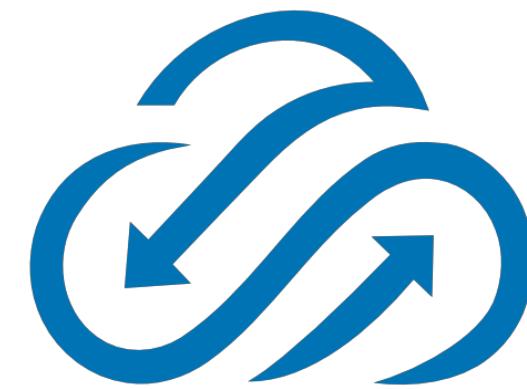


Building Resilient Serverless Systems

@johnchapin | symphonia.io





John Chapin

- Currently Partner, Symphonia
- Former VP Engineering, Technical Lead
 - Data Engineering and Data Science teams
- 20+ yrs experience in govt, healthcare, travel, and ad-tech
- Intent Media, RoomKey, Meddius, SAIC, Booz Allen



Agenda

- What is Serverless?
- Resiliency
- Demo
- Discussion and Questions

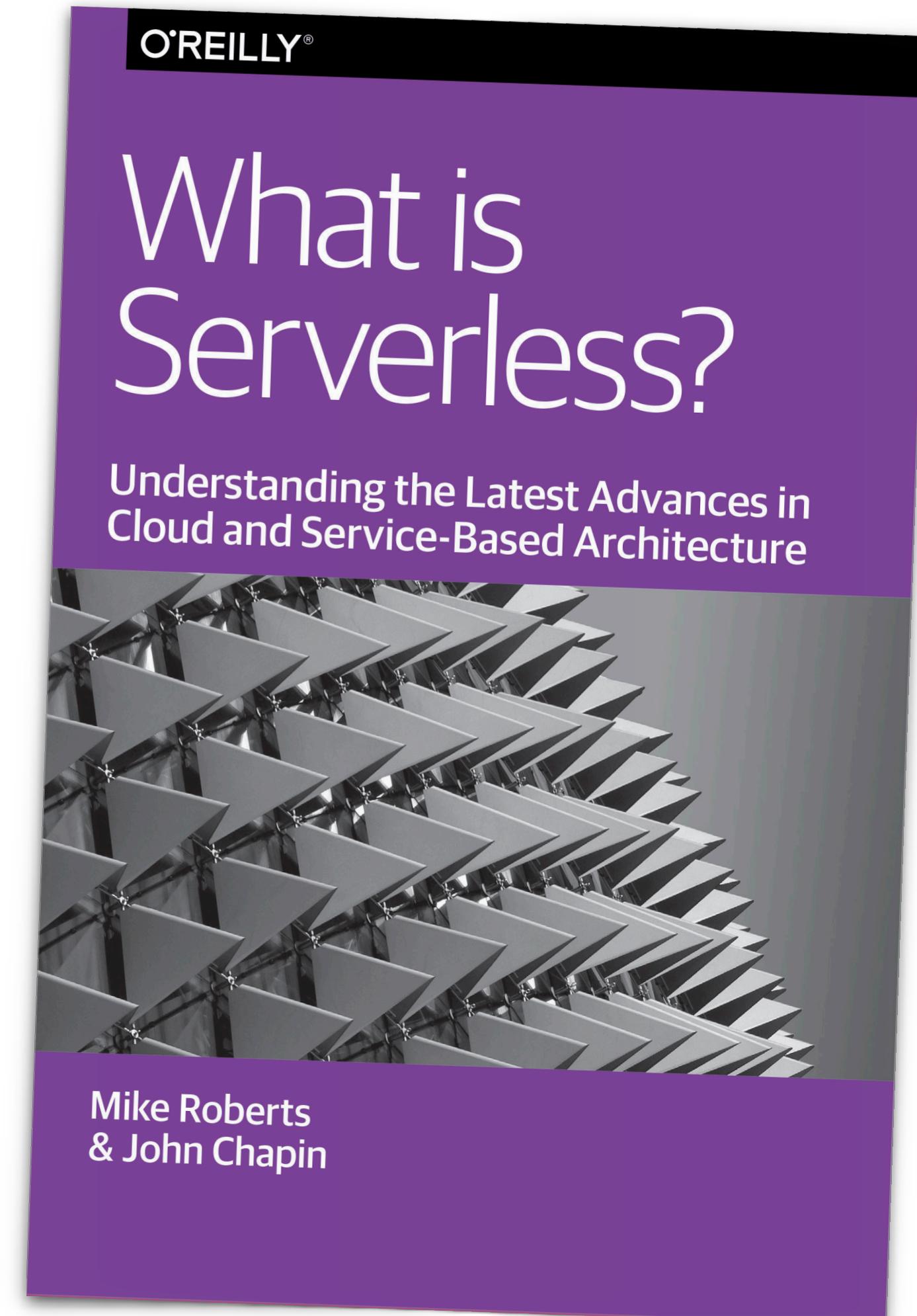


What is Serverless?



Serverless = FaaS + BaaS!

- **FaaS = Functions as a Service**
 - AWS Lambda, Auth0 Webtask, Azure Functions, Google Cloud Functions, etc...
- **BaaS = Backend as a Service**
 - Auth0, Amazon DynamoDB, Google Firebase, Parse, Amazon S3, etc...

