Introduction

Mike Bailey
mjb@cs.oregonstate.edu

Acknowledgements

First of all, thanks to the inaugural class of 19 students who braved new, unrefined, and just-in-time course materials to take the first Vulkan class at OSU – Winter Quarter, 2018. Thanks for your courage and patience!

Second, thanks to NVIDIA! The donation of the GeForce, 1080ti cards is what made this course possible.

Third, thanks to Kathleen Mattson and the Khronos Group for the great laminated Vulkan Quick Reference Cards! (Look at those happy faces in the photo holding them.)

Ali Alsalehy
Natasha Anisimova
Jianchang Bi
Christopher Cooper
Richard Cunard
Breton Cunin
Joshua Deiters
Trevor Hammond
Zach Lamer
Victor Li

Alan Neads
Raja Petroff
Bei Rong
Lawrence Roy
Lily Shelnhammer
Hannah Solorzano
Glenn Upthagrove
Logan Wingard

What Prompted the Move to Vulkan?

1. Performance
2. Performance
3. Performance

Vulkan is better at keeping the GPU busy than OpenGL is. OpenGL drivers need to do a lot of CPU work before handing work off to the GPU. Vulkan lets you get more power from the GPU card you already have.

This is especially important if you can hide the complexity of Vulkan from your customer base and just let them see the improved performance. Thus, Vulkan has had a lot of support and interest from game engine developers, 3rd party software vendors, etc.

As an aside, the Vulkan development effort was originally called "glNext", which created the false impression that this was a replacement for OpenGL. It's not.

Why is it so important to keep the GPU Busy?

From Wikipedia:

"Vulcan is the god of fire including the fire of volcanoes, metalworking, and the forge in ancient Roman religion and myth. Vulcan is often depicted with a blacksmith’s hammer. The Vulcánalia was the annual festival held August 23 in his honor. His Greek counterpart is Hephaestus, the god of fire and smithery. In Etruscan religion, he is identified with Sethlans. Vulcan belongs to the most ancient stage of Roman religion. Varro, the ancient Roman scholar and writer, citing the Annales Maximi, records that king Titus Tatius dedicated altars to a series of deities among which Vulcan is mentioned."

Who was the original Vulcan?
The Khronos Group, Inc. is a non-profit member-funded industry consortium, focused on the creation of open standard, royalty-free application programming interfaces (APIs) for authoring and accelerated playback of dynamic media on a wide variety of platforms and devices. Khronos members may contribute to the development of Khronos API specifications, vote at various stages before public deployment, and accelerate delivery of their platforms and applications through early access to specification drafts and conformance tests.

Who is the Khronos Group?

Who's Specifically Working on Vulkan?

Vulkan

- Largely derived from AMD’s Mantle API
- Also heavily influenced by Apple’s Metal API and Microsoft’s DirectX 12
- Goal: much less driver complexity and overhead than OpenGL has
- Goal: much less user hand-holding
- Goal: higher single-threaded performance than OpenGL can deliver
- Goal: able to do multithreaded graphics
- Goal: able to handle tiled rendering

Vulkan Differences from OpenGL

- More low-level information must be provided (by you!) in the application, rather than the driver
- Screen coordinate system is Y-down
- No “current state”, at least not one maintained by the driver
- All of the things that we have talked about being deprecated in OpenGL are already deprecated in Vulkan: built-in pipeline transformations, begin-end, fixed-function, etc.
- You must manage your own transformations.
- All transformation, color, texture functionality must be done in shaders.
- Shaders are pre-“half-compiled” outside of your application. The compilation process is then finished during the pipeline-building process.
Computer Graphics

**The Basic OpenGL Computer Graphics Pipeline, OpenGL-style**

- **Vertex, Normal, Color**
- **ModelViewMatrix, ProjectionMatrix, ModelViewProjectionMatrix**
- **Fragment Rendering, Texture, Per-Fragment Lighting**

**The Basic Computer Graphics Pipeline, Shader-style**

- **gl_Position, Per-vertex variables**
- **Uniform Variables**
- **Vertex Shader**
- **Fragment Shader**

**The Basic Computer Graphics Pipeline, Vulkan-style**

- **Per-vertex variables**
- **Uniform Variables**
- **Vertex Shader**
- **Fragment Shader**

**A Complete API Redesign**

- Originally architected for graphics workstations with direct memory and split memory.
- Driver does lots of work: state validation, dependency tracking, error checking. Limits and randomizes performance.

**Vulkan Highlights: Command Buffers**

- Graphics commands are sent to command buffers
- Think OpenCL...
- **E.g., vkCmdDispatch( cmdBuffer, ... );**
- You can have as many simultaneous Command Buffers as you want
- Buffers are flushed when the application wants them flushed
- Each command buffer can be filled from a different thread (i.e., filling is thread-safe)

**Moving part of the driver into the application**

- Complex drivers lead to driver overhead and cross vendor unpredictability.
- Error management is always active.
- Driver processes full standing language source.
- Separate APIs for desktop and mobile markets.
Vulkan Highlights: Pipelines

- In OpenGL, your “pipeline state” is whatever your current graphics attributes are: color, transformations, textures, shaders, etc.
- Changing the state on-the-fly one item at-a-time is very expensive
- Vulkan forces you to set all your state at once into a “pipeline state object” (PSO) and then invoke the entire PSO whenever you want to use that state combination
- Think of the pipeline state as being immutable.
- Potentially, you could have thousands of these pre-prepared states
- This is a good time to talk about how game companies view Vulkan…

