Performance: More than Asymptotic Complexity

Constant factors matter too!

- You can easily see 10:1 performance range depending on how your code is written.
- Must optimize at multiple levels: algorithm, data representations, procedures, loops.

Must understand the system to optimize performance.
- How programs are compiled and executed.
- How to measure program performance and identify bottlenecks.
- How to improve performance without destroying code modularity and generality.

Provide efficient mapping of program to machine:
- register allocation
- code selection and ordering
- eliminating minor inefficiencies

Don’t (usually) improve asymptotic efficiency.
- It’s up the programmer to select best overall algorithm.
- Big-O savings are often more important than constant factors.
- But constant factors also matter.
Limitations of Optimizing Compilers

Optimizing compilers have difficulty overcoming "optimization blockers":
- potential memory aliasing
- potential procedure side-effects.

Compilers operate under a fundamental constraint:
- They must not cause any change in program behavior under any possible condition.
- This often prevents making optimizations when they would only affect behavior under pathological conditions.

Machine-Independent Optimizations

Some optimizations you should do regardless of the processor / compiler.

**Code Motion:**
- Reduce frequency with which computation is performed, if it will always produce the same result.
- Move code out of loops if possible.

The unoptimized version:
```c
for (i=0; i<n; i++)
  for (j=0; j<n; j++)
    a[n*i + j] = b[j];
```

The optimized version:
```c
for (i=0; i<n; i++) {
  int ni = n*i;
  for (j=0; j<n; j++)
    a[ni + j] = b[j];
}
```

Most compilers do a good job with array code and simple loop structures.

Compiler-Generated Code Motion

Most analysis is performed only within procedures; whole-program analysis is too expensive in most cases.

Most analysis is based only on static information.

When in doubt, the compiler must be conservative.

Code generated by gcc:
```
testl %edx, %edx
jle .L1
movslq %edx, %r9
xorl %r8d, %r8d
salq $2, %r9
.L3: xorl %eax, %eax
.L5: movl (%rsi,%rax,4), %ecx
movl %ecx, (%rdi,%rax,4)
addq $1, %rax
cmp %eax, %edx
jg .L5
addq $r9, %rdi
cmp %edx, %r8d
jne .L3
.L1: ret
```
Reduction in Strength

- Replace costly operations with simpler ones.
- Shift, add instead of multiply or divide: \(16 \times x\) becomes \(x << 4\).
- The utility of this is machine dependent; depends on the cost of multiply and divide instructions.
- On x86, integer multiply only requires 4 CPU cycles.

Recognize a sequence of products:

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

Optimize as follows:

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

Can We Optimize?

```c
int adder( int *p, int *q ) {
  *p = 2;
  *q = 3;
  return (*p + *q);
}
```

What value is returned? Couldn’t we just return 5 and save two memory references?

Not so fast! What if \(p\) and \(q\) point to the same location (i.e., contain the same address)? What’s returned then?

**Aliasing** means that a location may have multiple names. Often, the compiler must assume that aliasing is possible.

Make Use of Registers

Reading and writing registers is much faster than reading / writing memory. So, if you can ensure that frequently accessed variables are in registers, your program will execute better. But how do you do that?
Make Use of Registers

Reading and writing registers is much faster than reading/writing memory. So, if you can ensure that frequently accessed variables are in registers, your program will execute better. But how do you do that?

- The compiler should do that for you, if possible.
- Compiler is not always able to determine whether a variable can be held in a register.
- Especially when there’s the possibility of aliasing. What’s the problem?

Share Common Subexpressions

- Reuse portions of expressions.
- Compilers often are not very sophisticated in exploiting arithmetic properties.

/* Sum neighbors of i, j */
up = val[(i-1)*n + j];
down = val[(i+1)*n + j];
left = val[i*n + j-1];
right = val[i*n + j+1];
sum = up + down + left + right;

Uses 1 multiplication:

int inj = i*n + j;
up = val[inj - n];
down = val[inj + n];
left = val[inj - 1];
right = val[inj + 1];
sum = up + down + left + right;

Uses 3 multiplications:

leal -1(%edx),%ecx
imull %ebx,%ecx
leal 1(%edx),%eax
imull %ebx,%eax
imull %ebx,%edx

Measuring Performance: Time Scales

Absolute time: Typically uses nanoseconds (10^{-9} seconds).

