The Memory Hierarchy

Lecture 15
November 15th, 2018

Jae W. Lee (jaewlee@snu.ac.kr)
Computer Science and Engineering
Seoul National University

***Slide credits**: [CS:APP3e] slides from CMU; [COD5e] slides from Elsevier Inc.*

Today

Textbook: [CS:APP3e] 6.1.1, 6.1.4, 6.2, 6.3

- **Storage technologies and trends**
  - Random Access Memory (RAM)
  - Storage Technology Trends
- **Locality of reference**
- **Caching in the memory hierarchy**

Random-Access Memory (RAM)

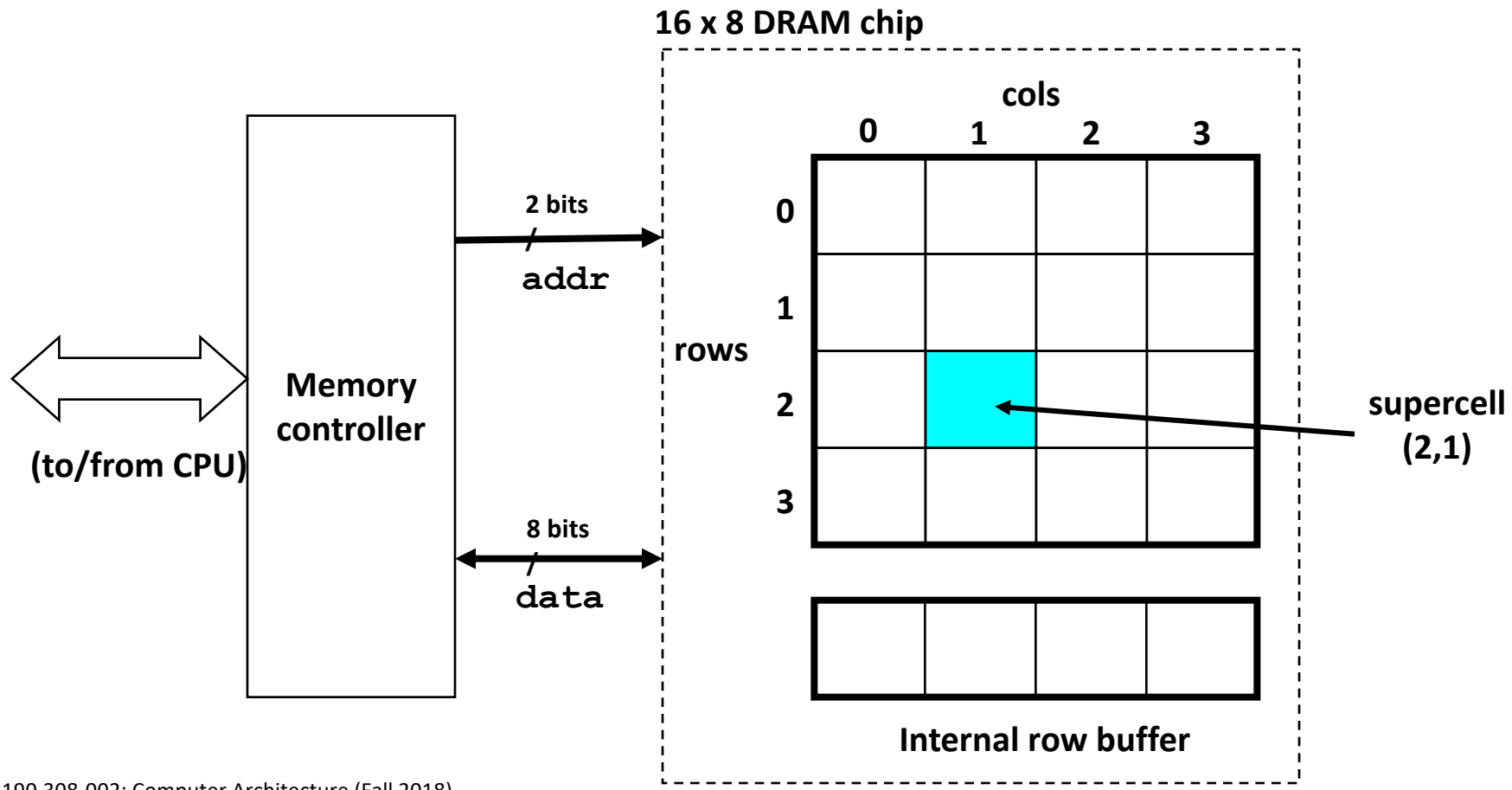
- **Key features**
  - RAM is traditionally packaged as a chip.
  - Basic storage unit is normally a cell (one bit per cell).
  - Multiple RAM chips form a memory.
- **RAM comes in two varieties:**
  - SRAM (Static RAM)
    - Each cell stores a bit with a four or six-transistor circuit.
    - Retains value indefinitely, as long as it is kept powered.
    - Faster and more expensive than DRAM.
  - DRAM (Dynamic RAM)
    - Each cell stores bit with a capacitor. One transistor is used for access
    - Value must be refreshed every 10-100 ms.
    - Slower and cheaper than SRAM.

SRAM vs DRAM Summary

	Trans. per bit	Access time	Needs refresh?	Needs EDC?	Cost	Applications
SRAM	4 or 6	1X	No	Maybe	100x	Cache memories
DRAM	1	10X	Yes	Yes	1X	Main memories, frame buffers

Conventional DRAM Organization

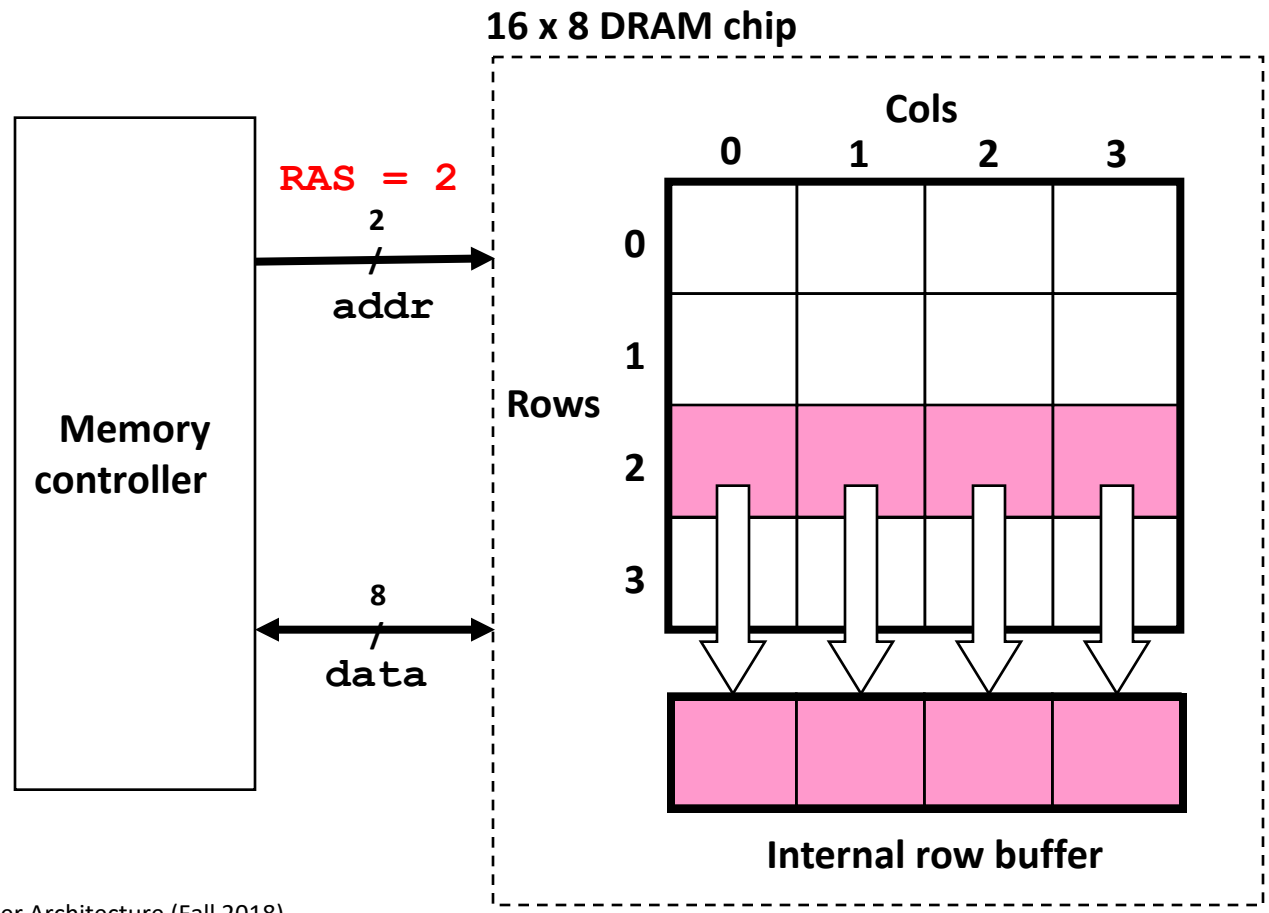
- **d x w DRAM:**
  - dw total bits organized as d supercells of size w bits



Reading DRAM Supercell (2,1)

Step 1(a): Row access strobe (RAS) selects row 2.

