

# Module 12: Database Tuning

## Winter 2026

Cheriton School of Computer Science


CS 348: Intro to Database Management

# Reading Assignments and References

To be read during the Week of ???:

- ▶ Sections 12.1 through 12.4 of Chapter 12 of course textbook.<sup>1</sup>
- ▶ Sections 14.1 through 14.3, 14.6 and 14.7 of Chapter 14 of course textbook.
- ▶ Section 16.5 of Chapter 16 of course textbook.
- ▶ Section 25.1 of Chapter 25 of course textbook.

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<sup>1</sup>Silberschatz, Korth and Sudarshan, *Database Systems Concepts*, 7<sup>th</sup> edition 

# Outline

Unit 1: **Overview and Workload Modelling**

Unit 2: Physical Database Design

Unit 3: Logical Schema and Query Tuning

## Database Tuning

The performance of a deployed information system may not satisfy requirements:

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An appreciation of application **workload** and resource bottlenecks is crucial to choosing parameters and to physical design.

### Workload Description

A *workload description* contains:

- ▶ the critical queries and their frequency,
- ▶ the critical updates and their frequency, and
- ▶ the desired *performance goal* for each query or update.

For each query:

- ▶ which relations are accessed,
- ▶ which attributes are retrieved, and
- ▶ which attributes occur in selection/join conditions, and how *selective* are query conditions.

For each update:

- ▶ the type of update and relations/attributes affected, and
- ▶ which attributes occur in selection/join conditions, and how *selective* are query conditions.

## Database Tuning (cont'd)

Performance goals:

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Core issues: *How can a DBA group*

1. *make queries run faster* (via data structures, clustering, replication),
2. *make updates run faster* (via locality of data items), and
3. *minimize congestion due to concurrency.*

# Outline

Unit 1: Overview and Workload Modelling

Unit 2: **Physical Database Design**

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# Physical Database Design

Recall the following from Module 10:

## Standard Physical Design

A *standard physical design* for a relational schema defines the following for each relation name  $R$ :

1. a **primary index** for  $R$  materializing its extension as a concrete data structure, and
2. zero or more **secondary indices** for  $R$  materializing *projections* of the primary index for  $R$  as concrete data structures.

A materialization of a relation adds an additional *record identifier* (RID) attribute to the relation.

Secondary indices usually include the RID attribute of the primary index in their projection of  $R$ .

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Primary and secondary indices are a variety of **materialized views**.

## Materialized Views

Possible syntax in SQL:<sup>†</sup>

```
CREATE VIEW <view-name> [AS] (<query>)  
MATERIALIZED [AS <data-structure-choice>]
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Most RDBMSs also support an alternative “CREATE INDEX ...” syntax.

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Example (from Module 10): *Relation name*

```
PROF/ (pnum, lname, dept)
```

*with the standard physical design consisting of:*

1. the Btree primary index on pnum called PROF-PRIMARY

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create view PROF-PRIMARY as (select * from PROF)  
materialized as BTREE with search key (pnum)
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create view PROF-PRIMARY as (select * from PROF)  
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```

2. and a Btree secondary index on lname called PROF-SECONDARY

```
create view PROF-SECONDARY  
as (select lname, rid from PROF-PRIMARY)  
materialized as BTREE with search key (lname)
```

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## On Choice of Data Structure

A Btree data structure is just one of a number of possibilities an RDBMS might allow for `<data-structure-choice>`:

- ▶ ISAM or VSAM file (static ordered indices),
- ▶ an unsorted heap file,
- ▶ a hash file,
- ▶ R trees (and other multidimensional data structures),
- ▶ an array (for memory resident indices),
- ▶ ...

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Records encoding tuples in an index can also be **co-clustered** with records encoding tuples for another index.

# On Co-Clustering Indices

## Co-Clustering

Two indices are *co-clustered* if the data pages for the indices are in common, that is, if records encoding tuples in the indices are interleaved within the same data pages.

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Co-clustering is useful when (1, N) relationships exist between the records for the two indices.

*Example: If a foreign key exists from an EMPLOYEE table to a DEPARTMENT table, each record for the primary index of EMPLOYEE might be co-clustered with its related DEPARTMENT record in the data pages of the DEPARTMENT primary index. Records for indices on other tables, e.g., PROJECTS and JOBS can in turn be respectively co-clustered with DEPARTMENT and EMPLOYEE.*

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Performance implications:

- ▶ Can speed up joins, particularly foreign-key joins; and
- ▶ Sequential scans of either relation become slower.

## On Search in Ordered Indices

Ordered indices allow more general subqueries to be evaluated efficiently.

### range queries

B-trees can also help evaluating a query with the form

```
select * from <table>
where <attribute> >= <constant>
```

If the search key of a Btree is on <attribute>, it can be used to efficiently locate tuples where <attribute> = <constant>. The remaining records that qualify are obtained by scanned the remaining data pages.

## On Search in Ordered Indices (cont'd)

### multi-attribute search keys

It is usually possible to create an index on several attributes of the same relation.

Example: *Assume relation name*

```
PROF/ (pnum, lname, fname, dept)
```

*with a secondary index now defined as follows:*

```
create view PROF-SECONDARY
as (select lname, fname, rid from PROF-PRIMARY)
materialized as BTREE with search key (lname, fname)
```

Note that the order in which attributes appear in the search key is important.

*In this index, records are organized first by lname. Tuples with a common surname are then organized by fname.*

## Using Multi-Attribute Indices

- ▶ *The PROF-SECONDARY index would be useful for these queries:*

