Building Blocks

CPUs, Memory and Accelerators

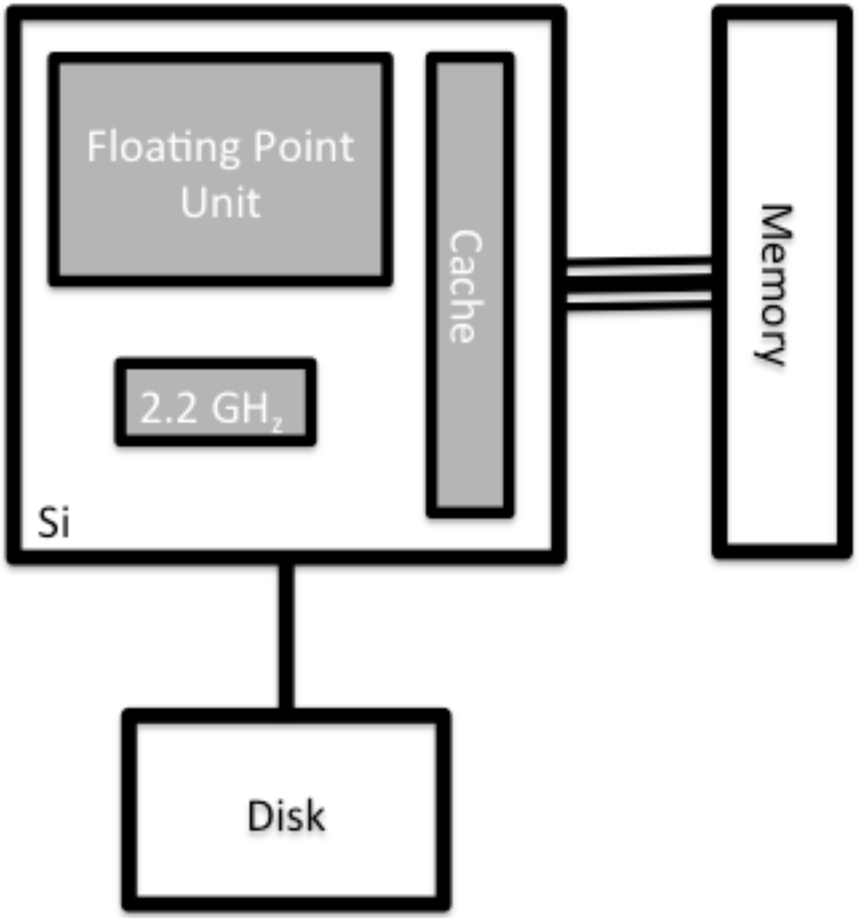
Outline

- Computer layout
  - CPU and Memory
  - What does performance depend on?
  - Limits to performance
- Silicon-level parallelism
  - Single Instruction Multiple Data (SIMD/Vector)
  - Multicore
  - Symmetric Multi-threading (SMT)
- Accelerators (GPGPU and Xeon Phi)
  - What are they good for?

Computer Layout

How do all the bits interact and which ones matter?

Anatomy of a computer



Data Access

- Disk access is slow
  - a few hundreds of Megabytes/second
- Large memory sizes allow us to keep data in memory
  - but memory access is slow
  - a few tens of Gigabytes/second
- Store data in fast cache memory
  - cache access much faster: hundreds of Gigabytes per second
  - limited size: a few Megabytes at most

Performance

- The performance (time to solution) on a single computer can depend on:
  - Clock speed – how fast the processor is
  - Floating point unit – how many operands can be operated on and what operations can be performed?
  - Memory latency – what is the delay in accessing the data?
  - Memory bandwidth – how fast can we stream data from memory?
  - Input/Output (IO) to storage – how quickly can we access persistent data (files)?

Performance (cont.)

