

**Computer Architecture 3**

**Formal Element: Cache Simulator**

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# Introduction

Cache is small, high-speed memory in a computer. It is used to increase efficiency and is usually found between CPU and RAM, its efficiency depends on the hit/miss ratio, higher being more efficient. Due to DRAM’s low speed, cache is essential for high-speed computing but is expensive to manufacture when compared to DRAM. The need for cache grew in the 1980s with the divergence of CPU and DRAM speeds, CPUs got faster at much higher rate requiring a faster memory type to act as a buffer.

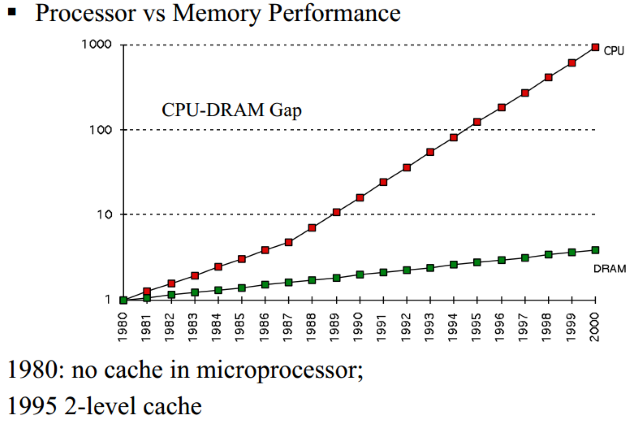


Figure 1 CPU-DRAM Speeds

There are multiple levels of cache in modern processors, usually three, each level is denoted L1-L3, L1 being the fasted but also the smallest, and L3 having larger storage but lower speed. Typically, in modern multicore processors each core has its own L1 and L2 cache with the larger L3 shared between all cores. In the past cache could be located externally from the CPU (in the motherboard) but has since changed. [3]

To make good use of cache, Locality of Reference (LOR) must be used. LOR allows the cache to store subsequent instructions while waiting on the CPU to execute current instructions. The type of LOR used here is Spatial LOR, when fetching an instruction from memory, the next few instructions should be brought on the cache line (4-line cache is this case) with the four instructions being stored in cache.

A hit in cache could be defined by the data being found immediately, without further loading. A miss is where the data is not found in cache and must be read from memory. A miss can either cause long delays or worse yet a crash.

The impact hit rates have on computer performance are significant, typically an L1 cache achieves between 95-97%, the difference of two percent translates to far higher potential latency, a miss meaning the instruction must be fetched from the memory, significantly increasing the time taken to execute the code.

## Fully Associative

The memory address requested by the processor is compared to all the cache lines simultaneously, a block in memory can be assigned to any slot in the cache. When a request arrives for a memory address, all tag fields are searched for a match, if the tag is found a hit occurs, if not a miss.

