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Part VI

Query Optimization
We already saw that there may be more than one way to answer a given query.

Which one of the join operators should we pick? With which parameters (block size, buffer allocation, . . .)?

The task of finding the best execution plan is, in fact, the holy grail of any database implementation.
Plan Generation Process

- **Parser**: syntactical/semantical analysis
- **Rewriting**: optimizations independent of the current database state (table sizes, availability of indexes, etc.)
- **Optimizer**: optimizations that rely on a cost model and information about the current database state
- The resulting plan is then evaluated by the system’s execution engine.
Impact on Performance

Finding the right plan can dramatically impact performance.

SELECT L.L_PARTKEY, L.L_QUANTITY, L.L_EXTENDEDPRICE
FROM LINEITEM L, ORDERS O, CUSTOMER C
WHERE L.L_ORDERKEY = O.O_ORDERKEY
AND O.O_CUSTKEY = C.C_CUSTKEY
AND C.C_NAME = 'IBM Corp.'

In terms of execution times, these differences can easily mean “seconds versus days.”
Besides some analyses regarding the syntactical and semantical correctness of the input query, the parser creates an internal representation of the input query.

This representation still resembles the original query:

- Each SELECT-FROM-WHERE clause is translated into a query block.

```
SELECT proj-list
    FROM R_1, R_2, ..., R_n
WHERE predicate-list
GROUP BY groupby-list
HAVING having-list
```

- Each $R_i$ can be a base relation or another query block.
Finding the “Best” Execution Plan

The parser output is fed into a **rewrite engine** which, again, yields a tree of query blocks.

It is then the **optimizer’s** task to come up with the optimal **execution plan** for the given query.

Essentially, the optimizer

1. **enumerates** all possible execution plans,
2. determines the **quality** (cost) of each plan, then
3. **chooses** the best one as the final execution plan.

Before we can do so, we need to answer the question

- What is a “good” execution plan at all?
Cost Metrics

Database systems judge the quality of an execution plan based on a number of cost factors, e.g.,

- the number of disk I/Os required to evaluate the plan,
- the plan’s CPU cost,
- the overall response time observable by the user as well as the total execution time.

A cost-based optimizer tries to anticipate these costs and find the cheapest plan before actually running it.

- All of the above factors depend on one critical piece of information: the size of (intermediate) query results.
- Database systems, therefore, spend considerable effort into accurate result size estimates.
Result Size Estimation

Consider a query block corresponding to a simple SFW query \( Q \).

We can estimate the result size of \( Q \) based on

- the size of the input tables, \(|R_1|, \ldots, |R_n|\), and
- the selectivity \( \text{sel}(p) \) of the predicate \( \text{predicate-list} \):

\[
|Q| \approx |R_1| \cdot |R_2| \cdots |R_n| \cdot \text{sel}(\text{predicate-list})
\]
Table Cardinalities

If not coming from another query block, the size $|R|$ of an input table $R$ is available in the DBMS’s **system catalogs**.

*E.g.*, IBM DB2:

```
db2 => SELECT TABNAME, CARD, NPAGES
db2 (cont.) => FROM SYSCAT.TABLES
db2 (cont.) => WHERE TABSCHEMA = 'TPCH';
```

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TABNAME</th>
<th>CARD</th>
<th>NPAGES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ORDERS</td>
<td>1500000</td>
<td>44331</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CUSTOMER</td>
<td>150000</td>
<td>6747</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NATION</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>REGION</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PART</td>
<td>200000</td>
<td>7578</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SUPPLIER</td>
<td>10000</td>
<td>406</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PARTSUPP</td>
<td>800000</td>
<td>31679</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LINEITEM</td>
<td>6001215</td>
<td>207888</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

8 record(s) selected.
Estimating Selectivities

To estimate the selectivity of a predicate, we look at its structure.

