Real-time Process Network Sonar Beamformer

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Introduction

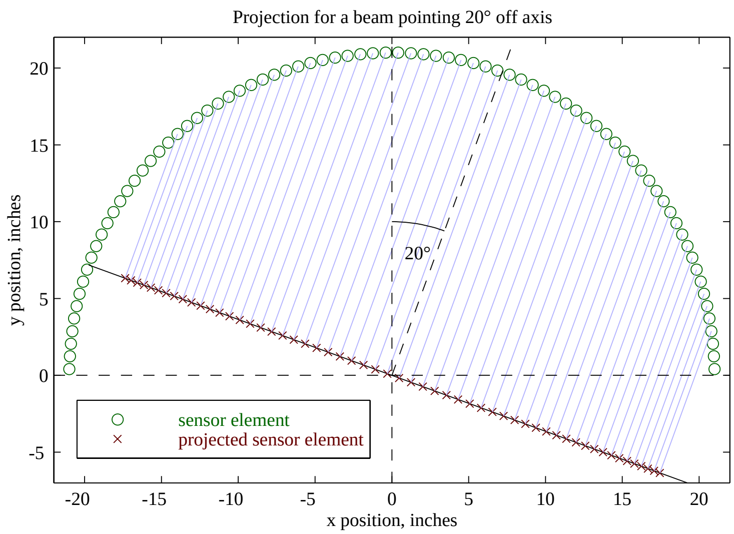
- ***Problem:*** **Beamforming is computationally intensive**
- ***Example:*** **High-resolution sonar beamformers (GFLOPS)**
  - Generation 1: expensive custom digital hardware (large state machines)
  - Generation 2: custom integration of programmable digital signal processors on commercial-off-the-shelf hardware (e.g. 120 DSPs in a VME rack)
- ***Objective:*** **Unix workstation beamformers**
  - Analysis: evaluate performance of beamforming kernels and systems
  - Modeling: capture parallelism, guarantee determinate bounded execution
  - Implementation: use portable, scalable software to achieve real-time performance on commodity hardware and lower development costs
- ***Solution:*** **Real-time beamforming on workstations**
  - Analysis: optimize kernels and profile beamfomers to measure scalability
  - Modeling: Process Networks
  - Implementation: Real-time POSIX threads using C++ on symmetric multiprocessor UltraSPARC-II workstation with native signal processing

Time-Domain Beamforming

- **Delay and sum weighted sensor outputs**
- **Geometrically project the sensor elements onto a line to compute the time delays**

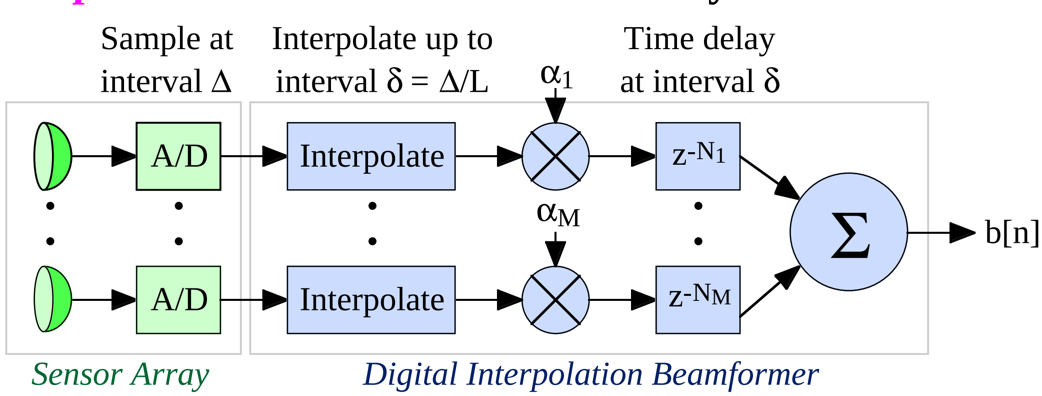
$$b(t) = \sum_{i=1}^{M} \alpha_i \, x_i(t-\tau_i)$$

