CS 2200 Systems and Networking

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Pipelining Extra Credit - LC-2200-pipe

Due: **April 24th 2023**

1   Why Pipelining?

The datapath design that we implemented for Project 1 was, in fact, grossly inefficient. By focusing on increasing throughput, a pipelined processor can get more instructions done per clock cycle. In the real world, that means higher performance, lower power draw, and most importantly, happy customers!

2   Project Requirements

In this extra credit project, you will make a pipelined processor that implements the LC-2200-pipe ISA. There will be five stages in your pipeline:

1. **IF** - Instruction Fetch

2. **ID/RR** - Instruction Decode/Register Read

3. **EX** - Execute (ALU operations)

4. **MEM** - Memory (both reads and writes with memory)

5. **WB** - Writeback (writing to registers)

Before you move on, read Appendix A: LC-2200-pipe Instruction Set Architecture to understand the ISA that you will be implementing. Understanding the instructions supported by your ISA will make designing your pipeline much easier. We provide you with a CircuitSim file with the some of the structure laid out.

3   Building the Pipeline

First, you will have to build the hardware to support all of your instructions. You will have to make each stage such that it can accommodate the actions of all instructions passing through it. Use the book (Ch. 5) to get an idea of what the pipeline looks like and to understand the function of each stage before you start building your circuits.
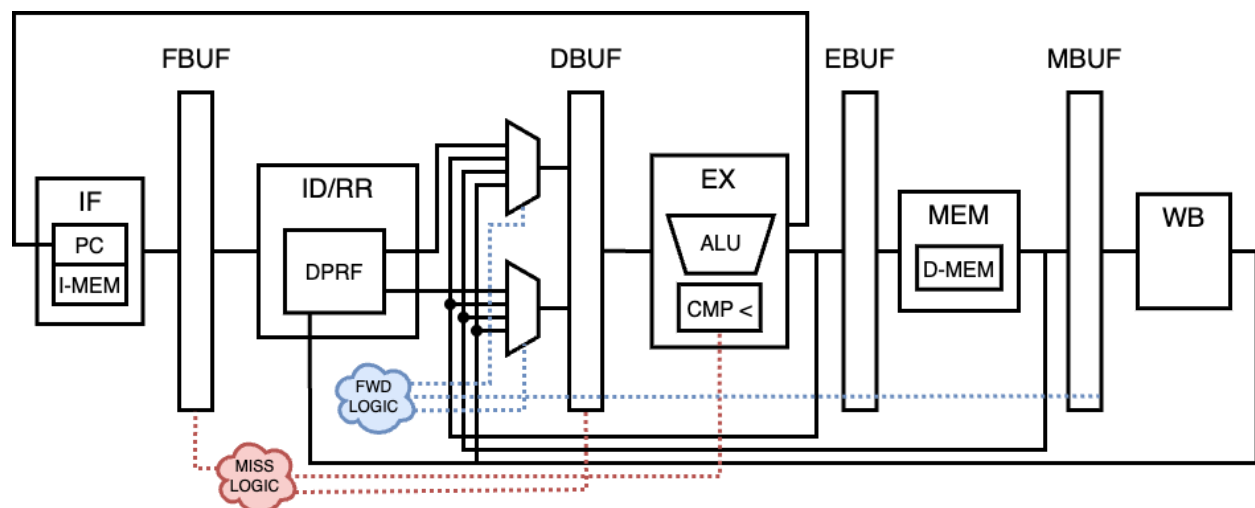

Figure 1: Pipeline Diagram

1. IF Stage

The IF stage is responsible for:

- Getting the instruction from I-MEM at location PC

- Updating the PC

For normal sequential execution, we would update the PC by incrementing it by 1. Notice, however, that this may not be the case when executing a branch or JALR instruction. Hence, you will likely need to multiplex which value is used to update the PC. I-MEM has 16 address bits.

2. ID/RR Stage

The ID/RR stage is responsible for:

- Decoding the instruction

- Reading the appropriate registers

- Identifying hazards and handling them appropriately

Please look at Appendix A: LC-2200-pipe Instruction Set Architecture in order to understand the instruction formats! You will have to design a dual ported register file (DPRF), which will allow you to read from two registers and write one register all at the same time.

