### ECE/CS 250 Computer Architecture

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I/O

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Includes material adapted from Dan Sorin (Duke) and Amir Roth (Penn). SSD material from Andrew Bondi (Colorado State).

# Where We Are in This Course Right Now

- So far:
  - We know how to design a processor that can fetch, decode, and execute the instructions in an ISA
  - We understand how to design caches and memory
- Now:
  - We learn about the lowest level of storage (disks)
  - We learn about input/output in general
- Next:
  - Faster processor cores
  - Multicore processors

# This Unit: I/O



- I/O system structure
  - Devices, controllers, and buses
- Device characteristics
  - Disks
- Bus characteristics
- I/O control
  - Polling and interrupts
  - DMA

# Readings

- Patterson and Hennessy dropped the ball on this topic
- It used to be covered in depth (in previous editions)
  - Now it's sort of in Appendix A.8

### **Computers Interact with Outside World**

### Input/output (I/O)

- Otherwise, how will we ever tell a computer what to do...
- ...or exploit the results of its work?
- Computers without I/O are not useful
- ICQ: What kinds of I/O do computers have?

# One Instance of I/O



- Have briefly seen one instance of I/O
  - **Disk**: bottom of memory hierarchy
  - Holds whatever can't fit in memory
  - ICQ: What else do disks hold?

### A More General/Realistic I/O System

- A computer system
  - CPU, including cache(s)
  - Memory (DRAM)
  - I/O peripherals: disks, input devices, displays, network cards, ...
    - With built-in or separate I/O (or DMA) controllers
  - All connected by a **system bus**



## I/O: Control + Data Transfer

- I/O devices have two ports
  - **Control**: commands and status reports
    - How we tell I/O what to do
    - How I/O tells us about itself
    - Control is the tricky part (especially status reports)
  - Data
    - Labor-intensive part
    - "Interesting" I/O devices do data transfers (to/from memory)
      - Display: video memory  $\rightarrow$  monitor
      - Disk: memory  $\leftrightarrow$  disk
      - Network interface: memory  $\leftrightarrow$  network

# **Operating System (OS) Plays a Big Role**

- I/O interface is typically under OS control
  - User applications access I/O devices indirectly (e.g., SYSCALL)
  - Why?
  - Device **drivers** are "programs" that OS uses to manage devices
- Virtualization: same argument as for memory
  - Physical devices shared among multiple programs
  - Direct access could lead to conflicts example?

### Synchronization

- Most have asynchronous interfaces, require unbounded waiting
- OS handles asynchrony internally, presents synchronous interface

### Standardization

- Devices of a certain type (disks) can/will have different interfaces
- OS handles differences (via drivers), presents uniform interface

### **I/O Device Characteristics**

- Primary characteristic
  - Data rate (aka bandwidth)
- Contributing factors
  - **Partner**: humans have slower output data rates than machines
  - Input or output or both (input/output)

| Device      | Partner | I? O?  | Data Rate (KB/s) |
|-------------|---------|--------|------------------|
| Keyboard    | Human   | Input  | 0.01             |
| Mouse       | Human   | Input  | 0.02             |
| Speaker     | Human   | Output | 0.60             |
| Printer     | Human   | Output | 200              |
| Display     | Human   | Output | 240,000          |
| Modem (old) | Machine | I/O    | 7                |
| Ethernet    | Machine | I/O    | ~1,000,000       |
| Disk        | Machine | I/O    | ~50,000          |

## I/O Device Bandwidth: Some Examples

- Keyboard
  - 1 B/key \* 10 keys/s = 10 B/s
- Mouse
  - 2 B/transfer \* 10 transfers/s = 20 B/s
- Display
  - 4 B/pixel \* 1M pixel/display \* 60 displays/s = 240 MB/s

# I/O Device: Disk





- head **Disk**: like stack of record players
  - Collection of platters
    - Each with read/write head
  - Platters divided into concentric **tracks** 
    - Head seeks (forward/backward) to track
    - All heads move in unison
  - Each track divided into **sectors** 
    - ZBR (zone bit recording)
      - More sectors on outer tracks
    - Sectors rotate under head

### Controller

- Seeks heads, waits for sectors
- Turns heads on/off
- May have its own cache (made w/DRAM)

