Run-time Environments

Status

• We have so far covered the front-end phases
  - Lexical analysis
  - Parsing
  - Semantic analysis
• Next come the back-end phases
  - Code generation
  - Optimization
  - Register allocation
  - Instruction scheduling
• We will examine code generation first . . .

Outline

• Management of run-time resources
• Correspondence between static (compile-time) and dynamic (run-time) structures
• Storage organization

Run-time Environments

• Before discussing code generation, we need to understand what we are trying to generate
• There are a number of standard techniques for structuring executable code that are widely used
Run-time Resources

• Execution of a program is initially under the control of the operating system (OS)

• When a program is invoked:
  - The OS allocates space for the program
  - The program code is loaded into part of this space
  - The OS jumps to the entry point of the program (i.e., to the beginning of the “main” function)

Notes

• By tradition, pictures of run-time memory organization have:
  - Low addresses at the top
  - High addresses at the bottom
  - Lines delimiting areas for different kinds of data

• These pictures are simplifications
  - E.g., not all memory need be contiguous

Organization of Code Space

• Usually, code is generated one function at a time. The code area thus is of the form:

  - Careful layout of code within a function can improve i-cache utilization and give better performance
  - Careful attention in the order in which functions are processed can also improve i-cache utilization
What is Other Space?

- Holds all data needed for the program’s execution
- Other Space = Data Space
- Compiler is responsible for:
  - Generating code
  - Orchestrating the use of the data area

Code Generation Goals

- Two goals:
  - Correctness
  - Efficiency
- Most complications in code generation come from trying to be efficient as well as correct

Assumptions about Flow of Control

1. Execution is sequential; at each step, control is at some specific program point and moves from one point to another in a well-defined order
2. When a procedure is called, control eventually returns to the point immediately after the place where the call was made

Do these assumptions always hold?

Language Issues that affect the Compiler

- Can procedures be recursive?
- What happens to the values of the locals on return from a procedure?
- Can a procedure refer to non-local variables?
- How are parameters to a procedure passed?
- Can procedures be passed as parameters?
- Can procedures be returned as results?
- Can storage be allocated dynamically under program control?
- Must storage be deallocated explicitly?
**Activations**

- An invocation of procedure $P$ is an *activation* of $P$

- The *lifetime* of an activation of $P$ is
  - All the steps to execute $P$
  - Including all the steps in procedures that $P$ calls

**Lifetimes of Variables**

- The *lifetime* of a variable $x$ is the portion of execution in which $x$ is defined

- Note that:
  - Lifetime is a dynamic (run-time) concept
  - Scope is (usually) a static concept

**Activation Trees**

- Assumption (2) requires that when $P$ calls $Q$, then $Q$ returns before $P$ does

- Lifetimes of procedure activations are thus either disjoint or properly nested

- Activation lifetimes can be depicted as a tree

**Example 1**

```
g(): int { return 42; } 
f(): int { return g(); } 
main() { g(); f(); } 
```
Example 2

g(): int { return 42; }
f(x:int): int {
    if x = 0 then return g();
    else return f(x - 1);
}
main() { f(3); }

What is the activation tree for this example?

Notes
• The activation tree depends on run-time behavior
• The activation tree may be different for every program input

Since activations are properly nested, a (control) stack can track currently active procedures
- push info about an activation at the procedure entry
- pop the info when the activation ends; i.e., at the return from the call

Example

g(): int { return 42; }
f(): int { return g(); }
main() { g(); f(); }

Example

g(): int { return 42; }
f(): int { return g(); }
main() { g(); f(); }

main Stack
main
g
Stack
main

main

main

main
Example

g(): int { return 42; }
f(): int { return g(); }
main() { g(); f(); }

Revised Memory Layout

Low Address

High Address

Memory

Code

Stack

main

g

f

Stack

main

g

f

Stack

main

g

f

Stack

main

g
Activation Records
• The information needed to manage a single procedure activation is called an activation record (AR) or a stack frame
• If a procedure F calls G, then G’s activation record contains a mix of info about F and G

What is in G’s AR when F calls G?
• F is “suspended” until G completes, at which point F resumes. G’s AR contains information needed to resume execution of F.
• G’s AR may also contain:
  - G’s return value (needed by F)
  - Actual parameters to G (supplied by F)
  - Space for G’s local variables