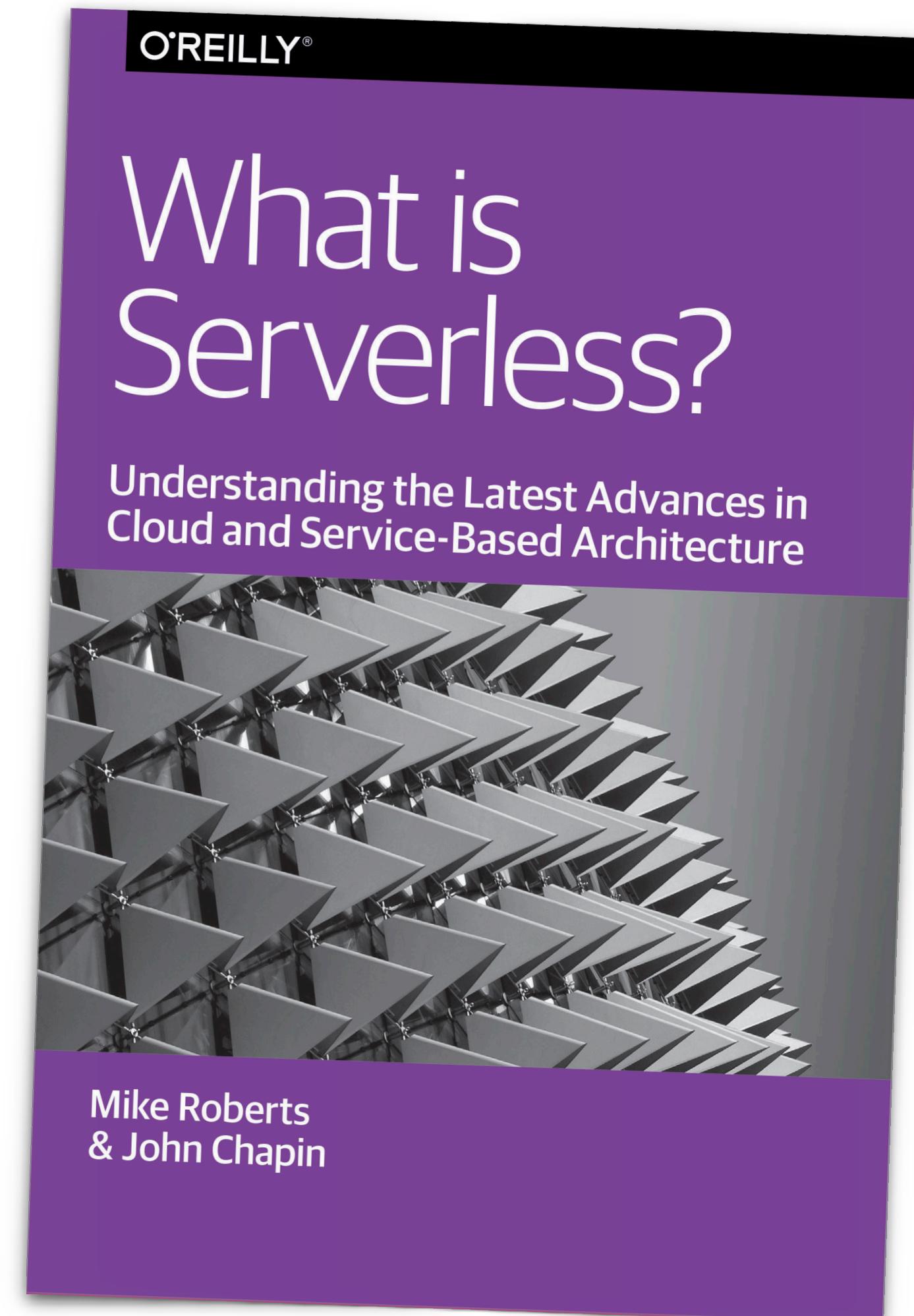


go.symphonia.io/what-is-serverless



Serverless attributes

- No managing of hosts or processes
- Self auto-scaling and provisioning
- Costs based on precise usage (down to zero!)
- Implicit high availability

