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Integrated Optoelectronic Networks for Application-Driven Multicore Computing

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Integrated Optoelectronic Networks for Application-Driven Multicore Computing

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The basic research objective of this Young Investigator proposal has been to determine the best architectural modalities to insert optics technology into future system-on-chip (SoC) platforms of interest to the Air Force, in order to meet projected on-chip data transfer rates that far exceed what is possible today. The research has aimed to complement advances in optoelectronic devices and supportive materials with innovative architectural designs that integrate these components according to system-wide application needs. The two main goals of this projects are: (i) Design new optoelectronic network topologies and protocols to effectively combine multiple stacked layers of heterogeneous optical interconnects with electrical interconnects for application-specific performance enhancements; and (ii) Devise new techniques for memory-access enhancements with optically connected DRAM modules and mechanisms for energy-efficient runtime reconfiguration of optoelectronic components in emerging SoC platforms. For validation, we aimed to realize a physical-level implementation of the optoelectronic network to enhance the operation of a SoC application for information and image processing and provide insights into the behavior of optoelectronic interfaces and optical devices at the system level.

Summary of Research Accomplishments

This project has not only succeeded in accomplishing its two main goals but also has resulted in laying the foundation for solving new problems and challenges in related areas. The only shortcoming has been the physical-implementation based validation. Despite our best efforts working with OpSIS foundry, we were unable to fabricate complex photonic architectures, due to lack of maturity in the silicon photonics fabrication process, while OpSIS was in operation (till Feb 2015). However, we have extensively validated all of our designed integrated silicon photonics architectures and circuits using analytical modeling, physical-level silicon photonics design tools from IPKISS and Lumerical, and detailed SoC-level simulations with parameters derived from real fabricated chips.

The project has supported 4 PhD students, 3 MS students, and 7 undergraduate students, either partially or entirely, to accomplish the goals of the original proposal. The project has resulted in the following products, publications, and recognitions:

- 5 peer-reviewed IEEE/ACM journal publications
- 12 peer-reviewed IEEE/ACM conference publications
- 1 keynote talk/paper (at the IEEE LPDC 2015 workshop)
- 1 invited special session (at the IEEE VLSID 2016 conference)
- 1 Best Paper Award (at ACM GLSVLSI 2015 conference)
- 1 Best Paper Finalist (at IEEE ISQED 2016 conference)
- 1 guest edited special journal issue on silicon photonics for multicore computing (IEEE D&T 2015)
- 1 invited book chapter (in book “Optical Interconnects for Computer Systems”, 2016)
- 4 invited seminar/workshop talks

In the area of innovative optoelectronic network topologies and protocols at the architecture-level and CAD exploration tools for future SoC chip platforms, we have made the following contributions:

- In [Bahirat and Pasricha, 2014a], we proposed and explored a novel hybrid ring-mesh electrophotonic NoC fabric (METEOR) for emerging chip multiprocessors (CMPs) based on advances in integrating nanoscale silicon photonics with commercial CMOS manufacturing technology. Our proposed fabric consists of a photonic ring waveguide that acts as a global communication channel and complements a more traditional 2D electrical NoC fabric. This hybrid communication architecture utilizes electrical and photonic paths simultaneously to improve the performance-per-watt characteristics of a CMP. We explore different architectural configurations of our hybrid photonic NoC fabric by considering: (i) varying levels of electrical to photonic communication connectivity, (ii) multiple degrees of communication serialization, and (iii) different levels of photonic wavelength division multiplexing. These configurations enable interesting trade-offs between performance and power consumption in the proposed architecture. Our experimental results indicate significant potential for METEOR as it can provide about $5\times$ reduction in power consumption and improvements in throughput and access latencies, compared to traditional electrical 2D mesh and torus NoCs. Our proposed METEOR fabric also demonstrates lower photonic-layer area cost, power consumption, and energy-delay product, while maintaining competitive communication latency and throughput compared to previously proposed hybrid photonic NoC fabrics, such as the hybrid photonic torus, the all-optical Corona crossbar, and the hybrid hierarchical Firefly crossbar.
- The key challenges for waveguide photonics include: (i) high complexity and overhead of thermally tuning microring resonators to ensure proper coupling of wavelengths, (ii) high power footprint due to significant waveguide crossing, propagation, and bending losses, (iii) need for complex tapered structures and optimized grating couplers with high coupling efficiency, and (iv) $0.5\text{-}3\ \mu\text{m}$ inter-waveguide spacing requirements to avoid crosstalk that can lead to lower bandwidth density than in optimized electrical wires. To overcome these challenges with waveguide photonics, free-space nanophotonics based on GaAs/AlAs dense Multiple Quantum Well (MQW) devices have recently been proposed as an alternative. Such free-space configurations can be integrated with standard CMOS fabrication processes and are better suited for high-density optical interconnects due to their small active area and improved misalignment tolerance. MQW devices are projected to consume less than $1\ \text{pJ/bit}$ energy and can be configured either as absorption modulators or photo-detectors (PDs). On-chip optical interconnects utilizing MQWs can operate at $40\ \text{Gbps}$ bandwidth to instantiate single-hop or multi-hop transfers through free-space optical links. MQW modulators provide significant potential to get around the thermal tuning challenges of silicon microring resonators and can be fabricated in various angles to achieve out-of-plane beam steering directions. In [Bahirat and Pasricha, 2014b], we proposed a novel system-level framework (HELIX) to synthesize application-specific hybrid (electrical and free-space photonics) NoC fabrics. HELIX integrates graph based algorithms, linear programming, and custom heuristics to enable rapid design space exploration and application-specific customization of hybrid electrophotonic NoC fabrics for many-core chip architectures. Based on our experimental studies, we demonstrate that the proposed techniques in the HELIX framework produce a superior NoC architecture that satisfies all performance requirements for *MiBench* multi-application workloads and *PARSEC* multi-threaded workloads, while achieving an average of $3.06\times$ reduction in power dissipation across SoC platforms of varying complexity, compared to previously proposed application-specific electrical-only NoC synthesis frameworks.
- In [Bahirat and Pasricha, 2014c], we presented the 3D-HELIX framework to synthesize heterogeneous application-specific hybrid (free space) nanophotonic-electric 3D NoCs for emerging 3D chip multiprocessors. Based on our experimental studies, we demonstrated that the proposed techniques in the 3D-HELIX framework produce a superior hybrid nanophotonic-electric 3D NoC architecture that satisfies all performance requirements for multi-application workloads,

while achieving an average from 2.5× to 6× reduction in power for multi-layer small, medium and large sized 3D-NoC based heterogeneous 3D CMP architectures, compared to synthesized application-specific electrical 3D NoCs.

- In [Chittamuru, Desai, Pasricha, 2015] we proposed the UltraNoC photonic NoC architecture that features improved channel sharing among cores by using an aggressive concurrent token stream-based arbitration strategy. UltraNoC utilizes multiple-write-multiple-read (MWMR) photonic waveguides in a crossbar topology, and supports dynamic performance adaptation to aggressively utilize network bandwidth and meet diverse application demands. UltraNoC also supports the ability to dynamically transfer bandwidth between clusters of cores and re-prioritize multiple co-running applications to further improve channel utilization and adapt to time-varying application performance goals. Our architecture improves throughput by up to 9.8×, latency by up to 55% and EDP by up to 90% over traditional electrical and state-of-the-art photonic NoC architectures with the best-known arbitration mechanisms. UltraNoC also scales well with increasing core counts on a chip, and reduces crosstalk in photonic channels to enhance communication reliability. **This paper received the Best Paper Award at the ACM GLSVLSI 2015 conference.**

In the area of memory-access enhancements with optically connected DRAM modules, we have made the following contributions:

- In [Thakkar and Pasricha, 2014a] we introduced 3D-Wiz, which is a high bandwidth, low latency, optically interfaced 3D DRAM architecture with fine grained data organization and activation. 3D-Wiz integrates sub-bank level 3D partitioning of the data array to enable fine-grained activation and greater memory parallelism. A novel method of routing the internal memory bus using TSVs and fan-out buffers enables 3D-Wiz to use smaller dimension subarrays without significant area overhead. This in turn reduces the random access latency and activation-precharge energy. 3D-Wiz demonstrates access latency of 19.5ns and row cycle time of 25ns. It yields per access activation energy and precharge energy of 0.78nJ and 0.62nJ respectively with 42.5% area efficiency. 3D-Wiz yields the best latency and energy consumption values per access among other well-known 3D DRAM architectures. Experimental results with PARSEC benchmarks indicate that 3D-Wiz achieves 38.8% improvement in performance, 81.1% reduction in power consumption, and 77.1% reduction in energy-delay product (EDP) on average over 3D DRAM architectures from prior work.
- In [Thakkar and Pasricha, 2015b] we introduced 3D-ProWiz (an enhanced version of 3D-Wiz), which is a high-bandwidth, energy-efficient, optically-interfaced 3D DRAM architecture with fine grained data organization and activation. 3D-ProWiz integrates sub-bank level 3D partitioning of the data array to enable fine-grained activation and greater memory parallelism. A novel method of routing the internal memory bus to individual subarrays using TSVs and fanout buffers enables 3D-ProWiz to use smaller dimension subarrays without significant area overhead. The use of TSVs at subarray-level granularity eliminates the need to use slow and power hungry global lines, which in turn reduces the random access latency and activation-precharge energy. 3D-ProWiz yields the best latency and energy consumption values per access among other well-known 3D DRAM architectures. Experimental results with PARSEC benchmarks indicate that 3D-ProWiz achieves 41.9% reduction in average latency, 52% reduction in average power, and 80.6% reduction in energy-delay product (EDP) on average over DRAM architectures from prior work.
- In [Thakkar and Pasricha, 2015c] we presented a novel Wide-I/O DRAM architecture called 3D-WiRED, with an enhanced DRAM core to enable low latency and energy-efficient optically interfaced memory access. Through detailed time-energy analysis of a Wide-I/O DRAM prototype, we have identified the need to reduce the capacitance of bitlines, memory bus, and global data path to reduce random access latency, read/write energy, and activation-precharge energy. We reorganize DRAM banks and utilize a TSV-based internal memory bus to achieve

reduced capacitance of the data access path with increased area-efficiency. We presented detailed breakdowns of timing and energy for the prototype Wide-I/O DRAM, through which we identify the key components of DRAM organization that most significantly affect overall latency and energy of the DRAM subsystem. We modeled and studied two variants of the state-of-the-art Wide-I/O and 3D-SWIFT DRAMs, to derive an optimum combination of critical enhancements to make in Wide-I/O bank organization that would achieve combined benefits in performance, energy-efficiency, cost and area. We employed large-aspect-ratio subarrays to reduce bitline capacitance, with high area efficiency. Reduced bitline capacitance reduces row cycle time and activation-precharge energy which relaxes the power constraint and increases bank-level parallelism. We reorganized 3D-WiRED banks by using a TSV-based internal memory bus to eliminate global wordlines and datalines, which reduces access time and read/write energy. Experimental results indicate that our proposed 3D-WiRED DRAM architecture yields on average 31.2%, 32.9%, and 52.8% improvements in energy-per-bit, average-latency, and energy-delay-product (EDP) over state-of-the-art Wide I/O and 3D-SWIFT DRAM architectures.