The Contents of a Typical AR for G
• Space for G’s return value
• Actual parameters
  • (optional) Pointer to the previous activation record
    - The control link; points to the AR of caller of G
  • (optional) Access link for access to non-local names
    - Points to the AR of the function that statically contains G
• Machine status prior to calling G
  - Return address, values of registers & program counter
  - Local variables
• Other temporary values used during evaluation

Example 2, Revisited
\[
g(): \text{int} \{ \text{return } 42; \}
f(x: \text{int}): \text{int} \{
  \text{if } x = 0 \text{ then return } g();
  \text{else return } f(x - 1); (**)
\}
main() \{ f(3); (*) \}
\]

AR for f:
\[
\begin{array}{l}
\text{result} \\
\text{argument} \\
\text{control link} \\
\text{return address}
\end{array}
\]
Stack After Two Calls to \( f \)

Notes

- **main()** has no argument or local variables and returns no result; its AR is uninteresting
- (*) and (***) are return addresses (continuation points) of the invocations of \( f() \)
  - The return address is where execution resumes after a procedure call finishes
- This is only one of many possible AR designs
  - Would also work for C, Pascal, FORTRAN, etc.

The Main Point

- The compiler must determine, at compile-time, the layout of activation records and generate code that correctly accesses locations in the activation record (as displacements from \( sp \))

  Thus, the AR layout and the code generator must be designed together!

Example 2, continued

The picture shows the state after the call to the 2nd invocation of \( f() \) returns
Discussion

- The advantage of placing the return value 1st in a frame is that the caller can find it at a fixed offset from its own frame.

- There is nothing magical about this run-time organization:
  - Can rearrange order of frame elements
  - Can divide caller/callee responsibilities differently
  - An organization is better if it improves execution speed or simplifies code generation.

Discussion (Cont.)

- Real compilers hold as much of the frame as possible in registers:
  - Especially the function result and (some of) the arguments.

Storage Allocation Strategies for Activation Records (1)

Static Allocation (Fortran 77)
- Storage for all data objects is laid out at compile time.
- Can be used only if size of data objects and constraints on their position in memory can be resolved at compile time ⇒ no dynamic structures.
- Recursive procedures are restricted, since all activations of a procedure must share the same locations for local names.

Storage Allocation Strategies for Activation Records (2)

Stack Allocation (Pascal, C)
- Storage organized as a stack.
- Activation record pushed when activation begins and popped when it ends.
- Cannot be used if the values of local names must be retained when the evaluation ends or if the called invocation outlives the caller.

Heap Allocation (Lisp, ML)
- Activation records may be allocated and deallocated in any order.
- Some form of garbage collection is needed to reclaim free space.
Global Variables

- All references to a global variable point to the same object
  - Can't store a global in an activation record

-Globals are assigned a fixed address once
  - Variables with fixed address are “statically allocated”

- Depending on the language, there may be other statically allocated values
  - e.g., static variables in C

Memory Layout with Static Data

- Code
- Global/Static Data
- Stack

Heap Storage

- A value that outlives the procedure that creates it cannot be kept in the AR
  ```
  foo() { new bar; }
  ```
  The bar value must survive deallocation of foo’s AR

- Languages with dynamically allocated data use a heap to store dynamic data

Review of Runtime Organization

- The code area contains object code
  - For most languages, fixed size and read only

- The static area contains data (not code) with fixed addresses (e.g., global data)
  - Fixed size, may be readable or writable

- The stack contains an AR for each currently active procedure
  - Each AR usually has fixed size, contains locals

- The heap contains all other data
  - In C, heap is managed explicitly by malloc() and free()
  - In Java, heap is managed by new() and garbage collection
  - In ML, both allocation and deallocation in the heap is managed implicitly
Notes

- Both the heap and the stack grow
- Must take care so that they don’t grow into each other
- Solution: start heap and stack at opposite ends of memory and let them grow towards each other

Data Layout

- Low-level details of computer architecture are important in laying out data for correct code and maximum performance
- Chief among these concerns is alignment of data

Memory Layout with Heap

- Code
- Global/Static Data
- Stack
- Heap

Alignment

- Most modern machines are 32 or 64 bit
  - 8 bits in a byte
  - 4 or 8 bytes in a word
  - Machines are either byte or word addressable
- Data is word-aligned if it begins at a word boundary

Most machines have some alignment restrictions
(Or performance penalties for poor alignment)
Alignment (Cont.)

Example: An ASCII string:

"Hello"

Takes 5 characters (without the terminating \0)

• To word-align next datum on a 32-bit machine, add 3 “padding” characters to the string

• The padding is not part of the string, it’s just unused memory