```
select *  
from PROF  
where lname = 'Smith'
```

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select *  
from PROF  
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Exercise: *Why would PROF-SECONDARY be very useful in the second case.*

# Beyond Standard Physical Design

## join indices

In standard physical design, a secondary index is a materialized view on a primary index.

Some systems support a materialized view defined by a conjunctive query on more than one primary index.

Example: *A join index for the bibliography database:*

```
create view AUTHOR-BOOK as (  
  select author-rid, book-rid  
  form AUTHOR-PRIMARY, WROTE-PRIMARY, BOOK-PRIMARY  
  where aid = author and publication = pubid )  
materialized as heap file
```

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## arbitrary materialized views

Some systems support a materialized view defined by an arbitrary SQL query.

# Query Optimization Revisited

## View Based Query Rewriting

Given a query  $Q$  and a physical database design consisting of a set of arbitrary materialized views  $\{V_1, \dots, V_n\}$ , the *view based query rewriting problem* is to find the most efficient query plan  $P$  equivalent to  $Q$  that uses only views  $V_j$ .

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View based query rewriting is also a fundamental problem in *data integration* for which data sources are defined via the *local-as-view* paradigm.

## Theorem

View based query rewriting is undecidable, even when  $Q$  and each  $V_i$  is a conjunctive query and any plan  $P$  equivalent to  $Q$  is acceptable.

## Query Plan Tools

An RDBMS will usually have a tool to enable one to investigate what plan is chosen for a query, and what the estimated cost is.

For DB2, one can use `db2expln` and `dynexpln`.

Example: *Invoking these tools on the bibliography query*

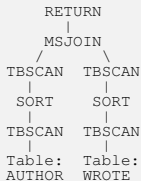
```
select name from author, wrote where aid = author
```

*generates the following:*

### (default physical design)

Estimated Cost = 50  
Estimated Cardinality = 120

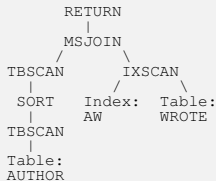
Optimizer Plan:



### (secondary index AW on author attribute of WROTE)

Estimated Cost = 25  
Estimated Cardinality = 120

Optimizer Plan:



## Index Advising Tools

An RDBMS will usually also have a tools to advise on a standard physical design given a workload description.

For DB2, one can use `db2advis`.

```
rees$ db2advis -d cs338
           -s "select name from author,wrote where aid=author"

Calculating initial cost (without recommended indexes) [25.390385]
Initial set of proposed indexes is ready.
Found maximum set of [2] recommended indexes
Cost of workload with all indexes included [0.364030] timerons
total disk space needed for initial set [  0.014] MB
total disk space constrained to         [ -1.000] MB
  2 indexes in current solution
 [ 25.3904] timerons (without indexes)
 [  0.3640] timerons (with current solution)
 [%98.57] improvement

Trying variations of the solution set.
--
-- execution finished at timestamp 2006-11-23-12.25.24.205770
--
-- LIST OF RECOMMENDED INDEXES
-- =====
-- index[1],      0.009MB
-- CREATE INDEX WIZ8 ON "DAVID"  "."AUTHOR" ("AID" ASC, "NAME" ASC) ;
-- index[2],      0.005MB
-- CREATE INDEX AW ON "DAVID"    "."WROTE" ("AUTHOR" ASC) ;
-- =====
Index Advisor tool is finished.
```

**NOTE:** `db2advis` can be given a more general workload.

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  2. it enables index-only plans.
- ▶ Choose indexes that benefit as many queries as possible.
- ▶ Each relation can have at most one primary index; therefore choose it wisely.
  1. Target important queries that would benefit the most.
    - ⇒ *range queries benefit the most from clustering*
    - ⇒ *join queries benefit the most from co-clustering*
  2. A multi-attribute index that enables an index-only plan does not benefit from being clustered.

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- ▶ retrieving *related data* in fewer operations.

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Techniques:

- ▶ choosing an alternative normalization or weaker normal form;
- ▶ co-clustering relations (if supported) and **denormalization**;
- ▶ **vertically and horizontally partitioning** data and materialized views; and
- ▶ avoiding concurrency hot-spots.

## Tuning the Conceptual Schema

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In general, (re) normalization:

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- ▶ speeds up simple queries (smaller tables),
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Consider merging relational schemata to intentionally increase redundancy.

In general, redundancy *increases update overhead* (due to change anomalies) but *decreases query overhead*.

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### vertical partitioning

Each partition has a subset of the original columns and all the original rows.

Typically used to separate frequently-used columns from each other (concurrency *hot-spots*) or from infrequently-used columns.

## Tuning Queries

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- ▶ It might be necessary to replace subqueries with joins.
- ▶ It might be necessary to replace correlated subqueries with uncorrelated subqueries.
- ▶ Use vendor-supplied tools to examine generated plans. Update and/or create statistics if poor plans are due to poor cost estimation.

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- ▶ Minimize lock contention and hot-spots.
  1. Delay updates as long as possible.
  2. Delay operations on hot-spots as long as possible.
  3. Shorten or split transactions as much as possible.
  4. Perform insertions/updates/deletions in batches.
  5. Consider lower isolation levels.

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  - ⇒ *and regarding query optimization*
- ▶ Modern systems provide many tools to assist.
- ▶ DBMS technology continues to be a very active area of research.