

Influence of the Cache Coherence Protocol on the Miss Rate

Instructor

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1. Introduction

This report introduces three different cache coherence protocols, the influence of these protocols on the cache data locality of the symmetric multiprocessor system, as well as the related experiment and analysis.

To better practice and verify the cache coherence knowledge we learned from Computer Architecture class, we conducted the experiment on top of a cache system simulation software SMPCache.

2. Background

2.1 SMPCache

SMPCache is a trace-driven simulator that provides a virtual environment for the cache memory system on symmetric multiprocessors machine [1].

The architecture of the virtual machine is configurable to users. Users can setup a single core or symmetric multi-core virtual machine with different cache/memory structures and hierarchies to study or verify how the cache system works practically.

Trace-driven means the simulation experiments can be conducted through executing the trace files on the configured virtual machine on SMPCache. A trace file is an ASCII data file for a Benchmark programs, which can be obtained from SMPCache website or generated by users' programs.

2.2 MSI, MESI and Dragon

SMPCache supports three types of cache coherence protocols: MSI, MESI and Dragon.

MSI is a basic cache-coherence protocol that operates in multiprocessor systems. The letters M-S-I in the protocol name identify the possible states in which a cache line can be [2].

The MESI protocol is a variant of the MSI protocol. MESI was designed to reduce the amount of traffic in the coherency interconnections(Bus). This is achieved by adding an "Exclusive" state to reduce the bus traffic caused by writing the blocks that only exist in one single cache [3].

Both MSI and MESI protocols are invalidate-based protocol, by which the cache controller invalidate its own copy of the updated memory block when a write operation to the same block is observed through the bus.

The Dragon cache coherence protocol is the schema used in the Xerox Dragon multiprocessor workstation, developed by Xerox PARC. This protocol uses a write-back policy [4]. The Dragon protocol includes five states of cache lines: Invalid, Clean, Shared-Clean, Dirty and Shared-Dirty.

Dragon uses write-update as the cache coherence policy when the updating happens on the shared cache line, which will update the latest copy of the memory block to other cache lines which share copies of the same memory location.

2.3 SMP & Parallel Program

To simulate all the features of symmetric multiprocessor machine, we use some parallel programs for the experiment.

SMP is the abbreviation for symmetric multiprocessor, which involves a symmetric hardware and software architecture where two or more identical processors connect to a single, shared main memory, have full access to all I/O devices, and are controlled by a single operating system instance that treats all processors equally. Most multiprocessor systems today use an SMP architecture [5].

Uniprocessor and SMP systems require different programming methods to achieve maximum performance. Programs running on SMP systems may experience an increase in performance even when they have been written for uniprocessor systems. This is because hardware interrupts usually suspends program execution while the kernel that handles them can execute on an idle processor instead. The effect in most applications is not so much a performance increase as the appearance that the program is running much more smoothly. Some applications, particularly compilers and some distributed computing projects, run faster by a factor of the number of additional processors.

Systems programmers must build support for SMP into the operating system, otherwise, the additional processors remain idle and the system functions as a uniprocessor system. To solve different problems and tasks, SMP applies multiple processors to that one problem, known as parallel programming.

Traditionally, computer software has been written for serial computation. To solve a problem, an algorithm is constructed and implemented as a serial stream of instructions. These instructions are executed on a central processing unit on one computer. Only one instruction may execute at a time after that instruction is finished, the next one is executed [6].

Parallel computing, on the other hand, uses multiple processing elements simultaneously to solve a problem. This is accomplished by breaking the problem into independent parts so that each processing element can execute its part of the algorithm simultaneously with the others. The

processing elements can be diverse and include resources such as a single computer with multiple processors, several networked computers, specialized hardware, or any combination of the above [7].

3. Experiment & Result

The experiment presented in this section is focus on the influence of different cache coherence protocols on the cache accessing miss rate of the parallel benchmark programs when it is running on a symmetric multiprocessor machine.

3.1 Architecture Configuration

We built up a symmetric multiprocessor virtual machine to enable all the parallel computing patterns in the test programs. On top of that, the tests of MSI, MESI and Dragon protocols are conducted to simulate the performance of the cache system.

Below list shows the configuration details of the symmetric multiprocessor virtual machine

- Processors in SMP = 8.
- Scheme for bus arbitration = LRU.
- Word wide (bits) = 16.
- Words by block = 32 (block size = 64 bytes).
- Blocks in main memory = 524288 (main memory size = 32 MB).
- Blocks in cache = 256 (cache size = 16 KB).
- Mapping = Set-Associative.
- Cache sets = 64 (four-way set associative caches).
- Replacement policy = LRU.

3.2 Parallel Bechmark Programs

The experiment uses four different parallel benchmark programs: FFT, Simple, Speech and Weather. As mentioned in Background section, these programs have already been optimized with parallel programming model to fully utilizing the SMP resources.

The FFT program is an application that simulates the fluid dynamics with FFT with parallel programming. The Weather program is the parallel version of the WEATHER application, which is used for weather forecasting. The serial version is from NASA Space Flight Center, Greenbelt, Md [1]. The Simple and Speech benchmark programs are also the parallelized version of some classic benchmark sequential programs.

Since the architecture configuration is 8 processors in SMP, we have to download the specific 8-processors version of the benchmark programs which can be found in SMPCache website.

3.3 Results

Below table shows the **hits/misses** statistics of different cache coherence protocols for different Benchmarks:

	MSI	MESI	Dragon
FFT	627,839 / 303,529	620,892 / 303,529	869,364 / 62,004
Simple	2,183,451 / 1,195,383	2,182,353 / 1,196,481	2,462,066 / 916,768
Speech	424,905 / 1,048,658	470,959 / 1,002,604	678,755 / 794,808
Weather	2,877,482 / 1,092,991	2,876,625 / 1,093,849	3,104,633 / 865,840

Below table shows the **miss rate** of different cache coherence protocols for different Benchmarks:

	MSI	MESI	Dragon
FFT	32.590%	32.590%	6.657%
Simple	35.379%	35.411%	27.133%
Speech	71.165%	68.039%	53.938%
Weather	27.528%	27.550%	21.807%

4. Analysis

From the experiment statistics mentioned in previous section, we generated the bar chart of the miss rate on different cache coherence protocols (See the charts at the end of this section).