- In [Thakkar and Pasricha, 2015a], we presented 3D-SGDRAM, a new 3D-stacked graphics DRAM architecture with optical interfacing for GPU-centric processing systems. 3D-SGDRAM employs a new bitline interface and a bank organization based on detailed parameter characterization and optimization to achieve simultaneous improvements in performance, throughput, power, and area of the DRAM core. We modified the bitline interface of the DRAM core to enable access to only a selective group of bitlines in all active subarrays during a memory transaction, which helps optimize page size and related architectural parameters. We characterized the interdependence between various architectural parameters of the 3D-SGDRAM bank organization and optimize these parameters, to achieve benefits in performance, power, throughput and area. Experimental results with CUDA benchmarks indicate that 3D-SGDRAM yields 57.5%, 77.7%, and 45.2% improvements in power, latency, and energy-delay product (EDP) on average over state-of-the-art GDDR5 and GDDR5M solutions.
- In [Thakkar and Pasricha, 2016] we presented a novel, energy-efficient DRAM refresh technique called *massed refresh* that simultaneously leverages bank-level and subarray-level concurrency to reduce the overhead of distributed refresh operations in the Hybrid Memory Cube (HMC) and other optically-connected DRAM architectures. In *massed refresh*, a bundle of DRAM rows in a refresh operation is composed of two subgroups mapped to two different banks, with the rows of each subgroup mapped to different subarrays within the corresponding bank. Both subgroups of DRAM rows are refreshed concurrently during a refresh command, which greatly reduces the refresh cycle time and improves bandwidth and energy efficiency of the HMC. Our experimental analysis shows that the proposed *massed refresh* technique achieves up to 6.3% and 5.8% improvements in throughput and energy-delay product on average over JEDEC standardized distributed per-bank refresh and state-of-the-art scattered refresh techniques.

In the area of device-level characterization and circuit-level enhancements for optoelectronic components to improve reliability, energy-efficiency, and performance, we have made the following contributions:

- Microring-resonators (MRs), which are the basic building blocks of PNoCs, are highly susceptible to crosstalk that can notably degrade optical-signal-to-noise ratio (SXR), reducing reliability in PNoCs. We observed that when transmitting data in PNoCs, crosstalk noise in MRs depends on the characteristics of data values propagating in the photonic waveguide. Therefore in [Chittamuru and Pasricha, 2015a] we proposed novel techniques to intelligently reduce undesirable data value occurrences in a photonic waveguide. These techniques are easily implementable in any existing DWDM-based photonic crossbar without requiring major modifications to the architectures, unlike previously proposed crosstalk mitigation techniques that are targeted to reduce crosstalk in specific architectures by requiring modifications to their router designs. We designed a crosstalk mitigation

technique with 5-bit encoding (PCTM5B) to improve worst-case SXR for DWDM-based photonic crossbar PNoCs. We also introduced another crosstalk-mitigation scheme with 6-bit encoding (PCTM6B), that more aggressively improves SXR but with relatively higher EDP overhead. Our evaluation results indicate that the encoding schemes improve worst-case-SXR in Corona and Firefly PNoCs by up to 18%.

