

CS1632: PERFORMANCE TESTING

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What do we mean by Performance?

- If you look it up in a dictionary ...
 - *Merriam-Webster*: the ability to perform
 - Dictionaries can be self-referential like this ☹
 - *Cambridge*: how **well** a person or machine does a piece of work
 - *Macmillan*: the **speed** and **effectiveness** of a machine or vehicle
- In software QA: it is a **non-functional** requirement (**quality attribute**)
 - Narrow sense: **speed** of a program
 - Broad sense: **effectiveness** of a program
 - In this chapter, we will refer to performance in the broad sense

But Even Speed is Hard to Define

- Even performance in the narrow sense (speed) is hard to define
- Speed for a *web browser*
 - How quickly a website responds to user interactions (Page loads, button clicks, dragging, typing ...)
 - Responsiveness is measured in average **response time**
- Speed for a *web server*
 - How quickly a server responds to a page request is a part of it, yes.
 - More importantly, pages served per second (a.k.a. **throughput**)
 - As long as response time is less than a threshold (say, < 100 ms), web server performance is measured by throughput, not response time
- We need more than one metric to quantify performance

Performance Indicators

- Quantitative measures of the performance of a system under test
- Examples (in the narrow sense, speed):
 - How long does it take to respond to a button press? (*response time*)
 - How many users can the system handle at one time? (*throughput*)
- Examples (in the broad sense)
 - How long can the system go without a failure? (*availability*)
 - How much memory does the program use in megabytes? (*utilization*)
 - How much energy does a program use per second in watts? (*utilization*)

Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)

- **KPI:** a performance indicator important to the user
- Select only a few KPIs that are really important
 - Those that are indicative of success or failure of your software
 - e.g. miles-per-gallon *should* be a KPI for a hybrid-electric car
 - e.g. miles-per-gallon *should not* be a KPI for a formula-1 race car
 - Being indiscriminate means important performance goals will suffer
- **Performance target:** quantitative measure that KPI should reach ideally
- **Performance threshold:** bare minimum a KPI should reach
 - Bare minimum to be considered production-ready
 - Typically more lax compared to performance target

KPI / Performance Target / Performance Threshold

- Let's say you are developing requirements for a web application
- Here is an example KPI / Performance Target / Performance Threshold
 - KPI: response time
 - Performance target: 100 milliseconds
 - Performance threshold: 500 milliseconds
- Another example KPI / Performance Target / Performance Threshold
 - KPI: throughput
 - Performance target: 100 user requests / second
 - Performance threshold: 10 user requests / second

Performance Indicators: Categories

- There are largely two categories of performance indicators
- Service-Oriented
- Efficiency-Oriented

Service-Oriented Performance Indicators

- Measures how well a system is providing a service to the users
 - Measures how a typical end-user experiences your system
 - Measures *Quality of Service (QoS)*
- Two subcategories:
 - **Response Time**
 - How quickly does the system respond to a user request?
 - E.g. How long does a web page takes to load?
 - **Availability**
 - What percentage of time can a user access the services of the system?
 - E.g. How many days in a year is the website up and running?

Efficiency-Oriented Performance Indicators

- Measures how well a system makes use of computational resources
 - Measures efficiency: computational efficiency, energy-efficiency, ...
 - Helps explain or predict QoS indicators
- Two subcategories:
 - **Utilization**
 - Given a *workload*, how much compute *resources* does the software use?
 - E.g. How many CPU clock ticks are needed to service a web page?
 - **Throughput**
 - Given certain *resources*, what *workload* can the software handle per time unit?
 - E.g. How many web pages can a web server service per second?

Service-Oriented vs. Efficiency-Oriented

- Service-oriented indicators measure QoS of the current system
 - Is the current *response time* satisfactory to the user?
 - Is the current *availability* satisfactory to the user?
- Efficiency-oriented indicators measure resources needed to achieve QoS
 - CPU *utilization* → CPUs needed to achieve target *response time*
 - Memory *utilization* → memory needed to guarantee *availability* without crashing
 - Server *throughput* → servers needed to consistently achieve target *response time* (given a certain request rate, according to queueing theory)
 - Server *throughput* → servers needed to guarantee *availability* during high demand (without having request rate overwhelm processing rate)
- Efficiency-oriented indicators point out problem areas in software
 - Given current set of resources, which aspect of software is bringing down QoS?