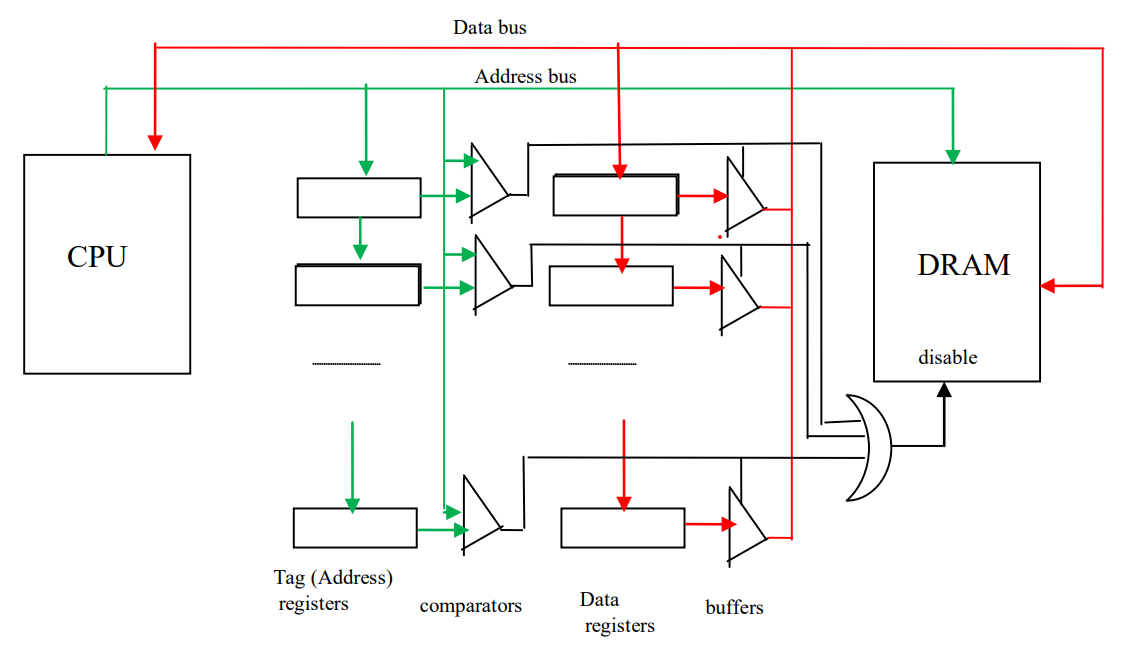


Figure 2 Fully Associative Diagram

Fully associative offers great performance but is very expensive due to the number of components, each line requires a comparator meaning far greater complexity and overall cost of production. Fully associative cache is used practically in TLB (Translation Lookaside Buffer) but only in very small amounts. TLB is required when translating virtual addresses to physical addresses, to speed up by page-table in faster memory.

## Direct Mapped

Direct mapped differs from fully associative in that each block can only go into one cache line, this serves as an advantage compared to fully associative in that the desired block can only be on one line. For direct mapped cache the address is split into the lower and upper halves. The lower half is as index for the tag RAM, the contents of current upper address is compared to the old address, if they match a hit occurs.

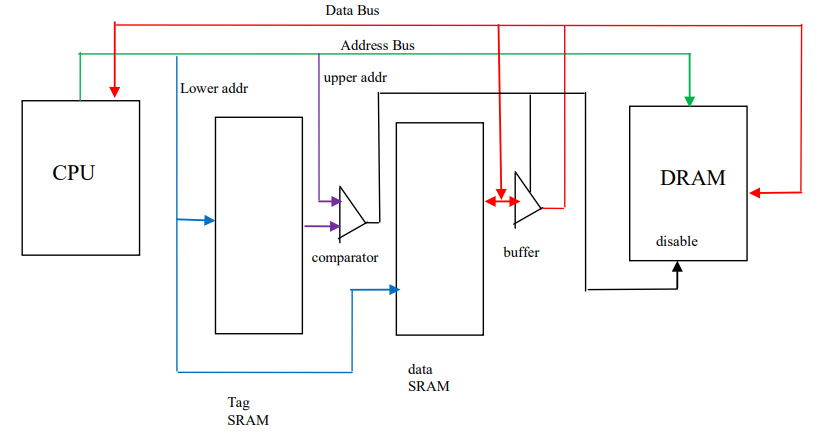


Figure 3 Direct Mapped Diagram

Direct mapped is cheaper and faster than full associative but a drawback is conflict miss. Conflict miss is when to two addresses correspond to a single entry in cache, even stale entries within cache cannot be evicted to make room because the location in cache is determined by the address (lower hit/miss rate).

## 2-Way Associative

Direct mapped cache has a low hit/miss rate therefore increasing fetch time, negatively affecting performance. A solution to this is to use an additional direct mapped cache which is essentially stacked on top of the other direct mapped cache, as shown in Figure 4.

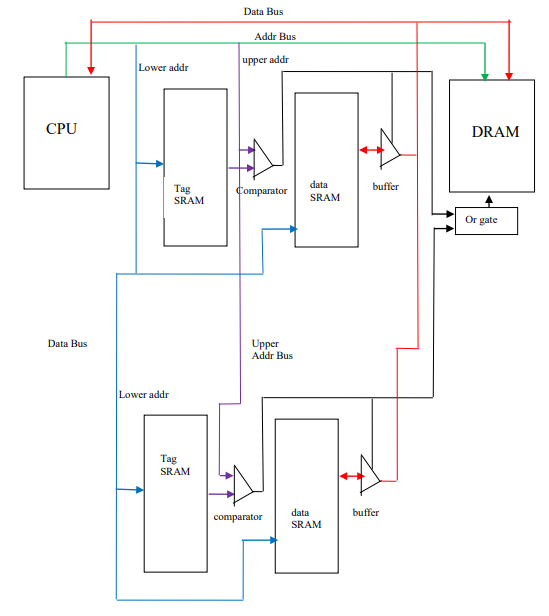


Figure 4 2-Way Associative Diagram

Direct mapped has too many misses and fully associative is too complex, 2-way set associative fits between the two with higher hit/miss rates and almost as cheap implementation. The higher hit rates are due to more blocks allowing previously loaded addresses to be stored. 2-way can be used in some L1 cache which requires minimal loading time but where hit rate is not paramount with higher sets used for the other cache levels.