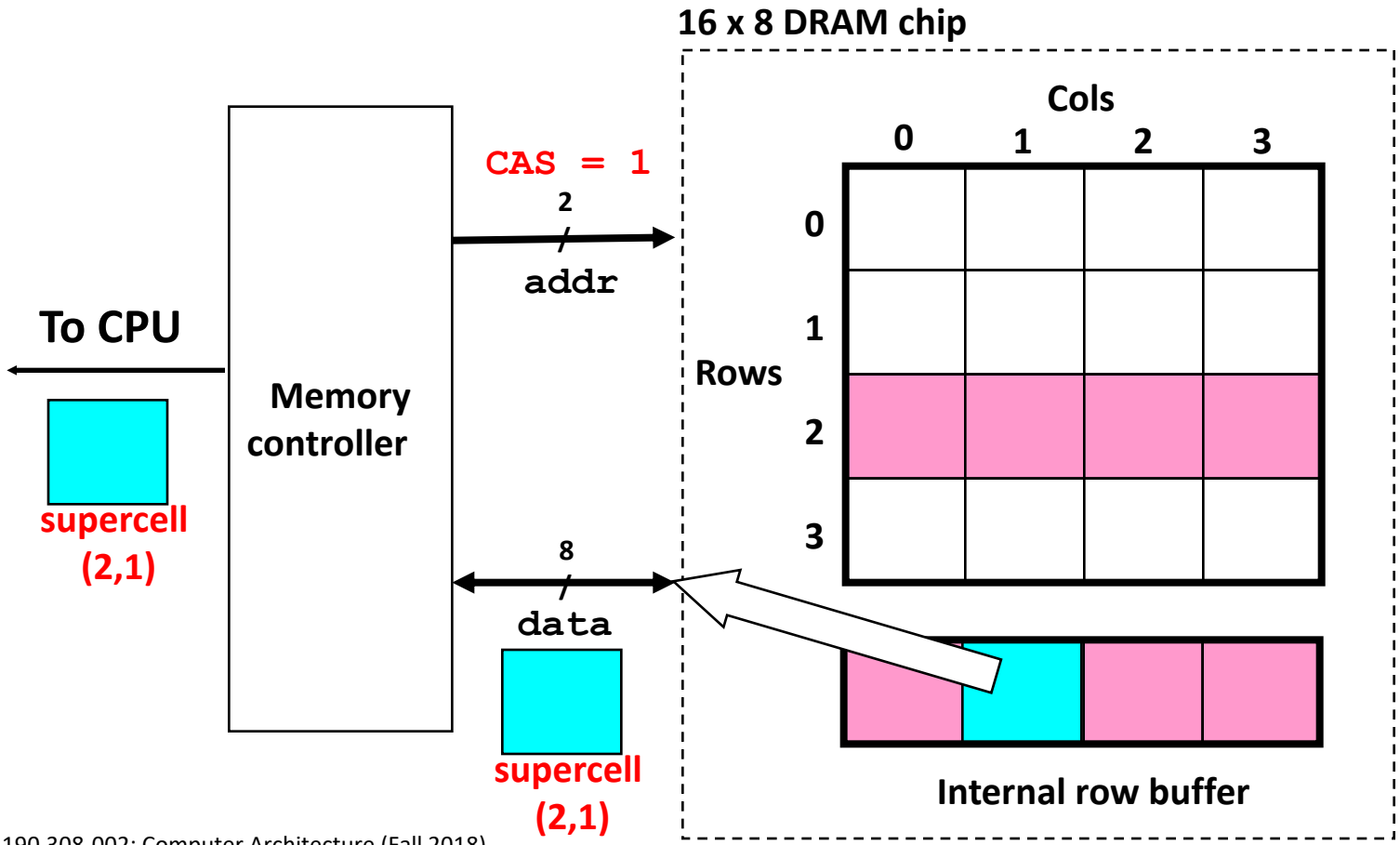
Step 1(b): Row 2 copied from DRAM array to row buffer.



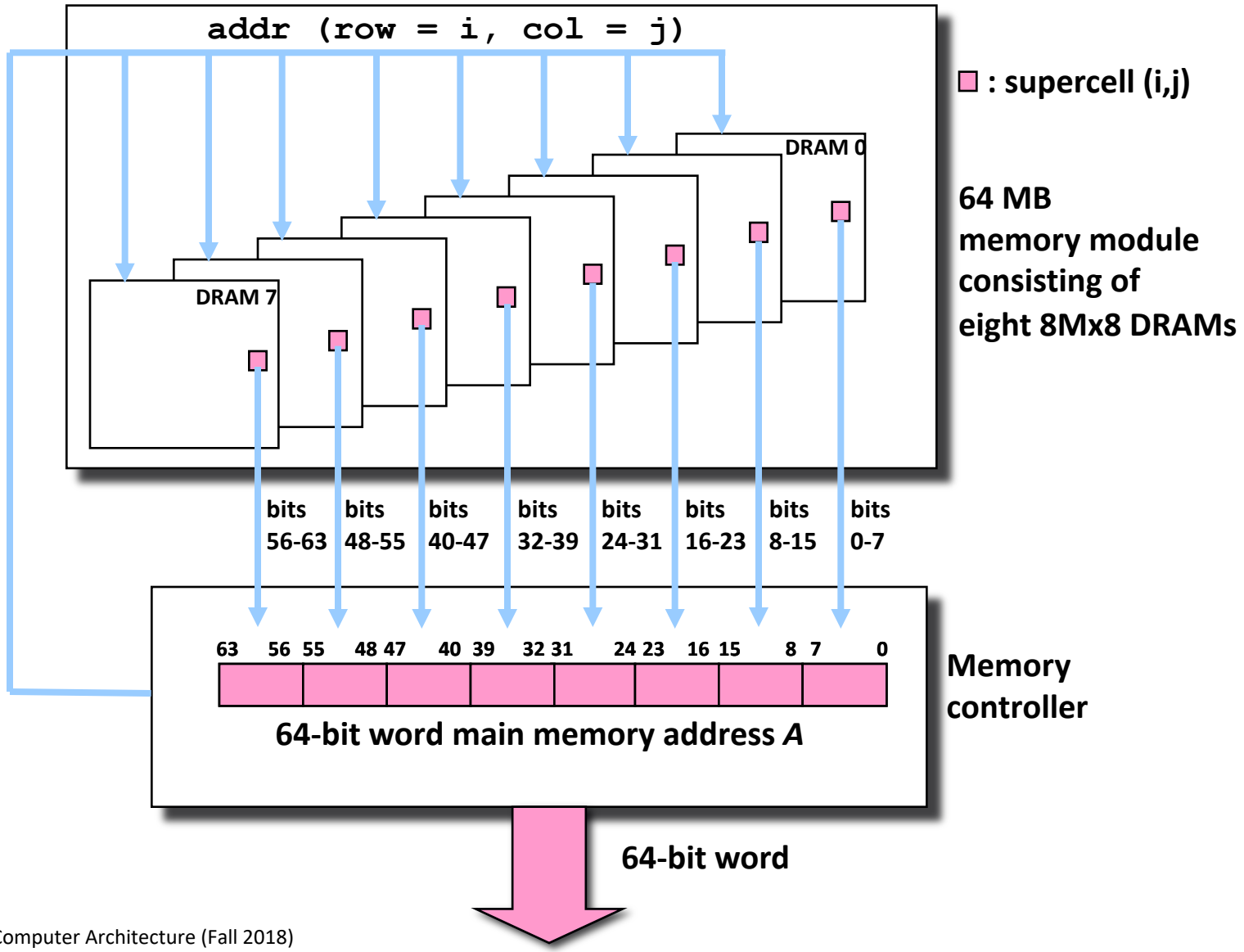
Reading DRAM Supercell (2,1)

Step 2(a): Column access strobe (CAS) selects column 1.

Step 2(b): Supercell (2,1) copied from buffer to data lines, and eventually back to the CPU.



