

## Compiling and Optimizing Scripting Languages

Paul Biggar and David Gregg

Department of Computer Science and Statistics  
Trinity College Dublin

LLNL, 17th March, 2009

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## Motivation

1. dont have to  
obduscate your  
code for  
performance

- User needs web page in 0.5 seconds
  - Execution time
  - DB access
  - Network latency
  - Browser rendering
- Easier maintainance
- What if execution was:
  - 2x as fast?
  - 10x as fast?

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## Outline

- 1 Introduction to phc
- 2 Current state of phc
  - Challenges to compilation?
  - phc solution: use the C API
  - Speedup
- 3 Next for phc - Analysis and Optimization
  - Simple Optimizations
  - Advanced Optimizations
- 4 Security

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**phc**

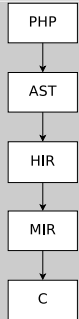
1. BSD licence useful since its easy to extend
2. Well engineered - turns out you dont get a phd for that

- <http://phpcompiler.org>
- Ahead-of-time compiler for PHP
- Edsko de Vries, John Gilbert, Paul Biggar
- BSD license
- Latest release: 0.2.0.3 - compiles non-OO
- svn trunk: compiles most OO

**phc**

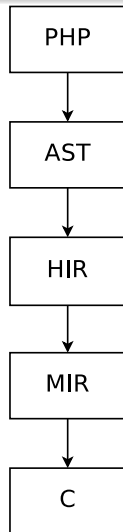
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## Structure of phc