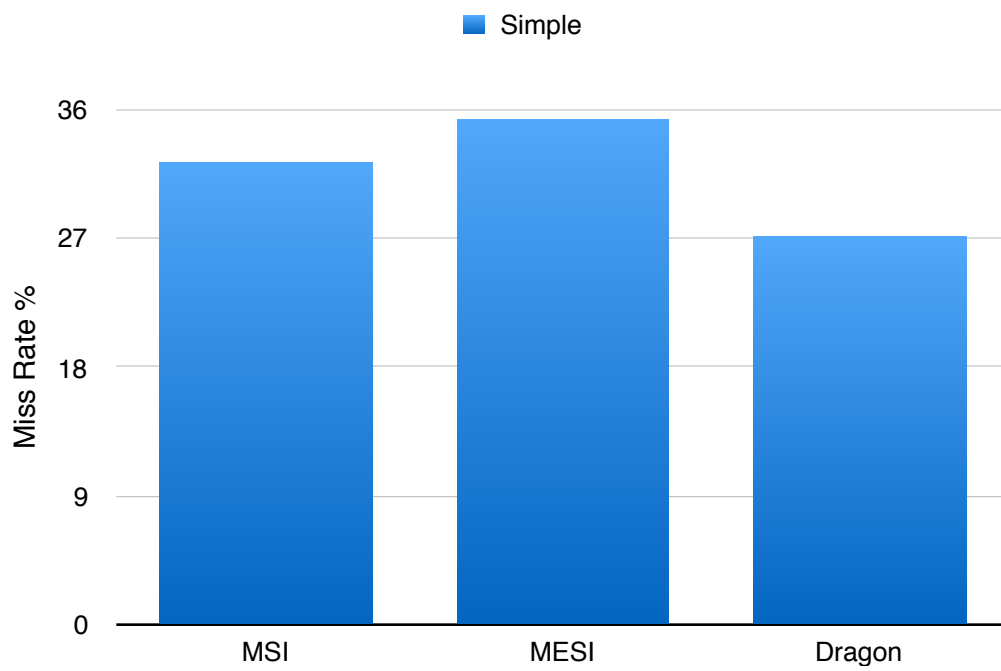
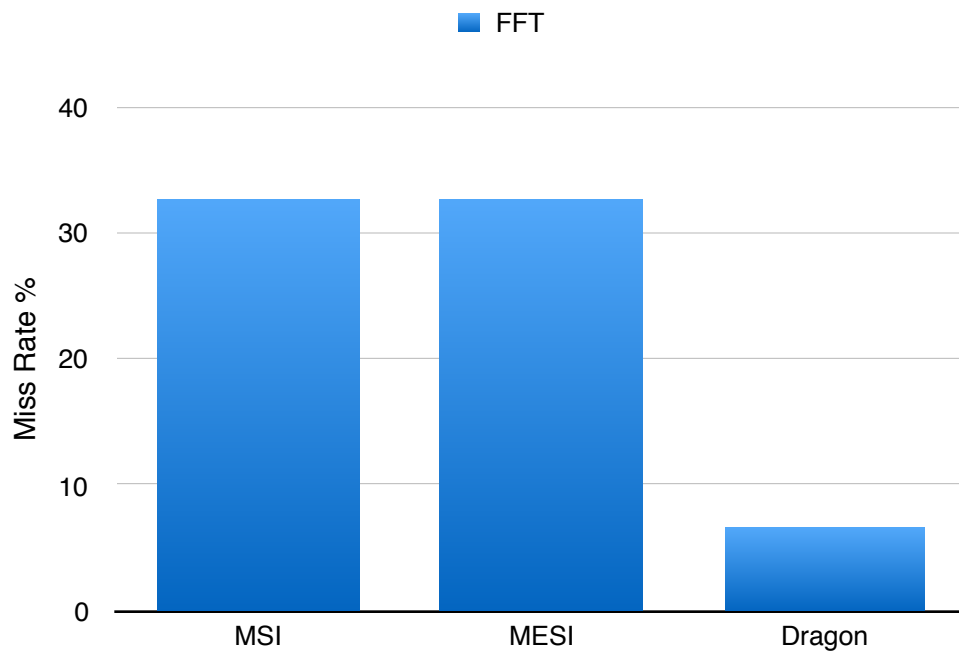
As shown in the figures, the Dragon protocol always has the best performance (lowest miss rate) on cache coherence. This result matches the expectation for the three protocols, which determined by their writing policy.

