How to Design Complex Digital Systems

Dr. Paul D. Franzon

Outline
1. Steps in an organized design approach
2. Maximizing Performance or Efficiency
3. Example
4. C to Verilog
5. Minimizing Power Consumption

References
1. Smith & Franzon, Chapter 10
Objectives and Motivation

Objectives

- Describe a structured approach to partitioning and designing complex systems
- Practice it on an example
- Understand how C can be “translated” into Verilog
- Introduce influence of design on power consumption

Motivation

- Start teaching you the “art” of complex design through general principles and examples
Course “Mantras”

1. One clock, one edge, flip-flops only
2. Design BEFORE coding
3. Behavior implies function
4. Clearly separate control and datapath
Steps in High Level Design

1. Determine the algorithm
   - Code it in a high level language.
   - Consider the hardware algorithm – the native parallelism of hardware can lead you to a different solution than the software one.

2. Explore the design
   What types of micro-operations must be performed?
   - Eg. Multiply Accumulates; Memory references
   What is the critical path and how fast can it reasonably go?
   - Synthesis exercises can be useful
   What resources are needed to achieve the performance targets?
   - E.g. How much parallelism?
... Steps

3. Design the data path.
   - Down to RTL level
   - Think while designing and try to be efficient

4. Identify the control and status lines.
   - Control lines come from the controller
   - Status lines come from the datapath

5. Identify the control approach needed (counters, FSMs, or pipelined control)

6. Implement the controller
   - Need a good “timing” diagram:
     - Reset
     - Sequence of micro-operations to be performed
     - Critical transitions understood
Control Strategies

Counter(s):
- Takes machine through a linear sequence of states with few decisions along the way

FSM(s)
- Permits branches in control decision chain
Pipeline Control

- In a sense, an “unrolled” FSM – each stage does one step (or one of several parallel steps) in an FSM; state information communicated between stages.
**Reset**

- Reset is a global signal that **the designer can not modify**
- It is generally asserted on power up or a “hard” reset
- It is used to get the machine into a “known” state
- Thus it must be distributed to
  - All FSMs
  - Selected counters
  - Selected status registers

**Might trigger a “high fanout” warning in synthesis**
- Is this OK?
Achieving Efficiency

High level tradeoffs:
- Parallelism
- Pipelining
- Optimizing the critical resource
  - E.g. Memory bandwidth
- Keep resources busy
  - If a resource is idle can it be shared?
  - Goal: Everything is used every clock cycle

Algorithmic Optimizations
- E.g. Algorithms that avoid DRAM accesses
  - E.g. Compress table onto SRAM
- Exploiting common algorithms in Computer Science
  - E.g. Boyer-Moore for string matching
  - E.g. Hash tables for matches
  - E.g. Shift instead of *2 /2
Mid-level efficiency

Think hardware (area and delay):

- Avoid large FSMs
- Count the large units (* + memories, etc.)
- Avoid high-fanout signals
- Avoid priority logic
- Structure arithmetic for speed
  - E.g. CLA instead of ripple carry

Exploit existing Intellectual Property
Design Ware

Synopsys, and others, provide libraries of carefully optimized design blocks for you to use -- called `Design Ware`

- Libraries include: Arithmetic, Advanced Math, DSP, Control, Sequential, and Fault Tolerant
- For +,-,*, >=, <=, >, and <, design ware is automatically used
- More complex cells must be inferred via a procedure call. e.g. cosine:

```vhdl
module trigger (angle, cos_out);
parameter wordlength1 = 8, wordlength2 = 8;
input [wordlength-1:0] angle;
output [wordlength-1:0] cos_out;

// passes the widths to the cos function
parameter angle_width = wordlength1, cos_width = wordlength2;
`include "/afs/bp/dist/synopsys_syn/dw/sim_ver/DW02_cos_function.inc"
wire [wordlength2-1:0] cos_out;

// infer DW02_cos
assign cos_out = cos(angle);
Endmodule
```
**Example**

**Motion Estimator**

Task:

- Detect blocks of video data in successive frames that are related only via a translation
  - Digital Video is captured as blocks of 16x16 pixels
  - Want to determine if block has moved largely unchanged
    - If true can transmit motion vector rather than block
    - Permits high level of compression
- Example (4x4 block)

![Reference Block in Frame 1](image1)

“Draw block” with motion vector (1,2) in frame 2
Search Algorithm

Describe for 16x16 reference block:
1. Move a window the size of the reference block over search space in the second frame
2. For each window location \((i,j)\) determine the distortion vector
   \[
   D(i, j) = \sum_{m=0}^{15} \sum_{n=0}^{15} | r_{m,n} - S_{m+i,N+j} |
   \]
3. Maintain the best distortion and appropriate motion vector produced so far.