Testing Service-Oriented Performance Indicators

Response Time / Availability

Rough Response Time Performance Targets

- < 0.1 S : Response time required to feel that system is instantaneous
- < 1 S : Response time required for flow of thought not to be interrupted
- < 10 S : Response time required for user to stay focused on the application
 - Taken from “Usability Engineering” by Jakob Nielsen, 1993

Things haven't changed much since then!

Testing Response Time

- Easy to do!
 1. Submit a request to the system, and click “start” on stopwatch
 2. When response comes back, click “stop” on stopwatch
- Any problems with this approach?



Problem with Manual Testing Response Times

1. Limited accuracy: cannot reliably tell sub-second differences
2. Labor intensive: time-consuming to measure all usage scenarios
3. Black box: can only measure end-to-end response times
 - Cannot measure component response times such as response times of:
 - Database queries
 - Calls to microservice endpoints
 - File read/write requests

➡ Performance testing relies heavily on automation

Response Time Testing Relies on Automated Tools

- time command in Unix
 - time java Foo
 - time curl <http://www.example.com>
 - time ls
- Windows PowerShell has:
 - Measure-Command { ls }

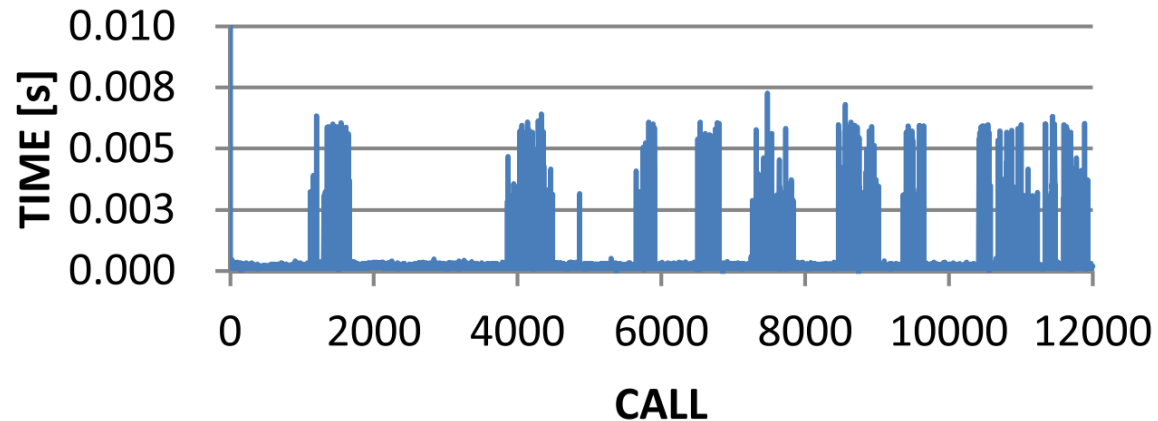
```
-bash$ time curl http://www.example.com
<!doctype html>
<html>
...
</html>
real    0m0.021s
user    0m0.002s
sys     0m0.004s
```

This is the response time

We will discuss these later

Response Time Testing Needs Statistical Reasoning

- Time taken by the same method call when measured 12000 times:



K. Kumahata et al. “A Case Study of the Running Time Fluctuation of Application”,
International Symposium on Computing and Networking, 2016

See: [resources/running_time_case_study.pdf](#) in course repository to read entire paper

