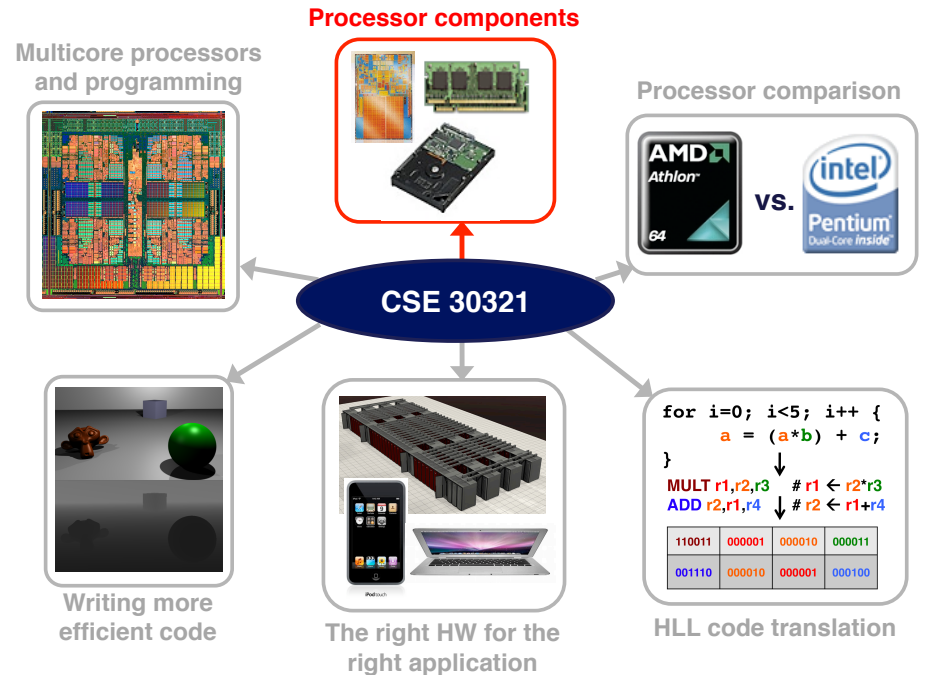


Lecture 17 Introduction to Memory Hierarchies

Suggested reading:
(HP Chapter 5.1-5.2)



1

2

Fundamental lesson(s)

- When you load data from disk or store data in memory, where does it go? How does the processor find it?
- In a pipelined datapath, we assume that a memory reference takes 1 CC. But an off-chip memory access requires 100s of CCs.
 - How can a memory reference truly be accomplished in 1 CC?

Why it's important...

- Memory hierarchies prevent programs from having absolutely abysmal performance
 - In lab 4, you'll see how a detailed understanding of the memory organization can help you write code that is *at least 2X* more efficient

3

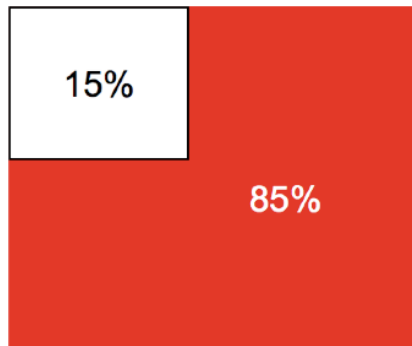
4

Question?

- How much of a chip is “memory”?

- 10%
- 25%
- 50%
- 75%
- 85%

Some Perspective



© 2004 by Lebeck, Serin, Roth, Hill, Wood, Sohi, Smith, Vijaykumar, Lipasti

COMPSCI 220 / ECE 252 Lecture Notes
Storage Hierarchy I: Caches

11

5

Memory and Pipelining

- In our 5 stage pipe, we’ve constantly been assuming that we can access our operand from memory in 1 clock cycle...
 - We’d like this to be the case, and its possible...but its also complicated
 - We’ll discuss how this happens in the next several lectures
- We’ll talk about...
 - Memory Technology
 - Memory Hierarchy
 - Caches
 - Memory
 - Virtual Memory

