Solving Large Retrograde Analysis Problems

Using a Network of Workstations

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ABSTRACT

Chess endgame databases, while of important theoretical interest, have yet to make a significant impact in tournament chess. In the game of checkers, however, endgame databases have played a pivotal role in the success of our World Championship challenger program *Chinook*. Consequently, we are interested in building databases consisting of hundreds of billions of positions. Since database positions arise frequently in *Chinook*'s search trees, the databases must be accessible in real-time, unlike in chess. This paper discusses techniques for building large endgame databases using a network of workstations, and how this data can be organized for use in a real-time search. Although checkers is used to illustrate many of the ideas, the techniques and tools developed are also applicable to chess.

1. Introduction

In computer chess, the impact of precomputed endgame databases on tournament play has been relatively small. There are primarily three reasons for this. First, the variety of chess pieces result in different classes of endgames, many of which are rarely seen in actual play. Second, the outcome of most chess games is usually decided well before the endgame, meaning that even if databases were available, they would rarely play a role in determining a game's outcome. Consequently, few chess programs use non-trivial databases as part of their real-time search. Third, the substantial computational resources required to build endgame databases in the conventional way [12, 13] makes it difficult for most chess programmers to build their own. Fortunately, however, the databases are being made available to the public [6, 14, 15]. For chess at least, the main benefit of database construction seems to be educational, revealing many new endgame results to the players (see [5] for an interesting example) without, as yet, revealing their secrets ([9] represents one attempt).

Our goal is to build a checkers endgame database of 150 billion positions (all the 1-7 piece endgames, and the 4×4 subset of the 8-piece endgames). This paper discusses techniques for building large endgame databases using a network of workstations, and how this data can be organized for use in a real-time search.

This work has been applied to the domain of computer checkers (8 × 8 draughts), which is an interesting point of comparison for computer chess. In checkers, since there are only checker and king pieces, all games play into a limited set of endgame classes. Also, the lower branching factor of checkers trees and the forced captures of the game result in deeper search trees than in chess. Although the root of the tree may be far from the endgame, the leaf nodes already may be in the databases. Consequently, the utility of the endgame databases is higher in checkers than chess.

Computing the checkers endgame databases with the resources available to us has been a challenge. The problem requires excessive memory, time, I/O and mass storage to solve using either the sequential version of Thompson's algorithm [4, 13] or Stiller's vector-processing method [12]. Of course, as computers get more powerful, many of these problems will be overcome, but we want the databases now! Other approaches to solving the problem, such as proving some properties of the search space (an interesting example can be found in [2]), have not been successful.

The memory problem is addressed by decomposing the 150 billion positions we want to solve into small pieces (10 million positions) and solving them individually. The time problem is solved using a distributed network of heterogeneous workstations. The I/O problem is (partially) solved by dividing the computation into distinct phases or passes to eliminate redundant I/O. The mass storage problem is solved by an application-dependent compression algorithm that also allows real-time access. Interestingly, the problem has been sufficiently decomposed that a *single* modern workstation can be used to solve the entire problem. The same techniques can be applied to building chess endgames databases.

More generally, the construction of endgame databases may have a greater impact than just in computer game playing. Many problems in mathematics and the sciences require finding the optimal solution in a large combinatorial search space. In essence, the construction of an endgame database is a backwards search from the solution. When combined with a forward search tree, as with computer games, the optimal solution may be found in less time. Therefore, some types of optimization problems can benefit from the approach taken in this paper.

The success of the *Chinook* checkers program (8 × 8 draughts) is largely due to its endgame databases [10]. The project began in June 1989 with the short-term goal of developing a program capable of defeating the human world champion and the long-term goal of solving the game. *Chinook* has achieved significant successes and also has had some setbacks. It was the first program to earn the right to play a reigning world champion for the title by placing second to then World Champion, Dr. Marion Tinsley, at the U.S. National Open in 1990, the biennial event for the determining the next challenger. At the 1992 Silicon Graphics World Draughts Championship in London, Dr. Tinsley defeated *Chinook* with 4 wins, 2 losses and 33 draws [11]. Previous to that match, Dr. Tinsley had lost only 7 games in over 40 years of competitive play. The techniques described in this paper have allowed us to significantly increase the number of positions in the endgame databases available to *Chinook* for the next Tinsley-*Chinook* match, tentatively scheduled for 1994.

2. Retrograde Analysis

Retrograde analysis can be used to help solve a large combinatorial search space by building the optimal solution in a bottom-up manner (searching from the solution backwards towards the problem statement). With an appropriate top-down search algorithm (searching from the problem statement forwards towards a solution), a better approximate solution, or possibly the optimal solution, can be obtained. For our problem domain, solving the game of checkers, the search space consists of 5×10^{20} positions.

The construction of a checkers endgame database is simply the computation of a transitive closure. Each position is a member of either the set of *wins*, *losses* or *draws*. Once computed, the classification of a database entry represents perfect knowledge as to the theoretical value of that position. Since a checkers database is a lookup table test for set membership, the simple techniques discussed in this paper can be applied to other problem domains.