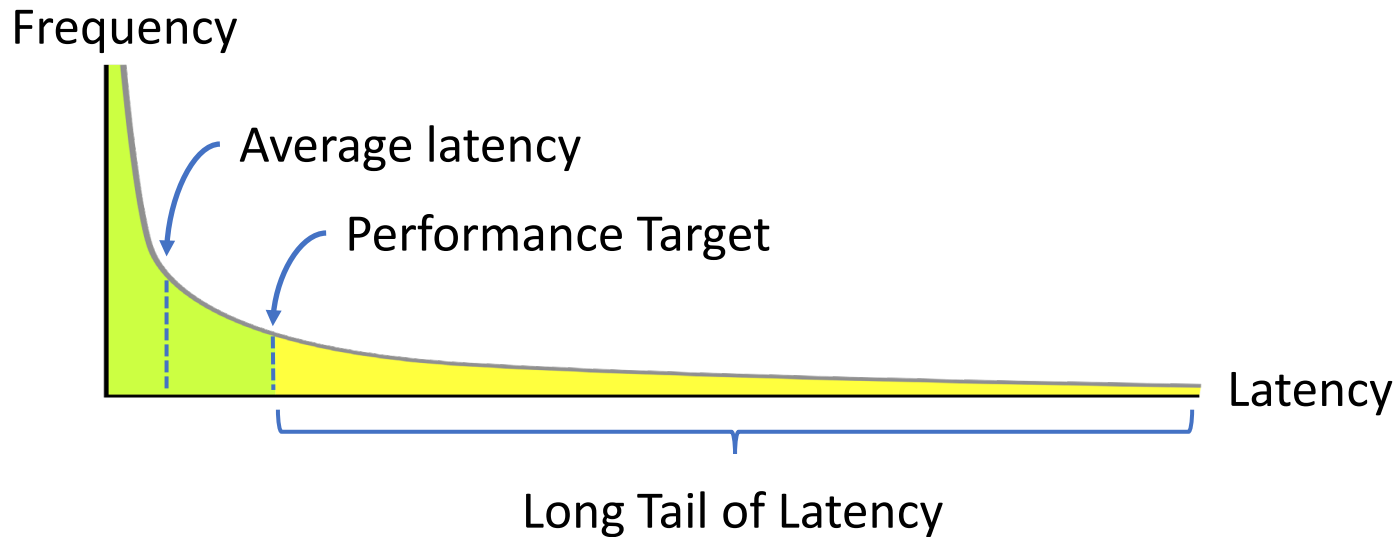
- System response times always form a distribution:
 - Other processes can run while testing, taking up CPU time
 - Data at time of execution can be at different levels of memory hierarchy: cache/memory/disk
 - Network can experience traffic while testing from external sources

Minimizing and Dealing with Variability

- Eliminate all variables OTHER THAN THE CODE UNDER TEST
 - Make sure you are running with same software/hardware configuration
 - Kill all processes in the machine other than the one you are testing
 - Remove all periodic scheduled jobs (e.g. anti-virus that runs every 2 hours)
 - Fill memory / caches by doing several warm up runs of app before measuring
- Even after doing all of this, there is still going to be variability
 - Try multiple times to get a statistically significant average
 - Also look at min/max values to check for large variances

The Dreaded Long Tail of Latency

- Typically, this is the type of latency distribution you will get



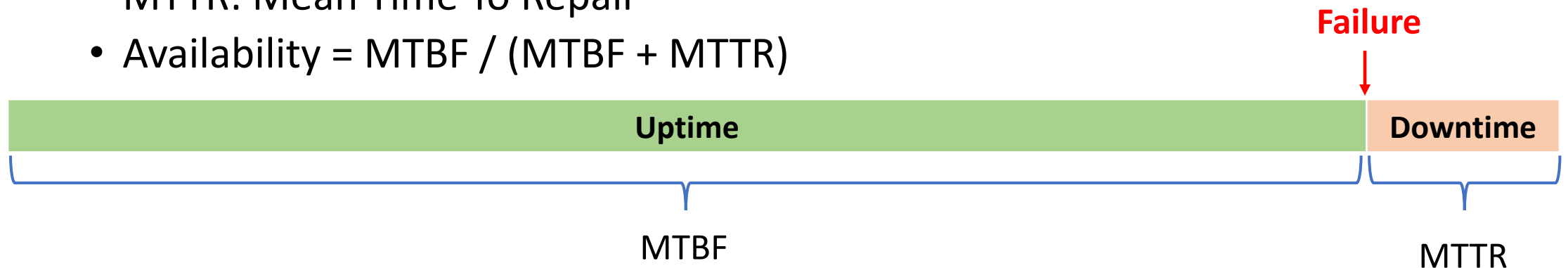
- Often the “long tail” is more important than average latency
 - These are the response times that fail the performance target
- Many runs are required not only to accurately measure the average, but also to detect the length and height of the “long tail”

Testing Availability

- Availability - often referred to as uptime
 - What percentage time is the system accessible to the user?
- Often codified in an *SLA (Service Level Agreement)*
 - “I am a web host. I guarantee you that you and your users will be able to access your service 99% of the time in a given month.”

How to test?

