CS412/413

Introduction to Compilers
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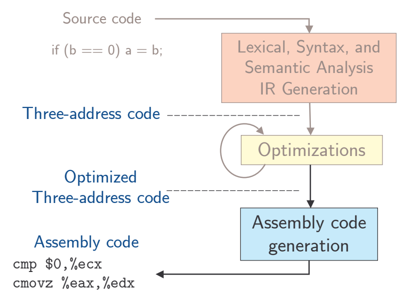
Lecture 18: Activation Records
03 Mar 06

Where We Are



Assembly vs. IR

- Assembly code:
  - Finite set of registers
  - Variables = memory locations (no names)
  - Variables accessed differently: global, local, heap, args, etc.
  - Uses a run-time stack (with special instructions)
  - Calling sequences: special sequences of instructions for function calls and returns
  - Instruction set of target machine
- Low IR code:
  - Variables (and temporaries)
  - No run-time stack
  - No calling sequences
  - Some abstract set of instructions

IR to Assembly Translation

- Calling sequences:
  - Translate function calls and returns into appropriate sequences which: pass parameters, save registers, and give back return values
  - Consists of push/pop operations on the run-time stack
- Variables:
  - Translate accesses to specific kinds of variables (globals, locals, arguments, etc)
  - Register Allocation: map the variables to registers
- Instruction set:
  - Account for differences in the instruction set
  - Instruction selection: map sets of low level IR instructions to instructions in the target machine

x86 Quick Overview

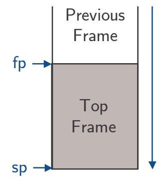
- Few registers:
  - General purpose 32bit: `eax, ebx, ecx, edx, esi, edi`
    - Also 16-bit: `ax, bx`, etc., and 8-bit: `al, ah, bl, bh`, etc.
  - Stack registers: `esp, ebp`
- Many instructions:
  - Arithmetic: `add, sub, inc, mod, idiv, imul`, etc.
  - Logic: `and, or, not, xor`
  - Comparison: `cmp, test`
  - Control flow: `jmp, jcc, jecz`
  - Function calls: `call, ret`
  - Data movement: `mov` (many variants)
  - Stack manipulations: `push, pop`
  - Other: `lea`

Run-Time Stack

- A frame (or activation record) for each function execution
  - Represents execution environment of the function
  - Includes: local variables, parameters, return value, etc.
  - Different frames for recursive function invocations
- Run-time stack of frames:
  - Push f's frame on stack when program calls f
  - Pop stack frame when f returns
  - Top frame = frame of currently executed function
- This mechanism is necessary to support recursion
  - Different activations of the same recursive function have different stack frames

Stack Pointers

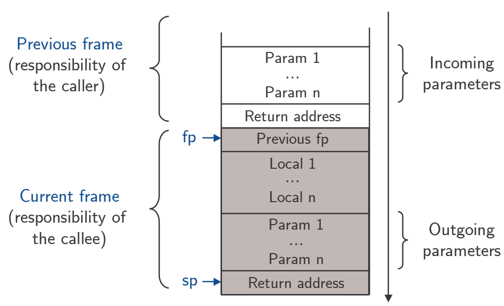
- Usually run-time stack grows downwards
  - Address of top of stack decreases
- Values on current frame (i.e. frame on top of stack) accessed using two pointers:
  - Stack pointer (sp): points to frame top
  - Frame pointer(fp): points to frame base
  - Variable access: use offset from fp (sp)
- When do we need two pointers?
  - If stack frame size not known at compile time
  - When can that happen?



