CSC2/452 Computer Organization
The Processor Pipeline

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Outline

Recap

Instruction Execution

Instruction Pipelining

Software and the Pipeline
Outline

Recap

Instruction Execution

Instruction Pipelining

Software and the Pipeline
The Processor and RAM (so far)

- CPU
- Registers
  - Fetch
  - Decode
  - AGU
  - L/SU
  - ALU
  - FPU
- RAM

RD: address
WR: address+data
RD: data
Recall hellopi execution statistics (lecture 1)

$ perf stat -e instructions ./a.out
Hello, the value of pi is 3.141593

Performance counter stats for './a.out':

662,172     instructions
0.001168841 seconds time elapsed
The Problem

How do you execute billions of instructions as quickly as possible?
The Performance Equation

\[ T = \frac{W \times t}{P} \]

- \( W \), work items to be completed
  - e.g., instructions to be executed
- \( t \), the average time per work item
  - cost per work item
- \( P \), average parallelism
  - Number of work items that can be executed in parallel
- \( T \), total time for execution
Example: Preparing Breakfast

- Work item 1: Toast
  - Time for making toast: 2 minutes
- Work item 2: Coffee
  - Time for making coffee: 3 minutes
  - Not instant!
Prep. Time for Breakfast: Serial

- Toast: 2 minutes, Coffee: 3 minutes
- Only Stove available to make breakfast
  - Average Parallelism: \( P = 1 \)
  - Work items \( W = 2 \)
  - Average Time \( t = (3 + 2)/2 \)
  - Total Time: ?
Prep. Time for Breakfast: Parallel

- Toast: 2 minutes, Coffee: 3 minutes
- Stove and Toaster available
  - Total Time: 3 minutes
  - Work items \( W = 2 \)
  - Average Time \( t = (3 + 2) / 2 \)
  - Average Parallelism: \( P = (2 \times 2 + 1 \times 1) / 3 = 1.66 \)
- Speedup (serial time/parallel time) is \( 5 / 3 = 1.66 \)
  - But, requires more equipment
Other ways to speed up breakfast

- Don’t eat toast
  - Decreases work, $W$
- Drink instant coffee
  - Decreases average time, $t$
Speeding up Programs

- Do less work (i.e., decrease $W$)
  - fewer instructions
  - choose algorithms with fewest operations
- Do cheaper work (i.e., decrease $t$)
  - not all instructions have the same cost
  - e.g. integer multiplies are slower than integer shifts
  - the algorithm with lower constant costs is better
  - purpose of this course: to teach you which instructions are cheap and which are expensive
  - Moore’s Law gave us free decreases in $t$
- Increase parallelism (i.e. increase $P$)
  - only option left if you’ve already reduced $W$ and $t$
  - take CSC258 to know more
Example: Making a Sandwich

- Toast 2 bread slices (2 minutes)
- Add cheese and tomato slices (1 minute)
  - Assuming tomatoes and cheese have to be sliced
- Melt cheese (1 minute)
- Total time: ?
- Average Parallelism: ?
Making 3 sandwiches

Task
Toast | C&T | Melt
Toast | C&T | Melt
Toast | C&T | Melt

Time
2min | 1min | 1min

▶ Total time: ?
▶ Average Parallelism: ?
▶ Equipment needed: ?
  ▶ Toasters?
  ▶ Knives?
  ▶ Stove? [assume one stove can melt cheese in one sandwich]
  ▶ Workers?
Making sandwiches: Observations

- Making one sandwich takes 4 minutes, end-to-end
  - Each step is dependent on previous step, no parallelism
- Making multiple sandwiches is highly parallel
  - Making each sandwich is independent of the other
  - But exploiting that parallelism requires lots of equipment
  - Also, as far as sandwich eaters are concerned, they get a one sandwich every 4 minutes
Pipeline Parallelism in the Kitchen

Equipment needed?
- Toasters (Toaster station): ?
- Knives (Filling station): ?
- Stove (Melt station): ?
- Workers?

Time for first sandwich?

Time for subsequent sandwiches (indicated by stars)?
- Each sandwich still takes 4 minutes to make
Alternate View: Pipeline Parallelism in the Kitchen

Same timeline as previous figure, but from perspective of sandwich instead of a work station.
Some performance measures

- Sandwich Latency (also Job Service Time): 4 minutes
  - Also pipeline fill time
- Service time (or System Latency) for making sandwiches: 2 minutes
  - Time after pipeline is full
- Throughput (rate) of making sandwiches: 1 sandwich every 2 minutes
Pipeline Parallelism

- Used to parallelize many similar (but independent) tasks
- Each task consists of highly dependent steps
- Pipelines consist of (sequential/serial) stages
  - Usually correspond to steps of each task
- But each stage can be handling steps from different tasks at a given time
  - e.g. at Time 5: sandwich 3 in Toaster and sandwich 2 in Filling
- Does not require more equipment than that required by one task
  - May require more “workers”
You’re not in culinary class!

How do these techniques apply to instruction execution (our original problem)?
Outline

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Steps in Instruction Execution

Instruction execution in a processor consists of at least 3 steps:

- Fetch instruction
- Decode instruction
- Execute instruction

Each step is dependent on the previous one. But there are many instructions in a program!
Program Execution: Example #1

I1: movq -8(%rbp), %rax
I2: addq %rcx, %rdx

Are I1 and I2 independent of each other?