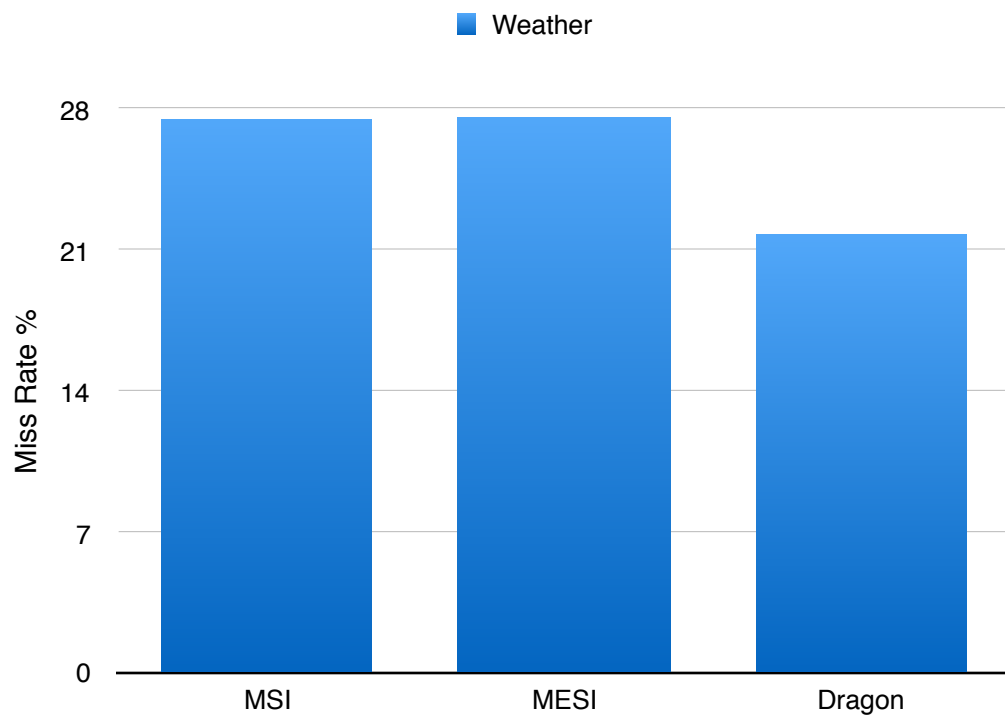
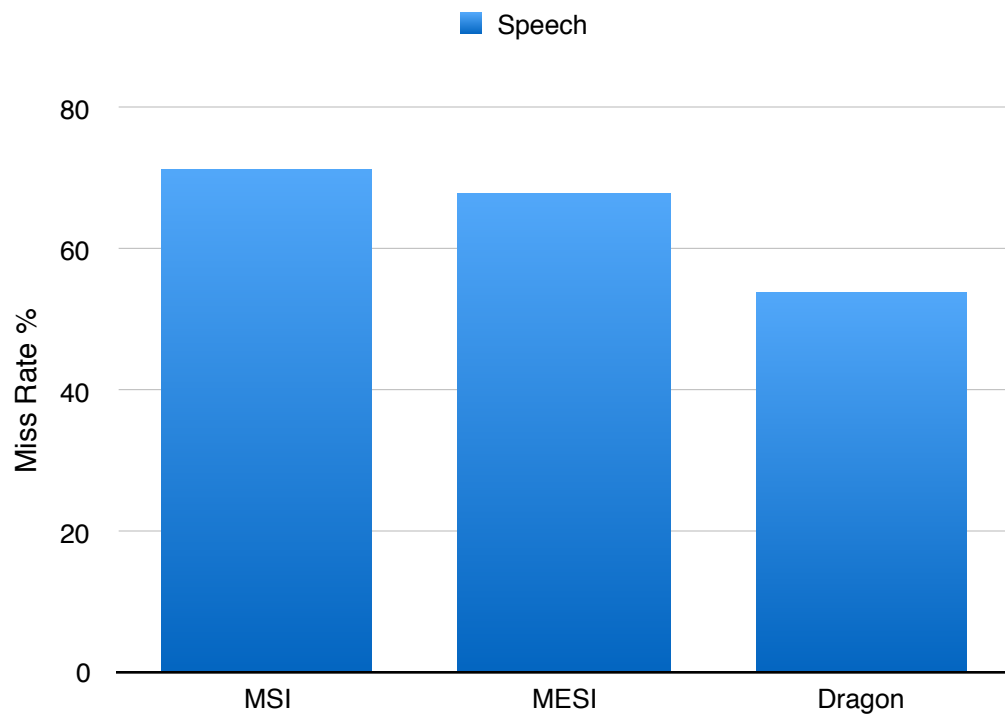
The reason is, as mentioned in Background section, both MSI and MESI are using write-invalidate policy to manage the cache consistence. As a write operation of the shared cache line is observed, invalidate-based protocols only changes the state of the cache lines which share the copy of same memory location to invalid state, and the cache miss happens when other processor access those invalid cache lines. Finally, the missed accessing will force the invalid cache line to update the content from other up-to-date cache line or the main memory and change the state back to shared again.

Meanwhile, the Dragon protocol adopts write-update policy. In this updated based policy, it immediately updates other shared cache lines if the updated cache line is in Shared-Clean or Shared-Dirty state. Obviously, comparing with write-invalidate, write-update policy will reduce the miss rate since the cache lines in Shared- states are always up-to-date. However, it may causes some overhead on the bus for the aggressive updating policy.

By comparing MSI and MESI, we can see the performance of these two write-invalidate protocols variant with different benchmark programs. More specifically, MSI and MESI got the same miss rate for the FFT benchmark case, MSI has lower miss rate than MESI in the Simple benchmark, MESI has lower miss rate than MSI in the Speech benchmark, and MSI took the lower miss rate in the Weather benchmark test.

The reason for this variant miss rate of MSI and MESI is that both of are using the same write-invalidate policy. It determines that these two protocols do not take advantages of each other in the cache hits/misses rate. However, comparing with MSI, the MESI protocol has an extra "Exclusive" state which is designed for reducing the bus overhead caused by writing the blocks that only exist in one single cache. This difference makes the behavior pattern of MESI is more complicated than MSI. Since the programming models and algorithms are distinguished among these four different benchmark programs, the number of Exclusive state cache line (the memory block accessed by on one processor at the same time) are also variant. Therefore, the similar but variant performance of the cache miss rate for MSI and MESI protocols make sense.





5. Conclusion

From the experiment and the analysis of the result, we can draw the conclusion.

The update-based protocol always has lower cache miss rate than the invalidation-based protocol. This situation are applicable to general applications. Meanwhile, the miss rate of MSI and MESI are variant with different benchmark programs. The use of concrete cache coherence protocol does not always improve the performance of multiprocessor system. Write-update protocol may reduces the cache miss rate but introduces extra overhead for aggressive and intensive updating policy, while the cache coherence performance of MSI and MESI are variant with different benchmark programs.

6. Reference

- [1]. SMPCache <http://arco.unex.es/smpcache/>
- [2]. MSI Protocol https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/MSI_protocol
- [3]. MESI Protocol https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/MESI_protocol
- [4]. Dragon Protocol https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dragon_protocol
- [5]. Symmetric multiprocessing https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Symmetric_multiprocessing
- [6]. Introduction to Parallel Computing Barney Blaise - Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory
- [7]. Parallel Computing https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Parallel_computing

7. Appendix

SMPCache - Cache evolution

Information | View cache | P0-P7

Number of blocks: 256 Cache of node: P0
 Mapping: Set-Associative Cache level: 1/1
 Replacement requ: LRU Cache type: Unified Cache address: 0

Cache sets: 64

Address	Set/Address	State	Block	Last Access
0000 (0)	0/0	Invalid (I)	2432	931280
0001 (1)	0/1	Invalid (I)	264576	929792
0002 (2)	0/2	Invalid (I)	262528	929727
0003 (3)	0/3	Invalid (I)	0	931368
0004 (4)	1/0	Invalid (I)	Empty	0
0005 (5)	1/1	Invalid (I)	Empty	0
0006 (6)	1/2	Invalid (I)	Empty	0
0007 (7)	1/3	Invalid (I)	Empty	0

Actual access

Access number: 931368
 Access type: Data reading
 Address: 00000000 (Hex)
 Block: 0
 Word: 0

Events visor | Node inspector | Hits-Misses | Bus | States | Configuration

Hits-Misses

Global readings

	Hits	Misses
Number	567955	189829
Rate	74.949%	25.051%

Local readings

	Hits	Misses
Number	567955	189829
Rate	74.949%	25.051%

Global writings

	Hits	Misses
Number	59884	113700
Rate	34.499%	65.501%

Local writings

	Hits	Misses
Number	59884	113700
Rate	34.499%	65.501%

Global hits and misses

	Hits	Misses
Number	627839	303529
Rate	67.410%	32.590%

Local hits and misses

	Hits	Misses
Number	627839	303529
Rate	67.410%	32.590%

Total replacements: 31492

Cache level 1

Data concerning cache 0

	Actual	Total
Accesses	931368	931368
Instructions	390512	390512
Data readings	367272	367272
Data writings	173584	173584