1. maketea
2. All can be unparsed to PHP

## Structure of phc



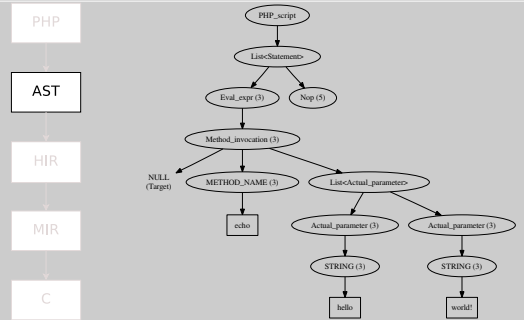
## PHP



## PHP



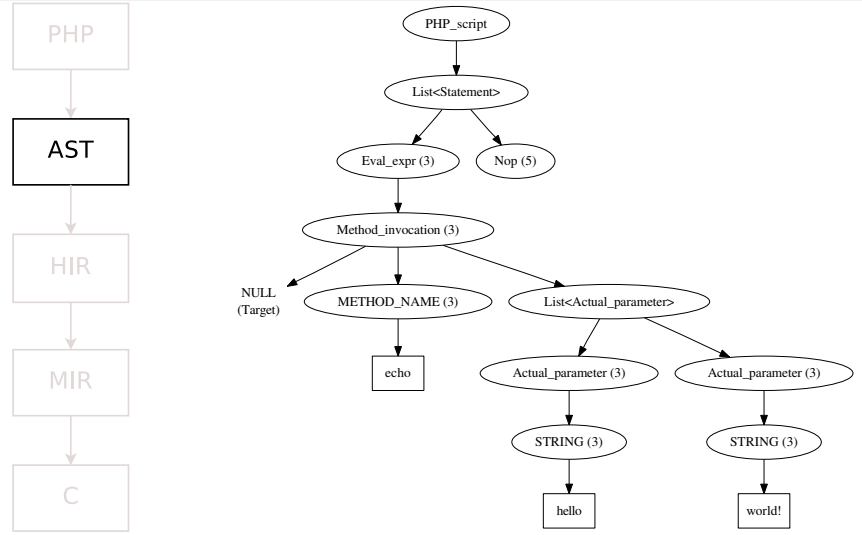
### AST



1. better than parse  
("concrete syntax")  
tree

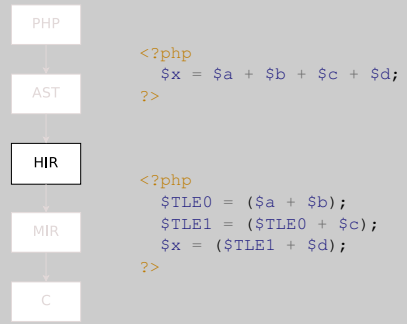


### AST



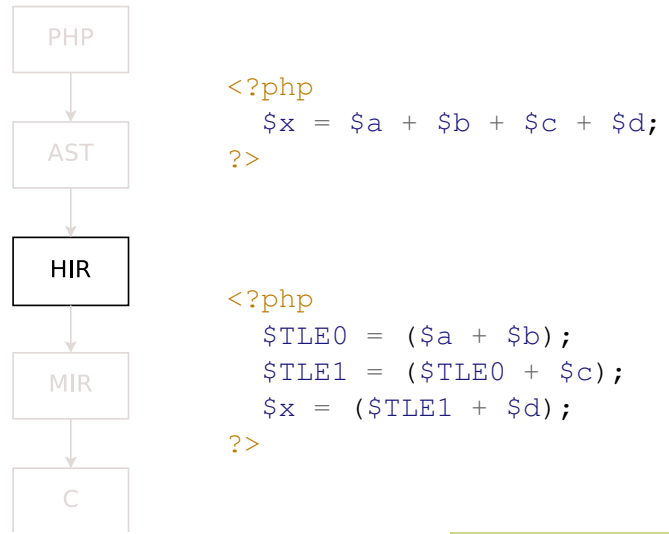


## HIR

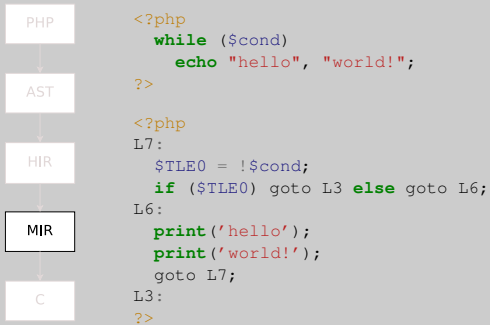


