



# Instruction Sets Want to be Free!

SiFive Inc & RISC-V Foundation

Microsemi  
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# Why Instruction Set Architecture matters

- **Why can't Intel sell mobile chips?**
  - 99%+ of mobile phones/tablets based on ARM v7/v8 ISA
- **Why can't ARM partners sell servers?**
  - 99%+ of laptops/desktops/servers based on AMD64 ISA  
(over 95%+ built by Intel)
- **How can IBM still sell mainframes?**
  - IBM 360, oldest surviving ISA (50+ years)

*ISA is most important interface in computer system  
where software meets hardware*

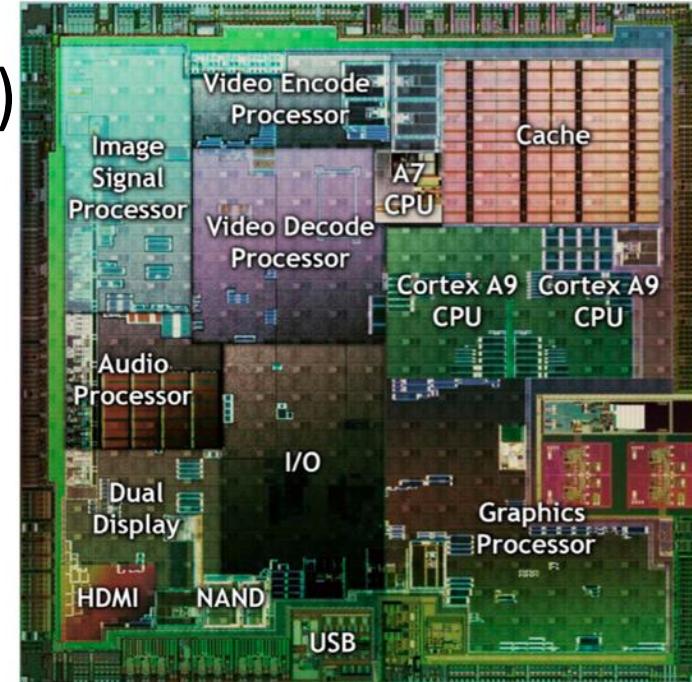
# Open Software/Standards Work!

| <i>Field</i> | <i>Standard</i>     | <i>Free, Open Impl.</i> | <i>Proprietary Impl.</i> |
|--------------|---------------------|-------------------------|--------------------------|
| Networking   | Ethernet,<br>TCP/IP | Many                    | Many                     |
| OS           | Posix               | Linux, FreeBSD          | M/S Windows              |
| Compilers    | C                   | gcc, LLVM               | Intel icc, ARMcc         |
| Databases    | SQL                 | MySQL,<br>PostgresSQL   | Oracle 12C,<br>M/S DB2   |
| Graphics     | OpenGL              | Mesa3D                  | M/S DirectX              |
| ISA          | ???????             | -----                   | x86, ARM, IBM360         |

- Why not successful free & open standards and free & open implementations, like other fields
- Dominant proprietary ISAs are *dismal* designs

# Why so many ISAs on an SoC?

- Applications processor (usually ARM)
- Graphics processors
- Image processors
- Radio DSPs
- Audio DSPs
- Security processors
- Power-management processor
- ....
- Apps processor ISA too large for base accelerator ISA
- IP bought from different places, each proprietary ISA
- Home-grown ISA cores
- *Over a dozen ISAs on some SoCs – each with unique software stack*



*NVIDIA Tegra SoC*



Do we need all these different ISAs?

Must they be proprietary?

*What if there was one free and open ISA everyone could use for everything?*



# RISC-V Origins

- In 2010, after many years and many projects using MIPS, SPARC, and x86 as basis of research at Berkeley, time to choose ISA for next set of projects
- Initial candidate was MIPS: Lots of SW
  - But, a few bad instructions
    - BRANCH DELAY SLOT
    - LOAD DELAY SLOT
  - Shows the guts of the ISA
- Obvious choices: x86 and ARM

# branch delay slot

- A basic example of a branch delay slot:

(source: Microsoft)

```
BEQ      r1, zero, dest      ; branch if r1 is equal to zero
OR       r1, zero, zero      ; set r1 = 0; this line executes regardless
...
dest:
ADDI     r2, zero, 1         ; set r2 = 1
```

- The OR instruction sits in the branch delay slot, and executes whether the branch is taken or not

Fetch and decode  
**BEQ** instruction.