Initially, all positions are given the value of `unknown`. Some of the positions can be classified as either a `win` or a `loss` according the the rules of the game. For example, a player without any pieces on the board (i.e. without material) or without a legal move is a loss in checkers. The set membership of the other positions depends on the membership of positions reachable by the legal moves of the game. Given a sufficient amount of information, the classification of a position can be changed from unknown to either a win, loss or draw. Specifically, if the side to play has a legal move that leads to a position that has already been classified as a win for itself, then the current position is also a win. If the side to play only has legal moves leading to positions that are wins for the opponent, then its current position is a loss for itself. The transitive closure is complete when there is insufficient information to change the value of any other positions. At that point, all of the unknown positions are declared to be draws since neither player can force a win.

In theory, if all of the leaf nodes of the minimax game tree are from the endgame databases, then there is no error in the evaluation of the root position. Consequently, it may be possible to compute the game theoretic value of the game of checkers using the perfect knowledge of the endgame databases. In practice, such as playing a game under real-time constraints, limitations on time and space may not allow the search to extend all of the leaf nodes into the endgame databases. For each leaf node not in the databases, a heuristic evaluation function is used to assess the position. Each application of the evaluation function introduces the possibility of error. A combination of leaf nodes from the databases and from the evaluation function is the most common situation. As the percent of leaf nodes taken from the databases increases, the accuracy of the search result improves.

The goal of our project is to solve 150 billion checkers positions. A naive approach to tackling the problem would exceed the computational, storage and input-output (I/O) facilities of most current day computers. Of course, computers continue to increase in their capabilities, but solving the problem with the current technology requires a more refined approach. Furthermore, although there may exist computers capable of dealing with the size of the endgame database problem, they are neither affordable or available to this team of researchers. The design tradeoffs and issues relating to solving large problems with limited resources is both challenging and important. There will always be problems that are technologically feasible, but too large to solve with the resources available. In fact, a simple implementation of retrograde analysis would be CPU-bound, memory-bound and I/O-bound, the classic triad of a large computational problem. In the following sections, each of these bottlenecks is addressed.

3. Basic Algorithm

All endgame databases are built according to the number of pieces on the board. Constructing an `N`-piece endgame database requires enumerating all positions with `N` pieces and computing whether each position is a win, loss, or draw. All database entries describe positions with Black to move. White to move results are determined by reversing the board, changing the colors of the pieces, and retrieving the appropriate Black to move result.

An `N`-piece database is computed using an iterative algorithm, building on the results of the previously computed 1, 2, ..., (`N-1`)-piece databases, as per a backwards search. Initially all `N`-piece positions are viewed as having a value of `UNKNOWN`. Each iteration scans through a subset of the positions to determine whether there is enough information to change a position's value to `WIN`, `LOSS` or `DRAW`. This is idea behind Thompson's original algorithm [13].

The execution strategy of the first iterative pass depends on an important rule of checkers: a capture must be played when one or more capture moves are present among the available legal moves. As a result, the first pass determines the value of all capture positions and defers the rest for later passes (analogous to resolving all mate positions in chess). Since a capture leads to a position with `N-1` or fewer pieces, each `N`-piece capture position is resolved by retrieving the values from the previously computed databases for `N-1` or fewer pieces. The capture position is then assigned the highest value retrieved from the previously computed positions. These values are ranked in descending order as win, draw and loss (hence 2 bits of storage per position †). Approximately half of the positions in a database are capture positions. In Appendix A, the pseudo-code for the `DoCaptures()` routine is given.

The second and subsequent iterations through the database resolve only non-capture positions. For each position considered, all the legal moves are generated. Each move is executed and the resulting position's value is retrieved from the current `N`-piece database. The unknown position is assigned a value only when one of the legal moves results in a win or all legal moves have been resolved. The program iterates until no more `N`-piece positions can be resolved (`DoNonCaptures()` in Appendix A). At that point, all remaining unknown positions are set to draws.

This algorithm is summarized in Figure 1. This method resolves positions in order of least to most moves required to play into a lesser database. Thus, the algorithm can be applied to problems such as finding all wins in 1 move, then 2, then 3, and so on.

There are, in fact, two opposite approaches to resolving unknown positions. The "forward" approach described above takes each unresolved position, generates its successor positions, and from these tries to determine the value of the parent. The "backward" approach takes a resolved position, uses a reverse move generator to find its predecessor

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Some implementations use 1 bit per position. The justification for 2 bits is given in Section 3.3.

```
1. Set all positions to UNKNOWN.
2. Iterate and resolve all capture positions.
3. Iterate and resolve non-capture positions.
4. Go to step 3 if any non-capture position was resolved.
5. Set all remaining UNKNOWNs to DRAWs.
```

Figure 1: Basic Iterative Algorithm.

positions, and checks if there is now enough information to resolve any of them. The best choice depends on the ratio of unresolved positions to resolved positions in an iteration [3]. For our application, a combination of approaches proved to be superior. Use of the forward approach is critical to achieving the massive parallelism we desire (see Section 5).

