Distributed computing deals with all forms of computing, information access, and information exchange across multiple processing platforms connected by computer networks. Design of distributed computing systems is a complex task. It requires a solid understanding of the design issues and an in-depth understanding of the theoretical and practical aspects of their solutions. This comprehensive textbook covers the fundamental principles and models underlying the theory, algorithms, and systems aspects of distributed computing.

Broad and detailed coverage of the theory is balanced with practical systems-related problems such as mutual exclusion, deadlock detection, authentication, and failure recovery. Algorithms are carefully selected, lucidly presented, and described without complex proofs. Simple explanations and illustrations are used to elucidate the algorithms. Emerging topics of significant impact, such as peer-to-peer networks and network security, are also covered.

With state-of-the-art algorithms, numerous illustrations, examples, and homework problems, this textbook is invaluable for advanced undergraduate and graduate students of electrical and computer engineering and computer science. Practitioners in data networking and sensor networks will also find this a valuable resource.

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Distributed Computing
Principles, Algorithms, and Systems

Ajay D. Kshemkalyani
University of Illinois at Chicago, Chicago

and

Mukesh Singhal
University of Kentucky, Lexington
To my father Shri Digambar and
my mother Shrimati Vimala.

Ajay D. Kshemkalyani

To my mother Chandra Prabha Singhal,
my father Brij Mohan Singhal, and my
daughters Meenakshi, Malvika,
and Priyanka.

Mukesh Singhal
# Contents

**Preface**  
page xv

1 **Introduction**  
1.1 Definition  
1  
1.2 Relation to computer system components  
2  
1.3 Motivation  
3  
1.4 Relation to parallel multiprocessor/multicomputer systems  
5  
1.5 Message-passing systems versus shared memory systems  
13  
1.6 Primitives for distributed communication  
14  
1.7 Synchronous versus asynchronous executions  
19  
1.8 Design issues and challenges  
22  
1.9 Selection and coverage of topics  
33  
1.10 Chapter summary  
34  
1.11 Exercises  
35  
1.12 Notes on references  
36  
References  
37

2 **A model of distributed computations**  
39  
2.1 A distributed program  
39  
2.2 A model of distributed executions  
40  
2.3 Models of communication networks  
42  
2.4 Global state of a distributed system  
43  
2.5 Cuts of a distributed computation  
45  
2.6 Past and future cones of an event  
46  
2.7 Models of process communications  
47  
2.8 Chapter summary  
48  
2.9 Exercises  
48  
2.10 Notes on references  
48  
References  
49
3 Logical time
3.1 Introduction 50
3.2 A framework for a system of logical clocks 52
3.3 Scalar time 53
3.4 Vector time 55
3.5 Efficient implementations of vector clocks 59
3.6 Jard–Jourdan’s adaptive technique 65
3.7 Matrix time 68
3.8 Virtual time 69
3.9 Physical clock synchronization: NTP 78
3.10 Chapter summary 81
3.11 Exercises 84
3.12 Notes on references 84
References 84

4 Global state and snapshot recording algorithms
4.1 Introduction 87
4.2 System model and definitions 90
4.3 Snapshot algorithms for FIFO channels 93
4.4 Variations of the Chandy–Lamport algorithm 97
4.5 Snapshot algorithms for non-FIFO channels 101
4.6 Snapshots in a causal delivery system 106
4.7 Monitoring global state 109
4.8 Necessary and sufficient conditions for consistent global snapshots 110
4.9 Finding consistent global snapshots in a distributed computation 114
4.10 Chapter summary 121
4.11 Exercises 122
4.12 Notes on references 122
References 123

5 Terminology and basic algorithms
5.1 Topology abstraction and overlays 126
5.2 Classifications and basic concepts 128
5.3 Complexity measures and metrics 135
5.4 Program structure 137
5.5 Elementary graph algorithms 138
5.6 Synchronizers 163
5.7 Maximal independent set (MIS) 169
5.8 Connected dominating set 171
5.9 Compact routing tables 172
5.10 Leader election 174
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ix</th>
<th>Contents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5.11</td>
<td>Challenges in designing distributed graph algorithms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.12</td>
<td>Object replication problems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.13</td>
<td>Chapter summary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.14</td>
<td>Exercises</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.15</td>
<td>Notes on references</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>References</td>
<td>185</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>References</td>
<td>186</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| 6 | Message ordering and group communication | 189 |
| 6.1 | Message ordering paradigms | 190 |
| 6.2 | Asynchronous execution with synchronous communication | 195 |
| 6.3 | Synchronous program order on an asynchronous system | 200 |
| 6.4 | Group communication | 205 |
| 6.5 | Causal order (CO) | 206 |
| 6.6 | Total order | 215 |
| 6.7 | A nomenclature for multicast | 220 |
| 6.8 | Propagation trees for multicast | 221 |
| 6.9 | Classification of application-level multicast algorithms | 225 |
| 6.10 | Semantics of fault-tolerant group communication | 228 |
| 6.11 | Distributed multicast algorithms at the network layer | 230 |
| 6.12 | Chapter summary | 236 |
| 6.13 | Exercises | 236 |
| 6.14 | Notes on references |
| References | 238 |
| References | 239 |

