Lecture 35: Registers, Functions, Parameters
Three-Address Code to ia32

• The problem is that in reality, the ia32 architecture has very few registers, and example from last lecture used registers profligately.

• *Register allocation* is the general term for assigning virtual registers to real registers or memory locations.

• When we run out of real registers, we *spill* values into memory locations reserved for them.

• We keep a register or two around as *compiler temporaries* for cases where the instruction set doesn’t let us just combine operands directly.
A Simple Strategy: Local Register Allocation

- It’s convenient to handle register allocation within basic blocks—sequences of code with one entry point at the top and (at most) one branch at the end.

- At the end of each such block, spill any registers needed.

- To do this efficiently, need to know when a register is dead—that is, when its value is no longer needed.

- We’ll talk about how to compute that in a later lecture. Let’s assume we know it for now.

- Let’s also assume that each virtual register representing a local variable or intermediate result has a memory location suitable for spilling.
Simple Algorithm for Local Register Allocation

• We execute the following for each three-address instruction in a basic block (in turn).

• Initially, the set availReg contains all usable physical registers.

```python
# Allocate registers to an instruction x := y op z
# [Adopted from Aho, Sethi, Ullman]
regAlloc(x := y op z):
    if x has an assigned register already or dies here:
        return
    if y is a virtual register and dies here:
        reassign y’s physical register to x
    elif availReg is not empty:
        remove a register from availReg and assign to x
    elif op requires a register:
        spill another virtual register (which could be y or z),
        and reassign its physical register to x
    else:
        just leave x in memory
```
Function Prologue and Epilogue for the ia32

- Consider a function that needs $K$ bytes of local variables and other compiler temporary storage for expression evaluation.
- We'll consider the case where we keep a frame pointer.
- Overall, the code for a function, $F$, looks like this:

```
F:
pushl %ebp        # Save dynamic link (caller’s frame pointer)
movl %esp,%ebp   # Set new frame pointer
subl $K,%esp     # Reserve space for locals
code for body of function, leaving value in %eax
leave            # Sets %ebp to 0(%ebp), popping old frame pointer
ret               # Pop return address and return
```
Code Generation for Local Variables

- Local variables are stored on the stack (thus not at fixed location).
- One possibility: access relative to the stack pointer, but
  - Sometimes convenient for stack pointer to change during execution of function, sometimes by unknown amounts.
  - Debuggers, unwinders, and stack tracers would like simple way to compute stack-frame boundaries.
- Solution: use frame pointer, which is constant over execution of function.
- For simple language, use fact that parameter $i$ is at location frame pointer + $K_1(i + K_2)$. If parameters are 32-bit integers (or pointers) on the ia32, $K_1 = 4$ and $K_2 = 2$ [why?].
- Local variables other than parameters are at negative offsets from the frame pointer on the ia32.
Accessing Non-Local Variables

• In program on left, how does f3 access x1?
• Let’s suppose that functions pass static links as the first parameter of their callees.
• The static link passed to f3 will be f2’s frame pointer.

```python
def f1(x1):
    def f2(x2):
        def f3(x3):
            ... x1 ...
            ...
        f3(12)
    ...
    f2(9)
```

# To access x1:
movl 8(%ebp),%ebx  # Fetch FP for f2
movl 8(%ebx),%ebx  # Fetch FP for f1
movl 12(%ebx),%eax  # Fetch x1

# When f2 calls f3:
    compute regular parameters
pushl %ebp        # Pass f2’s frame to f3
call f3

• We’ll say a function is at nesting level 0 if it is at the outer level, and at level $k + 1$ if it is most immediately enclosed inside a level-$k$ function. Likewise, the variables, parameters, and code in a level-$k$ function are themselves at level $k+1$ (enclosed in a level-$k$ function).
• In general, for code at nesting level $n$ to access a variable at nesting level $m \leq n$, perform $n - m$ loads of static links.
The GNU convention for passing the static link is slightly different: it is passed in register `ecx`, making it easy to ignore if not needed. We'll use that in what follows.

```python
def f1 (x1):
    def f2 (x2):
        def f3 (x3):
            ... x1 ...
            f3 (12)

    f2 (9)
```

```assembly
# Immediately after prologue:
pushl %ecx  # Save static link at -4 off %ebp.

# To access x1:
movl -4(%ebp),%ebx  # Fetch FP for f2
movl -4(%ebx),%ebx  # Fetch FP for f1
movl 8(%ebx),%eax  # Fetch x1

# When f2 calls f3:
compute parameters
movl %ebp, %ecx  # Pass f2's frame to f3
call f3
```
Calling Function-Valued Variables and Parameters

• As we’ve seen, a function value consists of a code address and a static link (let’s assume code address comes first).

• So, in project 3, when we need the value of a function itself:

```python
def caller(f):
    f(42)
```

we create an object containing the type pointer for the function type of \( f \), and the code pointer and static link for \( f \), and pass a pointer to this object.

