

15-213

“The Class That Gives CMU Its Zip!”

Introduction to Computer Systems

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Topics:

- Theme
- Five great realities of computer systems
- How this fits within CS curriculum

Course Theme

Abstraction is good, but don't forget reality!

Courses to date emphasize abstraction

- Abstract data types
- Asymptotic analysis

These abstractions have limits

- Especially in the presence of bugs
- Need to understand underlying implementations

Useful outcomes

- **Become more effective programmers**
 - Able to find and eliminate bugs efficiently
 - Able to tune program performance
- **Prepare for later “systems” classes**
 - Compilers, Operating Systems, Networks, Computer Architecture

Great Reality #1

Int's are not Integers, Float's are not Reals

Examples

- **Is $x^2 = 0$?**

- Float's: Yes!

- Int's:

- » `65535 * 65535 --> -131071` (On most machines)

- » `65535L * 65535 --> 4292836225` (On Alpha)

- **Is $(x + y) + z = x + (y + z)$?**

- Unsigned Int's: Yes!

- Float's:

- » `(1e10 + -1e10) + 3.14 --> 3.14`

- » `1e10 + (-1e10 + 3.14) --> 0.0`

Computer Arithmetic

Does not generate random values

- Arithmetic operations have important mathematical properties

Cannot assume “usual” properties

- Due to finiteness of representations
- Integer operations satisfy “ring” properties (usually)
 - Commutativity, associativity, distributivity
- Floating point operations satisfy “ordering” properties
 - Monotonicity, values of signs

Observation

- Need to understand which abstractions apply in which contexts
- Important issues for compiler writers and serious application programmers

Great Reality #2

You've got to know assembly

Chances are, you'll never write program in assembly

- **Compilers are much better at this than you are**

Understanding assembly key to machine-level execution model

- **Behavior of programs in presence of bugs**
 - High-level language model breaks down
- **Tuning program performance**
 - Understanding sources of program inefficiency
- **Implementing system software**
 - Compiler has machine code as target
 - Operating systems must manage process state

Great Reality #3

Memory Matters

Memory is not unbounded

- It must be allocated and managed
- Many applications are memory dominated
- The memory system can be the largest portion of a machine's cost

Memory referencing bugs especially pernicious

- Effects are distant in both time and space

Memory performance is not uniform

- Cache and virtual memory effects can greatly affect program performance
- Adapting program to characteristics of memory system can lead to major speed improvements

Memory Referencing Bug Example

```
main ()
{
    long int a[2];
    double d = 3.14;
    a[2] = 1073741824; /* Out of bounds reference */
    printf("d = %.15g\n", d);
    exit(0);
}
```

	Alpha	MIPS	Sun
-g	5.30498947741318e-315	3.1399998664856	3.14
-O	3.14	3.14	3.14

Memory Referencing Errors

C and C++ do not provide any memory protection

- Out of bounds array references
- Invalid pointer values
- Abuses of malloc/free

Can lead to nasty bugs

- Whether or not bug has any effect system and compiler dependent
- Action at a distance
 - Corrupted object logically unrelated to one being accessed
 - Effect of bug may occur long after it occurs

How can I deal with this?

- Program in Java, Lisp, or ML
- Understand what possible interactions may occur
- Use or develop tools to detect referencing errors
 - E.g., Purify