While, in theory, this enumeration technique should be sufficient to solve any `N`-piece database, the real problems begin when `N` becomes greater than 4 because of the exponential growth of the number of positions to resolve. Space and time become critical considerations for any solution enhancement. Table 1 lists the number of positions that must be solved to construct all databases with 8 or fewer pieces.

Number of pieces	Number of positions
1	120
2	6,972
3	261,224
4	7,092,774
5	148,688,232
6	2,503,611,964
7	34,779,531,480
8	406,309,208,481

Table 1: Endgame Database Sizes.

If the approach previously described is used to compute the entire 8-piece database of 406 billion positions, over 100 gigabytes of memory at 2 bits per position is required. The hundreds of sequential iterations required to resolve all the 8-piece positions would require many decades of CPU time on a current-day workstation.

3.1. Solving the Space Problem

Each position in a database maps to a unique number. There are no gaps in the indexing function. From an index, we can construct the corresponding position. Appendix B describes the indexing and deindexing algorithm used. They can easily be adopted for chess endgames.

The space problem is handled by breaking the problem into subdatabases according to the material, the number of checkers and kings, in each position. The first subdivision is based on the number of black and white pieces on the board. For example, the 8-piece database can be broken into several subsets, such as `6b` versus `2w` (6 black pieces against 2 white) or `4b` versus `4w`. Table 2 shows the number of database positions within each subset. The entries where one side has 0 pieces, a loss by the rules of the game, are not included.

Black Pieces	White Pieces						
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1	23,488	98,016	1,773,192	23,204,660	233,999,928	1,891,451,952	12,586,073,760
2	98,016	2,662,932	46,520,744	587,139,846	5,702,475,480	44,328,555,960	
3	1,773,192	46,520,744	783,806,128	9,527,629,380	88,991,228,360		
4	23,204,660	587,139,846	9,527,629,380	111,378,534,401			
5	233,999,928	5,702,475,480	88,991,228,360				
6	1,891,451,952	44,328,555,960					
7	12,586,073,760						

Table 2: Subdividing the Database.

The second subdivision is based on the number of kings and checkers. Since checkers can promote into kings, but not visa-versa, positions in a database with *k* kings can never play into positions with the same number of pieces and less than *k* kings. Hence, these subsets can be further broken down by computing king-only positions first and working backwards towards checker-only positions.

This subdivision can be represented by a set of graphs. Each graph contains all positions composed of *b* black pieces and *w* white pieces. The nodes represent subdatabases holding positions with similar numbers of kings and checkers. Figure 2 shows the subdivision of the `4b` versus `4w` positions. Each node is named using four digits to represent the number of black kings, white kings, black checkers, and white checkers in the subdatabase. The first subdatabase computed is `4400` (4 kings versus 4 kings) and the last is `0044` (4 checkers versus 4 checkers).

Because lower node positions lead to upper node positions, all database computations begin at the top of each graph and fan downward. Since every position must be resolved for both color's turn to play, each database computation requires two nodes: the *active* (or *original*) database and its *mirror*. The mirror is defined as the node (or graph) where the colors are reversed. For example, the mirror for node `4112` in the `5b3w` graph is node `1421` in the `3b5w` graph. While most nodes have mirrors in a separate graph, a few nodes have their mirror in the same graph.

Although this database partitioning into graphs helps reduce space difficulties, many of the nodes are still too large to calculate on most computers. For example, node `3212` in the `4b4w` graph contains 11,799,496,800 positions. When combined with its mirror, the memory requirement to compute the entire subdatabase is at least 5.9 gigabytes.

The key to solving nodes this large is to partition the subdatabase into yet smaller parts. The approach used is to *slice* the positions up based on the rank of the leading (most advanced) checker for each side. The ranks are numbered 0 to 7. A position with

```
          4400
       3410 4301
    2420 3311 4202
 1430 2321 3212 4103
0440 1331 2222 3113 4004
 0341 1232 2123 3014
    0242 1133 2024
       0143 1034
          0044
```

Figure 2: `4b4w` **Graph of the 8-Piece Database (111.4 billion positions).**

the leading checker on rank i stays in the same slice until a checker moves to rank $i+1$. Since each side with one or more checkers can have its leading checker on one of 7 possible ranks (a checker on the 7th rank is promoted to a king), the problem can be subdivided into 49 slices. If only one side has a checker, then it can be subdivided into 7 slices. Because of the multi-directional mobility of kings, this slicing technique cannot apply to all-king endgames. That node of the graph (i.e. `4400`) must be solved in its entirety at one time.

Each slice is named according to the position of the most advanced black and white checker. For example, `3212.53` refers to the slice in node `3212` where the leading black and white checkers are on rank `5` and `3` respectively.

There are well-defined dependencies between the slices. Computation of each sliced-node must start from their most advanced positions. This requires the leading checkers to start on the 6th rank. Each slice plays into a preceding one.

Table 3 displays the number of positions in the slices belonging to node `3212` in the `4b4w` tree. The largest slice is `3212.06` with 484,520,400 positions. At least 243 megabytes of memory is required to compute this slice and its mirror. This is a definite improvement when compared to the 5.9 gigabytes required by the naive approach! Of course, this technique could be used to further subdivide the problem by considering the ranks of the two leading checkers. This has not been done.