- In [Chittamuru and Pasricha, 2015b] we observed that for a fixed free spectral range (FSR), increase in DWDM of the waveguide leads to reduction in wavelength spacing between two adjacent wavelengths and this in turn increases crosstalk noise. From transmission spectrums of cascaded MRs, it can be seen that overlapping region between adjacent wavelengths decreases with increase in the wavelength spacing; this in turn reduces crosstalk noise. Thus SNR in DWDM based photonic crossbars is directly related to the available DWDM in its waveguides. Thus, we proposed a novel wavelength spacing (WSP) techniques to increase spacing between adjacent wavelengths in a DWDM waveguide for PNoCs. Experimental results on two photonic crossbar architectures (Corona and Firefly) indicate that our approach improves worst-case signal-to-noise ratio (SNR) by up to 51.7%.
- Photonic network-on-chip (PNoC) architectures typically employ dense wavelength division multiplexing (DWDM) for high bandwidth transfers. Unfortunately, DWDM increases crosstalk noise and decreases optical signal to noise ratio (SNR) in microring resonators (MRs) threatening the reliability of data communication. Additionally, process variations induce variations in the width and thickness of MRs causing shifts in resonance wavelengths of MRs, which further reduces signal integrity, leading to communication errors and bandwidth loss. In [Chittamuru, Thakkar, Pasricha, 2016b], we proposed a novel encoding mechanism that intelligently adapts to on-chip process variations, and improves worst-case SNR by reducing crosstalk noise in MRs used within DWDM-based PNoCs. Experimental results on the Corona PNoC architecture indicate that our approach improves worst-case SNR by up to 44.13%. **This paper was a Best Paper Finalist at the IEEE ISQED 2016 conference.**
- In [Chittamuru, Thakkar, Pasricha, 2016a], we presented a novel crosstalk mitigation framework called PICO to enable reliable communication in emerging PNoC-based multicore systems. PICO mitigates the effects of IM crosstalk by controlling signal loss of wavelengths in the waveguide and reduces trimming-induced crosstalk by intelligently reducing undesirable data value occurrences in a photonic waveguide based on the PV profile of MRs. Our framework has low overhead and is easily implementable in any existing DWDM-based PNoC without major modifications to the architecture. To the best of our knowledge, this is the first work that attempts to improve SNR in PNoCs considering both IM effects and PV in its MRs. We presented device-level analytical models to capture the deleterious effects of localized trimming in MRs. Moreover, we extended this model for system-level heterodyne crosstalk analysis. We proposed a scheme for IM passband truncation-aware heterodyne crosstalk mitigation (IMCM) to improve worst-case SNR of MRs by controlling non-resonant signal power. We proposed a scheme for process variation (PV)-aware heterodyne crosstalk mitigation (PVCMM) to improve worst-case SNR of detector MRs by encoding data to avoid undesirable data occurrences. Experimental results indicate that our approach can improve the worst-case SNR by up to 4.4 \times and significantly enhance the reliability of DWDM-based PNoC architectures.

In the area of energy-efficient runtime reconfiguration of optoelectronic components, we have made the following contributions:

- The operation of photonic NoCs (PNoCs) is very sensitive to temperature variations that frequently occur on a chip. These variations can create significant reliability issues for PNoCs. For example, a microring resonator (MR) may resonate at another wavelength instead of its designated wavelength due to thermal variations, which can lead to bandwidth wastage and data corruption in

PNoCs. In [Chittamuru and Pasricha, 2016c] we proposed a novel run-time framework called SPECTRA to overcome temperature-induced reliability issues in PNoCs. The framework consists of (i) a device-level reactive MR assignment mechanism that dynamically assigns a group of MRs to reliably modulate/receive data in a waveguide based on the chip thermal profile; and (ii) a system-level proactive thread migration technique to avoid on-chip thermal threshold violations and reduce MR tuning/trimming power by dynamically migrating threads between cores. Experimental results indicate that SPECTRA can satisfy on-chip thermal thresholds and maintain high NoC bandwidth while reducing total power by up to 61%, and thermal tuning/trimming power by up to 71% over state-of-the-art thermal management solutions.

Future Directions

We envision the following directions for future research in this area that can solve some of the new challenges we have uncovered as part of this project:

- CMOS-compatible integrated photonics devices are very susceptible to various sources of uncertainty, such as process variations, thermal variations, voltage fluctuations, circuit/device aging, and soft-errors. There is a need for a holistic framework to overcome uncertainty and ensure predictable behavior of photonic devices at the device, circuit and architecture levels.
- There is a need for new CAD tools that can allow for cross-layer exploration of integrated silicon photonic architectures, to balance the multiple objectives of performance, energy-efficiency, reliability, cost, and security with optoelectronic networks.
- The area of memory-NoC co-optimization shows great promise. As memory components determine a majority of the traffic characteristics in NoCs, co-design and co-optimization of the NoC and memory becomes essential to manage reliability, energy/power, and performance. There is a need for new optically interfaced memory architectures that are co-optimized with opto-electronic networks at the chip level.

Publications and Products

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