| 7 | Termination detection | 241 |
| 7.1 | Introduction | 241 |
| 7.2 | System model of a distributed computation | 242 |
| 7.3 | Termination detection using distributed snapshots | 243 |
| 7.4 | Termination detection by weight throwing | 245 |
| 7.5 | A spanning-tree-based termination detection algorithm | 247 |
| 7.6 | Message-optimal termination detection | 253 |
| 7.7 | Termination detection in a very general distributed computing model | 257 |
| 7.8 | Termination detection in the atomic computation model | 263 |
| 7.9 | Termination detection in a faulty distributed system | 272 |
| 7.10 | Chapter summary | 279 |
| 7.11 | Exercises | 279 |
| 7.12 | Notes on references |
| References | 280 |
| References | 280 |

| 8 | Reasoning with knowledge | 282 |
| 8.1 | The muddy children puzzle | 282 |
| 8.2 | Logic of knowledge | 283 |
## Contents

8.3 Knowledge in synchronous systems 289  
8.4 Knowledge in asynchronous systems 290  
8.5 Knowledge transfer 298  
8.6 Knowledge and clocks 300  
8.7 Chapter summary 301  
8.8 Exercises 302  
8.9 Notes on references 303  
References 303

9 Distributed mutual exclusion algorithms 305  
9.1 Introduction 305  
9.2 Preliminaries 306  
9.3 Lamport’s algorithm 309  
9.4 Ricart–Agrawala algorithm 312  
9.5 Singhal’s dynamic information-structure algorithm 315  
9.6 Lodha and Kshemkalyani’s fair mutual exclusion algorithm 321  
9.7 Quorum-based mutual exclusion algorithms 327  
9.8 Maekawa’s algorithm 328  
9.9 Agarwal–El Abbadi quorum-based algorithm 331  
9.10 Token-based algorithms 336  
9.11 Suzuki–Kasami’s broadcast algorithm 336  
9.12 Raymond’s tree-based algorithm 339  
9.13 Chapter summary 348  
9.14 Exercises 348  
9.15 Notes on references 349  
References 350

10 Deadlock detection in distributed systems 352  
10.1 Introduction 352  
10.2 System model 352  
10.3 Preliminaries 353  
10.4 Models of deadlocks 355  
10.5 Knapp’s classification of distributed deadlock detection algorithms 358  
10.6 Mitchell and Merritt’s algorithm for the single-resource model 360  
10.7 Chandy–Misra–Haas algorithm for the AND model 362  
10.8 Chandy–Misra–Haas algorithm for the OR model 364  
10.9 Kshemkalyani–Singhal algorithm for the $P$-out-of-$Q$ model 365  
10.10 Chapter summary 374  
10.11 Exercises 375  
10.12 Notes on references 375  
References 376
## Contents

### 11 Global predicate detection

11.1 Stable and unstable predicates 379
11.2 Modalities on predicates 382
11.3 Centralized algorithm for relational predicates 384
11.4 Conjunctive predicates 388
11.5 Distributed algorithms for conjunctive predicates 395
11.6 Further classification of predicates 404
11.7 Chapter summary 405
11.8 Exercises 406
11.9 Notes on references 407
References 408

### 12 Distributed shared memory

12.1 Abstraction and advantages 410
12.2 Memory consistency models 413
12.3 Shared memory mutual exclusion 427
12.4 Wait-freedom 434
12.5 Register hierarchy and wait-free simulations 434
12.6 Wait-free atomic snapshots of shared objects 447
12.7 Chapter summary 451
12.8 Exercises 452
12.9 Notes on references 453
References 454