Memory Performance Example

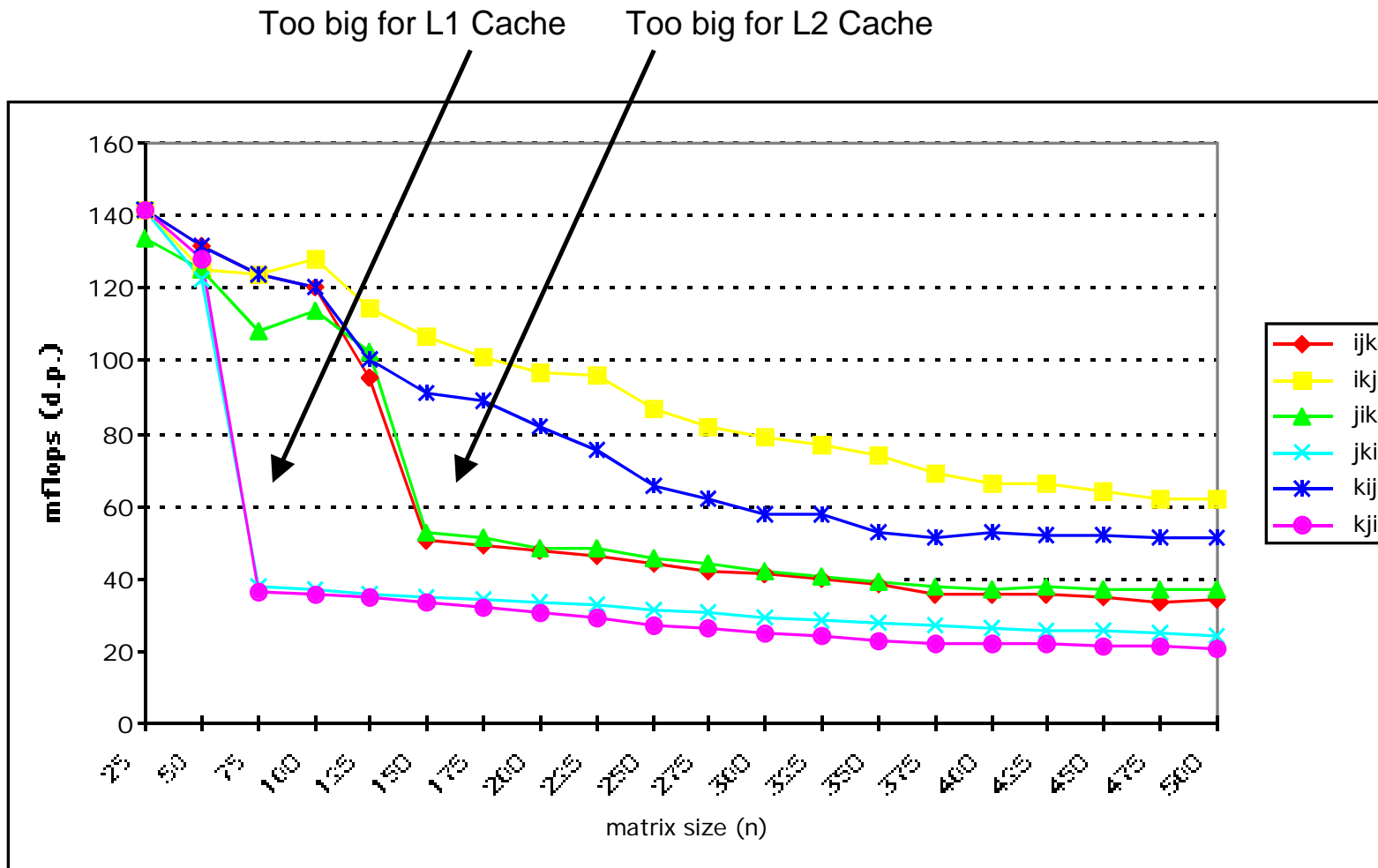
Implementations of Matrix Multiplication