The largest slice in the `4b4w` graph is `2222.66` with 1,142,505,000 positions. This slice requires approximately 286 megabytes of memory to compute since its mirror is itself. The next largest are `2222.65` and `2222.56`, each with 957,738,600 positions. Since these are mirrors of each other, at least 479 megabytes of memory is required. Thus, from 406 billion positions requiring over 100 gigabytes, these two subdivisions have reduced the minimum memory requirements to under 500 megabytes.

These memory requirements are still too large for most conventional workstations. Since the algorithm iteratively examines all positions in increasing sequential order, each position requires only its successors to be present in memory. Therefore, to further

Black Checker Rank	White Checker Rank						
	6	5	4	3	2	1	0
6	465,519,600	389,516,400	313,513,200	237,510,000	161,506,800	71,253,000	28,501,200
5	465,519,600	389,516,400	313,513,200	237,510,000	128,255,400	104,504,400	28,501,200
4	465,519,600	389,516,400	313,513,200	185,257,800	180,507,600	104,504,400	28,501,200
3	465,519,600	389,516,400	242,260,200	256,510,800	180,507,600	104,504,400	28,501,200
2	465,519,600	299,262,600	332,514,000	256,510,800	180,507,600	104,504,400	28,501,200
1	356,265,000	408,517,200	332,514,000	256,510,800	180,507,600	104,504,400	28,501,200
0	484,520,400	408,517,200	332,514,000	256,510,800	180,507,600	104,504,400	28,501,200

Table 3: Node 3212 Slices.

reduce memory overhead, a paging algorithm is used to handle the loading and unloading of parts of database slices. Each slice is partitioned into 8K-size pages with each page holding 32,768 positions. Figure 3 displays the format of each page table entry. The high order 17 bits represent the page number of the position. This is obtained by simply shifting the position index 15 bits to the right. The low order 15 bits represent the page offset.

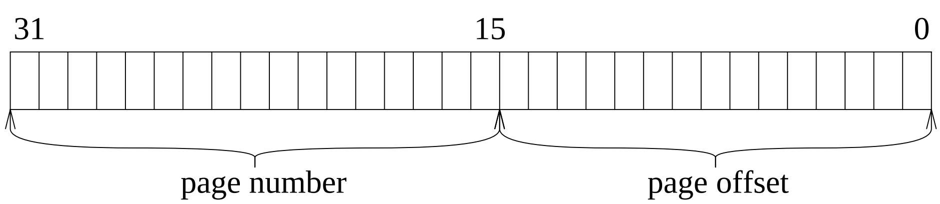

Figure 3: Page Table Format.

The page management algorithm consists of a slightly modified least recently used algorithm. Normally the least recently used page is flushed whenever a new page is required. An exception to this occurs when the position index increases to a new page boundary. In this case, due to the sequential processing of each slice and the fact that the page containing the previous position index will likely not be accessed again during the current iteration, this page is marked the "least recently used" page.

The number of page buffers present depends upon the amount of memory present in the host processor. Normally between 250 to 1000 buffers are used (2-8 megabytes).

Breaking a database slice into a set of pages has several advantages. Any 7 or 8 (or even greater) piece slice may be easily handled because the amount of data in memory is constant. This also facilitates the checkpointing of computed work. At periodic intervals, all "dirty" pages (those which contain one or more recently resolved positions) are flushed to disk. This is preferable to writing the entire slice to disk. These advantages far outweigh the disadvantages caused by the extra overhead associated with maintaining page tables and page buffers.

3.2. Reducing the Time Problem

Approximately half the positions in each database are capture positions and are resolved in the first iterative pass. Since many resolvable non-capture positions may require several dozen passes to compute, the iterative technique described earlier becomes increasingly inefficient as the number of positions resolved increases because most positions visited have been resolved.

This problem is handled by maintaining an ordered queue of positions resolved in each pass, called the *position queue*. Only positions held in the position queue are examined in the successive passes. For each position in the position queue, all *reverse moves* (moves which lead into this position) are generated. The reverse moves are executed and the resulting positions are checked to determine if sufficient information exists for complete position evaluation. If so, the position is assigned a value and added to the position queue for reverse move generation during the next pass. Once the position queue from the current pass is completely evaluated, it is deleted from either primary or secondary storage (see `DoQueue()` in Appendix A). In effect, we use the "forward" approach to resolving positions until the number of resolutions becomes small, and then we switch to the "backward" approach.

This queue mechanism greatly reduces the time required to process the non-capture passes. Each queue entry uses 4 bytes (position number). This presents a problem with large databases because the queue length could exceed several hundred megabytes (and the available amount of memory). Hence, queues are written to disk. To prevent excessively large queues, the iterative technique is initially applied to the non-capture passes until the number of resolved positions drops below a predefined threshold. Once this occurs, the position queue is triggered and the remaining passes are processed using the queue technique.