For Example (4x4 block):

Search Block Location \((i,j)=(-3,3)\)
\(D=3\) (3 pixels different in this B&W example)
System Requirements

System Requirements:

• 16x16 Reference Block
• 31x31 Search Window
• Each stored in one two-read-ported memory
  • In reality one memory per frame
• Grey-scale coded pixels (8 bits/block)
• 4096 reference blocks in a frame
• Conduct search at 15 frames per second
  • (Encoding does not have to be real time)
• Clocks available: 130, 260 MHz
• 0.18 μm CMOS library
Step 1: System Design

Elements to thinking:
- Bottom-up design
  - Determine critical bottlenecks (paths & other bottlenecks)
- Top-down design
  - Determine use of pipelining and parallelism to meet performance constraints

Critical Bottlenecks:
- Elemental Arithmetic Operation (add-accumulate):

\[ D = D + | r_{mn} - S_{m+i, N+j} | \]

- Design, synthesize ➔ Can operate at 260 MHz with some timing margin left over
- Memories:
  - Single access per clock cycle
… System Design

Top Down Design

- Number of add-accumulates per clock cycle:
  - 4096 blocks per 1/15 of a second
  - (31-15) x (31-15) = 256 searches/block
  - 16x16 = 256 add-accumulates per search
  - \(4096 \times 15 \times 256 \times 256 = 4.027 \times 10^9\) add-accumulates/second
  - At 260 MHz \(\Rightarrow\) At least 16 adders in parallel \((4027/260 = 15.5)\)

- Searches/block [(4x4) on (10x10) example]:
  - 7 searches per column
  - 7 searches per row
  - \((10-4) \times (10-4)\) total searches
...System Design

First Attempt

- Assign one search per Accumulator

![Diagram showing search locations andAccumulators]

Vector:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cycle</th>
<th>Vector:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>(-8,-8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>(-8,-7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(-8,-6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(-8,-5)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

...
**Second Attempt:**

- **Stagger Startup of Accumulators**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cycle</th>
<th>Vector</th>
<th>$r_{0,0}$-$S_{0,0}$</th>
<th>$r_{0,1}$-$S_{0,1}$</th>
<th>$r_{0,2}$-$S_{0,2}$</th>
<th>$r_{0,3}$-$S_{0,3}$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>(-8,-8)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>(-8,-7)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>(-8,-6)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>(-8,-5)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

... System Design...
Final Solution:

- Pipeline R

```
\begin{array}{c}
\text{R mem} \\
\text{Accum} \\
\text{Accum} \\
\text{Accum} \\
\text{Accum} \\
\text{S mem}
\end{array}
```

Vector:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cycle</th>
<th>r_{0,0} - S_{0,0}</th>
<th>r_{0,1} - S_{0,1}</th>
<th>r_{0,2} - S_{0,2}</th>
<th>r_{0,3} - S_{0,3}</th>
<th>...</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>...</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>r_{0,15} - S_{0,15}</td>
<td>r_{0,14} - S_{0,15}</td>
<td>r_{0,13} - S_{0,15}</td>
<td>r_{0,12} - S_{0,15}</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>r_{1,1} - S_{1,1}</td>
<td>r_{0,15} - S_{0,16}</td>
<td>r_{0,14} - S_{0,16}</td>
<td>r_{0,13} - S_{0,16}</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2 S mem ports required
Step 2: Design Datapath

Datapath Details:

- Detailed hardware required to implement above

\[ R\ mem \]

\[ S\ mem \]

PE = Processing Element

To comparator
… Datapath

Comparator:

$PE_{out}$

$PE_{ready}$

$Vector_x$  $Vector_y$

$motion_x$  $motion_y$

$BestDist$

$Pe_{out} < BestDist?$
Coding Datapath

**PE:** Note, accumulator can't overflow – saturate at FF

```verilog
module PE (clock, R, S1, S2, S1S2mux, newDist, Accumulate, Rpipe);
  input clock;
  input [7:0] R, S1, S2;// memory inputs
  input S1S2mux, newDist;// control inputs
  output [7:0] Accumulate, Rpipe;
  reg [7:0] Accumulate, AccumulateIn, Difference, Rpipe;
  reg Carry;

  always @(posedge clock) Rpipe <= R;
  always @(posedge clock) Accumulate <= AccumulateIn;

  always @(R or S1 or S2 or S1S2mux or newDist or Accumulate)
    begin // capture behavior of logic
      difference = R - S1S2mux ? S1 : S2;
      if (difference < 0) difference = 0 - difference;
      // absolute subtraction
      {Carry, AccumulateIn} = Accumulate + difference;
      if (Carry == 1) AccumulateIn = 8'hFF; // saturated
      if (newDist == 1) AccumulateIn = difference;
      // starting new Distortion calculation
    end
endmodule
```

