TLBs

Jinkyu Jeong (jinkyu@skku.edu)
Computer Systems Laboratory
Sungkyunkwan University
http://csl.skku.edu
Address Translation Steps

• For each memory reference,
  – Extract VPN from VA
  – Calculate the address of PTE
  – Read the PTE from memory
  – Extract PFN from PTE
  – Build PA
  – Read contents of PA from memory into register

• Which steps are expensive?
The Problem

• **Address translation is too slow**
  – A simple linear page table doubles the cost of memory lookups
    • One for the page table, another to fetch the data
  – Multi-level page tables increase the cost further (discussed later)

• **Goal: make address translation fast**
  – Make fetching from a virtual address about as efficient as fetching from a physical address
TLB

- Translation Lookaside Buffer
  - A hardware cache of popular virtual-to-physical address translations
  - Essential component which makes virtual memory possible

- TLB exploits locality
  - Temporal locality: an instruction or data item that has been recently accessed will likely be re-accessed soon
    - Instructions and data accesses in loops, …
  - Spatial locality: if a program accesses memory at address $x$, it will likely soon access memory near $x$
    - Code execution, array traversal, stack accesses, …
TLB Organization

- TLB is implemented in hardware
  - Processes only use a handful of pages at a time
    - 16~256 entries in TLB is typical
  - Usually fully associative
    - All entries looked up in parallel
    - But may be set associative to reduce latency
  - Replacement policy: LRU (Least Recently Used)
  - TLB actually caches the whole PTEs, not just PFNs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Valid</th>
<th>Tag (VPN)</th>
<th>Value (PTE)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>0x1000</td>
<td>V R M Prot PFN 0x1234</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>0x2400</td>
<td>V R M Prot PFN 0x8800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Address Translation with TLB

CPU → logical address → TLB

TLB hit → physical address

TLB miss → page table

physical memory
Handling TLB Misses

• Software-managed TLB
  – CPU traps into OS upon TLB miss
  – OS finds right PTE and loads it into TLB
  – CPU ISA has (privileged) instructions for TLB manipulation
  – Page tables can be in any format convenient for OS (flexible)

• Hardware-managed TLB
  – CPU knows where page tables are in memory (PTBR)
    • e.g. CR3 (or PDBR) register in IA-32
  – OS maintains page tables
  – CPU “walks” the page table and fills TLB
  – Page tables have to be in hardware-defined format
TLB on Context Switches

• Flush TLB on each context switch
  – TLB is flushed automatically when PTBR is changed in a hardware-managed TLB
  – Some architectures support the pinning of pages into TLB
    • For pages that are globally-shared among processes (e.g. kernel pages)
    • MIPS, Intel, etc.

• Track which entries are for which process
  – Tag each TLB entry with an ASID (Address Space ID)
  – A privileged register holds the ASID of the current process
  – MIPS supports 8-bit ASID
    • Why not use PID?
    • What if there are more than 256 processes running?
TLB Performance

• TLB is the source of many performance problems
  – Performance metric: hit rate, lookup latency, …

• Increase TLB reach (= # TLB entries * Page size)
  – Increase the page size: e.g. 2MB, 1GB page support in Intel 64
  – Increase the TLB size

• Use multi-level TLBs
  – e.g. Intel Haswell (4KB pages): L1 ITLB 128 entries (4-way),
    L1 DTLB 64-entries (4-way), L2 STLB 1024 entries (8-way)

• Change your algorithms and data structures to be
  TLB-friendly
From CPU to Memory

• A process is executing on the CPU, and it issues a read to a virtual address
Integrating VM and Cache (I)

- Physically addressed cache
  - Allows multiple processes to have blocks in cache
  - Allows multiple processes to share pages
  - Address translation is on the critical path
Integrating VM and Cache (2)

- Virtually addressed, virtually tagged cache
  - Homonym problem
    - Each process has a different translation of the same virtual address
  - Address synonyms or aliases problem
    - Two different virtual addresses point to the same physical address
Integrating VM and Cache (3)

- Virtually addressed, physically tagged cache
  - Use virtual address to access the TLB and cache in parallel
  - TLB produces the PFN – which must match the physical tag of the accessed cache line for it to be a “hit”