One other speed enhancement has been made to the initial capture and non-capture passes. For positions resolved as a loss, all positions generated by applying reverse move generation to the resolved position must be a win for the other side to play. Thus, these positions may also be immediately resolved. Approximately 5-10% of the positions in the non-queue passes (depending on the database being constructed) can be resolved using this simple observation (see `DoWinningMoves()` in Appendix A).

3.3. Reducing the I/O Problem

The database computations require an enormous amount of disk I/O, whether it be to previously computed results, or paging within a database under construction. Since the previously computed databases are several gigabytes in size (Section 4 elaborates on this), only one copy is available. When the computation is distributed over 30 or more networked workstations, the machine servicing all I/O requests quickly becomes swamped, as does the network. Since I/O over the network is slow, it must be kept to a minimum.

The basic algorithm involves repeated passes resolving the non-capture positions. Resolving a position involves examining each of its legal moves. Some of these moves result in positions within the database being computed (king moves, advances of non-leading checkers) while others cause conversions into previously computed databases (advances of leading checkers and captures). Since the conversion moves may involve

I/O, and they are repeated every time a position is revisited, it is desirable to obtain this information once, thereby reducing the I/O.

The non-capture pass has been broken up into two components. The first, called `DoLookups()`, takes each non-capture position and looks up each legal conversion move and stores the results of this I/O back in the database. The second, `DoNoIo()`, then uses the I/O information to do repeated passes through the data, only doing I/O on the current database and never having to refer back to a previously computed result. Appendix A contains pseudo-code for both `DoLookups()` and `DoNoIo()`.

Each position can take on one of 4 values. `DoLookups()` takes advantage of the 2-bit per position representation to encode the result of the conversion moves. The meaning of a position value of `WIN` or `LOSS` remains unchanged. The value of `DRAW` means that the conversion moves imply that this position has a value of `DRAW` *or better*. In other words, there is at least one conversion move leading to a draw, but none to a win. Thus, consideration of the non-conversion moves can only leave the value as a `DRAW` or possibly improve it to a `WIN`. A value of `UNKNOWN` implies that consideration of the conversion moves gave no lower bound on the value of the position (i.e. any of `WIN`, `LOSS` or `DRAW` is still possible). The result of `DoLookups()` is either an accurate result or a lower bound value for each non-capture position.

`DoNoIo()` essentially iterates through all `DRAW` and `UNKNOWN` values trying to improve the value. Any resolved position is added to the queue for further processing. The value of a position is never allowed to go below that set by `DoLookups()`.

By breaking up the non-captures part of the computation into two parts, no part of the database calculation now requires access to both the previously computed databases and the current database. As Table 4 shows, each component requires one or the other, but not both. The net result is that the size of the working set of the database program is further reduced, causing less of an impact to other users on the system. The program's size typically ranges from 8-15 megabytes, depending on the function being performed. The working set of the program is typically 3-4 megabytes.

Algorithm	Computed Databases	Current Databases
DoCaptures †	Yes	No
DoWinningMoves	No	Yes
DoLookups †	Yes	No
DoNoIo	No	Yes
DoQueue	No	Yes
Verify	Yes	No

Table 4: Storage Requirements.

† Note that this algorithm does require access to at most one page of the current database at a time. Since it processes the data sequentially, a page is read in, fully processed and then written out. Obviously this has a negligible effect on the storage requirements.

3.4. Putting it all Together

Figure 4 displays the final iteration algorithm that is executed on each slice. After a database has been calculated and compressed, a check is done that it is consistent (`DoVerify()`). Although this does not guarantee the database is 100% correct (it does not detect isolated cycles), the chance of an error is extremely remote. Appendix A gives the pseudo-C code listing for the routines given below.

```
 1. Set all positions to UNKNOWN.
 2. DoCaptures(): Run the capture pass on the original.
 3. DoCaptures(): Run the capture pass on the mirror.
 4. DoWinningMoves(): Run the winning move pass on the ori-
    ginal.
 5. DoWinningMoves(): Run the winning move pass on the mir-
    ror.
 6. DoLookups(): Run the lookup pass on the original.
 7. DoLookups(): Run the lookup pass on the mirror.
 8. DoNoIo(): Run a noio non-capture pass on the original.
 9. If the number of resolved non-capture positions is
    "small", go to step 11.
10. DoNoIo(): Run a noio non-capture pass on the mirror and
    go to step 8.
11. DoNoIo(): Run a noio non-capture pass on the mirror and
    generate the queue.
12. DoQueue(): Run until queue is empty.
13. Convert remaining UNKNOWNs to DRAWs.
14. Compress computed slices and add to master database.
15. DoVerify(): Verify consistency of compressed slices.
```

Figure 4: Iteration Algorithm.

4. Storing and Accessing the Data

The final database contains approximately 150 billion positions (the entire 1 through 7-piece databases and the `4b4w` portion of the 8-piece database). The data format chosen for storing this information in was governed by two constraints:

(1) minimizing the size of the database and

(2) allowing real-time access of data values.