- Application performance often described as:
  - Compute bound
  - Memory bound
  - IO bound
  - (Communication bound – more on this later…)

- For computational science
  - most calculations are limited by memory bandwidth
  - processor can calculate much faster than it can access data

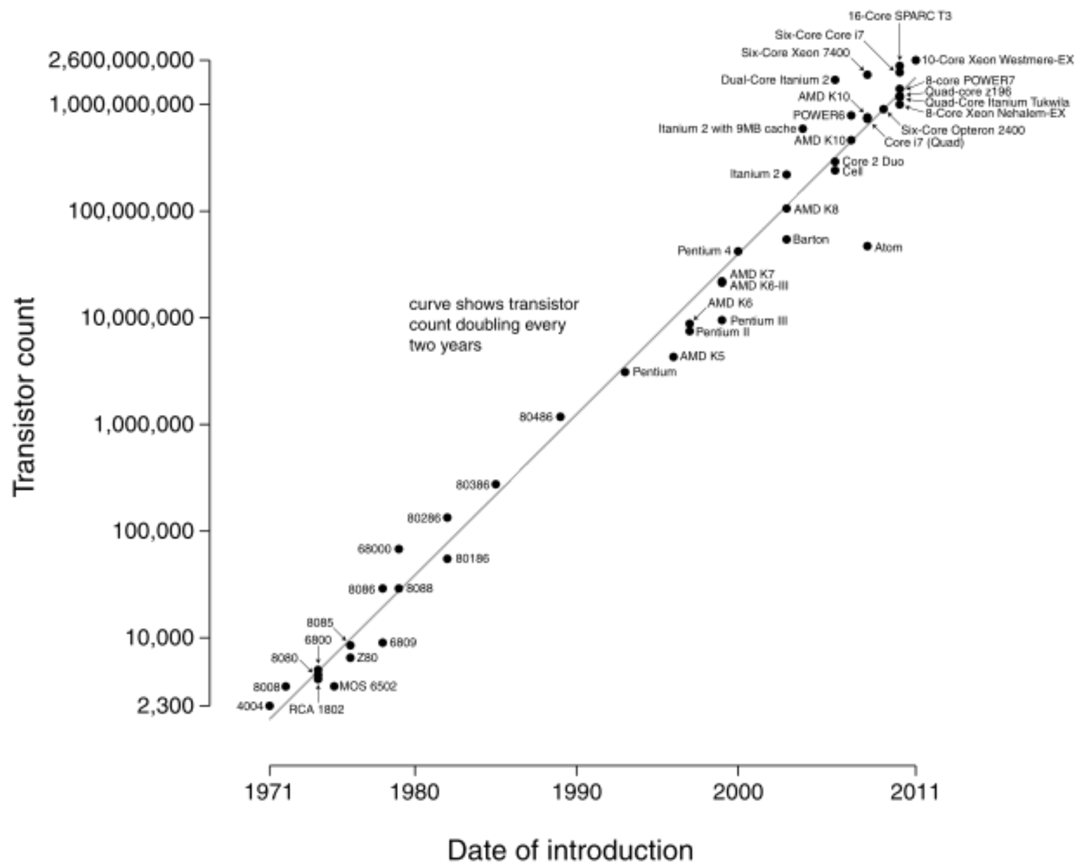
Silicon-level parallelism

What does Moore’s Law mean anyway?

Moore's Law

- Number of transistors doubles every 18-24 months
  - enabled by advances in semiconductor technology and manufacturing processes

Microprocessor Transistor Counts 1971-2011 & Moore's Law



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What to do with all those transistors?

- For over 3 decades until early 2000's
  - more complicated processors
  - bigger caches
  - faster clock speeds

- Clock rate increases as inter-transistor distances decrease
  - so performance doubled every 18-24 months

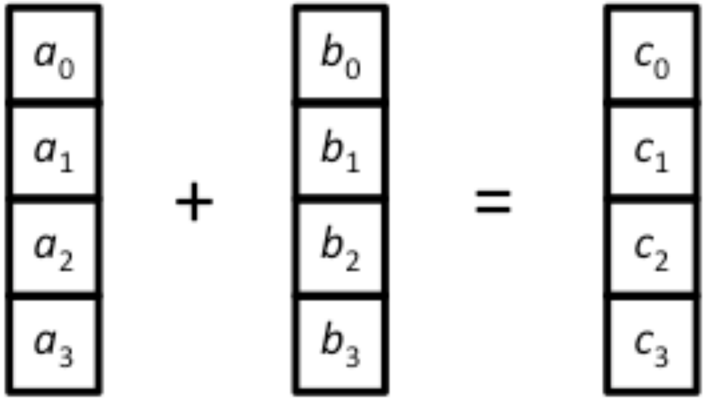
- Came to a grinding halt about a decade ago
  - reached power and heat limitations
  - who wants a laptop that runs for an hour and scorches your trousers!

