Lecture 03: Layering, Naming, and Filesystem Design

- Just like RAM, hard drives provide us with some contiguous space that we can store information in.
- Information in RAM is *byte-addressable*: even if you’re only trying to store a boolean (1 bit), you need to read an entire byte (8 bits) to retrieve that boolean from memory, and if you want to flip the boolean, you need to write the entire byte back to memory.
- A similar concept exists in the world of hard drives. Hard drives are divided into *sectors* (we’ll assume 512 bytes), and are *sector-addressable*: you must read or write entire sectors, even if you’re only interested in 32 bytes within a sector.
- Sectors are often 512 bytes in size, but it’s not required. The size is determined by the physical drive and might be 1024 or 2048 bytes, or even some larger power of two if the drive is optimized to store a small number of large files (e.g. high definition videos for youtube.com)
- Conceptually, a hard drive might be viewed like this:

```
sector 0       sector 1       sector 2       sector 3       sector 4       sector 5       sector 6
bytes 0-511    bytes 512-1023 bytes 1024-1535 bytes 1536-2047 bytes 2048-2559 bytes 2560-3071 bytes 3072-3583
```

Thanks to Ryan Eberhardt for the illustrations and the text used in these slides.
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- The drive itself exports an API—a hardware API—that allows us to read a sector into main memory, or update an entire sector with a new payload.
- In the interest of simplicity, speed, and reliability, the API is intentionally small, and might export a hardware equivalent of the C++ class presented right below.

```cpp
class Drive {
public:
  size_t getNumSectors() const;
  void readSector(size_t num, unsigned char data[])
       const;
  void writeSector(size_t num, const unsigned char data[]);
};
```

- This is what the hardware presents us with, and this small amount is all you really need to know in order to start designing basic filesystems. As filesystem designers, we need to figure out a way to take this primitive system and use it to store a user’s files.
Throughout the lecture, you may hear me use the term **block** instead of **sector**.

- Sectors are the physical storage units on the hard drive.
- The filesystem, however, generally frames its operations in terms of **blocks** (which are each comprised of one or more sectors).
- If the filesystem goes with a block size of 1024, then when it accesses the filesystem, it will only read or write from the disk in 1024-byte chunks. Reading one block—which can be thought of as a software abstraction over sectors—would be framed in terms of two neighboring sector reads.
- If the block abstraction defines the block size to be the same as the sector size (as the Unix v6 filesystem discussed in the textbook does), then the terms blocks and sectors can be used interchangeably (and the rest of this slide deck will do precisely that).
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- The diagram below shows how raw hardware could be leveraged to support filesystems as we're familiar with them. There's a lot going on in the diagram below, so we'll use the next several slides to dissect it and let you know what's going on.
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- Filesystem metadata
  - The first block is the boot block, which typically contains information about the hard drive itself. It's so named because its contents are generally tapped when booting—i.e. restarting—the operating system.
  - The second block is the superblock, which contains information about the filesystem imposing itself onto the hardware.
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- Filesystem metadata, continued
  - The rest of the metadata region stores the inode table, which at the highest level stores information about each file stored somewhere within the filesystem.
  - The diagram below makes the metadata region look much larger than it really is. In practice, at most 10% of the entire drive is set aside for metadata storage. The rest is used to store file payload.
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- File contents
  - File payloads are stored in quantums of 512 bytes (or whatever the block size is).
  - When a file isn't a multiple of 512 bytes, then the final block is a partial. The portion of that final block that contains meaningful payload is easily determined from the file size.
  - The diagram below includes illustrations for a 32 byte and a 1028 (or $2 \times 512 + 4$) byte file, so each enlists some block to store a partial.
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- The inode
  - We need to track which blocks are used to store the payload of a file.
    - Blocks 1025, 1027, and 1028 are part of the same file, but you only know because they're the same color in the diagram.
  - **inodes** are 32-byte data structures used to store meta-information about a single file. Stored within an inode are items like file owner, file permissions, creation times, and, most important for our purposes, file type, file size, and the sequence of blocks enlisted to store payload.
The inode, continued

- Look at the contents of inode 2, outlined in green.
- The file size is 1028 bytes. That means we need three blocks to store the payload. The first two will be saturated with meaningful payload, and the third will only store 1028 % 512, or 4, meaningful payload bytes.
- The block numbers are listed as 1027, 1028, and 1025, in that order. Bytes 0-511 reside within block 1027, bytes 512-1023 within block 1028, and bytes 1024-1027 at the front of block 1025.
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- The inode, continued
  - The blocks used to store payload are not necessarily contiguous or in sorted order. You see exactly this scenario with file linked to inode 2. Perhaps the file was originally 1024 bytes, block 1025 was freed when another file was deleted, and then the first file was edited to include four more bytes of payload and then saved.
  - Some file systems, particularly those with large block sizes, might work to make use of the 508 bytes of block 1025 that aren't being used. Most, however, don't bother.
The inode, continued