Simulation steps: 931368

Final writebacks

Execute
Continue
Stop
Complete
Exit

English

INFORMATION

Memory organization
SMP

Number of processors
8

Snoopy protocol
MSI

Bus arbitration
LRU

Directory protocol
NO

Word wide (bits)
16

Block size
64 Bytes

Main memory size
32 MBytes

Cache size - Level 1
16 KBytes

Cache size - Level 2
16 KBytes

Cache size - Level 3
16 KBytes

Cache size - Level 4
16 KBytes

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SMPCache - Cache evolution

Information | View cache | P0-P7

Number of blocks: 256 Cache of node: P0
 Mapping: Set-Associative Cache level: 1/1
 Replacement requ: LRU Cache type: Unified Cache address: 0

Cache sets: 64

Address	Set/Address	State	Block	Last Access
0000 (0)	0/0	Invalid (I)	0	931368
0001 (1)	0/1	Invalid (I)	2432	931280
0002 (2)	0/2	Invalid (I)	262528	929727
0003 (3)	0/3	Invalid (I)	264576	929792
0004 (4)	1/0	Invalid (I)	Empty	0
0005 (5)	1/1	Invalid (I)	Empty	0
0006 (6)	1/2	Invalid (I)	Empty	0
0007 (7)	1/3	Invalid (I)	Empty	0

Actual access

Access number: 931368
 Access type: Data reading
 Address: 00000000 (Hex)
 Block: 0
 Word: 0

Events visor | Node inspector | Hits-Misses | Bus | States | Configuration

Hits-Misses

Global readings

	Hits	Misses
Number	563553	194231
Rate	74.369%	25.631%

Local readings

	Hits	Misses
Number	563553	194231
Rate	74.369%	25.631%

Global writings

	Hits	Misses
Number	57339	116245
Rate	33.032%	66.968%

Local writings

	Hits	Misses
Number	57339	116245
Rate	33.032%	66.968%

Global hits and misses

	Hits	Misses
Number	620892	310476
Rate	66.665%	33.335%

Local hits and misses

	Hits	Misses
Number	620892	310476
Rate	66.665%	33.335%

Total replacements: 28218

Cache level 1

Data concerning cache 0

	Actual	Total
Accesses	931368	931368
Instructions	390512	390512
Data readings	367272	367272
Data writings	173584	173584

Simulation steps: 931368

Final writebacks

Execute
Continue
Stop
Complete
Exit

English

INFORMATION

Memory organization
SMP

Number of processors
8

Snoopy protocol
MESI

Bus arbitration
LRU

Directory protocol
NO

Word wide (bits)
16

Block size
64 Bytes

Main memory size
32 MBytes

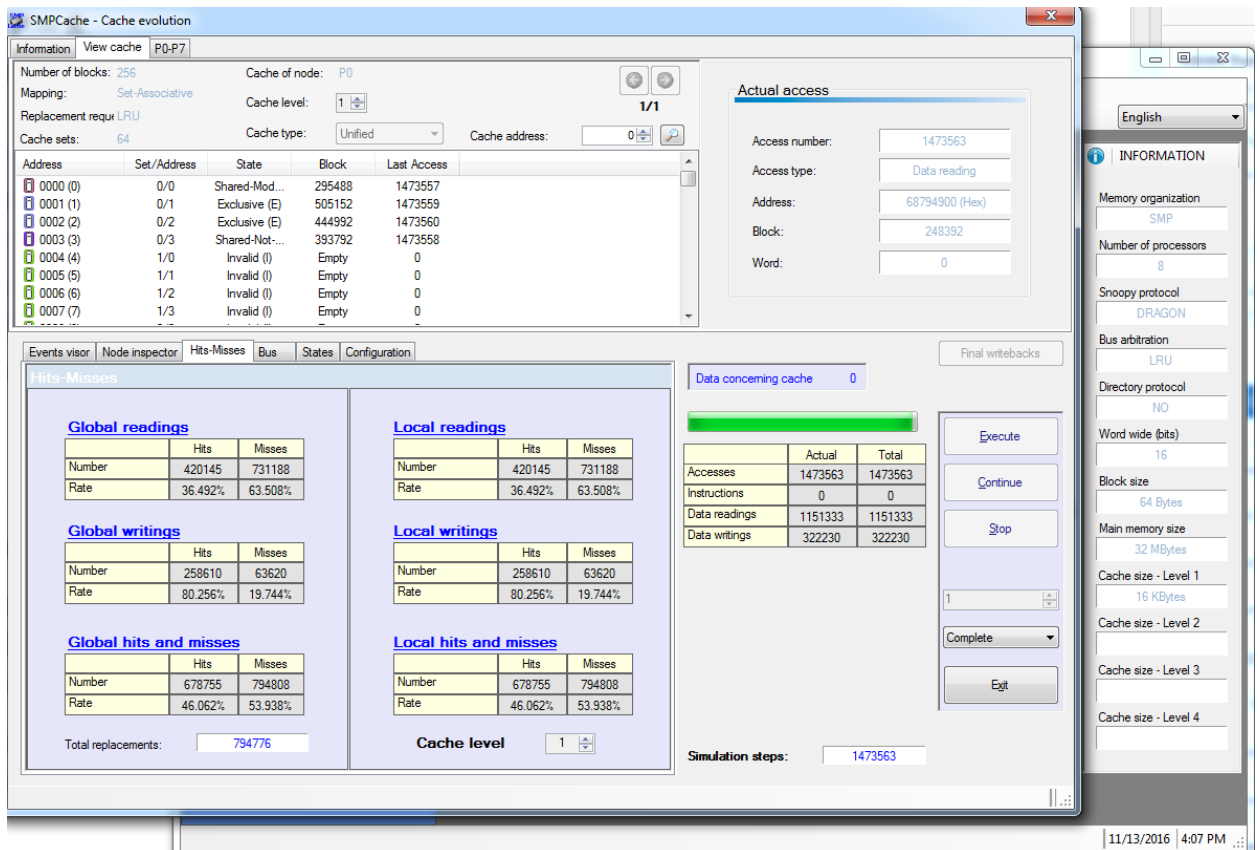
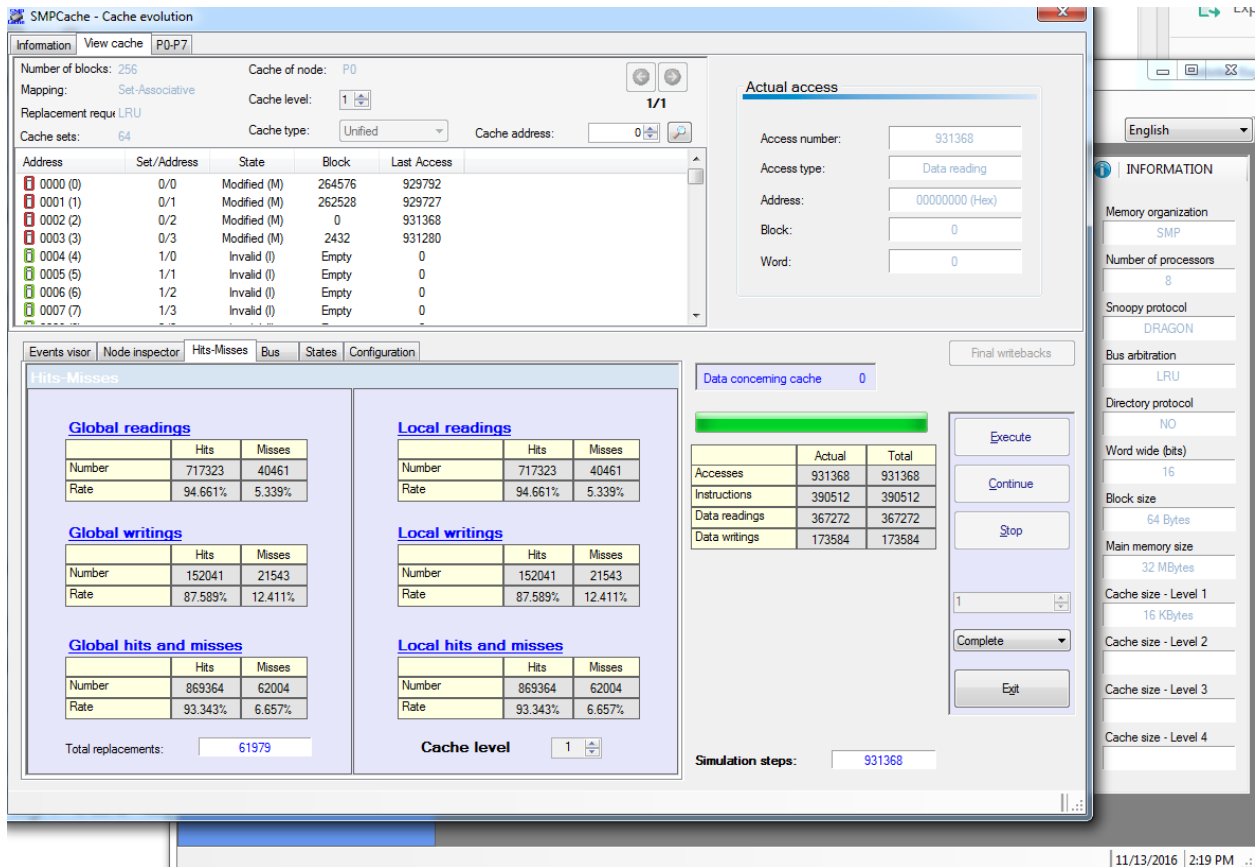
Cache size - Level 1
16 KBytes

