What is Ray Tracing?

- A computer graphic rendering technique that simulates optics
- Can generate very realistic-looking images
- Can take a long time to create those images

David Luebke (NVIDIA):

"Rasterization is fast, but needs cleverness to support complex visual effects. Ray tracing supports complex visual effects, but needs cleverness to be fast."

What’s the plan?

- Design and implement Ray Tracing variations on a (simulated) parallel machine
  - Start with everyone getting up to speed on a basic ray tracer
  - Then do projects on more advanced variations

Hardware Platform

- TRaX – a many-core architecture designed for ray tracing
- Quite different than a commercial GPU
- Exists as a detailed simulator

Software Platform

- Compiler based on llvm
- Generates x86 code (for running on your machine)
- Also generates TRaX assembly (for the simulator)

Projects

- Extend our understanding of HW support for advanced RT techniques...
  - Path tracing
  - Beam tracing
  - Ray bundles
  - Photon mapping
  - Motion blur
  - Ambient occlusion
  - Animated scenes
  - Participating media (fog, smoke, etc.)
  - Alternative acceleration structures (grid, KD tree, etc.)
  - Procedural texturing or geometry
  - Power saving techniques

Projects

- Extend our architecture that supports advanced RT techniques… (i.e. enhance the simulator)
  - Memory system enhancements
  - Address generation units
  - New function units
  - Communication between thread processors
  - Function unit chaining — configurable macro instructions
  - Support for streaming data access
Ray Tracing vs. Rasterization

Ray Tracing
- (parallel on pixels)

Rasterizing
- (parallel on triangles)

Ray Tracing
- Color each pixel based on the radiance from each visible surface
- Note that these arrows point in the direction of the radiance. We normally trace rays in the other direction.

Ray Tracing
- For each sample
  - Construct a ray from the eye position through view plane
  - Find the first surface hit
  - Compute color of that surface

Simple Ray Casting

```c
Image RayCast(Camera camera, Scene scene, int width, int height) {
    Image image = new Image(width, height);
    for (int i = 0; i < width; i++) {
        for (int j = 0; j < height; j++) {
            Ray ray = ConstructRayThroughPixel(camera, i, j);
            Intersection hit = FindIntersection(ray, scene);
            image[i][j] = GetColor(hit);
        }
    }
    return image;
}
```
Construct a ray through a pixel

Tom Funkhouser, Princeton

Recursive Ray Tracing

Create scene (objects, materials, lights, camera, background)
Preprocess scene
foreach frame
foreach pixel
foreach sample
generate ray
intersect ray with objects
find normal of closest object
shade intersection point

Mutually recursive
Shading can generate new rays...

Major Components of a Ray Tracer

- Camera (Pixels to Rays)
- Objects (Rays to intersection info)
- Materials (Intersection info and light to color)
- Lights
- Background (Rays to Color)

All together: a Scene

Details

Steve Parker, Utah and NVIDIA
An Improved Illumination Model for Shaded Display

\[ I = I_a + I_d + I_r + I_d \sum_{j=1}^{n} (I_j \cdot I + I_j \cdot I) \]

where
- \( I_a \) is the ambient light intensity.
- \( I_d \) is the diffuse light intensity from the \( d \) direction.
- \( I_r \) is the reflected light intensity from the \( r \) direction.
- \( I_j \) is the intensity of light from the \( j \)th light source.
- \( \alpha_i \) is the diffuse reflectance coefficient.
- \( \beta_i \) is the specular reflectance coefficient.
- \( \gamma_i \) is the exponent that depends on the glossiness of the surface.

Improved Model

\[ I' = \frac{I \cdot I}{|I|^2} \]

where
- \( I' \) is the intensity of light after reflection.
- \( \theta \) is the angle of incidence.

Turner Whitted

Steve Parker, UofU and NVIDIA
Volume Rendering

Steve Parker, UofU and NVIDIA

Surface model ray traced images

Steve Parker, UofU and NVIDIA

Student images from CS6620

Pegoraro

Student images from CS6620

Gallup

Student images from CS6620

Kensler

Student images from CS6620

Kensler variant B
Ray Tracing is complex?

Ray Tracing is complex?

Andrew Kensler’s business-card C++ RT

Andrew Kensler’s business-card C++ RT

A Hierarchy of Ray Tracers

1. Ray casting
2. Ray casting with shadows
3. Whitted-style recursive ray tracing
4. Cook-style distribution ray tracing
5. Path tracing for indirect illumination (global illumination)
6. … even more advanced techniques…

1: Ray Casting

- A 3D line query to determine visibility
  - Rays are cast from the eye point through each pixel into the scene
  - Intersection point of nearest object is returned
2: Ray Casting with Shadows
- At each intersection point, cast another ray in the direction of the light source
- Checks whether the point is in shadow

3: Whitted-Style Ray Tracing
- Recursively cast rays to account for reflections and refractions

3: Whitted-Style Ray Tracing
- Classic Whitted Examples
- Ray casting with shadows
- Whitted-style ray tracing

4: Distribution Ray Tracing
- AKA Cook-Style Ray Tracing
  - Rays can be cast through a lens with area (i.e., not just a pinhole)
    - Depth of field
  - Secondary rays directions can be perturbed
  - Glossy reflections
  - Shadow rays can be aimed at area light sources
    - Soft shadows
  - Can also add time to the ray
    - Motion blur
At each intersection point, cast a ray in a random direction to see if any light comes from there.