Clock cycles:

- Most computers are controlled by a high frequency clock signal.
- Typical range:
  - Low end: 100 MHz: 10^8 cycles per second; clock period = 10ns.
  - High end: 2 GHz: 2 × 10^9 cycles per second; clock period = 0.5 ns.

Example of Performance Measurement

Loop unrolling: Perform more in each iteration of the loop. (Assume even number of elements.)

Original loop:

```c
void vsum1( int n ) {
    int i;
    for (i = 0; i < n; i++)
        c[i] = a[i] + b[i];
}
```

Loop unrolled:

```c
void vsum2( int n ) {  
    int i;
    for (i = 0; i < n; i+=2) {
        c[i] = a[i] + b[i];
        c[i+1] = a[i+1] + b[i+1];
    }
}
```

Why would this make any difference in performance?
Cycles Per Element

CPE is a convenient way to express performance of a program that operates on vectors or lists.

If the vector length = n, then

\[ T = \text{CPE} \times n + \text{Overhead} \]

Procedure to convert a string to lower case:

```c
void lower(char *s) {
    int i;
    for (i = 0; i < strlen(s); i++)
        if (s[i] >= 'A' && s[i] <= 'Z')
            s[i] -= ('A' - 'a');
    i++;
    if (i < strlen(s))
        goto loop;
}
```

**Observation:** Time quadruples when string length doubles (quadratic performance: \( O(n^2) \)). Why would that be?

Convert Loop to Goto Form

```c
void lower(char *s) {
    int i = 0;
    if (i >= strlen(s))
        goto done;
    loop:
        if (s[i] >= 'A' && s[i] <= 'Z')
            s[i] -= ('A' - 'a');
        i++;
        if (i < strlen(s))
            goto loop;
    done:
}
```

So what is the issue?

- `strlen` is executed every iteration.
- `strlen` is linear in length of the string; must scan string until it finds `\0`. Why is that?
- Overall performance is quadratic. What do you do?
Improving Performance

Can move the call to `strlen` outside of loop, since the result does not change from one iteration to another. This is a form of code motion.

```c
void lower( char *s )
{
    int i;
    int len = strlen(s);
    for (i = 0; i < len; i++)
        if (s[i] >= 'A' && s[i] <= 'Z')
            s[i] -= ('A' - 'a');
}
```

Now, the run time doubles when the string length doubles (linear performance: $O(n)$).

Can you see other obvious optimizations in this code?

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### Optimization Example: Vector ADT

Create a vector abstract data type similar to array implementations in Pascal, ML, Java. E.g., always do bounds checking.

**Procedures:**

- `vec_ptr new_vec( int len )`
  - Create vector of specified length

- `int get_vec_element( vec_ptr v, int index, int *dest )`
  - Retrieve vector element, store at *dest
  - Return 0 if out of bounds, 1 if successful

- `int *get_vec_start( vec_ptr v )`
  - Return pointer to start of vector data

---

### Optimization Example

**Why couldn’t the compiler move `strlen` out of the inner loop?**

- Procedures may have side effects. E.g., might alter global state each time called.
- Function may not return the same value for given arguments; might depend on other parts of the global state.
- Procedure `lower` could interact with `strlen`.

**Why doesn’t the compiler just look at the code for `strlen`?**

- The linker might overload with a different version (unless it’s declared static).
- Inter-procedural optimization is rare because of the cost.

**Warning:**

- The compiler treats a procedure call as a black box.
- It applies weak optimizations in and around procedures.

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### Optimization Example

**void combine1( vec_ptr v, int *dest )**

```c
void combine1( vec_ptr v, int *dest )
{
    int i;
    *dest = 0;
    for( i = 0; i < vec_length(v); i++ )
    {
        int val;
        get_vec_element( v, i, &val );
        *dest += val;
    }
}
```

**Procedure:**

- Compute sum of all elements of integer vector.
- Store result at destination location.
- Vector data structure and operations defined via abstract data type.

x86 Performance: clock cycles / element

- 42.06 (compiled -Og)
- 31.25 (compiled -O2)
Reduction in Strength

```c
void combine2( vec_ptr v, int *dest )
{
    int i;
    int length = vec_length(v);
    int *data = get_vec_start(v);
    *dest = 0;
    for( i = 0; i < length; i++ )
        *dest += data[i];
}
```

Eliminate Unneeded Memory Refs

```c
void combine3( vec_ptr v, int *dest )
{
    int i;
    int length = vec_length(v);
    int *data = get_vec_start(v);
    int sum = 0;
    for( i = 0; i < length; i++ )
        sum += data[i];
    *dest = sum;
}
```

