
Quantitative Computer Architecture



How to measure, analyze, and specify computer system performance

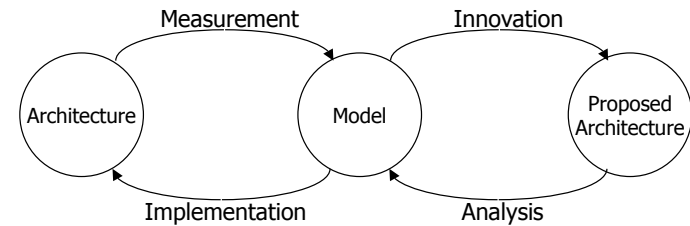
or

“My computer is faster than your computer!”

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Performance Measurement and Analysis in Computer Architecture



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What is Performance?

- Execution Time?
- Throughput?
- Of What?
- What is relative performance? How is it specified?

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Relative Performance, the Definition

$$\text{Relative Performance} = \frac{\text{Performance}_x}{\text{Performance}_y} = \frac{\text{Execution Time}_y}{\text{Execution Time}_x} = n$$

- We can remove all ambiguity by always constraining n to be $> 1 \Rightarrow$ machine x is n times faster than y .

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How to Specify Performance, in summary

- your program runs in 5 minutes on a Pentium III, but 2 minutes on a Pentium 4 processor. How much faster is the Pentium processor?
- another program runs in 10 minutes with the standard compiler, but when recompiled with a new compiler, the program runs in 9 minutes. How much faster is the new compiled program?

- Performance only has meaning in the context of a program or workload (MIPS, MFLOPS???).
- When talking about the performance of a single machine, we talk about “response time” or “throughput.”
- When talking about relative performance, we will say “machine x is n times faster than machine y” based on the ratio of their execution times for a workload.

But What Workload?

- Synthetic workloads
 - whetstone, dhrystone, ...
- toy benchmarks
 - puzzle, quicksort, sieve, ...
- kernels
 - livermore loops, linpack
- real programs

To maximize their efforts, architects will attempt to mirror the decision process of the market. When the market uses poor measurement methodology, we can get poor architectures!

SPEC: System Performance Evaluation Cooperative

- First Round 1989
 - 10 programs yielding a single number
- Second Round 1992
 - SpecInt92 (6 integer programs) and SpecFP92 (14 floating point programs)
 - Compiler Flags unlimited.
- Third Round 1995
 - Single flag setting for all programs; new set of programs
- Fourth Round, 2000
 - More complex programs, larger data sets

SPEC combines real programs with enforced measurement standards.

How to Summarize Performance

- Real workloads typically involve multiple programs, and thus, multiple results.
- Popular benchmarks (e.g., SPEC, livermore loops, ...) involve multiple programs.
- Everyone wants to summarize results with a single number.
- But the summarized result can be dramatically skewed by the method used to combine them.

How to Summarize Performance

- Arithmetic Mean

$$\frac{1}{n} \sum_{i=1}^n Time_i$$

- Weighted Arithmetic Mean

$$\sum_{i=1}^n Time_i * Weight_i \quad \text{where the sum of the weights is 1.}$$

- Geometric Mean

$$\sqrt[n]{\prod_{i=1}^n ExecutionTimeRatio_i} = \frac{\sqrt[n]{\prod_{i=1}^n ExecutionTime_i}}{ExecutionTime_{base}}$$

- Harmonic Mean

$$\frac{n}{\sum_{i=1}^n \frac{1}{Rate_i}}$$

Summarizing Performance

	A	B	C	W(1)	W(2)	W(3)
Program 1	1	10	20	.5	.909	.999
Program 2	1000	100	20	.5	.091	.001
AM/W(1)	500.5	55	20			
AM/W(2)	91.82	18.18	20			
AM/W(3)	2	10.09	20			
GM	31.6	31.6	20			

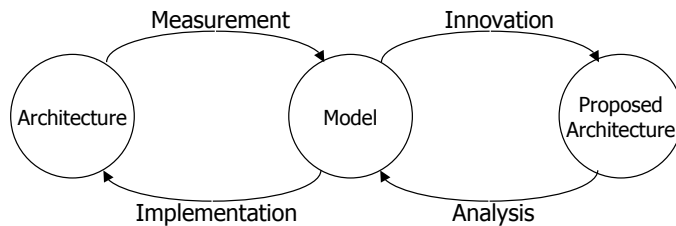
which machine is fastest now?

