15-213

Performance Evaluation I

November 5, 1998

Topics

- Performance measures (metrics)
- Timing
- Profiling

Performance expressed as a time

Absolute time measures (metrics)

- **difference between start and finish of an operation**
- **synonyms: running time, elapsed time, response time, latency, completion time, execution time**
- **most straightforward performance measure**

Relative (normalized) time measures

- **running time normalized to some reference time**
- **(e.g. time/reference time)**

Guiding principle: Choose performance measures that track running time.

Performance expressed as a rate

Rates are performance measures expressed in units of work per unit time.

Examples:

- **millions of instructions / sec (MIPS)**
- **millions of fp instructions / sec (Mflops/sec) Mflop = 10^6 flops**
- **millions of bytes / sec (MBytes/sec) MByte = 2^20 bytes**
- **millions of bits / sec (Mbits/sec) Mbit = 10^6 bits**
- **images / sec**
- **samples / sec**
- **transactions / sec (TPS)**

Performance expressed as a rate(cont)

Key idea: Report rates that track execution time.

Example: Suppose we are measuring a program that convolves a stream of images from a video camera.

Bad performance measure: MFLOPS

- **number of floating point operations depends on the particular convolution algorithm: n^2 matix-vector product vs nlogn fast Fourier transform. An FFT with a bad MFLOPS rate may run faster than a matrix-vector product with a good MFLOPS rate.**

Good performance measure: images/sec

- **a program that runs faster will convolve more images per second.**

Timing mechanisms

Clocks

- **returns elapsed time since epoch (e.g., Jan 1, 1970)**
- **Unix getclock() command**
- **coarse grained (e.g., *u*s resolution on Alpha)**

```
long int secs, ns;
struct timespec *start, *stop;

getclock(TIMEOFDAY, start);
P();
getclock(TIMEOFDAY, stop);
secs = (stop->tv_sec - start->tv_sec);
ns = (stop->tv_nsec - start->tv_nsec);
printf("%ld ns\n", secs*1e9 + ns);
```

Timing mechanisms (cont)

Interval (count-down) timers

- **set timer to some initial value**
- **timer counts down to zero, then sends Unix signal**
- **course grained (e.g., *u*s resolution on Alphas)**

```
void init_etime() {
  first.it_value.tv_sec
     = 86400;
  setitimer(ITIMER_VIRTUAL,
            &first, NULL);
}
```

```
double get_etime() {
  struct itimerval curr;
  getitimer(ITIMER_VIRTUAL,&curr);
  return(double)(
      (first.it_value.tv_sec -
       curr.it_value.tv_sec) +
      (first.it_value.tv_usec -
       curr.it_value.tv_usec)*1e-6);
```

Using the interval timer

```
init_etime();
secs = get_etime();
P();
secs = get_etime() - secs;
printf("%lf secs\n", secs);
```

Timing mechanisms (cont)

Performance counters

- **counts system events (CYCLES, IMISS, DMISS, BRANCHMP)**
- **very fine grained**
- **short time span (e.g., 9 seconds on 450 MHz Alpha)**

```
unsigned int counterRoutine[] = { /* Alpha cycle counter */
   0x601fc000u,
   0x401f0000u,
   0x6bfa8001u
};
unsigned int (*counter)(void) = (void *)counterRoutine;
```

Using the Alpha cycle counter

```
cycles = counter();
P();
cycles = counter() - cycles;
printf("%d cycles\n", cycles);
```

Measurement pitfalls

Discretization errors

- need to measure large enough chunks of work
- but how large is large enough?

