On-Chip Networks I: Topology/Flow Control

Daniel Sanchez
Computer Science & Artificial Intelligence Lab
M.I.T.
History: From interconnection networks to on-chip networks

- **Box-to-box networks**
- **Board-to-board networks**
- **Chip-to-chip networks**
- **On-chip networks**

Multi-Chip: Supercomputers, Data Centers, Internet Routers, Servers
On-Chip: Servers, Laptops, Phones, HDTVs, Access routers
History: From interconnection networks to on-chip networks

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Focus on on-chip networks connecting caches in shared-memory processors

Multi-Chip: Supercomputers, Data Centers, Internet Routers, Servers
On-Chip: Servers, Laptops, Phones, HDTVs, Access routers
What’s an on-chip network?

E.g. Cache-coherent chip multiprocessor

Load \texttt{reg1, addressA}

Home node for \texttt{address A}

Sharer that holds a copy of \texttt{address A in its $}$
What’s an on-chip network?

E.g. Cache-coherent chip multiprocessor

Load `reg1, addressA`

On-Chip Network

Home node for `address A`

Sharer that holds a copy of `address A`

Network transports cache coherence messages and cache lines between processor cores
Designing an on-chip network
Designing an on-chip network

- Topology
Designing an on-chip network

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- Topology
- Routing
Designing an on-chip network

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• Topology

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Designing an on-chip network

- Topology
- Flow control
- Router
- Microarchitecture
- Routing
Designing an on-chip network

- Topology
- Flow control
- Router microarchitecture
- Routing
Interconnection Network Architecture

- **Topology**: How to connect the nodes up? (processors, memories, router line cards, ...)

- **Routing**: Which path should a message take?

- **Flow control**: How is the message actually forwarded from source to destination?

- **Router microarchitecture**: How to build the routers?

- **Link microarchitecture**: How to build the links?
Topology
Topological Properties

• *Diameter*

• *Average Distance*

• *Bisection Bandwidth*
Topological Properties

- **Routing Distance** - number of links on route
- **Diameter** - maximum routing distance
- **Average Distance**

- A network is *partitioned* by a set of links if their removal disconnects the graph
- **Bisection Bandwidth** is the bandwidth crossing a minimal cut that divides the network in half
Linear Arrays and Rings

Linear Array

Torus

Torus arranged to use short wires
Linear Arrays and Rings

Route A -> B given by relative address \( R = B - A \)

Diameter?
Average distance?
Bisection bandwidth?

- Torus Examples:
  - FDDI, SCI, FiberChannel Arbitrated Loop, Intel Xeon
Linear Arrays and Rings

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Diameter? $N - 1$

Average distance? $\frac{N}{3} - 1/(3N)$

Bisection bandwidth?

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Route A -> B given by relative address $R = B - A$

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Diameter? \( N-1 \)
Average distance? \( \frac{N}{3} - 1/(3N) \)
Bisection bandwidth? \( 1 \)

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Linear Arrays and Rings

Route A -> B given by relative address $R = B - A$

Linear Array   Ring (1-D Torus)

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Average distance?

Bisection bandwidth?

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Linear Arrays and Rings

Route $A \rightarrow B$ given by relative address $R = B - A$

Linear Array

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Diameter?

Average distance?

Bisection bandwidth?

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Linear Arrays and Rings

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**Linear Array**

**Torus**

**Torus** arranged to use short wires

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Linear Array</th>
<th>Ring (1-D Torus)</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Diameter?</td>
<td>( N-1 )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average distance?</td>
<td>( N/3-1/(3N) )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bisection bandwidth?</td>
<td>( N/4 ) (if even ( N ))</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
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- **Torus Examples:**
  - FDDI, SCI, FiberChannel Arbitrated Loop, Intel Xeon
Multidimensional Meshes and Tori

- $d$-dimensional array
  - $n = k_{d-1} \times \ldots \times k_0$ nodes
  - described by $d$-vector of coordinates $(i_{d-1}, \ldots, i_0)$

- $d$-dimensional $k$-ary mesh: $N = k^d$
  - $k = \sqrt[d]{N}$
  - described by $d$-vector of radix $k$ coordinate

- $d$-dimensional $k$-ary torus (or $k$-ary $d$-cube)
Routing & Flow Control
Overview
Messages, Packets, Flits, Phits

Packet: Basic unit of routing and sequencing
- Limited size (e.g. 64 bits - 64 KB)

Flit (flow control digit): Basic unit of bandwidth/storage allocation
- All flits in packet follow the same path

Phit (physical transfer digit): data transferred in single clock

Why flits?
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Why flits?
For variable packet sizes
Routing vs Flow Control

- Routing algorithm chooses path that packets should follow to get from source to destination

- Flow control schemes allocate resources (buffers, links, control state) to packets traversing the network

- Our approach: Bottom-up
  - Today: Flow control, assuming routes are set
  - Next lecture: Routing algorithms
Properties of Routing Algorithms

- **Deterministic/Oblivious**
  - Route determined by (source, dest), not intermediate state (i.e. traffic)

- **Adaptive**
  - Route influenced by traffic along the way

- **Minimal**
  - Only selects shortest paths

- **Deadlock-free**
  - No traffic pattern can lead to a situation where no packets move forward

*(more in next lecture)*
Flow Control
Contestation

• Two packets trying to use the same link at the same time
  – Limited or no buffering
• Problem arises because we are sharing resources
  – Sharing bandwidth and buffers
Flow Control Protocols

- **Bufferless**
  - Circuit switching
  - Dropping
  - Misrouting

- **Buffered**
  - Store-and-forward
  - Virtual cut-through
  - Wormhole
  - Virtual-channel
Flow Control Protocols

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Complexity & Efficiency

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Circuit Switching

• Form a circuit from source to dest
• Probe to set up path through network
• Reserve all links
• Data sent through links

• Bufferless
Time-space View: Circuit Switching

- Why is this good?
- Why is it not?
Time-space View: Circuit Switching

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- Why is this good? Simple to implement
- Why is it not?