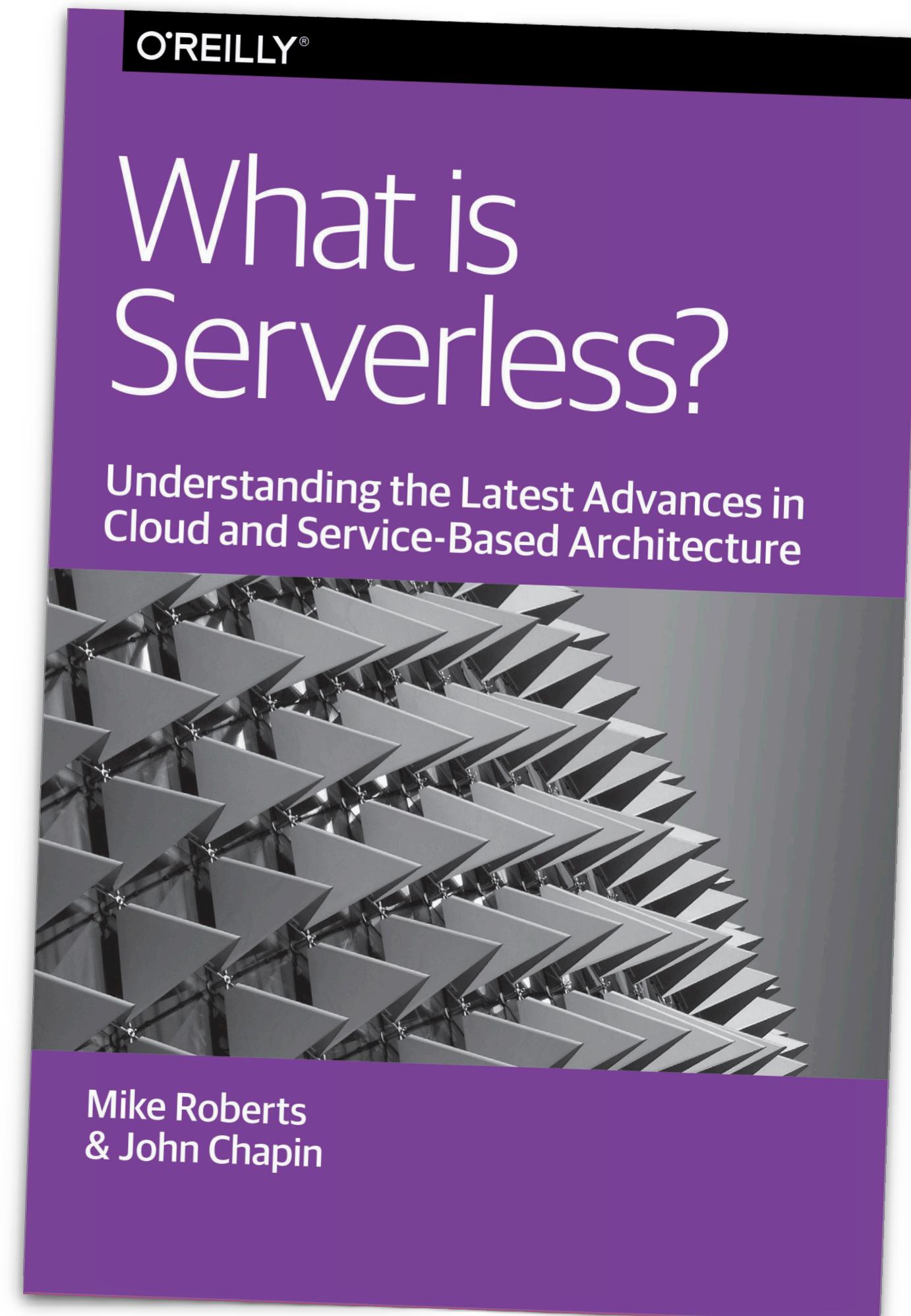


go.symphonia.io/what-is-serverless



Serverless benefits

- Cloud benefits ++
 - Reduced TCO
 - Scaling flexibility
 - Shorter lead time

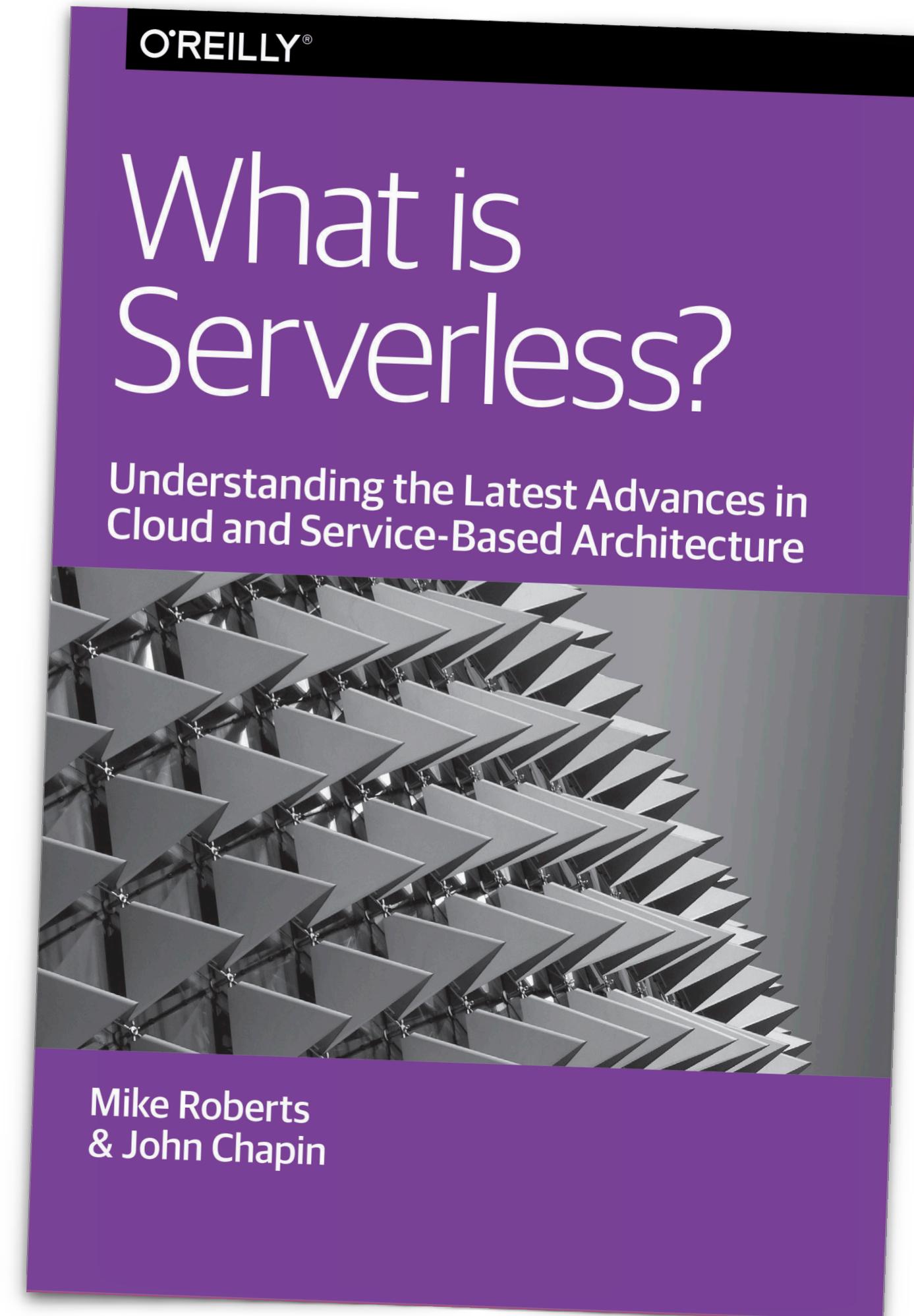


go.symphonia.io/what-is-serverless



Loss of control

- Limited configuration options
- Fewer opportunities for optimization
- Hands-off issue resolution



go.symphonia.io/what-is-serverless



Resiliency



“Failures are a given and everything will eventually fail over time ...”

