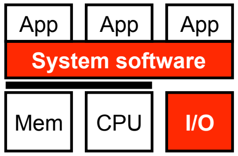
CIS 371
Computer Organization and Design

Unit 8: Virtual Memory

Based on slides by Prof. Amir Roth & Prof. Milo Martin

This Unit: Virtualization



- The operating system (OS)
  - A super-application
  - Hardware support for an OS
- Virtual memory
  - Page tables and address translation
  - TLBs and memory hierarchy issues

Readings

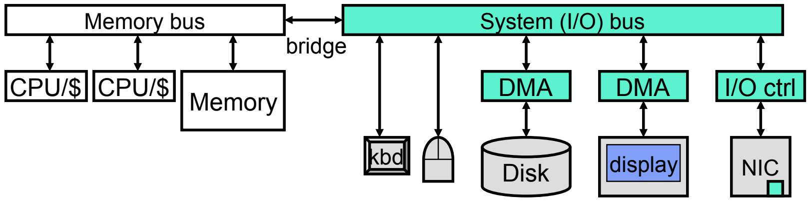
- P&H
  - Virtual Memory: 5.4

Start-of-class Question

- What is a "**trie**" data structure
  - Also called a "prefix tree"
- What is it used for?
- What properties does it have?
  - How is it different from a binary tree?
  - How is it different than a hash table

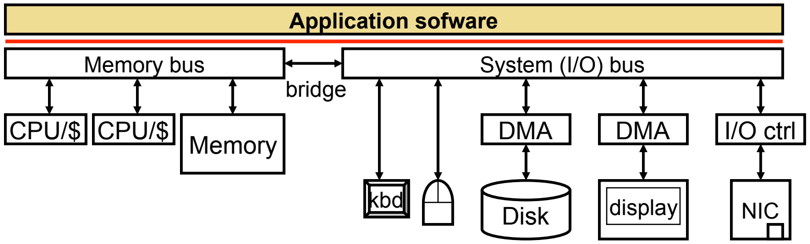
A Computer System: Hardware

- CPUs and memories
  - Connected by memory bus
- **I/O peripherals**: storage, input, display, network, …
  - With separate or built-in DMA
  - Connected by **system bus** (which is connected to memory bus)



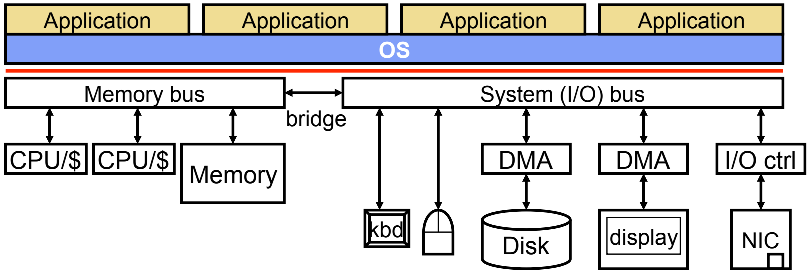
A Computer System: + App Software

- **Application software**: computer must do something



A Computer System: + OS

- **Operating System (OS):** virtualizes hardware for apps
  - **Abstraction**: provides **services** (e.g., threads, files, etc.)
    + Simplifies app programming model, raw hardware is nasty
  - **Isolation**: gives each app illusion of private CPU, memory, I/O
    + Simplifies app programming model
    + Increases hardware resource utilization



Operating System (OS) and User Apps

- Sane system development requires a split
  - Hardware itself facilitates/enforces this split

- **Operating System (OS)**: a super-privileged process
  - Manages hardware resource allocation/revocation for all processes
  - Has direct access to resource allocation features
  - Aware of many nasty hardware details
  - Aware of other processes
  - Talks directly to input/output devices (device driver software)

- **User-level apps**: ignorance is bliss
  - Unaware of most nasty hardware details
  - Unaware of other apps (and OS)
  - Explicitly denied access to resource allocation features