### **Disk Parameters**

|                     | Seagate 6TB<br>Enterprise HDD<br>(2016) | Seagate Savvio<br>(~2005) | Toshiba MK1003<br>(early 2000s) |
|---------------------|---|---------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Diameter            | 3.5″                                    | 2.5″                      | 1.8″                            |
| Capacity            | 6 TB                                    | 73 GB                     | 10 GB                           |
| RPM                 | 7200 RPM                                | 10000 RPM                 | 4200 RPM                        |
| Cache               | 128 MB                                  | 8 MB                      | 512 KB                          |
| Platters            | ~6                                      | 2                         | 1                               |
| Average Seek        | 4.16 ms                                 | 4.5 ms                    | 7 ms                            |
| Sustained Data Rate | 216 MB/s                                | 94 MB/s                   | 16 MB/s                         |
| Interface           | SAS/SATA                                | SCSI                      | ATA                             |
| Use                 | Desktop                                 | Laptop                    | Ancient iPod                    |

## **Disk Read/Write Latency**

- Disk read/write latency has four components
  - Seek delay (t<sub>seek</sub>): head seeks to right track
  - Rotational delay (t<sub>rotation</sub>): right sector rotates under head
    - On average: time to go halfway around disk
  - Transfer time (t<sub>transfer</sub>): data actually being transferred
  - **Controller delay (t<sub>controller</sub>)**: controller overhead (on either side)
- Example: time to read a 4KB page assuming...
  - 128 sectors/track, 512 B/sector, 6000 RPM, 10 ms t<sub>seek</sub>, 1 ms t<sub>controller</sub>
  - + 6000 RPM  $\rightarrow$  100 R/s  $\rightarrow$  10 ms/R  $\rightarrow$   $t_{rotation}$  = 10 ms / 2 = 5 ms
  - 4 KB page  $\rightarrow$  8 sectors  $\rightarrow$  t<sub>transfer</sub> = 10 ms \* 8/128 = 0.6 ms
  - $t_{disk} = t_{seek} + t_{rotation} + t_{transfer} + t_{controller}$ = 10 + 5 + 0.6 + 1 = 16.6 ms

## **Understanding disk performance**

- One equals 1 microsecond
- Time to read the "next" 512-byte sector (no seek needed):  $\circ \circ \sim 2\mu s$
- Time to read a random 512-byte sector (with seek):



## **Disk Bandwidth**

- Disk is bandwidth-inefficient for page-sized transfers
  - Actual data transfer (t<sub>transfer</sub>) a small part of disk access (and cycle)
- Increase bandwidth: **stripe data across multiple disks** 
  - Striping strategy depends on disk usage model
  - "File System" or "web server": many small files
    - Map entire files to disks
  - "Supercomputer" or "database": several large files
    - Stripe single file across multiple disks
- Both bandwidth and individual transaction latency important

## **Error Correction: RAID**

#### • Error correction: more important for disk than for memory

- Mechanical disk failures (entire disk lost) is common failure mode
- Entire file system can be lost if files striped across multiple disks

### • RAID (redundant array of inexpensive disks)

- Similar to DRAM error correction, but...
- Major difference: which disk failed is known
  - Even parity can be used to recover from single failures
  - Parity disk can be used to reconstruct data faulty disk
- RAID design balances bandwidth and fault-tolerance
- Many flavors of RAID exist
  - Tradeoff: extra disks (cost) vs. performance vs. reliability
  - Deeper discussion of RAID in ECE 552 and ECE 554; super-duper deep coverage in ECE 566/590 ("Enterprise Storage Architecture")
- RAID doesn't solve all problems  $\rightarrow$  can you think of any examples?

### What about Solid State Drives (SSDs)?



### SSDs

- Multiple NAND flash chips operated in parallel
- Pros:
  - Extremely good "seek" times (since "seek" is no longer a thing)
  - Almost instantaneous read and write times
  - The ability to read or write in multiple locations at once
  - The speed of the drive scales extremely well with the number of NAND ICs on board
  - Way cheaper than disk per IOP (performance)
- Cons:
  - Way more expensive than disk per GB (capacity)
  - Limited number of write cycles possible before it degrades (getting less and less of a problem these days)
  - Fundamental problem: Write amplification
    - You can <u>set</u> bits in "pages" (~4kB) fast (microseconds), but you can only <u>clear</u> bits in "blocks" (~512kB) slooow (milliseconds)
    - **Solution**: controller that is managing NAND cells tries to hide this

