

Database Security and Authorization

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1 Introduction to Database Security Issues

- Types of Security
 - Legal and ethical issues
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 - The need to identify multiple security levels

Introduction to Database Security Issues (2)

Threats to databases

- Loss of integrity
- Loss of availability
- Loss of confidentiality

To protect databases against these types of threats four kinds of countermeasures can be implemented : *access control, inference control, flow control, and encryption.*

Introduction to Database Security Issues (3)

A DBMS typically includes a database security and authorization subsystem that is responsible for ensuring the security portions of a database against unauthorized access.

Two types of database security mechanisms:

- Discretionary security mechanisms
- Mandatory security mechanisms

Introduction to Database Security Issues (4)

The security mechanism of a DBMS must include provisions for restricting access to the database as a whole; this function is called **access control** and is handled by creating user accounts and passwords to control login process by the DBMS.

Introduction to Database Security Issues (5)

The security problem associated with databases is that of controlling the access to a **statistical database**, which is used to provide statistical information or summaries of values based on various criteria.

The countermeasures to **statistical database security** problem is called **inference control** measures.

Introduction to Database Security Issues (6)

Another security is that of **flow control**, which prevents information from flowing in such a way that it reaches unauthorized users.

Channels that are pathways for information to flow implicitly in ways that violate the security policy of an organization are called **covert channels**.

Introduction to Database Security Issues (7)

A final security issue is **data encryption**, which is used to protect sensitive data (such as credit card numbers) that is being transmitted via some type communication network.

The data is **encoded** using some coding algorithm. An unauthorized user who access encoded data will have difficulty deciphering it, but authorized users are given decoding or decrypting algorithms (or keys) to decipher data.

1.2 Database Security and the DBA

The database administrator (DBA) is the central authority for managing a database system. The DBA's responsibilities include granting privileges to users who need to use the system and classifying users and data in accordance with the policy of the organization. The DBA has a **DBA account** in the DBMS, sometimes called a **system** or **superuser account**, which provides powerful capabilities :

1.2 Database Security and the DBA

1. *Account creation*
2. *Privilege granting*
3. *Privilege revocation*
4. *Security level assignment*

The DBA is responsible for the overall security of the database system.

Action 1 is access control, whereas 2 and 3 are discretionary and 4 is used to control mandatory authorization.

1.3 Access Protection, User Accounts, and Database Audits

Whenever a person or group of persons need to access a database system, the individual or group must first apply for a user account. The DBA will then create a new **account number** and **password** for the user if there is a legitimate need to access the database.

The user must **log in** to the DBMS by entering account number and password whenever database access is needed.

1.3 Access Protection, User Accounts, and Database Audits(2)

The database system must also keep track of all operations on the database that are applied by a certain user throughout each **login session**.

To keep a record of all updates applied to the database and of the particular user who applied each update, we can modify *system log*, which includes an entry for each operation applied to the database that may be required for recovery from a transaction failure or system crash.

If any tampering with the database is suspected, a **database audit** is performed, which consists of reviewing the log to examine all accesses and operations applied to the database during a certain time period.

A database log that is used mainly for security purposes is sometimes called an **audit trail**.

Discretionary Access Control Based on Granting and Revoking Privileges

The typical method of enforcing **discretionary access control** in a database system is based on the granting and revoking **privileges**.

2.1 Types of Discretionary Privileges

- The *account level*: At this level, the DBA specifies the particular privileges that each account holds independently of the relations in the database.
- The *relation (or table level)*: At this level, the DBA can control the privilege to access each individual relation or view in the database.

2.1 Types of Discretionary Privileges(2)

The privileges at the **account level** apply to the capabilities provided to the account itself and can include the CREATE SCHEMA or CREATE TABLE privilege, to create a schema or base relation; the CREATE VIEW privilege; the ALTER privilege, to apply schema changes such adding or removing attributes from relations; the DROP privilege, to delete relations or views; the MODIFY privilege, to insert, delete, or update tuples; and the SELECT privilege, to retrieve information from the database by using a SELECT query.

2.1 Types of Discretionary Privileges(3)

The second level of privileges applies to the **relation level**, whether they are base relations or virtual (view) relations.

