

Project 1 Exectuion Platforms

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1 Introduction to RISC-V Instruction Set Architecture

In this section we are focusing on a decomposition of RISC-V hex instruction into the ASM instruction. The instruction format is determined based on the opcode, funct3 and funct7 fields. Table 1 depicts a detailed translation of each instruction from it's hex code to it's format fields. Some of them not used in certain instruction types, and are marked with a dash (-) in the table. The ultimate factor that determines the instruction type is the "Type" column, which indicates instruction format label R, I, S or SB.

1.1 Program Instructions Decomposition

Address	Hex Code	Opcode (6:0)	rd (11:7)	funct3 (14:12)	rs1 (19:15)	rs2 (24:20)	funct7 (31:25)	imm[11:0] (31:20)	imm[11:5] (31:25)	imm[4:0] (11:7)	Type
0x0	0x00050893	0010011	10001	000	01010	-	-	000000000000	-	-	I
0x4	0x00068513	0010011	01010	000	01101	-	-	000000000000	-	-	I
0x8	0x04088063	1100011	-	000	10001	00000	-	-	0000010	00000	SB
0xc	0x04058263	1100011	-	000	01011	00000	-	-	0000010	00100	SB
0x10	0x04060063	1100011	-	000	01100	00000	-	-	0000010	00000	SB
0x14	0x04d05063	1100011	-	101	00000	01101	-	-	0000010	00000	SB
0x18	0x00088793	0010011	01111	000	10001	-	-	000000000000	-	-	I
0x1c	0x00269713	0010011	01110	001	01101	-	-	000000000010	-	-	I
0x20	0x00e888b3	0110011	10001	000	10001	01110	0000000	-	0000000	10001	R
0x24	0x0007a703	0000011	01110	010	01111	-	-	000000000000	-	-	I
0x28	0x0005a803	0000011	10000	010	01011	-	-	000000000000	-	-	I
0x2c	0x01070733	0110011	01110	000	01110	10000	0000000	-	0000000	01110	R
0x30	0x00e62023	0100011	-	010	01100	01110	-	-	0000000	00000	S
0x34	0x00478793	0010011	01111	000	01111	-	-	000000000100	-	-	I
0x38	0x00458593	0010011	01011	000	01011	-	-	000000000100	-	-	I
0x3c	0x00460613	0010011	01100	000	01100	-	-	000000000100	-	-	I
0x40	0xff1792e3	1100011	-	001	01111	10001	-	-	1111111	00101	SB
0x44	0x00008067	1100111	00000	000	00001	-	-	000000000000	-	-	I
0x48	0xffff00513	0010011	01010	000	00000	-	-	111111111111	-	-	I
0x4c	0x00008067	1100111	00000	000	00001	-	-	000000000000	-	-	I
0x50	0xffff00513	0010011	01010	000	00000	-	-	111111111111	-	-	I
0x54	0x00008067	1100111	00000	000	00001	-	-	000000000000	-	-	I

Table 1: Decomposition of Hex Codes to RISC-V Instruction Format

A point to note is that the immediate fields for UJ and U type instructions are missing from Table 1. This is because the provided program is missing them. There is also an overlap between the immediates of S and SB type instructions, as they share the same positions in the instruction format. The table head includes just the immediate fields for S out of simplicity, but in the case of SB, they were calculated as depicted in the RISC-V specification from the Project 1 description [1].

Address	Hex Code	ASM Instruction (ABI)	ASM Instruction (x-registers)
0x0	0x00050893	addi a7, a0, 0	addi x17, x10, 0
0x4	0x00068513	addi a0, a3, 0	addi x10, x13, 0
0x8	0x04088063	beq a7, zero, 64	beq x17, x0, 64
0xc	0x04058263	beq a1, zero, 68	beq x11, x0, 68
0x10	0x04060063	beq a2, zero, 64	beq x12, x0, 64
0x14	0x04d05063	bge zero, a3, 64	bge x0, x13, 64
0x18	0x00088793	addi a5, a7, 0	addi x15, x17, 0
0x1c	0x00269713	slli a4, a3, 2	slli x14, x13, 2
0x20	0x00e888b3	add a7, a7, a4	add x17, x17, x14
0x24	0x0007a703	lw a4, 0(a5)	lw x14, 0(x15)
0x28	0x0005a803	lw a6, 0(a1)	lw x16, 0(x11)
0x2c	0x01070733	add a4, a4, a6	add x14, x14, x16
0x30	0x00e62023	sw a4, 0(a2)	sw x14, 0(x12)
0x34	0x00478793	addi a5, a5, 4	addi x15, x15, 4
0x38	0x00458593	addi a1, a1, 4	addi x11, x11, 4
0x3c	0x00460613	addi a2, a2, 4	addi x12, x12, 4
0x40	0xff1792e3	bne a5, a7, -28	bne x15, x17, -28
0x44	0x00008067	jalr zero, ra, 0	jalr x0, x1, 0
0x48	0xfff00513	addi a0, zero, -1	addi x10, x0, -1
0x4c	0x00008067	jalr zero, ra, 0	jalr x0, x1, 0
0x50	0xfff00513	addi a0, zero, -1	addi x10, x0, -1
0x54	0x00008067	jalr zero, ra, 0	jalr x0, x1, 0

Table 2: RISC-V Instructions with register numbers, symbolic names and addresses

In order to better understand the provided program, Table 2 is introduced to map the hex codes with their corresponding assembly instructions. As an overall view, the program is making use of

RV32I instruction set only. The registers are represented in both their symbolic names (ABI) and x-register numbers. in order to facilitate the understanding of the program.