- 1. 3AC
- 2. Still PHP

## HIR

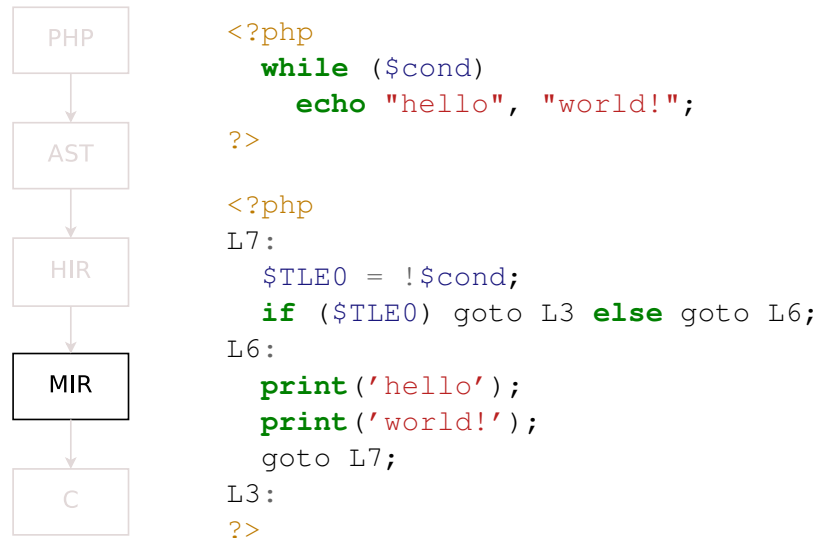


## MIR



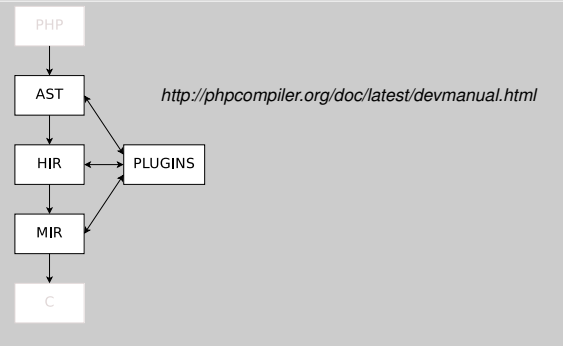
1. Not PHP
2. Gotos

## MIR

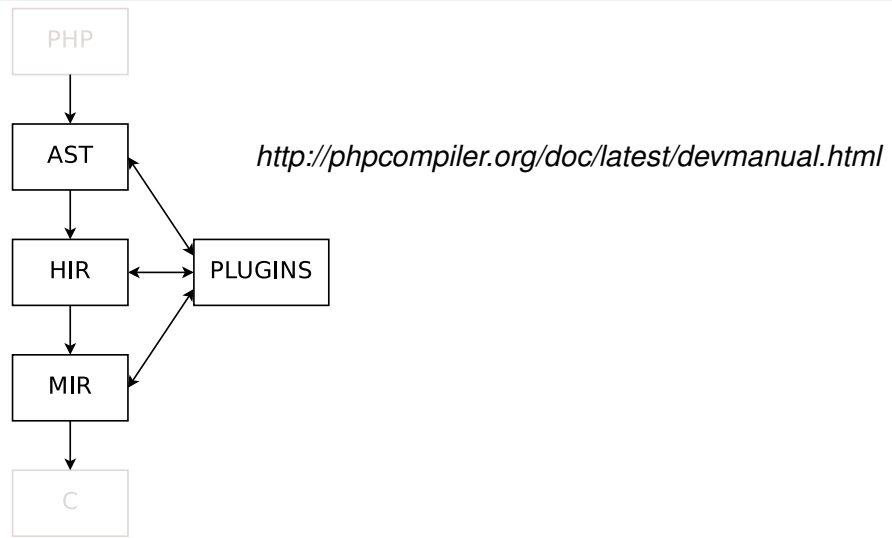


## Plugins

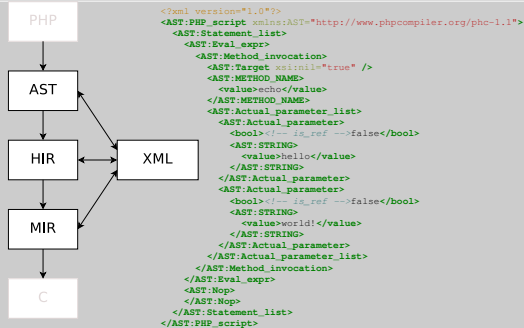
1. Visitor pattern
2. We use it for testing a lot
3. Manual documents it well
- 4.



