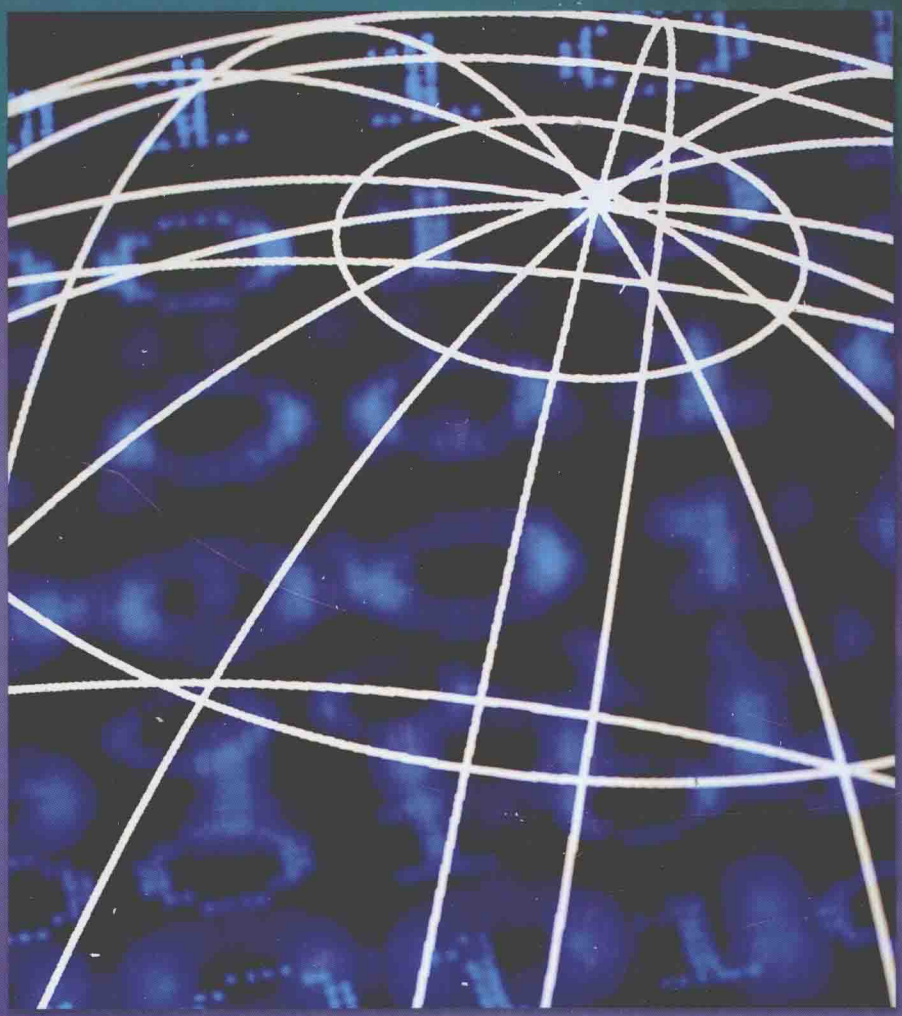
Carl Hamacher · Zvonko Vranesic · Safwat Zaky · Naraig Manjikian



COMPUTER ORGANIZATION
AND EMBEDDED SYSTEMS

Sixth Edition

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SIXTH EDITION

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CONTENTS

chapter

1

BASIC STRUCTURE OF COMPUTERS

CHAPTER OBJECTIVES

In this chapter you will be introduced to:

- The different types of computers
- The basic structure of a computer and its operation
- Machine instructions and their execution
- Number and character representations
- Addition and subtraction of binary numbers
- Basic performance issues in computer systems
- A brief history of computer development

This book is about computer organization. It explains the function and design of the various units of digital computers that store and process information. It also deals with the input units of the computer which receive information from external sources and the output units which send computed results to external destinations. The input, storage, processing, and output operations are governed by a list of instructions that constitute a program.

Most of the material in the book is devoted to *computer hardware* and *computer architecture*. Computer hardware consists of electronic circuits, magnetic and optical storage devices, displays, electromechanical devices, and communication facilities. Computer architecture encompasses the specification of an instruction set and the functional behavior of the hardware units that implement the instructions.

