Hardware technology

Optimization training at CINES

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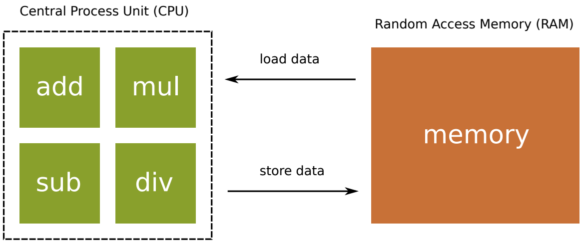
Basically, what is a processor?

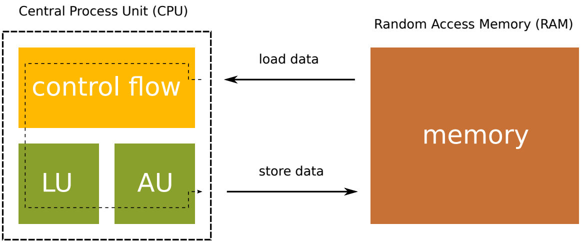
- Memory and compute units
  - Memory is a way to load/store data (input/output)
  - Compute units allow us to transform data



Basic vision of a processor and its memory

Basically, what is a processor?

- In fact we can be more precise, a CPU is composed by:
  - A control flow (if, switch, instructions placement, ...)
  - Logical units, LU (==, !=, >, <, ...)
  - Arithmetic units, AU (+, *, -, /, ...)



More precise vision of a processor and its memory

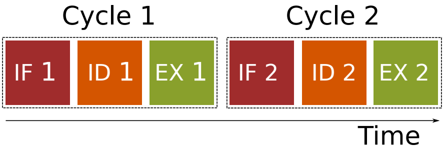
Clock cycle and frequency

- At each clock cycle the CPU is able to perform an elementary task
- The frequency is the number of cycles per second (in Hertz)
- Modern CPUs clock rates range between 1GHz and 4Ghz, this is very fast !
  - $1Ghz = 10^9 Hz$
- RAM does not operate at the same frequency as the CPU: between 0.5Ghz and 1.6GHz
  - This is slower than the CPU !
  - How can the CPU operate fully if memory is slower ? We will see that later on...

Pipelining model

Okay the CPU is fast, but how is this technically achieved?

- First, you have to know the basic cycle of an instruction:
  1. Fetch instruction: the instruction is copied from the memory
  2. Decode instruction: the instruction is interpreted by the CPU
  3. Execute instruction: the instruction is executed
- Let's take a look on how it works on an old school CPU (a slow one):

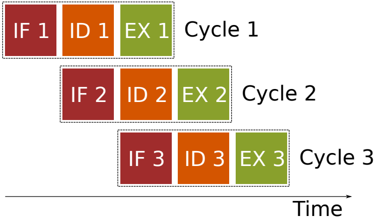


No pipeline

Pipelining model

Okay the CPU is fast, but how can it technically achieve that ?

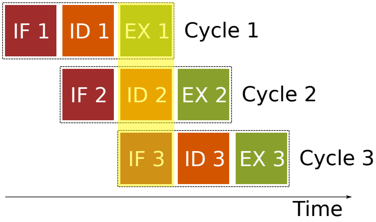
- According to the previous slide, we can divide an instruction in 3 sub-instructions
- We can divide an instruction in sub-instructions which take an equal amount of time
- This is the pipelining strategy
    - Uses internal parallelism
    - The number of tasks that can be carried out in parallel is the number of pipeline stages



3-stage pipeline

Pipelining model

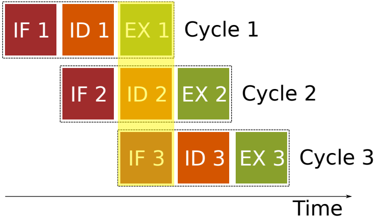
- There is a time before the pipeline is optimal: this is called "the pipeline latency"
  - 2 cycles here
- If we do not consider this latency, we are 3 times faster with the pipeline strategy (3-stage pipeline)