Cache size - Level 2
16 KBytes

Cache size - Level 3
16 KBytes

Cache size - Level 4
16 KBytes

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SMPCache - Cache evolution

Information View cache P0-P7

Number of blocks: 256 Cache of node: P0
Mapping: Set-Associative Cache level: 1/1
Replacement req: LRU Cache type: Unified Cache address: 0
Cache sets: 64

Address	Set/Address	State	Block	Last Access
0000 (0)	0/0	Invalid (I)	393792	1473558
0001 (1)	0/1	Invalid (I)	295488	1473557
0002 (2)	0/2	Shared (S)	444992	1473560
0003 (3)	0/3	Shared (S)	505152	1473559
0004 (4)	1/0	Invalid (I)	Empty	0
0005 (5)	1/1	Invalid (I)	Empty	0
0006 (6)	1/2	Invalid (I)	Empty	0
0007 (7)	1/3	Invalid (I)	Empty	0

Actual access

Access number: 1473563
Access type: Data reading
Address: 68794900 (Hex)
Block: 248392
Word: 0

Events visor Node inspector Hits-Misses Bus States Configuration

Hits-Misses

Global readings

	Hits	Misses
Number	350083	801250
Rate	30.407%	69.593%

Local readings

	Hits	Misses
Number	350083	801250
Rate	30.407%	69.593%

Global writings

	Hits	Misses
Number	120876	201354
Rate	37.512%	62.488%

Local writings

	Hits	Misses
Number	120876	201354
Rate	37.512%	62.488%

Global hits and misses

	Hits	Misses
Number	470959	1002604
Rate	31.961%	68.039%

Local hits and misses

	Hits	Misses
Number	470959	1002604
Rate	31.961%	68.039%

Total replacements: 547316

Cache level 1

Data concerning cache 0

	Actual	Total
Accesses	1473563	1473563
Instructions	0	0
Data readings	1151333	1151333
Data writings	322230	322230

Simulation steps: 1473563

Final writebacks

Execute Continue Stop Exit

INFORMATION

Memory organization SMP

Number of processors 8

Snoopy protocol MESI

Bus arbitration LRU

Directory protocol NO

Word wide (bits) 16

Block size 64 Bytes

Main memory size 32 MBytes

Cache size - Level 1 16 KBytes

Cache size - Level 2

Cache size - Level 3

Cache size - Level 4

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SMPCache - Cache evolution

Information View cache P0-P7

Number of blocks: 256 Cache of node: P0
Mapping: Set-Associative Cache level: 1/1
Replacement req: LRU Cache type: Unified Cache address: 0
Cache sets: 64

Address	Set/Address	State	Block	Last Access
0000 (0)	0/0	Invalid (I)	393792	1473558
0001 (1)	0/1	Invalid (I)	295488	1473557
0002 (2)	0/2	Shared (S)	444992	1473560
0003 (3)	0/3	Shared (S)	505152	1473559
0004 (4)	1/0	Invalid (I)	Empty	0
0005 (5)	1/1	Invalid (I)	Empty	0
0006 (6)	1/2	Invalid (I)	Empty	0
0007 (7)	1/3	Invalid (I)	Empty	0