Many aspects of programming and software components in computer systems are also discussed in the book. It is important to consider both hardware and software aspects of the design of the various computer components in order to gain a good understanding of computer systems.

1.1 COMPUTER TYPES

Since their introduction in the 1940s, digital computers have evolved into many different types that vary widely in size, cost, computational power, and intended use. Modern computers can be divided roughly into four general categories:

- *Embedded computers* are integrated into a larger device or system in order to automatically monitor and control a physical process or environment. They are used for a specific purpose rather than for general processing tasks. Typical applications include industrial and home automation, appliances, telecommunication products, and vehicles. Users may not even be aware of the role that computers play in such systems.
- *Personal computers* have achieved widespread use in homes, educational institutions, and business and engineering office settings, primarily for dedicated individual use. They support a variety of applications such as general computation, document preparation, computer-aided design, audiovisual entertainment, interpersonal communication, and Internet browsing. A number of classifications are used for personal computers. *Desktop computers* serve general needs and fit within a typical personal workspace. *Workstation computers* offer higher computational capacity and more powerful graphical display capabilities for engineering and scientific work. Finally, *Portable* and *Notebook computers* provide the basic features of a personal computer in a smaller lightweight package. They can operate on batteries to provide mobility.
- *Servers* and *Enterprise systems* are large computers that are meant to be shared by a potentially large number of users who access them from some form of personal computer over a public or private network. Such computers may host large databases and provide information processing for a government agency or a commercial organization.
- *Supercomputers* and *Grid computers* normally offer the highest performance. They are the most expensive and physically the largest category of computers. Supercomputers are used for the highly demanding computations needed in weather forecasting, engineering design and simulation, and scientific work. They have a high cost. Grid computers provide a more cost-effective alternative. They combine a large number of personal computers and

disk storage units in a physically distributed high-speed network, called a grid, which is managed as a coordinated computing resource. By evenly distributing the computational workload across the grid, it is possible to achieve high performance on large applications ranging from numerical computation to information searching.

There is an emerging trend in access to computing facilities, known as *cloud computing*. Personal computer users access widely distributed computing and storage server resources for individual, independent, computing needs. The Internet provides the necessary communication facility. Cloud hardware and software service providers operate as a utility, charging on a pay-as-you-use basis.

1.2 FUNCTIONAL UNITS

A computer consists of five functionally independent main parts: input, memory, arithmetic and logic, output, and control units, as shown in Figure 1.1. The input unit accepts coded information from human operators using devices such as keyboards, or from other computers over digital communication lines. The information received is stored in the computer's memory, either for later use or to be processed immediately by the arithmetic and logic unit. The processing steps are specified by a program that is also stored in the memory. Finally, the results are sent back to the outside world through the output unit. All of these actions are coordinated by the control unit. An interconnection network provides the means for the functional units to exchange information and coordinate their actions. Later chapters will provide more details on individual units and their interconnections. We refer to the

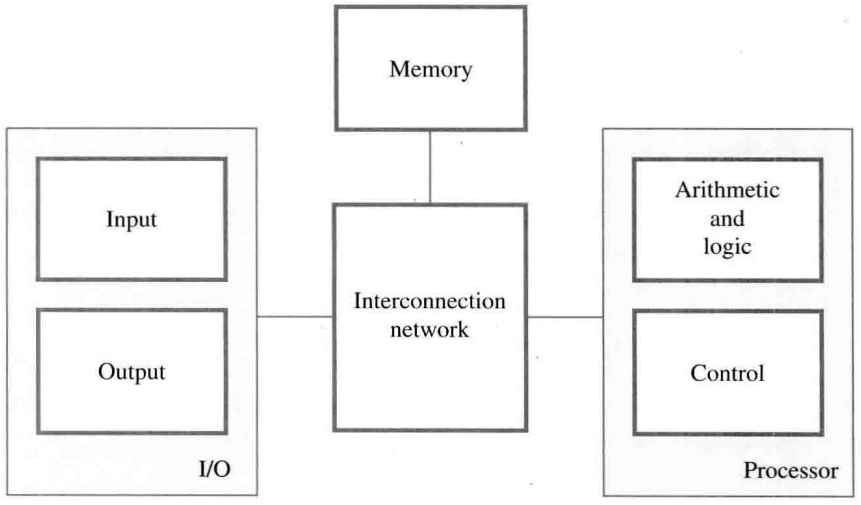

Figure 1.1 Basic functional units of a computer.

arithmetic and logic circuits, in conjunction with the main control circuits, as the *processor*. Input and output equipment is often collectively referred to as the *input-output* (I/O) unit.