Fetch and decode  
**OR** instruction.

The condition is  
true, so fetch the  
next instruction  
from **dest**.

*Not enough when deepening  
the pipeline level*

Set *r1* to zero.

Fetch and decode  
**ADDI** instruction.

Set *r2* to 1.



# Intel x86 “AAA” Instruction

- ASCII Adjust After Addition
- AL register is default source and destination
- If the low nibble is > 9 decimal, or the auxiliary carry flag AF = 1, then
  - Add 6 to low nibble of AL and discard overflow
  - Increment high byte of AL
  - Set CF and AF
- Else
  - CF = AF = 0
- Single byte instruction

# ARM v7 LDMIAEQ Instruction

**LDMIAEQ SP!, {R4-R7, PC}**

- **LoaD Multiple, Increment-Address**
  - Writes to 7 registers from 6 loads
  - Only executes if **EQ** condition code is set
  - Writes to the PC (a conditional branch)
  - Can change instruction sets
- 
- Idiom for "stack pop and return from a function call"



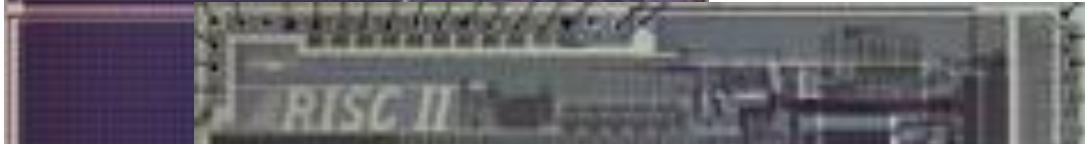
# RISC-V Origin Story

- x86 impossible – IP issues, too complex
- ARM mostly impossible – no 64-bit (at the time), IP issues, complex
- A “3-month project” in summer 2010 to develop a clean-slate ISA
  - Andrew Waterman, Yunsup Lee, Dave Patterson, Krste Asanovic principal designers
- Four years later, we released frozen base user spec
  - First public specification released in May 2011
  - Many tapeouts and several publications along the way

*Why are outsiders complaining about changes to RISC-V in Berkeley classes?*

# Why is name RISC-V? (pronounced “risk-five”)

RISC-I



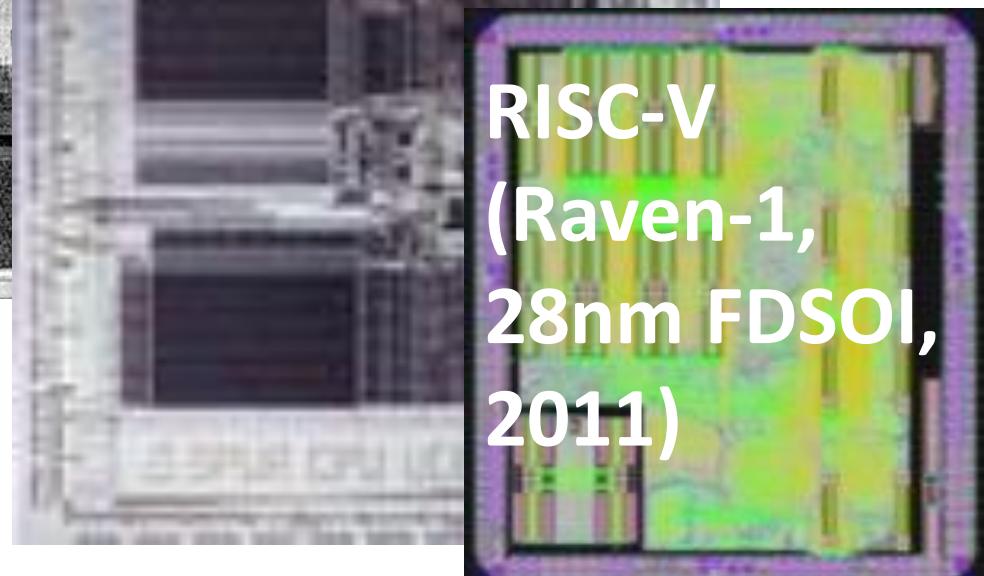
SOAR (aka RISC-III)