1.2 Branch Delay Slot Concept

The branch delay slot concept is interesting when discussing pipelined processors. Essentially, when a branch instruction is taken, the instructions that were fetched after the branch instructions might become invalid. To avoid this, the branch delay slot declares that the instruction immediately following a branch instruction is always executed, regardless of whether the branch is taken or not. This helps to mitigate the performance penalty associated with branch instructions that invalidate subsequent instructions in the pipeline. As explained in [2]: "The idea of the branch shadow or delay slot is to recover a part of the clocks. If you declare that the instruction after a branch is always executed then when a branch is taken, then the instruction in the decode slot also gets executed, while the instruction in the fetch slot is discarded. Therefore one has a hole of time not two."

In terms of advantages and disadvantages, there are several points to consider. For disadvantages:

- Branch delay slots may create complications in code debugging, since the instruction in the delay slot might have side effects, it may lead to an unexpected state of the registers and memory.
- It adds to the waiting time when trying to execute interruptions, since they will be deferred until the delay slot instruction is executed. This is a problem in the case of real time systems.
- Software compatibility requirements dictate that an architecture may not change the number of delay slots from one generation to the next. This inevitably requires that newer hardware implementations contain extra hardware to ensure that the architectural behaviour is followed despite no longer being relevant.

Advantages of using branch delay slots include:

- Improved performance in pipelined architectures, since it helps to reduce the number of pipeline stalls caused by branch instructions.

plus branch delay slots was initially a good idea then a bad idea

1.3 Branch Instructions Analysis

In order to understand better the provided program, it is useful to check the branch instructions and where they lead to.

Table 3: RISC-V Instructions with Addresses

Address	Conditional branch	Branch to
0x08	beq a7, zero, 64	0x48: addi a0, zero, -1
0x0c	beq a1, zero, 68	0x50: addi a0, zero, -1
0x10	beq a2, zero, 64	0x50: addi a0, zero, -1
0x14	bge zero, a3, 148	0x54: jalr zero, ra, 0
0x40	bne a5, a7, -28	0x24: lw a4, 0(a5)

From the table above we can see that there are 4 first conditional branches, that being the addresses 0x08, 0x0c, 0x10 and 0x14, which resemble input value checks. Considering the calling

convention for RISC-V, the registers a0-a7 are used for passing function arguments from the caller to the callee. In this case, the supposition of input value checks is valid. The first three jump to a return -1 in case the input values are 0, while the fourth one jumps to a return with the number of elements to be processed, which would be less than or equal to 0.

The last conditional branch at address 0x40 is part of a loop. It checks whether the address stored in register a5, used as a counter, is equal to the last address to be processed, which is stored in register a7. If they are not equal, the program branches back to address 0x24 to continue processing the next elements. If they are equal, the program continues to the return instruction.

1.4 Program Functionality

The program can be divided into three main parts: input validation, processing loop, and return value. The input validation part checks if any of the first three caller arguments are 0. The arguments are passed are actually pointers to the input and output arrays, so they are checked if they are null, which would indicate an invalid memory access, therefore leading to a jump to the section of the program corresponding to return -1. The fourth argument is the number of elements to be processed, which is checked in the register a3 to see if it is less than or equal to 0. In case it is, the program jumps to the section corresponding to return. In this case, it will return to the callee the value stored in a0, which is actually a3, the number of elements to be processed.

The processing loop starts at address 0x18 and continues until the branch instruction at address 0x40. It consists of an initial setup for the loop counter in register a5 and for the final value of the counter, which is stored in register a7. Register a7 will store the address of the last element to be processed from one of the input arrays, calculated as the base address plus the number of elements multiplied by 4, the size of each element. Because the elements are 4 bytes long, it can be extrapolated that the arrays are made of 32-bit integers. The loop itself consists of loading the elements from both input arrays, by using registers a5 and a1, which store the current addresses of the elements. Afterwards, the elements are summed and stored in register a4, which is then stored in the output array location pointed by register a2. Finally, the addresses in registers a5, a1 and a2 are incremented by 4 to point to the next elements to be processed. The loop continues until the address in register a5 is equal to the address in register a7. This is ensured by the branch if not equal instruction at address 0x40.

Finally, the return part is reached at address 0x44, where the program jumps back to the callee, using the address stored in register ra. The return value is stored in register a0, which is equal to the number of elements to be processed.

References

- [1] *PR1-SE201-21*, 2021. Unpublished internal document.
- [2] James. What is a branch delay slot and why is it used?, 2020. Accessed: June 10, 2024.