Some of the instructions require both inputs into to the ALU to be values pulled from the DPRF. However, other instructions contain a value within the instruction, such as an immval20, offset20, or PCoffset20 field. You may either pass all of these possible values to the next stage (requires bigger buffer registers), or condense them into just the values needed to execute the instruction in the following cycles (requires more logic, but buffer size can be optimized).

3. EX Stage

The EX stage is responsible for:

- Performing all necessary arithmetic and logic calculations

- Resolving any branch or JALR instructions

In the Execute (EX) stage, you will perform any arithmetic computations required by the instruction. This stage should host a complete ALU to perform the actual adding or NANDing as required by the instruction. For memory access instructions, this stage will perform the Base + Offset computation required to determine the memory address to access. The EX stage will contain the necessary comparator hardware to decide the outcome of the branches outlined in Appendix A: LC-2200-pipe Instruction Set Architecture.

4. MEM Stage

The MEM stage is responsible for:

- Reading from or writing a result to memory

All you need to do is to use the value calculated in the EX stage as the address for the RAM. **Note that you must use the maximum address length for the RAM block - this is 16 bits.** To accomplish this, simply take the lower 16 bits of the calculated address. Depending on the instruction, this stage will need to pass either the value read from memory or the value computed in EX to the WB stage.

5. WB Stage

The WB stage is responsible for:

- Writing results back to the DPRF (dual-ported register file)

Depending on the instruction, you may need to write a value back to a register. To do this, your WB stage will attach to the data in and write enable inputs of the DPRF in ID/RR. Remember that the DPRF can write **and** read different registers **in the same clock cycle**, which is why WB and ID/RR can share the same register file. For instructions that do not write a register, your WB stage may not do anything at all.

4   General Advice

Pipeline Buffers

For deciding what to pass through buffers, remember that we need to support the requirements of every possible instruction. Think of what each instruction needs to fulfill its duty, and pass a union of all those requirements. (By union we mean the mathematical union, for example say I1 needs PC and Rx, while I2 needs Rx and Ry, then you should pass PC, Rx and Ry through the buffer). You can also feel free to implement your hardware such that you re-use space in the buffer for different purposes depending on the instruction, but this is not required.

Control Signals

In the Project 1 datapath, recall that we had one main ROM that was the single source of all the control signals on the datapath. Now that we are spreading out our work across different stages of the pipeline, you have a choice of how to implement your signals!

The first thing to note is that in a pipelined processor, each stage is like a simple one-cycle processor that can do exactly ONE thing intended for that stage in a single cycle. In this sense, there is really no need for a control ROM anymore! Therefore in real processors, each stage of the pipeline is implemented using hardwired control as discussed in Chapter 3 of the textbook. However, to keep your design simple for debugging and getting it working, we are going to suggest using a control ROM to generate the needed control signals for the different independent stages of the pipelined processor.

There are two options:

1. You can either have a single large main ROM in ID/RR which calculates all the control signals for every stage.

   OR

2. You can have a small(er) ROM in each stage which takes in the opcode and assert the proper signals for that operation.

Note that if you choose the first method, you will need to pass all the signals needed for later stages through the earlier stages, and in the second method, you will need to pass the instruction opcode though all the stages so that you know which signals to assert during that stage.

Stalling and Data Forwarding

One must stall the pipeline when an instruction cannot proceed to the next stage because a value is not yet available to an instruction. This usually happens because of a data hazard. For example, consider two instructions in the following program:

1. `LW $t0, 5($t1)`

2. `ADDI $t0, $t0, 1`

Without stalling the ADDI instruction in the ID/RR stage, it will get an out of date value for $t0 from the regfile, as the correct value for $t0 isn't known the LW reaches the MEM stage! Therefore, we must stall. Consult the textbook (or your notes) for more information on data hazards.

To stall the pipeline, the stages preceding the stalled stage should disable writes into their buffers, i.e. they should continue to output the previous value into the next stage. The stalled stage itself will output NOOP (example, ADD $zero, $zero, $zero) instructions down the pipeline until the cause of the stall finishes.

In order to implement a pipeline that identifies and stalls on a data hazard, the simplest approach is to use the busy bit strategy outlined in the textbook. The only caveat is that you must remember to stall on WAW hazards, because if there are two instructions in the pipeline (after the ID/RR stage) that write to the same register, the first instruction will clear the busy bit and cause the wrong data to be forwarded.