-Werner Vogels

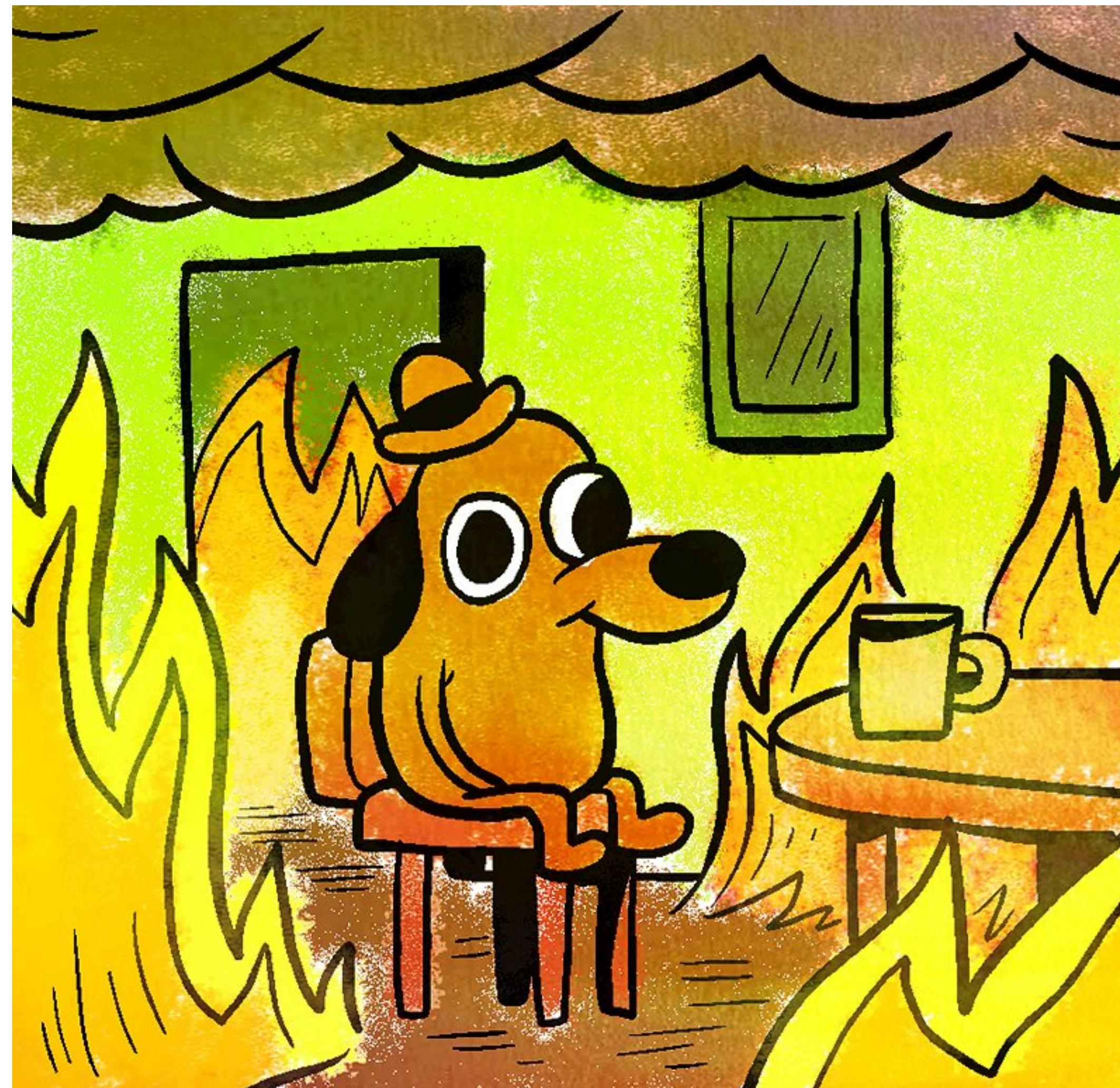
(<https://www.allthingsdistributed.com/2016/03/10-lessons-from-10-years-of-aws.html>)



