COMP 3170 - Analysis of Algorithms & Data Structures

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Disjoint Sets and Union-Find Structures

CLRS 21.121.4

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Disjoint Sets

- Disjoint set is an abstract data type for maintaining a collection $S = \{S_1, S_2, \ldots, S_k\}$ of disjoint, non-empty sets.
  - Disjoint: there is no common element between any two sets (if $a$ is in $S_i$ it cannot be in $S_j$ where $i \neq j$).
  - Dynamic: sets can be modified by make-set and union operations
  - Each set is identified by a representative element of the set.

$$k = 4; \quad S_a = \{a, b, m, n\}, \quad S_c = \{c, g, h\}, \quad S_e = \{d, e, f\}, \quad S_q = \{q\}$$
Disjoint Sets Operations

- **makeSet(x):**
  - Create a new set \{x\} whose only element is x.
  - By property 1 above, x cannot be an element of any other set.
  - By default, x is the representative of the new set.

E.g., \text{makeSet(\{p\})}

\[
k = 4; \quad S_a = \{a, b, m, n\}, \quad S_c = \{c, g, h\}, \quad S_e = \{d, e, f\}, \quad S_q = \{q\}
\]

\[
S_p = \{p\}
\]
Disjoint Sets Operations

- **find(x)** (also called Find-Set(x)):
  - Return the representative element of the set containing x.

E.g., \( \text{find}(b) \rightarrow a \)
E.g., \( \text{find}(c) \rightarrow c \)

\[ k = 4; \quad S_a = \{a, b, m, n\}, \quad S_c = \{c, g, h\}, \quad S_e = \{d, e, f\}, \quad S_q = \{q\}, \]
Disjoint Sets Operations

- **union**(\(x, y\)):
  - Unite the sets containing \(x\) and \(y\).
  - Suppose set \(S_x\) contains \(x\) and set \(S_y\) contains \(y\).
  - \(S \leftarrow S \cup \{S_x \cup S_y\} - S_x - S_y\)
  - Assign a representative for \(x \cup y\).
  - \(\text{union}(x, y)\) is equivalent to \(\text{union}(\text{find}(x), \text{find}(y))\).

E.g., Union(\(b, d\)) \(\rightarrow\) merge \(S_a\) and \(S_e\).

\[
k = 4; \quad S_a = \{a, b, m, n\}, S_c = \{c, g, h\}, S_e = \{d, e, f\}, S_q = \{q\},
\]

\[
\rightarrow S_c = \{c, g, h\}, S_q = \{q\}, S_a = \{a, b, m, n, d, e, f\}
\]
Disjoint Sets Operations

- **makeSet(x):**
  - Create a new set \{x\} whose only element is x.
  - By default, x is the representative of the new set.

- **find(x) (also called Find-Set(x):**
  - Return the representative element of the set containing x.

- **union(x, y):**
  - Unite the sets containing x and y.
  - Assign a representative for x ∪ y.
  - union(x, y) is equivalent to union(find(x), find(y)).
Applications of Disjoint Sets

- Many applications in designing algorithms
- E.g., Kruskal’s minimum spanning tree
Kruskal’s MST algorithm

- Sort edges by their weights and process them one by one.
- If an edge $e$ does not form a cycle in MST, add it to MST.
  - Maintain MST’s connected component as disjoint sets of vertices
  - $e$ does not form a cycle iff its endpoints are in different components
Disjoint Sets Review

- **Disjoint set** is an abstract data type for maintaining a set of disjoint sets
  - `make-set(x)`: create a new set with a single item `x` (which is not in any of the existing sets).
  - `find(x)`: returns the representative item of the set that includes `x`.
  - `union(x,y)`: removes the sets in which `x` and `y` belong to and adds a new set which is the union of deleted sets

- Disjoint sets have many applications in design of algorithms (e.g., Kruskal’s MST algorithm)
Data Structures for Disjoint Sets

- Linked lists for disjoint sets:
  - Each set is stored as a linked-list.
  - The representative element is the first element in the list.
  - In a ‘set object’, store head/tail pointers to the first/last elements.
  - Each node stores a set pointer to the set object.
Linked lists for disjoint sets

makeSet(x):
- Create a list containing one node.
- takes $O(1)$
- $O(1)$ time

makeSet(q)
Linked lists for disjoint sets

- **find(x):**
  - follow the set-pointer to find the set object and get the representative element.
  - We assume we’re given a reference to \( x \).
  - It takes \( O(1) \) time

\[ \text{find}(h) \rightarrow a \]
Linked lists for disjoint sets

- union(x,y):
  - Append y’s list to the end of x’s list.
  - find(x) becomes the representative of the new set.
  - Use head pointer from x’s list and tail pointer from y’s list.
  - Requires updating the set pointer for each node in y’s list, i.e., \( \Theta(n) \) time per operation in the worst case (when y has size \( \Theta(n) \)).