A large proportion of stalls due to data dependencies can be removed by implementing data forwarding. This allows the ID/RR stage to retrieve values computed in later stages of the pipeline early so that stalling the instruction is not necessary. It is recommended that you make a forwarding unit that implements various stock rules. The forwarding unit should take in the two register values you are reading, the destination register from the EX/MEM/WB stage, and the output value from the EX/MEM/WB stage. To forward a value from a future stage back to ID/RR, you must check to see if the destination register number from a particular stage is equal to your source register numbers in the ID/RR stage. If so, you must forward the value from that stage to your ID/RR stage.

Keep in mind: the zero register can never change, therefore it should not be considered for forwarding and stalling situations. Additionally not all instructions will be writing back to a register, so blindly checking bits [27-24] does not work for a lot of instructions.

Forwarding however cannot save you from one situation: when the destination register of a LW instruction is the source register of an instruction immediately after it. In this case, sometimes called "load-to-use", you must stall the instruction in the ID/RR stage. It is your job to flesh out all of the stall and forwarding rules.

Branch Prediction

Since branch instructions BLT/JALR are resolved in EX, the pipeline may be unsure of which instructions are correct to fetch. We could stall fetching further instructions until resolution, but this is inefficient and naive. To better handle control hazards, we can "predict" which instruction could be correct.

For this project we will always be predicting the **branch is not taken**, and so the pipeline will continue fetching sequentially. Upon resolving the branch, the pipeline should continue normally in the case of a correct prediction, or flush the incorrectly fetched instructions in the case of an incorrect prediction.

Flushing the Pipeline

For the BLT/JALR instructions, we calculate the target in the EX stage of the pipeline. However, the next two instructions the IF stage fetches while EX is computing the target may not be the next instructions we want to execute. When this happens, we must have a hardware mechanism to "cancel" or "flush" the incorrectly-fetched instructions after we realize they are incorrect.

In implementing your flushing mechanism, it is **highly recommended** that you avoid the asynchronous clear feature of registers in CircuitSim, as this may cause timing issues. Instead, we suggest using a multiplexer to selectively send a NOOP into the buffer input.

5   Report

Alongside the project, you will be required to submit a written report, rough 2-3 pages in length. The report should be presentable, with appropriate formatting.

Contents of the report may include, but are not limited to:

- Explanation of how to load your ROM(s) with your microcode.
- Explanation of the pipeline implementation (in particular the design of each stage and the data forwarding mechanism).

- Challenges that were faced during development.

- Results relating to cycle count when running the pow.s file, and any associated pipelining metrics that were taught in class.

- Potential areas of improvement or further optimization.

Submissions without a report will result in no extra credit points.

6   Testing

When you have constructed your pipeline, you should test it instruction by instruction to see if you have all the necessary components to ensure proper execution. We will not provide an autograder due to varying implementations of the pipeline.

Be careful to only use the instructions listed in the appendix - there are some subtle points in having a separate instruction and data memory. Load the assembled program into both the instruction memory and the data memory and let your processor execute it. Any writes to memory will only affect the data memory.

7   Grading

You may receive **up to 4 points of extra credit on your final grade** by completing this project.

Points will be distributed as follows:

- +3 points for a fully functioning pipeline without data forwarding and conservative branch handling.

- +1 bonus point for including data forwarding and an always not-taken branch predictor.

Along side the following points you will also need to submit a pdf report of your pipeline implementation. Submissions without an adequate report will receive **no credits** for the project. Partial credits may be awarded for effort given to a pipeline with minor errors, but no partial credits will be awarded for the bonus point. We will not accept regrades for the extra credit project.

8   Deliverables

To submit your project, you need to upload the following files to Gradescope:

- `LC-2200-pipe.sim`

- Microcode file (microcode.xlsx)

- Report file as a PDF

Always re-download your assignment from Gradescope after submitting to ensure that all necessary files were properly uploaded. If what we download does not work, you will get a 0 regardless of what is on your machine.

9   Appendix A: LC-2200-pipe Instruction Set Architecture

The LC-2200-pipe is a simple, yet capable computer architecture. The LC-2200-pipe combines attributes of both ARM and the LC-2200 ISA defined in the Ramachandran & Leahy textbook for CS 2200.

The LC-2200-pipe is a **word-addressable**, **32-bit** computer. **All addresses refer to words**, i.e. the first word (four bytes) in memory occupies address 0x0, the second word, 0x1, etc.