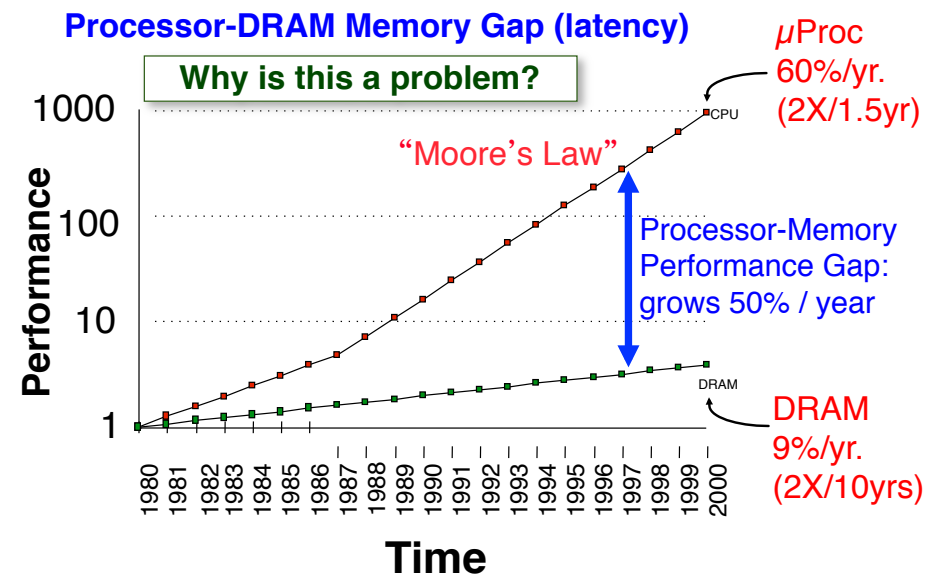
6

If I say “Memory” what do you think of?

- Memory Comes in Many Flavors
 - SRAM (Static Random Access Memory)
 - DRAM (Dynamic Random Access Memory)
 - ROM, Flash, etc.
 - Disks, Tapes, etc.
- Difference in speed, price and “size”
 - Fast is small and/or expensive
 - Large is slow and/or inexpensive
- The search is on for a “universal memory”
 - What’s a “universal memory”
 - Fast and non-volatile.
 - May be MRAM, PCRAM, etc. etc.

Let’s start with DRAM.
Its generally the largest piece of RAM.

Is there a problem with DRAM?



7

8

More on DRAM

- DRAM access on order of 100 ns...
- What if clock rate for our 5 stage pipeline was 1 GHz?
 - Would the memory *and* fetch stages stall for 100 cycles?
 - Actually, yes ... if only DRAM
- Caches come to the rescue
 - As transistors have gotten smaller, its allowed us to put more (faster) memory closer to the processing logic
 - The idea is to “mask” the latency of having to go off to main memory



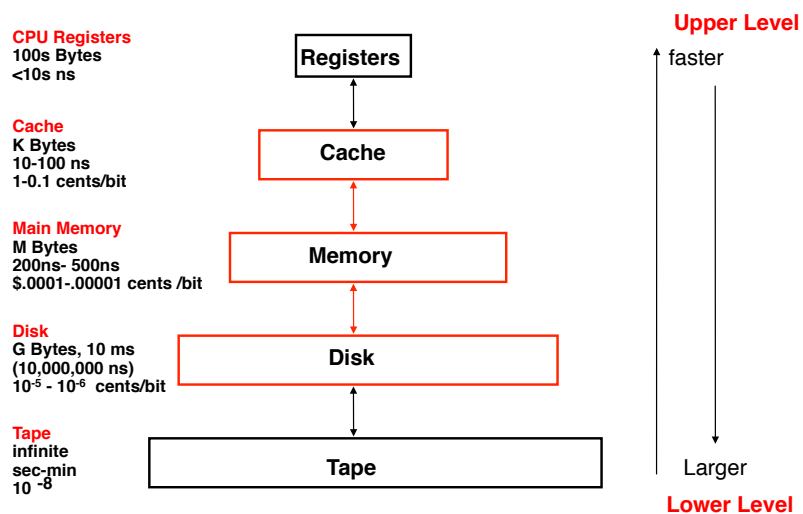
9

Caches and the principle of locality...