**Optimization**

- Avoid procedure call to retrieve each vector element.
- Get pointer to start of array before loop.
- Within the loop just do pointer reference.
- Not as clean in terms of data abstraction.
- CPE: 6.00 (compiled -O2)
- *Procedure calls are expensive!*
- *Bounds checking is expensive!*

**Optimization**

- Don’t need to store result in destination until the end.
- Local variable sum will be held in a register.
- Avoids 1 memory read and 1 memory write per cycle.
- CPE: 2.00 (compiled -O2)
- *Memory references are expensive!*

Detecting Unneeded Memory Refs

**Combine2**

- **L18:**
  - movl (%ecx,%edx,4),%eax
  - addl %eax,(%edi)
  -incl %edx
  -cmpl %esi,%edx
  -j1 .L18

**Combine3**

- **L24:**
  - addl (%eax,%edx,4),%ecx
  -incl %edx
  -cmpl %esi,%edx
  -j1 .L24

**Performance:**

- Combine2: 5 instructions in 6 clock cycles; addl must read and write memory.
- Combine3: 4 instructions in 2 clock cycles.

**Aliasing:** two different memory references specify a single location.

**Example:**

- let v: [3, 2, 17]
  - combine2( v, get_vec_start(v)+2 ) → ?
  - combine3( v, get_vec_start(v)+2 ) → ?

**Observations:**

- This can easily occur in C, since you’re allowed to do address arithmetic.
- You have direct access to storage structures.
- Get into the habit of introducing local variables and accumulating within loops.
- This is your way of telling the compiler not to check for potential aliasing.
```c
void combine3( vec_ptr v, int *dest )
{
    int i;
    int length = vec_length(v);
    int *data = get_vec_start(v);
    int sum = 0;
    for( i = 0; i < length; i++ )
        sum += data[i];
    *dest = sum;
}
```

**Task:**
- Compute sum of all elements in vector.
- Vector is represented by C-style abstract data type.
- Achieved cycles per element (CPE) of 2.00.

```c
void abstract_combine3( vec_ptr v, data_t *dest )
{
    int i;
    int length = vec_length(v);
    data_t *data = get_vec_start(v);
    data_t t = IDENT;
    for( i = 0; i < length; i++ )
        t = t OP data[i];
    *dest = t;
}
```

**Data Types:** Use different declarations for `data_t` (int, float, double, etc.)

**Operations:** Use different definitions of OP and IDENT (+, /, etc.)

### Machine Independent Optimization Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Method</th>
<th>Integer</th>
<th>Floating Point</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>abstract -g</td>
<td>42.06</td>
<td>41.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>abstract -O2</td>
<td>31.25</td>
<td>31.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>move vec_length</td>
<td>20.66</td>
<td>21.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>data access</td>
<td>6.00</td>
<td>8.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>accum in temp</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>3.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Optimizations: reduce function calls and memory references within loop.

**Performance anomaly:**
- Computing FP product of all elements exceptionally slow.
- Very large speedup when accumulate in temporary.
  - Caused by quirk in IA32 floating point.
  - Memory uses 64-bit format; register uses 80-bit format.
  - Benchmark data caused overflow in 64 bits, but not in 80 bits.

```c
void combine3p( vec_ptr v, int *dest )
{
    int length = vec_length(v);
    int *data = get_vec_start(v);
    int sum = 0;
    while ( data < dend )
    { 
        sum += *data;
        data++;
    }
    *dest = sum;
}
```

**Optimization:**
- Use pointers rather than array references.
- CPE: 3.00 (compiled -O2) – Oops! We’re making reverse progress.

**Warning:** Some compilers do a better job of optimizing array code.
**Array Code:**
```
.L24:
  addl (%eax,%edx,4), %ecx  # sum += data[i]
  incl %edx  # i++
  cmpl %esi,%edx  # i < length
  jl .L24  # if < goto Loop
```

**Pointer Code:**
```
.L30:
  addl (%eax), %ecx  # sum += *data[i]
  addl $4,%eax  # data++
  cmpl %edx,%eax  # data : dend
  jl .L30  # if < goto Loop
```

**Performance:**
- Array code: 4 instructions in 2 clock cycles
- Pointer code: almost same 4 instructions in 3 clock cycles

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**Code Motion**
- Compilers are good at this for simple loop/array structures.
- They don’t do well in the presence of procedure calls and potential memory aliasing.