What is the amortized cost of performing \( n - 1 \) union operations?

\[
\text{union}(p,h)
\]
Review of Amortized Analysis

- Amortized analysis considers the average cost per operation for a sequence of $m$ operations.
- In many data structures, there are many different sequences of operations
  - We often consider the **worst-case amortized time**, i.e., the average cost of an operation for the worst-case sequence
  - Sometimes people look at expected amortized time which considers the average cost for a random sequence (we do not talk about it in this course)
Linked lists for disjoint sets

- What is the amortized cost of performing \( n - 1 \) union operations?
- The following example is a worst-case sequence which provides a lower bound.
  - `makeSet(x_i)` for \( i \in \{1, 2 \ldots, n\}`
  - `union(x_i, x_{i-1})` for \( i \in \{n, n-1, \ldots, 2\}`, that is:
    - `union(x_n, x_{n-1})`: update 1 set-pointers
    - `union(x_{n-1}, x_{n-2})`: update 2 set-pointers
    - \( \ldots \)
    - `union(x_{n-i+1}, x_{n-i})`: update \( i \) set-pointers
    - \( \ldots \)
    - `union(x_2, x_1)`: updated \( n - 1 \) set-pointers
- Total set-pointer updates: \( 1 + 2 + 3 + \ldots + n - 1 \in \Omega(n^2) \).
  - Amortized cost of the update operation is \( \Omega(n) \) in the worstcase.
  - This is a worst-case amortized time, e.g., for a sequence of \( m \) operations formed by \( m \) make-sets, the amortized cost is constant.
- If we simply append the second list to the end of the first list, the (worst-case) amortized time for union is \( \Theta(n) \).
Review of Linked lists for Disjoint Set

- We want to maintain a set of disjoint sets so that make-set, find, and union operations can be performed efficiently.
  - make-set(x) creates a new set \{x\}.
  - find(x) returns the (representative item of) the set that x belongs to.
  - union(x,y) merges the sets that x, y belong to.

Disjoint set via linked lists: each set is represented by a linked list
- Each node has a set-pointer to the set object, which makes find(x) run in constant time.
- For union(x,y), we append one list to the end of another.
  - This requires updating all set pointers of the appended list.
- We saw in the last class that if we append the second list to the first one, there are worst-case scenarios such that even amortized cost of each operation is $\Theta(n)$. 
Linked lists & Union by Weight

- What if we append the smallest list to the end of the larger list?
- In the set object, in addition to head and tail pointers, maintain a **weight** field which indicates the number of items in that list (set).
  - Make-set and find are as before, i.e., they take constant time per operation.
  - For union, we compare the weights and append the smaller list to the end of the larger list.

```
S_1 = \{x, p\}
S_2 = \{a, h, c\}
S_3 = \{x, p, a, h, c\}
```

![Diagram of linked lists and set objects](image)
Consider a single node $u$ of the list. We count the number of times the set-pointer is updated for that node.

Each time the pointer of $u$ is updated, that means that the set of $u$ is merged with a larger set.

- The weight of the set of $u$ is at least doubled after the merge.

If there are $n$ items in all sets, the weight of each set is at most $n$.

- Each update for set-pointer of $u$ doubles the weight of its list, and this weight cannot be more than $n$
- Hence, there are at most $\lceil \log n \rceil$ set-pointer updates per item, i.e., a total of $O(n \log n)$ set-pointer updates.
Linked lists & Union by Weight

- There are at most $\lceil \log n \rceil$ set-pointer updates per item, i.e., a total of $O(n \log n)$ set-pointer updates.

- Ignoring the cost of set-pointer updates, the cost of union for other pointer updates and also find and make-set are constants $\rightarrow \Theta(m)$ cost for $m$ operation

- Union by Weight has a cost of $O(n \log n + m)$ for a sequence of $m$ operations on a universe of size $n$
  - The amortized cost per operation is $O(n \log n / m + 1) = O(\log n)$
  - Note that $m \geq n$ since we need $m$ operations to make a universe of size $n$.