- The principle of locality...
 - ...says that most programs don't access all code or data uniformly
 - i.e. in a loop, small subset of instructions might be executed over and over again...
 - ...and a block of memory addresses might be accessed sequentially...
- This has led to “memory hierarchies”
- Some important things to note:
 - Fast memory is expensive in cost/size
 - Levels of memory usually smaller/faster than previous
 - Levels of memory usually “subset” one another
 - All the stuff in a higher level is in some level below it

10

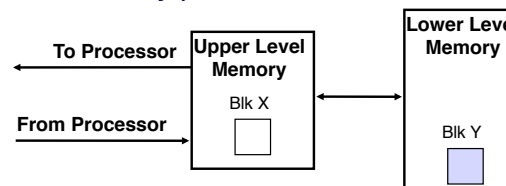
Common memory hierarchy:



11

Terminology Summary

- Hit: data appears in block in upper level (i.e. block X in cache)
 - Hit Rate: fraction of memory access found in upper level
 - Hit Time: time to access upper level which consists of
 - RAM access time + Time to determine hit/miss
- Miss: data needs to be retrieved from a block in the lower level (i.e. block Y in memory)
 - Miss Rate = $1 - (\text{Hit Rate})$
 - Miss Penalty: Extra time to replace a block in the upper level +
 - Time to deliver the block the processor
- Hit Time \ll Miss Penalty (500 instructions on some microprocessors)



12

Average Memory Access Time

$$\text{AMAT} = (\text{Hit Time}) + (1 - h) \times (\text{Miss Penalty})$$

- **Hit time:**
 - basic time of every access.
- **Hit rate (h):**
 - fraction of access that hit
- **Miss penalty:**
 - extra time to fetch a block from lower level, including time to replace in CPU



13

Some initial questions to consider

- Where can a block be placed in an upper level of memory hierarchy (i.e. a cache)?
- How is a block found in an upper level of memory hierarchy?
- Which cache block should be replaced on a cache miss if entire cache is full and we want to bring in new data?
- What happens if a you want to write back to a memory location?
 - Do you just write to the cache?
 - Do you write somewhere else?

15

Cache Basics

- Cache entries usually referred to as “**blocks**”
 - Block is minimum amount of information that can be in cache
 - Line size typically power of two
 - Typically 16 to 128 bytes in size

14

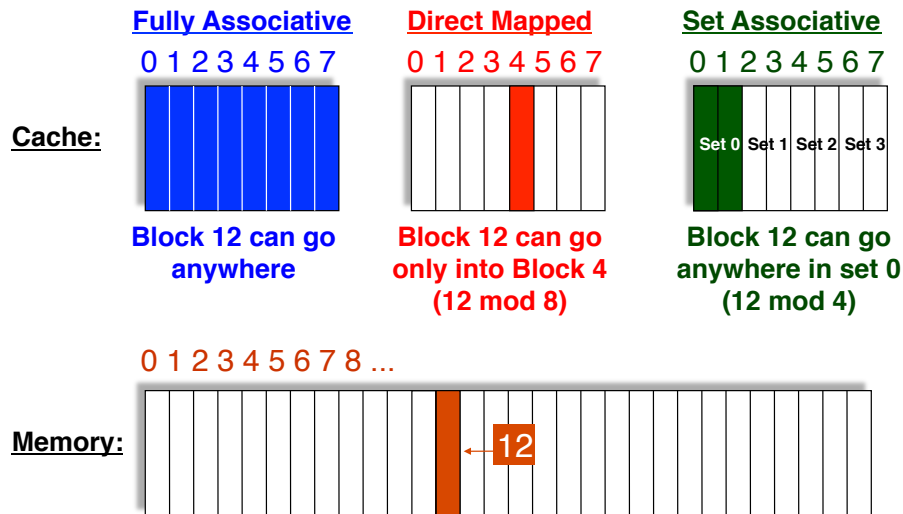
Where can a block be placed in a cache?

- 3 schemes for block placement in a cache:
 - **Direct mapped cache:**
 - Block (or data to be stored) can go to only 1 place in cache
 - Usually: (Block address) MOD (# of blocks in the cache)
 - **Fully associative cache:**
 - Block can be placed anywhere in cache
 - **Set associative cache:**
 - “Set” = a group of blocks in the cache
 - Block mapped onto a set & then block can be placed anywhere within that set
 - Usually: (Block address) MOD (# of sets in the cache)
 - If n blocks, we call it n-way set associative



16

Where can a block be placed in a cache?



17

How is a block found in the cache?

