integrity guarantees. Errors are first-class objects in the soup, enabling systematic analysis and automated recovery.

Motivation

Distributed systems fail in creative ways:

- **Network partitions** - Vaults lose contact
- **Storage corruption** - Bits flip, disks fail
- **Byzantine faults** - Nodes lie or misbehave
- **Resource exhaustion** - Out of memory, disk, connections
- **Protocol violations** - Malformed messages, invalid state

Recovery must be:

- **Deterministic** - Same error, same recovery
 - **Auditible** - Every error logged with context
 - **Automatic** - Self-healing where possible
 - **Graceful** - Degrade rather than crash
-

Error Model

Error Types

```
(define-error-type 'storage-error
  (subtypes corruption missing full readonly))

(define-error-type 'network-error
  (subtypes timeout unreachable protocol-violation))

(define-error-type 'crypto-error
  (subtypes signature-invalid key-expired capability-denied))

(define-error-type 'consistency-error
  (subtypes hash-mismatch merkle-divergence conflict))
```

```
(define-error-type 'resource-error
  (subtypes memory-exhausted connections-exhausted rate-limited))

(define-error-type 'protocol-error
  (subtypes invalid-message invalid-state version-mismatch))
```

Error Structure

```
(define (make-error type message context)
  `(#error
    (id ,(generate-error-id))
    (type ,type)
    (message ,message)
    (context ,context)
    (timestamp ,(current-time))
    (vault ,(current-vault-id))
    (principal ,(current-principal))
    (stack ,(capture-stack-trace)))))

;; Errors are soup objects
(define (record-error! err)
  (let ((hash (soup-put err type: 'error)))
    (audit-append action: 'error-recorded error-hash: hash)
    hash))
```

Error Context

```
;; Capture rich context for debugging
(define (error-context operation)
  `((operation . ,operation)
    (request-id . ,(current-request-id))
    (correlation-id . ,(current-correlation-id))
    (peer . ,(current-peer))
    (attempt . ,(current-retry-count))
    (duration . ,(operation-duration))
    (inputs . ,(sanitize-inputs (operation-inputs)))))
```

Error Handling Patterns

Result Type

```
;; Operations return (ok value) or (err error)
(define (result-ok value) `(#ok ,value))
(define (result-err error) `(#err ,error))
```

```

(define (result-ok? r) (eq? (car r) 'ok))
(define (result-err? r) (eq? (car r) 'err))
(define (result-value r) (cadr r))
(define (result-error r) (caddr r))

;; Chain operations
(define (result-bind r f)
  (if (result-ok? r)
      (f (result-value r))
      r))

;; Example
(define (safe-read hash)
  (result-bind (cas-get-safe hash)
    (lambda (data)
      (result-bind (verify-signature data)
        (lambda (verified)
          (result-ok verified))))))

```

Error Recovery

```

(define (with-recovery operation recovery)
  "Execute operation with recovery on failure"
  (let ((result (guard (ex (else (result-err ex)))
                       (result-ok (operation))))))
    (if (result-ok? result)
        (result-value result)
        (recovery (result-error result)))))

;; Example: read with fallback to replica
(define (read-with-fallback hash)
  (with-recovery
    (lambda () (cas-get hash))
    (lambda (err)
      (audit-append action: 'read-fallback error: err)
      (cas-get-from-replica hash))))

```

Retry Logic

```

(define (with-retry operation max-retries backoff)
  "Retry operation with exponential backoff"
  (let loop ((attempt 1))
    (let ((result (guard (ex (else (result-err ex)))
                         (result-ok (operation))))))
      (cond

```

```

((result-ok? result)
 (result-value result))
((>= attempt max-retries)
 (error "Max retries exceeded" (result-error result)))
(else
 (let ((delay (* backoff (expt 2 (- attempt 1))))))
   (audit-append action: 'retry attempt: attempt delay: delay)
   (thread-sleep! delay)
   (loop (+ attempt 1))))))

;; Retry configuration
(define *default-retry-config*
 `((max-retries . 3)
   (initial-backoff . 100)      ; ms
   (max-backoff . 30000)        ; ms
   (jitter . 0.1)))            ; 10% randomization

```

Circuit Breaker

```

(define (make-circuit-breaker threshold timeout)
  (let ((failures 0)
        (state 'closed)
        (last-failure #f))

    (lambda (operation)
      (case state
        ((open)
         (if (> (- (current-time) last-failure) timeout)
             (begin
               (set! state 'half-open)
               (try-operation operation))
             (error "Circuit open")))
        ((half-open)
         (let ((result (try-operation operation)))
           (if (result-ok? result)
               (begin
                 (set! state 'closed)
                 (set! failures 0)
                 (result-value result))
               (begin
                 (set! state 'open)
                 (error "Circuit reopened")))))
        ((closed)
         (try-operation operation)))))

  (define (try-operation cb operation)