Alternative approaches

- Introduce parallelism into the processor itself
  - vector instructions
  - simultaneous multi-threading
  - multicore

Single Instruction Multiple Data (SIMD)

- For example, vector addition:



  - single instruction adds 4 numbers
  - potential for 4 times the performance

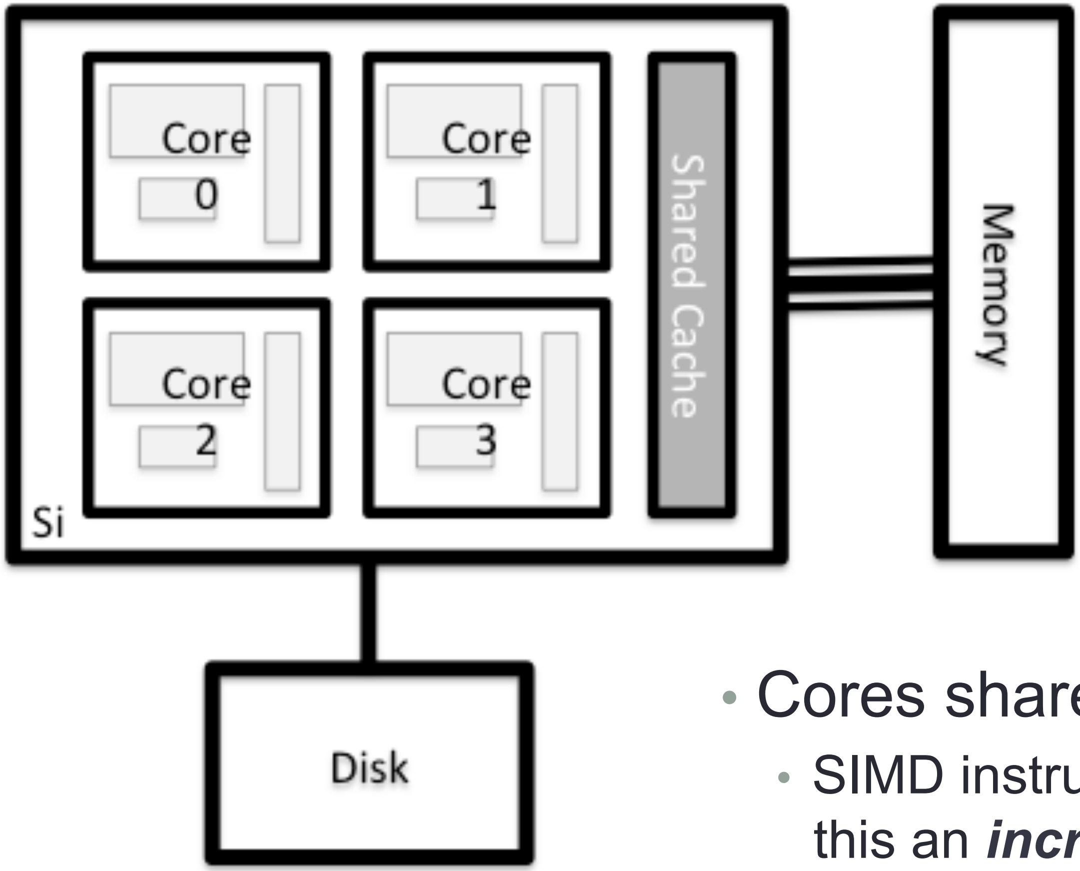
Symmetric Multi-threading (SMT)

- Some hardware supports running multiple instruction streams simultaneously on the same processor, e.g.
  - stream 1: loading data from memory
  - stream 2: multiplying two floating-point numbers together
- Known as *Symmetric Multi-threading (SMT)* or *hyperthreading*
- Threading in this case can be a misnomer as it can refer to processes as well as threads
  - These are hardware threads, not software threads.
  - Intel Xeon supports 2-way SMT
  - IBM BlueGene/Q 4-way SMT