Vulkan Code has a Distinct “Style”

```c
VkBufferCreateInfo vbci;
    vbci.sType = VK_STRUCTURE_TYPE_BUFFER_CREATE_INFO;
    vbci.pNext = nullptr;
    vbci.flags = 0;
    vbci.size = <buffer size in bytes>;
    vbci.usage = VK_USAGE_UNIFORM_BUFFER_BIT;
    vbci.sharingMode = VK_SHARING_MODE_EXCLUSIVE;
    vbci.queueFamilyIndexCount = 0;
    vbci.pQueueFamilyIndices = nullptr;
    VK_RESULT result = vkCreateBuffer ( LogicalDevice, IN &vbci, PALLOCATOR, OUT &Buffer);

VkMemoryRequirements vmr;
    result = vkGetBufferMemoryRequirements( LogicalDevice, Buffer, OUT &vmr);
    VkMemoryAllocateInfo vmai;
        vmai.sType = VK_STRUCTURE_TYPE_MEMORY_ALLOCATE_INFO;
        vmai.pNext = nullptr;
        vmai.flags = 0;
        vmai.allocationSize = vmr.size;
        vmai.memoryTypeIndex = 0;
        result = vkAllocateMemory( LogicalDevice, IN &vmai, PALLOCATOR, &MatrixBufferMemoryHandle);
        result = vkBindBufferMemory( LogicalDevice, Buffer, MatrixBufferMemoryHandle, 0);
```

Vulkan Quick Reference Card

**Querying the Number of Things**

```
uint32_t  count;
result = vkEnumeratePhysicalDevices( Instance, OUT &count, OUT (VkPhysicalDevice *) nullptr );
VkPhysicalDevice * physicalDevices = new VkPhysicalDevice[ count ];
result = vkEnumeratePhysicalDevices( Instance, OUT &count, OUT physicalDevices );
```

This way of querying information is a recurring OpenCL and Vulkan pattern (get used to it):

```
result = vkEnumeratePhysicalDevices( instance, &count, nullptr );
result = vkEnumeratePhysicalDevices( instance, &count, physicalDevices );
```

Application

Vulkan Highlights: Overall Block Diagram

Instance

Physical Device

Logical Device

Command Buffer

Application

Instance

Physical Device

Logical Device

Command Buffer

Command Buffer

Command Buffer
Vulkan Highlights: a More Typical Block Diagram

Steps in Creating Graphics using Vulkan
1. Create the Instance
2. Setup the Debug Callbacks
3. Create the Surface
4. List the Physical Devices
5. Pick the right Physical Device
6. Create the Logical Device
7. Create the Uniform Variable Buffers
8. Create the Vertex Data Buffers
9. Create the texture sampler
10. Create the texture images
11. Create the Swap Chain
12. Create the Depth and Stencil Images
13. Create the RenderPass
14. Create the Framebuffer(s)
15. Create the Descriptor Set Pool
16. Create the Command Buffer Pool
17. Create the Command Buffer(s)
18. Read the shaders
19. Create the Descriptor Set Layouts
20. Create and populate the Descriptor Sets
21. Create the Graphics Pipeline(s)
22. Update-Render-Update-Render-…

Vulkan: Creating a Pipeline

Vulkan GPU Memory
• Your application allocates GPU memory for the objects it needs
• You map GPU memory to the CPU address space for access
• Your application is responsible for making sure what you put into that memory is actually in the right format, is the right size, has the right alignment, etc.

Vulkan Render Passes
• Drawing is done inside a render pass
• Each render pass contains what framebuffer attachments to use
• Each render pass is told what to do when it begins and ends
• Multiple render passes can be merged

Vulkan Compute Shaders
• Compute pipelines are allowed, but they are treated as something special (just like OpenGL does)
• Compute passes are launched through dispatches
• Compute command buffers can be run asynchronously

From the OpenGL Shader Storage Buffer notes:
```c
// Create a buffer that shares a GPU address space with a Vulkan buffer
GLint bufMask = GL_MAP_WRITE_BIT | GL_MAP_INVALIDATE_BUFFER_BIT; // the invalidate makes a big difference when re-writing
struct pos *points = (struct pos *) glMapBufferRange(GL_SHADER_STORAGE_BUFFER, 0, numParticles * sizeof(struct pos), bufMask);
```
Vulkan Synchronization

- Synchronization is the responsibility of the application
- Events can be set, polled, and waited for (much like OpenCL)
- Vulkan does not ever lock – that’s the application’s job
- Threads can concurrently read from the same object
- Threads can concurrently write to different objects

Vulkan Shaders

- GLSL is the same as before … almost
- For places it’s not, an implied
  `#define VULKAN 100`
  is automatically supplied by the compiler
- You pre-compile your shaders with an external compiler
- Your shaders get turned into an intermediate form known as SPIR-V (Standard Portable Intermediate Representation for Vulkan)
- SPIR-V gets turned into fully-compiled code at runtime
- The SPIR-V spec has been public for months – new shader languages are surely being developed
- OpenCL and OpenGL will be moving to SPIR-V as well

GLSL Source → External GLSL Compiler → SPIR-V → Compiler in driver → Vendor-specific code

Advantages:
1. Software vendors don’t need to ship their shader source
2. Software can launch faster because half of the compilation has already taken place
3. This guarantees a common front-end syntax
4. This allows for other language front-ends