# Objective

The objective of this report is to simulate instructions loaded into a cache in a C++ script. The addresses are to be input from a text file containing roughly ten addresses, the same applies for the data. The types used include:

* Direct Mapped
* Associative
* 2-Way Set Associative

As each address is read it is compared to the current cache entries, the success of the cache loading is printed using a hit and miss counter. Along with the hit/mis, the set number, byte number and tag number are to be printed.

# Direct Mapped

## Code

The code below shows a structure used to store all the parameters of a typical cache entry. The *upprAddr* is the tag address used to compare the cache blocks. The *validFlag* is used to ensures that each cache entry is updated and valid. *LRUFlag* is used to evict the least recently used cache entries in set-associative cache. *data[4]* is used as a buffer for four 8-bit entries.

struct CacheEntry {

    unsigned short upprAddr; // 16 bit uppr addr

    bool validFlag; // prevents same copy, flag is set if data valid

    bool LRUFlag; // Least Recently Used

    char data[4]; // 32 bit data bus

};

A cache entry is created for each address read in from the text file. The code below shows the variable declarations and initialisation inside the main function. The *CPUAddr* is the full 32-bit address. *CPULwr* and *CPUUppr* are the 16-bit upper and lower addresses split before entering the tag RAM. *setNo* is the specific cache entry. There are hit and miss counters initialized to zero.

unsigned int CPUAddr; // 32 bit CPU Addr

unsigned short CPULwr; // lwr half

unsigned short CPUUppr; // uppr half

unsigned short setNo; // which element in way0[]

unsigned short byteNo; //

unsigned int hits = 0, misses = 0;

ifstream myAddr("testAddresses.txt"); // addr text file used

ifstream myData("testData.txt"); // data text file used

CacheEntry way0[16384]; // 2^14 cache entries

string index; // used to store line

*ifstream* is used to add the file containing the address to the code, a *CacheEntry* object is created called *way0* which stores all cache entries.

The first line below loops while it has not reached the end of the file (eof), the address read in is converted to hex and stored in the *CPUAddr* variable. *CPUAddr* is anded with 0000FFFF to give the lower 16-bits, the same is done for the *CPUUppr* but with FFFF0000 and bit shifted by 16. *setNo* is anded with FFFC and bit shifted to give a 14-bit address, *byteNo* is anded with 3 for.

while (!myAddr.eof()) { //while the end of file is NOT reached

    myAddr >> hex >> CPUAddr; // line treated as hex

    CPULwr = CPUAddr & 0x0000ffff; // lwr half anded with ffff to give lwr

    CPUUppr = (CPUAddr & 0xffff0000) >> 16; // uppr half anded with ffff then bit shifted by 16

    setNo = (CPULwr & 0xfffc) >> 2; // which element in way0[]

    byteNo = CPULwr & 3; // the lower addr is anded to give

    if (CPUUppr == way0[setNo].upprAddr ) { // Hit

        cout << "Hit" << endl;

        hits++; // increments counter

    }

    else {  // Miss

        cout << "Miss" << endl;

        misses++;

    }

}

cout << "Hits: " << hits << endl; // counts the number of hits

cout << "Misses: " << misses << endl; // number of misses

myAddr.close(); //closing the file

The *if* statement checks whether the element in the array of *CacheEntry* objects is equal to the contents of the address in the *myAddr*. This causes a hit if true along with incrementing the hit counter, vice versa for a miss. At the end of the code the total number of hits/misses are printed, and the file is closed.

## Results

## 

Figure 5 Direct Mapped Hit/Miss

# Fully Associative

## Code

## Results

# 2-Way Associative

## Code

## Results

# Conclusion

# References

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