# Typical read and write rates: SSD vs HDD

• Data circa 2007 (but comparative trends still hold)

|                | Drive Model                   | Description           | Seek Ti              | Seek Time Latency Read XFR Rate |                | ate    | Write XFR Rate  |                 |                 |                 |
|----------------|-------------------------------|-----------------------|----------------------|---------------------------------|----------------|--------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
|                |                               |                       | Track<br>to<br>Track | Average                         | Full<br>Stroke |        | Outer<br>Tracks | Inner<br>Tracks | Outer<br>Tracks | Inner<br>Tracks |
| Hard<br>Drives | Western Digital<br>WD7500AYYS | 7200 RPM<br>3.5" SATA | 0.6 ms               | 8.9 ms                          | 12.0 ms        | 4.2 ms | 85 MB/sec       | 60 MB/sec*      | 85 MB/sec       | 60 MB/sec*      |
|                | Seagate<br>ST936751SS         | 15K RPM<br>2.5" SAS   | 0.2 ms               | 2.9 ms                          | 5.0 ms*        | 2.0 ms | 112 MB/sec      | 79 MB/sec       | 112 MB/sec      | 79 MB/sec       |
| Flash<br>SSDs  | Transcend<br>TS8GCF266        | 8GB 266x<br>CF Card   | 0.09ms               |                                 | 40 MB/sec      |        | 32 MB/sec       |                 |                 |                 |
|                | Samsung<br>MCAQE32G5APP       | 32G 2.5"<br>PATA      | 0.14ms               |                                 |                |        | 51 MB/sec       |                 | 28 MB/sec       |                 |
|                | Sandisk<br>SATA5000           | 32G 2.5"<br>SATA      | 0.125ms              |                                 |                |        | 68 MB/sec       |                 | 40 MB/sec       |                 |

## **The System Bus**

#### • System bus: connects system components together

- Important: insufficient bandwidth can bottleneck entire system
- Performance factors
  - Physical length
  - Number and type of connected devices (taps)



## **Three Buses**





#### Processor-memory bus

- Connects CPU and memory, no direct I/O interface
- + Short, few taps  $\rightarrow$  fast, high-bandwidth
- System specific

### • I/O bus

- Connects I/O devices, no direct P-M interface
- Longer, more taps  $\rightarrow$  slower, lower-bandwidth
- + Industry standard
- Connect P-M bus to I/O bus using adapter

## Backplane bus

- CPU, memory, I/O connected to same bus
- + Industry standard, cheap (no adapters needed)
- Processor-memory performance compromised

## **Bus Design**

| data lines    |
|---------------|
| address lines |
| control lines |

- Goals
  - **High Performance**: low latency and high bandwidth
  - **Standardization**: flexibility in dealing with many devices
  - Low Cost
    - Processor-memory bus emphasizes performance, then cost
    - I/O & backplane emphasize standardization, then performance
- Design issues
  - **1. Width/multiplexing**: are wires shared or separate?
  - 2. Clocking: is bus clocked or not?
  - **3. Switching**: how/when is bus control acquired and released?
  - **4. Arbitration**: how do we decide who gets the bus next?

# (1) Bus Width and Multiplexing

### • Wider

- + More bandwidth
- More expensive and more susceptible to skew

### • Multiplexed: address and data share same lines

- + Cheaper
- Less bandwidth
- Burst transfers (bus parking)
  - Multiple sequential data transactions for single address
  - + Increase bandwidth at relatively little cost

# (2) Bus Clocking

- Synchronous: clocked
  - + Fast
  - Bus must be short to minimize clock skew
- Asynchronous: un-clocked
  - + Can be longer: no clock skew, deals with devices of different speeds
  - Slower: requires "hand-shaking" protocol
    - For example, asynchronous read
      - Multiplexed data/address lines, 3 control lines
      - 1. Processor drives address onto bus, asserts **Request** line
      - 2. Memory asserts **Ack** line, processor stops driving
      - 3. Memory drives data on bus, asserts **DataReady** line
      - 4. Processor asserts **Ack** line, memory stops driving
  - Processor-Memory buses are synchronous
  - I/O and backplane buses asynchronous or slow-clock synchronous