SPUR (aka RISC-IV)



RISC-V  
(Raven-1,  
28nm FDSOI,  
2011)





# Universal ISA Requirements

- Works well with existing software stacks, languages
- Is native hardware ISA, not virtual machine/ANDF
- Suits all sizes of processor, from smallest microcontroller to largest supercomputer
- Suits all implementation technologies, FPGA, ASIC, full-custom, future device technologies...
- Efficient for all microarchitecture styles: microcoded, in-order, decoupled, out-of-order, single-issue, superscalar, ...
- Supports extensive specialization to act as base for customized accelerators
- Stable: not changing, not disappearing

# Why Didn't Other Open ISAs Take Off?

- **SPARC V8** - To its credit, Sun Microsystems made SPARC V8 an IEEE standard in 1994
  - Sun, Gaisler offered open-source cores
  - ISA now owned by Oracle
- **OpenRISC** - GNU open-source effort started in 1999, based on DLX from *Computer Architecture: AQA*
  - 64-bit ISA was in progress in 2010
  - Didn't separate Architecture and Implementation
- Competing in microprocessor era – now in SoC era
- Don't meet the needs of a universal ISA





# What's Different about RISC-V?

- *Simple*
  - Far smaller than other commercial ISAs
- *Clean-slate design*
  - Clear separation between user and privileged ISA
  - Avoids μarchitecture or technology-dependent features
- A *modular* ISA
  - Small standard base ISA
  - Multiple standard extensions
- Designed for *extensibility/specialization*
  - Variable-length instruction encoding
  - Vast opcode space available for instruction-set extensions
- *Stable*
  - Base and standard extensions are frozen
  - Additions via optional extensions, not new versions



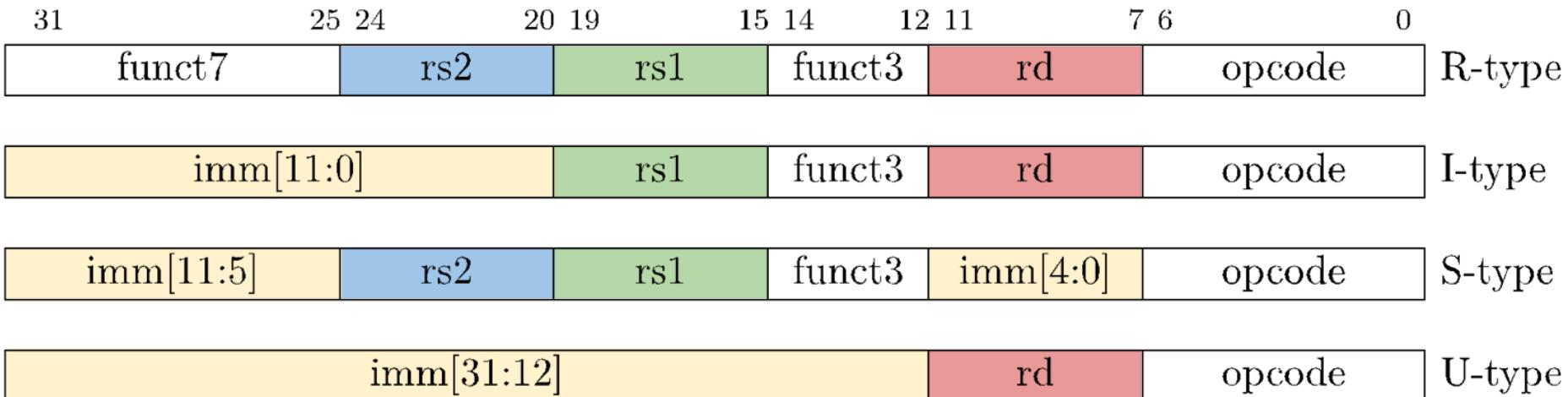
# RISC-V Base Plus Standard Extensions

- Four base integer ISAs
  - RV32E, RV32I, RV64I, RV128I
  - RV32E is 16-register subset of RV32I
  - Only <50 hardware instructions needed for base
- Standard extensions
  - M: Integer multiply/divide
  - A: Atomic memory operations (AMOs + LR/SC)
  - F: Single-precision floating-point
  - D: Double-precision floating-point
  - G = IMAFD, “General-purpose” ISA
  - Q: Quad-precision floating-point
- All the above are a fairly standard RISC encoding in a fixed 32-bit instruction format
- Above user-level ISA components frozen in 2014
  - Supported forever after