- Difficult – not feasible to run a few “test years” before deploying
- Modeling system and estimating uptime is the only feasible approach
- Metrics to model
 - MTBF: Mean Time Between Failures
 - MTTR: Mean Time To Repair
 - $\text{Availability} = \text{MTBF} / (\text{MTBF} + \text{MTTR})$



Measuring MTTR and MTBF

- Measuring MTTR is easy
 - Average time to reboot a machine
 - Average time to replace a hard disk
- Measuring MTBF is hard
 - Depends on how much the system is stressed
 - Depends on the usage scenario
 - Measure MTBF for different usage scenarios
 - Calculate a (weighted) average of MTBF for those scenarios

Measuring MTBF with Load Testing

- Load testing:
 - Given a load, how long can a system run without failing?
 - Load is expressed in terms of concurrent requests / users
- Kinds of load testing:
 - Baseline Test - A bare minimum amount of use, to provide a baseline
 - Soak / Stability Test – Typical usage for extended periods of time
 - Stress Test – High levels of activity typically in short bursts
- Estimate MTBF based on test results and historical load data
 - E.g. if 90% of time is typical usage, 10% of time is peak usage,
$$\text{MTBF} = \text{Soak Test MTBF} * 0.9 + \text{Stress Test MTBF} * 0.1$$