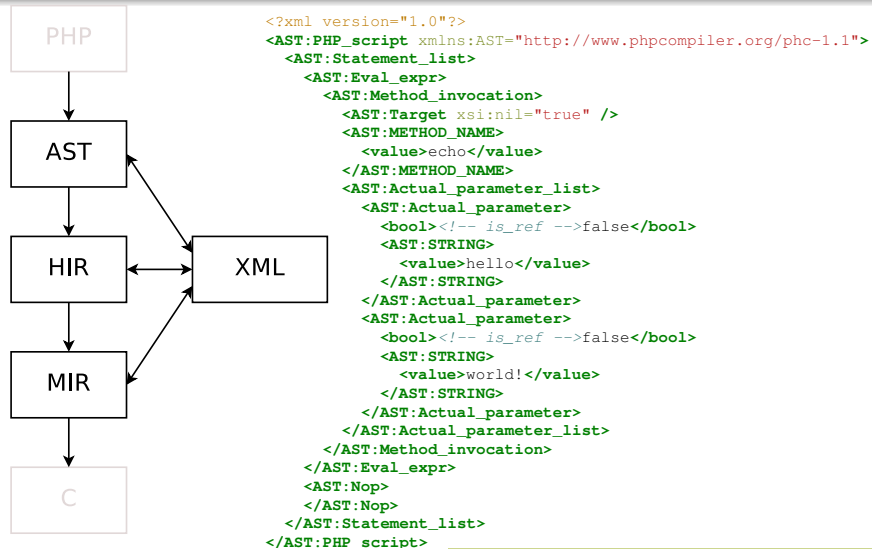
## Plugins



# XML



# XML



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SAC 2009

1. Correctness
2. Large libraries
3. Odd features
4. No spec

## A Practical Solution for Scripting Language Compilers

Paul Biggar, Edsko de Vries and David Gregg

Department of Computer Science and Statistics  
Trinity College Dublin

ACM Symposium on Applied Computing - PL track  
12th March, 2009

SAC 2009

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## Sneak peak

- Problem: Scripting languages present “unique” problems (in practice)
- Solution: Re-use as much of the ~~Canonical~~ *Reference Implementation* as possible.

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## Undefined

*The PHP group claim that they have the final say in the specification of PHP. This group's specification is an implementation, and there is no prose specification or agreed validation suite. There are alternate implementations [...] that claim to be compatible (they don't say what this means) with some version of PHP.*

D. M. Jones. Forms of language specification: Examples from commonly used computer languages. ISO/IEC JTC1/SC22/OWG/N0121, February 2008.

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D. M. Jones. Forms of language specification: Examples from commonly used computer languages. ISO/IEC JTC1/SC22/OWG/N0121, February 2008.

## Batteries included

1. all written in C, not PHP
2. Mike Furr earlier: 1000 methods/classes in C
3. 4870 functions, 1000 methods

```
abs() apc_load_constants() array_intersect() array_values()
acos() apc_sma_info() array_intersect_assoc() array_walk()
acosh() apc_store() array_intersect_key() array_walk_recursive()
addslashes() apd_breakpoint() array_intersect_uassoc() ArrayIterator::current()
aggregate() apd_callstack() array_intersect_ukey() ArrayIterator::key()
aggregate_info() apd_clunk() array_key_exists() ArrayIterator::next()
aggregate_methods() apd_continue() array_keys() ArrayIterator::rewind()
aggregate_methods_by_list() apd_croak() array_map() ArrayIterator::seek()
aggregate_methods_by_list() apd_dump_function_table() array_merge() ArrayIterator::valid()
aggregate_properties() apd_dump_persistent_resources() array_merge_recursive() ArrayObject::__construct()
aggregate_properties_by_list() apd_dump_regular_resources() array_multisort() ArrayObject::append()
aggregation_info() apd_echo() array_pad() ArrayObject::count()
apache_child_terminate() apd_get_active_symbols() array_pop() ArrayObject::getIterator()
apache_get_modules() apd_get_session() array_product() ArrayObject::offsetExists()
apache_get_version() apd_get_session_trace() array_rand() ArrayObject::offsetSet()
apache_lookup_uri() apd_set_pprof_trace() array_reduce() ArrayObject::offsetUnset()
apache_note() apd_set_session_trace() array_reduce() ArrayObject::offsetUnset()
apache_request_headers() apd_set_socket_session_trace() array_reverse() asort()
apache_reset_timeout() apc_cache_info() array_change_key_case() array_search() ascii2ebcdic()
apache_response_headers() apc_clear_cache() array_chunk() array_shift() asin()
apc_add() apc_compile_file() array_combine() array_slice() asinh()
apc_cache_info() apc_define_constants() array_count_values() array_splice() asort()
apc_clear_cache() apc_delete() array_diff() array_sum() aspell_check()
apc_compile_file() apc_fetch() array_diff_assoc() array_udiff() aspell_check_raw()
apc_define_constants() apc_fetch() array_diff_assoc() array_udiff() aspell_new()
apc_delete() apc_fetch() array_diff_key() array_udiff_assoc() aspell_suggest()
apc_fetch() apc_fetch() array_diff_uassoc() array_udiff_uassoc() assert()
apc_fetch() apc_fetch() array_diff_ukey() array_uintersect() assert_options()
apc_fetch() apc_fetch() array_fill() array_uintersect_assoc() atan()
apc_fetch() apc_fetch() array_fill_keys() array_uintersect_uassoc() atan2()
apc_fetch() apc_fetch() array_filter() array_unique() atan2()
apc_fetch() apc_fetch() array_flip() array_unshift() atanh()
```