Werner on Embracing Failure

- Systems will fail
- At scale, systems will fail a lot
- Embrace failure as a natural occurrence
- Limit the blast radius of failures
- Keep operating
- *Recover quickly (automate!)*





K.C. Green, Gunshow #648

Failures in Serverless land

- Serverless is all about using vendor-managed services.
- Two classes of failures:
 - Application failures (your problem, your resolution)
 - All other failures (your problem, but not your resolution)
- What happens when those vendor-managed services fail?
 - Or when the services used by those services fail?

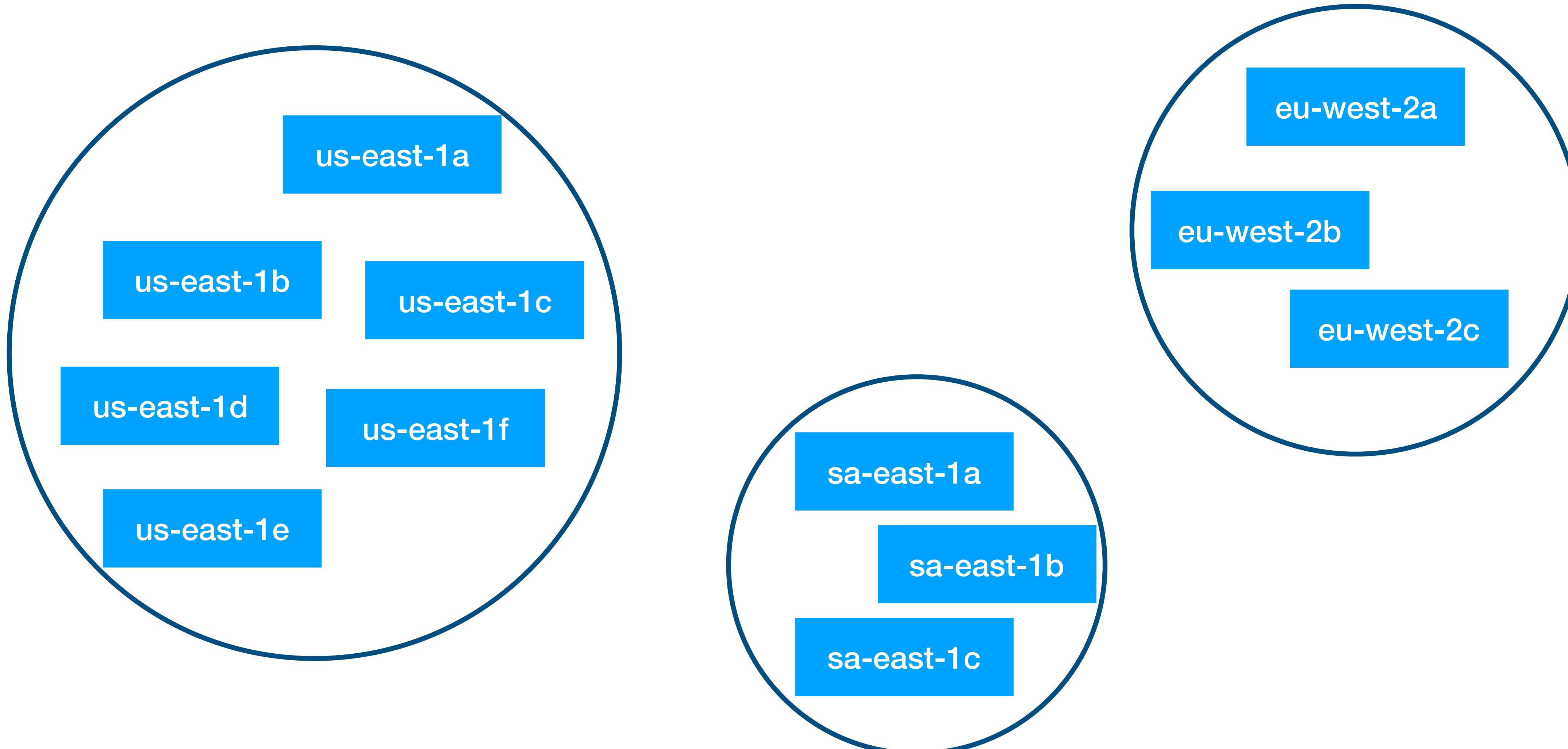


Mitigation through architecture

- No control over resolving acute vendor failures.
- Plan for failure, architect and build applications to be resilient.
- Take advantage of:
 - Vendor-designed isolation mechanisms (like AWS regions).
 - Vendor services designed to work across regions (like Route 53).
- Take advantage of vendor-recommended architectural practices, like the AWS Well-Architected Framework's Reliability Pillar:
<https://d1.awsstatic.com/whitepapers/architecture/AWS-Reliability-Pillar.pdf>

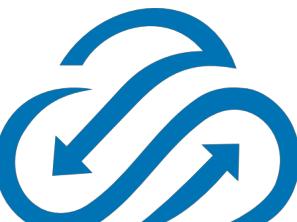


AWS isolation mechanisms



Serverless resiliency on AWS

- Regional high-availability = services running across multiple availability zones in one region.
 - With EC2 (and other traditional instance-based services), it's our problem.
 - With Serverless (Lambda, DynamoDB, S3, etc), AWS handle it for us.
- Global high-availability = services running across multiple regions.
 - **We must architect our systems for global high-availability.**
 - **The Serverless cost model is a huge advantage!**



Serverless resiliency on AWS (cont)

- Event-driven Serverless systems with externalized state mean:
 - Little or no data in-flight when a failure occurs
 - Data persisted to reliable stores (like DynamoDB or S3)
- Serverless continuous deployment means:
 - No persistent infrastructure to re-hydrate
 - Highly likely to be a portable, infrastructure-as-code approach
- **Again, Serverless is a huge advantage!**