Actual access

Access number: 1473563
Access type: Data reading
Address: 68794900 (Hex)
Block: 248392
Word: 0

Events visor Node inspector Hits-Misses Bus States Configuration

Hits-Misses

Global readings

	Hits	Misses
Number	350083	801250
Rate	30.407%	69.593%

Local readings

	Hits	Misses
Number	350083	801250
Rate	30.407%	69.593%

Global writings

	Hits	Misses
Number	120876	201354
Rate	37.512%	62.488%

Local writings

	Hits	Misses
Number	120876	201354
Rate	37.512%	62.488%

Global hits and misses

	Hits	Misses
Number	470959	1002604
Rate	31.961%	68.039%

Local hits and misses

	Hits	Misses
Number	470959	1002604
Rate	31.961%	68.039%

Total replacements: 547316

Cache level 1

Data concerning cache 0

	Actual	Total
Accesses	1473563	1473563
Instructions	0	0
Data readings	1151333	1151333
Data writings	322230	322230

Simulation steps: 1473563

Final writebacks

Execute Continue Stop Exit

INFORMATION

Memory organization SMP

Number of processors 8

Snoopy protocol MESI

Bus arbitration LRU

Directory protocol NO

Word wide (bits) 16

Block size 64 Bytes

Main memory size 32 MBytes

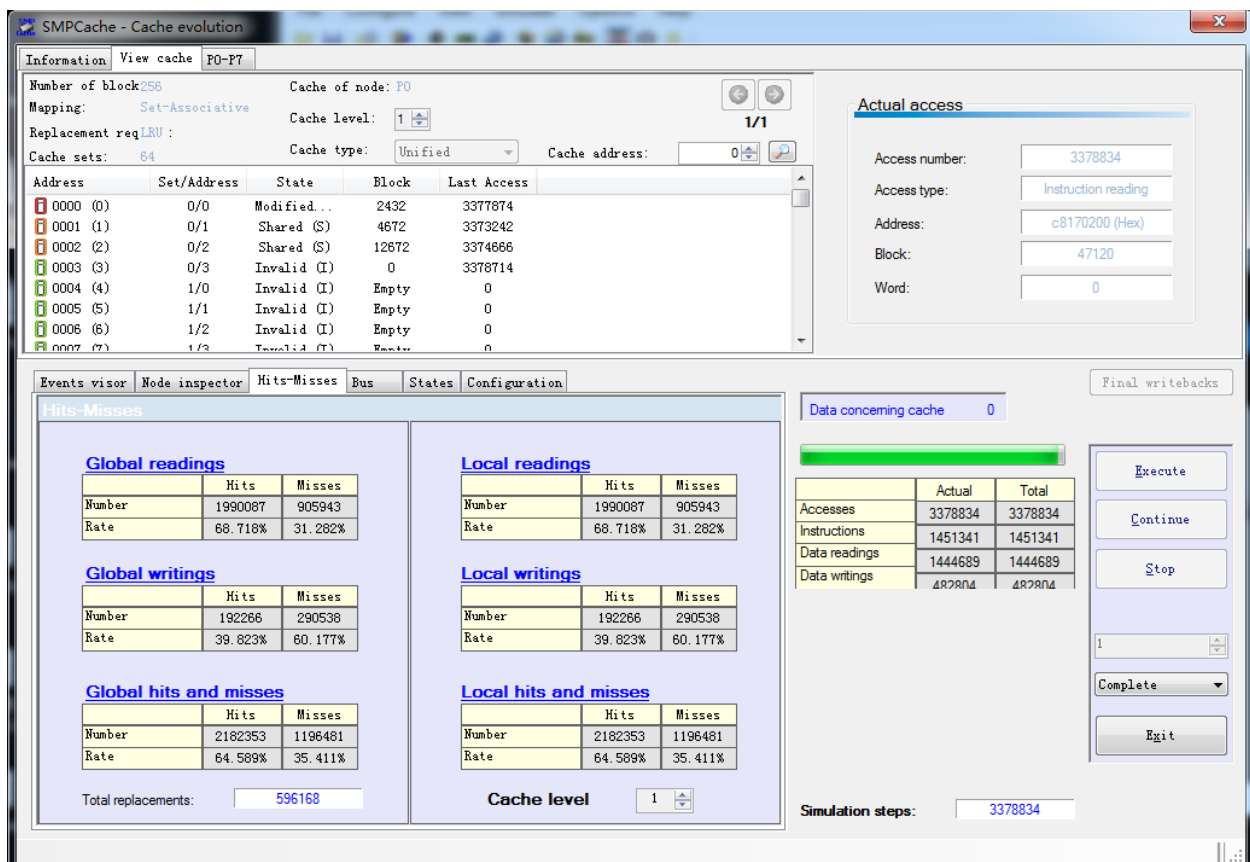
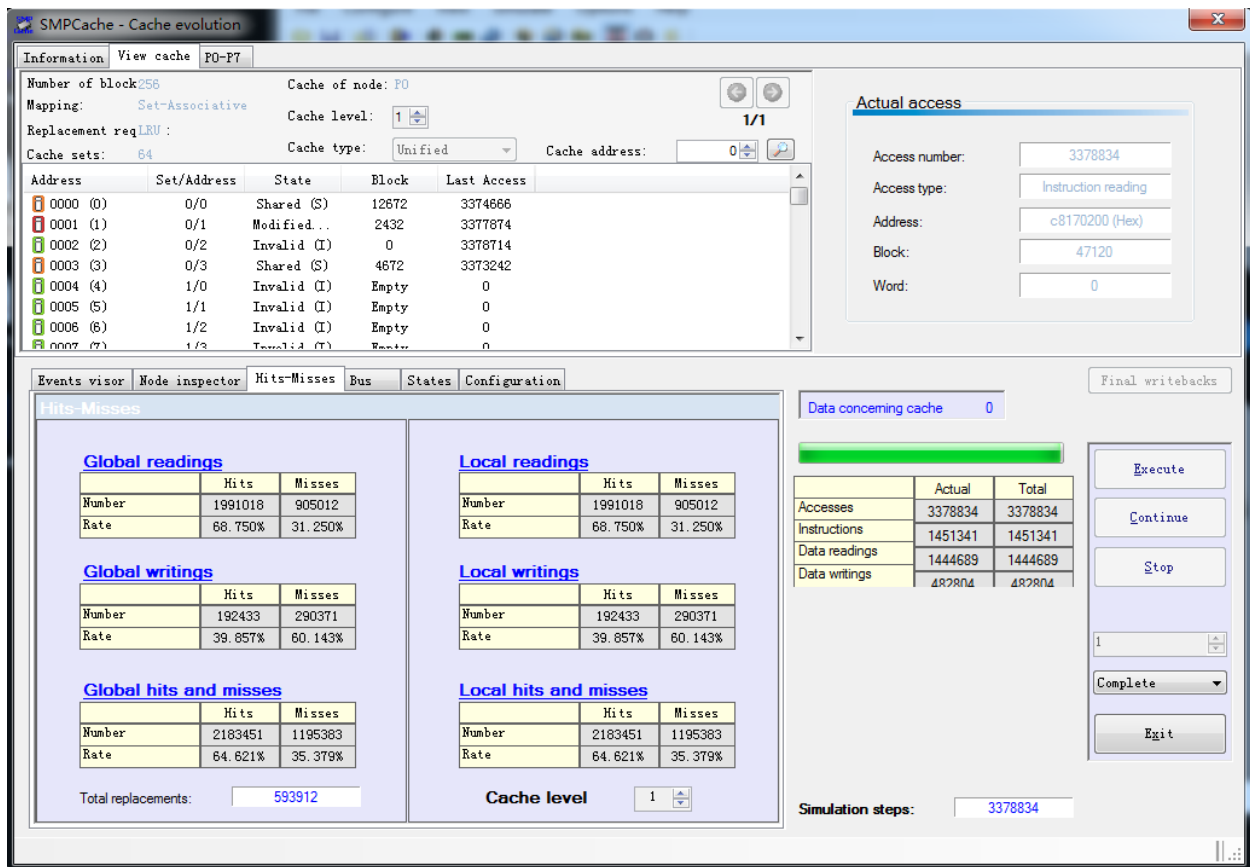
Cache size - Level 1 16 KBytes