3-stage pipeline, yellow is optimal

Pipelining model

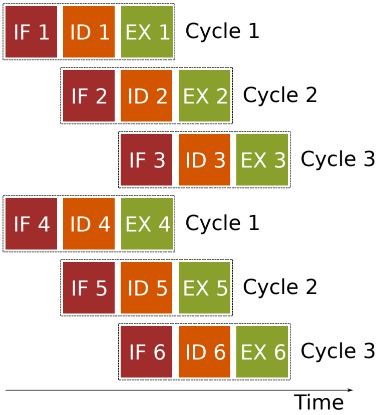
- Today CPUs have between 10-stage and 20-stage pipelines but the principle is still the same
- Pipelining is efficient but what about branches (if statements) ?
  - They are very problematic and sometimes "if" statements can destroy pipeline efficiency
  - The branch predictor mechanism tries to minimize this effect...



3-stage pipeline, yellow is optimal

Superscalar processors

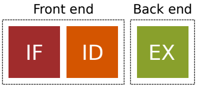
- Today CPUs are superscalar
- They can do same sub-instructions in parallel, this is also called Instruction Level Parallelism (ILP)
  - Between 3-way and 6-way superscalar
- So, now we can achieve more than one operation in one CPU clock cycle
  - In fact we can achieve almost 5 instructions at each cycle...
  - We will see that in more detail later



3-stage pipeline, 2-way superscalar

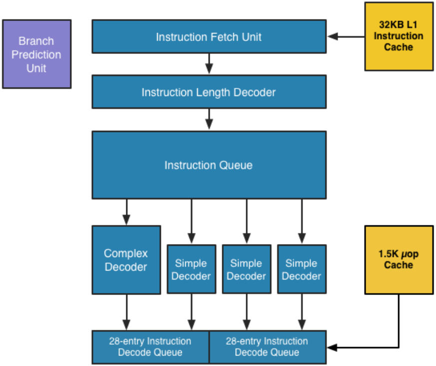
Sandy Bridge pipeline

- In modern CPUs the pipeline is split into two main parts:
  - Front end: fetches and decodes instructions
  - Back end or execution engine: executes instructions



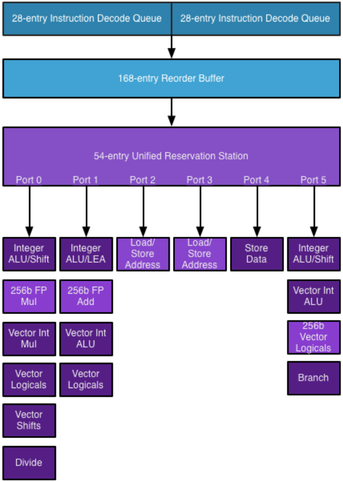
Front end and back end in our 3-stage pipeline

Sandy Bridge pipeline: front end



(Picture from Anandtech)

Sandy Bridge pipeline: back end



(Picture from Anandtech)

Out-of-Order execution

- Depending on ports availability, the processor can change the order of execution of the instructions: Out-of-Order execution
  - Ports utilization maximisation
  - Sometimes it's difficult to understand what the CPU really does (hard to predict)

```c
int a, b, c, d, e, f, g, h;
c = a + b; // first instruction to be executed
           // no dependency
e = c * d; // third instruction to be executed
           // dependency with the c variable
h = f * g; // second instruction to be executed
           // no dependency
```

Code example, Out-of-Order execution

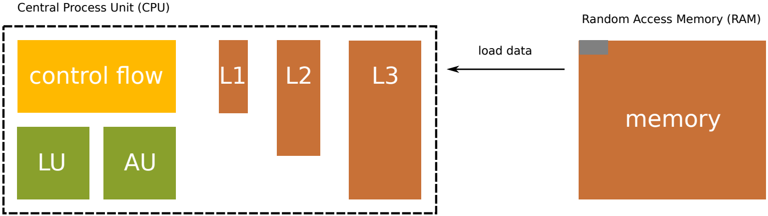
Memory hierarchy

- Previously we saw how fast a modern CPU is and how it manages instructions
- But there is still a problem: how to feed the beast ?
    - Remember, memory is very slow compared to the compute capacity of a CPU
    - And a CPU needs input data in order to compute results...
- Any ideas on how to solve this problem ?