```

```

(guard (ex
  (else
    (cb-record-failure! cb)
    (result-err ex)))
  (result-ok (operation))))

```

Storage Errors

Corruption Detection

```

(define (detect-corruption hash)
  "Verify object integrity"
  (let* ((data (storage-read-raw hash))
         (computed-hash (content-hash data)))
    (unless (equal? hash computed-hash)
      (record-error!
       (make-error 'corruption
                  "Hash mismatch detected"
                  `((expected . ,hash)
                    (computed . ,computed-hash)
                    (size . ,(bytevector-length data)))))))

(define (scan-for-corruption)
  "Full vault integrity scan"
  (let ((corrupted '()))
    (for-each (lambda (hash)
                (unless (verify-integrity hash)
                  (set! corrupted (cons hash corrupted))))
              (all-object-hashes)))
    (when (not (null? corrupted))
      (audit-append action: 'corruption-scan
                   corrupted: (length corrupted)))
    corrupted))

```

Corruption Recovery

```

(define (recover-corrupted hash)
  "Attempt to recover corrupted object"
  ;; Strategy 1: Fetch from replica
  (let ((replicas (find-replicas hash)))
    (for-each (lambda (replica)
                (let ((data (fetch-from-replica replica hash)))
                  (when (and data (verify-hash data hash))
                    (storage-write hash data)
                    (audit-append action: 'corruption-recovered
                                 data)))))))

```

```

                source: replica)
        (return data))))
replicas))

;; Strategy 2: Reconstruct from erasure coding
(when (erasure-coded? hash)
  (let ((data (reconstruct-from-shards hash)))
    (when data
      (storage-write hash data)
      (audit-append action: 'erasure-recovery)
      (return data)))))

;; Strategy 3: Mark as lost
(mark-object-lost hash)
(audit-append action: 'object-lost hash: hash)
#f)

```

Disk Full Handling

```

(define (handle-disk-full)
  "Emergency disk space recovery"
  ;; Phase 1: Emergency GC
  (gc-emergency)

  ;; Phase 2: Clear caches
  (clear-all-caches)

  ;; Phase 3: Compress compressible objects
  (compress-uncompressed-objects)

  ;; Phase 4: Alert and degrade
  (when (< (available-space) *critical-threshold*)
    (alert-disk-critical)
    (vault_READONLY!)))

```

Network Errors

Timeout Handling

```

(define (with-timeout duration operation)
  "Execute operation with timeout"
  (let ((result (make-channel)))
    (thread-start!
      (make-thread
        (lambda () 

```

```

(channel-put! result
  (guard (ex (else (result-err ex)))
    (result-ok (operation))))))
(let ((r (channel-get! result duration)))
  (if r
    (if (result-ok? r)
      (result-value r)
      (error (result-error r)))
    (error (make-error 'timeout
      "Operation timed out"
      `((duration . ,duration)))))))

```

Partition Detection

```

(define (detect-partition peers)
  "Detect network partition"
  (let* ((reachable (filter peer-reachable? peers))
         (unreachable (filter (lambda (p) (not (peer-reachable? p))) peers)))
    (when (> (length unreachable) 0)
      (audit-append action: 'partition-detected
                    reachable: (length reachable)
                    unreachable: (length unreachable))
      (if (> (length reachable) (/ (length peers) 2))
        (continue-with-majority reachable)
        (enter-read-only-mode)))))


```

Connection Pool Recovery

```

(define (recover-connection-pool pool)
  "Recover from connection pool exhaustion"
  ;; Close idle connections
  (pool-close-idle! pool)

  ;; Close long-running connections
  (pool-close-stale! pool *max-connection-age*)

  ;; If still exhausted, reject new requests
  (when (pool-exhausted? pool)
    (audit-append action: 'pool-exhausted)
    (enable-request-shedding)))

```

Consistency Errors

Conflict Detection

```
(define (detect-conflict hash versions)
  "Detect conflicting versions of object"
  (let ((unique-contents (delete-duplicates
                           (map version-content versions))))
    (when (> (length unique-contents) 1)
      (record-error!
       (make-error 'conflict
                  "Conflicting versions detected"
                  `((hash . ,hash)
                     (versions . ,(length unique-contents))
                     (sources . ,(map version-source versions)))))))
```

Conflict Resolution

```
(define (resolve-conflict hash versions strategy)
  "Resolve conflicting versions"
  (let ((resolved
         (case strategy
           ((latest)
            (max-by version-timestamp versions))
           ((merge)
            (merge-versions versions))
           ((manual)
            (queue-for-manual-resolution hash versions))
           ((tombstone)
            (create-conflict-tombstone hash versions))))
        (audit-append action: 'conflict-resolved
                      hash: hash
                      strategy: strategy)
        resolved)))
```