\[ \text{column} = \text{value} \]

\[ \text{sel}(\cdot) = \begin{cases} 
\frac{1}{|I|} & \text{if there is an index } I \text{ on } \text{column} \\
\frac{1}{10} & \text{otherwise}
\end{cases} \]

\[ \text{column}_1 = \text{column}_2 \]

\[ \text{sel}(\cdot) = \begin{cases} 
\frac{1}{\max\{|I_1|,|I_2|\}} & \text{if there are indexes on } \text{both cols.} \\
\frac{1}{|I_k|} & \text{if there is an index only on col. } k \\
\frac{1}{10} & \text{otherwise}
\end{cases} \]

\[ p_1 \text{ AND } p_2 \]

\[ \text{sel}(\cdot) = \text{sel}(p_1) \cdot \text{sel}(p_2) \]

\[ p_1 \text{ OR } p_2 \]

\[ \text{sel}(\cdot) = \text{sel}(p_1) + \text{sel}(p_2) - \text{sel}(p_1) \cdot \text{sel}(p_2) \]
The selectivity rules we saw make a fair amount of assumptions:

- **uniform distribution** of data values within a column,
- **independence** between individual predicates.

Since these assumptions aren’t generally met, systems try to improve selectivity estimation by gathering **data statistics**.

- These statistics are collected offline and stored in the system catalog.
  - ![](ibm-db2-runstats-on-table) IBM DB2: RUNSTATS ON TABLE . . .
- The most popular type of statistics are **histograms**.
Example: Histograms in IBM DB2

```sql
SELECT SEQNO, COLVALUE, VALCOUNT
FROM SYSCAT.COLDIST
WHERE TABNAME = 'LINEITEM'
    AND COLNAME = 'L_EXTENDEDPRICE'
    AND TYPE = 'Q';
```

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SEQNO</th>
<th>COLVALUE</th>
<th>VALCOUNT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>+00000000000996.01</td>
<td>3001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>+00000000004513.26</td>
<td>315064</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>+00000000007367.60</td>
<td>633128</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>+0000000011861.82</td>
<td>948192</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>+0000000015921.28</td>
<td>1263256</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>+0000000019922.76</td>
<td>1578320</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>+0000000024103.20</td>
<td>1896384</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>+0000000027733.58</td>
<td>2211448</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>+0000000031961.80</td>
<td>2526512</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>+0000000035584.72</td>
<td>2841576</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>+0000000039772.92</td>
<td>3159640</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>+0000000043395.75</td>
<td>3474704</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>+0000000047013.98</td>
<td>3789768</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

SYSCAT.COLDIST also contains information like

- the $n$ most frequent values (and their frequency),
- the number of distinct values in each histogram bucket.

Histograms may even be manipulated **manually** to tweak the query optimizer.
Join Optimization

- We’ve now translated the query into a graph of **query blocks**.
  - Query blocks essentially are a **multi-way** Cartesian product with a number of selection predicates on top.
- We can estimate the **cost** of a given **execution plan**.
  - Use result size estimates in combination with the cost for individual join algorithms in the previous chapter.

We are now ready to **enumerate** all possible execution plans, e.g., all possible **3-way** join combinations for a query block.
How Many Such Combinations Are There?

- A join over \( n + 1 \) relations \( R_1, \ldots, R_{n+1} \) requires \( n \) binary joins.
- Its **root-level operator** joins sub-plans of \( k \) and \( n - k - 1 \) join operators \( (0 \leq k \leq n - 1) \):

  \[ \begin{align*}
  \text{k joins} & \quad \text{n - k - 1 joins} \\
  R_1, \ldots, R_k & \quad R_{k+1}, \ldots, R_{n+1}
  \end{align*} \]

- Let \( C_i \) be the **number of possibilities** to construct a binary tree of \( i \) inner nodes (join operators):

  \[
  C_n = \sum_{k=0}^{n-1} C_k \cdot C_{n-k-1} .
  \]
This recurrence relation is satisfied by **Catalan numbers**:

\[ C_n = \sum_{k=0}^{n-1} C_k \cdot C_{n-k-1} = \frac{(2n)!}{(n+1)!n!}, \]

describing the number of ordered binary trees with \( n + 1 \) leaves.