The granting and revoking of privileges generally follow an authorization model for discretionary privileges known as the **access matrix model**, where the rows of a matrix M represents *subjects* (users, accounts, programs) and the columns represent *objects* (relations, records, columns, views, operations). Each position $M(i,j)$ in the matrix represents the types of privileges (read, write, update) that subject i holds on object j .

2.1 Types of Discretionary Privileges(4)

To control the granting and revoking of relation privileges, each relation R in a database is assigned an **owner account**, which is typically the account that was used when the relation was created in the first place. The owner of a relation is given *all* privileges on that relation. In SQL2, the DBA can assign an owner to a whole schema by creating the schema and associating the appropriate authorization identifier with that schema, using the `CREATE SCHEMA` command. The owner account holder can pass privileges on any of the owned relation to other users by **granting** privileges to their accounts.

2.1 Types of Discretionary Privileges(5)

In SQL the following types of privileges can be granted on each individual relation R:

- **SELECT** (retrieval or read) privilege on R: Gives the account retrieval privilege. In SQL this gives the account the privilege to use the **SELECT** statement to retrieve tuples from R.
- **MODIFY** privileges on R: This gives the account the capability to modify tuples of R. In SQL this privilege is further divided into **UPDATE**, **DELETE**, and **INSERT** privileges to apply the corresponding SQL command to R. In addition, both the **INSERT** and **UPDATE** privileges can specify that only certain attributes can be updated by the account.

2.1 Types of Discretionary Privileges(6)

- REFERENCES privilege on R: This gives the account the capability to reference relation R when specifying integrity constraints. The privilege can also be restricted to specific attributes of R.

Notice that to create a view, the account must have SELECT privilege on *all relations* involved in the view definition.

2.2 Specifying Privileges Using Views

The mechanism of **views** is an important discretionary authorization mechanism in its own right.

For example, if the owner *A* of a relation *R* wants another account *B* to be able to retrieve only some fields of *R*, then *A* can create a view *V* of *R* that includes only those attributes and then grant `SELECT` on *V* to *B*. The same applies to limiting *B* to retrieving only certain tuples of *R*; a view *V'* can be created by defining the view by means of a query that selects only those tuples from *R* that *A* wants to allow *B* to access.

2.3 Revoking Privileges

In some cases it is desirable to grant a privilege to a user temporarily.

For example, the owner of a relation may want to grant the `SELECT` privilege to a user for a specific task and then revoke that privilege once the task is completed. Hence, a mechanism for **revoking** privileges is needed. In SQL, a `REVOKE` command is included for the purpose of canceling privileges.

2.4 Propagation of Privileges using the GRANT OPTION

Whenever the owner A of a relation R grants a privilege on R to another account B, privilege can be given to B *with* or *without* the GRANT OPTION. If the GRANT OPTION is given, this means that B can also grant that privilege on R to other accounts. Suppose that B is given the GRANT OPTION by A and that B then grants the privilege on R to a third account C, also with GRANT OPTION. In this way, privileges on R can **propagate** to other accounts without the knowledge of the owner of R. If the owner account A now revokes the privilege granted to B, all the privileges that B propagated based on that privilege should automatically be revoked by the system.

2.5 An Example

Suppose that the DBA creates four accounts --A1, A2, A3, and A4-- and wants only A1 to be able to create base relations; then the DBA must issue the following GRANT command in SQL:

```
GRANT CREATETAB TO A1;
```

In SQL2 the same effect can be accomplished by having the DBA issue a CREATE SCHEMA command as follows:

```
CREATE SCHAMA EXAMPLE AUTHORIZATION A1;
```

2.5 An Example(2)

User account A1 can create tables under the schema called EXAMPLE.

Suppose that A1 creates the two base relations EMPLOYEE and DEPARTMENT; A1 is then **owner** of these two relations and hence *all the relation privileges* on each of them.

