Functional Components of a Computer

Computer: A computer is a combination of **hardware and software** resources which integrate together and provides various functionalities to the user. Hardware are the physical components of a computer like the processor, memory devices, monitor, keyboard etc. while software is the set of programs or instructions that are required by the hardware resources to function properly.

There are a few basic components that aids the working-cycle of a computer i.e. the Input- Process- Output Cycle and these are called as the functional components of a computer. It needs certain input, processes that input and produces the desired output. The input unit takes the input, the central processing unit does the processing of data and the output unit produces the output. The memory unit holds the data and instructions during the processing.

Digital Computer: A digital computer can be defined as a programmable machine which reads the binary data passed as instructions, processes this binary data, and displays a calculated digital output. Therefore, Digital computers are those that work on the digital data.

Details of Functional Components of a Digital Computer
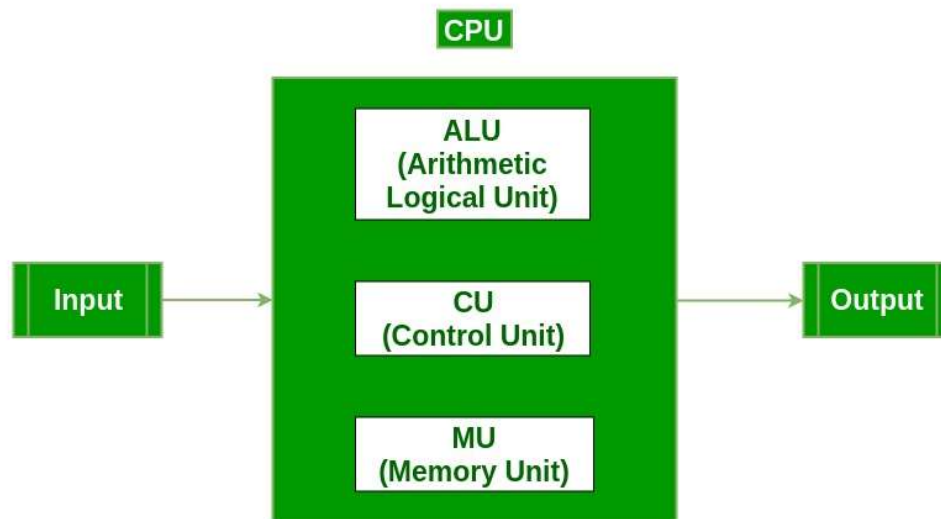
- **Input Unit :**The input unit consists of input devices that are attached to the computer. These devices take input and convert it into binary language that the computer understands. Some of the common input devices are keyboard, mouse, joystick, scanner etc.
- **Central Processing Unit (CPU) :** Once the information is entered into the computer by the input device, the processor processes it. The CPU is called the brain of the computer because it is the control center of the computer. It first fetches instructions from memory and then interprets them so as to know what is to be done. If required, data is fetched from memory or input device. Thereafter CPU executes or performs the required computation and then either stores the output or displays on the output device. The CPU has

three main components which are responsible for different functions – Arithmetic Logic Unit (ALU), Control Unit (CU) and Memory registers

- **Arithmetic and Logic Unit (ALU) :** The ALU, as its name suggests performs mathematical calculations and takes logical decisions. Arithmetic calculations include addition, subtraction, multiplication and division. Logical decisions involve comparison of two data items to see which one is larger or smaller or equal.

- **Control Unit :** The Control unit coordinates and controls the data flow in and out of CPU and also controls all the operations of ALU, memory registers and also input/output units. It is also responsible for carrying out all the instructions stored in the program. It decodes the fetched instruction, interprets it and sends control signals to input/output devices until the required operation is done properly by ALU and memory.

- **Memory Registers :** A register is a temporary unit of memory in the CPU. These are used to store the data which is directly used by the processor. Registers can be of different sizes(16 bit, 32 bit, 64 bit and so on) and each register inside the CPU has a specific function like storing data, storing an instruction, storing address of a location in memory etc. The user registers can be used by an assembly language programmer for storing operands, intermediate results etc. Accumulator (ACC) is the main register in the ALU and contains one of the operands of an operation to be performed in the ALU.

- **Memory :** Memory attached to the CPU is used for storage of data and instructions and is called internal memory The internal memory is divided into many storage locations, each of which can store data or instructions. Each memory location is of the same size and has an address. With the help of the address, the computer can read any memory location easily without having to search the entire memory. when a program is executed, it's data is copied to the internal memory and is stored in the memory till the end of the

his memory is also called as RAM, i.e. Random Access Memory. The time of access of data is independent of its location in memory, therefore this memory is also called Random Access memory (RAM). Read this for different types of RAMs

- **Output Unit :** The output unit consists of output devices that are attached with the computer. It converts the binary data coming from CPU to human understandable form. The common output devices are monitor, printer, plotter etc.

Interconnection between Functional Components

A computer consists of input unit that takes input, a CPU that processes the input and an output unit that produces output. All these devices communicate with each other through a common bus. A bus is a transmission path, made of a set of conducting wires over which data or information in the form of electric signals, is passed from one component to another in a computer. The bus can be of three types – Address bus, Data bus and Control Bus.

Following figure shows the connection of various functional components:
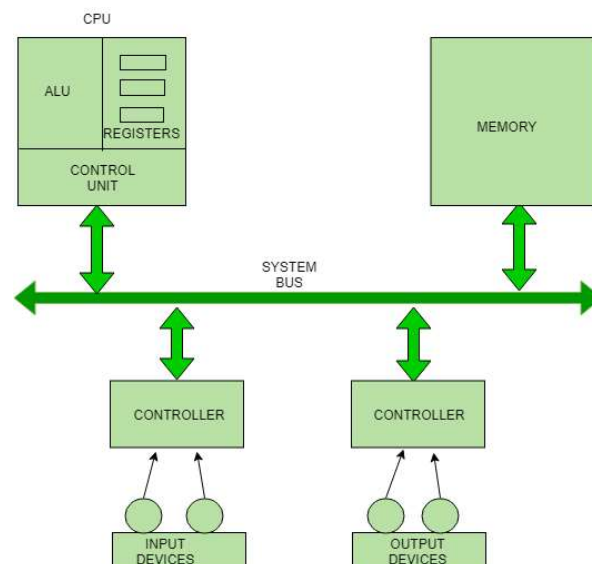
The address bus carries the address location of the data or instruction. The data bus carries data from one component to another and the control bus carries the control signals. The system bus is the common communication path that carries signals to/from CPU, main memory and input/output devices. The input/output devices communicate with the system bus through the controller circuit which helps in managing various input/output devices attached to the

computer.

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