### 13 Checkpointing and rollback recovery

13.1 Introduction 456
13.2 Background and definitions 457
13.3 Issues in failure recovery 462
13.4 Checkpoint-based recovery 464
13.5 Log-based rollback recovery 470
13.6 Koo–Toueg coordinated checkpointing algorithm 476
13.7 Juang–Venkatesan algorithm for asynchronous checkpointing and recovery 478
13.8 Manivannan–Singhal quasi-synchronous checkpointing algorithm 483
13.9 Peterson–Kearns algorithm based on vector time 492
13.10 Helary–Mostefaoui–Netzer–Raynal communication-induced protocol 499
13.11 Chapter summary 505
13.12 Exercises 506
13.13 Notes on references 506
References 507
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>14</th>
<th>Consensus and agreement algorithms</th>
<th>510</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>14.1</td>
<td>Problem definition</td>
<td>510</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14.2</td>
<td>Overview of results</td>
<td>514</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14.3</td>
<td>Agreement in a failure-free system (synchronous or asynchronous)</td>
<td>515</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14.4</td>
<td>Agreement in (message-passing) synchronous systems with failures</td>
<td>516</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14.5</td>
<td>Agreement in asynchronous message-passing systems with failures</td>
<td>529</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14.6</td>
<td>Wait-free shared memory consensus in asynchronous systems</td>
<td>544</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14.7</td>
<td>Chapter summary</td>
<td>562</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14.8</td>
<td>Exercises</td>
<td>563</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14.9</td>
<td>Notes on references</td>
<td>564</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>References</td>
<td>565</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>15</th>
<th>Failure detectors</th>
<th>567</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>15.1</td>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>567</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15.2</td>
<td>Unreliable failure detectors</td>
<td>568</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15.3</td>
<td>The consensus problem</td>
<td>577</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15.4</td>
<td>Atomic broadcast</td>
<td>583</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15.5</td>
<td>A solution to atomic broadcast</td>
<td>584</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15.6</td>
<td>The weakest failure detectors to solve fundamental agreement problems</td>
<td>585</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15.7</td>
<td>An implementation of a failure detector</td>
<td>589</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15.8</td>
<td>An adaptive failure detection protocol</td>
<td>591</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15.9</td>
<td>Exercises</td>
<td>596</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15.10</td>
<td>Notes on references</td>
<td>596</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>References</td>
<td>596</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>16</th>
<th>Authentication in distributed systems</th>
<th>598</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>16.1</td>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>598</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16.2</td>
<td>Background and definitions</td>
<td>599</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16.3</td>
<td>Protocols based on symmetric cryptosystems</td>
<td>602</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16.4</td>
<td>Protocols based on asymmetric cryptosystems</td>
<td>615</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16.5</td>
<td>Password-based authentication</td>
<td>622</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16.6</td>
<td>Authentication protocol failures</td>
<td>625</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16.7</td>
<td>Chapter summary</td>
<td>626</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16.8</td>
<td>Exercises</td>
<td>627</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16.9</td>
<td>Notes on references</td>
<td>627</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>References</td>
<td>628</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>17</th>
<th>Self-stabilization</th>
<th>631</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>17.1</td>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>631</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17.2</td>
<td>System model</td>
<td>632</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Contents

17.3 Definition of self-stabilization 634
17.4 Issues in the design of self-stabilization algorithms 636
17.5 Methodologies for designing self-stabilizing systems 647
17.6 Communication protocols 649
17.7 Self-stabilizing distributed spanning trees 650
17.8 Self-stabilizing algorithms for spanning-tree construction 652
17.9 An anonymous self-stabilizing algorithm for 1-maximal independent set in trees 657
17.10 A probabilistic self-stabilizing leader election algorithm 660
17.11 The role of compilers in self-stabilization 662
17.12 Self-stabilization as a solution to fault tolerance 665
17.13 Factors preventing self-stabilization 667
17.14 Limitations of self-stabilization 668
17.15 Chapter summary 670
17.16 Exercises 670
17.17 Notes on references 671

References 671

18 Peer-to-peer computing and overlay graphs 677
18.1 Introduction 677
18.2 Data indexing and overlays 679
18.3 Unstructured overlays 681
18.4 Chord distributed hash table 688
18.5 Content addressable networks (CAN) 695
18.6 Tapestry 701
18.7 Some other challenges in P2P system design 708
18.8 Tradeoffs between table storage and route lengths 710
18.9 Graph structures of complex networks 712
18.10 Internet graphs 714
18.11 Generalized random graph networks 720
18.12 Small-world networks 720
18.13 Scale-free networks 721
18.14 Evolving networks 723
18.15 Chapter summary 727
18.16 Exercises 727
18.17 Notes on references 728