Suppose that A1 wants to grant A2 the privilege to insert and delete tuples in both of these relations, but A1 does not want A2 to be able to propagate these privileges to additional accounts:

GRANT INSERT, DELETE ON EMPLOYEE, DEPARTMENT TO A2;

2.5 An Example(3)

EMPLOYEE

NAME	SSN	BDATE	ADDRESS	SEX	SALARY	DNO
------	-----	-------	---------	-----	--------	-----

DEPARTMENT

DNUMBER	DNAME	MGRSSN
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2.5 An Example(4)

Suppose that A1 wants to allow A3 to retrieve information from either of the two tables and also to be able to propagate the SELECT privilege to other accounts.

A1 can issue the command:

```
GRANT SELECT ON EMPLOYEE, DEPARTMENT TO A3 WITH  
GRANT OPTION;
```

A3 can grant the SELECT privilege on the EMPLOYEE relation to A4 by issuing:

```
GRANT SELECT ON EMPLOYEE TO A4;
```

(Notice that A4 can not propagate the SELECT privilege because GRANT OPTION was not given to A4.)

2.5 An Example(5)

Suppose that A1 decides to revoke the SELECT privilege on the EMPLOYEE relation from A3; A1 can issue:

REVOKE SELECT ON EMPLOYEE FROM A3;

(The DBMS must now automatically revoke the SELECT privilege on EMPLOYEE from A4, too, because A3 granted that privilege to A4 and A3 does not have the privilege any more.)

2.5 An Example(6)

Suppose that A1 wants to give back to A3 a limited capability to SELECT from the EMPLOYEE relation and wants to allow A3 to be able to propagate the privilege. The limitation is to retrieve only the NAME, BDATE, and ADDRESS attributes and only for the tuples with DNO=5.

A1 then create the view:

```
CREATE VIEW A3EMPLOYEE AS
SELECT NAME, BDATE, ADDRESS
FROM EMPLOYEE
WHERE DNO = 5;
```

After the view is created, A1 can grant SELECT on the view A3EMPLOYEE to A3 as follows:

```
GRANT SELECT ON A3EMPLOYEE TO A3 WITH GRANT OPTION;
```

2.5 An Example(7)

Finally, suppose that A1 wants to allow A4 to update only the SALARY attribute of EMPLOYEE;

A1 can issue:

```
GRANT UPDATE ON EMPLOYEE (SALARY) TO A4;
```

(The UPDATE or INSERT privilege can specify particular attributes that may be updated or inserted in a relation. Other privileges (SELECT, DELETE) are not attribute specific.)

2.6 Specifying Limits on Propagation of Privileges

Techniques to limit the propagation of privileges have been developed, although they have not yet been implemented in most DBMSs and are not a part of SQL.

Limiting **horizontal propagation** to an integer number i means that an account B given the GRANT OPTION can grant the privilege to at most i other accounts.

Vertical propagation is more complicated; it limits the depth of the granting of privileges.

3 Mandatory Access Control and Role-Based Access Control for Multilevel Security

The discretionary access control techniques of granting and revoking privileges on relations has traditionally been the main security mechanism for relational database systems.

This is an all-or-nothing method: A user either has or does not have a certain privilege.

In many applications, and *additional security policy* is needed that classifies data and users based on security classes.

This approach as **mandatory access control**, would typically be *combined* with the discretionary access control mechanisms.

3 Mandatory Access Control and Role-Based Access Control for Multilevel Security(2)

Typical **security classes** are top secret (TS), secret (S), confidential (C), and unclassified (U), where TS is the highest level and U the lowest: $TS \geq S \geq C \geq U$

The commonly used model for multilevel security, known as the Bell-LaPadula model, classifies each **subject** (user, account, program) and **object** (relation, tuple, column, view, operation) into one of the security classifications, T, S, C, or U: **clearance** (classification) of a subject S as **class(S)** and to the **classification** of an object O as **class(O)**.

3 Mandatory Access Control and Role-Based Access Control for Multilevel Security(3)

Two restrictions are enforced on data access based on the subject/object classifications:

1. A subject S is not allowed read access to an object O unless $\text{class}(S) \geq \text{class}(O)$. This is known as the **simple security property**.
2. A subject S is not allowed to write an object O unless $\text{class}(S) \leq \text{class}(O)$. This known as the **star property** (or * property).