We now take a closer look at the information handled by a computer. It is convenient to categorize this information as either instructions or data. *Instructions*, or *machine instructions*, are explicit commands that

- Govern the transfer of information within a computer as well as between the computer and its I/O devices
- Specify the arithmetic and logic operations to be performed

A *program* is a list of instructions which performs a task. Programs are stored in the memory. The processor fetches the program instructions from the memory, one after another, and performs the desired operations. The computer is controlled by the stored program, except for possible external interruption by an operator or by I/O devices connected to it. *Data* are numbers and characters that are used as operands by the instructions. Data are also stored in the memory.

The instructions and data handled by a computer must be encoded in a suitable format. Most present-day hardware employs digital circuits that have only two stable states. Each instruction, number, or character is encoded as a string of binary digits called *bits*, each having one of two possible values, 0 or 1, represented by the two stable states. Numbers are usually represented in positional binary notation, as discussed in Section 1.4. Alphanumeric characters are also expressed in terms of binary codes, as discussed in Section 1.5.

1.2.1 INPUT UNIT

Computers accept coded information through input units. The most common input device is the keyboard. Whenever a key is pressed, the corresponding letter or digit is automatically translated into its corresponding binary code and transmitted to the processor.

Many other kinds of input devices for human-computer interaction are available, including the touchpad, mouse, joystick, and trackball. These are often used as graphic input devices in conjunction with displays. Microphones can be used to capture audio input which is then sampled and converted into digital codes for storage and processing. Similarly, cameras can be used to capture video input.

Digital communication facilities, such as the Internet, can also provide input to a computer from other computers and database servers.

1.2.2 MEMORY UNIT

The function of the memory unit is to store programs and data. There are two classes of storage, called primary and secondary.

Primary Memory

Primary memory, also called *main memory*, is a fast memory that operates at electronic speeds. Programs must be stored in this memory while they are being executed. The

memory consists of a large number of semiconductor storage cells, each capable of storing one bit of information. These cells are rarely read or written individually. Instead, they are handled in groups of fixed size called *words*. The memory is organized so that one word can be stored or retrieved in one basic operation. The number of bits in each word is referred to as the *word length* of the computer, typically 16, 32, or 64 bits.

To provide easy access to any word in the memory, a distinct *address* is associated with each word location. Addresses are consecutive numbers, starting from 0, that identify successive locations. A particular word is accessed by specifying its address and issuing a control command to the memory that starts the storage or retrieval process.

Instructions and data can be written into or read from the memory under the control of the processor. It is essential to be able to access any word location in the memory as quickly as possible. A memory in which any location can be accessed in a short and fixed amount of time after specifying its address is called a *random-access memory* (RAM). The time required to access one word is called the *memory access time*. This time is independent of the location of the word being accessed. It typically ranges from a few nanoseconds (ns) to about 100 ns for current RAM units.

Cache Memory

As an adjunct to the main memory, a smaller, faster RAM unit, called a *cache*, is used to hold sections of a program that are currently being executed, along with any associated data. The cache is tightly coupled with the processor and is usually contained on the same integrated-circuit chip. The purpose of the cache is to facilitate high instruction execution rates.

At the start of program execution, the cache is empty. All program instructions and any required data are stored in the main memory. As execution proceeds, instructions are fetched into the processor chip, and a copy of each is placed in the cache. When the execution of an instruction requires data located in the main memory, the data are fetched and copies are also placed in the cache.

Now, suppose a number of instructions are executed repeatedly as happens in a program loop. If these instructions are available in the cache, they can be fetched quickly during the period of repeated use. Similarly, if the same data locations are accessed repeatedly while copies of their contents are available in the cache, they can be fetched quickly.