# Status as of “today”

| Name             | Description   | Version | Status <sup>[a]</sup> |
|------------------|---|---------|-----------------------|
| <b>Base</b>      |   |         |                       |
| RV32I            | Base Integer Instruction Set, 32-bit                          | 2.0     | Frozen                |
| RV32E            | Base Integer Instruction Set (embedded), 32-bit, 16 registers | 1.9     | Open                  |
| RV64I            | Base Integer Instruction Set, 64-bit                          | 2.0     | Frozen                |
| RV128I           | Base Integer Instruction Set, 128-bit                         | 1.7     | Open                  |
| <b>Extension</b> |   |         |                       |
| M                | Standard Extension for Integer Multiplication and Division    | 2.0     | Frozen                |
| A                | Standard Extension for Atomic Instructions                    | 2.0     | Frozen                |
| F                | Standard Extension for Single-Precision Floating-Point        | 2.0     | Frozen                |
| D                | Standard Extension for Double-Precision Floating-Point        | 2.0     | Frozen                |
| G                | Shorthand for the base and above extensions                   | N/A     | N/A                   |
| Q                | Standard Extension for Quad-Precision Floating-Point          | 2.0     | Frozen                |
| L                | Standard Extension for Decimal Floating-Point                 | 0.0     | Open                  |
| C                | Standard Extension for Compressed Instructions                | 2.0     | Frozen                |
| B                | Standard Extension for Bit Manipulation                       | 0.37    | Open                  |
| J                | Standard Extension for Dynamically Translated Languages       | 0.0     | Open                  |
| T                | Standard Extension for Transactional Memory                   | 0.0     | Open                  |
| P                | Standard Extension for Packed-SIMD Instructions               | 0.1     | Open                  |
| V                | Standard Extension for Vector Operations                      | 0.2     | Open                  |
| N                | Standard Extension for User-Level Interrupts                  | 1.1     | Open                  |

# RISC-V Standard Base ISA Details

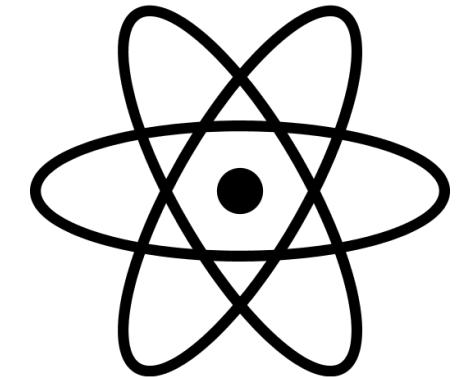


- 32-bit fixed-width, naturally aligned instructions
- 31 integer registers x1-x31, plus x0 zero register
- rd/rs1/rs2 in fixed location, no implicit registers
- Immediate field (instr[31]) always sign-extended
- Floating-point adds f0-f31 registers plus FP CSR, also fused mul-add four-register format
- Designed to support PIC and dynamic linking

# “A”: Atomic Operations Extension

Two classes:

- Atomic Memory Operations (AMO)
  - Fetch-and-op,  
op=ADD,OR,XOR,MAX,MIN,MAXU,MINU
- Load–Reserved/Store Conditional
  - With forward progress guarantee for short sequences
- All atomic operations can be annotated with two bits (Acquire/Release) to implement release consistency or sequential consistency
- *Current issues in memory model being resolved*



# Variable-Length Encoding

|  |                                 |
|--|---------------------------------|
| xxxxxxxxxxxxxxaa                               | 16-bit ( $aa \neq 11$ )         |
| xxxxxxxxxxxxxxx<br>xxxxxxxxxxxxx bbb11         | 32-bit ( $bbb \neq 111$ )       |
| ...xxxx<br>xxxxxxxxxxxxxx<br>xxxxxxxxxxx011111 | 48-bit                          |
| ...xxxx<br>xxxxxxxxxxxxxx<br>xxxxxxxxxx0111111 | 64-bit                          |
| ...xxxx<br>xxxxxxxxxxxxxx<br>xnnnxxxxx1111111  | (80+16*nnn)-bit, $nnn \neq 111$ |
| ...xxxx<br>xxxxxxxxxxxxxx<br>x111xxxxx1111111  | Reserved for $\geq 192$ -bits   |