Summarizing Performance

- Even the unweighted arithmetic mean implies a weighting
- Geometric mean does not necessarily predict execution time for any mix of the programs
- ratios of geometric means never change (regardless of which machine is used as the base), and always give equal weight to all benchmarks
- To give unequal weight requires weighted arithmetic mean

Analyzing Performance

- That was all about measuring performance. What tools do we use to analyze (predict) performance in the absence of something to measure?
 - models, equations, queueing theory, mean value analysis, instruction-level simulation, gate-level simulation, ...



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Speedup

- Speedup is just relative performance on the same machine with something changed.

$$\text{speedup} = \text{relative performance} = \frac{\text{ET for entire task without change}}{\text{ET for entire task with change}}$$

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Amdahl's Law

The impact of a performance improvement is limited by the percent of execution time affected by the improvement

$$\text{Execution time after improvement} = \frac{\text{Execution Time Affected}}{\text{Amount of Improvement}} + \text{Execution Time Unaffected}$$

Make the common case fast!!

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- program A runs for 30 seconds, but 5 seconds of that time is just waiting for memory. If we double the speed of the memory subsystem, what is the speedup?
- fp instructions account for 10% of execution time of program B. Should we double the speed of the fp instructions, or speed up integer by 20%?
- How much do we need to speed up the memory to get a 20% improvement in program A?

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What is Time?

$$\begin{aligned}\text{CPU Execution Time} &= \text{CPU clock cycles} * \text{Clock cycle time} \\ &= \text{CPU clock cycles} / \text{Clock rate}\end{aligned}$$

Every conventional processor has a clock with an associated clock cycle time or clock rate.

Every program runs in an integral number of clock cycles.

MHz = millions of cycles/second

X MHz = 1000/X nanoseconds cycle time

How many clock cycles?

$$\text{Number of CPU cycles} = \text{Instructions executed} * \text{Average Clock Cycles per Instruction (CPI)}$$

or

$$\text{CPI} = \text{CPU clock cycles} / \text{Instruction count}$$

All Together Now

The diagram shows the formula $\text{CPU Execution Time} = \text{Instruction Count} \times \text{CPI} \times \text{Clock Cycle Time}$ enclosed in a box. Arrows point from each term to its unit: 'seconds' for CPU Execution Time, 'instructions' for Instruction Count, 'cycles/instruction' for CPI, and 'seconds/cycle' for Clock Cycle Time.

$$\begin{array}{ccccccc} & \nearrow & & & & & \\ & \text{seconds} & & & & & \\ & & & & & & \\ \text{CPU Execution} & = & \text{Instruction} & \times & \text{CPI} & \times & \text{Clock Cycle} \\ \text{Time} & & \text{Count} & & & & \text{Time} \\ & \searrow & & \searrow & & \searrow & \\ & \text{instructions} & & \text{cycles/instruction} & & \text{seconds/cycle} & \end{array}$$

-
- 100 MHz processor, program runs in 30 seconds, executing a billion instructions: CPI = ??
 - If we reduce CPI to 2.4, ET = ??
 - new compiler reduces IC to .8 billion, but increases CPI to 2.6: good or bad?
 - 100 MHz pentium has CPI of .9, 200 MHz pentium has a CPI of 1.1 (why?): What's the speedup for that workload?

Key Points

- We need to be precise about how to specify performance.
- Performance is only meaningful in the context of a workload.
- Be careful how you summarize performance.
- Amdahl's law
- $ET = IC * CPI * CT$