System Calls

- Controlled transfers to/from OS

- **System Call**: a user-level app “function call” to OS
  - Leave description of what you want done in registers
  - SYSCALL instruction (also called TRAP or INT)
    - Can’t allow user-level apps to invoke arbitrary OS code
    - Restricted set of legal OS addresses to jump to (**trap vector**)
  - Processor jumps to OS using trap vector
    - Sets privileged mode
  - OS performs operation
  - OS does a “return from system call”
    - Unsets privileged mode

Interrupts

- **Exceptions**: synchronous, generated by running app
  - E.g., illegal insn, divide by zero, etc.
- **Interrupts**: asynchronous events generated externally
  - E.g., timer, I/O request/reply, etc.
- **“Interrupt” handling**: same mechanism for both
  - “Interrupts” are on-chip signals/bits
    - Either internal (e.g., timer, exceptions) or from I/O devices
  - Processor continuously monitors interrupt status, when one is high…
  - Hardware jumps to some preset address in OS code (interrupt vector)
  - Like an asynchronous, non-programmatic SYSCALL
- **Timer**: programmable on-chip interrupt
  - Initialize with some number of micro-seconds
  - Timer counts down and interrupts when reaches 0

Typical I/O Device Interface

- Operating system talks to the I/O device
  - Send commands, query status, etc.
  - Software uses special uncached load/store operations
  - Hardware sends these reads/writes across I/O bus to device

- Direct Memory Access (DMA)
  - For big transfers, the I/O device accesses the memory directly
  - Example: DMA used to transfer an entire block to/from disk

- Interrupt-driven I/O
  - The I/O device tells the software its transfer is complete
  - Tells the hardware to raise an “interrupt” (door bell)
  - Processor jumps into the OS
  - Inefficient alternative: polling

Virtualizing Processors

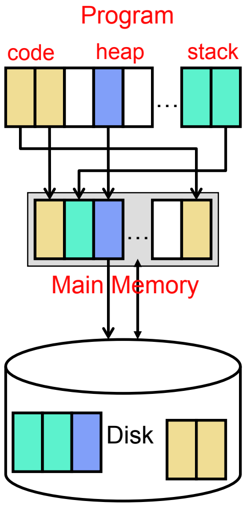
- How do multiple apps (and OS) share the processors?
  - **Goal: applications think there are an infinite # of processors**

- Solution: time-share the resource
  - Trigger a **context switch** at a regular interval (~1ms)
    - **Pre-emptive**: app doesn’t yield CPU, OS forcibly takes it
      - + Stops greedy apps from starving others
  - **Architected state**: PC, registers
    - Save and restore them on context switches
    - Memory state?
  - **Non-architected state**: caches, branch predictor tables, etc.
    - Ignore or flush
- Operating responsible to handle context switching
  - Hardware support is just a timer interrupt

Virtualizing Main Memory

- How do multiple apps (and the OS) share main memory?
  - **Goal: each application thinks it has infinite memory**
- One app may want more memory than is in the system
  - App's insn/data footprint may be larger than main memory
  - **Requires main memory to act like a cache**
    - With disk as next level in memory hierarchy (slow)
    - Write-back, write-allocate, large blocks or "pages"
  - No notion of "program not fitting" in registers or caches (why?)
- Solution:
  - Part #1: treat memory as a "cache"
    - Store the overflowed blocks in "swap" space on disk
  - Part #2: add a level of indirection (address translation)

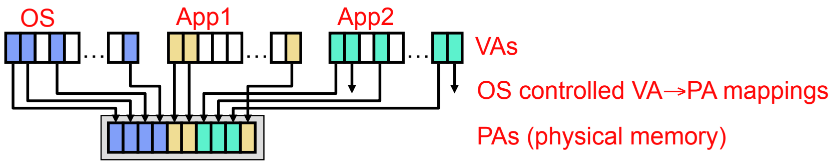
Virtual Memory (VM)



- Programs use **virtual addresses (VA)**
  - 0…2^N-1
  - VA size also referred to as machine size
  - E.g., 32-bit (embedded) or 64-bit (server)
- Memory uses **physical addresses (PA)**
  - 0…2^M-1 (typically M<N, especially if N=64)
  - 2^M is most physical memory machine supports
- VA→PA at **page** granularity (VP→PP)
  - By "system"
  - Mapping need not preserve contiguity
  - VP need not be mapped to any PP
  - Unmapped VPs live on disk (swap)