- Union by weight (appending smaller list to the end of larger one) improves the amortized time complexity from $\Theta(n)$ to $O(\log n)$. 
Disjoint Set Forests

- A data structure for disjoint sets which is based on trees instead of lists.
  - Each set is stored as a rooted tree
  - Each node points to its parent
  - The root points to itself
  - The representative element is the root

\[ S_1 = \{x, p\} \quad S_2 = \{a, h, c, f\} \]
Disjoint Set Forests

- **MakeSet(x)** takes $O(1)$ time:
  - Create a new tree containing one node $x$
  - $\text{parent}(x) \rightarrow x$

- **Find(x):**
  - Follow parent pointers to the root and return it.
    - $y \leftarrow x$
    - while $y \neq \text{parent}(y)$
      - $y \leftarrow \text{parent}(y)$
      - return $y$
  - time proportional to the tree’s height

\[ S_1 = \{ x, p \} \quad S_2 = \{ a, h, c, f \} \]
Disjoint Set Forests

- **Union(x,y) (first approach):**
  - Set root of y’s tree to point to the root of x’s tree.
    - \( \text{root}_x \leftarrow \text{find}(x) \)
    - \( \text{root}_y \leftarrow \text{find}(y) \)
    - \( \text{parent} (\text{root}_y) \leftarrow \text{root}_x \).
  - Time is proportional to tree’s height

- Tree’s height can be \( \Theta(n) \) for a universe of size \( n \)
  - In the worst case, each operation takes \( \Theta(n) \).
Amortized cost of first approach

What is the amortized cost when performing \( m \) operations?

- If we simply make the second tree point to the first one, it takes \( \Theta(n) \) in the worst case:
- consider the following worst-case sequence of operations:
  - make-set(\( x_i \)) for \( i \in \{1, \ldots, n\} \)
  - union(\( x_i, x_1 \)) for \( i \in \{2, \ldots, n\} \).
- after the \( i \)'th union, set of \( x_1 \) is a tree of height \( i \).
- the total time for the \( 2n - 1 \) operations is \( \sum_{i=1}^{n-1} i = n(n - 1)/2 \), i.e., the amortized cost is \( \Theta(n) \).
- after forming this bad tree, the worst-case sequence of operations continues with \( m - 2n + 1 \) find(\( x \)) operation where \( x \) is the only leaf of the tree.

**Observation**

*Having the second tree point to the first one for union results in the worst-case trees of height \( n \) and amortized time of \( \Theta(n) \) for each operation.*
Reducing the Height of Trees

- Two strategies for bounding tree heights:
  - union by rank
  - path compression
Union by Rank

- Attempt to attach the shorter tree to the root of the taller one
  - Similar to union-by-weight on lists
- Maintain the rank as an upper bound for the height of each tree.
  - The rank increased when both trees have the same rank

```
root_x ← find(x); root_y ← find(y)
if rank(root_x) > rank(root_y)
    parent(root_y) ← root_x
else
    parent(root_x) ← root_y
if rank(root_x) = rank(root_y)
    rank(root_y) ← rank(root_y) + 1
```

\[
S_1 = \{x, p\} \quad S_2 = \{a, h, c, f\} \quad \{x, p, a, h, c, f\}
\]
Union by Rank

- If \( \text{rank}(x) = h \), the tree rooted at \( x \) has at least \( 2^h \) nodes.
  - use induction; for the base, we know when \( h = 0 \), the tree contains \( 1 = 2^0 \) nodes.
  - choose any \( h > 0 \) and consider the union operation in which the rank is increased from \( h - 1 \) to \( h \).
  - at the time of union, both trees had rank \( h - 1 \)
  - by induction hypothesis, they each included at least \( 2^{h-1} \) nodes.
  - then the resulting tree has at least \( 2 \cdot 2^{h-1} = 2^h \) nodes.
  - The number of nodes is at least \( 2^h \) since after the union, the number of nodes can be increased further.

- Since the number of nodes is at least \( 2^h \), the height of the trees is \( O(\log n) \)
  - Union, find operations when we use union by rank is \( O(\log n) \).
Path Compression

- A simple, effective add on to union by rank
  - Find(x) involves finding a path from x to the root of its tree
  - For each node on the path, updated its pointer to point directly to the root:
    
    ```
    if x ≠ parent(x)
    parent(x) ← find(parent(x))
    return parent(x)
    ```

- For each visited node, the additional work is updating one pointer.
  - Time complexity remains the same asymptotically, i.e., $O(\log n)$.

