

COBOL Performance - Myths and Realities

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Agenda

- Performance of COBOL compilers - myths and realities
- Performance improvements over the years
- Highlights of updates to Performance Tuning Paper
- Coding tips

Myths and Realities

- Performance of COBOL compilers - myths and realities
 - Rumors that COBOL V4R2 exploits z196 instructions
 - Myth that z196 instructions were all designed for performance improvement, that exploitation of them automatically means a performance improvement
 - Some interesting facts about z196 processors
 - IBM COBOL compilers are extremely efficient!
 - Dev process includes regular performance scrutiny
 - COBOL does run faster on newer processors

Myths/facts about z196 and COBOL

- The 135 new and changed instructions were added or changed for many reasons, not just for performance
 - Examples:
 - Cryptographic facility instructions
 - BFP and DFP floating point instructions
- The z196 processor processes all instructions faster than the z10 does, even old COBOL!
- Strategic direction is to Incorporate leading-edge optimization and code-generation technology to Enterprise COBOL for z/OS which will improve delivery of z/Architecture exploitation (see session 12334)

Summary of new z196 instructions

- The IBM zEnterprise 196 provides a broad range of new facilities to improve performance and function:
 - High-word facility (30 instructions)
 - Interlocked-access facility (12 instructions)
 - Load/store-on-condition facility (6 instructions)
 - Distinct-operands facility (22 instructions)
 - Population-count facility (1 instruction)
 - Enhanced-floating-point facility (25 new, 30 changed instructions)
 - MSA-X4 facility (4 new, 3 changed instructions, new functions)
 - Etc.
- Potential for:
 - Significant performance improvement
 - Enhanced capabilities
 - Simpler code

Performance improvements over the years for COBOL compilers

- VS COBOL II
 - Many performance improvements over 6 releases result in very fast code produced by IBM COBOL compilers
- COBOL V2R2
 - Significant performance improvement in processing binary data with the TRUNC(BIN) compiler option
- COBOL V4R1
 - Performance of COBOL application programs has been enhanced by exploitation of new z/Architecture® instructions. The performance of COBOL Unicode support (USAGE NATIONAL data) has been significantly improved.

Performance tuning paper updated

- As the result of a SHARE requirement, we were able to apply resources to getting the COBOL Performance Tuning Paper updated for COBOL V4R2
- The previous time it was updated was for COBOL V3R1, in 2001
- Online at:
<http://www-01.ibm.com/software/awdtools/cobol/zos/library/>
- New info since V3R1 version:
 - BLOCK0, XMLPARSE, INTERRUPT
- Updated section
 - CICS communication

Performance tuning paper updated

- BLOCK0 compiler option
 - New V4R2 option to change default behavior for QSAM output files
 - For 40 years, no BLOCK CONTAINS clause meant:
 - **BLOCK CONTAINS 1 RECORD**
 - The slowest possible!
 - Counterpoint: the file is always current 😊
- BLOCK0 changes the compiler default for QSAM files from unblocked to blocked (as if **BLOCK CONTAINS 0** were specified) and thus gain the benefit of system-determined blocking for output files.
- NOTE: Blocking is controlled more by COBOL than by JCL

Performance tuning paper updated

- Specifying BLOCK0 activates an implicit BLOCK CONTAINS 0 clause for each file in the program that meets the following three criteria:
 - The FILE-CONTROL paragraph either specifies ORGANIZATION SEQUENTIAL or omits the ORGANIZATION clause.
 - The FD entry does not specify RECORDING MODE U.
 - The FD entry does not specify a BLOCK CONTAINS clause.

Performance tuning paper updated

- BLOCK 0 compiler option...results?
- Performance considerations using BLOCK0 on a program with a file that meets the criteria:
 - One program using BLOCK0 was 88% faster than using NOBLOCK0 and used 98% fewer EXCPs.

Performance tuning paper updated

- XMLPARSE compiler option
- There are 3 parsers in COBOL today
 - COBOL V3 parser, available in V4 as XMLPARSE(COMPAT)
 - Selected by compiler option
 - XMLSS non-validating parser (COBOL V4R1)
 - Selected by compiler option
 - XMLSS validating parser (COBOL V4R2)
 - Selected by compiler option + VALIDATING WITH clause
 - Do not change to XMLSS from V3 (COMPAT) parser unless you need the extra functionality!
 - Customer feedback and testing show it is a lot slower

Performance tuning paper updated

- XMLPARSE compiler option...Results?
- Performance considerations for XML PARSE example:
 - Five programs using XML PARSE were from 20% to 108% slower when using XMLPARSE(XMLSS) compared to using XMLPARSE(COMPAT).