Motion Estimator Processing Element (PE).
module Comparator (clock, CompStart, PEout, PEready, vectorX, vectorY, BestDist, motionX, motionY);

input clock;
input CompStart; // goes high when distortion calculations start
input [8*16:0] PEout; // Outputs of PEs as one long vector
input [15:0] PEready; // Goes high when that PE has a new distortion
input [3:0] vectorX, vectorY; // Motion vector being evaluated
output [7:0] BestDist; // Best Distortion vector so far
output [3:0] motionX, motionY; // Best motion vector so far
reg [7:0] BestDist, newDist;
reg [3:0] motionX, motionY;
reg newBest;

always @(posedge clock)
  if (CompStart == 0) BestDist <= 8'hFF; //initialize to highest value
  else if (newBest == 1)
    begin
      BestDist <= newDist;
      motionX <= vectorX;
      motionY <= vectorY;
    end

always @(BestDist or PEout or PEready)
  begin
    newDist = PEout [PEready*8+7 : PEready*8];
    if (!PEready || (start == 0)) newBest = 0; // no PE is ready
    else if (newDist < BestDist) newBest = 1;
    else newBest = 0;
  end
endmodule

Comparator Module.
Step 3. Identify Control Points

PE control lines:
S1S2mux [15:0]; // S1-S2 mux control
NewDist [15:0]; // =1 when PE is starting a new distortion calculation

Comparator control lines:
CompStart;11 = // when PEs running
PEready [15:0]; // PEready[I]=1 when PEi has a new distortion vector
VectorX [3:0];
VectorY [3:0]; // Motion vector being evaluated

Memory control lines:
• Memories organized in row-major format
  • e.g. R(3,2) is stored at location 3*15+2-1 = 46
AddressR [7:0]; // address for Reference memory (0,0). ..(15,15)
AddressS1 [9:0]; // address for first read port of Search mem
AddressS2 [9:0]; // second read port of Search mem (0,0)-(30,30)
Step. 4 Design Controller

Best Strategy: Counter

```verilog
module control (clock, start, S1S2mux, NewDist, CompStart, PEready,
VectorX, VectorY, AddressR, AddressS1, AddressS2);

input clock;
input start; // = 1 when 'going'
output [15:0] S1S2mux;
output [15:0] NewDist;
output CompStart;
output [15:0] PEready;
output [3:0] VectorX, VectorY;
output [7:0] AddressR;
output [9:0] AddressS1, AddressS2;
reg [15:0] S1S2mux;
reg [15:0] NewDist;
reg CompStart;
reg [15:0] PEready;
reg [3:0] VectorX, VectorY;
reg [7:0] AddressR;
reg [9:0] AddressS1, AddressS2;
reg [12:0] count;
reg completed;
integer i;

always @(posedge clock)
    if (start == 0) count <= 12'b0;
    else if (completed == 0) count <= count + 1'b1;

always @(count)
    begin
        for (i=0; i<15; i = i+1)
            begin
                NewDist[i] = (count[7:0] == i);
                PEready[i] = (NewDist[i] & & ! (count < 8'd256));
                S1S2mux[i] = (count[3:0] > i);
            end
        AddressR = count[7:0];
        VectorX = count[3:0] - 4'd7;
        vectorY = count[11:8]>>4 - 4'd7;
        complete = (count = 4'd16 * (8'd256 + 1));
    end
endmodule
```

Reset Strategy

- Reset needed to initialize entire chip in known state
  - Does not apply here, as long as “start” comes from a unit that does use a reset
Generally the “flow” constructs in C correlate to controller designs in Verilog, e.g.

In “C”: If (A <= 5) {B = A + C;} else {B = A - C;}

In Hardware:
C to Verilog (cont’d)

For loop:

- In “C”: B=0; for (i=0;i<=7;i++) B=B+A;
- In Hardware:
Minimizing Power Consumption

Will go over in a later set of notes, but here is the logic design impact…

- In general, at the logic level, the energy required to complete a complex task is roughly proportional to:

  \[ \sum_{\text{nodes}} \text{01 and 10 logic transitions} \]

- E.g.

```
  010 01010 010 010
  \text{“1 unit of energy”} \text{“2 units of energy”} \text{“2 units of energy”}
```

Note:

- Complex logical units (e.g. Multiplier) have a lot more internal nodes than simpler logical units
  - And thus consume more energy per operation
How to Minimize Power Consumption

- Simpler, smaller design will often also more energy efficient
- There is often a speed-power tradeoff
  E.g. Which design is more energy efficient?

- Try to eliminate useless toggling
  E.g. Which design is LESS energy efficient if B mostly DESELECTS mult output?
… How to minimize power consumption

• Memory accesses are particularly energy hungry, especially with larger memories

• Complex data motion is particularly power hungry
  • E.g. Long range on-chip interconnect
  • Off-chip interconnect
  • Using an on-chip network to move data, especially a store and forward network
**Review Questions**

What was the critical resource optimized in the Motion Estimator?

How was the use of this resource optimized?

What is the control strategy?
Review Questions

What are my four “mantras”

What are common control strategies?

What are common speed-up strategies?

What is “reset” for?
Review Questions

What are the main principles to follow to minimize power consumption?