$b(t)$	beam output
$x_i(t)$	i^{th} sensor output
τ_i	i^{th} sensor delay
α_i	i^{th} sensor weight



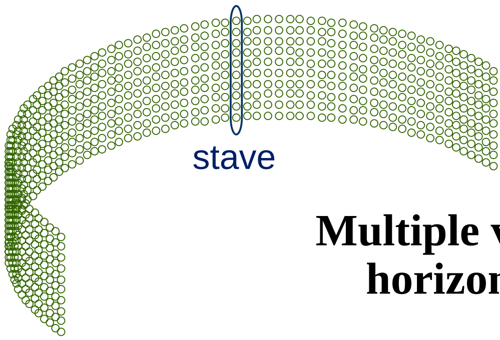
Interpolation Beamforming

- **Quantized time delays perturb beam pattern**
- **Sample at just above the Nyquist rate**
- ***Interpolate* to obtain desired time-delay resolution**



- **Kernel implementation on UltraSPARC-II**
  - **Highly optimized C++ (loop unrolling and SPARCompiler5.0EA)**
  - **Currntly operating at 60% of peak, which is 2 FLOPs per cycle**

Vertical Beamforming

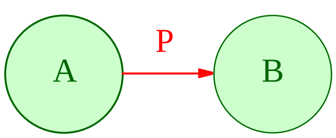


Multiple vertical transducers for every horizontal position

- **Each vertical sensor column is combined into a *stave***
  - **No time delay or interpolation is required**
  - **Staves are calculated by a simple integer dot product**
  - **Integer-to-float conversion must be performed**
  - **Output data must be interleaved**
- **Kernel implementation on UltraSPARC-II**
  - **Native signal processing with Visual Instruction Set (VIS)**
  - **Software data prefetching to hide memory latency and keep the pipeline full**

Formal Design Methodology

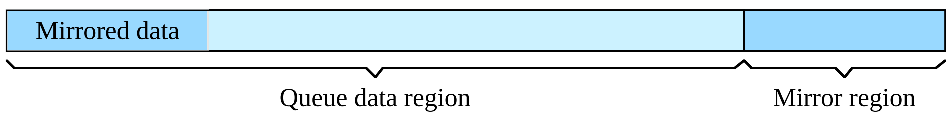
- **The *Process Network* model [Kahn, 1974]**
  - **Superset of dataflow models of computation**
  - **Captures concurrency and parallelism**
  - **Provides correctness**
  - **Guarantees determinate execution of the program**
- **A program is represented as a directed graph**



  - **Each node is an independent process**
  - **Each edge is a one-way queue of data**
- **Blocking reads, non-blocking writes, infinite queues**
- **Scheduling for bounded queues is possible [Parks, 1995]**
  - **Blocking reads and writes**
  - **Dynamically increase queue capacities to prevent *artificial deadlock***
- **Fits the thread model of concurrent programming**

Process Network Implementation

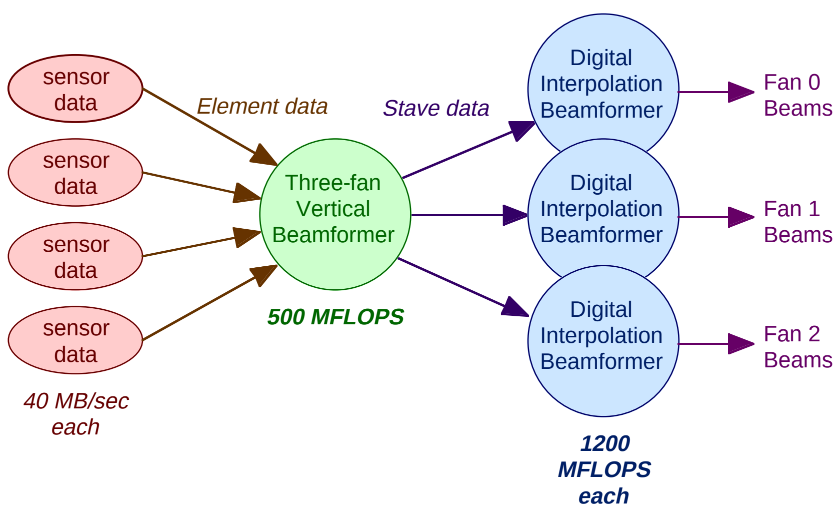
- **Each node corresponds to a thread**
  - **Implemented in C++ using POSIX Pthreads**
  - **Low-overhead, high-performance, scalable**
  - **Granularity larger than a thread context switch (~10 us)**
  - **Symmetric multiprocessing operating system dynamically schedules threads**
  - **Efficient utilization of multiple processors**
- **Optimize queues for high-throughput signal processing**
  - **Nodes operate directly on queue memory, avoiding copying**
  - **Queues use mirroring to keep data contiguous**