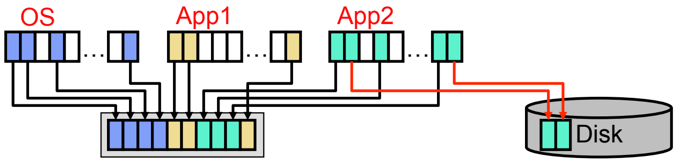
Virtual Memory (VM)

- **Virtual Memory (VM)**:
  - Level of indirection (like register renaming)
  - Application generated addresses are **virtual addresses (VAs)**
    - Each process ***thinks*** it has its own 2^N bytes of address space
  - Memory accessed using **physical addresses (PAs)**
  - VAs translated to PAs at some coarse granularity (page)
  - OS controls VA to PA mapping for itself and all other processes
  - Logically: translation performed before every insn fetch, load, store
  - Physically: hardware acceleration removes translation overhead


OS
App1
App2
VAs
OS controlled VA→PA mappings
PAs (physical memory)

Virtual Memory: The Basics

- Programs use **virtual addresses (VA)**
  - VA size (N) aka machine size (e.g., Core 2 Duo: 48-bit)
- Memory uses **physical addresses (PA)**
  - PA size (M) typically M<N, especially if N=64
  - 2^M is most physical memory machine supports
- VA→PA at **page** granularity (VP→PP)
  - Mapping need not preserve contiguity
  - VP need not be mapped to any PP
  - Unmapped VPs live on disk (swap) or nowhere (if not yet touched)



VM is an Old Idea: Older than Caches

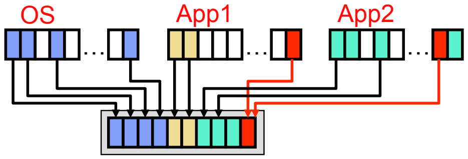
- Original motivation: **single-program compatibility**
  - IBM System 370: a family of computers with one software suite
  - \+ Same program could run on machines with different memory sizes
  - – Prior, programmers explicitly accounted for memory size

- But also: **full-associativity + software replacement**
  - Memory t_{miss} is high: extremely important to reduce $\%_{miss}$

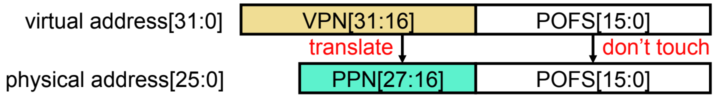
Parameter	**I$/D$**	**L2**	**Main Memory**
t_{hit}	2ns	10ns	**30ns**
t_{miss}	**10ns**	**30ns**	**10ms (10M ns)**
Capacity	8–64KB	128KB–2MB	**64MB–64GB**
Block size	16–32B	32–256B	**4+KB**
Assoc./Repl.	1–4, LRU	4–16, LRU	**Full, "working set"**

Uses of Virtual Memory

- More recently: **isolation** and **multi-programming**
  - Each app thinks it has 2^N B of memory, its stack starts 0xFFFFFFFF,…
  - Apps prevented from reading/writing each other's memory
    - Can't even address the other program's memory!
- **Protection**
  - Each page with a read/write/execute permission set by OS
  - Enforced by hardware
- **Inter-process communication**.
  - Map same physical pages into multiple virtual address spaces
  - Or share files via the UNIX `mmap()` call



Address Translation



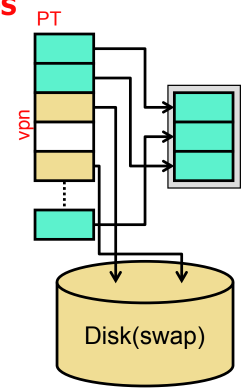
- VA→PA mapping called **address translation**
  - Split VA into **virtual page number (VPN)** & **page offset (POFS)**
  - Translate VPN into **physical page number (PPN)**
  - POFS is not translated
  - VA→PA = [VPN, POFS] → [PPN, POFS]

