# Performance Improvement

The material for this lecture is drawn, in part, from
*The Practice of Programming* (Kernighan & Pike) Chapter 7

# For Your Amusement

"Optimization hinders evolution."

-- Alan Perlis

"Premature optimization is the root of all evil."

-- Donald Knuth

"Rules of Optimization:

- Rule 1: Don't do it.
- Rule 2 (for experts only): Don't do it yet."

-- Michael A. Jackson

# "Programming in the Large" Steps

## Design & Implement

- Program & programming style (done)
- Common data structures and algorithms (done)
- Modularity (done)
- Building techniques & tools (done)

## Debug

- Debugging techniques & tools (done)

## Test

- Testing techniques (done)

## Maintain

- Performance improvement techniques & tools **<--** we are here

# Goals of this Lecture

Help you learn about:

- Techniques for improving program performance
  - How to make your programs run faster and/or use less memory
- The GPROF execution profiler

Why?

- In a large program, typically a small fragment of the code consumes most of the CPU time and/or memory
- A power programmer knows how to identify such code fragments
- A power programmer knows techniques for improving the performance of such code fragments

# Performance Improvement Pros

Techniques described in this lecture can yield answers to questions such as:

- How slow is my program?
- Where is my program slow?
- Why is my program slow?
- How can I make my program run faster?
- How can I make my program use less memory?

# Performance Improvement Cons

Techniques described in this lecture can yield code that:

- Is less clear/maintainable
- Might confuse debuggers
- Might contain bugs
  - Requires regression testing

So…

# When to Improve Performance

"The first principle of optimization is

***don't.***

Is the program good enough already?
Knowing how a program will be used
and the environment it runs in,
is there any benefit to making it faster?"

-- Kernighan & Pike

# Agenda

**Execution (time) efficiency**

- **Do timing studies**
- Identify hot spots
- Use a better algorithm or data structure
- Enable compiler speed optimization
- Tune the code

Memory (space) efficiency

# Timing a Program

Run a tool to time program execution

- E.g., Unix **`time`** command

```
$ time sort < bigfile.txt > output.txt
real     0m12.977s
user     0m12.860s
sys      0m0.010s
```

Output:

- **Real**: Wall-clock time between program invocation and termination
- **User**: CPU time spent executing the program
- **System**: CPU time spent within the OS on the program's behalf

But, which *parts* of the code are the most time consuming?

# Timing Parts of a Program

Call a function to compute **wall-clock time** consumed

- E.g., Unix **`gettimeofday()`** function (time since Jan 1, 1970)

```
#include <sys/time.h>

struct timeval startTime;
struct timeval endTime;
double wallClockSecondsConsumed;

gettimeofday(&startTime, NULL);
<execute some code here>
gettimeofday(&endTime, NULL);
wallClockSecondsConsumed =
   endTime.tv_sec - startTime.tv_sec +
   1.0E-6 * (endTime.tv_usec - startTime.tv_usec);
```

- Not defined by C90 standard

# Timing Parts of a Program (cont.)

## Call a function to compute **CPU time** consumed

- E.g. **`clock()`** function

```
#include <time.h>

clock_t startClock;
clock_t endClock;
double cpuSecondsConsumed;

startClock = clock();
<execute some code here>
endClock = clock();
cpuSecondsConsumed =
   ((double)(endClock - startClock)) / CLOCKS_PER_SEC;
```

- Defined by C90 standard

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## Memory (space) efficiency

# Identifying Hot Spots

Gather statistics about your program's execution

- How much time did execution of a particular function take?
- How many times was a particular function called?
- How many times was a particular line of code executed?
- Which lines of code used the most time?
- Etc.

How? Use an **execution profiler**

- Example: **`gprof`** (GNU Performance Profiler)

# GPROF Example Program

## Example program for GPROF analysis

- Sort an array of 10 million random integers
- Artificial:  consumes much CPU time, generates no output

```
#include <string.h>
#include <stdio.h>
#include <stdlib.h>

enum {MAX_SIZE = 10000000};
int a[MAX_SIZE]; /* Too big to fit in stack! */

void fillArray(int a[], int size)
{  int i;
   for (i = 0; i < size; i++)
      a[i] = rand();
}

void swap(int a[], int i, int j)
{  int temp = a[i];
   a[i] = a[j];
   a[j] = temp;
}
…
```

# GPROF Example Program (cont.)

## Example program for GPROF analysis (cont.)

```
…
int partition(int a[], int left, int right)
{   int first = left-1;
    int last = right;
    for (;;)
    {   while (a[++first] < a[right])
            ;
        while (a[right] < a[--last])
            if (last == left)
                break;
        if (first >= last)
            break;
        swap(a, first, last);
    }
    swap(a, first, right);
    return first;
}
…
```