  - **Compensates for the lack of circular address buffers**
  - **Queues trade-off memory usage for overhead**
  - **Virtual memory manager maintains data circularity**

System Implementation

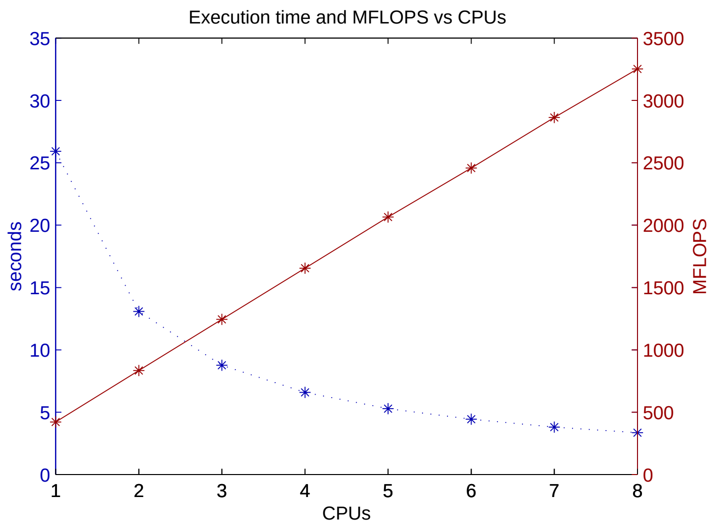
- **Vertical beamformer forms 3 sets of 80 staves from 10 vertical elements per stave**
- **Each horizontal beamformer forms 61 beams from the 80 staves, using a two-point interpolation filter**
- **4 GFLOPS total computation**



Performance Results

- **100 trial mean execution time for 2.6 seconds of data**
- **Sun Ultra Enterprise 4000 with eight 336-MHz UltraSPARC-IIs, 2 Gb RAM, running Solaris 2.6**

Implementation	Time (s)	MFLOPS	Mbytes
thread pool	3.607	3024.8	832
process network	3.354	3252.8	654



- **Process network is 7% faster than thread pool, overhead is small**
- **Process network uses 20% less memory with lower latency**
- **Process network scalability is nearly linear**
- **Will continue to scale with additional CPUs**
- **Real-time performance achievable with 12 CPUs**

Conclusion

- **Third generation beamformers: *Workstation* hardware**
  - **Commodity hardware saves development/manufacturing costs**
  - **Multiprocessor servers, native signal processing**
  - **Upgradable hardware, Moore's Law**
- **Software model: *Process Networks***
  - **Captures parallelism, guarantees determinate bounded execution**
  - **Portable, reusable, scalable C++ code**
  - **High-performance, low overhead POSIX threads**
  - **Symmetric multiprocessing operating system**
- **The example 4-GFLOPS 1-Gb 3-D sonar beamforming system does execute in real time using a Sun Ultra Enterprise 4000 server with twelve 336 MHz UltraSPARC-II CPUs with 14.5% to spare**

http://www.ece.utexas.edu/~allen/Beamforming/