Memory Modules



Enhanced DRAMs

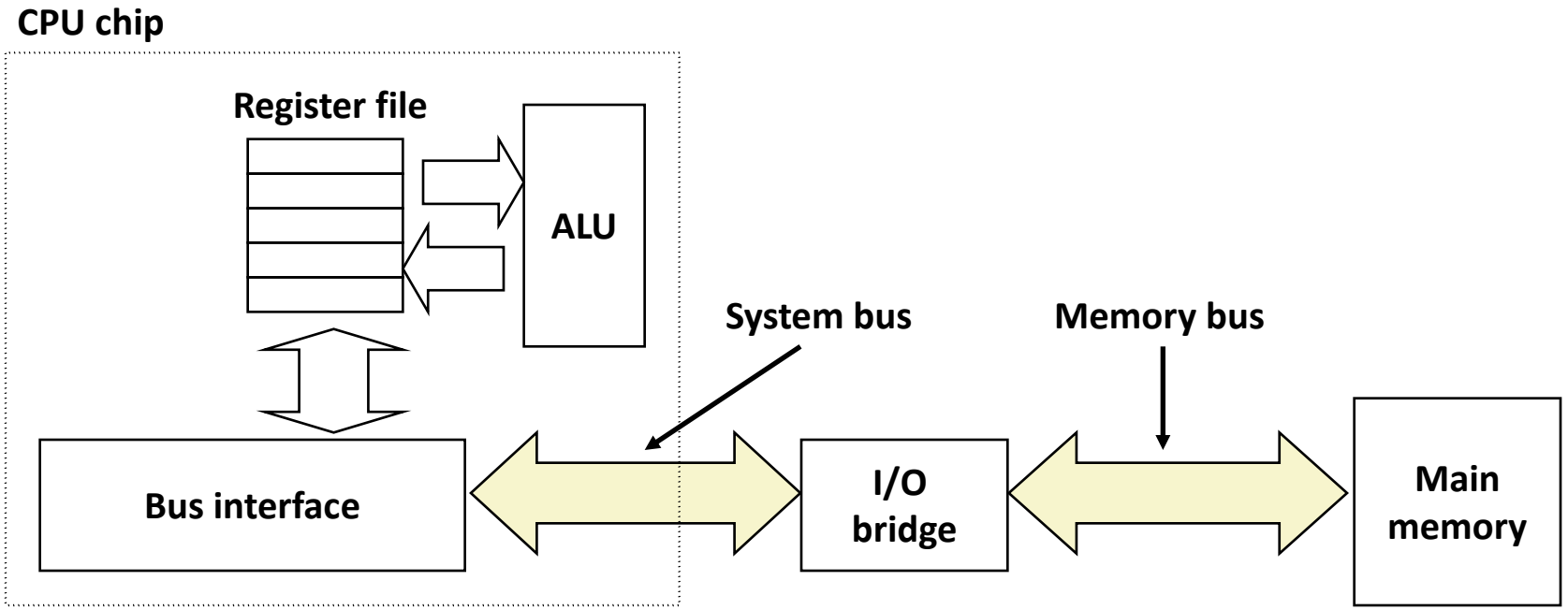
- **Basic DRAM cell has not changed since its invention in 1966.**
  - Commercialized by Intel in 1970.
- **DRAM cores with better interface logic and faster I/O :**
  - Synchronous DRAM (SDRAM)
    - Uses a conventional clock signal instead of asynchronous control
    - Allows reuse of the row addresses (e.g., RAS, CAS, CAS, CAS)
  - Double data-rate synchronous DRAM (DDR SDRAM)
    - Double edge clocking sends two bits per cycle per pin
    - By 2010, standard for most server and desktop systems

Nonvolatile Memories

- **DRAM and SRAM are volatile memories**
  - Lose information if powered off.
- **Nonvolatile memories retain value even if powered off**
  - Read-only memory (ROM): programmed during production
  - Programmable ROM (PROM): can be programmed once
  - Eraseable PROM (EPROM): can be bulk erased (UV, X-Ray)
  - Electrically eraseable PROM (EEPROM): electronic erase capability
  - Flash memory: EEPROMs. with partial (block-level) erase capability
    - Wears out after about 100,000 erasings
- **Uses for Nonvolatile Memories**
  - Firmware programs stored in a ROM (BIOS, controllers for disks, network cards, graphics accelerators, security subsystems,…)
  - Solid state disks (replace rotating disks in thumb drives, smart phones, mp3 players, tablets, laptops,…)
  - Disk caches

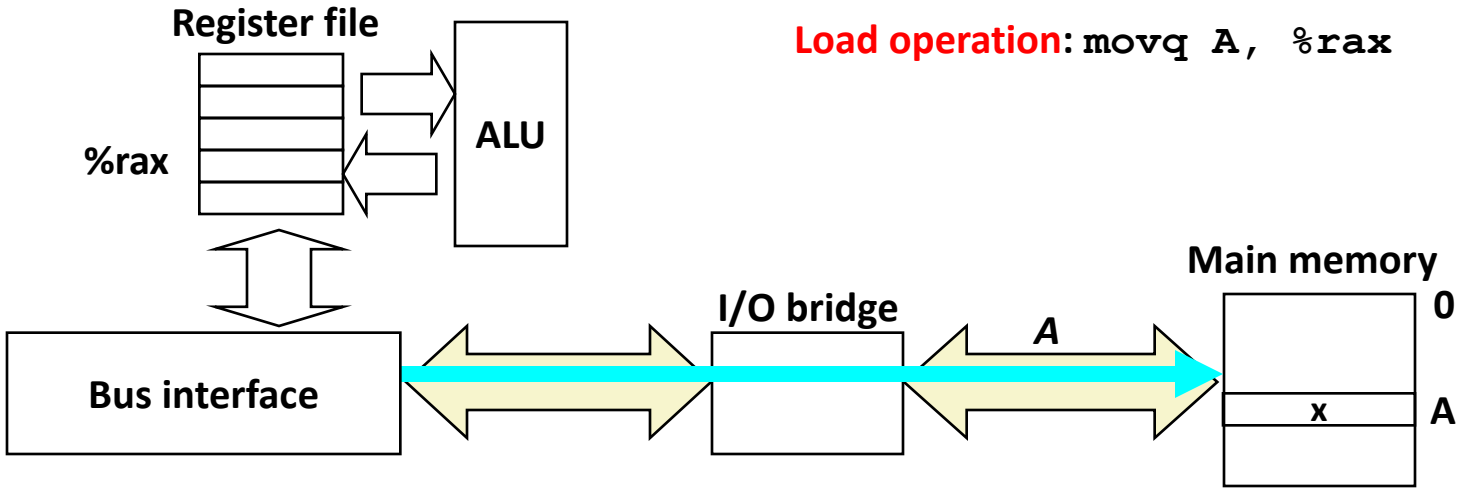
Traditional Bus Structure Connecting CPU and Memory

- A bus is a collection of parallel wires that carry address, data, and control signals.
- Buses are typically shared by multiple devices.



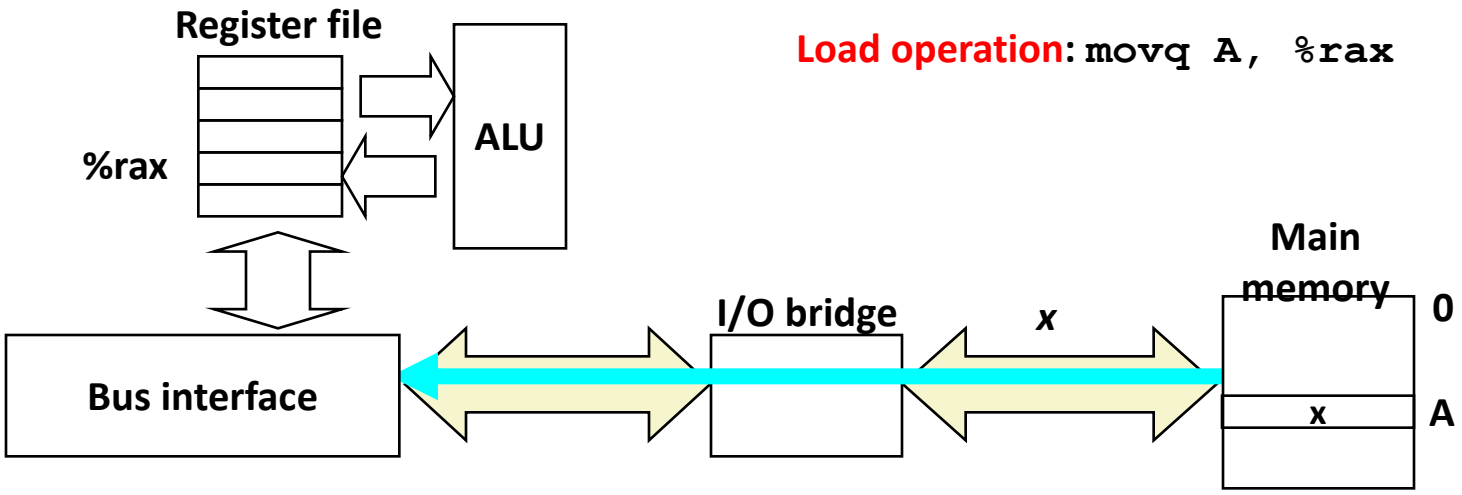
Memory Read Transaction (1)

- CPU places address A on the memory bus.