Secondary Storage

Although primary memory is essential, it tends to be expensive and does not retain information when power is turned off. Thus additional, less expensive, permanent *secondary storage* is used when large amounts of data and many programs have to be stored, particularly for information that is accessed infrequently. Access times for secondary storage are longer than for primary memory. A wide selection of secondary storage devices is available, including *magnetic disks*, *optical disks* (DVD and CD), and *flash memory devices*.

1.2.3 ARITHMETIC AND LOGIC UNIT

Most computer operations are executed in the *arithmetic and logic unit* (ALU) of the processor. Any arithmetic or logic operation, such as addition, subtraction, multiplication,

division, or comparison of numbers, is initiated by bringing the required operands into the processor, where the operation is performed by the ALU. For example, if two numbers located in the memory are to be added, they are brought into the processor, and the addition is carried out by the ALU. The sum may then be stored in the memory or retained in the processor for immediate use.

When operands are brought into the processor, they are stored in high-speed storage elements called *registers*. Each register can store one word of data. Access times to registers are even shorter than access times to the cache unit on the processor chip.

1.2.4 OUTPUT UNIT

The output unit is the counterpart of the input unit. Its function is to send processed results to the outside world. A familiar example of such a device is a *printer*. Most printers employ either photocopying techniques, as in laser printers, or ink jet streams. Such printers may generate output at speeds of 20 or more pages per minute. However, printers are mechanical devices, and as such are quite slow compared to the electronic speed of a processor.

Some units, such as graphic displays, provide both an output function, showing text and graphics, and an input function, through touchscreen capability. The dual role of such units is the reason for using the single name *input/output* (I/O) unit in many cases.

1.2.5 CONTROL UNIT

The memory, arithmetic and logic, and I/O units store and process information and perform input and output operations. The operation of these units must be coordinated in some way. This is the responsibility of the control unit. The control unit is effectively the nerve center that sends control signals to other units and senses their states.

I/O transfers, consisting of input and output operations, are controlled by program instructions that identify the devices involved and the information to be transferred. Control circuits are responsible for generating the *timing signals* that govern the transfers and determine when a given action is to take place. Data transfers between the processor and the memory are also managed by the control unit through timing signals. It is reasonable to think of a control unit as a well-defined, physically separate unit that interacts with other parts of the computer. In practice, however, this is seldom the case. Much of the control circuitry is physically distributed throughout the computer. A large set of control lines (wires) carries the signals used for timing and synchronization of events in all units.

The operation of a computer can be summarized as follows:

- The computer accepts information in the form of programs and data through an input unit and stores it in the memory.
- Information stored in the memory is fetched under program control into an arithmetic and logic unit, where it is processed.
- Processed information leaves the computer through an output unit.
- All activities in the computer are directed by the control unit.

1.3 BASIC OPERATIONAL CONCEPTS

In Section 1.2, we stated that the activity in a computer is governed by instructions. To perform a given task, an appropriate program consisting of a list of instructions is stored in the memory. Individual instructions are brought from the memory into the processor, which executes the specified operations. Data to be used as instruction operands are also stored in the memory.

A typical instruction might be

```
Load    R2, LOC
```

This instruction reads the contents of a memory location whose address is represented symbolically by the label LOC and loads them into processor register R2. The original contents of location LOC are preserved, whereas those of register R2 are overwritten. Execution of this instruction requires several steps. First, the instruction is fetched from the memory into the processor. Next, the operation to be performed is determined by the control unit. The operand at LOC is then fetched from the memory into the processor. Finally, the operand is stored in register R2.

After operands have been loaded from memory into processor registers, arithmetic or logic operations can be performed on them. For example, the instruction

```
Add     R4, R2, R3
```

adds the contents of registers R2 and R3, then places their sum into register R4. The operands in R2 and R3 are not altered, but the previous value in R4 is overwritten by the sum.

After completing the desired operations, the results are in processor registers. They can be transferred to the memory using instructions such as

```
Store   R4, LOC
```

This instruction copies the operand in register R4 to memory location LOC. The original contents of location LOC are overwritten, but those of R4 are preserved.

