File Organizations and Indexing

Chapter 8

“How index-learning turns no student pale
Yet holds the soul of science by the tail.”
-- Alexander Pope (1688-1744)

Alternative File Organizations

Many alternatives exist, each ideal for some
situation, and not so good in others:

- **Heap Files**: Suitable when typical access is a file
  scan retrieving all records.
- **Sorted Files**: Best if records must be retrieved in
  some order, or only a ‘range’ of records is needed.
- **Hashed Files**: Good for equality selections.

  - File is a collection of buckets. Bucket = primary
    page plus zero or more overflow pages.
  - Hashing function h: h(r) = bucket in which
    record r belongs. h looks at only some of the
    fields of r, called the search fields.

Cost Model for Our Analysis

We ignore CPU costs, for simplicity:
- B: The number of data pages
- R: Number of records per page
- D: (Average) time to read or write disk page
- Measuring number of page I/O’s ignores gains of
  pre-fetching blocks of pages; thus even I/O cost is
  only approximated.
- Average-case analysis; based on several simplistic
  assumptions.

  - Good enough to show the overall trends!

Assumptions in Our Analysis

- Single record insert and delete.
- **Heap Files**:
  - Equality selection on key; exactly one match.
  - Insert always at end of file.
- **Sorted Files**:
  - Files compacted after deletions.
  - Selections on sort field(s).
- **Hashed Files**:
  - No overflow buckets. 80% page occupancy.

Cost of Operations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Operation</th>
<th>Heap File</th>
<th>Sorted File</th>
<th>Hashed File</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Scan all recs</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equality Search</td>
<td>0.5 B</td>
<td>D x log B</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Range Search</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>D x (log B + # of pages with matches)</td>
<td>1.25 B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Insert</td>
<td>2D</td>
<td>Search + B</td>
<td>2D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delete</td>
<td>Search + D</td>
<td>Search + B</td>
<td>2D</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

  - Several assumptions underlie these (rough) estimates!
**Indexes**

- An index on a file speeds up selections on the search key fields for the index.
  - Any subset of the fields of a relation can be the search key for an index on the relation.
  - Search key is not the same as key (minimal set of fields that uniquely identify a record in a relation).
- An index contains a collection of data entries, and supports efficient retrieval of all data entries \( k^* \) with a given key value \( k \).

**Alternatives for Data Entry \( k^* \) in Index**

- Three alternatives
  1. Data record with key value \( k \)
  2. \( <k, \text{rid of data record with search key value } k> \)
  3. \( <k, \text{list of rids of data records with search key } k> \)
- Choice of alternative for data entries is orthogonal to the indexing technique used to locate data entries with a given key value \( k \).
  - Examples of indexing techniques: B-trees, hash-based structures
  - Typically, index contains auxiliary information that directs searches to the desired data entries.

**Alternatives for Data Entries (Contd.)**

- Alternative 1:
  - If this is used, index structure is a file organization for data records (like Heap files or sorted files).
  - At most one index on a given collection of data records can use Alternative 1. (Otherwise, data records duplicated, leading to redundant storage and potential inconsistency.)
  - If data records very large, # of pages containing data entries is high. Implies size of auxiliary information in the index is also large, typically.

**Index Classification**

- Primary vs. secondary: If search key contains primary key, then called primary index
  - Unique index: Search key contains a candidate key.
- Clustered vs. unclustered: If order of data records is the same as, or close to, order of data entries, then called clustered index
  - Alternative 1 implies clustered, but not vice-versa.
  - A file can be clustered on at most one search key.
  - Cost of retrieving data records through index varies greatly based on whether index is clustered or not.

**Alternatives for Data Entries (Contd.)**

- Alternatives 2 and 3:
  - Data entries typically much smaller than data records. So, better than Alternative 1 with large data records, especially if search keys are small.
    - Portion of index structure used to direct search is much smaller than with Alternative 1.
  - If more than one index is required on a given file, at most one index can use Alternative 1; rest must use Alternatives 2 or 3.
  - Alternative 3 more compact than Alternative 2 but leads to variable sized data entries even if search keys are of fixed length.

**Clustered vs. Unclustered Index**

- Suppose that Alternative (2) is used for data entries, and that the data records are stored in a Heap file.
  - To build clustered index, first sort the Heap file (with some free space on each page for future inserts).
  - Overflow pages may be needed for inserts. (Thus, order of data recs is ‘close to’, but not identical to, the sort order.)
### Index Classification (Contd.)

- **Dense vs. Sparse:** If there is at least one data entry per search key value (in some data record), then dense.
  - Alternative I always leads to dense index.
  - Every sparse index is clustered!
  - Sparse indices are smaller; however, some useful optimizations are based on dense indices.

### Summary

- Many alternative file organizations exist, each appropriate in some situation.
- If selection queries are frequent, sorting the file or building an index is important.
  - Hash-based indexes only good for equality search.
  - Sorted files and tree-based indexes best for range search; also good for equality search. (Files must be kept sorted in practice; B-tree index is better.)
- Index is a collection of data entries plus a way to quickly find entries with given key values.