The former implies that the data must be compressed, but the latter limits the options. During a tournament game, the database may be accessed hundreds of time a second, implying that disk I/O must be kept to a minimum and that the cost of decompressing the database to extract values be small. Most chess databases store not only the result of each position (win, loss or draw) but, for wins and losses, also a distance metric (used for finding the quickest win or slowest loss). Given the size of the checkers databases, it was not feasible to save this additional information. Thus, each position has only a win/loss/draw designation. Note that under this scenario, it is possible for *Chinook* to reach a database win but be unable to win it because it cannot search far enough ahead to find a conversion into another subdatabase. This has never happened.

Five position values can be stored in a byte ($3^5 = 243 < 256$). This naive compression results in 150 billion positions requiring 30 gigabytes of disk storage. Unfortunately, with today's technology, this is an expensive proposition. Numerous schemes have been tried to gain further compression. Some achieve high compression ratios, but at a prohibitive run-time decompression cost. Others, such as the 5 positions per byte scheme, have minimal decompression costs but low compression ratios. In this report, only the scheme finally chosen will be discussed in detail (the scheme described in [10] is not quite as efficient). One failed attempt worth mentioning was the use of an evaluation function to predict the value of a position (a technique used for compressing chess games [1]). If the routine was sufficiently accurate, then only exception positions need be stored. While seemingly a promising approach, we were never able to develop a function that gave better results than the scheme eventually chosen. Finally, because of the presence of checkers and the non-symmetric nature of the board, one cannot take advantage of symmetries, as is possible in chess.

In the game of checkers, capture moves are forced. They have the same affect on the game tree as do checking moves in chess; the branching factor drops to an average of 1.3 [8]. Since capture positions comprise roughly half of all positions in the database, these positions can be omitted since their result can be easily computed. In a search, if a capture position in a database is reached, it is searched an additional ply deeper to find its value. Further, positions where one side could capture if the side-to-move were switched comprise an additional 25% of the positions (capture-threat). Again, by removing these positions from the database, additional compression can be achieved, at the cost of a more complicated search algorithm for resolving values.

In each database, the number of wins, losses and draws are counted to determine which result is dominant. All capture positions and capture-threat positions have their database value changed to the dominant value. Consequently, the values in a database are dominated by one value. Run-length encoding can now be used to compress the database into a manageable size (similar to the methods used by Gasser [3]). Table 5 shows the results of compressing some databases. Note that the `4b3w` database achieves a high compression ratio because having an extra piece in checkers is usually a decisive advantage. Overall, we have 150 billion positions compressed into roughly 5.5 billion bytes of storage.

	`3b3w`	`4b3w`	`4b4w`
Positions	783,806,128	19,055,258,760	111,378,534,401
Compressed bytes	44,715,085	365,946,247	5,088,710,532
Positions/byte	18	52	22

Figure 5: Compression Ratios.

Figure 6 illustrates how the compressed databases are accessed. The database is logically grouped into a series of 1K-byte pages (adjustable to any multiple of 1K). An index file (a *.idx* file) indicates for each subdatabase the position number starting each 1K-byte block in the file. Given a position that is not a capture or a capture-threat, it is converted to its unique position number. A binary search is done on the position's subdatabase starting indices to identify the page that contains the position's value. The page is then fetched (from disk or cache) and uncompressed until the desired position's value is found. In Figure 6, for example, index 150,786 for subdatabase `3113.51` is found in block 680, which contains the values for positions 148,265 to 208,299. That block is read from disk and sequentially processed until the desired position's value is obtained.

