Vulkan Ray Tracing – 5 New Shader Types!

Digital Ray Tracing Examples

analog Ray Tracing Example

The Rasterization Shader Pipeline Doesn’t Apply to Ray Tracing

- Fixed Function
- Programmable
- Rasterizer
The Ray-trace Pipeline Involves Five New Shader Types

- **Ray Generation Shader (rgen)**
  - Runs on a 2D grid of threads. Begins the entire ray-tracing operation.

- **Intersection Shader (rint)**
  - Implements ray-primitive intersections.

- **Any Hit Shader (rahit)**
  - Called when the Intersection Shader finds a hit.

- **Closest Hit Shader (rchit)**
  - Called with the information about the hit that happened closest to the viewer. Typically lighting is done here, or firing off new rays to handle reflection and refraction.

- **Miss Shader (rmiss)**
  - Called when no intersections are found for a given ray. Typically it just sets its pixel color to the background color.

Note: none of this lives in the graphics hardware pipeline. This is all built on top of the compute functionality.

The Ray Intersection Process for a Sphere

1. **Sphere equation:** \((x-x_c)^2 + (y-y_c)^2 + (z-z_c)^2 = R^2\)
2. **Ray equation:** \((x,y,z) = (x_0,y_0,z_0) + t(dx,dy,dz)\)

Plugging \((x,y,z)\) from the second equation into the first equation and multiplying through and simplifying gives:

\[A t^2 + B t + C = 0\]

Solve for \(t_1, t_2\)

- A. If both \(t_1\) and \(t_2\) are complex, then the ray missed the sphere.
- B. If \(t_1 = t_2\), then the ray brushed the sphere at a tangent point.
- C. If both \(t_1\) and \(t_2\) are real and different, then the ray entered and exited the sphere.

In Vulkan terms:

- `gl_WorldRayOrigin = (x_0,y_0,z_0)`
- `gl_Hit = t`
- `gl_WorldRayDirection = (dx,dy,dz)`

The Ray Intersection Process for a Cube

1. **Plane equation:** \(A x + B y + C z + D = 0\)
2. **Ray equation:** \((x,y,z) = (x_0,y_0,z_0) + t(dx,dy,dz)\)

Plugging \((x,y,z)\) from the second equation into the first equation and multiplying through and simplifying gives:

\[A t + B = 0\]

Solve for \(t\)

A cube is actually the intersection of 6 half-space planes (just 4 are shown here). Each of these will produce its own \(t\) intersection value. Treat them as pairs: \((t_{x1}, t_{x2}), (t_{y1}, t_{y2}), (t_{z1}, t_{z2})\)

The ultimate entry and exit values are:

\[
\begin{align*}
  t_{\text{min}} &= \max(\min(t_{x1}, t_{x2}), \min(t_{y1}, t_{y2}), \min(t_{z1}, t_{z2})) \\
  t_{\text{max}} &= \min(\max(t_{x1}, t_{x2}), \max(t_{y1}, t_{y2}), \max(t_{z1}, t_{z2}))
\end{align*}
\]

This works for all convex solids.

In a Raytracing, each ray typically hits a lot of Things
Acceleration Structures

- **Bottom-level Acceleration Structure (BLAS)** holds the vertex data and is built from vertex and index VkBuffers.
- The BLAS can also hold transformations, but it looks like usually the BLAS holds vertices in the original Model Coordinates.
- **Top-level Acceleration Structure (TLAS)** holds a pointer to elements of the BLAS and a transformation.
- The BLAS is used as a Model Coordinate bounding box.
- The TLAS is used as a World Coordinate bounding box.
- A TLAS can instance multiple BLAS's.

Creating Bottom Level Acceleration Structures

```c
vkCreateAccelerationStructureBottomLevelAccelerationStructure;
VkAccelerationStructureInfo vasi;
vasi.sType = VK_ACCELERATION_STRUCTURE_TYPE_BOTTOM_LEVEL;
vasi.flags = 0;
vasi.pNext = nullptr;
vasi.instanceCount = 0;
vasi.geometryCount = << number of vertex buffers >>;
vasi.pGeometries = << vertex buffer pointers >>;
VkAccelerationStructureCreateInfo vasci;
vasci.sType = VK_STRUCTURE_TYPE_ACCELERATION_STRUCTURE_CREATE_INFO;
vasci.pNext = nullptr;
vasci.info = &vasi;
vasci.compactedSize = 0;
result = vkCreateAccelerationStructure( LogicalDevice, &vasci, PALLOCATOR, OUT &BottomLevelAcceleraionrStructure );
```

Creating Top Level Acceleration Structures

```c
vkCreateAccelerationStructureTopLevelAccelerationStructure;
 VkAccelerationStructureInfo vasi;
 vasi.sType = VK_ACCELERATION_STRUCTURE_TYPE_TOP_LEVEL;
 vasi.flags = 0;
 vasi.pNext = nullptr;
 vasi.instanceCount = << number of bottom level acceleration structure instances >>;
 vasi.geometryCount = 0;
 vasi.pGeometries = VK_NULL_HANDLE;
 VkAccelerationStructureCreateInfo vasci;
 vasci.sType = VK_STRUCTURE_TYPE_ACCELERATION_STRUCTURE_CREATE_INFO;
 vasci.pNext = nullptr;
 vasci.info = &vasi;
 vasci.compactedSize = 0;
 result = vkCreateAccelerationStructure( LogicalDevice, &vasci, PALLOCATOR, &TopLevelAcceleraionrStructure );
```