With enough oversampling, this results in solving the "rendering equation".

Fills in the "ambient" shadowed spaces with indirect lighting.

Whitted ray tracing

Path Tracing
Lots more to it…

- But this hierarchy helps me keep things straight
  - Ambient occlusion, ray bundles, beam tracing, photon mapping, metropolis light transport, etc. etc. etc.
- Material properties involve other huge set of issues that can impact realism
  - BRDF: Bidirectional Reflectance Distribution Function
  - BSDF: Bidirectional Scattering Distribution Function
  - BTDF: Bidirectional Transmission Distribution Function
  - BSSRDF: Bidirectional Scattering Surface Reflectance Distribution Function

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If you could build a GPU that was customized for ray tracing, what would it look like?
- Probably have lots of floating point units
- NVIDIA/ATI GPUs organize them as wide SIMD
  - For example, 32 threads in a “warp”
  - Great if all 32 threads truly do the exact same thing
  - Not so great if they branch...
- TRaX takes a more MIMD/SPMD approach
  - Let the multiple threads each have their own PC
  - Letting the threads be out of sync has benefits…

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Ray tracing is by nature divergent in control flow
- Consider lots of light-weight MIMD threads capable of handling divergence
  - Designed from ground up specifically for ray tracing
- But what about area overhead for MIMD?

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Ray tracing Domain Features
- Ray tracing is “embarrassingly parallel”
  - Minimal communication and synchronization required
- All memory writes are to framebuffer only
  - We can enforce write-around policy to keep caches clean
  - Use local scratchpad memory for temporary variables
- Small program size makes for small fast icaches
- Threads all at different places in program (out of sync)
  - We can share various resources since all threads won’t be using them at the same time

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TRaX Architecture

- Basic tile
  - 32 core thread multiprocessor (TM)

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TRaX Software Model
- Write a single-threaded ray tracer
  - Copy this code to all thread processors
  - Now make each thread use atomic increment to help it decide which rays are its responsibility
  - Let ‘em loose on the scene
How well does it work?

- 2 int add, 8 FP mul and FP add, 1 invsqrt, and 2 16-banked instruction caches per TM
- 256KB, 16-bank L2 data cache per TM
- Total off-chip bandwidth: 52 Gb/sec
- 20 TMs per L2 (80 total)
- Total of 2560 cores

Comparison

- We compare our architecture against the best known wide-SIMD GPU ray tracer
- Timo Aila (NVIDIA) et al, HPG09
- Running on NVIDIA GTX 285

- Used some scenes and rendering techniques (shaders)
- Compare performance/area and overall performance

Benchmark Scenes

- Conference Room: 282K triangles
- Fairy Forest: 174K triangles
- Sibenik Cathedral: 80K triangles

- Primary rays only: ~1M rays per frame
- Shading (+/secondary rays): ~34M rays per frame

Results

- MIMD/SPMD total area: 175mm²
- GTX285 total area: ~300mm²
- Both areas estimated at 65nm process

Resource Area

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>GTX285</th>
<th>MIMD</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SM</td>
<td>16384</td>
<td>4096</td>
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<tr>
<td>FPAdd</td>
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<td>FPMult</td>
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<td>2</td>
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<td>1</td>
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<td>Register Area (mm²)</td>
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<td>0.61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compute Area (mm²)</td>
<td>0.43</td>
<td>0.26</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

SM = streaming multiprocessor, NVIDIA’s analogue to our TM

Analysis

- SPMD and resource sharing benefit from each other
  - threads get out of sync, resource requests become evenly staggered
    - which results in high performance, small area
  - Small multi-banked caches diminish area requirement of SPMD instruction fetch
    - Without constraint of synchronized threads
Comparison Conclusion

- Wide SIMD and general purpose multi-core CPUs seem over-provisioned for ray tracing
- Lightweight SPMD architecture with shared resources out-performs a highly tuned ray tracer on highly evolved GPU hardware on realistic benchmark scenes

Back to: What’s the Plan?

- Start with everyone writing a ray tracer
  - Using our llvm-based compiler
  - Get it running on your machine
  - Then on our TRaX simulator
- Then propose projects to write a more advanced RT
  - Benchmark on TRaX simulator
  - Could even result in papers?
- Next time: Josef will start talking about RT infrastructure (mathematics, coding, etc.)