- Example above
  - 64KB pages → 16-bit POFS
  - 32-bit machine → 32-bit VA → 16-bit VPN
  - Maximum 256MB memory → 28-bit PA → 12-bit PPN

Address Translation Mechanics I

- How are addresses translated?
  - In software (for now) but with hardware acceleration (a little later)
- Each process allocated a **page table (PT)**
  - **Software data structure constructed by OS**
  - Maps VPs to PPs or to disk (swap) addresses
    - VP entries empty if page never referenced
  - Translation is table lookup

```
struct {
   int ppn;
   int is_valid, is_dirty, is_swapped;
} PTE;
struct PTE page_table[NUM_VIRTUAL_PAGES];

int translate(int vpn) {
  if (page_table[vpn].is_valid)
     return page_table[vpn].ppn;
}
```



Page Table Size

- How big is a page table on the following machine?
  - 32-bit machine
  - 4B page table entries (PTEs)
  - 4KB pages

  - 32-bit machine → 32-bit VA → 4GB virtual memory
  - 4GB virtual memory / 4KB page size → 1M VPs
  - 1M VPs * 4B PTE → 4MB

- How big would the page table be with 64KB pages?
- How big would it be for a 64-bit machine?

- Page tables can get big
  - There are ways of making them smaller

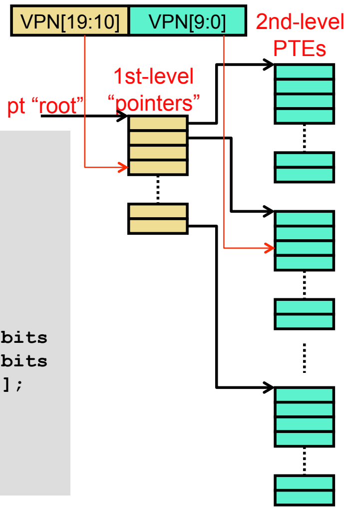
Multi-Level Page Table (PT)

- One way: **multi-level page tables**
  - Tree of page tables ("trie")
  - Lowest-level tables hold PTEs
  - Upper-level tables hold pointers to lower-level tables
  - Different parts of VPN used to index different levels

- Example: two-level page table for machine on last slide
  - Compute number of pages needed for lowest-level (PTEs)
    - 4KB pages / 4B PTEs → 1K PTEs/page
    - 1M PTEs / (1K PTEs/page) → 1K pages
  - Compute number of pages needed for upper-level (pointers)
    - 1K lowest-level pages → 1K pointers
    - 1K pointers * 32-bit VA → 4KB → 1 upper level page

Multi-Level Page Table (PT)

- 20-bit VPN
  - Upper 10 bits index 1st-level table
  - Lower 10 bits index 2nd-level table



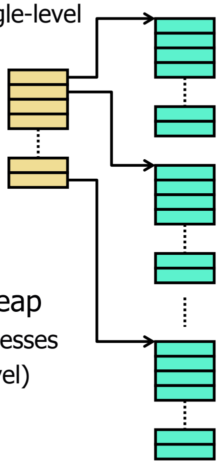
```
struct {
   int ppn;
   int is_valid, is_dirty, is_swapped;
} PTE;
struct { struct PTE ptes[1024]; } L2PT;
struct L2PT *page_table[1024];

int translate(int vpn) {
  index1 = (vpn >> 10);    // upper 10 bits
  index2 = (vpn & 0x3ff);  // lower 10 bits
  struct L2PT *l2pt = page_table[index1];
  if (l2pt != NULL &&
      l2pt->ptes[index2].is_valid)
    return l2pt->ptes[index2].ppn;
}
```

Multi-Level Page Table (PT)

- Have we saved any space?
  - Isn't total size of 2nd level tables same as single-level table (i.e., 4MB)?
  - Yes, but…

- Large virtual address regions unused
  - Corresponding 2nd-level tables need not exist
  - Corresponding 1st-level pointers are null

- Example: 2MB code, 64KB stack, 16MB heap
  - Each 2nd-level table maps 4MB of virtual addresses
  - 1 for code, 1 for stack, 4 for heap, (+1 1st-level)
  - 7 total pages = 28KB (much less than 4MB)