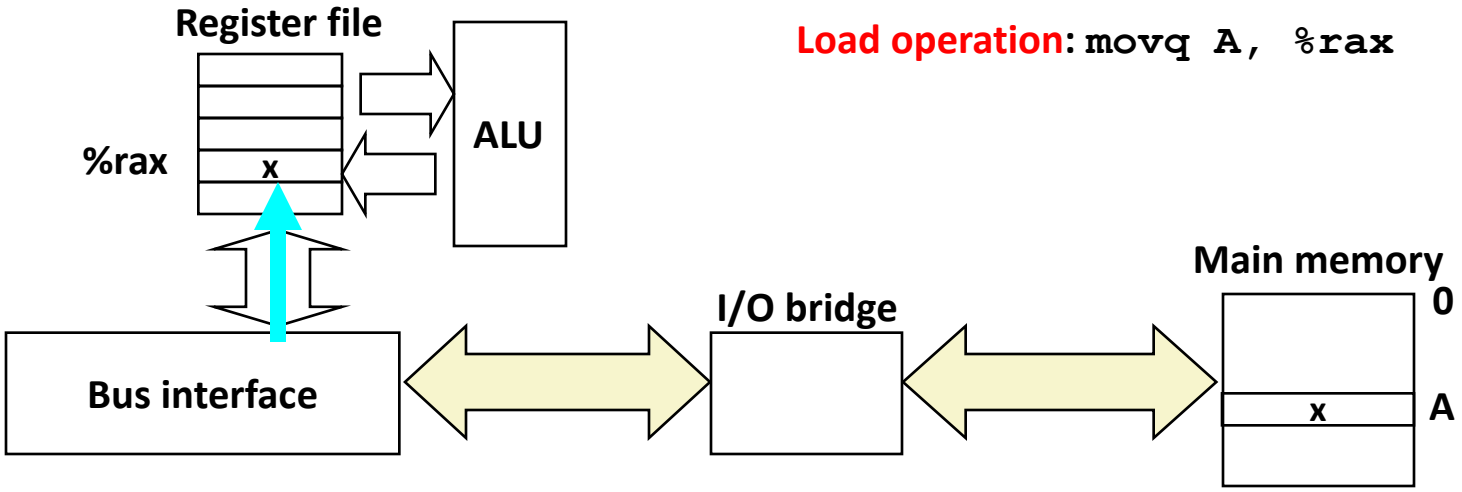
Memory Read Transaction (2)

- Main memory reads A from the memory bus, retrieves word x, and places it on the bus.



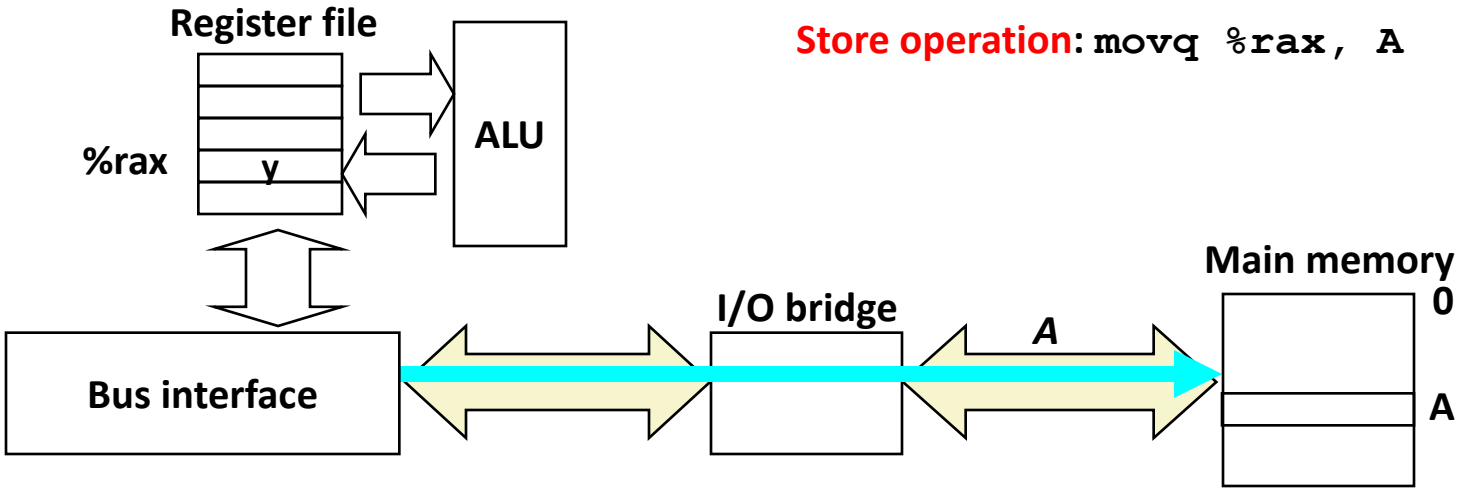
Memory Read Transaction (3)

- CPU read word x from the bus and copies it into register %rax.



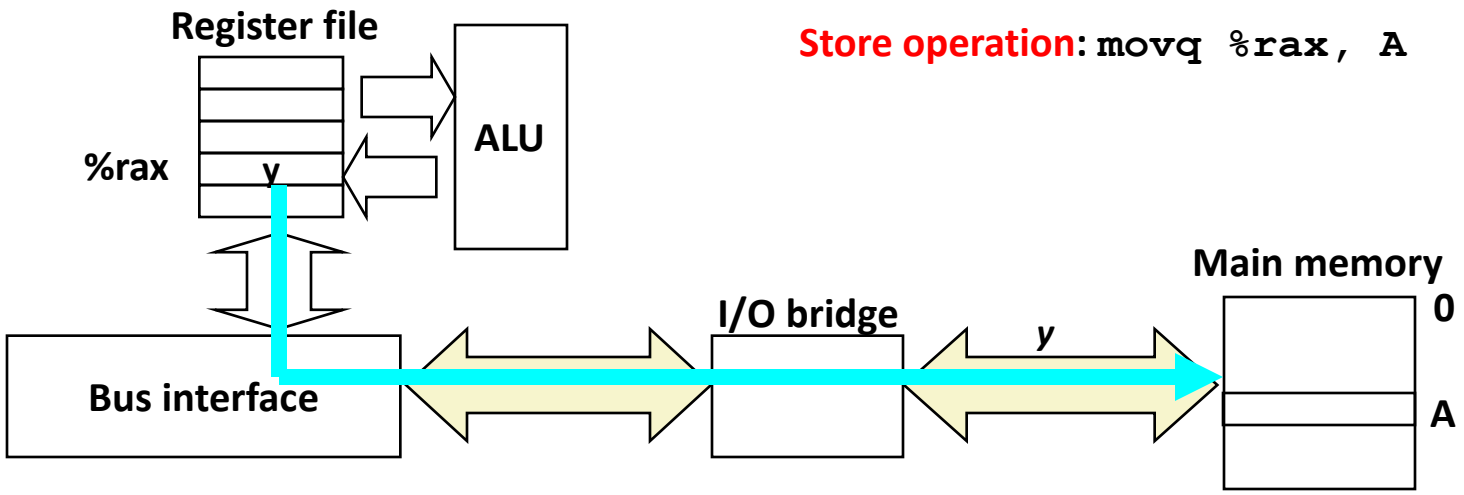
Memory Write Transaction (1)

- CPU places address A on bus. Main memory reads it and waits for the corresponding data word to arrive.