Ray Generation Shader

```c
layout( location = 1 ) varrayPayload myPayload;
{
    vec4 color;
};
void main( )
{
    trace( topLevel, ..., 1 );
    imageStore( framebuffer, gl_GlobalInvocationID.xy, color );
}
```

A "payload" is information that keeps getting passed through the process. Different stages can add to it. It is finally consumed at the very end, in this case by writing color into the pixel being worked on.
A New Built-in Function

```c
void trace(
    accelerationStructure topLevel,
    uint rayFlags,
    uint cullMask,
    uint sbtRecordOffset,
    uint sbtRecordStride,
    uint missIndex,
    vec3 origin,
    float tmin,
    vec3 direction,
    float tmax,
    int payload);
```

In Vulkan terms:

```c
gl_WorldRayOrigin = (x, y, z)
gl_WorldRayDirection = (dx, dy, dz)
```

Intersection Shader

Intersect a ray with an arbitrary 3D object. Passes data to the Any Hit shader. There is a built-in ray-triangle Intersection Shader.

```c
// Attribute vec3 attribs
void main( )
{
    [SpherePrimitive sph = spheres[gl_PrimitiveID];
    vec3 orig = gl_WorldRayOrigin;
    vec3 dir = normalize(gl_WorldRayDirection);
    float discr = b*b - 4.*a*c;
    if( discr < 0. ) return;
    float tmp = ( -b - sqrt(discr) ) / (2.*a);
    if( gl_RayTmin < tmp && tmp < gl_RayTmax ) {
        vec3 p = orig + tmp * dir;
        attribs = p;
        reportIntersection( tmp, 0 );
        return;
    }
    tmp = ( -b + sqrt(discr) ) / (2.*a);
    if( gl_RayTmin < tmp && tmp < gl_RayTmax ) {
        vec3 p = orig + tmp * dir;
        attribs = p;
        reportIntersection( tmp, 0 );
        return;
    }
}
```

Intersection Shader

```c
hitAttribute vec3 attribs
void main( )
{
    [SpherePrimitive sph = spheres[gl_PrimitiveID];
    vec3 orig = gl_WorldRayOrigin;
    vec3 dir = normalize(gl_WorldRayDirection);
    float discr = b*b - 4.*a*c;
    if( discr < 0. ) return;
    float tmp = ( -b - sqrt(discr) ) / (2.*a);
    if( gl_RayTmin < tmp && tmp < gl_RayTmax ) {
        vec3 p = orig + tmp * dir;
        attribs = p;
        reportIntersection( tmp, 0 );
        return;
    }
    tmp = ( -b + sqrt(discr) ) / (2.*a);
    if( gl_RayTmin < tmp && tmp < gl_RayTmax ) {
        vec3 p = orig + tmp * dir;
        attribs = p;
        reportIntersection( tmp, 0 );
        return;
    }
}
```

Miss Shader

Handle a ray that doesn't hit any objects

```c
rayPayload myPayLoad
{
    vec4 color;
};
void main( )
{
    color = vec4(0., 0., 0., 1.);
}
```

Any Hit Shader

Handle a ray that hits anything. Store information on each hit. Can reject a hit.

```c
layout(binding = 4, set = 0) buffer outputProperties
{
    float outputValues[ ];
} outputData;
layout(location = 0) rayPayloadIn uint outputId;
layout(location = 1) rayPayloadIn uint hitCounter;
hitAttribute vec3 attribs;
void main( )
{
    outputData.outputValues[outputId + hitCounter] = gl_PrimitiveID;
    hitCounter = hitCounter + 1;
}
```
Closest Hit Shader

Handle the intersection closest to the viewer. Collects data from the Any Hit shader. Can spawn more rays.

```glsl
rayPayload myPayload
{
  vec4 color;
}
void main()
{
  vec3 stp = gl_WorldRayOrigin + gl_Hit * gl_WorldRayDirection;
  color = texture(MaterialUnit, stp); // material properties lookup
}
```

In Vulkan terms:
- `gl_WorldRayOrigin = (x₀, y₀, z₀)`
- `gl_Hit = t`
- `gl_WorldRayDirection = (dx, dy, dz)`

Other New Built-in Functions

- `void terminateRay();`
- `void ignoreIntersection();`
- `void reportIntersection(float hit, uint hitKind);`

Loosely equivalent to "discard"

The Trigger comes from the Command Buffer:
- `vkCmdBindPipeline()` and `vkCmdTraceRays()`

```glsl
vkCmdBindPipeline(CommandBuffer, VK_PIPELINE_BIND_POINT_RAYTRACING, RaytracePipeline);
vkCmdTraceRays(CommandBuffer, raygenShaderBindingTableBuffer, raygenShaderBindingOffset, missShaderBindingTableBuffer, missShaderBindingOffset, missShaderBindingStride, hitShaderBindingTableBuffer, hitShaderBindingOffset, hitShaderBindingStride, callableShaderBindingTableBuffer, callableShaderBindingOffset, callableShaderBindingStride, width, height, depth);
```
Check This Out!

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QL7sXc2iNJ8