All memory addresses are truncated to 16 bits on access, discarding the 16 most significant bits if the address was stored in a 32-bit register. This provides 256 KB of addressable memory.

9.1   Registers

The LC-2200-pipe has 16 general-purpose registers. While there are no hardware-enforced restraints on the uses of these registers, your code is expected to follow the conventions outlined below.

Table 1: Registers and their Uses

Register Number	Name	Use	Callee Save?
0	$zero	Always Zero	NA
1	$at	Assembler/Target Address	NA
2	$v0	Return Value	No
3	$a0	Argument 1	No
4	$a1	Argument 2	No
5	$a2	Argument 3	No
6	$t0	Temporary Variable	No
7	$t1	Temporary Variable	No
8	$t2	Temporary Variable	No
9	$s0	Saved Register	Yes
10	$s1	Saved Register	Yes
11	$s2	Saved Register	Yes
12	$k0	Reserved for OS and Traps	NA
13	$sp	Stack Pointer	No
14	$fp	Frame Pointer	Yes
15	$ra	Return Address	No

1. **Register 0** is always read as zero. Any values written to it are discarded. **Note:** for the purposes of this project, you must implement the zero register. Regardless of what is written to this register, it should always output zero.

2. **Register 1** is used to hold the target address of a jump. It may also be used by pseudo-instructions generated by the assembler.

3. **Register 2** is where you should store any returned value from a subroutine call.

4. **Registers 3 - 5** are used to store function/subroutine arguments. **Note:** registers 2 through 8 should be placed on the stack if the caller wants to retain those values. These registers are fair game for the callee (subroutine) to trash.

5. **Registers 6 - 8** are designated for temporary variables. The caller must save these registers if they want these values to be retained.

6. **Registers 9 - 11** are saved registers. The caller may assume that these registers are never tampered with by the subroutine. If the subroutine needs these registers, then it should place them on the stack and restore them before it jumps back to the caller.

7. **Register 12** is reserved for handling interrupts. While it should be implemented, it otherwise will not have any special use on this assignment.

8. **Register 13** is the everchanging top of the stack; it keeps track of the top of the activation record for a subroutine.

9. **Register 14** is the anchor point of the activation frame. It is used to point to the first address on the activation record for the currently executing process.

10. **Register 15** is used to store the address a subroutine should return to when it is finished executing.

9.2   Instruction Overview

The LC-2200-pipe supports a variety of instruction forms, only a few of which we will use for this project. The instructions we will implement in this project are summarized below.

Table 2: LC-2200-pipe Instruction Set

	31 30 29 28	27 26 25 24	23 22 21 20	19 18 17 16 15 14 13 12 11 10 9 8 7 6 5 4	3 2 1 0
ADD	0000	DR	SR1	unused	SR2
NAND	0001	DR	SR1	unused	SR2
ADDI	0010	DR	SR1	immval20	
LW	0011	DR	BaseR	offset20	
SW	0100	SR	BaseR	offset20	
BR	0101	unused		offset20	
JALR	0110	RA	AT	unused	
HALT	0111	unused			
BLT	1000	SR1	SR2	offset20	
LEA	1010	DR	unused	PCoffset20	

9.2.1   Conditional Branching

We have a set of branching instructions including BR, an unconditional branch, as well as BLT, which offers the ability to branch upon a certain condition being met. The BLT instruction compares the values of two source registers. If the comparison is true (for example, with the BLT instruction, if SR1 < SR2), then we will branch to the target destination of incrementedPC + offset20.

9.3   Detailed Instruction Reference

9.3.1   ADD

Assembler Syntax

```
ADD    DR, SR1, SR2
```

Encoding

31 30 29 28	27 26 25 24	23 22 21 20	19 18 17 16 15 14 13 12 11 10 9 8 7 6 5 4	3 2 1 0
0000	DR	SR1	unused	SR2

Operation

```
DR = SR1 + SR2;
```

Description

The ADD instruction obtains the first source operand from the SR1 register. The second source operand is obtained from the SR2 register. The second operand is added to the first source operand, and the result is stored in DR.