For **each** of these trees, we can **permute** the input relations \( R_1, \ldots, R_{n+1} \), leading to

\[ \frac{(2n)!}{(n+1)!n!} \cdot (n+1)! = \frac{(2n)!}{n!} \]

possibilities to evaluate an \( (n + 1) \)-way join.
The resulting search space is enormous:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>number of relations $n$</th>
<th>$C_{n-1}$</th>
<th>join trees</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>1,680</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>30,240</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>132</td>
<td>665,280</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>429</td>
<td>17,297,280</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>4,862</td>
<td>17,643,225,600</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

And we haven’t yet even considered the use of $k$ different join algorithms (yielding another factor of $k^{(n-1)}$)!
The traditional approach to master this search space is the use of dynamic programming.

Idea:

- Find the cheapest plan for an \( n \)-way join in \( n \) passes.
- In each pass \( k \), find the best plans for all \( k \)-relation sub-queries.
- **Construct** the plans in pass \( k \) from best \( i \)-relation and \((k - i)\)-relation sub-plans found in earlier passes \((1 \leq i < k)\).

Assumption:

- To find the optimal global plan, it is sufficient to only consider the optimal plans of its sub-queries.
Example: Four-Way Join

Pass 1 (best 1-relation plans)
Find the best access path to each of the $R_i$ individually (considers index scans, full table scans).

Pass 2 (best 2-relation plans)
For each pair of tables $R_i$ and $R_j$, determine the best order to join $R_i$ and $R_j$ ($R_i \Join R_j$ or $R_j \Join R_i$):

$$\text{optPlan}([R_i, R_j]) \leftarrow \text{best of } R_i \Join R_j \text{ and } R_j \Join R_i.$$ 
→ 12 plans to consider.

Pass 3 (best 3-relation plans)
For each triple of tables $R_i$, $R_j$, and $R_k$, determine the best three-table join plan, using sub-plans obtained so far:

$$\text{optPlan}([R_i, R_j, R_k]) \leftarrow \text{best of } R_i \Join \text{optPlan}([R_j, R_k]),$$
$$\text{optPlan}([R_j, R_k]) \Join R_i, \quad R_j \Join \text{optPlan}([R_i, R_k]), \ldots .$$
→ 24 plans to consider.
Pass 4 (best 4-relation plan)
For each set of \textbf{four} tables $R_i$, $R_j$, $R_k$, and $R_l$, determine the best four-table join plan, using sub-plans obtained so far:

$$\text{optPlan}([R_i, R_j, R_k, R_l]) \leftarrow \text{best of } R_i \bowtie \text{optPlan}([R_j, R_k, R_l]),$$
$$\text{optPlan}([R_j, R_k, R_l]) \bowtie R_i, \ R_j \bowtie \text{optPlan}([R_i, R_k, R_l]), \ldots ,$$
$$\text{optPlan}([R_i, R_j]) \bowtie \text{optPlan}([R_k, R_l]), \ldots .$$

$\rightarrow$ 14 plans to consider.

- Overall, we looked at only \textbf{50} (sub-)plans (instead of the possible 120 four-way join plans; $\uparrow$ slide 218).
- All decisions required the evaluation of \textbf{simple} sub-plans only (no need to re-evaluate the interior of $\text{optPlan}()$).
Dynamic Programming Algorithm

1 Function: find_join_tree_dp(q(R_1, ..., R_n))

2 for i = 1 to n do

3 \hspace{1em} optPlan({R_i}) \leftarrow access\_plans(R_i) ;

4 \hspace{1em} prune\_plans(optPlan({R_i})) ;

5 for i = 2 to n do

6 \hspace{2em} foreach S \subseteq \{R_1, ..., R_n\} such that |S| = i do

7 \hspace{3em} optPlan(S) \leftarrow \emptyset ;

8 \hspace{3em} foreach O \subset S do

9 \hspace{4em} optPlan(S) \leftarrow optPlan(S) \cup \\
10 \hspace{4em} \hspace{1em} possible\_joins(optPlan(O), optPlan(S \setminus O)) ;

11 \hspace{3em} \hspace{1em} prune\_plans(optPlan(S)) ;

12 return optPlan({R_1, ..., R_n}) ;

- possible\_joins(R, S) enumerates the possible joins between R and S (nested loops join, merge join, etc.).