Memory hierarchy

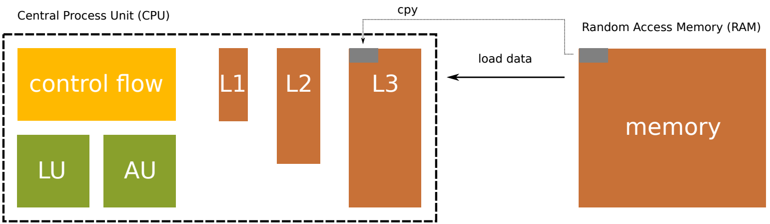
- Add a layer of faster memory between CPU and RAM: cache memory !
  - Faster memory is expensive, and takes a lot of physical space
  - So, this memory is way smaller than the RAM
  - 3 cache levels (on chip memory):
    - L1 is the fastest but also the smallest (32 Ko): (access time approx. 1 cycle)
    - L2 is slower than L1 but it is also bigger (256 Ko): (access time approx. 10 cycles)
    - L3 is slower than L2 but much faster than RAM and it is bigger than L2 (3 Mo to 20 Mo): (access time approx. 30 cycles)
  - RAM latency is approximately 100 cycles

First load with memory hierarchy



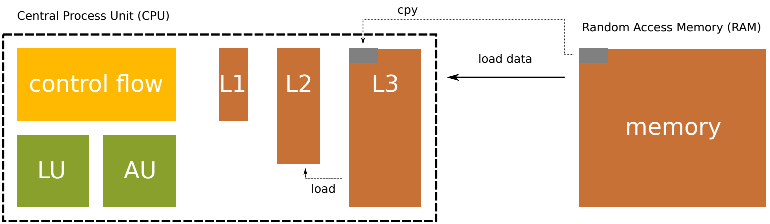
Load from RAM: 100 cycles

First load with memory hierarchy



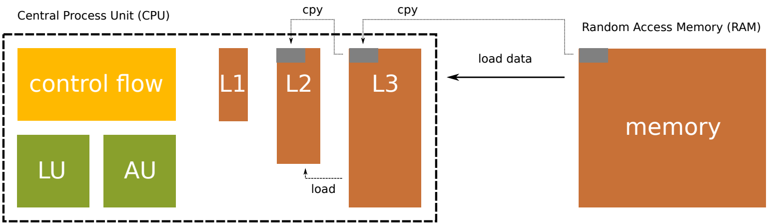
Copying loaded data into L3

First load with memory hierarchy



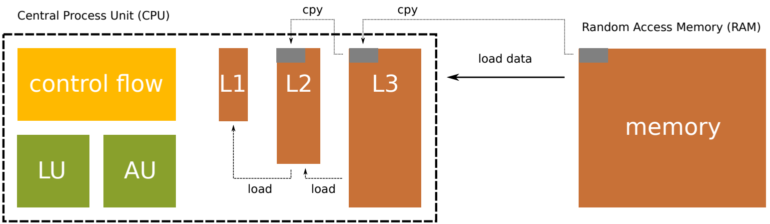
Load from L3: 30 cycles

First load with memory hierarchy



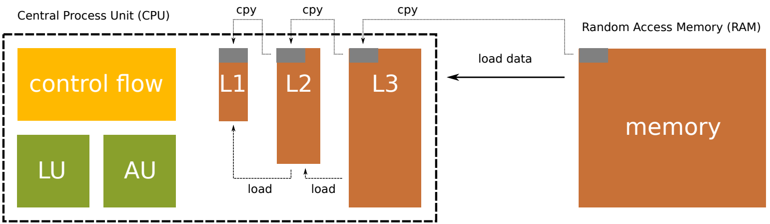
Copying loaded data into L2

First load with memory hierarchy



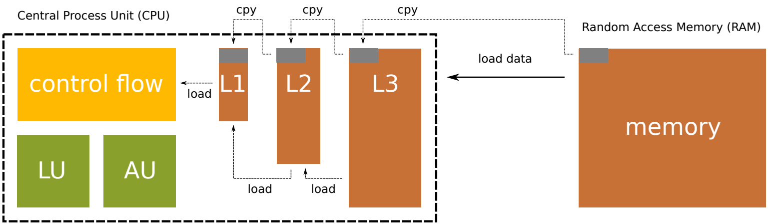
Load from L2: 10 cycles

First load with memory hierarchy



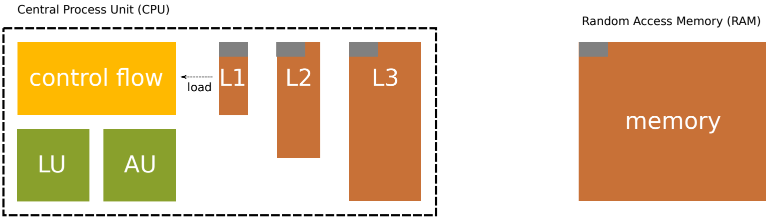
Copying loaded data into L2

First load with memory hierarchy



Load from L1: 1 cycle

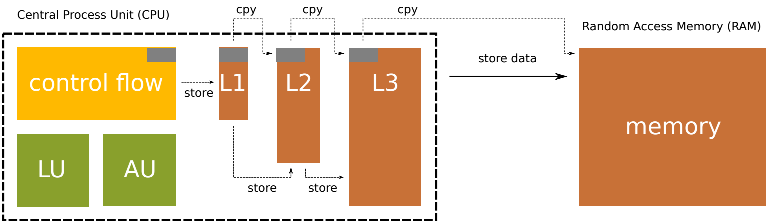
Second load with memory hierarchy



Load from L1: 1 cycle

- Here we can see the benefit of the cache hierarchy
- If the data are in the L1 cache, the load takes only 1 cycle !
- Data reuse is required if we want to feed the CPU
- Data are loaded by lines of words, so contiguous words accesses are fast

Store with memory hierarchy