Jeff Atwood, Coding Horror, May 20th, 2008  
<http://www.codinghorror.com/blog/archives/001119.html>

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## Change between releases

```
<?php  
var_dump (0x9fa0ff0b);  
?>
```

PHP 5.2.1 (32-bit)

int(2147483647)

PHP 5.2.3 (32-bit)

float(2678128395)

## Change between releases

```
<?php  
var_dump (0x9fa0ff0b);  
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```

PHP 5.2.1 (32-bit)

int(2147483647)

PHP 5.2.3 (32-bit)

float(2678128395)

## Run-time code generation

1. scripting langs are typically made for interpreters
2. can do source inclusion at compile time
3. same mechanism for plugins

```
<?php
    eval ($argv[1]);
?>

<?php
    include ("mylib.php");
    ...
    include ("plugin.php");
    ...
?>
```

## Run-time code generation

```
<?php
    eval ($argv[1]);
?>
```

```
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    include ("mylib.php");
    ...
    include ("plugin.php");
    ...
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```

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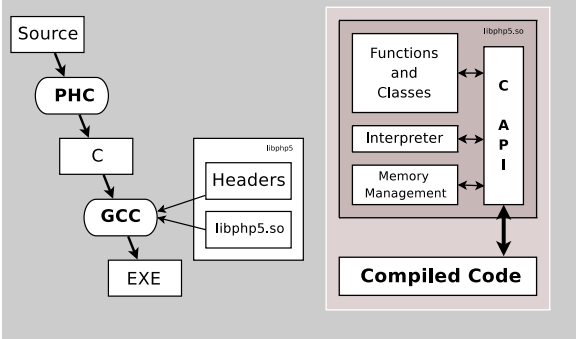
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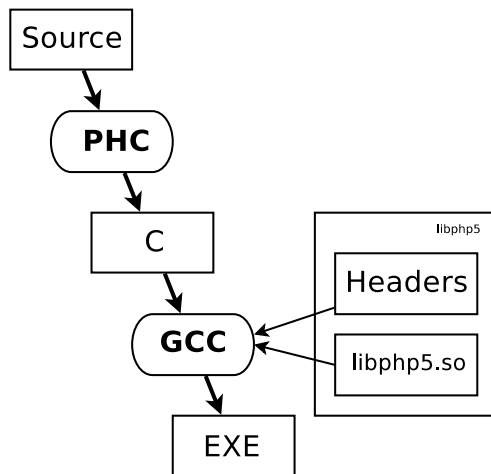
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## Use C API

1. RTCG
2. Functions
3. Changes between releases: also use C API at compile-time



## Use C API



## More detail

1. C API is just zval + macros and functions
2. Use (target) PHP's C API at run-time

PHP	zval
Python	PyObject
Ruby	VALUE
Lua	TValue

H. Muhammad and R. Ierusalimschy. C APIs in extension and extensible languages. *Journal of Universal Computer Science*, 13(6):839–853, 2007.

## More detail

PHP	zval
Python	PyObject
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## Simple listings: \$i = 0

```
// $i = 0;
{
    zval* p_i;
    php_hash_find (LOCAL_ST, "i", 5863374, p_i);
    php_destruct (p_i);
    php_allocate (p_i);
    ZVAL_LONG (*p_i, 0);
}
```

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    php_allocate (p_i);
    ZVAL_LONG (*p_i, 0);
}
```



## Example: \$i = 0

```
// $i = 0;
{
  if (local_i == NULL)
  {
    local_i = EG (uninitialized_zval_ptr);
    local_i->refcount++;
  }
  zval **p_lhs = &local_i;

  zval *value;
  if ((*p_lhs)->is_ref)
  {
    // Always overwrite the current value
    value = *p_lhs;
    zval_dtor (value);
  }
  else
  {
    ALLOC_INIT_ZVAL (value);
    zval_ptr_dtor (p_lhs);
    *p_lhs = value;
  }