Multicore

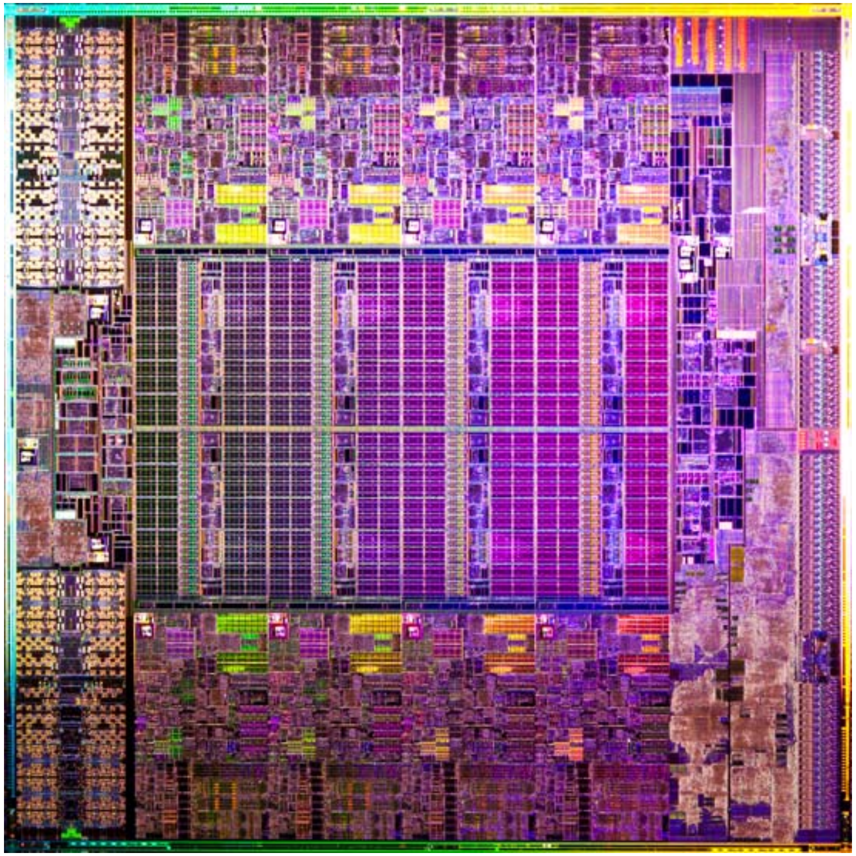
- Twice the number of transistors gives 2 choices
  - a new more complicated processor with twice the clock speed
  - two versions of the old processor with the same clock speed
- The second option is more power efficient
  - and now the only option as we have reached heat/power limits
- Effectively two independent processors
  - … except they can share cache
  - commonly called “cores”

Multicore

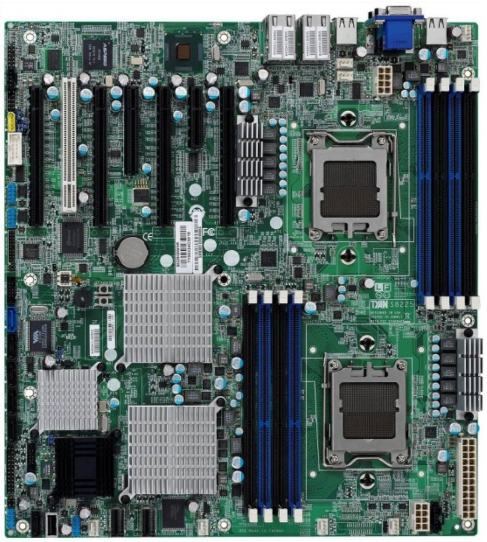


- Cores share path to memory
  - SIMD instructions + multicore make this an ***increasing*** bottleneck!

Intel Xeon E5-2600 – 8 cores HT



What is a processor?



- To a programmer
  - the thing that runs my program
  - i.e. a single core of a multicore processor
- To a hardware person
  - the thing you plug in to a socket on the motherboard
  - i.e. an entire multicore processor
- Some ambiguity
  - in this course we will talk about cores and sockets
  - try and avoid using “processor”