Page-Level Protection

- **Page-level protection**
  - Piggy-back page-table mechanism
  - Map VPN to PPN + Read/Write/Execute permission bits
  - Attempt to execute data, to write read-only data?
    - Exception → OS terminates program
  - Useful (for OS itself actually)

```
struct {
   int ppn;
   int is_valid, is_dirty, is_swapped, permissions;
} PTE;
struct PTE page_table[NUM_VIRTUAL_PAGES];

int translate(int vpn, int action) {
   if (page_table[vpn].is_valid &&
       !(page_table [vpn].permissions & action)) kill;
   …
}
```

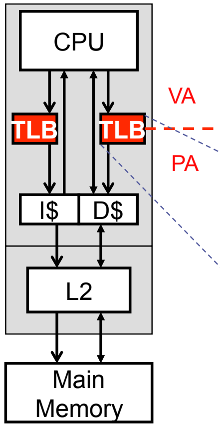
Address Translation Mechanics II

- Conceptually
  - Translate VA to PA before every cache access
  - Walk the page table before every load/store/insn-fetch
  - – Would be terribly inefficient (even in hardware)

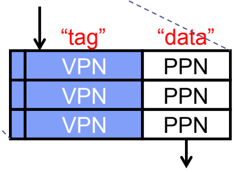
- In reality
  - **Translation Lookaside Buffer (TLB)**: cache translations
  - Only walk page table on TLB miss

- Hardware truisms
  - Functionality problem? Add indirection (e.g., VM)
  - Performance problem? Add cache (e.g., TLB)

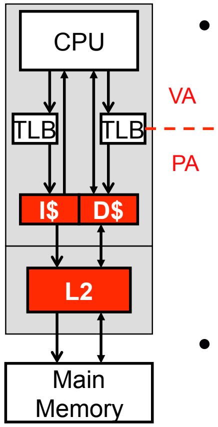
Translation Lookaside Buffer



- **Translation lookaside buffer (TLB)**
  - Small cache: 16–64 entries
  - Associative (4+ way or fully associative)
  - \+ Exploits temporal locality in page table
  - What if an entry isn't found in the TLB?
    - Invoke TLB miss handler

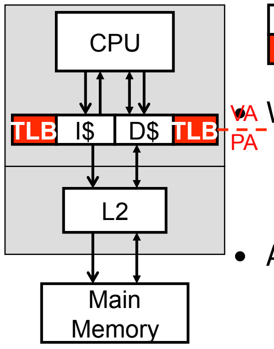


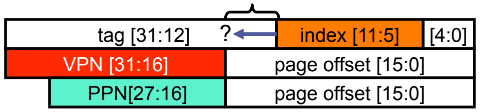
Serial TLB & Cache Access



- **"Physical" caches**
  - Indexed and tagged by **physical addresses**
  - \+ Natural, "lazy" sharing of caches between apps/OS
    - VM ensures isolation (via **physical addresses**)
    - No need to do anything on context switches
    - Multi-threading works too
  - \+ Cached inter-process communication works
    - Single copy indexed by physical address
  - – Slow: adds at least one cycle to t_{hit}
- Note: **TLBs are by definition "virtual"**
  - Indexed and tagged by **virtual addresses**
  - Flush across context switches
  - Or extend with process identifier tags (x86)