For Load and Store instructions, transfers between the memory and the processor are initiated by sending the address of the desired memory location to the memory unit and asserting the appropriate control signals. The data are then transferred to or from the memory.

Figure 1.2 shows how the memory and the processor can be connected. It also shows some components of the processor that have not been discussed yet. The interconnections between these components are not shown explicitly since we will only discuss their functional characteristics here. Chapter 5 describes the details of the interconnections as part of processor organization.

In addition to the ALU and the control circuitry, the processor contains a number of registers used for several different purposes. The *instruction register* (IR) holds the instruction that is currently being executed. Its output is available to the control circuits, which generate the timing signals that control the various processing elements involved in executing the instruction. The *program counter* (PC) is another specialized register. It

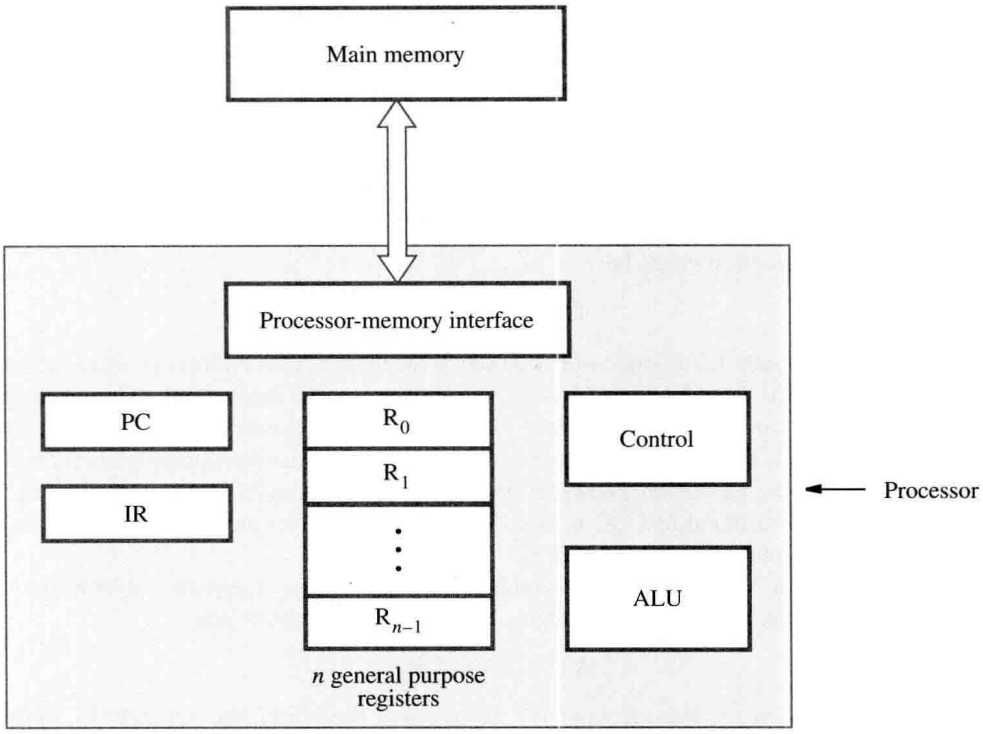

Figure 1.2 Connection between the processor and the main memory.

contains the memory address of the next instruction to be fetched and executed. During the execution of an instruction, the contents of the PC are updated to correspond to the address of the next instruction to be executed. It is customary to say that the PC *points* to the next instruction that is to be fetched from the memory. In addition to the IR and PC, Figure 1.2 shows *general-purpose registers* R_0 through R_{n-1}, often called processor registers. They serve a variety of functions, including holding operands that have been loaded from the memory for processing. The roles of the general-purpose registers are explained in detail in Chapter 2.

The processor-memory interface is a circuit which manages the transfer of data between the main memory and the processor. If a word is to be read from the memory, the interface sends the address of that word to the memory along with a Read control signal. The interface waits for the word to be retrieved, then transfers it to the appropriate processor register. If a word is to be written into memory, the interface transfers both the address and the word to the memory along with a Write control signal.

Let us now consider some typical operating steps. A program must be in the main memory in order for it to be executed. It is often transferred there from secondary storage through the input unit. Execution of the program begins when the PC is set to point to the