# GPROF Example Program (cont.)

## Example program for GPROF analysis (cont.)

```
…
void quicksort(int a[], int left, int right)
{   if (right > left)
    {   int mid = partition(a, left, right);
        quicksort(a, left, mid - 1);
        quicksort(a, mid + 1, right);
    }
}

int main(void)
{   fillArray(a, MAX_SIZE);
    quicksort(a, 0, MAX_SIZE - 1);
    return 0;
}
```

# Using GPROF

## Step 1:  Instrument the program

```
gcc217 -pg mysort.c -o mysort
```

- Adds profiling code to mysort, that is…
- "Instruments" **`mysort`**

## Step 2:  Run the program

```
mysort
```

- Creates file **`gmon.out`** containing statistics

## Step 3:  Create a report

```
gprof mysort > myreport
```

- Uses **`mysort`** and **`gmon.out`** to create textual report

## Step 4:  Examine the report

```
cat myreport
```

# The GPROF Report

## Flat profile

| % time | cumulative seconds | self seconds | calls | self s/call | total s/call | name |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 84.54 | 2.27 | 2.27 | 6665307 | 0.00 | 0.00 | partition |
| 9.33 | 2.53 | 0.25 | 54328749 | 0.00 | 0.00 | swap |
| 2.99 | 2.61 | 0.08 | 1 | 0.08 | 2.61 | quicksort |
| 2.61 | 2.68 | 0.07 | 1 | 0.07 | 0.07 | fillArray |

- Each line describes one function
  - **name**: name of the function
  - **%time**: percentage of time spent executing this function
  - **cumulative seconds**: [skipping, as this isn't all that useful]
  - **self seconds**: time spent executing this function
  - **calls**: number of times function was called (excluding recursive)
  - **self s/call**: average time per execution (excluding descendents)
  - **total s/call**: average time per execution (including descendents)

# The GPROF Report (cont.)

## Call graph profile

```
index % time    self  children    called     name
                                                 <spontaneous>
[1]    100.0    0.00    2.68                 main [1]
                0.08    2.53       1/1           quicksort [2]
                0.07    0.00       1/1           fillArray [5]
-----------------------------------------------
                             13330614             quicksort [2]
                0.08    2.53       1/1           main [1]
[2]     97.4    0.08    2.53       1+13330614 quicksort [2]
                2.27    0.25 6665307/6665307     partition [3]
                             13330614             quicksort [2]
-----------------------------------------------
                2.27    0.25 6665307/6665307     quicksort [2]
[3]     94.4    2.27    0.25 6665307         partition [3]
                0.25    0.00 54328749/54328749     swap [4]
-----------------------------------------------
                0.25    0.00 54328749/54328749     partition [3]
[4]      9.4    0.25    0.00 54328749         swap [4]
-----------------------------------------------
                0.07    0.00       1/1           main [1]
[5]      2.6    0.07    0.00       1         fillArray [5]
-----------------------------------------------
```

# The GPROF Report (cont.)

## Call graph profile (cont.)

- Each section describes one function
  - Which functions called it, and how much time was consumed?
  - Which functions it calls, how many times, and for how long?
- Usually overkill; we won’t look at this output in any detail

# GPROF Report Analysis

## Observations

- **`swap()`** is called very many times; each call consumes little time; **`swap()`** consumes only 9% of the time overall
- **`partition()`** is called many times; each call consumes little time; but **`partition()`** consumes 85% of the time overall

## Conclusions

- To improve performance, try to make **`partition()`** faster
- Don't even think about trying to make **`fillArray()`** or **`quicksort()`** faster

# Aside: GPROF Design

Incidentally…

How does GPROF work?

- Good question!
- Essentially, by randomly sampling the code as it runs
- … and seeing what line is running, & what function it's in

# Agenda

## Execution (time) efficiency

- Do timing studies
- Identify hot spots
- **Use a better algorithm or data structure**
- Enable compiler speed optimization
- Tune the code

## Memory (space) efficiency

# Using Better Algs and DSs

Use a better algorithm or data structure

Example:

- For mysort, would mergesort work better than quicksort?

See COS 226!

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Memory (space) efficiency

# Enabling Speed Optimization

## Enable compiler speed optimization

```
gcc217 -Ox mysort.c -o mysort
```

- Compiler spends more time compiling your code so…
- Your code spends less time executing
- **x** can be:
  - **1**: optimize
  - **2**: optimize more
  - **3**: optimize yet more
- See "man gcc" for details

## Beware: Speed optimization can affect debugging

- E.g. Optimization eliminates variable => GDB cannot print value of variable

# Agenda

## Execution (time) efficiency

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## Memory (space) efficiency

# Avoiding Repeated Computation

Avoid repeated computation

Before:

```
int g(int x)
{  return f(x) + f(x) + f(x) + f(x);
}
```

After:

```
int g(int x)
{  return 4 * f(x);
}
```

Could a good compiler do that for you?