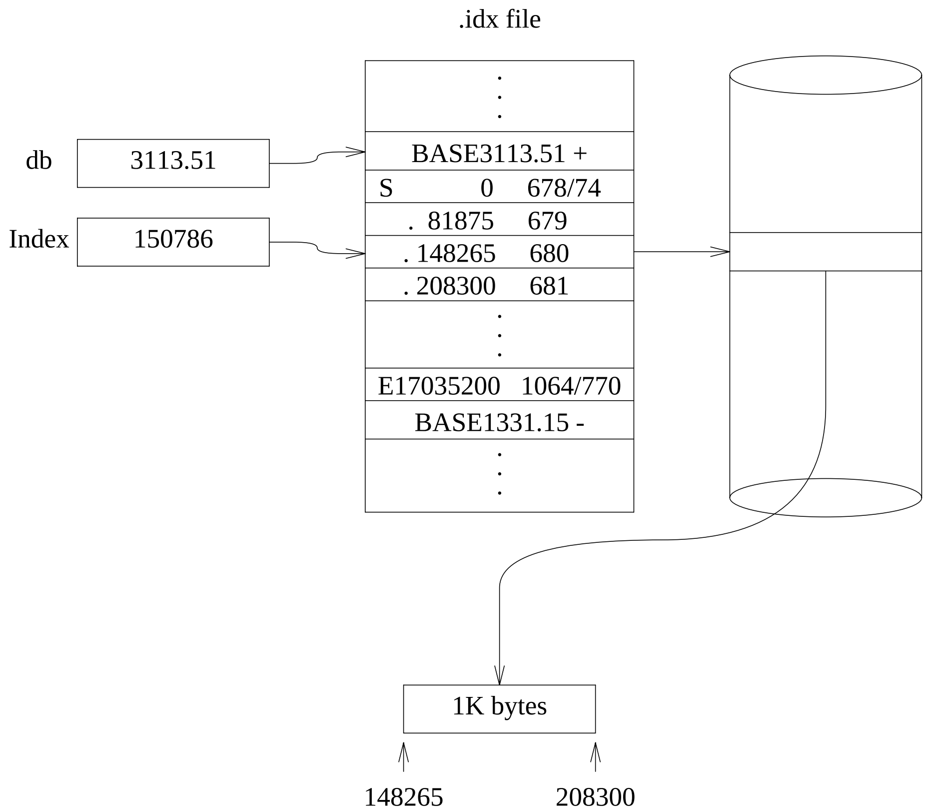

Figure 6: Accessing the Databases.

Chinook uses several thousand 1K byte buffers to cache database pages (the number depends on available memory). The least-recently used algorithm is used to decide which buffer to free when all the buffers have been filled. As well, a position cache is maintained. It is essentially a small hash table containing the results of recent database position lookups. Thus, even if a position's database page has been freed from memory, its value may still be around in the position cache.

In practice, during a typical game 80-95% of all database positions encountered in the search are found in memory. This is a result of the caching described above and locality of reference in the search and in the way the database is organized. Even with such a high success rate, *Chinook* often becomes I/O-bound. The easy solution is to make more RAM available, increasing the number of database buffers.

5. Parallelism

While an entire database may be computed sequentially on a single workstation using the algorithm presented in Figure 4, in reality many workstations work simultaneously on many databases by taking advantage of three types of parallelism provided by the database structure and two from the iteration algorithm design.

The first database parallelism opportunity occurs with the database subsets sorted according to the number of black and white pieces. These form independent subsets because no position from one subset with `N` pieces play into positions from another `N` piece subset. This enables subsets such as `4b4w` and `5b3w` to be computed independently.

The second database parallelism occurs within the graphs describing each subset (for example, Figure 2). All nodes horizontally adjacent to each other may be computed in parallel because positions within one node never lead to positions in same level nodes. The only exception occurs with symmetric graphs because some horizontal nodes may be mirrors of each other. For example, referring to Figure 2 again, nodes `2222`, `3113/1331` and `4004/0440` may be computed in parallel.

The third database parallelism occurs with the ranks of the leading checker. Each graph node is computed diagonally downward from the highest to lowest rank. Figure 7 displays the order of computation for a 49-slice node. All entries along each diagonal are computed in parallel provided any two diagonal squares are not mirrors of each other.

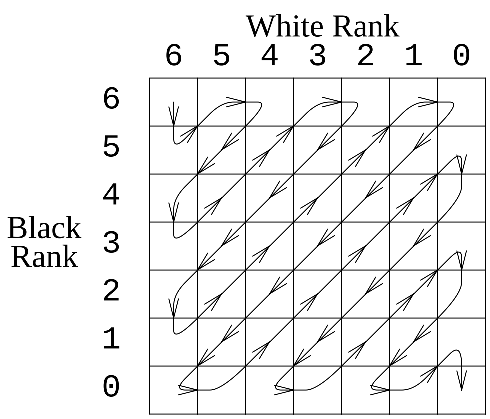

Figure 7: Leading Checker Rank Parallelism.

Many steps in the iteration algorithm are frequently computed in parallel for several database slices simultaneously. For example, the `DoCaptures` pass may be computed in parallel on any number of `N`-piece slices since this pass references only previously computed databases with `N-1` or fewer pieces. Another example is the `DoLookups` and `DoVerify` phase; they can execute on the original and mirror simultaneously.

Despite using the parallelism described above, many difficulties and inefficiencies still exist with the computations. If each slice is given to a single workstation for execution, computation time is wasted because of differing slice sizes and machine speeds. Occasionally a workstation may handle a very large slice (such as `2222.66`) which requires several days to compute. This creates a bottleneck for processors waiting to compute the next set of slices. Since most slices differ in size, workstations which finish computing smaller slices often sit idle waiting for the completion of larger slices. A further bottleneck is present in the top and bottom of the graphs since these areas afford the least amount of parallelism.

The solution to these problems is to slice each database slice into a set of mini-slices. The starting and finishing position for each mini-slice is aligned on a page boundary to enable each workstation to compute its mini-slice without interference from other workstations. By keeping the size of the each mini-slice small (usually 10 million or fewer positions per mini-slice), many computers may now process a single database slice in parallel. This also handles differences in machine speed because faster workstations may compute two or more mini-slices while the slower machines handle one.

Computing mini-slices in parallel hinges on having each piece of work not interfere with each other. Verifications only read computed databases, so they never conflict with work in progress. Captures and lookups need to be able to write to a database. Thus each of their mini-slices represents a disjoint interval of the database for which they write their values. For `DoNoIo`, the choice of the "forward" approach to resolving positions (looking at the successors rather than the predecessors of a move) is critical here. Using this approach, consecutive addresses are considered for value updates, whereas using the "backward" approach, resolved predecessor positions are distributed throughout the entire range of values. The "forward" approach allows each slice to have its disk writes localized, preventing interference with other slices and reducing the number of disk I/O writes. Processing the position queue, however, has no locality (because it uses the "backward" approach) and is currently done sequentially. There is room for some parallelism here, but it has not been implemented.