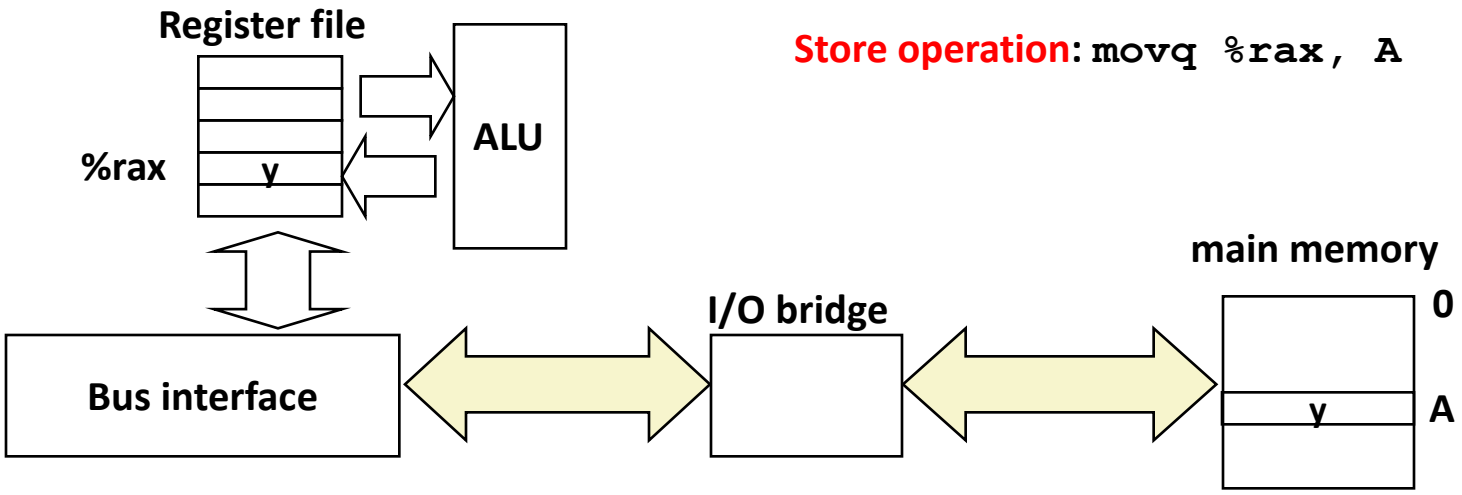
Memory Write Transaction (2)

- CPU places data word y on the bus.



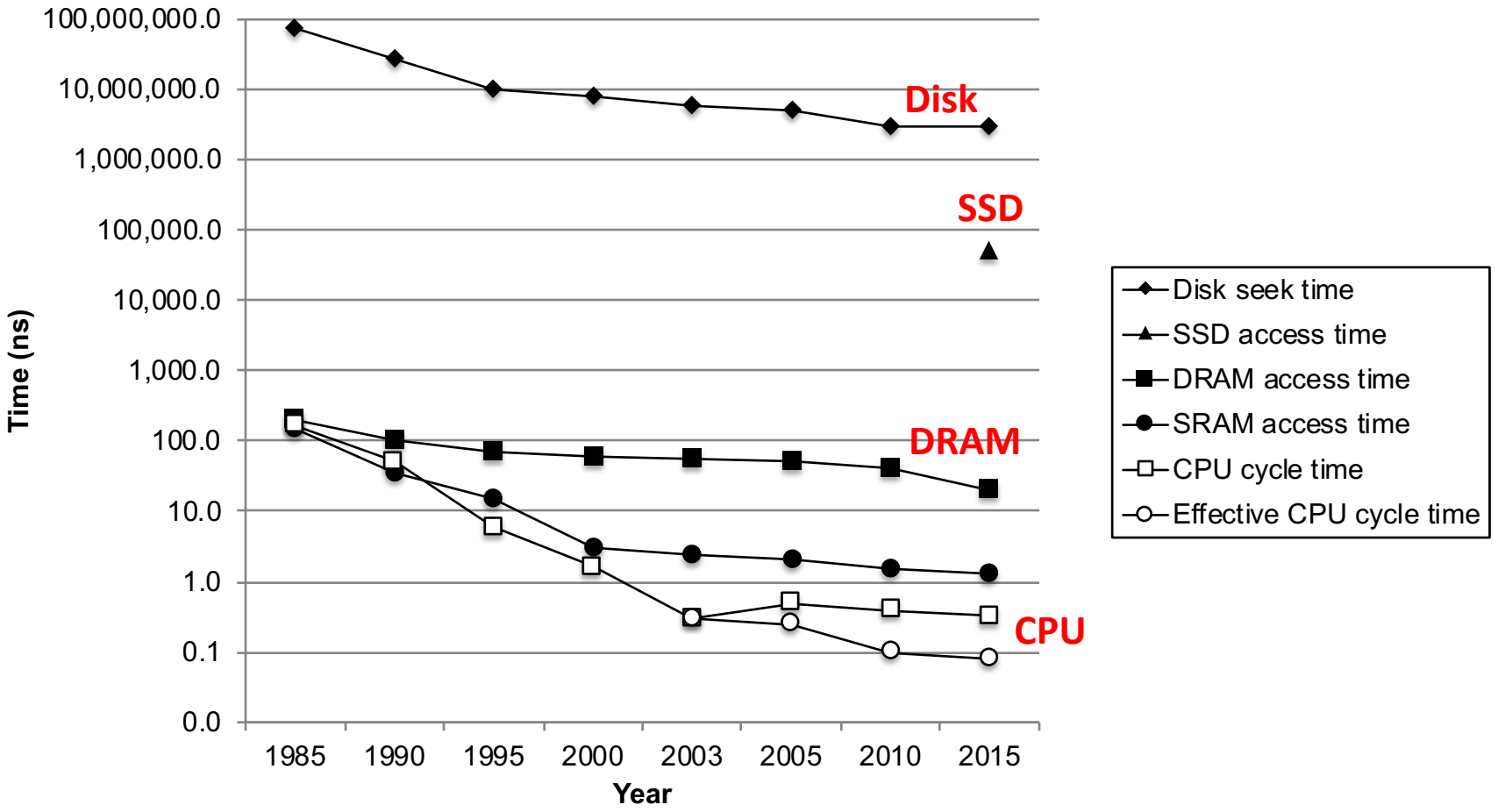
Memory Write Transaction (3)

- Main memory reads data word y from the bus and stores it at address A.



The CPU-Memory Gap

The gap widens between DRAM, disk, and CPU speeds.



Storage Trends

SRAM

Metric	1985	1990	1995	2000	2005	2010	2015	*2015:1985*
$/MB	2,900	320	256	100	75	60	*25*	*116*
access (ns)	150	35	15	3	2	1.5	*1.3*	*115*

DRAM

Metric	1985	1990	1995	2000	2005	2010	2015	*2015:1985*
$/MB	880	100	30	1	0.1	0.06	0.02	*44,000*
access (ns)	200	100	70	60	50	40	20	*10*
typical size (MB)	0.256	4	16	64	2,000	8,000	16.000	*62,500*

Disk

Metric	1985	1990	1995	2000	2005	2010	2015	*2015:1985*
$/GB	100,000	8,000	300	10	5	0.3	0.03	*3,333,333*
access (ms)	75	28	10	8	*5*	*3*	*3*	*25*
typical size (GB)	0.01	0.16	1	20	160	1,500	3,000	*300,000*

CPU Clock Rates

Inflection point in computer history when designers hit the "Power Wall"

	1985	1990	1995	2003	2005	2010	2015	*2015:1985*
CPU	80286	80386	Pentium	P-4	Core 2	Core i7(n)		Core i7(h)
Clock rate (MHz)	6	20	150	3,300	2,000	2,500	3,000	500
Cycle time (ns)	166	50	6	0.30	0.50	0.4	0.33	500
Cores	1	1	1	1	2	4	4	4
Effective cycle time (ns)	166	50	6	0.30	0.25	0.10	0.08	2,075

(n) Nehalem processor
(h) Haswell processor

Locality to the Rescue!

QUESTION: How can we make a memory as fast as SRAM and as cheap as DRAM (or even disk)?

The key to bridging this CPU-Memory gap is a fundamental property of computer programs known as locality

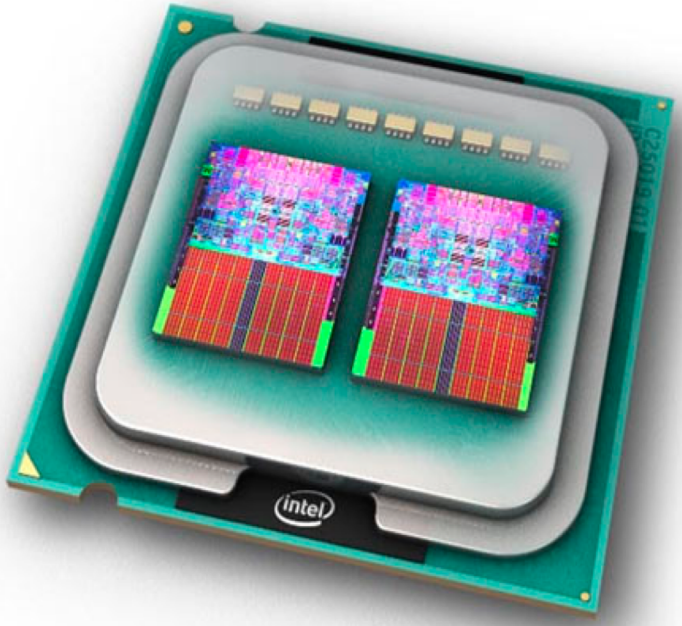
Today

Textbook: [CS:APP3e] 6.1.1, 6.1.4, 6.2, 6.3 / 6.1.3, 6.1.4

- **Storage technologies and trends**
  - Random Access Memory (RAM)
  - Storage Technology Trends
- **Locality of reference**
- **Caching in the memory hierarchy**

Memory Hierarchy with Multiple Levels!