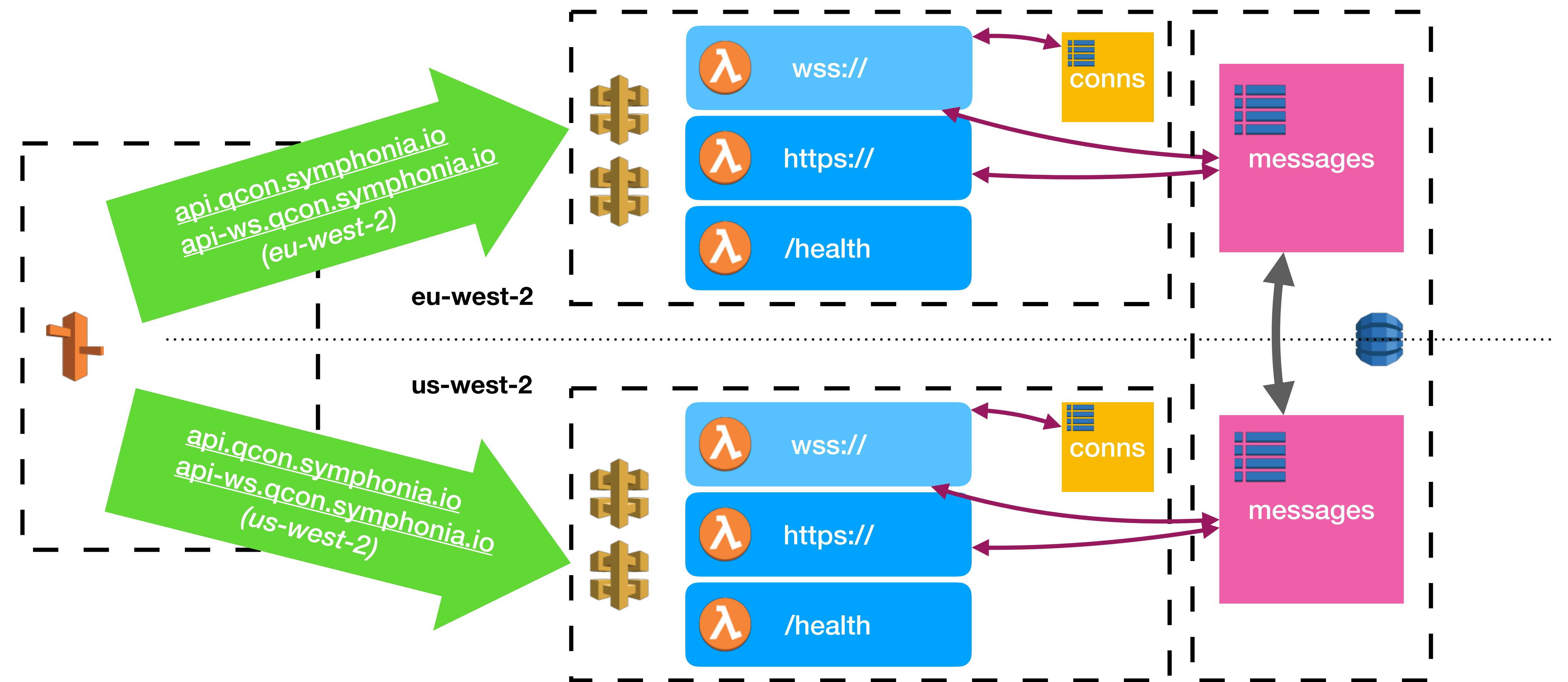
Demo



Overview

- Global, highly-available API
- <https://github.com/symphoniacloud/qcon-london-2019>
 - Serverless Application Model (SAM) template
 - Lambda code (TypeScript)
 - Build system (NPM + shell)
 - Elm front-end





Request flow

- DNS lookup for api.qcon.symphonia.io
- Route 53 responds with IP address for
 - lowest latency regional API Gateway endpoint
 - that has a passing health check (HTTP 2xx or 3xx from **/health** endpoint)
- Request traverses regional API Gateway to regional Lambda
- Regional Lambda writes to regional DynamoDB table
- DynamoDB replicates data to **all** replica tables in other regions, last write wins



Simulating failure

- Alter eu-west-2 health check to return HTTP error status
- Observe request routed to us-east-1 or us-west-2 instead
- Observe DynamoDB writes propagated from us-west-2 back to eu-west-2



Rough edges

- DynamoDB Global Tables not available in CloudFormation
- API Gateway WebSockets + Custom Domains not available in CloudFormation
- Can't add new replicas to DynamoDB global tables after inserting data
- SAM not compatible with CloudFormation Stack Sets



Additional approaches

- Multi-region deployment via Code Pipeline
<https://github.com/symphoniacloud/multi-region-codepipeline>
- CloudFront Origin Failover
https://docs.aws.amazon.com/AmazonCloudFront/latest/DeveloperGuide/high_availability_origin_failover.html
- Global Accelerator (for ELB, ALB, and EIP)