Parallel TLB & Cache Access

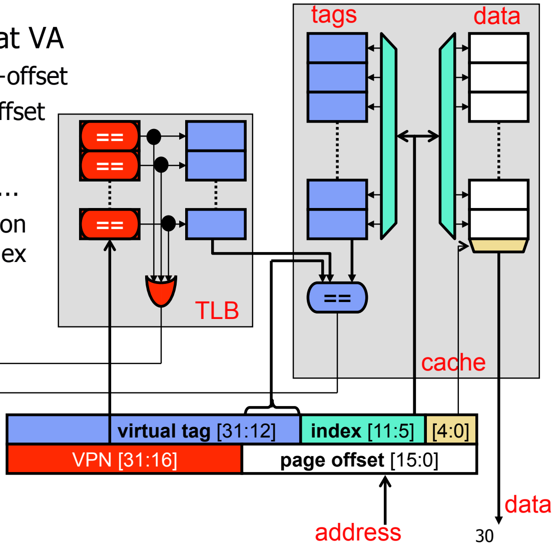




- What about parallel access?
  - Only if…
    (cache size) / (associativity) ≤ page size
  - Index bits same in virt. and physical addresses!
- Access TLB in parallel with cache
  - Cache access needs tag only at very end
  - \+ Fast: no additional t_{hit} cycles
  - \+ No context-switching/aliasing problems
  - Dominant organization used today
- Example: Core 2, 4KB pages, 32KB, 8-way SA L1 data cache
  - Implication: associativity allows bigger caches

Parallel TLB & Cache Access

- Two ways to look at VA
  - Cache: tag+index+offset
  - TLB: **VPN**+page offset
- Parallel cache/TLB…
  - If address translation doesn't change index
  - That is, VPN/index must not overlap



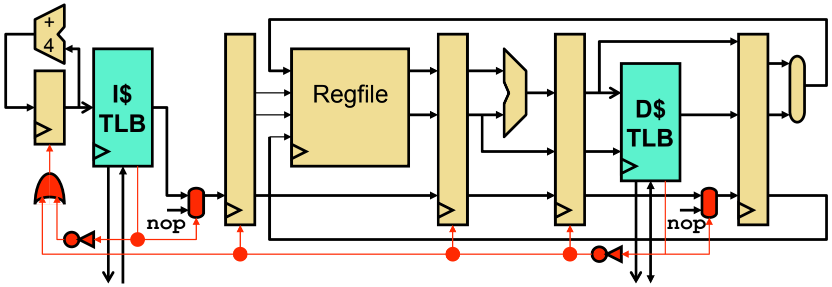
TLB Organization

- **Like caches**: TLBs also have ABCs
  - Capacity
  - Associativity (At least 4-way associative, fully-associative common)
  - What does it mean for a TLB to have a block size of two?
    - Two consecutive VPs share a single tag
  - **Like caches**: there can be L2 TLBs
- Example: AMD Opteron
  - 32-entry fully-assoc. TLBs, 512-entry 4-way L2 TLB (insn & data)
  - 4KB pages, 48-bit virtual addresses, four-level page table
- **Rule of thumb**: TLB should "cover" L2 contents
  - In other words: (#PTEs in TLB) * page size ≥ L2 size
  - Why? Consider relative miss latency in each…

TLB Misses

- **TLB miss:** translation not in TLB, but in page table
  - Two ways to "fill" it, both relatively fast
- **Software-managed TLB**: e.g., Alpha, MIPS
  - Short (~10 insn) OS routine walks page table, updates TLB
  - \+ Keeps page table format flexible
  - – Latency: one or two memory accesses + OS call (pipeline flush)
- **Hardware-managed TLB**: e.g., x86, recent SPARC, ARM
  - Page table root in hardware register, hardware "walks" table
  - \+ Latency: saves cost of OS call (avoids pipeline flush)
  - – Page table format is hard-coded
- Trend is towards hardware TLB miss handler

TB Misses and Pipeline Stalls



- TLB misses stall pipeline just like data hazards...
  - ...if TLB is hardware-managed
- If TLB is software-managed…
  - …must generate an interrupt
  - Hardware will not handle TLB miss

Page Faults

- **Page fault**: PTE not in TLB or page table
  - → page not in memory
  - Or no valid mapping → segmentation fault
  - Starts out as a TLB miss, detected by OS/hardware handler
- **OS software routine**:
  - Choose a physical page to replace
    - **"Working set"**: refined LRU, tracks active page usage
  - If dirty, write to disk
  - Read missing page from disk
    - Takes so long (~10ms), OS schedules another task
  - Requires yet another data structure: **frame map**
    - Maps physical pages to <process, virtual page> pairs
  - Treat like a normal TLB miss from here

Summary

- OS virtualizes memory and I/O devices
- Virtual memory
  - "infinite" memory, isolation, protection, inter-process communication
  - Page tables
  - Translation buffers
    - Parallel vs serial access, interaction with caching
  - Page faults