- How to make cheap and fast memory?



On-Chip (CPU) SRAM Caches:
Small, expensive, but fast

Off-Chip DRAM:
Large, cheap, but slow

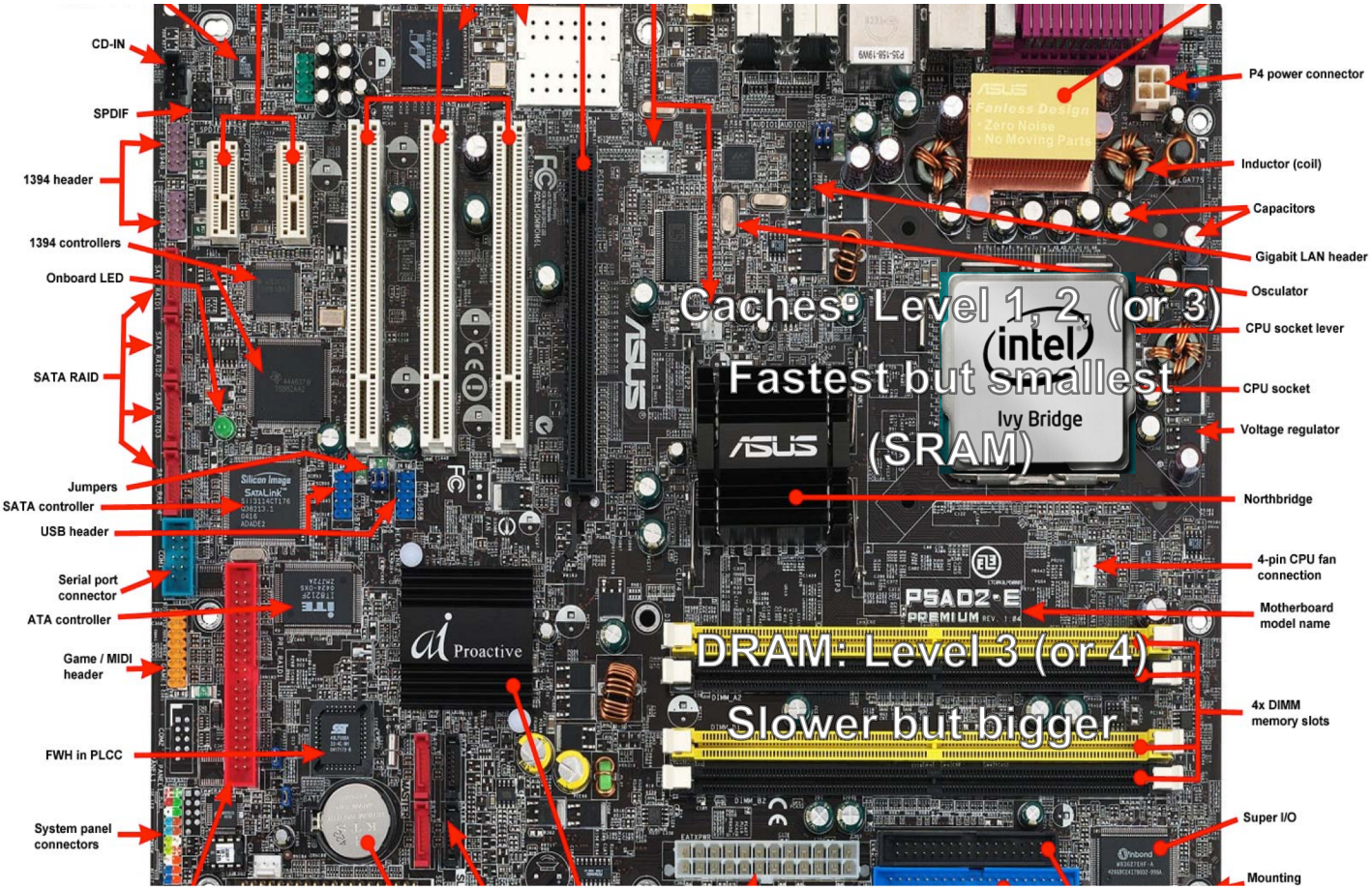
Exploiting Hierarchy Example 1: Book Storage

How about Level 3?

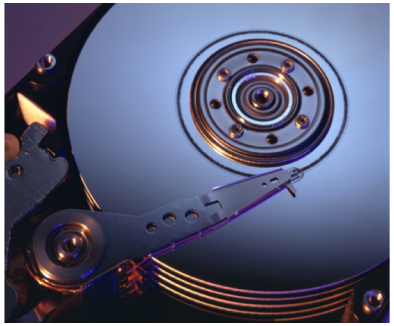
Exploiting Hierarchy Example 2: Cookers

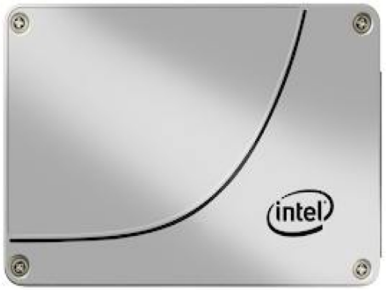
- Even my grandmom understands the concept of hierarchy. ☺

How about Computer System?



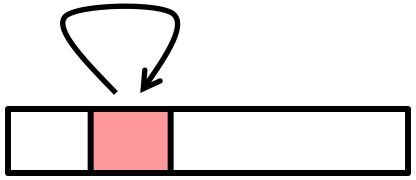
How about Level 4 (or 5)?



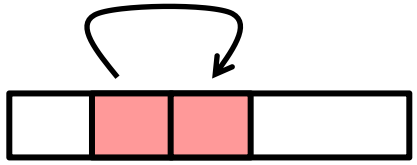


Locality

- **Principle of Locality: Programs tend to use data and instructions with addresses near or equal to those they have used recently**



- **Temporal locality:**
  - Recently referenced items are likely to be referenced again in the near future



- **Spatial locality:**
  - Items with nearby addresses tend to be referenced close together in time

Locality Example

```
sum = 0;
for (i = 0; i < n; i++)
    sum += a[i];
return sum;
```

- **Data references**
  - Reference array elements in succession (stride-1 reference pattern). — **Spatial locality**
  - Reference variable `sum` each iteration. — **Temporal locality**
- **Instruction references**
  - Reference instructions in sequence. — **Spatial locality**
  - Cycle through loop repeatedly. — **Temporal locality**

Qualitative Estimates of Locality

- **Claim:** Being able to look at code and get a qualitative sense of its locality is a key skill for a professional programmer.

- **Question:** Does this function have good locality with respect to array `a`?

```
int sum_array_rows(int a[M][N])
{
    int i, j, sum = 0;

    for (i = 0; i < M; i++)
        for (j = 0; j < N; j++)
            sum += a[i][j];
    return sum;
}
```

Locality Example

- **Question:** Does this function have good locality with respect to array `a`?

```
int sum_array_cols(int a[M][N])
{
    int i, j, sum = 0;

    for (j = 0; j < N; j++)
        for (i = 0; i < M; i++)
            sum += a[i][j];
    return sum;
}
```

Locality Example

- **Question: Can you permute the loops so that the function scans the 3-d array `a` with a stride-1 reference pattern (and thus has good spatial locality)?**

```
int sum_array_3d(int a[M][N][N])
{
    int i, j, k, sum = 0;

    for (i = 0; i < M; i++)
        for (j = 0; j < N; j++)
            for (k = 0; k < N; k++)
                sum += a[k][i][j];
    return sum;
}
```

Memory Hierarchies

- **Some fundamental and enduring properties of hardware and software:**
  - Fast storage technologies cost more per byte, have less capacity, and require more power (heat!).
  - The gap between CPU and main memory speed is widening.
  - Well-written programs tend to exhibit good locality.