- I1:
  - reads memory: -8(%rbp)
  - writes register: %rax

- I2:
  - reads register: %rcx
  - writes register: %rdx
Program Execution: Example #2

I3: movq -8(%rbp), %rax
I4: addq %rax, %rdx

Are I3 and I4 independent of each other?

- I3:
  - reads memory: -8(%rbp)
  - writes register: %rax

- I4:
  - reads register: %rax
  - writes register: %rdx
Data Dependences

- I1 and I2 are independent
  - Reads and writes do not overlap
- I3 and I4 are dependent
  - I3 produces (i.e. writes) value that is consumed (i.e. read) by I4
  - I4 execution must wait until I3 produces a value
test %eax, %eax
jnz L1
movq ...
add ...
div ...
jmp ...

L1:
xor %eax, %eax
ret

▶ Which instruction follows jnz?
▶ Which instruction follows ret?
If jnz does not jump, then current state of pipeline (green box) is valid.

If jnz does make the jump, what must we do?
  - can’t execute movq and add
Control Dependences

- Can’t decide which instruction follows jnz until it finishes execution
  - Could be movq if %eax is zero
  - Could be xor (at L1)
- Can’t decide which instruction follows ret either
  - Need to look at function stack to find return address
- In these cases, the instructions we have fetched and decoded may be wrong
  - Usually, we need to throw them away
  - Called a “pipeline flush”
Program Execution: Example #4

```
divl %ecx
addq %edi, %esi
```

▶ Both `divl` and `addq` use the ALU
▶ But `divl` takes more time than `addq`
  ▶ `addq` must wait until `divl` is done
Structural Dependence/‘Hazards’

- Different instructions may require use of the same (type) of resources
- Instructions must wait until “structure” (e.g. functional unit) is free
  - Could be other structures, e.g. queues
- Kitchen example:
  - Toast + Coffee with only one stove and no toaster
  - Can only toast or make coffee at the same time, not both
Instruction Execution: The Problem

- Could be pipelined
  - Each instruction consists of multiple steps
  - There are many instructions that must be executed

- Complication: Not all instructions are independent
  - Data dependence: Instruction requires results from previous instruction
  - Control dependence: Next instruction depends on execution of current instruction
  - Structural dependence: Instructions may require use of same structure or some structure is full

- Other complications
  - Instructions can take different execution times (e.g. divl vs addq)
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Stages

Although a 3-stage pipeline can be used (and sometimes fewer stages can also be used, usually by eliminating decode\textsuperscript{1}), usually 5 stages are used:

- Instruction Fetch (IF)
- Instruction Decode (ID)
- Instruction Execute (EX)
- Memory (MEM)
- Instruction Writeback (or retirement) (WB)

The MIPS R2000 (the first MIPS processor from Stanford) popularized the 5-stage pipeline.

\textsuperscript{1}See the Berkeley RISC I processor
EX/MEM

```assembly
addq %rax, %rdx  # %rdx = %rdx + %rax
movq (%rdi, %rsi, 2), %rbx  # %rbx = memory[%rdi + %rsi * 2]
```

- Note how `movq` is computing an effective address and then loading data from memory
  - Two steps combined into one
- EX stage handles all arithmetic computation
- MEM stage is used to access memory
  - skipped if the instruction does not access memory
The writeback stage isn’t always necessary in simple designs.

But if you can flush a pipeline, then you need to prevent wrong instruction results from being made visible.

Stage where results are made permanent (sometimes called “Commit”)

Values written back to registers

Also releases any resources occupied by instruction
Dealing with dependences

- General solution, add an interlock
- This is a circuit that delays instructions
  - introduces “bubbles” (a no-op) by stalling a stage (stops the stage) in the pipeline
More sophisticated solutions: Use a compiler!

- Reorder instructions to:
  - keep dependent instructions far from each other
  - prevent structural hazards
  - reordering must preserve program semantics!

- Use branch-delay slots for control dependence
  - Instruction after branch is always executed, regardless of direction of branch
  - Can be a NOP instruction
  - Now considered to be a poor design practice

- These techniques were used by MIPS (Microprocessor without Interlocked Pipelined Stages)
Terminology

- **Superscalar processor**: A processor that can execute more than one instruction at the same time.
- **In-order pipeline**: Instructions are executed in (assembly-language) program order.
  - Note: like on MIPS, the compiler may reorder instructions, but the pipeline doesn’t.
- **Out-of-order pipelines**: Instructions are executed out-of-order.
  - In-order fetch
  - Out-of-order execute
  - In-order retirement
  - Most modern high-performance processors
- **Speculative pipelines**: Pipelines that guess which direction a branch is going to execute.
  - Check guess at writeback stage and either flush or commit.

This course looks at in-order pipelines, for the others, take CSC251.
A view of the processor
Outline

Recap

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Software and the Pipeline
Does the pipeline affect how you write software?

- Knowledge of the pipeline is crucial to understanding performance issues
- You can get information on pipeline behaviour using the `perf` tool on Linux
  - we’ll see next class
References

- A detailed description of the pipeline is given in Chapter 4 of the textbook.
- We will be more software-centric than hardware-centric in this course.
  - Take CSC251 if you want to really build a processor at the hardware level.