Unexpected cache effects

- artificial hits or misses
- cold start misses due to context swapping

The nature of time

real (wall clock) time

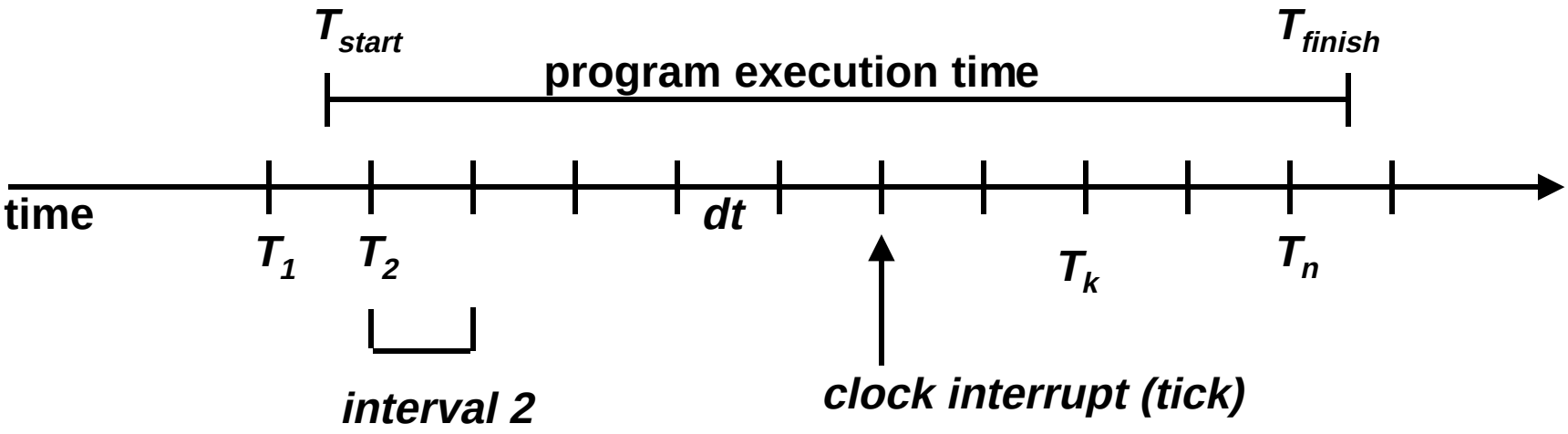
= user time (time executing instructing instructions in the user process)

= system time (time executing instructing instructions in kernel on behalf of user process

= real (wall clock) time

We will use the word "time" to refer to user time.