- **These fundamental properties complement each other beautifully.**

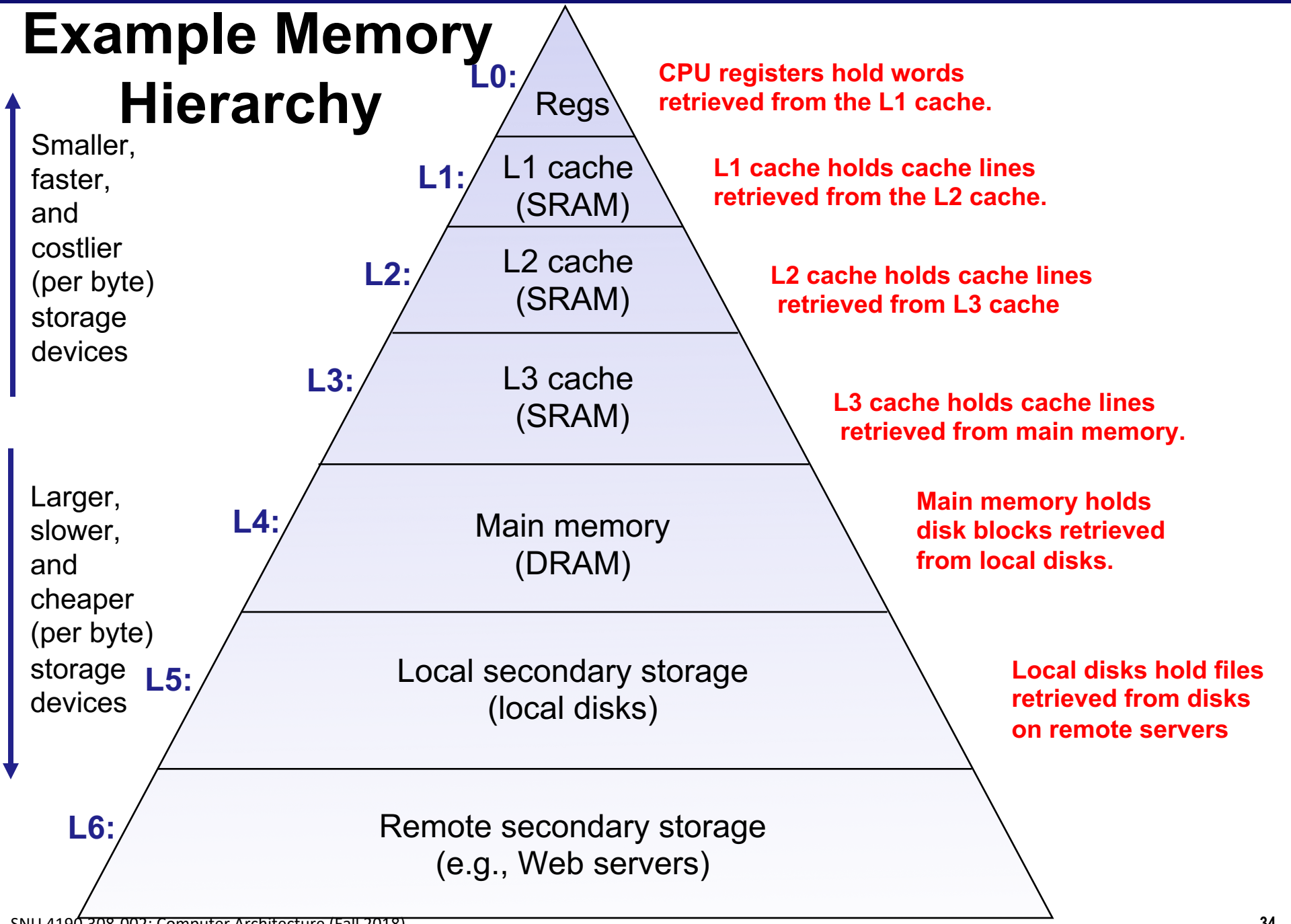
- **They suggest an approach for organizing memory and storage systems known as a memory hierarchy.**

Today

Textbook: [CS:APP3e] 6.1.1, 6.1.4, 6.2, 6.3 / 6.1.3, 6.1.4

- **Storage technologies and trends**
  - Random Access Memory (RAM)
  - Storage Technology Trends
- **Locality of reference**
- **Caching in the memory hierarchy**