References 729

Index 731
Preface

Background

The field of distributed computing covers all aspects of computing and information access across multiple processing elements connected by any form of communication network, whether local or wide-area in the coverage. Since the advent of the Internet in the 1970s, there has been a steady growth of new applications requiring distributed processing. This has been enabled by advances in networking and hardware technology, the falling cost of hardware, and greater end-user awareness. These factors have contributed to making distributed computing a cost-effective, high-performance, and fault-tolerant reality. Around the turn of the millenium, there was an explosive growth in the expansion and efficiency of the Internet, which was matched by increased access to networked resources through the World Wide Web, all across the world. Coupled with an equally dramatic growth in the wireless and mobile networking areas, and the plummeting prices of bandwidth and storage devices, we are witnessing a rapid spurt in distributed applications and an accompanying interest in the field of distributed computing in universities, governments organizations, and private institutions.

Advances in hardware technology have suddenly made sensor networking a reality, and embedded and sensor networks are rapidly becoming an integral part of everyone’s life – from the home network with the interconnected gadgets to the automobile communicating by GPS (global positioning system), to the fully networked office with RFID monitoring. In the emerging global village, distributed computing will be the centerpiece of all computing and information access sub-disciplines within computer science. Clearly, this is a very important field. Moreover, this evolving field is characterized by a diverse range of challenges for which the solutions need to have foundations on solid principles.

The field of distributed computing is very important, and there is a huge demand for a good comprehensive book. This book comprehensively covers all important topics in great depth, combining this with a clarity of explanation.
and ease of understanding. The book will be particularly valuable to the academic community and the computer industry at large. Writing such a comprehensive book has been a Herculean task and there is a deep sense of satisfaction in knowing that we were able complete it and perform this service to the community.

Description, approach, and features

The book will focus on the fundamental principles and models underlying all aspects of distributed computing. It will address the principles underlying the theory, algorithms, and systems aspects of distributed computing. The manner of presentation of the algorithms is very clear, explaining the main ideas and the intuition with figures and simple explanations rather than getting entangled in intimidating notations and lengthy and hard-to-follow rigorous proofs of the algorithms. The selection of chapter themes is broad and comprehensive, and the book covers all important topics in depth. The selection of algorithms within each chapter has been done carefully to elucidate new and important techniques of algorithm design. Although the book focuses on foundational aspects and algorithms for distributed computing, it thoroughly addresses all practical systems-like problems (e.g., mutual exclusion, deadlock detection, termination detection, failure recovery, authentication, global state and time, etc.) by presenting the theory behind and algorithms for such problems. The book is written keeping in mind the impact of emerging topics such as peer-to-peer computing and network security on the foundational aspects of distributed computing.

Each chapter contains figures, examples, exercises, a summary, and references.

Readership

This book is aimed as a textbook for the following:

- Graduate students and Senior level undergraduate students in computer science and computer engineering.
- Graduate students in electrical engineering and mathematics. As wireless networks, peer-to-peer networks, and mobile computing continue to grow in importance, an increasing number of students from electrical engineering departments will also find this book necessary.
- Practitioners, systems designers/programmers, and consultants in industry and research laboratories will find the book a very useful reference because it contains state-of-the-art algorithms and principles to address various design issues in distributed systems, as well as the latest references.
Preface

Hard and soft prerequisites for the use of this book include the following:

- An undergraduate course in algorithms is required.
- Undergraduate courses in operating systems and computer networks would be useful.
- A reasonable familiarity with programming.

We have aimed for a very comprehensive book that will act as a single source for distributed computing models and algorithms. The book has both depth and breadth of coverage of topics, and is characterized by clear and easy explanations. None of the existing textbooks on distributed computing provides all of these features.

Acknowledgements

This book grew from the notes used in the graduate courses on distributed computing at the Ohio State University, the University of Illinois at Chicago, and at the University of Kentucky. We would like to thank the graduate students at these schools for their contributions to the book in many ways.

The book is based on the published research results of numerous researchers in the field. We have made all efforts to present the material in our own words and have given credit to the original sources of information. We would like to thank all the researchers whose work has been reported in this book. Finally, we would like to thank the staff of Cambridge University Press for providing us with excellent support in the publication of this book.

Access to resources

The following websites will be maintained for the book. Any errors and comments should be sent to ajayk@cs.uic.edu or singhal@cs.uky.edu. Further information about the book can be obtained from the authors’ web pages:

- www.cs.uic.edu/~ajayk/DCS-Book