9.3.2   NAND

Assembler Syntax

```
NAND   DR, SR1, SR2
```

Encoding

31 30 29 28	27 26 25 24	23 22 21 20	19 18 17 16 15 14 13 12 11 10 9 8 7 6 5 4	3 2 1 0
0001	DR	SR1	unused	SR2

Operation

```
DR = ~(SR1 & SR2);
```

Description

The NAND instruction performs a logical NAND (AND NOT) on the source operands obtained from SR1 and SR2. The result is stored in DR.

HINT: A logical NOT can be achieved by performing a NAND with both source operands the same. For instance,

```
NAND DR, SR1, SR1
```

...achieves the following logical operation: $DR \leftarrow \overline{SR1}$.

9.3.3   ADDI

Assembler Syntax

```
ADDI   DR, SR1, immval20
```

Encoding

31 30 29 28	27 26 25 24	23 22 21 20	19 18 17 16 15 14 13 12 11 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1 0
0010	DR	SR1	immval20

Operation

```
DR = SR1 + SEXT(immval20);
```

Description

The ADDI instruction obtains the first source operand from the SR1 register. The second source operand is obtained by sign-extending the immval20 field to 32 bits. The resulting operand is added to the first source operand, and the result is stored in DR.

9.3.4   LW

Assembler Syntax

```
LW   DR, offset20(BaseR)
```

Encoding

31 30 29 28	27 26 25 24	23 22 21 20	19 18 17 16 15 14 13 12 11 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1 0
0011	DR	BaseR	offset20

Operation

```
DR = MEM[BaseR + SEXT(offset20)];
```

Description

An address is computed by sign-extending bits [19:0] to 32 bits and then adding this result to the contents of the register specified by bits [23:20]. The 32-bit word at this address is loaded into DR.

9.3.5   SW

Assembler Syntax

```
SW   SR, offset20(BaseR)
```

Encoding

31 30 29 28	27 26 25 24	23 22 21 20	19 18 17 16 15 14 13 12 11 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1 0
0100	SR	BaseR	offset20

Operation

```
MEM[BaseR + SEXT(offset20)] = SR;
```

Description

An address is computed by sign-extending bits [19:0] to 32 bits and then adding this result to the contents of the register specified by bits [23:20]. The 32-bit word obtained from register SR is then stored at this address.

9.3.6   BR

Assembler Syntax

```
BR  offset20
```

Encoding

31 30 29 28	27 26 25 24 23 22 21 20	19 18 17 16 15 14 13 12 11 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1 0
0101	unused	offset20

Operation

```
PC = incrementedPC + offset20
```

Description

A branch is unconditionally taken. The PC will be set to the sum of the incremented PC (since we have already undergone fetch) and the sign-extended offset[19:0].

9.3.7   JALR

Assembler Syntax

```
JALR   RA, AT
```

Encoding

31 30 29 28	27 26 25 24	23 22 21 20	19 18 17 16 15 14 13 12 11 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1 0
0110	RA	AT	unused

Operation

```
RA = PC;
PC = AT;
```

Description

First, the incremented PC (address of the instruction + 1) is stored into register RA. Next, the PC is loaded with the value of register AT, and the computer resumes execution at the new PC.

9.3.8   HALT

Assembler Syntax

```
HALT
```

Encoding

31 30 29 28	27 26 25 24 23 22 21 20 19 18 17 16 15 14 13 12 11 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1 0
0111	unused

Description

The machine is brought to a halt and executes no further instructions.

9.3.9   BLT

Assembler Syntax

```
BLT  SR1, SR2, offset20
```

Encoding

31 30 29 28	27 26 25	24 23 22 21 20	19 18 17 16 15 14 13 12 11 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1 0
1000	SR1	SR2	offset20

Operation

```
if (SR1 < SR2) {
    PC = incrementedPC + offset20
}
```

Description

A branch is taken if SR1 is less than SR2. If this is the case, the PC will be set to the sum of the incremented PC (since we have already undergone fetch) and the sign-extended offset[19:0].

9.3.10   LEA

Assembler Syntax

```
LEA    DR, label
```

Encoding

31 30 29 28	27 26 25 24	23 22 21 20	19 18 17 16 15 14 13 12 11 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1 0
1010	DR	unused	PCoffset20

Operation

```
DR = PC + SEXT(PCoffset20);
```

Description

An address is computed by sign-extending bits [19:0] to 32 bits and adding this result to the incremented PC (address of instruction + 1). It then stores the computed address into register DR.