3 Mandatory Access Control and Role-Based Access Control for Multilevel Security(4)

To incorporate multilevel security notions into the relational database model, it is common to consider attribute values and tuples as data objects. Hence, each attribute A is associated with a **classification attribute** C in the schema, and each attribute value in a tuple is associated with a corresponding security classification. In addition, in some models, a **tuple classification** attribute TC is added to the relation attributes to provide a classification for each tuple as a whole. Hence, a **multilevel relation** schema R with n attributes would be represented as

$R(A_1, C_1, A_2, C_2, \dots, A_n, C_n, TC)$

where each C_i represents the classification attribute associated with attribute A_i .

3 Mandatory Access Control and Role-Based Access Control for Multilevel Security(5)

The value of the TC attribute in each tuple t – which is the *highest* of all attribute classification values within t – provides a general classification for the tuple itself, whereas each C_i provides a finer security classification for each attribute value within the tuple.

The **apparent key** of a multilevel relation is the set of attributes that would have formed the primary key in a regular(single-level) relation.

3 Mandatory Access Control and Role-Based Access Control for Multilevel Security(6)

A multilevel relation will appear to contain different data to subjects (users) with different clearance levels. In some cases, it is possible to store a single tuple in the relation at a higher classification level and produce the corresponding tuples at a lower-level classification through a process known as **filtering**.

In other cases, it is necessary to store two or more tuples at different classification levels with the same value for the *apparent key*. This leads to the concept of **polyinstantiation** where several tuples can have the same apparent key value but have different attribute values for users at different classification levels.

3 Mandatory Access Control and Role-Based Access Control for Multilevel Security(7)

In general, the **entity integrity** rule for multilevel relations states that all attributes that are members of the apparent key must not be null and must have the *same* security classification within each individual tuple.

In addition, all other attribute values in the tuple must have a security classification greater than or equal to that of the apparent key. This constraint ensures that a user can see the key if the user is permitted to see any part of the tuple at all.

3 Mandatory Access Control and Role-Based Access Control for Multilevel Security(8)

Other integrity rules, called **null integrity** and **interinstance integrity**, informally ensure that if a tuple value at some security level can be filtered (derived) from a higher-classified tuple, then it is sufficient to store the higher-classified tuple in the multilevel relation.

3.1 Comparing Discretionary Access Control and Mandatory Access Control

- Discretionary Access Control (DAC) policies are characterized by a high degree of flexibility, which makes them suitable for a large variety of application domains.
- The main drawback of DAC models is their vulnerability to malicious attacks, such as Trojan horses embedded in application programs.

3.1 Comparing Discretionary Access Control and Mandatory Access Control(2)

- By contrast, mandatory policies ensure a high degree of protection in a way, they prevent any illegal flow of information.
- Mandatory policies have the drawback of being too rigid and they are only applicable in limited environments.
- In many practical situations, discretionary policies are preferred because they offer a better trade-off between security and applicability.

3.2 Role-Based Access Control

Role-based access control (RBAC) emerged rapidly in the 1990s as a proven technology for managing and enforcing security in large-scale enterprisewide systems. Its basic notion is that permissions are associated with roles, and users are assigned to appropriate roles. Roles can be created using the `CREATE ROLE` and `DESTROY ROLE` commands. The `GRANT` and `REVOKE` commands discussed under DAC can then be used to assign and revoke privileges from roles.

3.2 Role-Based Access Control(2)

- RBAC appears to be a viable alternative to traditional discretionary and mandatory access controls; it ensures that only authorized users are given access to certain data or resources.
- Many DBMSs have allowed the concept of roles, where privileges can be assigned to roles.
- Role hierarchy in RBAC is a natural way of organizing roles to reflect the organization's lines of authority and responsibility.

3.2 Role-Based Access Control(3)

- Another important consideration in RBAC systems is the possible temporal constraints that may exist on roles, such as time and duration of role activations, and timed triggering of a role by an activation of another role.
- Using an RBAC model is highly desirable goal for addressing the key security requirements of Web-based applications.

In contrast, discretionary access control (DAC) and mandatory access control (MAC) models lack capabilities needed to support the security requirements emerging enterprises and Web-based applications.