Byte Address:      base+4                          base+2                          base

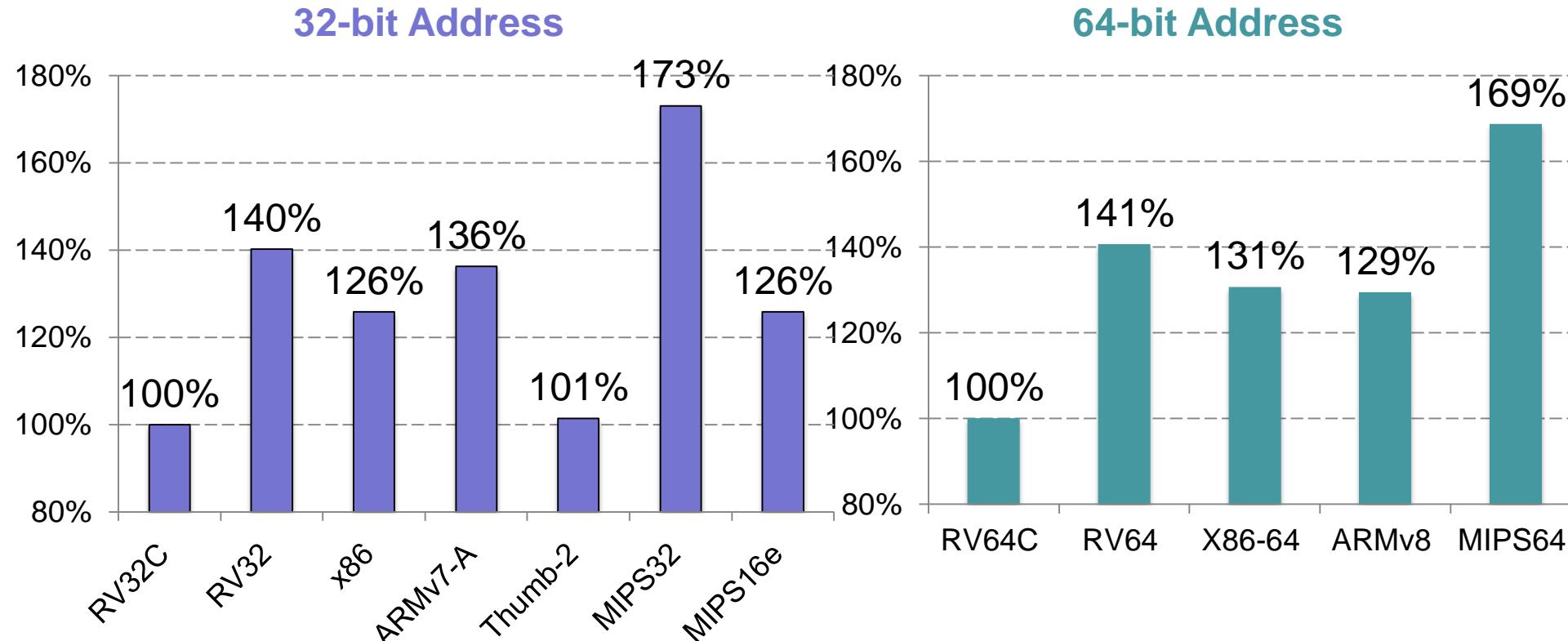
- Extensions can use any multiple of 16 bits as instruction length
- Branches/Jumps target 16-bit boundaries even in fixed 32-bit base
  - Consumes 1 extra bit of jump/branch address

# “C”: Compressed Instruction Extension



- Compressed code important for:
  - low-end embedded to save static code space
  - high-end commercial workloads to reduce cache footprint
- C extension adds 16-bit compressed instructions
  - 2-address forms with all 32 registers
  - 2/3-address forms with most frequent 8 registers
- 1 compressed instruction expands to 1 base instruction
  - Assembly lang. programmer & compiler oblivious
  - RVC  $\Rightarrow$  RVI decoder only  $\sim$ 700 gates ( $\sim$ 2% of small core)
- All original 32-bit instructions retain encoding but now can be 16-bit aligned
- 50%-60% instructions compress  $\Rightarrow$  25%-30% smaller