- prune\_plans(set) discards all but the best plan from set.
find_join_tree_dp() draws its advantage from filtering plan candidates early in the process.

In our example on slide 220, pruning in Pass 2 reduced the search space by a factor of 2, and another factor of 6 in Pass 3.

Some heuristics can be used to prune even more plans:

- Try to avoid Cartesian products.
- Produce left-deep plans only (see next slides).

Such heuristics can be used as a handle to balance plan quality and optimizer runtime.

DB2 UDB: SET CURRENT QUERY OPTIMIZATION = n
The algorithm on slide 222 explores all possible shapes a join tree could take:

- **Left-deep**
- **Bushy** (everything else)
- **Right-deep**

Actual systems often prefer **left-deep** join trees.\(^1\)

- The **inner** relation is always a **base relation**.
- Allows the use of **index nested loops join**.
- Easier to implement in a **pipelined** fashion.

\(^1\)The seminal *System R* prototype, *e.g.*, considered only left-deep plans.
XPath evaluation over relationally encoded XML data

$n$-way self-join with a range predicate.

\[\text{exec. time [s]}\]

\[\text{path length}\]

\[\text{35 MB XML} \cdot \text{IBM DB2 9 SQL}\]

\[\text{http://www.pathfinder-xquery.org/}\]


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Join Order Makes a Difference

Contrast the execution plans for a 8- and a 9-step path.

left-deep join tree

- DB2’s optimizer essentially gave up in the face of 9+ joins.

bushy join tree
Dynamic programming still has **exponential** resource requirements:

- time complexity: $O(3^n)$
- space complexity: $O(2^n)$

This may still be too expensive

- for joins involving many relations ($\sim 10–20$ and more),
- for simple queries over well-indexed data (where the right plan choice should be easy to make).

The **greedy join enumeration** algorithm jumps into this gap.
Greedy Join Enumeration

Function: find_join_tree_greedy(q(R₁,...,Rₙ))

worklist ← ∅;
for i = 1 to n do
    worklist ← worklist ∪ best_access_plan(Rᵢ);
for i = n downto 2 do
    // worklist = {P₁,...,Pᵢ}
    find Pⱼ, Pₖ ∈ worklist and △... such that cost(Pⱼ △... Pₖ) is minimal;
    worklist ← worklist \ {Pⱼ, Pₖ} ∪ {(Pⱼ △... Pₖ)};
// worklist = {P₁}
return single plan left in worklist;

- In each iteration, choose the cheapest join that can be made over the remaining sub-plans.
- Observe that find_join_tree_greedy() operates similar to finding the optimum binary tree for Huffman coding.
Discussion

Greedy join enumeration:
- The greedy algorithm has $O(n^3)$ time complexity.
  - The loop has $O(n)$ iterations.
  - Each iteration looks at all remaining pairs of plans in worklist. An $O(n^2)$ task.

Other join enumeration techniques:
- **Randomized algorithms**: randomly rewrite the join tree one rewrite at a time; use hill-climbing or simulated annealing strategy to find optimal plan.
- **Genetic algorithms**: explore plan space by combining plans ("creating offspring") and altering some plans randomly ("mutations").
Consider the query

```sql
SELECT O.O_ORDERKEY, L.L_EXTENDEDPRICE
FROM ORDERS O, LINEITEM L
WHERE O.O_ORDERKEY = L.L_ORDERKEY
```

where table `ORDERS` is indexed with a **clustered index** `OK_IDX` on column `O_ORDERKEY`.

Possible table access plans are:

- **ORDERS**
  - **full table scan**: estimated I/Os: \( N_{ORDERS} \)
  - **index scan**: estimated I/Os: \( N_{OK_IDX} + N_{ORDERS} \).

- **LINEITEM**
  - **full table scan**: estimated I/Os: \( N_{LINEITEM} \).
Since the **full table scan** is the cheapest access method for both tables, our join algorithms will select them as the best 1-relation plans in Pass 1.$^{17}$

To **join** the two scan outputs, we now have the choices

- **nested loops join**,  
- **hash join**, or  
- **sort** both inputs, then use **merge join**.

