Porting SLAMBench KFusion to Khronos SYCL

Paul Keir
University of the West of Scotland
paul.keir@uws.ac.uk

Abstract
The C++ SYCL for OpenCL standard was ratified last year by the Khronos Group, with early commercial and open-source implementations available already. While SYCL provides a programming model comparable to OpenCL, the use of an OpenMP-style single-source idioms, with integrated support for C++11 templates and language features, also introduces significant differences. To investigate the robustness of SYCL and its implementations, we report on the completed effort to port the SLAMBench KFusion computer vision benchmark to SYCL.

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1. Introduction
The Khronos SYCL 1.2 specification [3] defines a C++11/14 API for parallel programs targeting execution upon a wide range of heterogeneous and hierarchical processing hardware of the kind typically targeted by OpenCL. Distinct from the pending OpenCL C++ kernel language, the foremost characteristic of SYCL is the complete integration of host and device code; wherein a kernel specified by a function object can as readily be passed to a SYCL parallel_for function template, as called directly. So too, an arbitrary function may equally well be called within the call-graph of a kernel targeting the OpenCL device; as within common or garden host code. Another interesting aspect of SYCL concerns the transparent exchange of C++ type information between host and device; permitting novel possibilities for GPGPU template metapograms. With no extensions to the C++ language, it is also reassuring to find that a serial execution is always at hand for debugging; to borrow the language of OpenMP, a SYCL program is single-source.

SYCL is an convenient solution for introducing OpenCL-style parallelism to a serial or homogeneously parallel C++ project. Also when porting legacy OpenCL codes to SYCL, the calls to OpenCL C built-in functions can be transposed directly to those of SYCL; with many types sharing the same names.

struct vec_add {
    template <typename I, typename T>
    static void k(I ix, const T *a, const T *b, T *c, const size_t extent) {
        if (ix[0] < extent)
            c[ix] = a[ix] + b[ix];
    }
};

void vec_add_h(const T *a, const T *b, T *c, const size_t sz)
{
    queue q;
    const range<1> r(sz);
    const buffer<T,1> buf_a(a, r), buf_b(b, r);
    buf_c(c, r);
    dagr::run<vec_add>(q, buf_a, buf_b, buf_c, sz);
}

Figure 1. A SYCL vector addition kernel for DAGR

The DAGR header library 1 developed as part of this work, supports the cut and paste transplant of kernels written in OpenCL C, into SYCL C++. Consequently, DAGR supports comparable function signatures. Figure 1 demonstrates the DAGR equivalent of the common vector addition kernel: note the pointer syntax of parameters 2, 3 and 4. Conventionally, SYCL accessor objects provide the crucial working abstraction over host memory; yet while some pointer interface operators such as operator* and operator[] are supported, others such as operator++ and operator-- are not. A SYCL accessor satisfies the dereferenceable concept, but not the iterator concept. This is true also of SYCL's explicit pointer classes; such as global_ptr. It is no surprise then to find that a SYCL accessor object cannot be passed as an argument to a polymorphic pointer parameter such as T*; and of course the std::is_pointer trait also evaluates to false.

Another common aspect of OpenCL kernel function signatures which DAGR mirrors in SYCL is in the correspondence of kernel parameters passed by value, with those host variables which do not originate from SYCL buffer objects. This is illustrated by the size_t argument to the dagr::run method in the host code of Figure 2, which corresponds to the size_t value parameter of the kernel in Figure 1.

Figure 2. SYCL vector addition host code for DAGR

1Like “SYCL”, “DAGR” misspells a sharp metal instrument in four letters.
The DAGR API is subsequently applied to port version 1.1 of the main KFusion algorithm [7, 8] of the SLAMBench computer vision benchmark suite [1] to SYCL. SLAMBench provides implementations of KFusion in a range of languages, including an OpenCL version, which naturally provides the starting point here. Nevertheless, the final result of the port is more akin to the C++ version, upon which the OpenCL version was originally based. Development was undertaken using a trial version of Codeplay Software’s ComputeCpp [6]. Accordingly, performance evaluation of the SYCL port of SLAMBench KFusion is deferred.