- A file's inodes tell us where we'll find its payload, but the inode also has to be stored on the drive as well.
- A series of blocks comprise the inode table, which in our diagram stretches from block 2 through block 2013.
- Because inodes are small—only 32 bytes—each block within the inode table can store 16 inodes side by side, like the books of a 16-volume encyclopedia in a single bookshelf.
The inode, continued

- If we needed to remember the inode number of every file on our system, we'd be sad.
- We rely on filenames and a hierarchy of named directories to organize our files, and we prefer those names—e.g. `/usr/class/cs110/WWW/index.html`—to seemingly magic numbers that incidentally identify where the corresponding inodes sit in the inode table.
The inode, continued

- We could wedge a filename field inside each inode. But that won't work, for two reasons.
  - Inodes are small, but filenames are long. My Assignment 1 solution resides in a file named `/usr/class/cs110/staff/master_repos/assign1/imdb.cc`. At 51 characters, the name wouldn't fit in an inode even if the inode stored nothing else.
  - Linearly searching an inode table for a named file would be unacceptably slow. My own laptop has about two million files, so the inode table is at least that big, probably much bigger.
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- Introducing the directory file type
  - The solution is to introduce **directory** as a new file type. You may be surprised to find that this requires almost no changes to our existing scheme; we can layer directories on top of the file abstraction we already have. In almost all filesystems, directories are just files, the same as any other file (with the exception that they are marked as directories by the file type field in the inode).
  - The file payload is a series of 16-byte slivers that form a table mapping names to inode numbers.
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- Introducing the directory file type, continued
  - Have a look at the contents of block 1024, i.e. the contents of file with inumber 1, in the diagram below. This directory contains two files, so its total file size is 32; the first 16 bytes form the first row of the table (14 bytes for the filename, 2 for the inumber), and the second 16 bytes form the second row of the table. When we are looking for a file in the directory, we search this table for the corresponding inumber.
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- Introducing the directory file type, continued
  - What does the file lookup process look like, then? Consider a file at `/usr/class/cs110/example.txt`. First, we find the inode for the file `/` (which always has inumber 1). We search inode 1's payload for the token `usr` and its companion inumber. Let's say it's at inode 5. Then, we get inode 5's contents and search for the token `class` in the same way. From there, we look up the token `cs110` and then `example.txt`. 
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- What about large files?
  - In the Unix V6 filesystem, inodes can only store a maximum of 8 block numbers. This presumably limits the total file size to $8 \times 512 = 4096$ bytes. That's farcically small.
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- What about large files? We have a solution!
  - To resolve this problem, we use a scheme called **indirect addressing**. Normally, the inode stores block numbers that directly identify payload blocks.
    - As an example, let's say the file is stored across blocks 2001-2008. The inode will store the numbers 2001-2008. We want to append to the file, but the inode can't store any more block numbers.
    - Instead, let's allocate a single block—let's say this is block 2050—and let's store the numbers 2001-2009 **in that block**. Then, we update the inode to store **only** block number 2050, and we set a flag specifying that we're using this indirect addressing scheme.
    - When we want to get the contents of the file, we check the inode and see this flag is set. We get the first block number, read that block, and then read the **actual** block numbers (storing file payload) from that block.
    - This is known as singly-indirect addressing. We can store up to 8 singly indirect block numbers in an inode, and each of those blocks can store $\frac{512}{2} = 256$ block numbers.
    - This increases the maximum file size to $8 \times 256 \times 512 = 1,048,576$ bytes = 1 MB
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- What about large files? We have a better solution!
  - That's still not that big. To make the max file size even bigger, Unix V6 uses the 8th block number of the inode to store a **doubly indirect** block number. In the inode, the first 7 block numbers store to singly indirect block numbers, but the last block number identifies to a block which itself stores singly-indirect block numbers.
  - The total number of singly indirect block numbers we can have is $7 + 256 = 263$, so the maximum file size is $263 \times 256 \times 512 = 34,471,936$ bytes = 34MB.
  - That's still not very large by today's standards, but remember all of the details here refer to a file system design from 1975, when file system demands were presumably lighter than they are today.