# (3) Bus Switching

• Atomic: bus "busy" between request and reply

+ Simple

Low utilization

• **Split-transaction**: requests/replies can be interleaved

- + Higher utilization  $\rightarrow$  higher throughput
- Complex, requires sending IDs to match replies to request

# (4) Bus Arbitration

#### • **Bus master**: component that can initiate a bus request

- Bus typically has several masters, including processor
- I/O devices can also be masters (Why? See in a bit)
- Arbitration: choosing a master among multiple requests
  - Try to implement **priority** and **fairness** (no device "starves")
  - Daisy-chain: devices connect to bus in priority order
    - High-priority devices intercept/deny requests by low-priority ones
    - $\pm\,$  Simple, but slow and can't ensure fairness
  - Centralized: special arbiter chip collects requests, decides
    - $\pm$  Ensures fairness, but arbiter chip may itself become bottleneck
  - **Distributed**: everyone sees all requests simultaneously
    - Back off and retry if not the highest priority request
    - $\pm\,$  No bottlenecks and fair, but needs a lot of control lines

## **Standard Bus Examples**

|                 | PCI            | SCSI         | USB               |
|-----------------|----------------|--------------|-------------------|
| Туре            | Backplane      | I/O          | I/O               |
| Width           | 32–64 bits     | 8–32 bits    | 1 bit             |
| Multiplexed?    | Yes            | Yes          | Yes               |
| Clocking        | 33 (66) MHz    | 5 (10) MHz   | Asynchronous      |
| Data rate       | 133 (266) MB/s | 10 (20) MB/s | 0.2, 1.5, 60 MB/s |
| Arbitration     | Distributed    | Daisy chain  | weird             |
| Maximum masters | 1024           | 7–31         | 127               |
| Maximum length  | 0.5 m          | 2.5 m        | _                 |

### USB (universal serial bus)

- Popular for low/moderate bandwidth external peripherals
- + Packetized interface (like TCP), extremely flexible
- + Also supplies power to the peripheral

# This Unit: I/O



- I/O system structure
  - Devices, controllers, and buses
- Device characteristics
  - Disks
- Bus characteristics
- I/O control
  - Polling and interrupts
  - DMA

## I/O Control and Interfaces

- Now that we know how I/O devices and buses work...
- How does I/O actually happen?
  - How does CPU give commands to I/O devices?
  - How do I/O devices execute data transfers?
  - How does CPU know when I/O devices are done?

# Sending Commands to I/O Devices

• Remember: only OS can do this! Two options ...

### • I/O instructions

- OS only? Instructions must be privileged (only OS can execute)
- E.g., IA-32

### Memory-mapped I/O

- Portion of **physical** address space reserved for I/O
- OS maps physical addresses to I/O device control registers
- Stores/loads to these addresses are commands to I/O devices
  - Main memory ignores them, I/O devices recognize and respond
  - Address specifies both I/O device and command
- These address are not cached why?
- OS only? I/O physical addresses only mapped in OS address space
- E.g., almost every architecture other than IA-32 (see pattern??)

## Memory mapped IO example (1)



• Non-special read – comes from memory

## Memory mapped IO example (2)



- Write to address 1000 routed to TTY!
  - Mem write disabled, TTY write enabled; signal goes to both

## Memory mapped IO example (3)



- Read from address 1000 data comes from keyboard
  - Mux switches to keyboard for that address

# **Querying I/O Device Status**

- Now that we've sent command to I/O device ...
- How do we query I/O device status?
  - So that we know if data we asked for is ready?
  - So that we know if device is ready to receive next command?
- **Polling**: Ready now? How about now? How about now???
  - Processor queries I/O device status register (e.g., with MM load)
    - Loops until it gets status it wants (ready for next command)
    - Or tries again a little later
  - + Simple
  - Waste of processor's time
    - Processor much faster than I/O device

## **Polling Overhead: Example #1**

- Parameters
  - 500 MHz CPU
  - Polling event takes 400 cycles
- Overhead for polling a mouse 30 times per second?
  - Cycles per second for polling =  $(30 \text{ poll/s})^*(400 \text{ cycles/poll})$
  - $\rightarrow$  12000 cycles/second for polling
  - (12000 cycles/second)/(500 M cycles/second) = 0.002% overhead
    + Not bad

## **Polling Overhead: Example #2**

- Same parameters
  - 500 MHz CPU, polling event takes 400 cycles
- Overhead for polling a 4 MB/s disk with 16 B interface?
  - Must poll often enough not to miss data from disk
  - Polling rate = (4MB/s)/(16 B/poll) >> mouse polling rate
  - Cycles per second for polling=[(4MB/s)/(16 B/poll)]\*(400 cyc/poll)
  - $\rightarrow$  100 M cycles/second for polling
  - (100 M cycles/second)/(500 M cycles/second) = 20% overhead
  - Bad
  - This is the overhead of polling, not actual data transfer
    - Really bad if disk is not being used (pure overhead!)

