Overview and Paper 1

29 January 2015

For your term paper in this course, you'll compare two different database management systems. Because each system has their own strengths and weaknesses, you'll make the comparison with respect to a particular situation: you'll write the paper as if you were a consultant or employee for a company who has a particular data processing need and is trying to decide which system would be most appropriate for the task. Your audience for the paper will be someone with purchasing power at the company who can handle a certain amount of technical detail but is not necessarily up to speed on the ins and outs of database systems—so you'll have to explain the relevant pieces.

In the end, the final term paper will be around eight or nine pages (not counting references or diagrams), but the earlier writing assignments will be shorter, and you'll get feedback on them before folding them into the final product.

Paper 1

The first piece of this is to choose a task and write a brief description of the needs of that situation.

The task you pick may be hypothetical but should be specific. In particular, you will need to be clear about things like overall scale, number of users, number of sites, and frequency of queries and transactions in order to effectively compare your systems. I don't expect that you'll be writing about a real company (although it's cool if you have one in mind), but even so you should have a clear sense of the imaginary business or other group that is the "client" that you're doing the research for.

This paper should end up a bit over one page, maybe as much as two. The important thing is that there be enough detail about the scenario that you can actually perform a meaningful analysis later. It also should be realistic, and you should be able to document that—which means that there should be some citations as well.

A note on references and citation: This is a paper and as such you should follow the usual conventions with respect to citation. Many of your cites

will be to web pages, and that's ok, but they still need to be cited. When choosing references, evaluate them critically and be sure they're reputable and as primary as you can manage; Wikipedia may be a great place to look for ideas and start understanding things, but it is almost never an appropriate final resource to quote from or cite. (The same is true of encyclopædias in general, actually.)

This paper is due in two weeks. The version you turn in should be basically final (i.e. not "drafty"), but you will be able to incorporate suggestions and edits when you eventually fold this material in to the term paper.