Balsa
Behaviour to Silicon

Doug Edwards
School of Computer Science
University of Manchester
Overview of Presentations

- Demonstration of Balsa system (Doug Edwards)
  - quick overview
  - building implementations
- Current Balsa Optimisations (Luis Tarazona)
  - description strategies
  - handshake circuit optimisations
- New Teak synthesis system (Andrew Bardsley)
  - creating new back-ends using ABS
Balsa

- Synthesis framework for self-timed circuits
- Compiles a behavioural description to a set of (~40) intermediate *handshake components*
- Syntax Directed Compilation
  - Language constructs map to handshake components
- Different implementation of handshake components for different protocols and technologies
- Builtin functions for constructing test suites in Balsa
Balsa Design Flow
Balsa Back-Ends

- 180 nm ST, generic Verilog and Xilinx libraries,
- Single rail, dual rail & 1-of-4 in standard distribution
  - Arbitrary n-of-m codes can also be generated
- Handshake components described by abstract gate operators.
- Complex cells, such as adders, can be described from cells in the library.
- The netlist is then mapped according to specifications defined by the technology
- New technologies may be created using a Balsa utility: *balsa-make-helpers* which generates any cells not resident in library.
Next (Public) Release

- Optimised handshake components
- Buffer Insertion
- GUI elements moved to GTK2
- Style options reorganised
- Scheme directory reorganised
- balsa-netlist rewritten
- Obsolete parts of release removed
Progress against SPA

- x13 improvement
  - simplified architecture (e.g. no Thumb)
  - fixing bugs in description (e.g. 7-port register bank)
  - “bottom up” description - pipeline style
  - new handshake components
  - architecture improvements (e.g. forwarding)
Balsa Walkthrough

- **Simple Buffer example**
  - balsa-mgr
  - balsa utilities
  - adding a test harness & balsa-level simulations

- **SSEM example**
  - balsa builtin functions
  - choosing different implementation styles
  - verilog simulation
  - interfacing to Cadence - generating a layout
SSEM - the “Baby”

- **SSEM (Small Scale Experimental Machine or “Baby”)**
  - World’s 1st stored program machine
  - ran GCD program 21st June 1948 in Manchester
  - 32 bit processor, 2’s complement, 32 word memory
  - 7 instruction types
  - Single register accumulator (ACC)
  - program counter (PC)
The Baby (rebuild)
Balsa Baby Demo

- Peek at Balsa description
- Compile the description
- Run Balsa test bench
  - source code in `gcd.s`, precompiled to file `prog`
  - program computes the GCD of locations 0x11 and 0x12
    - defined as 0xC and 0x8
  - Result returned in location 0x11 (= 4)
Layout Demonstration

- Dual-rail implementation in 180nm technology
  - verilog netlist produced
  - transistor level (nanosim) simulation
- Place and Route using Cadence Encounter
- Repeat for single Nor gate primitive library
  - in same 180 nm technology
Simulation Demonstration

- Balsa generated verilog of SSEM used
  - but uses a custom verilog test-bench
    - porting of Balsa test-bench not complete

1. Verilog (unit gate delay) simulation
2. Nanosim transistor-level simulation of the two implementations
  - spice file of layout generated off-line
    - DIVA extractor is obsolete, doesn’t run on latest linux kernels
Comparative Layouts
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- Luis Tarazona: Buffer Insertion & Optimisations
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import [balsa.types.basic]
constant debug = true

type word is 32 bits
type LineAddress is 5 bits
type CRTAddress is 8 bits -- SSEM function

types type SSEMFunc is enumeration
    JMP, JRP,        -- Abs. and rel. jumps
    LDN, STO,        -- Load negative and store
    SUB, SUB_alt,    -- Two encodings for subtract
    TEST, STOP       -- Skip and stop
end

-- Complete instruction encoding
type SSEMInst is record
    LineNo : LineAddress;
    CRTNo : CRTAddress;
    Func : SSEMFunc
over word
-- SSEM: Top level
procedure SSEM (  
  -- Memory interface, MemA, MemRNW, MemR, MemW  
  output MemA : LineAddress;  
  output MemRNW : bit;  
  input MemR : word;  
  output MemW : word;  
  -- Signal halt state  
  sync halted  
) is

  variable ACC, ACC_slave : word  
  variable IR : word  
  variable PC, PC_step : LineAddress  
  variable MDR : word  
  variable Stopped : bit
-- Extract an address from a word
function ExtractAddress (wordVal : word) =
(wordVal as SSEMInst).LineNo

shared WriteExtractedAddress is begin
    MemA <- ExtractAddress (IR) end

-- Memory operations, shared procedures
shared MemoryWrite is
begin
    MemRNW <- 0 || WriteExtractedAddress ()
|| MemW <- ACC_slave end

shared MemoryRead is
begin
    MemRNW <- 1 || WriteExtractedAddress ()
|| MemR -> MDR end

-- Fetch an instruction IR := M[PC]
procedure InstructionFetch is
begin
    MemRNW <- 1 || MemA <- PC || MemR -> IR end
-- Modify the programme counter PC
shared IncrementPC is begin
    PC := (PC + PC_step as LineAddress) end
shared AddMDRToPC is begin
    PC_step := ExtractAddress (MDR); IncrementPC () end

procedure DecodeAndExecuteInstruction is begin
    case (IR as SSEMInst).Func of
        JMP then MemoryRead (); ZeroPC (); AddMDRToPC ()
        | JRP then MemoryRead (); AddMDRToPC ()
        | LDN then ZeroACC (); SUB ()
        | STO then MemoryWrite ()
        | SUB .. SUB_alt then SUB ()
        | TEST then
            if #ACC [31] -- -ve?
                then IncrementPC () end
        | STOP then Stopped := 1
    end ;
    ACC := ACC_slave
end
begin
  ZeroACC () || ZeroPC () ||
  Stopped := 0; -- reset initialisation
loop while not Stopped then
  PC_step := 1;
  IncrementPC ();
  InstructionFetch ();
  DecodeAndExecuteInstruction ()
end ; -- loop
sync halted
  -- halt -- STOP instruction effect
end