# **Interrupt-Driven I/O**

#### • Interrupts: alternative to polling

- I/O device generates interrupt when status changes, data ready
- OS handles interrupts just like exceptions (e.g., page faults)
  - Identity of interrupting I/O device recorded in ECR
    - ECR: exception cause register
- I/O interrupts are **asynchronous** 
  - Not associated with any one instruction
  - Don't need to be handled immediately
- I/O interrupts are **prioritized** 
  - Synchronous interrupts (e.g., page faults) have highest priority
  - High-bandwidth I/O devices have higher priority than lowbandwidth ones

## **Interrupt Overhead**

- Parameters
  - 500 MHz CPU
  - Polling event takes 400 cycles
  - Interrupt handler takes 400 cycles
  - Data transfer takes 100 cycles

Note: when disk is transferring data, the interrupt rate is same as polling rate

- 4 MB/s, 16 B interface disk, transfers data only 5% of time
- Percent of time processor spends transferring data
  - 0.05 \* (4 MB/s)/(16 B/xfer)\*[(100 c/xfer)/(500M c/s)] = 0.25%
- Overhead for polling?
  - (4 MB/s)/(16 B/poll) \* [(400 c/poll)/(500M c/s)] = 20%
- Overhead for interrupts?

+0.05 \* (4 MB/s)/(16 B/int) \* [(400 c/int)/(500M c/s)] = 1%

## **Direct Memory Access (DMA)**

- Interrupts remove overhead of polling...
- But still requires OS to transfer data one word at a time
  - OK for low bandwidth I/O devices: mice, microphones, etc.
  - Bad for high bandwidth I/O devices: disks, monitors, etc.

### Direct Memory Access (DMA)

- Transfer data between I/O and memory without processor control
- Transfers entire blocks (e.g., pages, video frames) at a time
  - Can use bus "burst" transfer mode if available
- Only interrupts processor when done (or if error occurs)

## **DMA Controllers**

- To do DMA, I/O device attached to DMA controller
  - Multiple devices can be connected to one DMA controller
  - Controller itself seen as a memory mapped I/O device
    - Processor initializes start memory address, transfer size, etc.
  - DMA controller takes care of bus arbitration and transfer details
    - So that's why buses support arbitration and multiple masters!



### **I/O Processors**

- A DMA controller is a very simple component
  - May be as simple as a FSM with some local memory
- Some I/O requires complicated sequences of transfers
  - **I/O processor**: heavier DMA controller that executes instructions
    - Can be programmed to do complex transfers
    - E.g., programmable network card



### **DMA Overhead**

- Parameters
  - 500 MHz CPU
  - Interrupt handler takes 400 cycles
  - Data transfer takes 100 cycles
  - 4 MB/s, 16 B interface, disk transfers data 50% of time
  - DMA setup takes 1600 cycles, transfer 1 16KB page at a time
- Processor overhead for interrupt-driven I/O?
  - 0.5 \* (4M B/s)/(16 B/xfer)\*[(500 c/xfer)/(500M c/s)] = 12.5%
- Processor overhead with DMA?
  - Processor only gets involved once per page, not once per 16 B + 0.5 \* (4M B/s)/(16K B/page) \* [(2000 c/page)/(500M c/s)] = 0.05%

## **DMA and Memory Hierarchy**

- DMA is good, but is not without challenges
- Without DMA: processor initiates all data transfers
  - All transfers go through address translation
    - + Transfers can be of any size and cross virtual page boundaries
  - All values seen by cache hierarchy
    - + Caches never contain stale data
- With DMA: DMA controllers initiate data transfers
  - Do they use virtual or physical addresses?
  - What if they write data to a cached memory location?

## **DMA and Address Translation**

• Which addresses does processor specify to DMA controller?