# SPECint2006 compressed code size with save/restore optimization (relative to “standard” RVC)



- RISC-V now smallest ISA for 32- and 64-bit addresses
- All results with same GCC compiler and options



# RISC-V Privileged Architecture

- Four privilege modes
  - User (U-mode)
  - Supervisor (S-mode)
  - Hypervisor (H-mode)
  - Machine (M-mode)
- Supported combinations of modes:
  - M (simple embedded systems)
  - M, U (embedded systems with protection)
  - M, S, U (systems running Unix-style operating systems)
  - M, H, S, U (systems running Hypervisors)

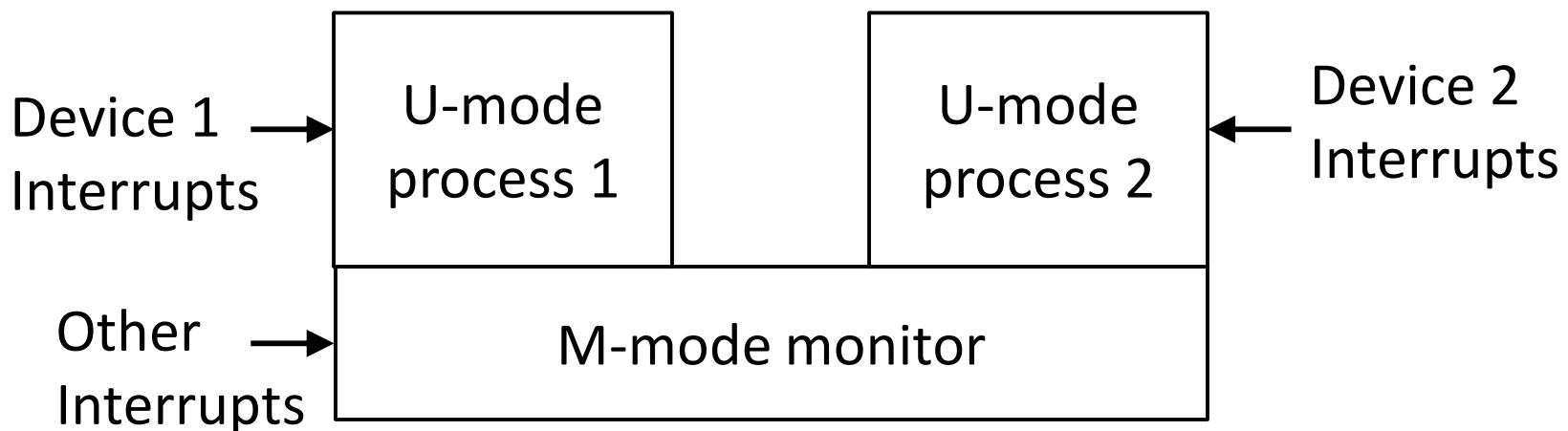


# Simple Embedded Systems (M-mode only)

- No address translation/protection
  - “Mbare” bare-metal mode
  - Trap bad physical addresses precisely
- All code inherently trusted
- Low implementation cost
  - $2^7$  bits of architectural state (in addition to user ISA)
  - $+2^7$  more bits for timers
  - $+2^7$  more for basic performance counters

# Secure Embedded Systems (M, U modes)

- M-mode runs secure boot and runtime monitor
- Embedded code runs in U-mode
- Physical memory protection on U-mode accesses
- Interrupt handling can be delegated to U-mode code
  - User-level interrupt support
- Provides arbitrary number of isolated subsystems