Chip types and manufacturers

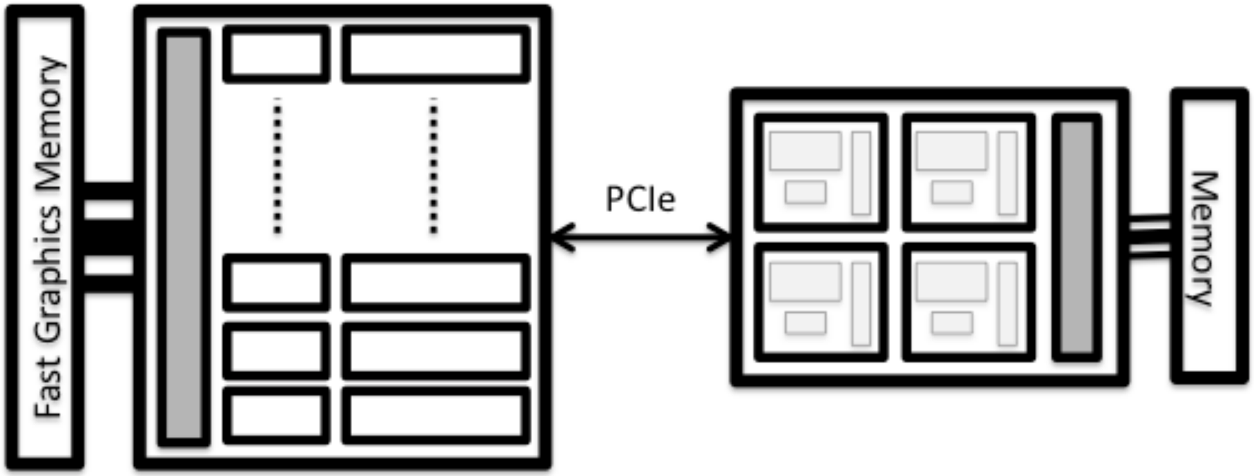
- x86 – Intel and AMD
  - "PC" commodity processors, SIMD (SSE, AVX) FPU, multicore, SMT (Intel); Intel currently dominates the HPC space.
- Power – IBM
  - Used in high-end HPC, high clock speed (direct water cooled), SIMD FPU, multicore, SMT; not widespread anymore.
- PowerPC – IBM BlueGene
  - Low clock speed, SIMD FPU, multicore, high level of SMT.
- SPARC – Fujitsu
- ARM – Lots of manufacturers
  - Not yet relevant to HPC (weak FP Unit)

Accelerators

Go-faster stripes

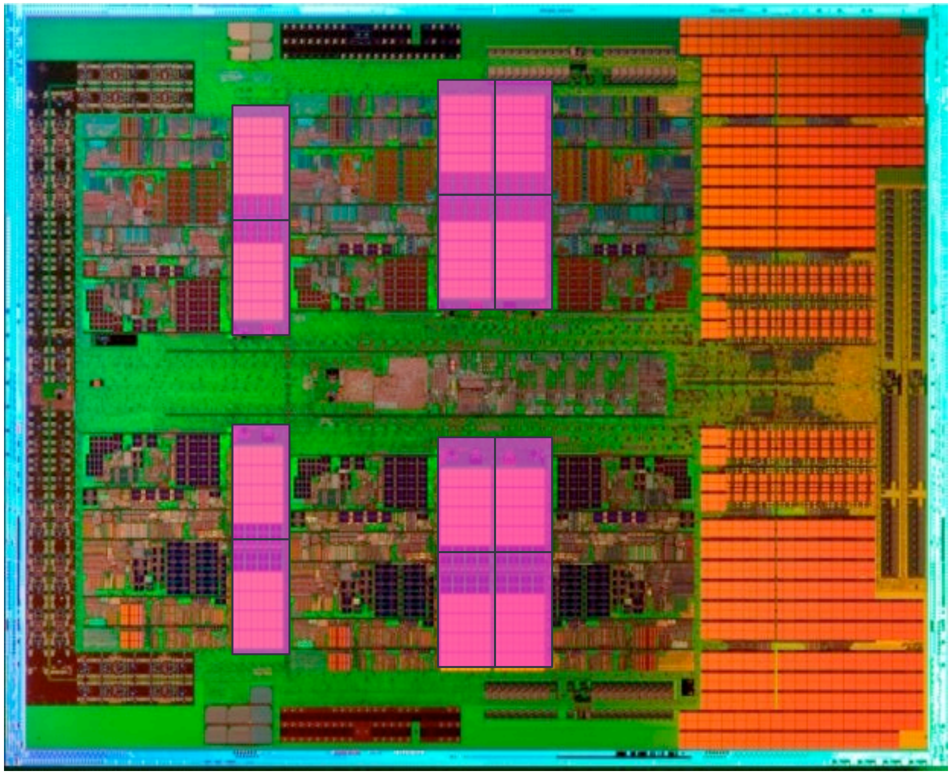
Anatomy

- An *Accelerator* is a additional resource that can be used to off-load heavy floating-point calculation
  - additional processing engine attached to the standard processor
  - has its own floating point units and memory