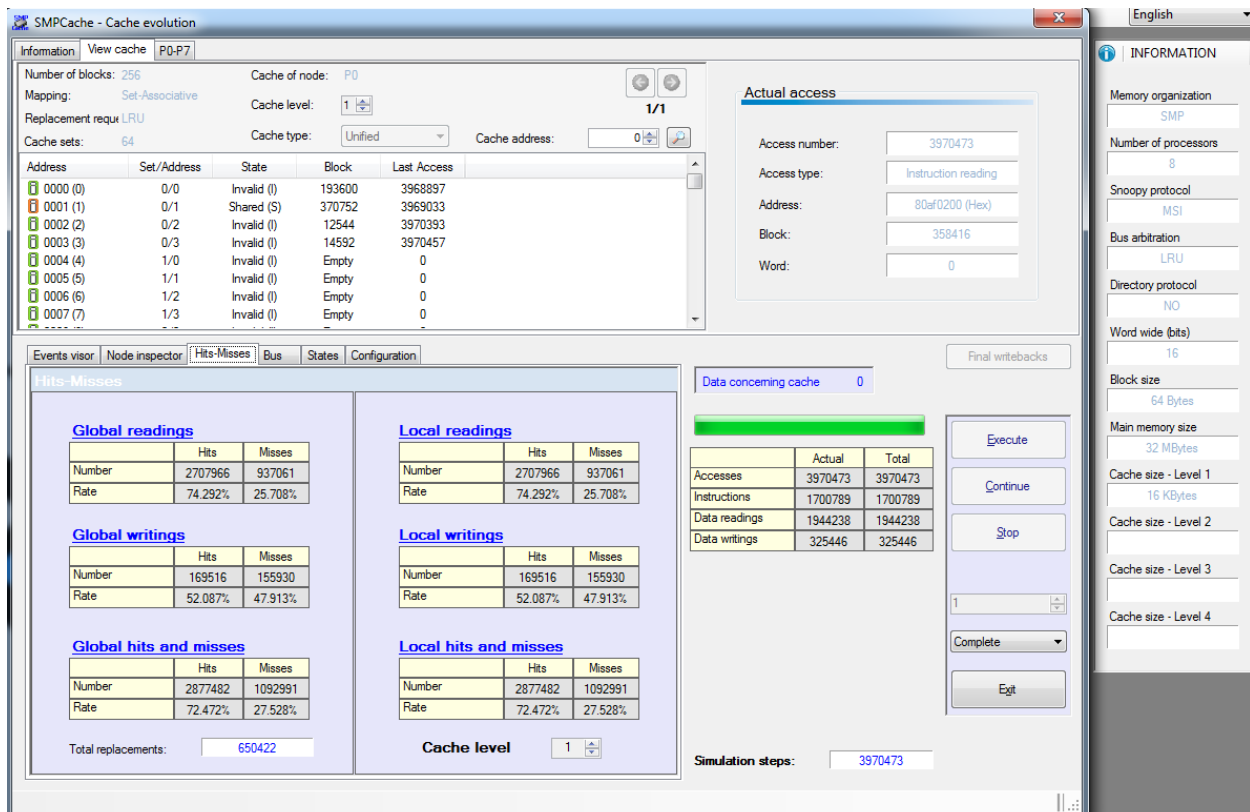
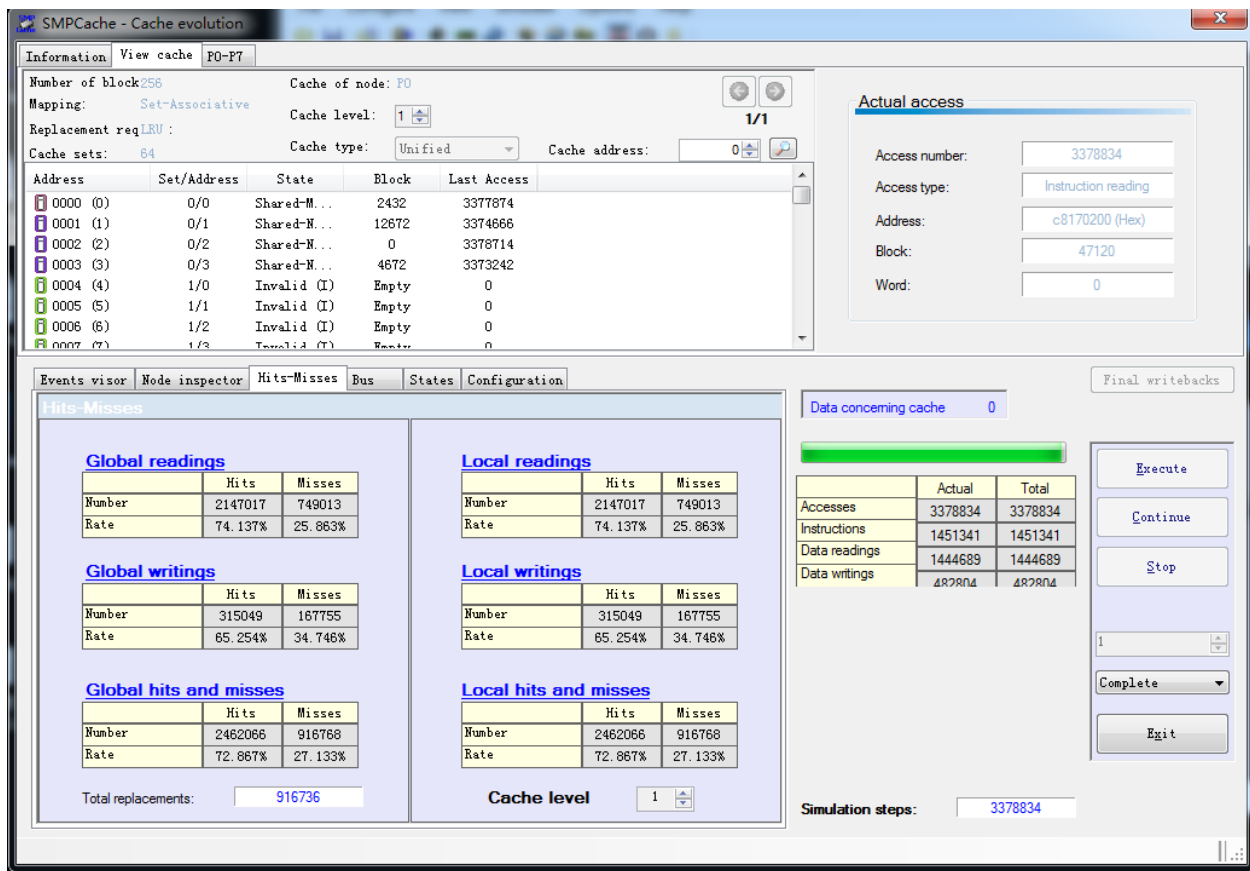
Cache size - Level 2