2. SYCL SLAMBench
The SYCL version of the SLAMBench [1] KFusion algorithm was developed and tested on 64-bit Ubuntu 15.04, with GCC 4.9.2, and the 15.06 and 15.10 evaluation versions of Codeplay Software’s ComputeCpp. The OpenCL driver was version 5.0.0.43 from the 64-bit Intel Code Builder for OpenCL. A significant first task was the development of a GCC-like compiler driver, syclcc, which automatically invokes both the device compiler from Codeplay’s ComputeCpp, and the native C++ host compiler. So equipped, and following minor modifications to the SLAMBench CMake configuration, by setting CXX to syclcc, the GUI and benchmark versions of KFusion will build; upon the same simple cmake and make command invocations as for each supported language.

Version 1.1 of SLAMBench includes 14 significant kernels. Of these, 12 are implemented on GPU using both CUDA and OpenCL. The two remaining are acquire, the IO-heavy acquisition of another RGB-D frame; and solve, a singular value decomposition, too small to be offloaded. The SYCL version contains the same 12 kernels.

The focus for the original SLAMBench project is portability; with a nevertheless competitive performance profile. From this perspective a goal in the development of the SYCL version was in replicating the high-level structure of the KFusion algorithm implementation; shared by each of the language implementations included with SLAMBench. Due to the Khronos specified compatibility between OpenCL and SYCL, the OpenCL implementation was the foundation in the development of the SYCL equivalent. This meant that OpenCL cl_mem variables declared at global scope, became SYCL buffer pointers; also declared at global scope. Calls to clCreateBuffer became calls to the C++ new operator, with some care required as the relevant read/write access permission is not requested by the SYCL buffer constructor; using a subsequent SYCL accessor instead. Hence, access permission requests were transferred to the site of each kernel enqueue. The declaration; creation; and release of kernels are implicit in SYCL, and were thus elided in this version. Calls to clSetKernelArg and clEnqueueNDRangeKernel are rendered especially concise with a single call to dagr::run. Ultimately, the aim in porting the host component in this fashion is readability, so allowing a fruitful comparison of the SYCL and existing versions; and parity of performance by replicating the same algorithm.

Figure 3’s invocation of the bilateralFilter kernel in SYCL, uses the DAGR API, with the ro wrapper function utilized twice to request access::mode::read access. The single call to dagr::run shown occurs in the Kfusion::preprocessing method, and is directly comparable to the single call to bilateralFilterKernel in the C++ version; albeit with additional SYCL queue and range arguments. In the more verbose OpenCL version, clSetKernelArg is called for each of five arguments, before the call to clEnqueueNDRangeKernel.

3. Related Work
Regarding purely C++ interfaces to GPU acceleration, a published ISO standard in consideration for inclusion in the next iteration of the C++ standard [4] provides an API for the parallel execution of a range of common STL algorithms. The API relies on the addition of tag-like execution policy objects as first arguments of relevant algorithm functions. Sequential, parallel and vectorised (including GPU) implementations are specified. A SYCL implementation [5] also exists; with 8 STL algorithms implemented so far.

Another example of a DSL using SYCL is described in Potter [2]. That research contrasts with the current work in its use of a deep embedding, to allow the composition of kernels. ViennaCL [9] provides a C++ API targeting a range of backends including OpenMP, OpenCL and CUDA. The main focus for ViennaCL is the provision of common linear algebra operations, with OpenCL strings facilitating custom kernels via runtime compilation.

4. Conclusion
The SYCL DAGR API has been introduced, along with its deployment to the task of porting the SLAMBench computer vision benchmark suite [1] to SYCL, for compatibility with Codeplay Software’s implementation: ComputeCpp. Notable features of DAGR include a concise end-user API; support for both value and pointer kernel parameters, as in OpenCL C; and the provision of lightweight wrapper functions to convey information regarding access permissions and shared memory quotas to the DAGR implementation. The API is designed as a header-only library, and utilises the Khronos SYCL standard to provide a concise interface for developers less interested in C++ lambda functions per se, than in maintaining parity between an OpenCL and a SYCL backend. While it is understood that the DAGR API offers only a portion of the configuration space of SYCL, it is hoped that this is nevertheless a focused and useful interface.

References