Hardware Support

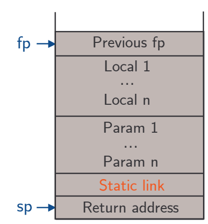
- Hardware provides:
  - Stack registers
  - Stack instructions
- X86 Registers and instructions for stack manipulation:
  - Stack pointer register: `esp`
  - Frame pointer register: `ebp`
  - Push instructions: `push`, `pusha`, etc.
  - Pop instructions: `pop`, `popa`, etc
  - Call instruction: `call`
  - Return instruction: `ret`

Anatomy of a Stack Frame



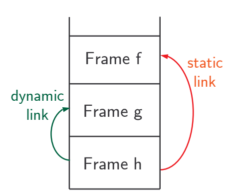
Static Links

- Problem for languages with nested functions (Pascal):
  How do we access local variables from other frames?
- Need a static link: a pointer to the frame of enclosing function
- Previous fp = dynamic link, I.e. pointer to the previous frame in the current execution



Example Nested Procedures

```
procedure f(i : integer)
   var a : integer;
   procedure h(j : integer)
         begin a = j end
   procedure g(k : integer)
         begin h(k*k) end
   begin g(i+2) end
```



Saving Registers

- Problem: execution of invoked function may overwrite useful values in registers
- Generated code must:
  - Save registers when function is invoked
  - Restore registers when function returns
- Possibilities:
  - Callee saves and restores registers
  - Caller saves and restores registers
  - ... or both

Calling Sequences

- How to generate the code that builds the frames?
- Generate code which pushes values on stack:
  1. Before call instructions (caller responsibilities)
  2. At function entry (callee responsibilities)
- Generate code which pops values from stack:
  3. After call instructions (caller responsibilities)
  4. At return instructions (callee responsibilities)
- Calling sequences = sequences of instructions performed in each of the above 4 cases

Push Values on Stack

- Code before call instruction:
  - Push caller-saved registers
  - Push each actual parameter (in reverse order)
  - Push static link (if necessary)
  - Push return address (current program counter) and jump to caller code
- Prologue = code at function entry
  - Push dynamic link (i.e. current fp)
  - Old stack pointer becomes new frame pointer
  - Push local variables
  - Push callee-saved registers

Pop Values from Stack

- Epilogue = code at return instruction
  - Pop (restore) callee-saved registers
  - Restore old stack pointer (pop callee frame!)
  - Pop old frame pointer
  - Pop return address and jump to that address
- Code after call
  - Pop (restore) caller-saved registers
  - Pop parameters from the stack
  - Use return value

Example: Pentium

- Consider call `foo(3, 5)`, `%ecx` caller-saved, `%ebx` callee-saved, no static links, result passed back in `%eax`
- Code before call instruction:

```
push %ecx    // push caller saved registers
push $3      // push first parameter
push $5      // push second parameter
call _foo    // push return address, jump to callee
```

- Prologue:

```
push %ebx        // push old fp
mov %esp, %ebp   // compute new fp
sub $12, %esp    // push 3 integer local variables
push %ebx        // push callee saved registers
```


Example: Pentium

- Epilogue:

```
pop %ebx        // restore callee-saved registers
mov %ebp,%esp   // pop callee frame, including locals
pop %ebp        // restore old fp
ret             // pop return address and jump
```

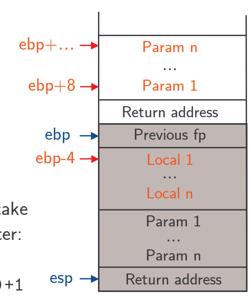
- Code after call instruction:

```
add $8,%esp     // pop parameters
pop %ecx        // restore caller-saved registers
```


Accessing Stack Variables

- To access stack variables: use offsets from fp
- Example:
  8(%ebp) = parameter 1
  12(%ebp) = parameter 2
  -4(%ebp) = local 1
- Translate low-level code to take into account the frame pointer:

```
  a = p+1
-4(%ebp) = 16(%ebp)+1
```



Accessing Other Variables

- Global variables
  - Are statically allocated
  - Their addresses can be statically computed
  - Don't need to translate low IR
- Heap variables
  - Are unnamed locations
  - Can be accessed only by dereferencing variables which hold their addresses
  - Therefore, they don't explicitly occur in low-level code

Big Picture: Memory Layout