- Cache's have address tag on each block frame that provides block address
 - Tag of every cache block that might have entry is examined against CPU address (in parallel! – why?)
- Each entry usually has a valid bit
 - Tells us if cache data is useful/not garbage
 - If bit is not set, there can't be a match...
- How does address provided to CPU relate to entry in cache?
 - Entry divided between block address & block offset...
 - ...and further divided between tag field & index field



19

Associativity

- If you have associativity > 1 you have to have a replacement policy
 - FIFO
 - LRU
 - Random
- “Full” or “Full-map” associativity means you check every tag in parallel and a memory block can go into any cache block
 - Virtual memory is effectively fully associative
 - (But don't worry about virtual memory yet)

18

How is a block found in the cache?



- Block offset field selects data from block
 - (i.e. address of desired data within block)
- Index field selects a specific set
- Tag field is compared against it for a hit
- Could we compare on more of address than the tag?
 - Not necessary; checking index is redundant
 - Used to select set to be checked
 - Ex.: Address stored in set 0 must have 0 in index field
 - Offset not necessary in comparison – entire block is present or not and all block offsets must match

20

Which block is replaced on a cache miss?

- If we look something up in cache and entry not there, generally want to get data from memory and put it in cache
 - B/c principle of locality says we'll probably use it again
- Direct mapped caches have 1 choice of what block to replace
- Fully associative or set associative offer more choices
- Usually 2 strategies:
 - Random – pick any possible block and replace it
 - LRU – stands for “Least Recently Used”
 - Why not throw out the block not used for the longest time
 - Usually approximated, not much better than random – i.e. 5.18% vs. 5.69% for 16KB 2-way set associative

21

What happens on a write?

- Generically, there are 2 kinds of write policies:
 - Write through
 - With write through, information written to block in cache and to block in lower-level memory
 - Write back
 - With write back, information written only to cache. It will be written back to lower-level memory when cache block is replaced
- The dirty bit:
 - Each cache entry usually has a bit that specifies if a write has occurred in that block or not...
 - Helps reduce frequency of writes to lower-level memory upon block replacement

23

What happens on a write?

- FYI most accesses to a cache are reads:
 - Used to fetch instructions (reads)
 - Most instructions don't write to memory
 - For MIPS only about 7% of memory traffic involve writes
 - Translates to about 25% of cache data traffic
- Make common case fast! Optimize cache for reads!
 - Actually pretty easy to do...
 - Can read block while comparing/reading tag
 - Block read begins as soon as address available
 - If a hit, address just passed right on to CPU

22

What happens on a write?

- Write back versus write through:
 - Write back advantageous because:
 - Writes occur at the speed of cache and don't incur delay of lower-level memory
 - Multiple writes to cache block result in only 1 lower-level memory access
 - Write through advantageous because:
 - Lower-levels of memory have most recent copy of data
- If CPU has to wait for a write, we have write stall
 - 1 way around this is a write buffer
 - Ideally, CPU shouldn't have to stall during a write
 - Instead, data written to buffer which sends it to lower-levels of memory hierarchy

24

What happens on a write?

- What if we want to write and block we want to write to isn't in cache?
- There are 2 common policies:
 - **Write allocate:**
 - The block is loaded on a write miss
 - The idea behind this is that subsequent writes will be captured by the cache (ideal for a write back cache)
 - **No-write allocate:**
 - Block modified in lower-level and not loaded into cache
 - Usually used for write-through caches
 - (subsequent writes still have to go to memory)

Memory access equations

- Using what we defined on previous slide, we can say:
 - **Memory stall clock cycles =**
 - Reads x Read miss rate x Read miss penalty +
 - Writes x Write miss rate x Write miss penalty
- Often, reads and writes are combined/averaged:
 - **Memory stall cycles =**
 - Memory access x Miss rate x Miss penalty (approximation)
- Also possible to factor in instruction count to get a “complete” formula:

$$CPU\ time = IC \times \left(CPI_{execution} + \frac{Memory\ stall\ clock\ cycles}{Instruction} \right) \times Clock\ cycle\ time$$

25

26

Reducing cache misses

- Obviously, we want data accesses to result in cache hits, not misses –this will optimize performance
- Start by looking at ways to increase % of hits....
- ...but first look at 3 kinds of misses!
 - **Compulsory misses:**
 - Very 1st access to cache block will not be a hit –the data's not there yet!
 - **Capacity misses:**
 - Cache is only so big. Won't be able to store every block accessed in a program – must swap out!
 - **Conflict misses:**
 - Result from set-associative or direct mapped caches
 - Blocks discarded/retrieved if too many map to a location

27