Performance tuning paper updated

- INTERRUPT run-time option
- The 3R1 version of performance tuning paper did not cover this option
- The INTERRUPT option causes attention interrupts to be recognized by Language Environment. When you cause an interrupt, Language Environment can give control to your application or to Debug Tool.
- Performance considerations using INTERRUPT:
 - On the average, INTERRUPT(ON) was 1% slower than INTERRUPT(OFF), with a range of equivalent to 18% slower

Performance tuning paper updated

- SIMVRD run-time option...removed support!
- The SIMVRD option specifies whether COBOL programs use a VSAM KSDS to simulate variable-length relative organization data set. This support is only available with VS COBOL II through Enterprise COBOL Version 3 programs. Starting with Enterprise COBOL Version 4 programs, this support is no longer available.
- Performance considerations using SIMVRD:
 - One VSAM test case compiled with Enterprise COBOL 3.4 was 5% slower when using SIMVRD compared to NOSIMVRD.
- Those concerned with performance will not miss SIMVRD!

Performance tuning paper updated

- Program communication under CICS
- Choices: static CALL, dynamic CALL or EXEC CICS LINK
- In many cases EXEC CICS LINK can be replaced with COBOL dynamic CALL (similar separate load module characteristic)
 - DYNAM compiler option is not allowed for programs with EXEC CICS statements in CICS, so you must use CALL identifier to do dynamic CALL in these cases
- In some cases dynamic CALL cannot replace CICS LINK:
 - Cross systems EXEC CICS LINK or EXCI programs
 - If subprograms ABEND or STOP RUN, they will stop the caller unless EXEC CICS LINK is used

Performance tuning paper updated

- Program communication under CICS
 - CBLPSHPOP(OFF) cannot be used with programs that have EXEC HANDLE xxx statements
- Performance considerations using CICS (measuring call overhead only):
 - One test case was 446% slower using EXEC CICS LINK compared to using COBOL dynamic CALL with CBLPSHPOP(ON)
 - The same test case was 7817% slower using EXEC CICS LINK compared to using COBOL dynamic CALL with CBLPSHPOP(OFF)
 - The same test case was 1350% slower using COBOL dynamic CALL with CBLPSHPOP(ON) compared to using COBOL dynamic CALL with CBLPSHPOP(OFF)

Performance tuning paper updated

- To show the magnitude of the difference in CPU times between the above methods, here are the CPU times that were obtained from running each of these tests on our system and may not be representative of the results on your system.

'call' type	CPU Time (seconds)
EXEC CICS LINK	0.475
COBOL dynamic CALL CBLPSHPOP(ON)	0.087
COBOL dynamic CALL CBLPSHPOP(OFF)	0.006

Performance tuning paper updated

- COBOL normally either ignores decimal overflow conditions or handles them by checking the condition code after the decimal instruction. ILC triggers switch to a language-neutral or ILC program mask
 - This ILC program mask enables decimal overflow
 - (COBOL-only program mask ignores overflow)
 - COBOL code also tests condition after decimal instructions
 - Overflows cause program calls to condition handling
 - Overflows can be very common in COBOL
 - Result: COBOL math can get bogged down

Performance tuning paper updated

- Performance considerations for a mixed COBOL with C or PL/I application with COBOL using PACKED-DECIMAL data types in 100,000 arithmetic statements that cause a decimal overflow condition (100,000 overflows):
 - Without C or PL/I: .040 seconds of CPU time
 - With C or PL/I: 1.636 seconds of CPU time

Performance tuning paper updated

- XML GENERATE and XML PARSE result in bringing a C signature into your module - ILC!
- Solutions?
 - Ensure that your COBOL code does not encounter decimal overflow conditions
 - Larger numeric data items
 - If XML processing is a special case, move XML processing into a different application
 - Process XML in separate processes if possible

Performance tuning paper updated

- SEARCH - binary versus serial
- We got the question: Is there a point (a small enough number of items searched) where a serial search is faster than a binary SEARCH?
- Answer: it depends on your data!
- Performance considerations for search example:
 - Using a binary search (SEARCH ALL) to search a 100-element table was 15% faster than using a sequential search (SEARCH)
 - Using a binary search (SEARCH ALL) to search a 1000-element table was 500% faster than using a sequential search (SEARCH)

Performance tuning paper updated

- UPPER and LOWER case conversion
- When converting data to upper or lower case, it is generally more efficient to use INSPECT CONVERTING than the intrinsic functions FUNCTION UPPER-CASE or FUNCTION LOWER-CASE.
- Performance considerations for character conversions:
 - One test case that does 1,000 uppercase conversions was 35% faster when using INSPECT CONVERTING compared to using FUNCTION UPPER-CASE or FUNCTION LOWER-CASE
 - For this same test case, these intrinsic functions used 70% more storage than INSPECT CONVERTING

Performance tuning paper updated

- **Initializing Data**
- The INITIALIZE statement sets selected categories of data fields to predetermined values.
 - However, it is inefficient to initialize an entire group unless you really need all the items in the group to be initialized to different value.
- If you have a group that contains OCCURS data items and you want to set all items in the group to the same character (for example, space or x'00'), it is generally more efficient to use a MOVE statement instead of the INITIALIZE statement.