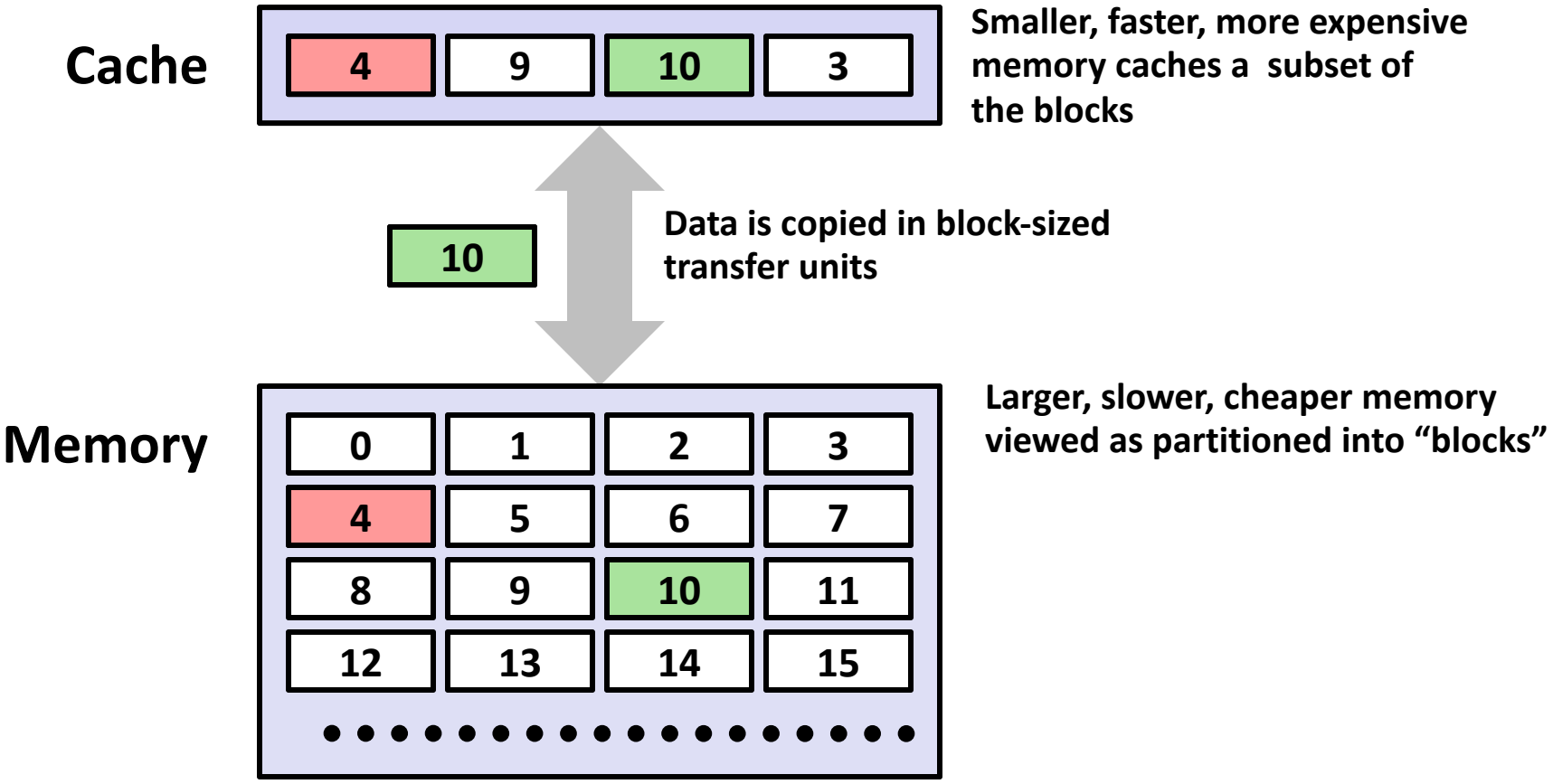
Example Memory Hierarchy



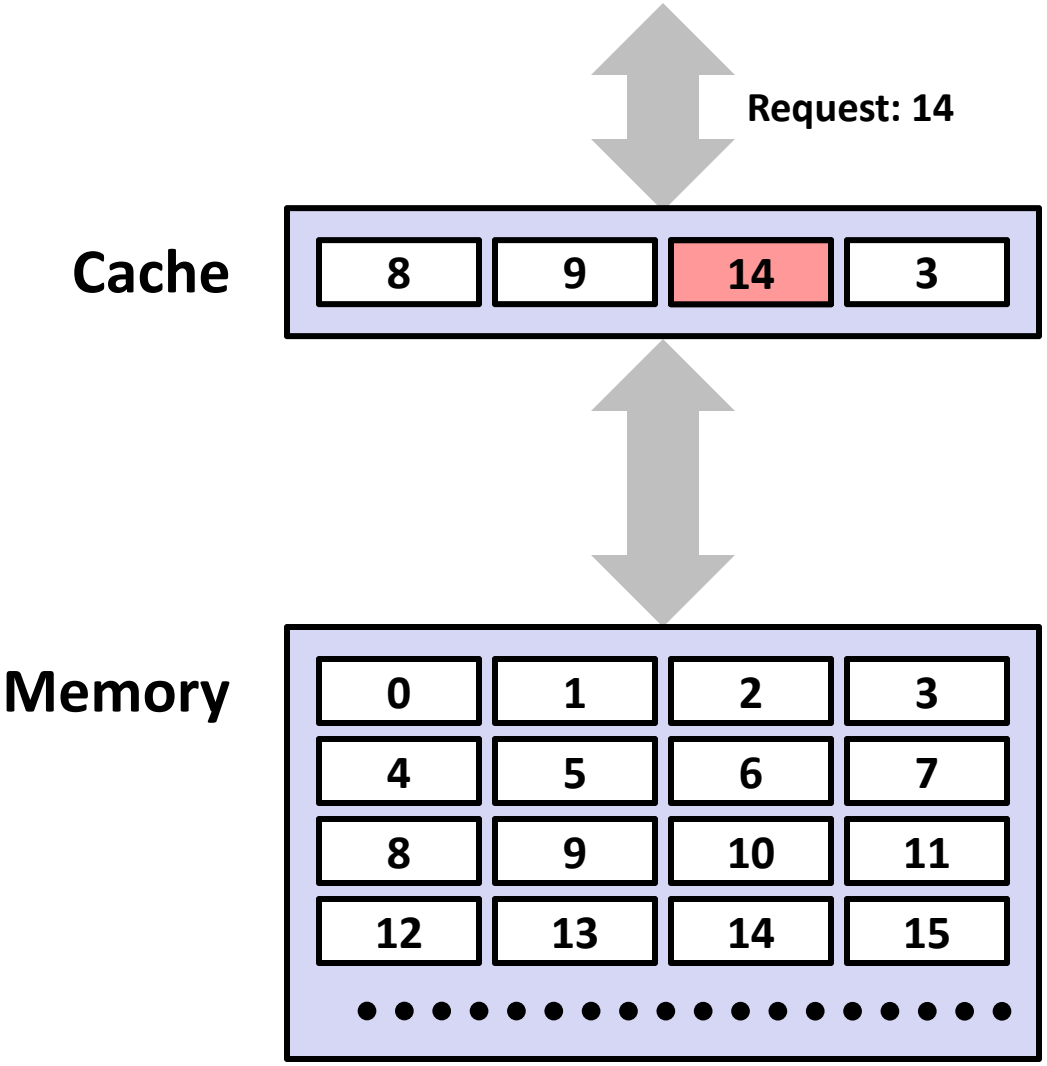
Caches

- ***Cache:*** **A smaller, faster storage device that acts as a staging area for a subset of the data in a larger, slower device.**
- **Fundamental idea of a memory hierarchy:**
  - For each k, the faster, smaller device at level k serves as a cache for the larger, slower device at level k+1.
- **Why do memory hierarchies work?**
  - Because of locality, programs tend to access the data at level k more often than they access the data at level k+1.
  - Thus, the storage at level k+1 can be slower, and thus larger and cheaper per bit.
- ***Big Idea:*** **The memory hierarchy creates a large pool of storage that costs as much as the cheap storage near the bottom, but that serves data to programs at the rate of the fast storage near the top.**

General Cache Concepts



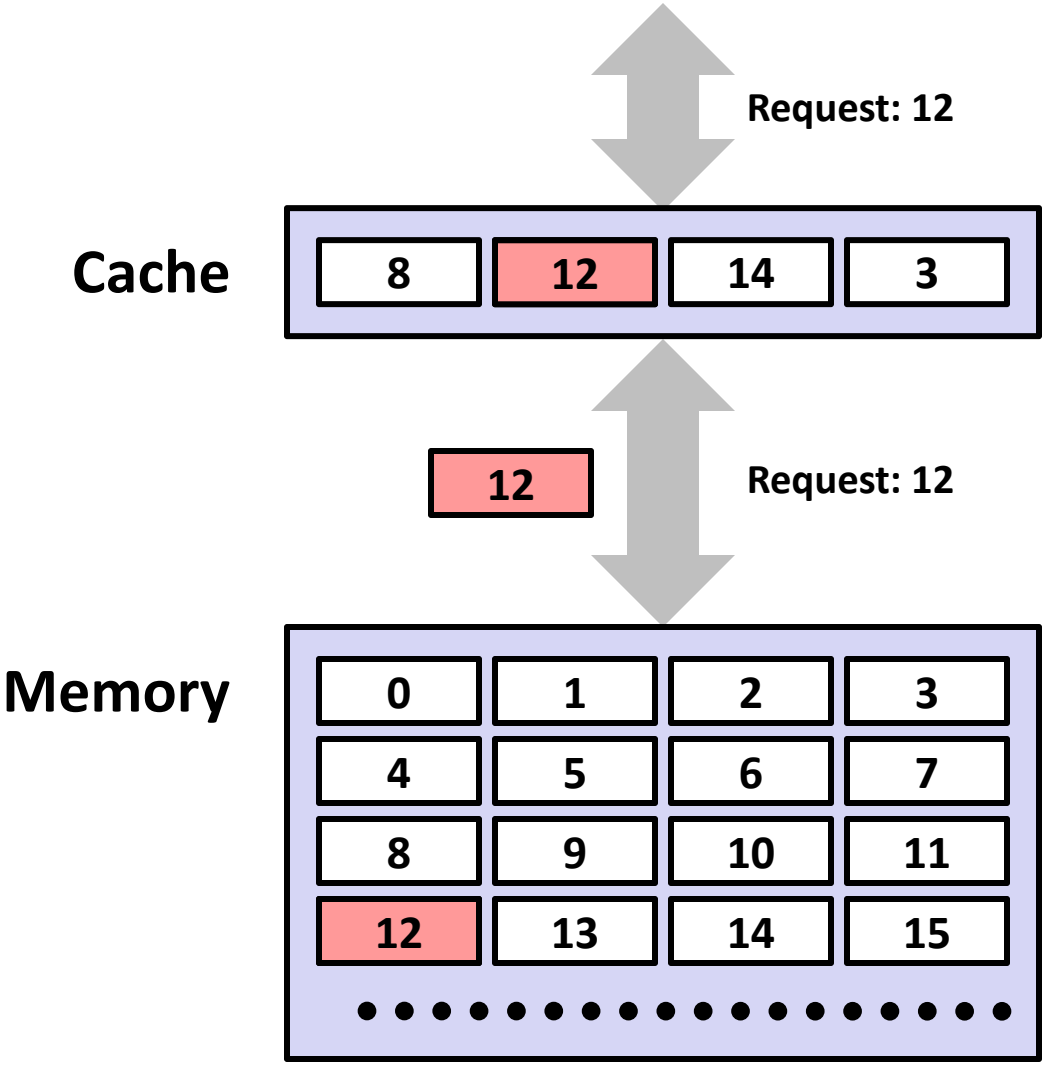
General Cache Concepts: Hit



Data in block b is needed

Block b is in cache:
Hit!

General Cache Concepts: Miss



Data in block b is needed

Block b is not in cache:
Miss!

Block b is fetched from memory

Block b is stored in cache

- Placement policy: determines where b goes
- Replacement policy: determines which block gets evicted (victim)

General Caching Concepts: Types of Cache Misses

- **Cold (compulsory) miss**
  - Cold misses occur because the cache is empty.
- **Conflict miss**
  - Most caches limit blocks at level k+1 to a small subset (sometimes a singleton) of the block positions at level k.
    - E.g. Block i at level k+1 must be placed in block (i mod 4) at level k.
  - Conflict misses occur when the level k cache is large enough, but multiple data objects all map to the same level k block.
    - E.g. Referencing blocks 0, 8, 0, 8, 0, 8, ... would miss every time.
- **Capacity miss**
  - Occurs when the set of active cache blocks (working set) is larger than the cache.

Examples of Caching in the Mem. Hierarchy

Cache Type	What is Cached?	Where is it Cached?	Latency (cycles)	Managed By
Registers	4-8 bytes words	CPU core	0	Compiler
TLB	Address translations	On-Chip TLB	0	Hardware MMU
L1 cache	64-byte blocks	On-Chip L1	4	Hardware
L2 cache	64-byte blocks	On-Chip L2	10	Hardware
Virtual Memory	4-KB pages	Main memory	100	Hardware + OS
Buffer cache	Parts of files	Main memory	100	OS
Disk cache	Disk sectors	Disk controller	100,000	Disk firmware
Network buffer cache	Parts of files	Local disk	10,000,000	NFS client
Browser cache	Web pages	Local disk	10,000,000	Web browser
Web cache	Web pages	Remote server disks	1,000,000,000	Web proxy server

Summary

- **The speed gap between CPU, memory and mass storage continues to widen.**
- **Well-written programs exhibit a property called *locality*.**
- **Memory hierarchies based on *caching* close the gap by exploiting locality.**

Next Topic – Memory Organization

- How to design these blocks?