Cache size - Level 3

Cache size - Level 4

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SMPCache - Cache evolution

Information View cache P0-P7

Number of blocks: 256 Cache of node: P0
Mapping: Set-Associative Cache level: 1/1
Replacement requ: LRU Cache type: Unified Cache address: 0

Cache sets: 64

Address	Set/Address	State	Block	Last Access
0000 (0)	0/0	Shared (S)	370752	3969033
0001 (1)	0/1	Invalid (I)	14592	3970457
0002 (2)	0/2	Invalid (I)	0	3969654
0003 (3)	0/3	Invalid (I)	12544	3970393
0004 (4)	1/0	Invalid (I)	Empty	0
0005 (5)	1/1	Invalid (I)	Empty	0
0006 (6)	1/2	Invalid (I)	Empty	0
0007 (7)	1/3	Invalid (I)	Empty	0

Actual access

Access number: 3970473
Access type: Instruction reading
Address: 80af0200 (Hex)
Block: 358416
Word: 0

Events visor Node inspector Hits-Misses Bus States Configuration

Hits-Misses

Global readings

	Hits	Misses
Number	2704865	940162
Rate	74.207%	25.793%

Local readings

	Hits	Misses
Number	2704865	940162
Rate	74.207%	25.793%

Global writings

	Hits	Misses
Number	171759	153687
Rate	52.776%	47.224%

Local writings

	Hits	Misses
Number	171759	153687
Rate	52.776%	47.224%

Global hits and misses

	Hits	Misses
Number	2876624	1093849
Rate	72.450%	27.550%

Local hits and misses

	Hits	Misses
Number	2876624	1093849
Rate	72.450%	27.550%

Total replacements: 649079

Cache level 1

Data concerning cache 0

	Actual	Total
Accesses	3970473	3970473
Instructions	1700789	1700789
Data readings	1944238	1944238
Data writings	325446	325446

Execute Continue Stop Complete Exit

Simulation steps: 3970473

Final writebacks

INFORMATION

Memory organization SMP
Number of processors 8
Snoopy protocol MESI
Bus arbitration LRU
Directory protocol NO
Word wide (bits) 16
Block size 64 Bytes
Main memory size 32 MBytes
Cache size - Level 1 16 KBytes
Cache size - Level 2
Cache size - Level 3
Cache size - Level 4

SMPCache - Cache evolution

Information View cache P0-P7

Number of blocks: 256 Cache of node: P0
Mapping: Set-Associative Cache level: 1/1
Replacement requ: LRU Cache type: Unified Cache address: 0

Cache sets: 64

Address	Set/Address	State	Block	Last Access
0000 (0)	0/0	Shared-Mod...	14592	3970457
0001 (1)	0/1	Shared-Not...	0	3969654
0002 (2)	0/2	Shared-Not...	370752	3969033
0003 (3)	0/3	Modified (M)	12544	3970393
0004 (4)	1/0	Invalid (I)	Empty	0
0005 (5)	1/1	Invalid (I)	Empty	0
0006 (6)	1/2	Invalid (I)	Empty	0
0007 (7)	1/3	Invalid (I)	Empty	0

Actual access

Access number: 3970473
Access type: Instruction reading
Address: 80af0200 (Hex)
Block: 358416
Word: 0

Events visor Node inspector Hits-Misses Bus States Configuration

Hits-Misses

Global readings

	Hits	Misses
Number	2862235	782792
Rate	78.524%	21.476%

Local readings

	Hits	Misses
Number	2862235	782792
Rate	78.524%	21.476%

Global writings

	Hits	Misses
Number	242398	83048
Rate	74.482%	25.518%

Local writings

	Hits	Misses
Number	242398	83048
Rate	74.482%	25.518%

Global hits and misses

	Hits	Misses
Number	3104633	865840
Rate	78.193%	21.807%

Local hits and misses

	Hits	Misses
Number	3104633	865840
Rate	78.193%	21.807%

Total replacements: 865808

Cache level 1

Data concerning cache 0

	Actual	Total
Accesses	3970473	3970473
Instructions	1700789	1700789
Data readings	1944238	1944238
Data writings	325446	325446

Execute Continue Stop Complete Exit

Simulation steps: 3970473

Final writebacks

INFORMATION

Memory organization SMP
Number of processors 8
Snoopy protocol DRAGON
Bus arbitration LRU
Directory protocol NO
Word wide (bits) 16
Block size 64 Bytes
Main memory size 32 MBytes
Cache size - Level 1 16 KBytes
Cache size - Level 2
Cache size - Level 3
Cache size - Level 4