  ZVAL_LONG (value, 0);
}
```

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```

## Example: \$i = \$j

```

// $i = $j
{
  if (local_i == NULL)
  {
    local_i = EG (uninitialized_zval_ptr);
    local_i->refcount++;
  }
  zval **p_lhs = &local_i;

  zval *rhs;
  if (local_j == NULL)
  rhs = EG (uninitialized_zval_ptr);
  else
  rhs = local_j;

  if (*p_lhs != rhs)
  {
    if ((*p_lhs)->is_ref)
    {
      // First, call the destructor to remove any data structures
      // associated with lhs that will now be overwritten
      zval_dtor (*p_lhs);
      // Overwrite LHS
      (*p_lhs)->value = rhs->value;
      (*p_lhs)->type = rhs->type;
      zval_copy_ctor (*p_lhs);
    }
    else
    {
      zval_ptr_dtor (p_lhs);
      if (rhs->is_ref)
      {
        // Take a copy of RHS for LHS
        *p_lhs = zvp_clone_ex (rhs);
      }
      else
      {
        // Share a copy
        rhs->refcount++;
        *p_lhs = rhs;
      }
    }
  }
}

```

## Example: \$i = \$j

```

// $i = $j;
{
  if (local_i == NULL)
  {
    local_i = EG (uninitialized_zval_ptr);
    local_i->refcount++;
  }
  zval **p_lhs = &local_i;

  zval *rhs;
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  }
}

```

## Example: printf (\$f)

```

1  int main(int argc, char *argv[])
2  {
3      printf("$f\n", 1);
4      return 0;
5  }

```

## Example: printf (\$f)

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```

## Applicability

- **Everything**
  - Perl
  - PHP
  - Ruby
  - Tcl – *I think*

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## Applicability

### 1. Python used to be bad - aycock quote

- Everything
  - Perl
  - PHP
  - Ruby
  - Tcl – *I think*
- Except specification
  - Lua
  - Python

## Applicability

- Everything
  - Perl
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## Applicability

- Everything
  - Perl
  - PHP
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  - Python
- **Not at all**
  - Javascript

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- Everything
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1. Why is experimental evaluation a speedup?
2. That's an interesting result. Shouldn't compilers always be faster!!!
3. PHP's interpreter isn't slowed by interpreter loop. Rather it's the level of dynamicism.

Original Speed-up

0.1x

(10 times slower than the PHP interpreter)

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0.1x

(10 times slower than the PHP interpreter)



## The problem with copies

1. each statement is pretty high level

```
<?php
  for ($i = 0; $i < $n; $i++)
    $str = $str . "hello";
?>
```

```
<?php
  for ($i = 0; $i < $n; $i++)
  {
    $T = $str . "hello";
    $str = $T;
  }
?>
```

## The problem with copies

```
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```

```
<?php
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    $str = $T;
  }
?>
```

## Optimization

- Constant folding

1. We dont need to know how to fold constants - we just pass it off to PHP's eval

```
<?php
...
$T = "5" + true;
...
?>
```

```
<?php
...
$T = 6;
...
?>
```

## Optimization

- Constant folding

```
<?php
...
$T = "5" + true;
...
?>
```

```
<?php
...
$T = 6;
...
?>
```

## Optimization

- Constant folding
- **Constant pooling**

```
<?php
    $sum = 0;
    for ($i = 0; $i < 10; $i=$i+1)
    {
        $sum .= "hello";
    }
?>
```

## Optimization

- Constant folding
- **Constant pooling**

```
<?php
    $sum = 0;
    for ($i = 0; $i < 10; $i=$i+1)
    {
        $sum .= "hello";
    }
?>
```

## Optimization

1. PHP implements this
2. function cant change afte first invocation - dont need lookup-cache of inline cache or polymorphic inline cache