Testing Efficiency-Oriented Performance Indicators

Throughput / Resource Utilization

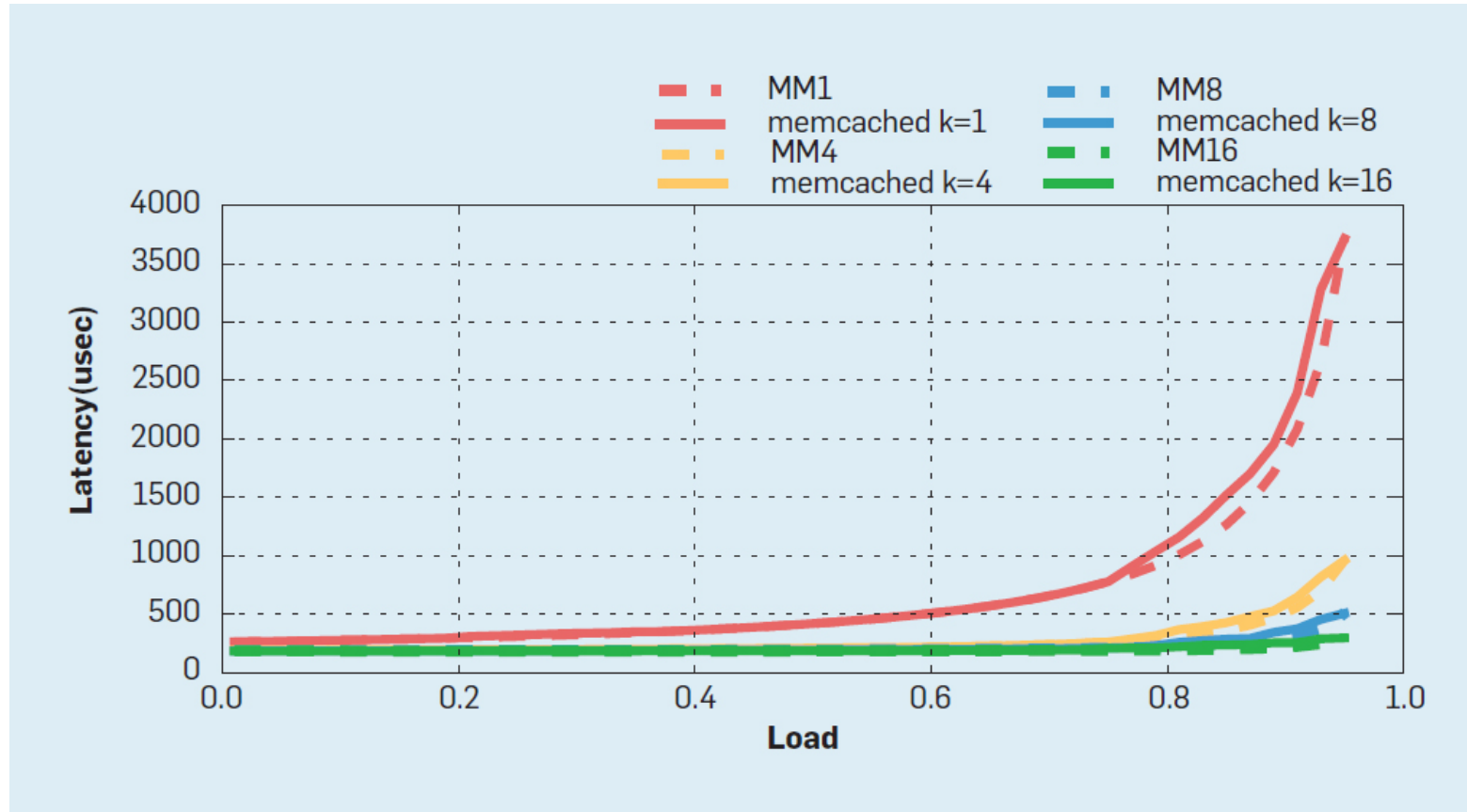
Testing Throughput

- *Throughput*
 - Number of events a system can handle in a given timeframe
- Examples:
 - Packets per second (that can be handled by a router)
 - Pages per minute (that can be served by a web server)
 - Number of concurrent users (that a game server can handle)

Measuring Throughput: Load testing

- Load testing can also be used to test throughput (as well as availability)
- Basically measure the maximal load that system can handle
 - Without degrading Quality of Service (QoS)
 - Increase events / second until response time falls below performance target
 - Resulting events / second is the throughput of the system

Measuring Throughput: Load testing



- From “Amdahl's Law for Tail Latency” C. Delimitrou et al. *CACM*, 2018
<https://cacm.acm.org/research/amdahls-law-for-tail-latency/>

Testing Utilization

- *Utilization*
 - How much compute resources does the software use?
- Examples:
 - How many *CPU clock ticks* is used to service a request?
 - How much *memory* is used to service a request?
 - How much *network bandwidth* is used to service a request?
 - How much *energy* is used to service a request?

Testing Utilization: Tools

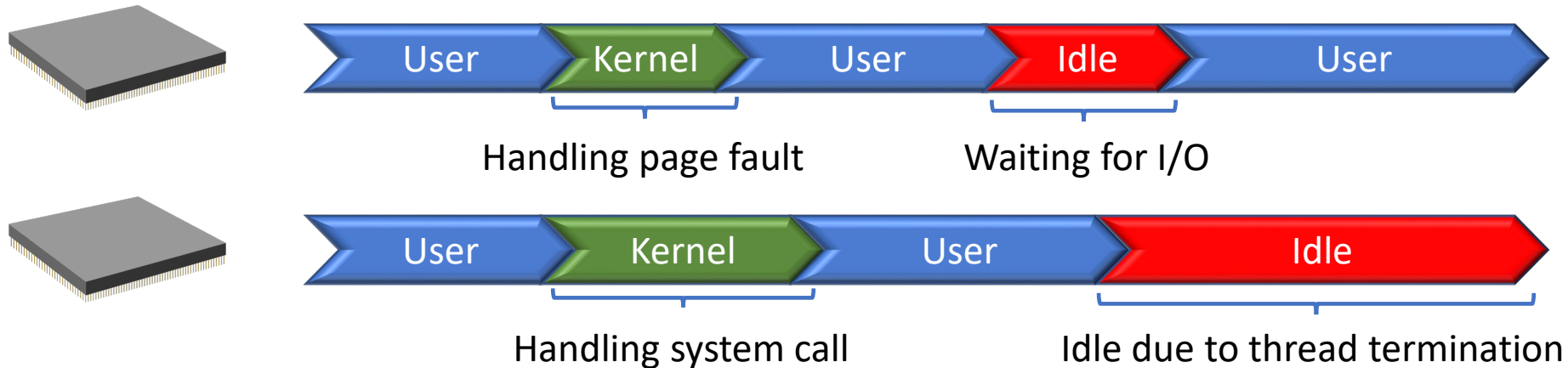
- General purpose
 - Windows Systems – Task Manager, perfmon
 - OS X - Activity Monitor or Instruments, top
 - Unix systems - top, iostat, sar, time
- Program-Specific Tools

Measuring CPU Utilization

- real time: “Actual” amount of time taken (wall clock time)
 - **user time**: Amount of time user code executes on CPU
 - **system time**: Amount of time kernel (OS) code executes on CPU
 - **total time**: user time + system time = **CPU utilization**
-
- real time \neq total time
 - real time = total time + idle time
 - idle time: time app is idling (not executing on CPU) waiting for some event (where event can be an I/O event, synchronization event, interrupt event, ...)

