OpenGL Compute Shaders

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OpenGL Compute Shader – the Basic Idea

A Shader Program, with only a Compute Shader in it

Application Invokes the Compute Shader to Modify the OpenGL Buffer Data

Application Invokes OpenGL Rendering which Reads the Buffer Data

Another Shader Program, with pipeline rendering in it
Why Not Just Use OpenCL Instead?

OpenCL is great! It does a super job of using the GPU for general-purpose data-parallel computing. And, OpenCL is more feature-rich than OpenGL compute shaders. So, why use Compute Shaders ever if you've got OpenCL? Here's what I think:

• OpenCL requires installing a separate driver and separate libraries. While this is not a huge deal, it does take time and effort. When everyone catches up to OpenGL 4.3, Compute Shaders will just "be there" as part of core OpenGL.

• Compute Shaders use the GLSL language, something that all OpenGL programmers should already be familiar with (or will be soon).

• Compute shaders use the same context as does the OpenGL rendering pipeline. There is no need to acquire and release the context as OpenGL+OpenCL must do.

• I'm assuming that calls to OpenGL compute shaders are more lightweight than calls to OpenCL kernels are. (true?) This should result in better performance. (true? how much?)

• Using OpenCL is somewhat cumbersome. It requires a lot of setup (queries, platforms, devices, queues, kernels, etc.). Compute Shaders look to be more convenient. They just kind of flow in with the graphics.

The bottom line is that I will continue to use OpenCL for the big, bad stuff. But, for lighter-weight data-parallel computing that interacts with graphics, I will use the Compute Shaders.

I suspect that a good example of a lighter-weight data-parallel graphics-related application is a particle system. This will be shown here in the rest of these notes. I hope I'm right.

If I Know GLSL, What Do I Need to Do Differently to Write a Compute Shader?

Not much:

1. A Compute Shader is created just like any other GLSL shader, except that its type is GL_COMPUTE_SHADER (duh...). You compile it and link it just like any other GLSL shader program.

2. A Compute Shader must be in a shader program all by itself. There cannot be vertex, fragment, etc. shaders in there with it. (why?)

3. A Compute Shader has access to uniform variables and buffer objects, but cannot access any pipeline variables such as attributes or variables from other stages. It stands alone.

4. A Compute Shader needs to declare the number of work-items in each of its work-groups in a special GLSL layout statement.

More information on items 3 and 4 are coming up...
The Example We Are Going to Use Here is a Particle System

The Compute Shader Moves the Particles by Recomputing the Position and Velocity Buffers

The OpenGL Rendering Draws the Particles by Reading the Position Buffer

---

Setting up the Shader Storage Buffer Objects in Your C Program

```c
#define NUM_PARTICLES 1024*1024 // total number of particles to move
#define WORK_GROUP_SIZE 128 // # work-items per work-group

struct pos
{
    float x, y, z, w; // positions
};

struct vel
{
    float vx, vy, vz, vw; // velocities
};

struct color
{
    float r, g, b, a; // colors
};

// need to do the following for both position, velocity, and colors of the particles:

GLuint posSSbo;
GLuint velSSbo;
GLuint colSSbo;
```

Note that .w and .vw are not actually needed. But, by making these structure sizes a multiple of 4 floats, it doesn't matter if they are declared with the std140 or the std430 qualifier. I think this is a good thing. (is it?)
Setting up the Shader Storage Buffer Objects in Your C Program

```c
// Setting up Storage Buffer Objects
// For example, setting up storage for positions
glGenBuffers( 1, &posSSbo );
glBindBuffer( GL_SHADER_STORAGE_BUFFER, posSSbo );
glBufferData( GL_SHADER_STORAGE_BUFFER, NUM_PARTICLES * sizeof(struct pos), NULL, GL_STATIC_DRAW );
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, NUM_PARTICLES * sizeof(struct pos), bufMask );
for( int i = 0; i < NUM_PARTICLES; i++ )
{
    points[ i ].x = Ranf( XMIN, XMAX );
    points[ i ].y = Ranf( YMIN, YMAX );
    points[ i ].z = Ranf( ZMIN, ZMAX );
    points[ i ].w = 1.;
}
glUnmapBuffer( GL_SHADER_STORAGE_BUFFER );

// Setting up Storage Buffer Objects for velocities
glGenBuffers( 1, &velSSbo );
glBindBuffer( GL_SHADER_STORAGE_BUFFER, velSSbo );
glBufferData( GL_SHADER_STORAGE_BUFFER, NUM_PARTICLES * sizeof(struct vel), NULL, GL_STATIC_DRAW );
struct vel *vels = (struct vel *) glMapBufferRange( GL_SHADER_STORAGE_BUFFER, 0, NUM_PARTICLES * sizeof(struct vel), bufMask );
for( int i = 0; i < NUM_PARTICLES; i++ )
{
    vels[ i ].vx = Ranf( VXMIN, VXMAX );
    vels[ i ].vy = Ranf( VYMIN, VYMAX );
    vels[ i ].vz = Ranf( VZMIN, VZMAX );
    vels[ i ].vw = 0.;
}
glUnmapBuffer( GL_SHADER_STORAGE_BUFFER );
```

The Data Needs to be Divided into Large Quantities called Work-Groups, each of which is further Divided into Smaller Units Called Work-Items

20 total items to compute:

```
  1  2  3  4  5  6  7  8  9 10
  11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20
```

5 Work Groups

The Invocation Space can be 1D, 2D, or 3D. This one is 1D.

$$\text{#WorkGroups} = \frac{\text{GlobalInvocationSize}}{\text{WorkGroupSize}}$$

$$5 \times 4 = \frac{20}{4}$$
The Data Needs to be Divided into Large Quantities called Work-Groups, each of which is further Divided into Smaller Units Called Work-Items.

