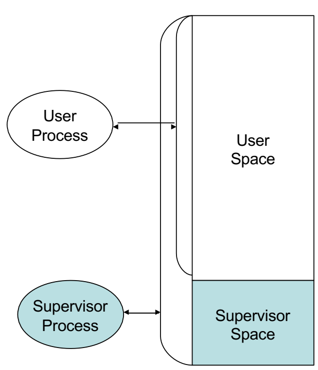
CS 35L Software Construction Lab
Week 5 – System Calls

Kernel

- kernel is the core of the OS
  - interface between hardware and software
  - controls access to system resources: memory, I/O, CPU
  - ensure protection and fair allocations
- user space - where normal user processes run
  - limited access to system resources: memory, I/O, CPU
- kernel space
  - stores the code of the kernel, which manages processes
  - prevent processes messing with each other and the machine
  - only the kernel code is trusted

Processor Modes

- Operating modes that place restrictions on the type of operations that can be performed by running processes
  - User mode: restricted access to system resources
  - Kernel/Supervisor mode: unrestricted access



User Mode vs. Kernel Mode

- Hardware contains a mode-bit, e.g. 0 means kernel mode, 1 means user mode
- User mode
  - CPU **restricted** to unprivileged instructions and a specified area of memory
- Kernel mode
  - CPU is **unrestricted**, can use all instructions, access all areas of memory and take over the CPU anytime

Which Code is Trusted?
=> The Kernel *ONLY*

- Core of OS software **executing in supervisor** state
- **Trusted software:**
  - Manages hardware resources (CPU, Memory and I/O)
  - Implements protection mechanisms that could not be changed through actions of untrusted software in user space

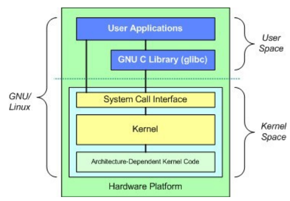
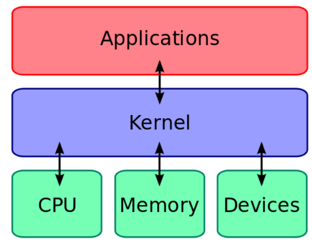


Image by: Tim Jones (IBM)

What About User Processes?

- The kernel executes privileged operations on behalf of untrusted user processes

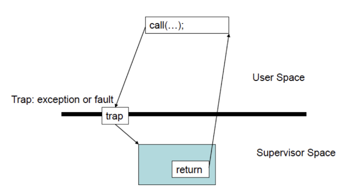


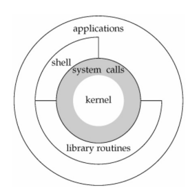
System Calls

- Special type of function that:
  - Used by user-level processes to request a service from the kernel
  - Changes the CPU's mode from user mode to kernel mode to enable more capabilities
  - Is part of the kernel of the OS
  - Verifies that the user should be allowed to do the requested action and then does the action (kernel performs the operation on behalf of the user)
  - Is the ***only way*** a user program can perform privileged operations

System Calls

- When a system call is made, the program being executed is interrupted and control is passed to the kernel
- If operation is valid the kernel performs it





System Call Overhead

- System calls are expensive and can hurt performance
- The system must do many things
  - Process is interrupted & computer saves its state
  - OS takes control of CPU & verifies validity of op.
  - **OS performs requested action**
  - OS restores saved context, switches to user mode
  - OS gives control of the CPU back to user process

Example System Calls

```
#include <fcntl.h>
#include <sys/stat.h>
#include <unistd.h>
```

- `int open(const char *pathname, int flags, mode_t mode);`
- `int close(int fd);`
- File descriptors
  - 0 stdin
  - 1 stdout
  - 2 stderr
- `ssize_t read(int fildes, void *buf, size_t nbyte)`
  - fildes: file descriptor
  - buf: buffer to write to
  - nbyte: number of bytes to read
- `ssize_t write(int fildes, const void *buf, size_t nbyte);`
  - fildes: file descriptor
  - buf: buffer to write from
  - nbyte: number of bytes to write

Example System Calls

```
#include <sys/stat.h>
int fstat(int filedes, struct stat *buf)
```

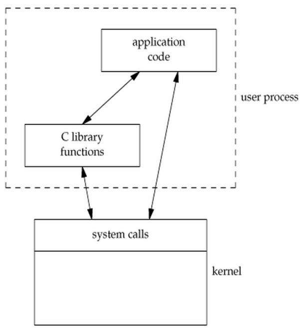
- Returns information about the file with the descriptor filedes into buf

```
struct stat {
    dev_t     st_dev;     /* ID of device containing file */
    ino_t     st_ino;     /* inode number */
    mode_t    st_mode;    /* protection */
    nlink_t   st_nlink;   /* number of hard links */
    uid_t     st_uid;     /* user ID of owner */
    gid_t     st_gid;     /* group ID of owner */
    dev_t     st_rdev;    /* device ID (if special file) */
    off_t     st_size;    /* total size, in bytes */
    blksize_t st_blksize; /* blocksize for file system I/O */
    blkcnt_t  st_blocks;  /* number of 512B blocks allocated */
    time_t    st_atime;   /* time of last access */
    time_t    st_mtime;   /* time of last modification */
    time_t    st_ctime;   /* time of last status change */
};
```

Library Functions

- Functions that are a part of standard C library
- To avoid system call overhead use equivalent library functions
  - getchar, putchar vs. read, write (for standard I/O)
  - fopen, fclose vs. open, close (for file I/O), etc.
- How do these functions perform privileged operations?
  - They make system calls

So What's the Point?



- Many library functions invoke system calls indirectly
- So why use library calls?
- Usually equivalent library functions make fewer system calls
- non-frequent switches from user mode to kernel mode => less overhead

Unbuffered vs. Buffered I/O

- **Unbuffered**
  – Every byte is read/written by the kernel through a system call
- **Buffered**
  – collect as many bytes as possible (in a buffer) and read more than a single byte (into buffer) at a time and use one system call for a block of bytes

=> Buffered I/O decreases the number of read/write system calls and the corresponding overhead

Laboratory

- Write `tr2b` and `tr2u` programs in 'C' that transliterates bytes. They take two arguments 'from' and 'to'. The programs will transliterate every byte in 'from' to corresponding byte in 'to'
  – `./tr2b 'abcd' 'wxyz' < bigfile.txt`
    - Replace 'a' with 'w', 'b' with 'x', etc
  – `./tr2b 'mno' 'pqr' < bigfile.txt`
- `tr2b` uses **getchar** and **putchar** to read from STDIN and write to STDOUT.
- `tr2u` uses **read** and **write** to read and write each byte, instead of using getchar and putchar. The nbyte argument should be 1 so it reads/writes a single byte at a time.
- Test it on a big file with 5,000,000 bytes

```
$ head --bytes=# /dev/urandom > output.txt
```

`time` and `strace`

- **time [***options***]** *command* **[***arguments...***]**
- Output:
  – real 0m4.866s: elapsed time as read from a wall clock
  – user 0m0.001s: the CPU time used by your process
  – sys 0m0.021s: the CPU time used by the system on behalf of your process
- **strace**: intercepts and prints out system calls.
  – $ strace –o strace_output ./tr2b 'AB' 'XY' < input.txt
  – $ strace –o strace_output2 ./tr2u 'AB' 'XY' < input.txt