Anatomy of a timer

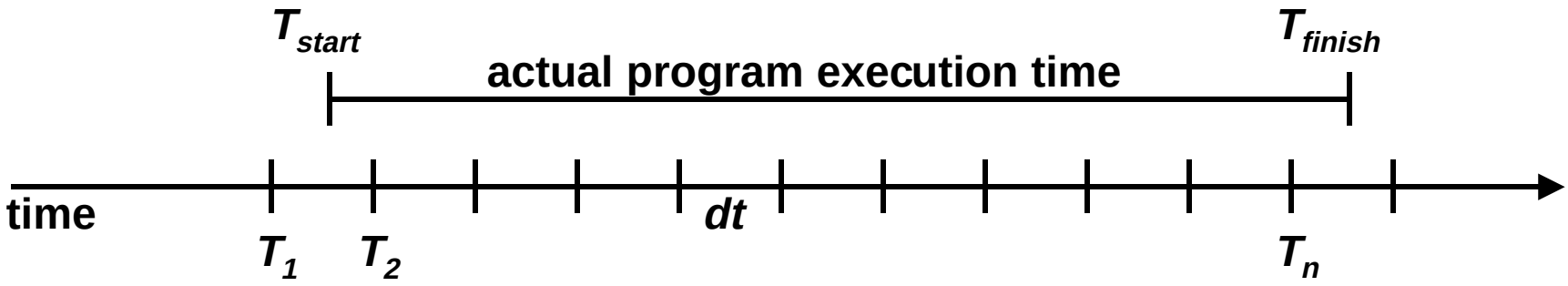


timer period: *dt* secs/tick

timer resolution: *1/dt* ticks/sec

Assume here that $T_k = T_{k-1} + dt$

Measurement pitfall #1: Discretization error



measured time: $(T_n - T_1)$

actual time: $(T_n - T_1) + (T_{finish} - T_n) - (T_{start} - T_1)$

absolute error = measured time - actual time

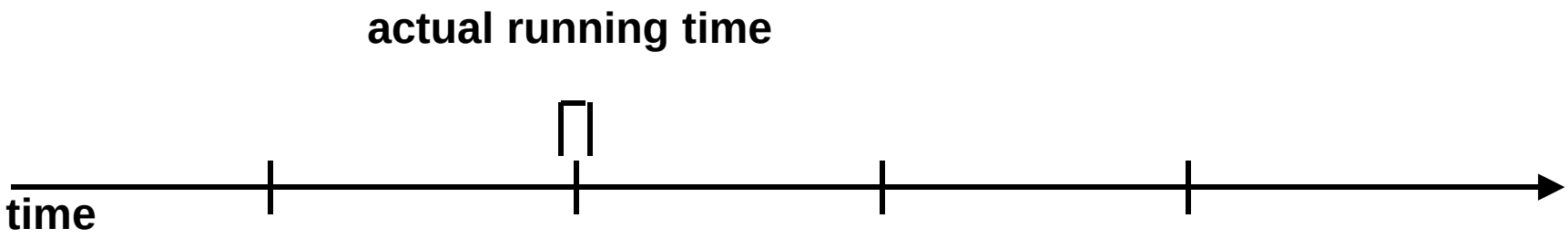
$f_{start} = (T_{start} - T_1)/dt$ **fraction of interval overreported**

$f_{finish} = (T_{finish} - T_n)/dt$ **fraction of interval underreported**

absolute error = $dt\ f_{start} - dt\ f_{finish} = dt\ (f_{start} - f_{finish})$

max absolute error = $+/- dt$

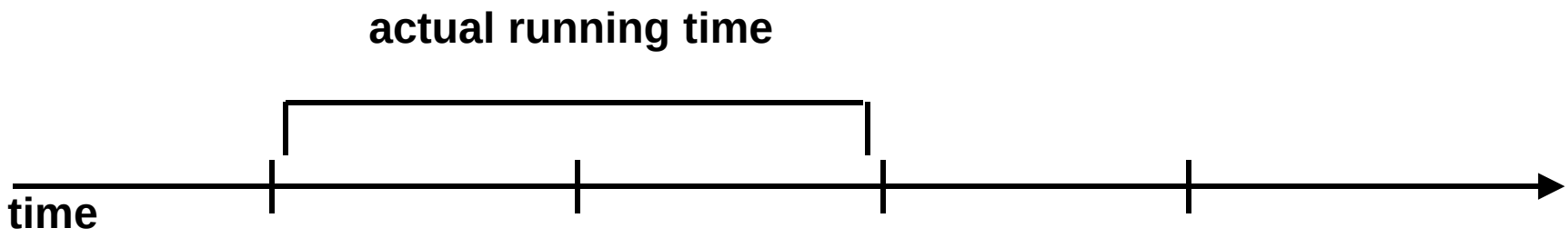
Examples of discretization error



Actual time = near zero
measured time = *dt*

Absolute measurement error = *+dt*

Examples of discretization error (cont)



Actual time = near *2dt*
measured time = *dt*

Absolute measurement error = *-dt*

Estimating the timer period *dt*

```
start = 0;
while (start == (end = get_etime()))
   ;
dt = end - start;
printf("dt = %lf\n", dt);
```

Digital Unix Alpha systems: dt = 1ms

Modeling discretization error

Key idea: need to measure long enough to hide the discretization error.

Example:

```
start = get_etime();
for (i=0; i<n; i++) {
   P();
}
tprime = get_etime() - start;
```

Question: how big must *tprime* be in order to get a "good" estimate of the running time of the loop?

Relative error analysis

Let *t* and *t'* be the actual and measured running times of the loop, respectively, and let *dt* be the timer period.

Also, let *t'-t* be the absolute error and let */t'-t|/t* be the relative error.

Problem: What value of t' will result in a relative error less than or equal to E_{max}?