3.3 Access Control Policies for E-Commerce and the Web

- **E-Commerce** environments require elaborate policies that go beyond traditional DBMSs.
 - In an e-commerce environment the resources to be protected are not only traditional data but also knowledge and experience.
 - The access control mechanism should be flexible enough to support a wide spectrum of heterogeneous protection objects.
- A related requirement is the support for content-based access-control.

3.3 Access Control Policies for E-Commerce and the Web(2)

- Another requirement is related to the heterogeneity of subjects, which requires access control policies based on user characteristics and qualifications.
 - A possible solution, to better take into account user profiles in the formulation of access control policies, is to support the notion of credentials. A **credential** is a set of properties concerning a user that are relevant for security purposes (for example, age, position within an organization).
 - It is believed that the XML language can play a key role in access control for e-commerce applications.

4 Introduction to Statistical Database Security

- Statistical databases are used mainly to produce statistics on various populations.
- The database may contain confidential data on individuals, which should be protected from user access.
- Users are permitted to retrieve statistical information on the populations, such as averages, sums, counts, maximums, minimums, and standard deviations.

4 Introduction to Statistical Database Security(2)

- A **population** is a set of tuples of a relation (table) that satisfy some selection condition.
- Statistical queries involve applying statistical functions to a population of tuples.

4 Introduction to Statistical Database Security(3)

For example, we may want to retrieve the number of individuals in a population or the average income in the population. However, statistical users are not allowed to retrieve individual data, such as the income of a specific person. Statistical database security techniques must prohibit the retrieval of individual data.

This can be achieved by prohibiting queries that retrieve attribute values and by allowing only queries that involve statistical aggregate functions such as COUNT, SUM, MIN, MAX, AVERAGE, and STANDARD DEVIATION. Such queries are sometimes called **statistical queries**.

4 Introduction to Statistical Database Security(4)

- It is DBMS's responsibility to ensure confidentiality of information about individuals, while still providing useful statistical summaries of data about those individuals to users.
- Provision of **privacy protection** of users in a statistical database is paramount.
- In some cases it is possible to **infer** the values of individual tuples from a sequence statistical queries. This is particularly true when the conditions result in a population consisting of a small number of tuples.

5 Introduction to Flow Control

- Flow control regulates the distribution or flow of information among accessible objects. A flow between object X and object Y occurs when a program reads values from X and writes values into Y.
- Flow controls check that information contained in some objects does not flow explicitly or implicitly into less protected objects.
- A flow policy specifies the channels along which information is allowed to move. The simplest flow policy specifies just two classes of information: confidential (C) and nonconfidential (N), and allows all flows except those from class C to class N.

5.1 Covert Channels

A covert channel allows a transfer of information that violates the security or the policy.

- A **covert channel** allows information to pass from a higher classification level to a lower classification level through improper means.

5.1 Covert Channels(2)

- Covert channels can be classified into two broad categories:
 - **storage channels** do not require any temporal synchronization, in that information is conveyed by accessing system information or what is otherwise inaccessible to the user.
 - in a **timing channel** the information is conveyed by the timing of events or processes.

Some security experts believe that one way to avoid covert channels is for programmers to not actually gain access to sensitive data that a program is supposed to process after the program has been put into operation.

6 Encryption and Public Key Infrastructures

- Encryption is a means of maintaining secure data in an insecure environment.
- Encryption consists of applying an **encryption algorithm** to data using some prespecified **encryption key**.
 - the resulting data has to be **decrypted** using a **decryption key** to recover the original data.

6.1 The Data and Advanced Encryption Standards

- The Data Encryption Standard (DES) is a system developed by the U.S. government for use by the general public. It has been widely accepted as a cryptographic standard both in the United States and abroad.
- DES can provide end-to-end encryption on the channel between the sender A and receiver B.

6.1 The Data and Advanced Encryption Standards(2)

- DES algorithm is a careful and complex combination of two of the fundamental building blocks of encryption: substitution and permutation (transposition).
 - The algorithm derives its strength from repeated application of these two techniques for a total of 16 cycles.
 - Plaintext (the original form of the message) is encrypted as blocks of 64 bits.
- After questioning the adequacy of DES, the National Institute of Standards (NIST) introduced the Advanced Encryption Standards (AES).
 - This algorithm has a block size of 128 bits and thus takes longer time to crack.

