CIS 341: COMPILERS
Announcements

• HW2: X86lite
  – Available on the course web pages.
  – Due: Thursday, February 2nd at 11:59:59pm
  – Pair-programming:
    • Register the group on the submission page
    • Submission by any group member counts for the group
Directly Translating AST to Assembly

• For simple languages, no need for intermediate representation.
  – e.g. the arithmetic expression language from

• Main Idea: Maintain invariants
  – e.g. Code emitted for a given expression computes the answer into rax

• Key Challenges:
  – storing intermediate values needed to compute complex expressions
  – some instructions use specific registers (e.g. shift)
One Simple Strategy

- Compilation is the process of “emitting” instructions into an instruction stream.
- To compile an expression, we recursively compile sub expressions and then process the results.
- Invariants:
  - Compilation of an expression yields its result in rax
  - Argument (Xi) is stored in a dedicated operand
  - Intermediate values are pushed onto the stack
  - Stack slot is popped after use (so the space is reclaimed)
- Resulting code is wrapped to comply with cdecl calling conventions:
- See the compile.ml compile2.
INTERMEDIATE REPRESENTATIONS
Why do something else?

• This is a simple *syntax-directed* translation
  – Input syntax uniquely determines the output, no complex analysis or code transformation is done.
  – It works fine for simple languages.

But…

• The resulting code quality is poor.
• Richer source language features are hard to encode
  – Structured data types, objects, first-class functions, etc.
• It’s hard to optimize the resulting assembly code.
  – The representation is too concrete – e.g. it has committed to using certain registers and the stack
  – Only a fixed number of registers
  – Some instructions have restrictions on where the operands are located
• Control-flow is not structured:
  – Arbitrary jumps from one code block to another
  – Implicit fall-through makes sequences of code non-modular (i.e. you can’t rearrange sequences of code easily)
• Retargeting the compiler to a new architecture is hard.
  – Target assembly code is hard-wired into the translation
Intermediate Representations (IR’s)

- Abstract machine code: hides details of the target architecture
- Allows machine independent code generation and optimization.
Multiple IR’s

- Goal: get program closer to machine code without losing the information needed to do analysis and optimizations
- In practice, multiple intermediate representations might be used (for different purposes)
What makes a good IR?

• Easy translation target (from the level above)
• Easy to translate (to the level below)
• Narrow interface
  – Fewer constructs means simpler phases/optimizations

• Example: Source language might have “while”, “for”, and “foreach” loops (and maybe more variants)
  – IR might have only “while” loops and sequencing
  – Translation eliminates “for” and “foreach”

\[
\text{[for(pre; cond; post) \{body\}] = [pre; while(cond) \{body; post\}]}
\]

– Here the notation \([\text{cmd}]\) denotes the “translation” or “compilation” of the command \text{cmd}. 
IR’s at the extreme

- **High-level IR’s**
  - Abstract syntax + new node types not generated by the parser
    - e.g. Type checking information or disambiguated syntax nodes
  - Typically preserves the high-level language constructs
    - Structured control flow, variable names, methods, functions, etc.
    - May do some simplification (e.g. convert `for` to `while`)
  - Allows high-level optimizations based on program structure
    - e.g. inlining “small” functions, reuse of constants, etc.
  - Useful for semantic analyses like type checking

- **Low-level IR’s**
  - Machine dependent assembly code + extra pseudo-instructions
    - e.g. a pseudo instruction for interfacing with garbage collector or memory allocator (parts of the language runtime system)
    - e.g. (on x86) a `imulq` instruction that doesn’t restrict register usage
  - Source structure of the program is lost:
    - Translation to assembly code is straightforward
  - Allows low-level optimizations based on target architecture
    - e.g. register allocation, instruction selection, memory layout, etc.

- **What’s in between?**
Mid-level IR’s: Many Varieties

• Intermediate between AST (abstract syntax) and assembly
• May have unstructured jumps, abstract registers or memory locations
• Convenient for translation to high-quality machine code
  – Example: all intermediate values might be named to facilitate optimizations that attempt to minimize stack/register usage

• Many examples:
  – Triples: OP a b
    • Useful for instruction selection on X86 via “tiling”
  – Quadruples: a = b OP c (“three address form”)
  – SSA: variant of quadruples where each variable is assigned exactly once
    • Easy dataflow analysis for optimization
    • e.g. LLVM: industrial-strength IR, based on SSA
  – Stack-based:
    • Easy to generate
    • e.g. Java Bytecode, UCODE
Growing an IR

• Develop an IR in detail… starting from the very basic.

• Start: a (very) simple intermediate representation for the arithmetic language
  – Very high level
  – No control flow

• Goal: A simple subset of the LLVM IR
  – LLVM = “Low-level Virtual Machine”
  – Used in HW3+

• Add features needed to compile rich source languages
SIMPLE LET-BASED IR
Eliminating Nested Expressions

• Fundamental problem:
  – Compiling complex & nested expression forms to simple operations.

  Source  
  \(((1 + X4) + (3 + (X1 * 5)))\)

  AST  
  Add(Add(Const 1, Var X4),
       Add(Const 3, Mul(Var X1,
                     Const 5)))

  IR  
  ?

• Idea: *name* intermediate values, make order of evaluation explicit.
  – No nested operations.
Translation to SLL

Given this:

\[
\text{Add} (\text{Add} (\text{Const } 1, \text{Var } X4), \\
\text{Add} (\text{Const } 3, \text{Mul} (\text{Var } X1, \\
\text{Const } 5)))
\]

Translate to this desired SLL form:

let tmp0 = add 1L varX4 in
let tmp1 = mul varX1 5L in
let tmp2 = add 3L tmp1 in
let tmp3 = add tmp0 tmp2 in
    tmp3

Translation makes the order of evaluation explicit.
Names intermediate values
Note: introduced temporaries are never modified