Fact (1): */t'-t| <= dt*
Fact (2): *t' - dt <= t*

We want */t'-t|/t <= E_{max}*

dt/t <= E_{max} (1)
dt/ E_{max} <= t (algebra)
dt/ E_{max} <= t' - dt (2)

dt/ E_{max} + dt <= t'

Relative error analysis

```
start = get_etime();
for (i=0; i<n; i++) {
   P();
}
tp = get_etime() - start; /* t' */
```

Example: Let *dt=1 ms* and E_{max} *= 0.05* (i.e., 5% relative error)

Then:

dt/E_{max} + dt <= t'

.001/.05 + .05 <= t'

t' >= 0.070 seconds (70 ms)

Measurement pitfall #2: Unexpected cache effects

Call ordering can introduce unexpected cold start misses (measured with Alpha cycle counter):

- **ip(array1, array2, array3); /* 68,829 cycles */**
- **ipp(array1, array2, array3); /* 23,337 cycles */**

- **ipp(array1, array2, array3); /* 70,513 cycles */**
- **ip(array1, array2, array3); /* 23,203 cycles */**

Context switches can alter cache miss rate

- **71,002 23,617 (ip/ipp cycles on unloaded timing server)**
- **67,968 23,384**
- **68,840 23,365**
- **68,571 23,492**
- **69,911 23,692**

Measurement summary

It's difficult to get accurate times

- **discretization error**
- **but can't always measure short procedures in loops**
  - global state
  - mallocs
  - changes cache behavior

It's difficult to get repeatable times

- **cache effects due to ordering and context switches**

Moral of the story:

- **Adopt a healthy skepticism about measurements!**
- **Always subject measurements to sanity checks.**

Profiling

The goal of profiling is to account for the cycles used by a program or system.

Basic techniques

- **src translation**
  - gprof [Graham, 1982]
- **binary translation**
  - Atom [DEC, 1993]
  - pixie [MIPS, 1990]
- **direct simulation**
  - SimOS [Rosenblum, 1995]
- **statistical sampling**
  - prof (existing interrupt source)
  - DCPI [Anderson, 1997] (performance counter interrupts)
  - SpeedShop [Zhaga, 1996] (performance counter interrupts)

Profiling tools

Tool	Overhead	Scope	Grain	Stalls
gprof	high	app	inst cnt	none
pixie	high	app	proc cnt	none
SimOS	high	sys	inst time	accurate
prof	low	app	inst time	none
DCPI	low	sys	inst time	accurate
SpeedShop	low	sys	inst time	inacurate

Overhead: **How much overhead (slowdown) does the tool introduce?**
Scope: **Can the tool be used to profile an entire system, or a single program?**
Grain: **What types of program units can the tool account for?**
Stalls: **Can the tool account for instruction stalls?**

Case study: DEC Continuous Profiling Infrastructure (DCPI)

Cutting edge profiling tool for Alpha 21164

Coarse grained profiling:

cycles	%	procedure	image
2064143	33.9	ffb8ZeroPolyArc	/usr/shlib/X11/lib_dec_ffb_ev5.so
517464	8.5	ReadRequestFromClient	/usr/shlip/X11/libos.so
305072	5.0	miCreateETandAET	/usr/shlib/X11/libmi.so
245450	4.0	bcopy	/vmunix
170723	2.8	in_checksum	/vmunix