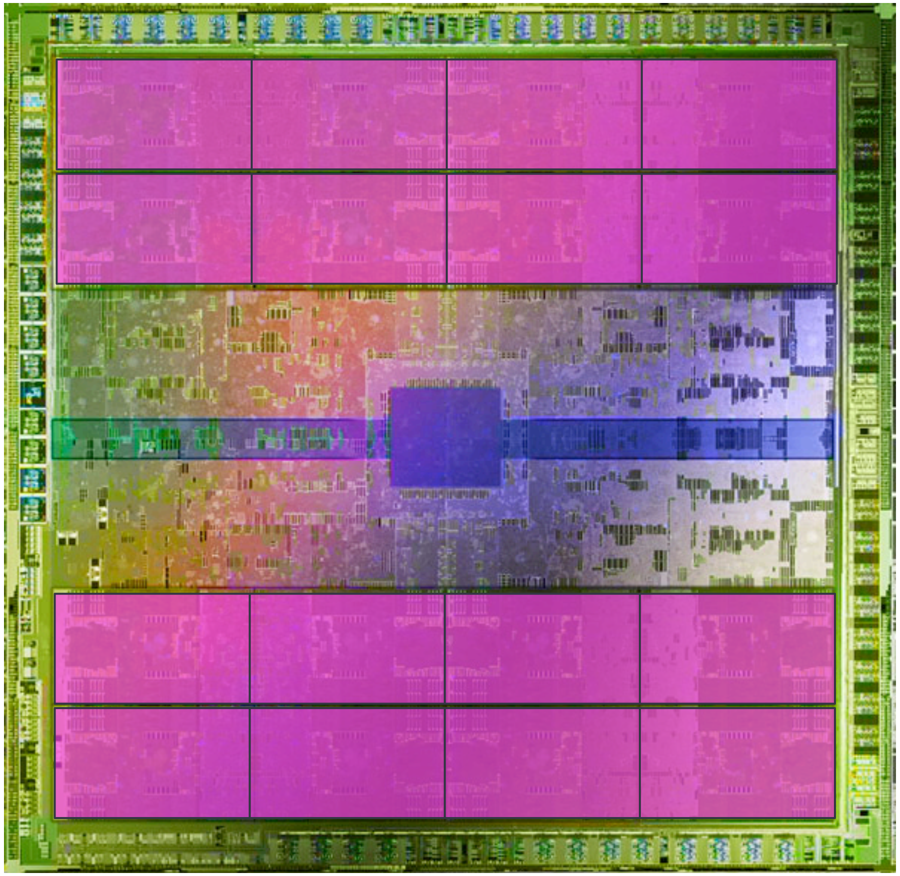
AMD 12-core CPU

- Not much space on CPU is dedicated to computation

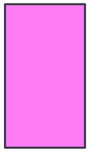


= compute unit (= core)