20x12 (~240) total items to compute:

\[ \text{GlobalInvocationSize} = \frac{20 \times 12}{4 \times 3} = 5 \times 4 \]

The Invocation Space can be 1D, 2D, or 3D. This one is 2D.

Running the Compute Shader from the Application

```c
void glDispatchCompute( num_groups_x, num_groups_y, num_groups_z );
```

If the problem is 2D, then \( num\_groups\_z = 1 \)

If the problem is 1D, then \( num\_groups\_y = 1 \) and \( num\_groups\_z = 1 \)
Invoking the Compute Shader in Your C/C++ Program

```cpp
glBindBufferBase( GL_SHADER_STORAGE_BUFFER, 4, posSSbo );
glBindBufferBase( GL_SHADER_STORAGE_BUFFER, 5, velSSbo );
glBindBufferBase( GL_SHADER_STORAGE_BUFFER, 6, colSSbo );

. . .

glUseProgram( MyComputeShaderProgram );
glDispatchCompute( NUM_PARTICLES / WORK_GROUP_SIZE, 1, 1 );
glMemoryBarrier( GL_SHADER_STORAGE_BARRIER_BIT );

. . .

glUseProgram( MyRenderingShaderProgram );
glBindBuffer( GL_ARRAY_BUFFER, posSSbo );
glVertexPointer( 4, GL_FLOAT, 0, (void *)0 );
glEnableClientState( GL_VERTEX_ARRAY );

glDrawArrays( GL_POINTS, 0, NUM_PARTICLES );
glDisableClientState( GL_VERTEX_ARRAY );

glBindBuffer( GL_ARRAY_BUFFER, 0 );
```

Special Pre-set Variables in the Compute Shader

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable Type</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>uvec3</td>
<td>gl_NumWorkGroups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>const uvec3</td>
<td>gl_WorkGroupSize</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>uvec3</td>
<td>gl_WorkGroupID</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>uvec3</td>
<td>gl_LocalInvocationID</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>uvec3</td>
<td>gl_GlobalInvocationID</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>uint</td>
<td>gl_LocalInvocationIndex</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

```
0 ≤ gl_WorkGroupID ≤ gl_NumWorkGroups – 1
0 ≤ gl_LocalInvocationID ≤ gl_WorkGroupSize – 1

gl_GlobalInvocationID = gl_WorkGroupID * gl_WorkGroupSize + gl_LocalInvocationID

gl_LocalInvocationIndex = gl_LocalInvocationID.x * gl_WorkGroupSize.y * gl_WorkGroupSize.z + gl_LocalInvocationID.y * gl_WorkGroupSize.x + gl_LocalInvocationID.x
```
The Particle System Compute Shader -- Setup

```glsl
#version 430 compatibility
#extension GL_ARB_compute_shader : enable
#extension GL_ARB_shader_storage_buffer_object : enable;
layout( std140, binding=4 )  buffer  Pos
{
    vec4  Positions[ ]; // array of structures
};
layout( std140, binding=5 )  buffer  Vel
{
    vec4  Velocities[ ]; // array of structures
};
layout( std140, binding=6 )  buffer  Col
{
    vec4  Colors[ ]; // array of structures
};
layout( local_size_x = 128, local_size_y = 1, local_size_z = 1 ) in;
```

You can use the empty brackets, but only on the last element of the buffer. The actual dimension will be determined for you when OpenGL examines the size of this buffer's data store.

... con3 G = vec3( 0., -9.8, 0. );
const float DT = 0.1;

uint gid = gl_GlobalInvocationID.x; // the .y and .z are both 1 in this case
vec3 p  = Positions[ gid ].xyz;
vec3 v  = Velocities[ gid ].xyz;
vec3 pp = p + v*DT + .5*DT*DT*G;
vec3 vp = v + G*DT;

Positions[ gid ].xyz = pp;
Velocities[ gid ].xyz = vp;

The Particle System Compute Shader -- The Physics
The Particle System Compute Shader – How About Introducing a Bounce?

const vec4 SPHERE = vec4( -100.0, -800.0, 0.0, 600.0 ); // x, y, z, r
// (could also have passed this in)

vec3 Bounce( vec3 vin, vec3 n )
{
    vec3 vout = reflect( vin, n );
    return vout;
}

vec3 BounceSphere( vec3 p, vec3 v, vec4 s )
{
    vec3 n = normalize( p - s.xyz );
    return Bounce( v, n );
}

bool IsInsideSphere( vec3 p, vec4 s )
{
    float r = length( p - s.xyz );
    return ( r < s.w );
}

The Particle System Compute Shader – How About Introducing a Bounce?

uint gid = gl_GlobalInvocationID.x; // the .y and .z are both 1 in this case
vec3 p = Positions[ gid ].xyz;
vec3 v = Velocities[ gid ].xyz;
vec3 pp = p + v*DT + .5*DT*DT*G;
vec3 vp = v + G*DT;

if( IsInsideSphere( pp, SPHERE ) )
{
    vp = BounceSphere( p, v, SPHERE );
    pp = p + vp*DT + .5*DT*DT*G;
}

Positions[ gid ].xyz = pp;
Velocities[ gid ].xyz = vp;

Graphics Trick Alert: Making the bounce happen from the surface of the sphere is time-consuming. Instead, bounce from the previous position in space. If DT is small enough, nobody will ever know…
The Bouncing Particle System Compute Shader – What Does It Look Like?