Merkle Divergence

```
(define (handle-merkle-divergence local-root remote-root peer)
  "Handle diverged Merkle trees"
  (let ((divergence (find-divergence-point local-root remote-root)))
    (audit-append action: 'merkle-divergence
                  local: local-root
                  remote: remote-root
                  divergence: divergence)
    ;; Sync diverged subtrees
    (for-each (lambda (subtree)
                (sync-subtree subtree peer)))
```

```
(divergent-subtrees divergence))))
```

Recovery Procedures

Automatic Recovery

```
(define recovery-handlers
  `((corruption . ,recover-corrupted)
    (missing . ,fetch-from-replica)
    (timeout . ,retry-with-backoff)
    (partition . ,wait-for-reconnection)
    (conflict . ,resolve-with-default-strategy)))

(define (auto-recover error)
  "Attempt automatic recovery"
  (let ((handler (assoc-ref recovery-handlers (error-type error))))
    (if handler
        (begin
          (audit-append action: 'auto-recovery-attempt
                        error: (error-id error))
          (handler error))
        (escalate-error error))))
```

Manual Recovery

```
(define (queue-manual-recovery error)
  "Queue error for manual intervention"
  (soup-put
   `(recovery-ticket
     (error ,(error-id error)))
   (status pending)
   (created ,(current-time))
   (assigned #f))
  type: 'recovery-ticket))

(define (process-recovery-ticket ticket-hash)
  "Process manual recovery ticket"
  (let ((ticket (soup-get ticket-hash)))
    ;; Mark in progress
    (soup-update ticket-hash status: 'in-progress)
    ;; ... manual recovery steps ...
    ;; Mark resolved
    (soup-update ticket-hash
                  status: 'resolved
                  resolved-at: (current-time))
```

```
resolved-by: (current-principal))))
```

Disaster Recovery

```
(define (disaster-recovery backup-location)
  "Full vault recovery from backup"
  (audit-append action: 'disaster-recovery-start
    backup: backup-location)

;; Phase 1: Verify backup integrity
(unless (verify-backup-integrity backup-location)
  (error "Backup integrity check failed"))

;; Phase 2: Restore CAS
(restore-cas-from-backup backup-location)

;; Phase 3: Restore soup
(restore-soup-from-backup backup-location)

;; Phase 4: Restore indexes
(rebuild-indexes)

;; Phase 5: Verify restoration
(verify-restoration)

(audit-append action: 'disaster-recovery-complete))
```

Error Reporting

Error Aggregation

```
(define (aggregate-errors window)
  "Aggregate errors over time window"
  (let ((errors (soup-query type: 'error
    timestamp: (> (- (current-time) window)))))
    (group-by error-type errors)))

(define (error-rate error-type window)
  "Calculate error rate"
  (let ((count (length (soup-query type: 'error
    error-type: error-type
    timestamp: (> (- (current-time) window))))))
    (/ count window)))
```

Alerting

```
(define alert-thresholds
  `((corruption . 1)           ; Any corruption is critical
    (timeout . 100)            ; 100 timeouts per minute
    (conflict . 10)             ; 10 conflicts per minute
    (resource . 5)))           ; 5 resource errors per minute

(define (check-alert-thresholds)
  "Check if error rates exceed thresholds"
  (for-each (lambda (threshold)
    (let ((type (car threshold))
          (limit (cdr threshold)))
      (when (> (error-rate type 60) limit)
        (send-alert type (error-rate type 60) limit))))
    alert-thresholds))
```

Security Considerations

Error Information Leakage

```
; Don't expose internal details in user-facing errors
(define (sanitize-error-for-user error)
  `(error
    (type ,(error-type error))
    (message ,(user-safe-message (error-type error)))
    (request-id ,(error-request-id error)))

; Full details only in audit log
(define (log-full-error error)
  (audit-append action: 'error
               error: error)) ; Full context preserved
```

Error-Based Attacks

```
; Rate limit error generation to prevent DoS
(define error-rate-limiter
  (make-rate-limiter 1000 60)) ; 1000 errors per minute max

(define (rate-limited-record-error! err)
  (if (rate-limiter-allow? error-rate-limiter)
    (record-error! err)
    (audit-append action: 'error-rate-limited)))
```

References

1. Release It! - Nygard
 2. Hystrix - Netflix Circuit Breaker
 3. RFC-003: Cryptographic Audit Trail
 4. RFC-026: Garbage Collection
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Changelog

- **2026-01-07** - Initial draft
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Implementation Status: Draft **Dependencies:** soup, audit, storage **Integration:** All vault operations, monitoring, alerting