NVIDIA Fermi GPU

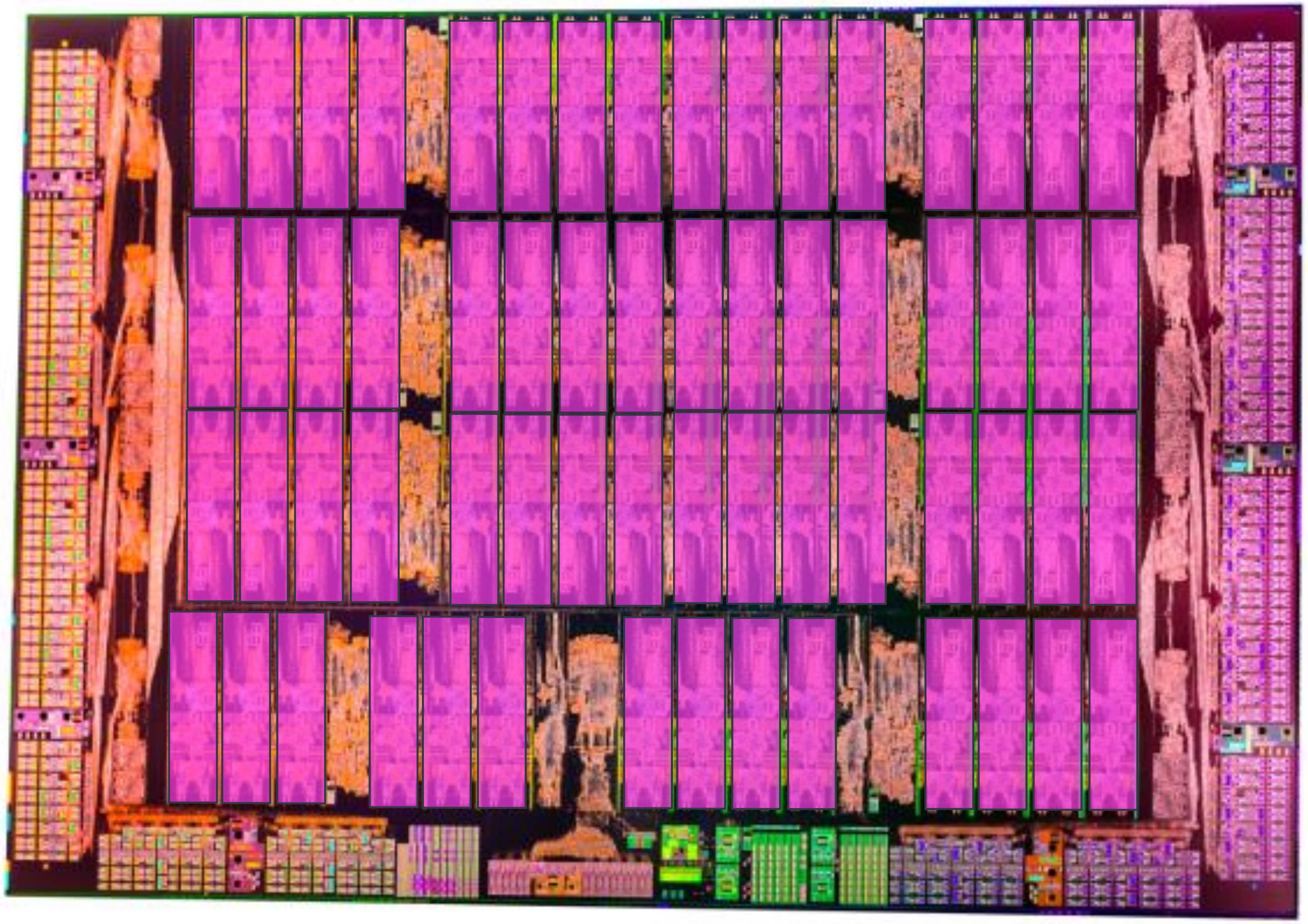


- GPU dedicates much more space to computation
  - At expense of caches, controllers, sophistication etc



= compute unit
(= SM
= 32 CUDA cores)

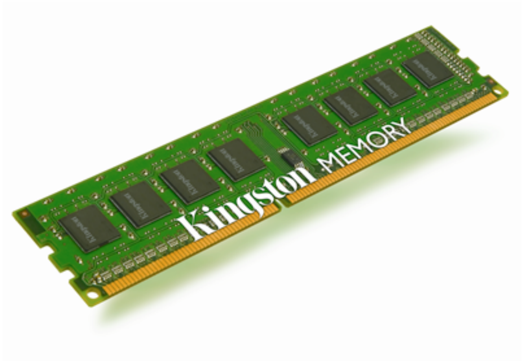
Intel Xeon Phi



= compute unit (= core)

Memory

- For most HPC applications, performance is very sensitive to memory bandwidth
- GPUs and Intel Phi both use Graphics memory: much higher bandwidth than standard CPU memory



CPUs use DRAM

GPUs and Xeon Phi use Graphics DRAM

Summary - What is automatic?

- Which features are managed by hardware/software and which does the user/programmer control?
  - Cache and memory – automatically managed
  - SIMD/Vector parallelism – automatically produced by compiler
  - SMT – automatically managed by operating system
  - Multicore parallelism – manually specified by the user
  - Use of accelerators – manually specified by the user