<https://aws.amazon.com/global-accelerator/>



AWS Resources

- James Hamilton's "Amazon Global Network Overview"
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uj7Ting6Ckk>
- Rick Houlihan's DAT401: Advanced Design Patterns for DynamoDB
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HaEPXoXVf2k>
- <https://aws.amazon.com/blogs/compute/building-a-multi-region-serverless-application-with-amazon-api-gateway-and-aws-lambda/>
(Magnus Bjorkman, November 2017)
- <https://aws.amazon.com/blogs/database/how-to-use-amazon-dynamodb-global-tables-to-power-multiregion-architectures/>
(Adrian Hornsby, December 2018)
- <https://aws.amazon.com/blogs/compute/announcing-websocket-apis-in-amazon-api-gateway/> (Diego Magalhaes, December 2018)



Symphonia resources

- [**What is Serverless?**](#) Our 2017 report, published by O'Reilly.
- [**Programming AWS Lambda**](#) - Our upcoming full-length book with O'Reilly.
- [**Serverless Architectures**](#) - Mike's de facto industry primer on Serverless.
- [**Learning Lambda**](#) - A 9-part blog series to help new Lambda devs get started.
- [**Serverless Insights**](#) - Our email newsletter covering Serverless news, event, etc.
- [**The Symphonium**](#) - Our blog, featuring technical content and analysis.



Stay in touch!

john@symphonia.io

[@johnchapin](https://twitter.com/johnchapin)

[@symphoniacloud](https://twitter.com/symphoniacloud)

symphonia.io/events

blog.symphonia.io