### Virtual DMA

- + Can specify large cross-page transfers
- DMA controller has to do address translation internally
  - DMA contains small translation buffer (TB)
  - OS initializes buffer contents when it requests an I/O transfer

### Physical DMA

- + DMA controller is simple
- Can only do short page-size transfers
  - OS breaks large transfers into page-size chunks

# **DMA and Caching**

- Caches are good
  - Reduce CPU's observed instruction and data access latency
  - + But also, reduce CPU's use of memory...
  - + ...leaving majority of memory/bus bandwidth for DMA I/O
- But they also introduce a coherence problem for DMA
  - Input problem
    - DMA write into memory version of cached location
    - Cached version now stale
  - Output problem: write-back caches only
    - DMA read from memory version of "dirty" cached location
    - Output stale value

### **Solutions to Coherence Problem**

- Route all DMA I/O accesses to cache
  - + Solves problem
  - Expensive: CPU must contend for access to caches with DMA
- Disallow caching of I/O data

+ Also works

- Expensive in a different way: CPU access to those regions slow
- Selective flushing/invalidations of cached data
  - Flush all dirty blocks in "I/O region"
  - Invalidate blocks in "I/O region" as DMA writes those addresses
  - + The high performance solution
    - Hardware cache coherence mechanisms for doing this
  - Expensive in yet a third way: must implement this mechanism

# H/W Cache Coherence (more later on this)



- D\$ and L2 "snoop" bus traffic
  - Observe transactions
  - Check if written addresses are resident
  - Self-invalidate those blocks
  - + Doesn't require access to data part
  - Does require access to tag part
    - May need 2nd copy of tags for this
    - That's OK, tags smaller than data
- Bus addresses are physical
  - L2 is easy (physical index/tag)
  - D\$ is harder (virtual index/physical tag)

# **Designing an I/O System for Bandwidth**

- Approach
  - Find bandwidths of individual components
  - Configure components you can change...
  - To match bandwidth of bottleneck component you can't
- Example (from P&H textbook, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition)
  - Parameters
    - 300 MIPS CPU, 100 MB/s backplane bus
    - 50K OS insns + 100K user insns per I/O operation
    - SCSI-2 controllers (20 MB/s): each accommodates up to 7 disks
    - 5 MB/s disks with  $t_{seek} + t_{rotation} = 10$  ms, 64 KB reads
  - Determine
    - What is the maximum sustainable I/O rate?
    - How many SCSI-2 controllers and disks does it require?

# **Designing an I/O System for Bandwidth**

- First: determine I/O rates of components we can't change
  - CPU: (300M insn/s) / (150K Insns/IO) = 2000 IO/s
  - Backplane: (100M B/s) / (64K B/IO) = 1562 IO/s
  - Peak I/O rate determined by bus: 1562 IO/s
- Second: configure remaining components to match rate
  - Disk: 1 / [10 ms/IO + (64K B/IO) / (5M B/s)] = 43.9 IO/s
  - How many disks?
    - (1562 IO/s) / (43.9 IO/s) = **36 disks**
  - How many controllers?
    - (43.9 IO/s) \* (64K B/IO) = 2.74M B/s per disk
    - (20M B/s) / (2.74M B/s) = 7.2 disks per SCSI controller
    - (36 disks) / (7 disks/SCSI-2) = 6 SCSI-2 controllers
- Caveat: real I/O systems modeled with simulation

# **Designing an I/O System for Latency**

- Previous system designed for bandwidth
- Some systems have latency requirements as well
  - E.g., database system may require maximum or average latency
- Latencies are actually harder to deal with than bandwidths
  - Unloaded system: few concurrent IO transactions
    - Latency is easy to calculate
  - Loaded system: many concurrent IO transactions
    - Contention can lead to queuing
    - Latencies can rise dramatically
    - Queuing theory can help if transactions obey fixed distribution
    - Otherwise simulation is needed

## Summary

- Role of the OS
- Device characteristics
  - Data bandwidth
  - Disks/SSDs
    - Structure and latency: seek, rotation, transfer, controller delays
- Bus characteristics
  - Processor-memory, I/O, and backplane buses
  - Width, multiplexing, clocking, switching, arbitration
- I/O control
  - I/O instructions vs. memory mapped I/O
  - Polling vs. interrupts
  - Processor controlled data transfer vs. DMA
    - Interaction of DMA with memory system