Lecture: Branch Prediction

• Topics: dynamic branch prediction, bimodal/global/local/tournament predictors (Section 3.3, notes on class webpage)
Amdahl’s Law

• Architecture design is very bottleneck-driven – make the common case fast, do not waste resources on a component that has little impact on overall performance/power

• Amdahl’s Law: performance improvements through an enhancement is limited by the fraction of time the enhancement comes into play

• Example: a web server spends 40% of time in the CPU and 60% of time doing I/O – a new processor that is ten times faster results in a 36% reduction in execution time (speedup of 1.56) – Amdahl’s Law states that maximum execution time reduction is 40% (max speedup of 1.66)
Principle of Locality

- Most programs are predictable in terms of instructions executed and data accessed

- The 90-10 Rule: a program spends 90% of its execution time in only 10% of the code

- Temporal locality: a program will shortly re-visit X

- Spatial locality: a program will shortly visit X+1
Pipeline without Branch Predictor

In the 5-stage pipeline, a branch completes in two cycles →
If the branch went the wrong way, one incorrect instr is fetched →
One stall cycle per incorrect branch
Pipeline with Branch Predictor

In the 5-stage pipeline, a branch completes in two cycles →
If the branch went the wrong way, one incorrect instr is fetched →
One stall cycle per incorrect branch
1-Bit Bimodal Prediction

• For each branch, keep track of what happened last time and use that outcome as the prediction

• What are prediction accuracies for branches 1 and 2 below:

```c
while (1) {
    for (i=0;i<10;i++) { branch-1
        ...
    }
    for (j=0;j<20;j++) { branch-2
        ...
    }
}
```
2-Bit Bimodal Prediction

- For each branch, maintain a 2-bit saturating counter:
  if the branch is taken: counter = min(3,counter+1)
  if the branch is not taken: counter = max(0,counter-1)

- If (counter >= 2), predict taken, else predict not taken

- Advantage: a few atypical branches will not influence the prediction (a better measure of “the common case”)

- Especially useful when multiple branches share the same counter (some bits of the branch PC are used to index into the branch predictor)

- Can be easily extended to N-bits (in most processors, N=2)
Bimodal 1-Bit Predictor

The table keeps track of what the branch did last time
Bimodal 2-Bit Predictor

Branch PC

10 bits

Table of 1K entries

Each entry is a 2-bit sat. counter

The table keeps track of the common-case outcome for the branch
Correlating Predictors

• Basic branch prediction: maintain a 2-bit saturating counter for each entry (or use 10 branch PC bits to index into one of 1024 counters) – captures the recent “common case” for each branch

• Can we take advantage of additional information?
  ➢ If a branch recently went 01111, expect 0; if it recently went 11101, expect 1; can we have a separate counter for each case?
  ➢ If the previous branches went 01, expect 0; if the previous branches went 11, expect 1; can we have a separate counter for each case?

Hence, build correlating predictors
Global Predictor

Branch PC
10 bits
CAT or XOR

Global history

Table of 16K entries
Each entry is a 2-bit sat. counter

The table keeps track of the common-case outcome for the branch/history combo
Local Predictor

Branch PC

Use 6 bits of branch PC to index into local history table

Table of 64 entries of 14-bit histories for a single branch

10110111011001

Also a two-level predictor that only uses local histories at the first level

14-bit history indexes into next level

Table of 16K entries of 2-bit saturating counters
Local Predictor

The table keeps track of the common-case outcome for the branch/local-history combo
Local/Global Predictors

- Instead of maintaining a counter for each branch to capture the common case,
  - Maintain a counter for each branch and surrounding pattern
  - If the surrounding pattern belongs to the branch being predicted, the predictor is referred to as a local predictor
  - If the surrounding pattern includes neighboring branches, the predictor is referred to as a global predictor
Tournament Predictors

- A local predictor might work well for some branches or programs, while a global predictor might work well for others.

- Provide one of each and maintain another predictor to identify which predictor is best for each branch.

### Tournament Predictor

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Branch PC</th>
<th>Local Predictor</th>
<th>Global Predictor</th>
<th>Tournament Predictor</th>
<th>MUX</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

- **Table of 2-bit saturating counters**

- **Alpha 21264**:
  - 1K entries in level-1
  - 1K entries in level-2
  - 4K entries
  - 12-bit global history
  - 4K entries
  - Total capacity: ?
Branch Target Prediction

- In addition to predicting the branch direction, we must also predict the branch target address.

- Branch PC indexes into a predictor table; indirect branches might be problematic.

- Most common indirect branch: return from a procedure – can be easily handled with a stack of return addresses.
Problem 1

- What is the storage requirement for a global predictor that uses 3-bit saturating counters and that produces an index by XOR-ing 12 bits of branch PC with 12 bits of global history?
Problem 1

• What is the storage requirement for a global predictor that uses 3-bit saturating counters and that produces an index by XOR-ing 12 bits of branch PC with 12 bits of global history?

The index is 12 bits wide, so the table has $2^{12}$ saturating counters. Each counter is 3 bits wide. So total storage

$= 3 \times 4096 = 12$ Kb or 1.5 KB
Problem 2

- What is the storage requirement for a tournament predictor that uses the following structures:
  - a “selector” that has 4K entries and 2-bit counters
  - a “global” predictor that XORs 14 bits of branch PC with 14 bits of global history and uses 3-bit counters
  - a “local” predictor that uses an 8-bit index into L1, and produces a 12-bit index into L2 by XOR-ing branch PC and local history. The L2 uses 2-bit counters.
Problem 2

• What is the storage requirement for a tournament predictor that uses the following structures:
  ▪ a “selector” that has 4K entries and 2-bit counters
  ▪ a “global” predictor that XORs 14 bits of branch PC with 14 bits of global history and uses 3-bit counters
  ▪ a “local” predictor that uses an 8-bit index into L1, and produces a 12-bit index into L2 by XOR-ing branch PC and local history. The L2 uses 2-bit counters.

Selector = 4K * 2b = 8 Kb
Global = 3b * 2^14 = 48 Kb
Local = (12b * 2^8) + (2b * 2^12) = 3 Kb + 8 Kb = 11 Kb
Total = 67 Kb
Problem 3

- For the code snippet below, estimate the steady-state bpred accuracies for the default PC+4 prediction, the 1-bit bimodal, 2-bit bimodal, global, and local predictors. Assume that the global/local preds use 5-bit histories.

```c
do {
    for (i=0; i<4; i++) {
        increment something
    }
    for (j=0; j<8; j++) {
        increment something
    }
    k++;
} while (k < some large number)
```
Problem 3

• For the code snippet below, estimate the steady-state bpred accuracies for the default PC+4 prediction, the 1-bit bimodal, 2-bit bimodal, global, and local predictors. Assume that the global/local preds use 5-bit histories.

```c
int k = 0;
for (i=0; i<4; i++) {
    increment something
}
for (j=0; j<8; j++) {
    increment something
}
k++;
```

- PC+4: \( \frac{2}{13} = 15\% \)
- 1b Bim: \( \frac{2+6+1}{4+8+1} = \frac{9}{13} = 69\% \)
- 2b Bim: \( \frac{3+7+1}{13} = \frac{11}{13} = 85\% \)
- Global: \( \frac{4+7+1}{13} = \frac{12}{13} = 92\% \)
- Local: \( \frac{4+7+1}{13} = \frac{12}{13} = 92\% \)