Advanced Caching Techniques

Approaches to improving memory system performance

- eliminate memory accesses/operations
- decrease the number of misses
- decrease the miss penalty
- decrease the cache/memory access times
- hide memory latencies
- increase cache throughput
- increase memory bandwidth

New techniques address particular components of memory system performance

Handling a Cache Miss the Old Way

(1) Send the address & read operation to the next level of the hierarchy

(2) Wait for the data to arrive

(3) Update the cache entry with data*, rewrite the tag, turn the valid bit on, clear the dirty bit (if data cache)

(4) Resend the memory address; this time there will be a hit.

* There are variations:

- get data before replace the block
- send the requested word to the CPU as soon as it arrives at the cache (**early restart**)
- requested word is sent from memory first; then the rest of the block follows (**requested word first**)

How do the variations improve memory system performance?

Non-blocking Caches

Non-blocking cache (**lockup-free cache**)

- allows the CPU to continue executing instructions while a miss is handled
- some caches allow only 1 outstanding miss ("hit under miss")
- some caches have multiple misses outstanding ("miss under miss")
- **miss status holding registers** (MSHR)
  - hardware structure for tracking outstanding misses
    - physical address of the block
    - which word in the block
    - destination register number (if data)
    - mechanism to merge requests to the same block
    - mechanism to insure accesses to the same location execute in program order

Non-blocking Caches

Non-blocking cache (**lockup-free cache**)

- can be used with both in-order and out-of-order processors
  - **in-order processors** can execute when the next instruction is not the load consumer
  - **out-of-order processors** can execute instructions after the load consumer

How do non-blocking caches improve memory system performance?

Non-blocking Caches

in-order processors

```
lw $3, 100($4)        in execution, cache miss
add $2, $3, $4        consumer  waits until the miss is satisfied
sub $5, $6, $7        independent  instruction waits for the add
```

out-of-order processors

```
lw $3, 100($4)        in execution, cache miss
sub $5, $6, $7        independent  instruction can execute
                      during the cache miss
add $2, $3, $4        consumer  waits until the miss is satisfied
```


Victim Cache

Victim cache

- small fully-associative cache
  - contains the most recently replaced blocks of a direct-mapped L1 cache
  - if L1 cache miss & victim cache hit, swap the direct-mapped block and victim cache block
  - if both miss, L1 block goes to victim cache
- alternative to 2-way set-associative cache

Why do victim caches work?

How do victim caches improve memory system performance?

Sub-block Placement

Divide a block into sub-blocks

tag	I	data	V	data	V	data	I	data
tag	I	data	**V**	**data**	V	data	V	data
tag	V	data	V	data	V	data	V	data
tag	I	data	I	data	I	data	I	data

- **sub-block** = unit of transfer on a cache miss
- **valid bit**/sub-block
- 2 kinds of misses:
  - block-level miss: tags didn't match
  - sub-block-level miss: tags matched, valid bit was clear

\+ the transfer time of a sub-block

\+ fewer tags than if each block was the size of a subblock

\- less implicit prefetching

How does sub-block placement improve memory system performance?

Pipelined Cache Access

Pipelined cache access

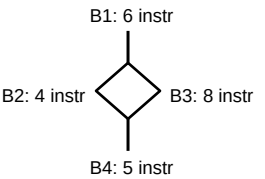
- simple 2-stage pipeline
  - access the cache
  - data transfer back to CPU
  - tag check & hit/miss logic with the shorter of the two stages

How do pipelined caches improve memory system performance?

Trace Cache

Contains instructions from the *dynamic* instruction stream

- fetch statically noncontiguous instructions in a single cycle, called a **trace**
- limit on # basic blocks & # instructions in a trace



- instructions may appear more than once
  - accessed with PC & prediction bit
- traces can contain decoded instructions
  - particularly useful for CISC architectures

Trace Cache

Advantages/disadvantages of a trace cache

+

?

-

Effect on memory system performance?

Cache-friendly Compiler Optimizations

Improve spatial locality for data

- **group & transpose**
  - collects data from different vectors or structures that are accessed together & places them contiguously in memory
- **loop interchange**
  - so inner loop follows memory layout of data

Improve temporal locality for data

- **loop fusion**
  - put computations on the same portion of an array from separate loops into one loop
- **tiling (also called blocking)**
  - do all computation on a small block of an array that will fit in the cache

Tiling Example

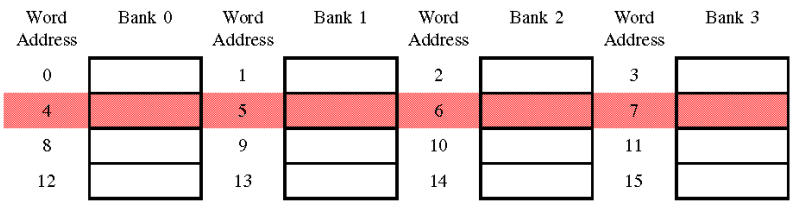
```
/* before */
for (i=0; i<n; i=i+1)
       for (j=0; j<n; j=j+1){
              r = 0;
              for (k=0; k<n; k=k+1) {
                     r = r + y[i,k] * z[k,j]; }
              x[i,j] = r;
              };
/* after */
for (jj=0; jj<n; jj=jj+T)
for (kk=0; kk<n; kk=kk+T)

   for (i=0; i<n; i=i+1)
       for (j=jj; j<min(jj+T-1,n); j=j+1) {
              r = 0;
              for (k=kk; k<min(kk+T-1,n); k=k+1)
                     {r = r + y[i,k] * z[k,j]; }
              x[i,j] = x[i,j] + r;
              };
```

Memory Banks

Interleaved memory:

- multiple memory banks
  - word locations are assigned across banks
  - send a single address to all banks at once
  - **interleaving factor**: number of banks



Memory Banks

Interleaved memory:

+ get more data for one transfer
  - data is probably used *(why?)*
- larger DRAM chip capacity means fewer banks
- power issue

Effect on memory system performance?

Memory Banks

Independent memory banks

- different banks can be accessed at once, with different addresses
- allows parallel access, possibly parallel data transfer
- multiple memory controllers & separate address lines, one for each access
  - different controllers cannot access the same bank
- less area than dual porting

Effect on memory system performance?

Advanced Caching Techniques

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- increase cache throughput
- increase memory/cache bandwidth

Other Techniques

- Hardware or compiler-based prefetching (decreases misses)
- Coupling a write-through memory update policy with a write buffer (eliminates store ops/hides store latencies)
- Merging requests to the same cache block in a non-blocking cache (hide miss penalty)
- TLB (reduce page fault time (penalty))
- Cache hierarchies (reduce miss penalty)
- Virtual caches (reduce L1 cache access time)
- Wider bus (increase bandwidth)