- Constant folding
- Constant pooling
- **Function caching**

```
// printf ($f);  
static php_fcall_info printf_info;  
{  
    php_fcall_info_init ("printf", &printf_info);  
  
    php_hash_find (  
        LOCAL_ST, "f", 5863275, &printf_info.params);  
  
    php_call_function (&printf_info);  
}
```

## Optimization

- Constant folding
- Constant pooling
- **Function caching**

```
// printf ($f);  
static php_fcall_info printf_info;  
{  
    php_fcall_info_init ("printf", &printf_info);  
  
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}
```

## Optimization

- Constant folding
- Constant pooling
- Function caching
- Pre-hashing

```
// $i = 0;  
{  
    zval* p_i;  
    php_hash_find (LOCAL_ST, "i", 5863374, p_i);  
    php_destruct (p_i);  
    php_allocate (p_i);  
    ZVAL_LONG (*p_i, 0);  
}
```

## Optimization

- Constant folding
- Constant pooling
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## Optimization

- Constant folding
- Constant pooling
- Function caching
- Pre-hashing
- **Symbol-table removal**

```
// $i = 0;  
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  php_destruct (local_i);  
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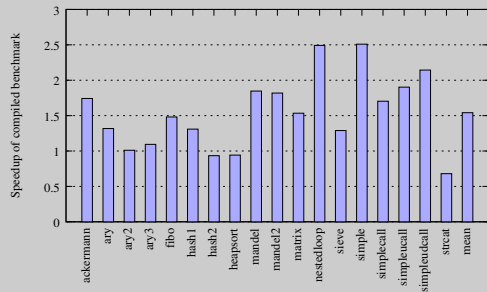
## Optimization

- Constant folding
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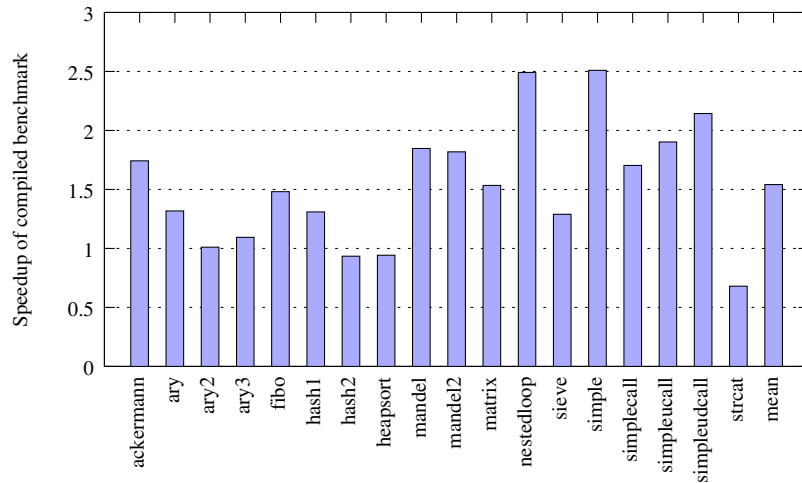
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```

## Current speed-up

1. Explain how to read graph
2. Much better than 0.1x
3. C compiler: be 5x faster
4. PHP 40x-70x slower



## Current speed-up



## Outline

- 1 Introduction to phc
- 2 Current state of phc
  - 
  - 
  -
- 3 Next for phc - Analysis and Optimization
  - Simple Optimizations
  - Advanced Optimizations
- 4 Security

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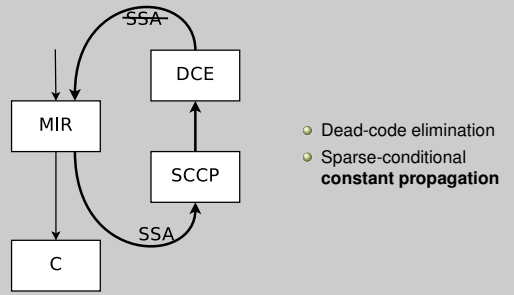
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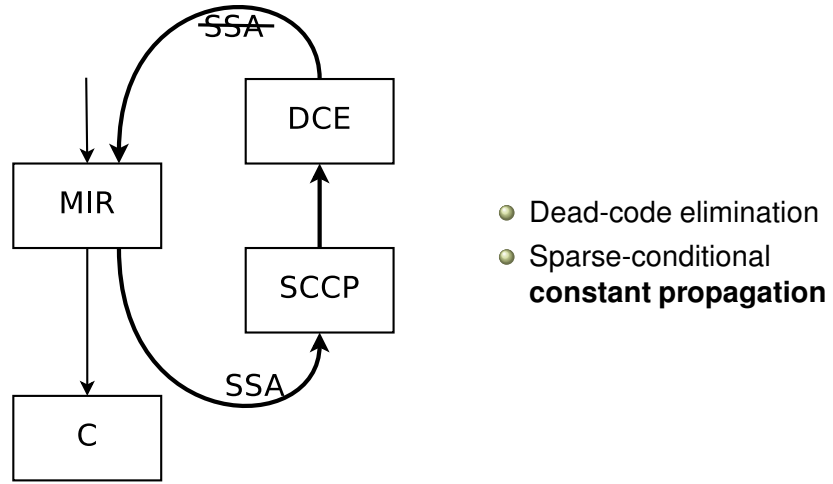
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### Intra-procedural optimizations

1. 2x speedup



### Intra-procedural optimizations



## Type-inference