Store data from CPU to RAM

- Stored data are also put in caches
- Load data we have recently stored is efficient (this data is in the L1)

Contents

Several level of parallelism inside a CPU

- The simplest way to increase performance is to increase the clock frequency of the processor
  - No code modification required
  - But energy consumption directly depends on the clock frequency ($e \approx f^2$)
  - And we can't increase clock frequency indefinitely
- This is why we prefer making things in parallel
  - No impact on clock frequency
  - CPU performance is also improved this way, but sometime we have to modify the code !

Several level of parallelism inside a CPU

There are two different types of parallelism:

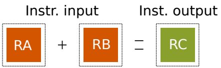
- Automatic parallelism, which can be indirectly controlled by user:
  - Pipeline
  - Instruction Level Parallelism (superscalar processors)
- Manual parallelism, directly controlled by the user:
  - Vectorization
  - Simultaneous multi threading or Hyper Threading
  - Multi-core architecture

Vectorization

- Traditionally an instruction works on scalar values
- But there is an other type of instruction that allows us to work on vectors
- This strategy is the less energy consuming!
- This is also called SIMD (Single Instruction Multiple Data) instructions
- Modern CPUs tend to become more and more SIMD (because of the energy efficiency)

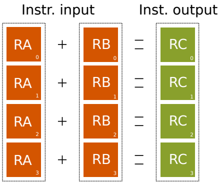
Vectorization

- A scalar instruction works with standard scalar registers



Scalar instruction

- A vector instruction works with special vector registers
- Performing a vector instruction takes the same amount of cycles as a standard scalar instruction