Request

Acknowledgement

Deallocation
Time-space View: Circuit Switching

- Why is this good? Simple to implement
- Why is it not? Wasteful, 3x latency for short packets
Speculative Flow Control: Dropping

- If two things arrive and I don’t have resources, drop one of them
- Flow control protocol on the Internet
Speculative Flow Control: Dropping

• If two things arrive and I don’t have resources, drop one of them
• Flow control protocol on the Internet
Time-space Diagram: Dropping

Disadvantages?
Time-space Diagram: Dropping

Unable to allocate channel 3  Disadvantages?
Time-space Diagram: Dropping

Unable to allocate channel 3

Disadvantages?
Time-space Diagram: Dropping

Unable to allocate channel 3

Disadvantages?
Poor tradeoff of traffic and buffering
Less Simple Flow Control: Misrouting

- If only one message can enter the network at each node, and one message can exit the network at each node, the network can never be congested. Right?
Less Simple Flow Control: Misroutting

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• Philosophy behind misrouting: intentionally route away from congestion

• No need for buffering
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- Problems?
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**Wrong! Multiple hops cause congestion**

- Philosophy behind misrouting: intentionally route away from congestion
- No need for buffering
- Problems? Livelock: need to guarantee that progress is made
Buffered Routing

- **Link-level flow control:**
  - Given that you can’t drop packets, how to manage the buffers? When can you send stuff forward, when not?

- **Metrics of interest:**
  - Throughput/Latency
  - Buffer utilization (turnaround time)
Techniques for link backpressure
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- Naïve stall-based (on/off):
  - Can source send or not?
Techniques for link backpressure

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• Sophisticated stall-based (credit-based):
  – How many flits can be sent to the next node?
Techniques for link backpressure

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  – How many flits can be sent to the next node?

• Speculative (ack/nack):
  – Guess can always send, but keep copy
  – Resolve if send was successful (ack/nack)
    • On ack – drop copy
    • On nack - resend
Store-and-Forward (packet-based, no flits)

• **Strategy:**
  – Make intermediate stops and wait until the entire packet has arrived before you move on

• **Advantage:**
  – Other packets can use intermediate links
Time-space View: Store-and-Forward

- Buffering allows packet to wait for channel
- *Drawback?*
Time-space View: Store-and-Forward

Could be allocated at a much later time without packet dropping

• Buffering allows packet to wait for channel
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Time-space View: Store-and-Forward

Could be allocated at a much later time without packet dropping

- Buffering allows packet to wait for channel
- **Drawback?** Serialization latency experienced at each hop/channel
Virtual Cut-through (packet-based)

• Why wait till entire message has arrived at each intermediate stop?
• The head flit of the packet can dash off first
• When the head gets blocked, whole packet gets blocked at one intermediate node
• Used in Alpha 21364
Time-space View: Virtual Cut-through

• Advantages?

• Disadvantages?
Time-space View: Virtual Cut-through

- Advantages?
- Disadvantages?

No breaks allowed
Time-space View: Virtual Cut-through

(A) Channel 0 1 2 3
Cycle 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

(B) Channel 0 1 2 3
Cycle 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

• Advantages?
  Lower latency

• Disadvantages?

No breaks allowed

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Time-space View: Virtual Cut-through

- **Advantages?**
  - Lower latency

- **Disadvantages?**
  - Buffers allocated in packets → large buffers & low utilization
  - Channels allocated in packets → unfairness & low utilization

No breaks allowed
Flit-Buffer Flow Control: Wormhole

• When a packet blocks, just block wherever the pieces (flits) of the message are at that time.

• Operates like cut-through but with channel and buffers allocated to flits rather than packets
  – Channel state (virtual channel) allocated to packet so body flits can follow head flit
Time-space View: Wormhole

- Advantages?
- Disadvantages?
Time-space View: Wormhole

- **Advantages?** Smaller amount of buffer space required
- **Disadvantages?**
Time-space View: Wormhole

- **Advantages?** Smaller amount of buffer space required
- **Disadvantages?** May block a channel mid-packet, another packet cannot use bandwidth
Virtual-Channel (VC) Flow Control

- When a message blocks, instead of holding on to links so others can’t use them, hold on to virtual links

- Multiple queues in buffer storage
  - Like lanes on the highway

- Virtual channel can be thought of as channel state and flit buffers
Time-space View: Virtual-Channel

- Advantages?
- Disadvantages?

# flits in VC buffer

A downstream

B downstream
Time-space View: Virtual-Channel

• Advantages?  Significantly reduces blocking
• Disadvantages?
Time-space View: Virtual-Channel

• **Advantages?**
  - Significantly reduces blocking

• **Disadvantages?**
  - More complex router, fair VC allocation required
Thank you!

Next Lecture:  
Router (Switch) Microarchitecture  
Routing Algorithms