Time Measurement Example

- Example breakdown of time for an application that runs on 2 CPUs



- Real time:

- User time: Sum of

- Kernel time: Sum of

- Idle time: Sum of

User

Kernel

Idle

- Now we need to revise our previous equation:
$$\text{Real time} = \text{Total time} + \text{Idle time}$$
- This works for only one CPU. For multiple CPUs:
$$\text{Real time} = (\text{Total time} + \text{Idle time}) / \text{CPUs}$$

Time Measurement Using “time”

- time command in Unix
 - time java Foo
 - time curl <http://www.example.com>
 - time ls
- Windows PowerShell has:
 - Measure-Command { ls }

```
-bash$ time curl http://www.example.com
<!doctype html>
<html>
...
</html>

real    0m0.021s
user    0m0.002s
sys     0m0.004s
```

- Real time = (User time + Kernel time + Idle time) / CPUs
- 0.021s = (0.002s + 0.004s + Idle time) / 1 (single-threaded)
- Idle time = 0.015s → Time mostly spent waiting for web server to respond

What does each Indicator Imply?

- Suppose real time does not satisfy response time target
- High proportion of **user time**?
 - Means a lot of time is spent running user (application) code
 - Need to optimize algorithm or use efficient data structure
- High proportion of **kernel time**?
 - Means a lot of time is spent in OS to handle system calls or interrupts
 - Need to reduce frequency of system calls or investigate source of interrupts
- Neither? i.e. High proportion of **idle time**?
 - Means a lot of time is spent waiting for I/O or synchronization
 - CPU utilization is not the problem. Look for efficiency issues somewhere else.
 - Need to reduce I/O bandwidth (by compressing data)?
 - Need to reduce synchronization so that all CPUs can be utilized at the same time?

CPU is not the Only Limited Resource

- CPU Usage
 - Physical Memory
 - Virtual Memory
 - Disk I/O Bandwidth
 - Network Bandwidth
 - Threads
- ➡ Excessive utilization of any of these can result in low QoS

Other Utilization Performance Indicators

- Page faults – indicates high physical memory utilization
- Network packets discarded – indicates high network utilization
- Disk cache misses – indicates high hard disk utilization
- CPU cache misses – indicates high memory bandwidth utilization

General purpose tools only give general info

- Lots of CPU being taken up...
 - ...but by what methods / functions?
- Lots of memory being taken up...
 - ...but by what objects / classes / data?
- Lots of packets sent...
 - ...but why? And what's in them?

Testing Utilization: Tools

- General purpose
 - Windows Systems – Task Manager, perfmon
 - OS X - Activity Monitor or Instruments, top
 - Unix systems - top, iostat, sar
- Program-Specific Tools

Program-Specific Tools

- Protocol analyzers
 - e.g., Wireshark or tcpdump
 - See exactly what packets are being sent/received
- Profilers
 - e.g. JProfiler, VisualVM, gprof, and many, many more
 - See exactly what methods are taking up most of the CPU time
 - See exactly what objects are taking up memory

To Wrap it Up ...

“Premature optimization is the root of all evil”
– Donald Knuth

- Do service-oriented testing first
 - If key performance indicators hit targets, why bother?
 - Only drill down with efficiency-oriented tests if otherwise

From Service-Oriented Test to Solution

- Assume: Rent-A-Cat has list-sorted-cats API listing available cats
 1. Service-oriented testing
 - Response time: list-sorted-cats API misses performance target of 100 ms
 2. Efficiency-oriented testing – General-purpose testing
 - Utilization testing (per request):
 - Network bandwidth usage is 1%
 - I/O bandwidth usage is 1%
 - Memory usage is 2%
 - CPU usage is pegged at 99%
 - Diagnosis: Problem must be inefficient CPU utilization

From Service-Oriented Test to Solution

3. Efficiency-oriented testing – Program-specific testing

- VisualVM profiling says that the sortCats() method is taking most of the time

4. Solution

- Cats sorted with insertion sort – Use better sorting algorithm

Track Performance throughout Versions

- Performance testing should be part of your regression test suite
- Just like for functional defects, you should be able to tell exactly when/where a performance defect is introduced
- Allows you to make an informed decision on whether that extra feature or enhancement is worth the performance hit

Now Please Read Textbook Chapter 19