- Multiple ways to nest loops

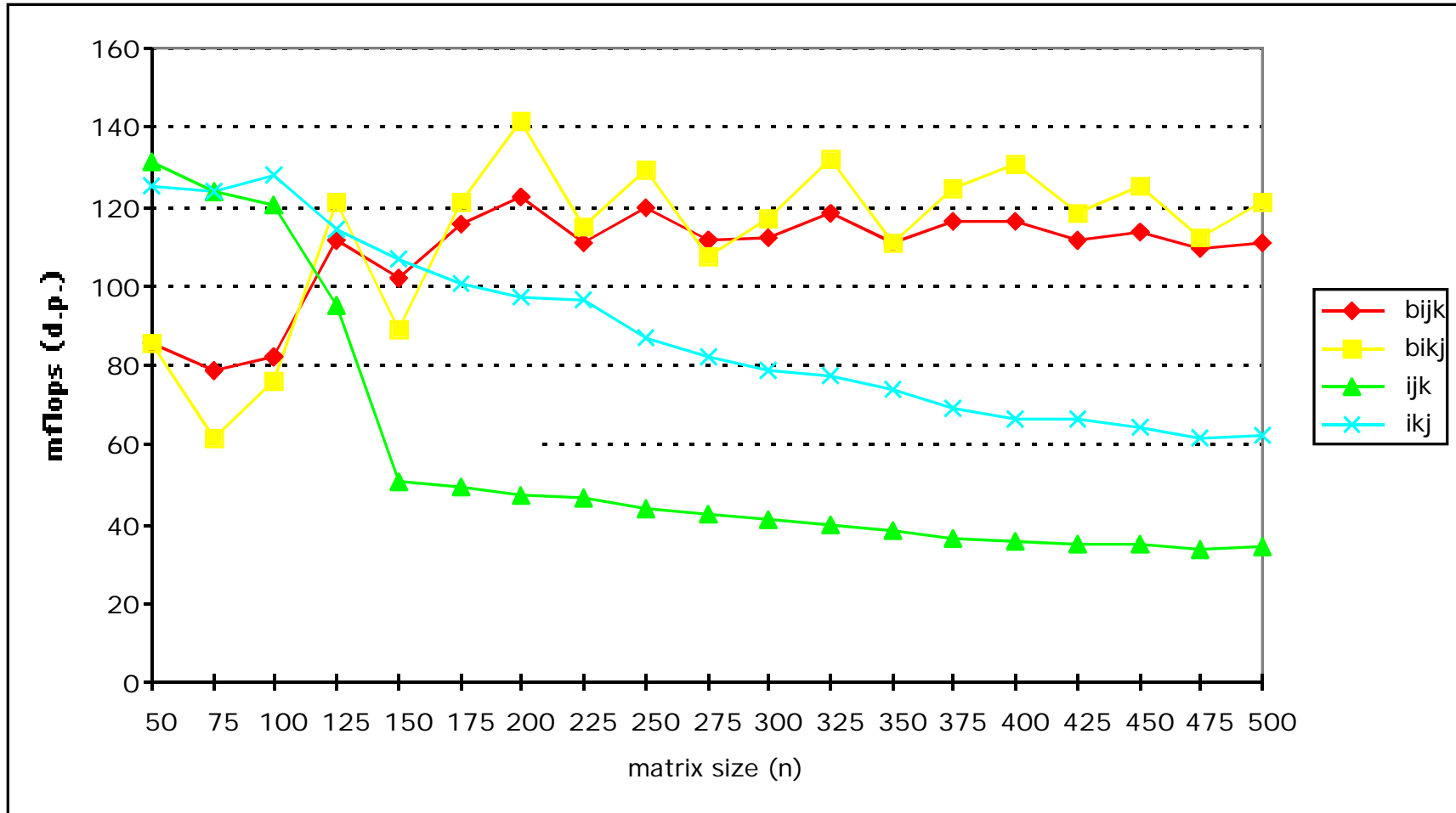
```
/* ijk */
for (i=0; i<n; i++) {
    for (j=0; j<n; j++) {
        sum = 0.0;
        for (k=0; k<n; k++)
            sum += a[i][k] * b[k][j];
        c[i][j] = sum;
    }
}
```

```
/* jik */
for (j=0; j<n; j++) {
    for (i=0; i<n; i++) {
        sum = 0.0;
        for (k=0; k<n; k++)
            sum += a[i][k] * b[k][j];
        c[i][j] = sum;
    }
}
```

Matmult Performance (Alpha 21164)



Blocked matmult perf (Alpha 21164)



Great Reality #4

There's more to performance than asymptotic complexity

Constant factors matter too!

- Easily see 10:1 performance range depending on how code written
- Must optimize at multiple levels: algorithm, data representations, procedures, and loops

Must understand system to optimize performance

- How programs compiled and executed
- How to measure program performance and identify bottlenecks
- How to improve performance without destroying code modularity and generality

Great Reality #5

Computers do more than execute programs

They need to get data in and out

- I/O system critical to program reliability and performance

They communicate with each other over networks

- Many system-level issues arise in presence of network
 - Concurrent operations by autonomous processes
 - Coping with unreliable media
 - Cross platform compatibility
 - Complex performance issues

Role within Curriculum