Vector instruction

Vectorization on Sandy Bridge

- Sandy Bridge processors have AVX-256 bits instructions (Advanced Vector Extensions)
  - 256 bits is the size of AVX registers
  - 256 bits = 4 double precision numbers (double)
  - 256 bits = 8 single precision numbers (float, int)
- One simple precision number requires 32 bits (or 4 bytes)
- One double precision number requires 64 bits (or 8 bytes)

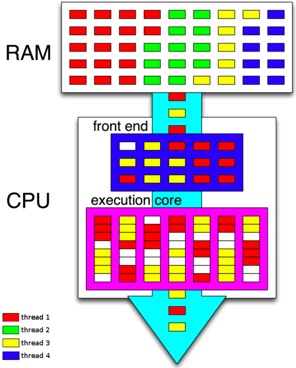
Simultaneous Multi Threading

New hardware supports the very famous Hyper Threading technology (same as SMT), but what is it really ?

- Possibility to manage several hardware threads in a processor core simultaneously
    - Without adding arithmetic and logic units (max. reachable performance does not change with SMT)
    - Increase the pressure on ports
    - This is a mechanism to maximize CPU usage
        - Gain depends on the problem and the implementation
        - Sometimes this is useless

Simultaneous Multi Threading

- Today, Intel cores can manage until 2 hardware threads
- This reduces bubbles in the pipeline

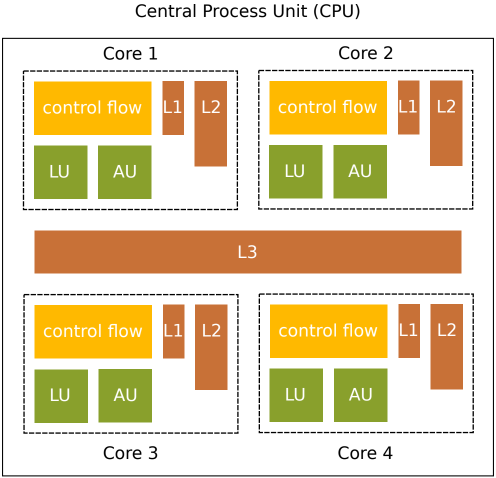


2-way Simultaneous Multi Threading (Wikipedia)

Multi-core architecture

- Current architectures are multi-core
- The idea is to put processors together
  - Each core has a lot of independence
  - All the previous features are available in each core
  - In fact, this is not totally true: cores also share some resources...
    - L3 cache is shared by all the cores of a processor !
    - Memory (RAM) management is also shared
- To use these cores fully we have to create multiple threads (multi-threading) or to create multiple processes
  - Be careful, threads can be used on different cores but also in a same core with SMT mechanism
  - Unlike SMT, multi-core architecture really increases the maximum reachable performance (by the number of cores)

Multi-core architecture



Quad core processor architecture

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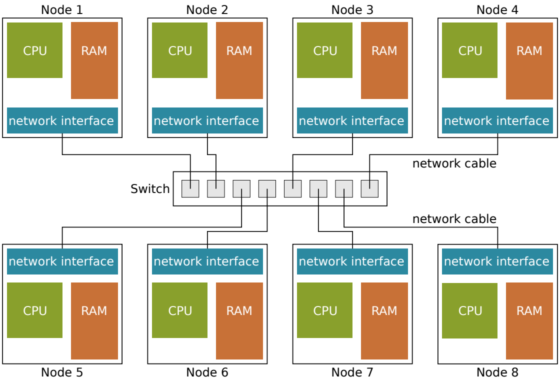
How to make a supercomputer ?

- In the previous sections we described the mechanisms inside a node (inside a single computer)
- Sometimes a node is not powerful enough to simulate a complete phenomena
- So, what can we do ?
  - Apply the *Divide and conquer* strategy!
  - Split the work and distribute it over several nodes
  - We have just created an other level of parallelism: the node
- How to use node parallelism is not in the range of this course

A very basic supercomputer



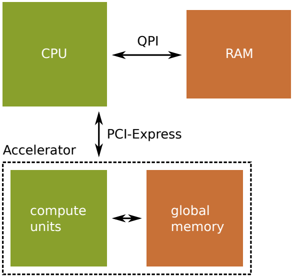
Very basic supercomputer architecture

- Here, the switch inter-connects all nodes
- Cluster max. performance = 8 x node performance

Contents

What is an accelerator ?