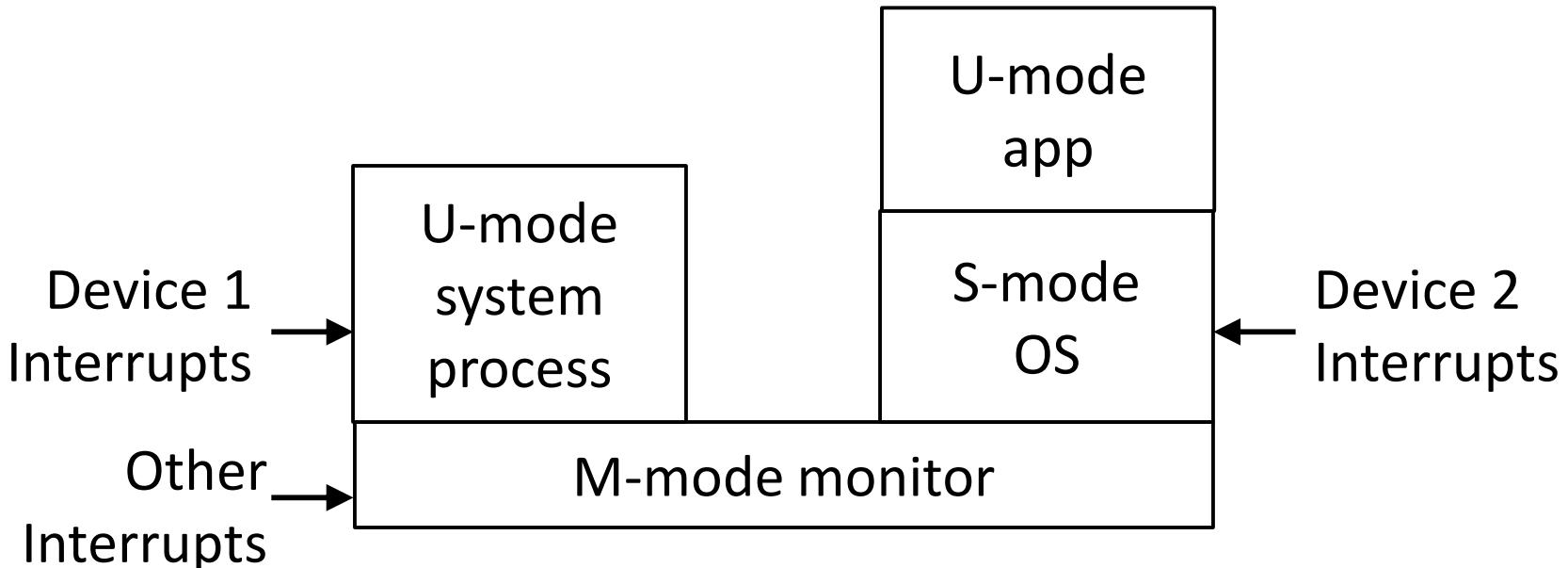


# Virtual Memory Architectures (M, S, U modes)

- Designed to support current Unix-style operating systems
- Sv32 (RV32)
  - Demand-paged 32-bit virtual-address spaces
  - 2-level page table
  - 4 KiB pages, 4 MiB megapages
- Sv39 (RV64)
  - Demand-paged 39-bit virtual-address spaces
  - 3-level page table
  - 4 KiB pages, 2 MiB megapages, 1 GiB gigapages
- Sv48, Sv57, Sv64 (RV64)
  - Sv39 + 1/2/3 more page-table levels

# S-Mode runs on top of M-mode

- M-mode runs secure boot and monitor
- S-mode runs OS (OS always runs virtualized)
- U-mode runs application on top of OS or M-mode
- Monitor can provide physical resource partitioning, simple hypervisor (space for separate H-mode)











# RISC-V Foundation

- Mission statement
  - “to standardize, protect, and promote the free and open RISC-V instruction set architecture and its hardware and software ecosystem for use in all computing devices.”
- Established as a 501(c)(6) non-profit corporation on August 3, 2015
- Rick O'Connor recruited as Executive Director
- First year, 41+ “founding” members. Additional members welcome:
  - Platinum (\$25K/year)
  - Gold (\$10K/year)
  - Silver (\$5K/year)



# Foundation Principles

- The RISC-V ISA and related standards shall remain open and license-free to all parties. The standard specifications shall always be publicly available as an online download.
- The compatibility test suites shall always be publicly available as a source-code download.
- To protect the standard, only members of the Foundation in good standing can use “RISC-V” and associated trademarks for commercial products, and only for devices that pass the tests in the open-source compatibility suites maintained by the Foundation.