Performance tuning paper updated

- **Initializing Data**
- Performance considerations for INITIALIZE on a group that contained 5 OCCURS clauses:
 - When each OCCURS clause in the group contained 100 elements, a MOVE to the group was 8% faster than an INITIALIZE of the group.
 - When each OCCURS clause in the group contained 1000 elements, a MOVE to the group was 23% faster than an INITIALIZE of the group.

Coding tips from customer situations

- Avoid INITIALIZE unless the functionality is really needed
 - Much faster to MOVE SPACES or x'00' to the group
 - If individual fields need to be set to spaces or different types of zero (external decimal, packed-decimal, numeric-edited) then by all means use INITIALIZE
 - Rule: Don't use INITIALIZE just because it is there!

Coding tips from customer situations

- One customer got recommendation from consultant to code in Java instead of COBOL
- Customer would have preferred to code in COBOL
- He complained of continued issues with slow performance and missing Service Level Agreements(SLAs) due to poor Java performance

Coding tips from customer situations

- One customer found that COBOL performance was better than PL/I and wanted to start using only COBOL for new applications (they are 50/50 COBOL and PL/I)
- The customer wanted to have replacements for commonly used PL/I functions:
 - VERIFY
 - TRIM
 - INDEX
- When they tried to code these in COBOL they found they were too slow
- They asked me to try to do better...

Coding tips from customer situations

* VERIFY PL/I function written in COBOL: slow version

```
MOVE '02.04.2010' TO TEXT1
```

```
MOVE TEXT1 TO TEXT2
```

```
INSPECT TEXT2 REPLACING ALL '.' BY '0'
```

```
IF TEXT2 IS NOT NUMERIC
```

```
    MOVE 'NOT DATE' TO TEXT1
```

```
END-IF
```

Coding tips from customer situations

- * VERIFY PL/I function written in COBOL: 40% faster

SPECIAL-NAMES.

CLASS VDATE IS '0' thru '9' '!'.

. . .

MOVE '02.04.2010' TO TEXT1

IF TEXT1 IS Not VDATE Then

MOVE 'NOT DATE' TO TEXT1

END-IF

Coding tips from customer situations

- * TRIM PL/I function written in COBOL: slow version

```
MOVE ' This is string 1 ' TO TEXT1  
COMPUTE POS1 POS2 = 0
```

```
INSPECT TEXT1  
  TALLYING POS1  
  FOR LEADING SPACES  
INSPECT FUNCTION REVERSE(TEXT1)  
  TALLYING POS2  
  FOR LEADING SPACES  
MOVE TEXT1(POS1:LENGTH OF TEXT1 - POS2 - POS1)  
  TO TEXT2
```

Coding tips from customer situations

- * TRIM PL/I function written in COBOL: 31% faster

```
MOVE ' This is string 1 ' TO TEXT1  
PERFORM VARYING POS1 FROM 1 BY 1  
    UNTIL TEXT1(POS1:1) NOT = SPACE  
END-PERFORM
```

```
PERFORM VARYING POS2 FROM LENGTH OF TEXT1  
    BY -1 UNTIL TEXT1(POS2:1) NOT = SPACE  
END-PERFORM
```

```
COMPUTE LEN = POS2 - POS1 + 1  
MOVE TEXT1(POS1 : LEN) TO TEXT2 (1 : LEN)
```

Coding tips from customer situations

- * INDEX PL/I function written in COBOL: slow version

```
MOVE 'TestString1 TestString2' TO BUFFER
```

```
COMPUTE POS = 0
```

```
INSPECT BUFFER  
  TALLYING POS  
  FOR CHARACTERS  
  BEFORE INITIAL 'TestString2'
```

Coding tips from customer situations

- * INDEX PL/I function written in COBOL: 83% faster

```
MOVE 'TestString1 TestString2' TO BUFFER
```

```
PERFORM VARYING POS FROM 1 BY 1  
  UNTIL BUFFER(POS:11) = 'TestString2'  
END-PERFORM
```

System z Social Media Channels



- Top Facebook pages related to System z:

- [IBM System z](#)
- [IBM Academic Initiative System z](#)
- [IBM Master the Mainframe Contest](#)
- [IBM Destination z](#)
- [Millennial Mainframer](#)
- [IBM Smarter Computing](#)

- Top LinkedIn groups related to System z:

- [System z Advocates](#)
- [SAP on System z](#)
- [IBM Mainframe- Unofficial Group](#)
- [IBM System z Events](#)
- [Mainframe Experts Network](#)
- [System z Linux](#)
- [Enterprise Systems](#)
- [Mainframe Security Gurus](#)

- Twitter profiles related to System z:

- [IBM System z](#)
- [IBM System z Events](#)
- [IBM DB2 on System z](#)
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- YouTube accounts related to System z:

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- Top System z blogs to check out:

- [Mainframe Insights](#)
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- [Millennial Mainframer](#)
- [Mainframe & Hybrid Computing](#)
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