- Basically, this is something made to decrease the restitution time of codes
- An hardware separated from the CPU
  - Today, accelerators are connected to the CPU through a the PCI-Express bus
- A very parallel hardware (even more than CPUs)
- It has its own memory

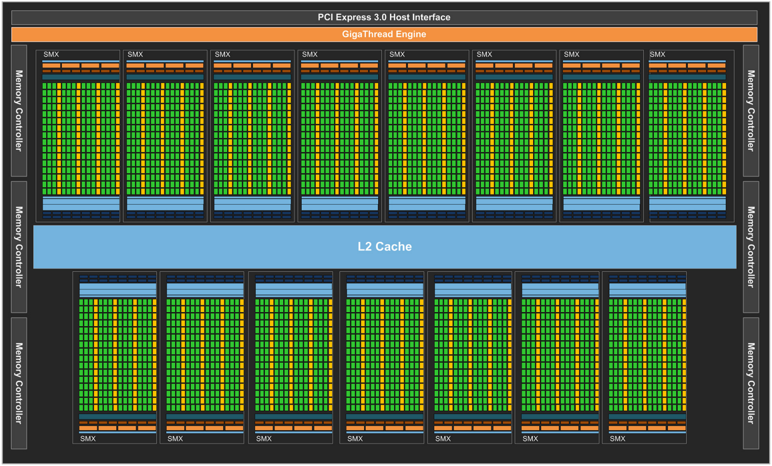


An accelerator in a node

Graphical Process Unit (GPU)

- Built for image calculations
- Very parallel architecture
- Less control units than traditional CPU but more compute units
- Faster global memory than CPU memory (RAM)
- Very attractive performance/energy ratio (much better than the CPU ratio)
- Adapted to massively parallel scientific computations
- But requires a specific code to work well!

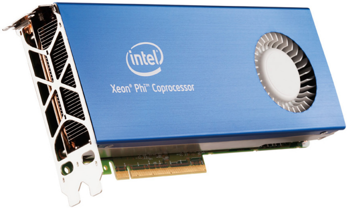
GPU architecture



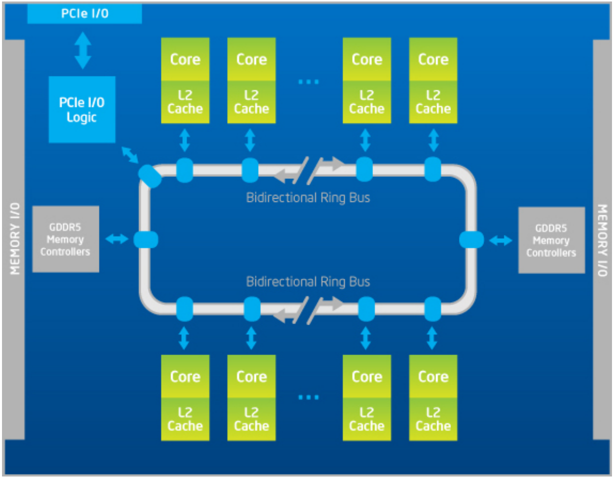
Nvidia Kepler architecture (full GK110)

Xeon Phi

- First massively parallel accelerator from Intel
- Built specifically for HPC
- Very young architecture made from the union of many small x86 processors
  - Based on Pentium 3 (or Atom) architecture
  - But with very large AVX 512 bits instructions: remember those instructions are very interesting for energy efficiency!
  - Uses 2-way SMT
- Faster memory than traditional CPU memory
- Runs a real operating system based on Linux!



Xeon Phi architecture



Intel Knights Corner architecture