**Reduction in Strength**
- Shift, add instead of multiply, divide
  - Compilers are (generally) good at this.
  - The exact trade off is machine-dependent.
- Keep data in registers rather than memory.
  - Compilers are not good at this, since they are concerned with potential aliasing.

**Share Common Subexpressions**
- Compilers have limited algebraic reasoning capabilities.

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**Important Tools**

**Measurement**
- Accurately compute time taken by code.
  - Most modern machines have built-in cycle counters.
  - Using them to get reliable measurements is tricky.
- Profile procedure calling frequencies (Unix tool gprof).

**Observation:** Generating assembly code:
- lets you see what optimizations the compiler can make;
- allows you to understand the capabilities / limitations of a particular compiler.

**Code Profiling Example**

**Task**
- Count word frequencies in a text document.
- Produce sorted list of words from most frequent to least.

**Steps**
- Convert strings to lowercase.
- Apply hash function.
- Read words and insert into hash table:
  - Mostly list operations.
  - Maintain counter for each unique word
- Sort the results.

**Data Set**
- Collected works of Shakespeare.
- 946,596 total words; 26,596 unique words.
- Initial implementation: 9.2 seconds.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Shakespeare’s most frequent words</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>the</td>
<td>29,801</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and</td>
<td>27,529</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>21,029</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to</td>
<td>20,957</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>of</td>
<td>18,514</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a</td>
<td>15,370</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>you</td>
<td>14,010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>my</td>
<td>12,936</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>in</td>
<td>11,722</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>that</td>
<td>11,519</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Code Profiling

Augment executable program with timing functions.
- Computes the (approximate) amount of time spent in each function.
- Time Computation method:
  - Periodically (~ every 10ms) interrupt program.
  - Determine what function is currently executing.
  - Increment the timer by interval (e.g., 10ms).
- Also maintains counter for each function indicating the number of times it is called.

Using:

```bash
gcc -O2 -pg prog.c -o prog
./prog
```

This executes in normal fashion, but also generates file gmon.out.

```bash
gprof prog
```

Generates profile information based on gmon.out.

Profiling Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>% time</th>
<th>cumulative seconds</th>
<th>self seconds</th>
<th>calls</th>
<th>self ms/call</th>
<th>total ms/call</th>
<th>name</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>86.60</td>
<td>8.21</td>
<td>8.21</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8210.00</td>
<td>8210.00</td>
<td>sort_words</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.80</td>
<td>8.76</td>
<td>0.55</td>
<td>946596</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>lower1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.75</td>
<td>9.21</td>
<td>0.45</td>
<td>946596</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>fine_ele_rec</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.27</td>
<td>9.33</td>
<td>0.12</td>
<td>946596</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>h_add</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Call Statistics: Number of calls and cumulative time for each function.

Performance Limiter:
- Using inefficient sorting algorithm.
- Single call uses 87% of CPU time.

The first obvious step in optimization is to use a more efficient sorting algorithm. Replacing the initial slow sort with the library function qsort (QuickSort), brought the time down from 9 seconds to around 1 second!

Further Optimizations

- Iter first: use iterative function to insert elements into the linked list; actually causes code to slow down.
- Iter last: iterative function that places new entries at end of the list rather than front; tends to place common words near the front of the list.
- Big table: increase the number of hash functions.
- Better hash: use a more sophisticated hash function.
- Linear lower: move strlen out of the loop.

By applying these optimizations successively and profiling the result, the overall runtime was reduced to around 0.5 seconds.

Profiling Observations

Benefits
- Helps identify performance bottlenecks.
- Especially useful for complex systems with many components.

Limitations
- Only shows performance for the data tested.
- E.g., linear lower did not show a big gain, since words are short.
  - Quadratic inefficiency could remain lurking in the code.
- The timing mechanism is fairly crude; it only works for programs that run for > 3 seconds.
Role of the Programmer

How should I write my programs, given that I have a good optimizing compiler?

- Don’t: Smash code into oblivion.
  - Becomes hard to read, maintain, and assure correctness.

- Do:
  - Select the best algorithm.
  - Write code that’s readable and maintainable.
    - Use procedures and recursion and eliminate built-in limits.
    - Even though these factors can slow down code.
  - Eliminate optimization blockers to allow the compiler to do its job.

- Focus on inner loops.
  - Do detailed optimizations where code will be executed repeatedly.
  - You’ll get the most performance gain here.

Summary

- Optimization blocker: procedure calls
- Optimization blocker: memory aliasing
- Tools (profiling) for understanding performance