6.2 Public Key Encryption

In 1976 Diffie and Hellman proposed a new kind of cryptosystem, which they called **public key encryption**.

- Public key algorithms are based on mathematical functions rather than operations on bit patterns.
 - They also involve the use of two separate keys, in contrast to conventional encryption, which uses only one key.
 - The use of two keys can have profound consequences in the areas of confidentiality, key distribution, and authentication.

6.2 Public Key Encryption(2)

- The two keys used for public key encryption are referred to as the **public key** and the **private key**.
 - the private key is kept secret, but it is referred to as *private key* rather than a *secret key* (the key used in conventional encryption) to avoid confusion with conventional encryption.

6.2 Public Key Encryption(3)

A public key encryption scheme, or infrastructure, has six ingredients:

1. *Plaintext* : This is the data or readable message that is fed into the algorithm as input.
2. *Encryption algorithm* : The encryption algorithm performs various transformations on the plaintext.
3. and
4. *Public and private keys* : These are pair of keys that have been selected so that if one is used for encryption, the other is used for decryption. The exec transformations performed by the encryption algorithm depend on the public or private key that is provided as input.

6.2 Public Key Encryption(4)

5. *Ciphertext* : This is the scrambled message produced as output. It depends on the plaintext and the key. For a given message, two different keys will produce two different ciphertexts.
6. *Decryption algorithm* : This algorithm accepts the ciphertext and the matching key and produces the original plaintext.

6.2 Public Key Encryption(5)

Public key is made for public and private key is known only by owner.

A general-purpose public key cryptographic algorithm relies on one key for encryption and a different but related one for decryption. The essential steps are as follows:

1. Each user generates a pair of keys to be used for the encryption and decryption of messages.
2. Each user places one of the two keys in a public register or other accessible file. This is the public key. The companion key is kept private.

6.2 Public Key Encryption(6)

3. If a sender wishes to send a private message to a receiver, the sender encrypts the message using the receiver's public key.
4. When the receiver receives the message, he or she decrypts it using the receiver's private key. No other recipient can decrypt the message because only the receiver knows his or her private key.

6.2 Public Key Encryption(7)

The RSA Public Key Encryption algorithm, one of the first public key schemes was introduced in 1978 by Ron Rivest, Adi Shamir, and Len Adleman at MIT and is named after them as the RSA scheme.

- The RSA encryption algorithm incorporates results from number theory, combined with the difficulty of determining the prime factors of a target.
- The RSA algorithm also operates with modular arithmetic – mod n .

6.2 Public Key Encryption(8)

- Two keys, d and e , are used for decryption and encryption.
 - An important property is that d and e can be interchanged.
 - n is chosen as a large integer that is a product of two large distinct prime numbers, a and b .
 - The encryption key e is a randomly chosen number between 1 and n that is relatively prime to $(a-1) \times (b-1)$.
 - The plaintext block P is encrypted as $P^e \bmod n$.
 - Because the exponentiation is performed $\bmod n$, factoring P^e to uncover the encrypted plaintext is difficult.
 - However, the decryption key d is carefully chosen so that $(P^e)^d \bmod n = P$.
 - The decryption key d can be computed from the condition that $d \times e = 1 \bmod ((a-1) \times (b-1))$.
 - Thus, the legitimate receiver who knows d simply computes $(P^e)^d \bmod n = P$ and recovers P without having to factor P^e .

6.3 Digital Signatures

A digital signature is an example of using encryption techniques to provide authentication services in e-commerce applications.

- A **digital signature** is a means of associating a mark unique to an individual with a body of text.
 - The mark should be unforgettable, meaning that others should be able to check that the signature does come from the originator.
- A **digital signature** consists of a string of symbols.
 - Signature must be different for each use. This can be achieved by making each digital signature a function of the message that it is signing, together with a time stamp.
 - Public key techniques are the means creating digital signatures.