Hash join or sort-merge join are probably the preferable candidates here, incurring a cost of $\approx 2(N_{ORDERS} + N_{LINEITEM})$.

$\rightarrow$ **overall cost**: $N_{ORDERS} + N_{LINEITEM} + 2(N_{ORDERS} + N_{LINEITEM})$.

$^{17}$Dynamic programming and the greedy algorithm happen to do the same in this example.
A Better Plan

It is easy to see, however, that there is a better way to evaluate the query:

1. Use an **index scan** to access `ORDERS`. This guarantees that the scan output is already in `ORDERKEY` order.

2. Then only **sort** `LINEITEM` and

3. join using **merge join**.

→ overall cost: \((N_{OK\_IDX} + N_{ORDERS}) + 2 \cdot N_{LINEITEM}\).

Although more expensive as a standalone table access plan, the use of the index pays off in the overall plan.
Interesting Orders

- The advantage of the index-based access to `ORDERS` is that it provides beneficial **physical properties**.
- Optimizers, therefore, keep track of such properties by **annotating** candidate plans.
- System R introduced the concept of **interesting orders**, determined by
  - `ORDER BY` or `GROUP BY` clauses in the input query, or
  - join attributes of subsequent joins (merge join).
- In `prune_plans()`, retain
  - the cheapest “unordered” plan and
  - the cheapest plan for each interesting order.
Join optimization essentially takes a set of relations and a set of join predicates to find the best join order.

By rewriting query graphs beforehand, we can improve the effectiveness of this procedure.

The query rewriter applies (heuristic) rules, without looking into the actual database state (no information about cardinalities, indexes, etc.). In particular, it

- rewrites predicates and
- unnests queries.
Predicate Simplification

Example: rewrite

```
SELECT *  
FROM LINEITEM L  
WHERE L.L_TAX * 100 < 5
```

into

```
SELECT *  
FROM LINEITEM L  
WHERE L.L_TAX < 0.05
```

Predicate simplification may enable the use of **indexes** and simplify the detection of opportunities for join algorithms.
Additional Join Predicates

Implicit join predicates as in

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{SELECT} & \quad * \\
\text{FROM} & \quad A, B, C \\
\text{WHERE} & \quad A.a = B.b \text{ AND } B.b = C.c
\end{align*}
\]

can be turned into explicit ones:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{SELECT} & \quad * \\
\text{FROM} & \quad A, B, C \\
\text{WHERE} & \quad A.a = B.b \text{ AND } B.b = C.c \\
\text{AND} & \quad A.a = C.c
\end{align*}
\]

This enables plans like

\[
(A \bowtie C) \bowtie B
\]

\((A \bowtie C)\) would have been a Cartesian product before.)
Nested Queries

SQL provides a number of ways to write nested queries.

- **Uncorrelated** sub-query:

```
SELECT *
FROM ORDERS O
WHERE O_CUSTKEY IN (SELECT C_CUSTKEY
                      FROM CUSTOMER
                      WHERE C_NAME = 'IBM Corp.' )
```

- **Correlated** sub-query:

```
SELECT *
FROM ORDERS O
WHERE O.O_CUSTKEY IN
  (SELECT C.C_CUSTKEY
   FROM CUSTOMER C
   WHERE C.C_ACCTBAL < O.O_TOTALPRICE)
```
Taking query nesting literally might be **expensive**.

An uncorrelated query, *e.g.*, need not be re-evaluated for every tuple in the outer query.

Oftentimes, sub-queries are only used as a syntactical way to express a **join** (or a semi-join).

The query rewriter tries to detect such situations and **make the join explicit**.

This way, the sub-query can become part of the regular **join order optimization**.

Summary

Query Parser
Translates input query into (SFW-like) query blocks.

Rewriter
Logical (database state-independent) optimizations; predicate simplification; query unnesting.

(Join) Optimization
Find “best” query execution plan based on a cost model (considering I/O cost, CPU cost, ...); data statistics (histograms); dynamic programming, greedy join enumeration; physical plan properties (interesting orders).

Database optimizers still are true pieces of art...
“Picasso” Plan Diagrams

Download Picasso at