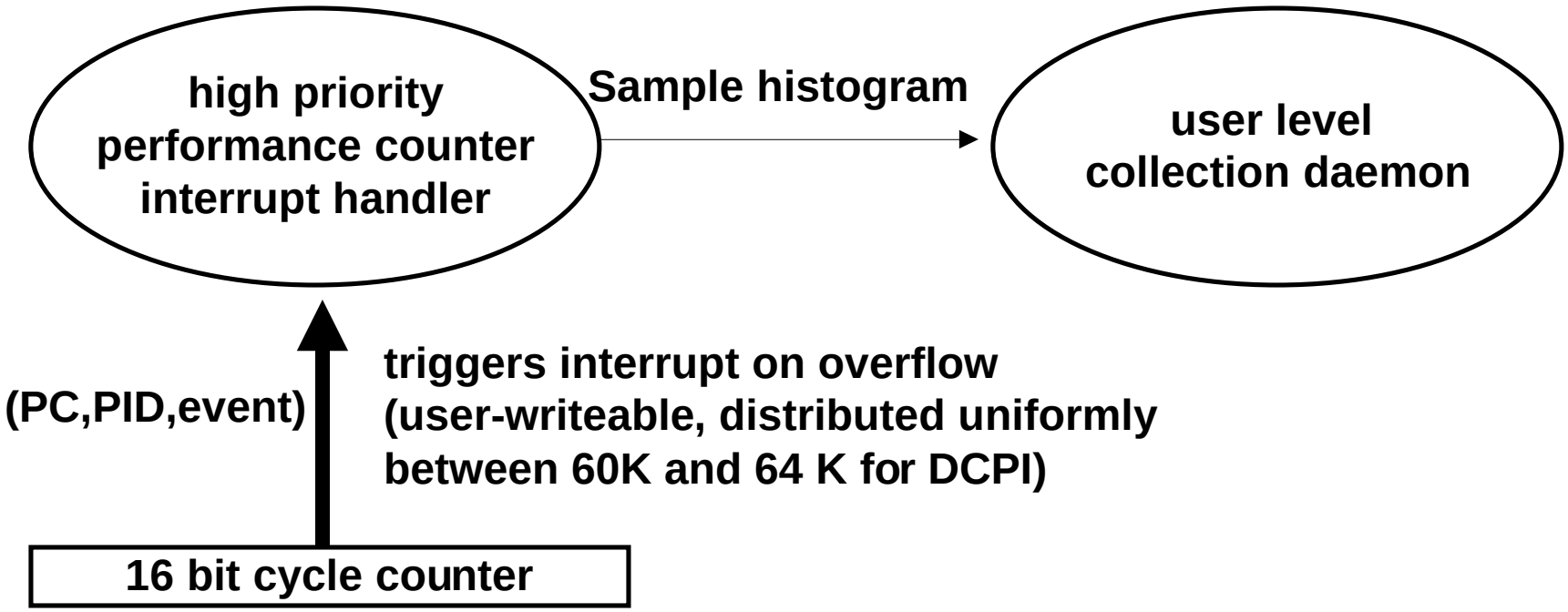
DCPI case study

Fine-grained profiling:

```
addr                        instruction
         pD (p=branch mispredict)
         pD (D = data TLB miss)
009810                      ldq t4,0(t1)
009814                      addq t0,0x4,t0 (dual issue)
009818                      ldq t5,8(t1)
00981c                      ldq t6,16(t1)
009820                      ldq a0,24(t1)
009824                      lda t1, 32(t1) (dual issue)
         dwD (d=D-cache miss)
         dwD ... 18
         dwD (w=write buffer)
009828                      stq t4,0(t2)
00982c                      cmpmult t0,v0,t4
009830                      t5,8(t2)
         s (s=slotting hazard)
         dwD
         dwD 114.5
         dwD
009834                      stq t6,16(t2)
...
```

```
for (i=0; i<n; i++)
   c[i] = a[i];
```

DCPI architecture



DCPI architecture

Data Collection

- **A performance counter counts occurrences of a particular kind of event (e.g., cycle counter counts the passage of instruction cycles)**
- **The performance counter triggers a high-priority hardware interrupt after a user-defined number of events (5200 times a second).**
- **The interrupt handler records a (PC, PID, event type) tuple**
- **The interrupt handler counts samples with a hash table to reduce data volume.**
- **When hash table is full, handler passes results to user-level analysis daemon, which associates samples with load images.**

Question:

- **How to associate sample with load image?**
  - modified */usr/sbin/loader* records all dynamically loaded binaries.
  - modified *exec* call records all statically loaded binaries.
  - at startup, daemon scans for active processes and their regions.

DCPI architecture

Data Analysis

- **evaluates PC sample histogram offline**
- **assigns cycles to procedures and instructions.**
- **identifies stalls and possible sources (data cache miss, write buffer overflow, TLB miss)**

DCPI architecture

Interesting analysis problem:

If we see a large sample count for a particular instruction, did it

- execute many times with no stalls?
- execute only a few times with large stalls?

- **approach: use compiler to identify basic blocks [a block of instructions with no jumps in (except possibly at the beginning) and no jumps out (except possibly at the end)]**
- **compare execution frequency of loads/stores to non-blocking instructions in the block.**

For more info: Anderson, et al. "Continuous Profiling: Where Have all the Cycles Gone?", ACM TOCS, v15, n4, Nov. 1997, pp 357-390.