# Aside: Side Effects as Blockers

```
int g(int x)
{   return f(x) + f(x) + f(x) + f(x);
}
```

```
int g(int x)
{   return 4 * f(x);
}
```

Q: Could a good compiler do that for you?

A: Probably not

Suppose `f()` has **side effects**?

```
int counter = 0;
...
int f(int x)
{   return counter++;
}
```

And `f()` might be defined in another file known only at link time!

# Avoiding Repeated Computation

Avoid repeated computation

Before:

```
for (i = 0; i < strlen(s); i++)
{  /* Do something with s[i] */
}
```

After:

```
length = strlen(s);
for (i = 0; i < length; i++)
{  /* Do something with s[i] */
}
```

Could a good compiler do that for you?

# Avoiding Repeated Computation

## Avoid repeated computation

Before:

```
for (i = 0; i < n; i++)
   for (j = 0; j < n; j++)
      a[n*i + j] = b[j];
```

After:

```
int ni;
…
for (i = 0; i < n; i++)
{  ni = n * i;
   for (j = 0; j < n; j++)
      a[ni + j] = b[j];
}
```

Could a good compiler do that for you?

# Tune the Code

## Avoid repeated computation

Before:

```
void twiddle(int *p1, int *p2)
{   *p1 += *p2;
    *p1 += *p2;
}
```

After:

```
void twiddle(int *p1, int *p2)
{   *p1 += *p2 * 2;
}
```

Could a good compiler do that for you?

# Aside: Aliases as Blockers

```
void twiddle(int *p1, int *p2)
{   *p1 += *p2;
    *p1 += *p2;
}
```

```
void twiddle(int *p1, int *p2)
{   *p1 += *p2 * 2;
}
```

Q: Could a good compiler do that for you?

A: Not necessarily

What if **`p1`** and **`p2`** are **aliases**?

- What if **`p1`** and **`p2`** point to the same integer?
- First version: result is 4 times **`*p1`**
- Second version: result is 3 times **`*p1`**

Some compilers support **`restrict`** keyword

# Inlining Function Calls

**Inline** function calls

Could a good compiler do that for you?

Before:

```
void g(void)
{   /* Some code */
}
void f(void)
{   …
    g();
    …
}
```

After:

```
void f(void)
{   …
    /* Some code */
    …
}
```

Beware: Can introduce redundant/cloned code
Some compilers support `inline` keyword

# Unrolling Loops

Could a good compiler do that for you?

## **Unroll** loops

Original:

```
for (i = 0; i < 6; i++)
   a[i] = b[i] + c[i];
```

Maybe faster:

```
for (i = 0; i < 6; i += 2)
{  a[i+0] = b[i+0] + c[i+0];
   a[i+1] = b[i+1] + c[i+1];
}
```

Maybe even faster:

```
a[i+0] = b[i+0] + c[i+0];
a[i+1] = b[i+1] + c[i+1];
a[i+2] = b[i+2] + c[i+2];
a[i+3] = b[i+3] + c[i+3];
a[i+4] = b[i+4] + c[i+4];
a[i+5] = b[i+5] + c[i+5];
```

Some compilers provide option, e.g. `-funroll-loops`

# Using a Lower-Level Language

## Rewrite code in a lower-level language

- As described in second half of course…
- Compose key functions in **assembly language** instead of C
  - Use registers instead of memory
  - Use instructions (e.g. **`adc`**) that compiler doesn't know

## Beware: Modern optimizing compilers generate fast code

- Hand-written assembly language code could be slower!

# Agenda

Execution (time) efficiency

- Do timing studies
- Identify hot spots
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- Tune the code

**Memory (space) efficiency**

# Improving Memory Efficiency

These days memory is cheap, so…

**Memory** (**space**) efficiency typically is less important than **execution** (**time**) efficiency

Techniques to improve memory (space) efficiency…

# Improving Memory Efficiency

Use a smaller data type

- E.g. `short` instead of `int`

Compute instead of storing

- E.g. To determine linked list length, traverse nodes instead of storing node count

Enable compiler size optimization

- `gcc217 -Os mysort.c -o mysort`

# Summary

Steps to improve **execution** (**time**) efficiency:

- Do timing studies
- Identify hot spots (using GPROF)
- Use a better algorithm or data structure
- Enable compiler speed optimization
- Tune the code

Techniques to improve **memory** (**space**) efficiency:

- Use a smaller data type
- Compute instead of storing
- Enable compiler size optimization

And, most importantly…

# Summary (cont.)

Clarity supersedes performance

**Don't improve performance unless you must!!!**