- For any $y$ that used to lie on the path from $x$ to the root, any subsequent call to $\text{find}(y)$ takes $O(1)$ time
  - The amortized time is significantly improved.
Disjoint set data structure

- Maintain a set of disjoint forests
  - Apply union-by rank after union operation (attach the tree with smaller rank to the one with higher rank)
  - Apply path compression after find operation (update the pointer of any node on the Find path to point to the root)
    - Note that the height might change after path compression; hence we use term rank as an upper bound for height

- The amortized time for performing any operation is $O(\alpha(n))$ where $\alpha(n)$ is a very, very, very slow growing function of $n$ similar to inverse Ackermann function.
  - For any practical reason, $\alpha(n) \leq 4$.
  - In practice (not in theory) you can support disjoint operations in constant time.
$\alpha(n)$ Description

- Let $f^{(i)}(n)$ denote $f(n)$ iteratively applied $i$ times to the initial value of $n$.

\[
    f^{(i)}(n) = \begin{cases} 
    n & \text{if } i = 0 \\
    f(f^{(i-1)}(n)) & \text{if } i > 0
    \end{cases}
\]

- E.g., if $f(n) = 2n$, then
  \[
  f^{(0)}(n) = n = 2^0 n, \\
  f^{(1)}(n) = f(f^{(0)}(n)) = 2(n) = 2^1 n, \\
  f^{(2)}(n) = f(f^{(1)}(n)) = 2(2^1 n) = 2^2 n, \\
  \ldots \\
  f^{(i)}(n) = f(f^{(i-1)}(n)) = 2(2^{i-1} n) = 2^i n,
  \]

- E.g., if $f(n) = 2^n$, then
  \[
  f^{(0)}(n) = n \\
  f^{(1)}(n) = f(f^{(0)}(n)) = f(n) = 2^n \\
  f^{(2)}(n) = f(f^{(1)}(n)) = f(2^n) = 2^{2^n} \\
  \ldots \\
  f^{i}(n) = f(f^{(i-1)}(n)) = 2^{2^{\ldots^{2^n}}} \} i \text{ times}
  \]
\( \alpha(n) \) Description (cntd.)

For any \( k \geq 0 \) and \( j \geq 1 \), let

\[
A_k(j) = \begin{cases} 
  j + 1 & \text{if } k = 0 \\
  A_{k-1}^{(i+1)}(j) & \text{if } k > 0
\end{cases}
\]

Function \( A_k(j) \) is strictly increasing in both \( j \) and \( k \)

- For \( j > 0 \), \( A_1(j) = 2j + 1 \).
- For \( j > 0 \), \( A_2(j) = 2^{j+1}(j + 1) - 1 \).
- \( A_3(1) = A_2^{(2)}(1) = A_2(A_2(1)) = A_2(7) = 2^8 \cdot 8 - 1 = 2^{11} - 1 = 2047 \)
- \( A_4(1) = A_3^{(2)}(1) = A_3(A_3(1)) = A_3(2047) = A_2^{(2048)}(2047) \gg \)
  \( A_2(2047) = 2^{2048}(2048) - 1 > 2^{2048} \gg 10^{80} \)
- \( A_4(1) \) is by far larger than the number of atoms in the universe.
\( \alpha(n) \) **Description (cntd.)**

- \( \alpha(n) \) is the inverse of \( A_k(n) \): \( \alpha(n) = \min\{k | A_k(1) \geq n\} \)
  - \( \alpha(n) \) is the lowest value of \( k \) for which \( A_k(1) \) is at least \( n \)

\[
\alpha(n) = \begin{cases} 
0 & \text{for } 0 \leq n \leq 2 \\
1 & \text{for } n = 3 \\
2 & \text{for } 4 \leq n \leq 7 \\
3 & \text{for } 8 \leq n \leq 2047 \\
4 & \text{for } 2048 \leq n \leq A_4(1) 
\end{cases}
\]

- For any practical purpose, \( \alpha(n) \leq 4 \).
- Theoretically, however, \( \alpha(n) \in \omega(1) \), i.e., for every constant \( c \), there is a very huge \( n \) such that \( \alpha(n) \geq c \).

- Recall that the worst-case amortized time for performing an operation (make-set, union, find) is \( \alpha(n) \).
  - This bound is tight, i.e., we cannot do better than \( \alpha(n) \).
- \( \alpha(n) \) is the smallest super-constant function that appears in algorithm analysis (there are smaller ones like \( \alpha(\alpha(n)) \) which don’t appear in analysis of practical algorithms).
Disjoint Set Summary

- Disjoint sets maintain a set of disjoint sets with support of make-set(x), find(x), and union(x,y).
- The right data structure for disjoint sets is a forest of trees (one tree per set).
  - In case of a union, apply union by rank
  - In case of a find, apply path compression
- The amortized cost per operation for this data structure is $\Theta(\alpha(n))$ which is very slowly growing
  - This is the best that is possible!