• Then the call \( f(42) \) gets translated to

```assembly
pushl $42
movl 8(%ebp), %eax  # Get parameter f
movl 8(%eax), %ecx  # Fetch static link from f
movl 4(%eax), %eax  # Get code address for f
call *%eax          # GNU assembler for call to address in eax
```
Static Links for Calling Known Functions

- For a call $F(\ldots)$ to a fixed, known function $F$, we could use the same strategy as for function-values variables:
  - Create a closure for $F$ containing address of $F$’s code and value of its static link.
  - Call $F$ using the same code sequence as on previous slide.
- But can do better. Functions and their nesting levels are known.
- In code that is at nesting level $n$, to call a function at known nesting level $m \leq n$, get correct static link in register R with:
  - movl %ebp,R
  - Do ‘movl -4(R),R’ $n - m + 1$ times.
  (assuming we save static links at -4 off our frame pointer).
- When calling outer-level functions, it doesn’t matter what you use as the static link.
Passing Static Links to Known Functions: Example

```python
def f1(x1):
    def f2(x2):
        def f3(x3):
            ... f2(9) ...
        ...
        f3(12)
    f2(10) # (recursively)
    ...

# To call f2(9) (in f3):
    pushl $9
    movl 4(%ebp),%ebx # Fetch FP for f2
    movl 4(%ebx),%ecx # Fetch FP for f1, and pass it
    call f2
    addl $4,%esp

# To call f3(12) (in f2):
    pushl $12
    movl %ebp, %ecx # f2's FP is static link
    call f3
    addl $4,%ebp

# To call f2(10) (in f2):
    pushl $10
    movl 4(%ebp),%ecx # Pass down same static link
    call f2
    addl $4,%ebp
```

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A Note on Pushing

- Don’t really need to push and pop the stack as I’ve been doing.
- Instead, when allocating local variables, etc., on the stack, leave sufficient extra space on top of the stack to hold any parameter list in the function.
- Eg., to translate

  ```python
def f(x):
g(g(x+2))
```

- We could either get the code on the left (pushing and popping) or that on the right (ignoring static links):

  ```
f:  movl 8(%ebp),%eax
    addl $2,%eax
    pushl %eax
    call g
    addl $4,%esp
    pushl %eax
    call g
    addl $4,%esp

f:  subl $4,%esp
    movl 8(%ebp),%eax
    addl $2,%eax
    movl %eax,0(%esp)
    call g
    movl %eax,0(%esp)
    call g
    addl $4,%esp
```

  ...and you can continue to use the depressed stack pointer for arguments on the right.

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Parameter Passing Semantics: Value vs. Reference

- So far, our examples have dealt only with value parameters, which are the only kind found in C, Java, and Python.
  
  Ignorant comments from numerous textbook authors, bloggers, and slovenly hackers notwithstanding [End Rant].

- Pushing a parameter’s value on the stack creates a copy that essentially acts as a local variable of the called function.

- C++ (and Pascal) have reference parameters, where assignments to the formal are assignments to the actual.

- Implementation of reference parameters is simple:
  - Push the address of the argument, not its value, and
  - To fetch from or store to the parameter, do an extra indirection.
Copy-in, Copy-out Parameters

- Some languages, such as Fortran and Ada, have a variation on this: \textit{copy-in, copy-out}. Like call by value, but the final value of the parameter is copied back to the original location of the actual parameter after function returns.
  
  - “Original location” because of cases like $f(A[k])$, where $k$ might change during execution of $f$. In that case, we want the final value of the parameter copied back to $A[k_0]$, where $k_0$ is the original value of $k$ before the call.
  
  - Question: can you give an example where call by reference and copy-in, copy-out give different results?
Parameter Passing Semantics: Call by Name

• Algol 60’s definition says that the effect of a call $P(E)$ is as if the body of $P$ were substituted for the call (dynamically, so that recursion works) and $E$ were substituted for the corresponding formal parameter in the body (changing names to avoid clashes).

• It’s a simple description that, for simple cases, is just like call by reference:

```plaintext
procedure F(x)
    integer x;
begin
    aVar := 42;
    x := 42;
end F;
```

• But the (unintended?) consequences were “interesting”.

```plaintext
F(aVar);
```

`becomes`

```plaintext
aVar := 42;
```
Call By Name: Jensen’s Device

• Consider:

```pascal
procedure DoIt (i, L, U, x, x0, E)
    integer i, L, U; real x, x0, E;
    begin
        x := x0;
        for i := L step 1 until U do
            x := E;
    end DoIt;
```

• To set y to the sum of the values in array A[1:N],

```pascal
integer k;
DoIt(k, 1, N, y, 0.0, y+A[k]);
```

• To set z to the Nth harmonic number:

```pascal
DoIt(k, 1, N, z, 0.0, z+1.0/k);
```

• Now how are we going to make this work?
Call By Name: Implementation

• Basic idea: Convert call-by-name parameters into parameterless functions (traditionally called \textit{thunks}.)

• To allow assignment, these functions can return the addresses of their results.

• So the call

\[
\text{DoIt}(k, 1, N, y, 0.0, y+A[k]);
\]

becomes something like (please pardon highly illegal notation):

\[
\text{integer t1; real t2, t3, t4;}
\]
\[
t2 := 1.0; t3 := 0.0;
\]
\[
\text{DoIt(lambda: &k, lambda: &t2, lambda: &N, lambda: &y, lambda: &t3, lambda: (t4 := y+A[k], &t4));}
\]

• Later languages have abandoned this particular parameter-passing mode.