Virtual Memory Design Issues: Address Translation

Jaswinder Pal Singh and a Fabulous Course Staff
Computer Science Department
Princeton University
(http://www.cs.princeton.edu/courses/cos318/)

Virtual Memory Design Goals

- Protection
- Virtualization
  - Use disk to extend physical memory
  - Make addressing user friendly (0 to high address)
- Enabling memory sharing (code, libraries, communication)
- Efficiency
  - Translation efficiency (TLB as cache)
  - Access efficiency
    - Access time = \( h \cdot \text{memory access time} + (1 - h) \cdot \text{disk access time} \)
    - E.g. Suppose memory access time = 100ns, disk access time = 10ms
    - If \( h = 90\% \), VM access time is 1ms!
- Portability

Recall Address translation: Base and Bound

- Pros: Simple, fast, cheap, safe, can relocate
- Cons:
  - Can’t keep program from accidentally overwriting its own code
  - Can’t share code/data with other processes (all or nothing)
  - Can’t grow stack/heap as needed (stop program, change reg, …)

Recall Address Translation: Segmentation

- A segment is a contiguous region of virtual memory
- Every process has a segment table (in hardware)
  - Entry in table per segment
- Segment can be located anywhere in physical memory
  - Each segment has: start, length, access permission
- Processes can share segments
  - Same start, length, same/different access permissions
Segmentation

Pros
- Can share code/data segments between processes
- Can protect code segment from being overwritten
- Can transparently grow stack/heap as needed
- Can detect if need to copy-on-write

Cons
- Complex memory management due to external fragmentation
  - Need to find chunk of particular size
  - Wasted space between chunks/segments
  - May need to rearrange memory from time to time to make room for new segment or to grow segment

Segments Enable Copy-on-Write

- Idea of Copy-on-Write
  - Child process inherits copy of parent's address space on fork
  - But don't really want to make a copy of all data upon fork
  - Would like to share as far as possible and make own copy only "on-demand", i.e. upon a write

- Segments allow this to an extent
  - Copy segment table into child, not entire address space
  - Mark all parent and child segments read-only
  - Start child process; return to parent
  - If child or parent writes to a segment (e.g. stack, heap)
    - Trap into kernel
    - At this point, make a copy of the segment, and resume

Recall Address Translation: Paging

- Manage memory in fixed size units, or pages
- Finding a free page is easy
  - Effectively a bitmap allocation: 00111110000001100
  - Every bit represents one physical page frame
- Every process has its own page table
  - Stored in physical memory
  - Supported by a couple of hardware registers:
    - Pointer to start of page table
    - Page table length

- Recall fancier structures: segmentation+paging, multi-level PT
  - Better for sparse virtual address spaces
  - E.g. per-processor heaps, per-thread stacks, memory mapped files, dynamically linked libraries, ...
  - Eliminate need for page table entries for address space "holes"
Multilevel Page Table

Copy on Write with Paging

UNIX fork with copy on write
- Copy page table of parent into child process
- Mark all pages (in new and old page tables) as read-only
- Trap into kernel on write (in child or parent)
- Copy page
- Mark both as writeable
- Resume execution
- Finer grained than with segments

Shared Pages

- PTEs from two processes share the same physical pages
  - Entries in both page tables point to same page frames
  - What use cases?
- Implementation issues
  - What if you terminate a process with shared pages
  - Paging in/out shared pages
  - Pinning, unpinning shared pages
  - Deriving the working set for a process with shared pages

Pinning (or Locking) Page Frames

- When do you need it?
  - When DMA is in progress, you don’t want to page the pages out to avoid CPU from overwriting the pages
- Mechanism?
  - A data structure to remember all pinned pages
  - Paging algorithm checks the data structure to decide on page replacement
  - Special calls to pin and unpin certain pages
Zeroing Pages

- Initialize pages to all zero values
  - Heap and static data are initialized
- How to implement?
  - On the first page fault on a data page or stack page, zero it
  - Or, have a special thread zeroing pages in the background

Efficient address translation

- Recall translation lookaside buffer (TLB)
  - Cache of recent virtual page → physical page translations
  - If cache hit, use translation
  - If cache miss, walk (perhaps multi-level) page table

TLB Performance

- Cost of translation = Cost of TLB lookup + \text{Prob(TLB miss)} \times \text{cost of page table lookup}
- Cost of a TLB miss on a modern processor?
  - Cost of multi-level page table walk
  - Software-controlled: plus cost of trap handler entry/exit
  - Use additional caching principles: multi-level caching, etc

Intel i7 Memory hierarchy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cache</th>
<th>Hit Cost</th>
<th>Size</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1st level cache/first level TLB</td>
<td>1 ns</td>
<td>64 KB</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd level cache/second level TLB</td>
<td>4 ns</td>
<td>256 KB</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd level cache</td>
<td>12 ns</td>
<td>2 MB</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Memory (DRAM)</td>
<td>100 ns</td>
<td>10 GB</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data center memory (DRAM)</td>
<td>100 (\mu)s</td>
<td>100 TB</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local non-volatile memory</td>
<td>100 (\mu)s</td>
<td>100 GB</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local disk</td>
<td>10 ms</td>
<td>1 TB</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data center disk</td>
<td>10 ms</td>
<td>100 PB</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Remote data center disk</td>
<td>200 ms</td>
<td>1 XB</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

TLB is important: Intel i7 Processor Chip

Intel i7 Memory hierarchy

17 has 8MB as shared 3rd level cache; 2nd level cache is per-core
Problem with Translation Slowdown

- What is the cost of a first level TLB miss?
  - Second level TLB lookup
- What is the cost of a second level TLB miss?
  - x86: 2-4 level page table walk
- Problem: Do we need to wait for the address translation in order to look up the caches (for code and data)?

Virtually vs. Physically Addressed Caches

- It can be too slow to first access TLB to find physical address, then look up address in the cache
- Instead, first level cache is virtually addressed
- In parallel with cache lookup using virtual address, access TLB to generate physical address in case of a cache miss

Virtually addressed caches

Physically addressed cache
When do TLBs work/not work?

- Video Frame Buffer: 32 bits x 1K x 1K = 4MB

Superpages

- On many systems, TLB entry can be
  - A page
  - A superpage: a set of contiguous pages

- x86: superpage is a set of pages in one page table
  - x86 TLB entries
    - 4KB
    - 2MB
    - 1GB

When do TLBs Work/Not Work, Part 3

- What happens on a context switch?
  - Keep using TLB?
  - Flush TLB?

- Solution: Tagged TLB
  - Each TLB entry has process ID
  - TLB hit only if process ID matches current process
Aliasing

- Alias: two (or more) virtual cache entries that refer to the same physical memory
  - A consequence of a tagged virtually addressed cache!
  - A write to one copy needs to update all copies

- Typical solution
  - Keep both virtual and physical address for each entry in virtually addressed cache
  - Lookup virtually addressed cache and TLB in parallel
  - Check if physical address from TLB matches multiple entries, and update/invalidate other copies

TLB Consistency Issues

- “Snoopy” cache protocols (hardware)
  - Maintain consistency with DRAM, even when DMA happens
- Consistency between DRAM and TLBs (software)
  - You need to flush related TLBs whenever changing a page table entry in memory
- TLB “shoot-down”
  - On multiprocessors/multicore, when you modify a page table entry, need to flush all related TLB entries on all processors/cores

Summary

- Must consider many issues
  - Global and local replacement strategies
  - Management of backing store
  - Primitive operations
    - Pin/lock pages
    - Zero pages
    - Shared pages
    - Copy-on-write
- Real system designs are complex