```
<?php  
  
function a ($x, $y)  
{  
    $str = $x . $y;  
    ...  
    return $str;  
}  
  
?>
```

## Type-inference

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## User-space handlers

- `__toString`
- `__get`
- `__set`
- `__isset`
- `__unset`
- `__sleep`
- `__wake`
- `__call`
- `__callStatic`
- ...

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- `__callStatic`
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## C API handlers

1. So previous SSA opts were illegal
2. Complete access to interpreter internals
3. Need accurate use-defs

- read\_property
- read\_dimension
- **get**
- **set**
- cast\_object
- has\_property
- unset\_property
- ...

## C API handlers

- read\_property
- read\_dimension
- **get**
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- cast\_object
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## Unknown types propagate

- local symbol table
- global symbol table
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- Must model types precisely
  - (Possibly unnamed) fields, arrays, variables and method calls

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## Analysis design

### 1. Uses and definitions incomplete - this doesn't use them

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  - (Possibly unnamed) fields, arrays, variables and method calls
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  - Can't use *def-use chains*
  - Can't use *SSA*

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## Analysis design

### 1. Imprecise callgraph - do it lazily

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## Algorithm

- Abstract Execution / Interpretation

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- Points-to analysis
  - \*-sensitive

1. flow, context,  
object, field

## Algorithm

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  - Precision
  - Array-indices/field names
  - Implicit conversions

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Master's thesis, SUNY at New Paltz, 1999.

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1. Make polymorphic calls monomorphic
2. Go through each of the problems on the previous slide
3. model types precisely
4. need to model many functions - in contrast to SAC stuff
5. much easier than reimplementing, however

## Algorithm

- Abstract Execution / Interpretation
- Points-to analysis
  - \*-sensitive
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## Complex cases

1. Static-includes optimization needs to be deployment-time
2. hashtables - SAC javascript talk

- Hashtables
- Implicit conversions
- Variable-variables
- \$GLOBALS
- Static includes
- \$SESSION
- Compiler temporaries

## Complex cases

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## Interesting thoughts

### 1. just like hotspot

- Strip off first loop iteration

## Interesting thoughts

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## Interesting thoughts

1. Would it go well with Gal/Franz tracing?

- Strip off first loop iteration
- JITs or Gal/Franz Tracing?

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- Davis - if we include it, we'll do better

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- Better yet: standardize libraries (and language?), including FFI
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- Pessimistic assumptions spread
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## Thanks

### phc needs contributors

- **contribute:**  
`http://phpcompiler.org/contribute.html`
- **mailing list:** `phc-general@phpcompiler.org`
- **slides:** `http://www.cs.tcd.ie/~pbiggar/`
- **contact:** `paul.biggar@gmail.com`

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