## *Gold, Silver, Auditors:*



# Who is SiFive?

Best-in-class team with technology depth and breadth

## Founders & Execs



**Yunsup  
Lee**  
CTO



**Krste Asanovic**  
Chief Architect



**Andrew Waterman**  
Chief Engineer



**Jack Kang**  
VP Product/BD



**Stefan Dyckerhoff**  
Interim CEO, VC



**Sander Arts**  
CMO

## Key Leaders & Team



**Han Chen**  
Chip Implementation



**Ali Habibi**  
Verification



# SiFive Product Offerings: CPU IP & SoCs

Common hardware platform, Standard software, Customized features

| CPU Core IP   | SiFive Freedom SoCs  |  |   |
|---|--|--|---|
|  <b>Coreplex E Series</b><br><br><b>ARM Cortex-M Series Replacement</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 32-bit CPU</li><li>• Replaces M0, M0+, M3, M4, M23, M33</li><li>• 2x Perf/Watt</li><li>• Custom Extensions</li></ul> |  <b>Coreplex U Series</b><br><br><b>ARM Cortex-A Series Replacement</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 32-bit and 64-bit CPUs</li><li>• Replaces A5, A7, A32, A35, A8, A9, A53,</li><li>• 2x Perf/Watt</li><li>• Custom Extensions</li></ul> |  <b>Freedom Everywhere</b><br><br><b>Low cost, 32-bit microcontrollers</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Edge Computing</li><li>• Embedded</li><li>• Smart IOT</li><li>• Wearables</li></ul> |  <b>Freedom Unleashed</b><br><br><b>High performance, 64-bit multi-core SoCs</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Datacenter Accelerators</li><li>• Storage / SSD Controllers</li><li>• Networking / Baseband</li></ul> |
|   |  |  |   |



## Learning More about RISC-V

- Website **riscv.org** is primary resource
- Sign up for mailing lists/twitter at **riscv.org** to get announcements
- Ask Ted!
- 1<sup>st</sup> RISC-V workshop January 14-15, 2015, Monterey
- 2<sup>nd</sup> RISC-V workshop June 29-30, 2015, UC Berkeley
- 3<sup>rd</sup> RISC-V workshop January 5-6, 2016, Oracle, CA
- 4<sup>th</sup> RISC-V Workshop July 12-13, 2016, MIT, MA
- 5<sup>th</sup> RISC-V Workshop, November 29-30, 2016, Google, Mountain View, CA
- All workshops sold out!
- Material from all workshops at **riscv.org**

# 5<sup>th</sup> RISC-V Workshop November 2016



- Sold out! People turned away...
- 100+ companies, 360+ attendees
- Hosted at Google, Mountain View
- SiFive announced first commercial RISC-V SoC
- Next Workshop, Shanghai, May 9-10, 2017, hosted by NVIDIA



## Summary: Why RISC-V?

- Free and open architecture, no proprietary lock-in
- Much simpler ISA than others (verification, security)
- Stable, will not change or disappear
- Enables better area/power/performance than other general-purpose ISAs at all design points
- Usable as base ISA for every core on SoC
- Readily and freely extensible

### Modest RISC-V Project Goal

*Become the industry-standard ISA for all computing devices*



# RISC-V Research Project Sponsors

- DoE Isis Project
- DARPA PERFECT program
- DARPA POEM program (Si photonics)
- STARnet Center for Future Architectures (C-FAR)
- Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory
- Industrial sponsors (ParLab + ASPIRE)
  - Intel, Google, HPE, Huawei, LG, NEC, Microsoft, Nokia, NVIDIA, Oracle, Samsung

# Questions?



# Backup



# RISC-V Architecture Roadmap

- **Nov 2016 - 5th workshop (@1.9.1 today)**
  - Agree/tweak plan, assign more leaders and doers
- **Feb 2017**
  - Priv-1.10.0
  - Debug spec ratified by Foundation
  - Calling convention fixed and documented
  - ELF format fixed and documented
  - M-mode/S-mode changes must be backwards-compatible after this date
- **March 2017**
  - Memory model changes must be backwards-compatible after this date
- **May 2017 - 6th workshop**
  - Priv-1.11.0
  - RV32EMAC RV32IMAFDQC RV64IMAFDQC ratified by Foundation
- **Aug 2017**
  - Priv-1.12.0
- **Nov 2017 - 7th workshop**
  - Priv-1.13.0 -> Priv-2.0 ratified?
  - V ratified by Foundation
  - Complete Linux/KVM, \*BSD/Bhyve platform spec agreed