5.1. Creating a Supercomputer

With the amount of parallelism offered by the mini-slices and database structure, keeping 30 or more machines busy required too much manual labor. Consequently, a job queue file has been built to describe the required computations. Each line in the job queue file describes an action to be performed on either a database slice or mini-slice. A controlling shell script parses the top entry, sets up the necessary parameters, and forks a process to execute the job. This shell script runs on every workstation performing database computations.

Most job queue entries have one of the following two formats:

```
job_type slice -max maxslices -n thisslice
job_type slice first_position last_position -n thisslice
```

The first parameter specifies the type of work to be performed. This can be one of the following:

`cap`	capture pass
`winmove`	winning move pass
`lookup`	lookup pass
`noioo`	noio pass on the original

`noiom`	noio pass on the mirror
`que`	queue pass
`build`	build compressed database
`ver`	verify compressed database consistency
`stop`	graceful exit from shell script

The second parameter specifies either the slice or mini-slice involved in the computation. Two formats are possible for the remaining parameters. The first specifies the maximum number of slices and the slice number of this job. These parameters align the first and last positions of the slice onto page boundaries as follows:

$$numPos = number\ of\ positions\ in\ slice$$

$$positionsperpage = 8K*4 = 32,768$$

$$offset = ((numPos\ /\ positionsperpage)\ /\ maxslices) \times positionsperpage$$

$$firstPosition = thisslice \times offset$$

$$lastPosition = (thisslice + 1) \times offset$$

lastPosition is set to *numPos* if it exceeds the value of *numPos*.

The second job queue entry format specifies a starting position, final position, and mini-slice number. This format is useful if a previously computed mini-slice prematurely terminated due to conditions such as a machine reboot. Rather than resuming the computation from the beginning of the slice, a starting index near the last completed index is specified and the job continues from that point.

The controlling shell script recognizes several dependencies between phases of a database slice computation. For example, `noiom` waits until its `noioo` pass is complete; `que` waits for completion of `noiom`; and `build` waits until `que` is done. To prevent processors from being idle during these periods, jobs involving other slices currently being computed in parallel are inserted into the job queue.

Figure 8 displays an example job queue. Note that the `build` cannot start until the `que` is completed. Rather than let a processor take the `build` and then wait, we usually insert enough work between such dependencies so that when the `build` is eventually taken, the `que` has completed.

5.2. A Day in the Life of a Network Supercomputer

We have used as many as 90 workstations computing simultaneously, and keeping track of what has been computed and what problems have arisen can be a difficult and time-consuming task. Before we developed the tools described in this section, management of the distributed database calculation required a significant time investment *every day*. We needed tools to check the consistency of the work being performed and alert us in the event of an error.

The first check occurs with the job queue shell script. For every job computed, this script creates a lock file whose name reflects the job being executed. Upon completion of the job, the shell script checks the output file to determine if the job exited normally. If so, the file is removed; otherwise the file remains as a notice that an unusual circumstance occurred. The output files are then manually inspected for the cause of the

```
ver 3113.02 -max 10 -s 1 -n 00
ver 3113.02 -max 10 -s 1 -n 01
ver 3113.02 -max 10 -s 1 -n 02
ver 3113.02 -max 10 -s 1 -n 03
ver 3113.02 -max 10 -s 1 -n 04
ver 3113.02 -max 10 -s 1 -n 05
ver 3113.02 -max 10 -s 1 -n 06
ver 3113.02 -max 10 -s 1 -n 07
ver 3113.02 -max 10 -s 1 -n 08
ver 3113.02 -max 10 -s 1 -n 09

cap 2123.66 230445242 241002422 -n 20

que 3113.01

build 3113.01
```

Figure 8: Example Job Queue.

problem and, if necessary, the job is reinserted (either from the beginning or from the last checkpointed location) back into the job queue.

One problem with working in a network environment is machine reliability. Hardware failures, software bugs, and power interrupts are among the factors which cause machine crashes and reboots. Because database slice passes have dependencies, these interruptions must be dealt with immediately to avoid the situation where many processors wait for completion of a previously aborted mini-slice. We have developed a tool which monitors all machines computing databases by sending a *ping* packet to each machine every minute. Normally every machine responds immediately to the *ping* query. However, a negative response indicates one of three conditions: either the target machine is down, the reply has been lost, or the *ping* inquiry has been lost.

The problem with the above is distinguishing between lost packets and machine crashes. We have found packets created by database computations account for approximately 75% of our department's network traffic. Consequently, it is not uncommon for a *ping* inquiry or response packet to be lost. Whenever a *ping* response fails, attempts are made to query the machine for another 10 minutes. If the machine responds within this time period, a query is made to determine how long it has been up since many machines reboot within 10 minutes. If the machine has been been rebooted, the last job running on the host is extracted from the log file and reinserted to the top of the queue. The job queue script is remotely restarted and a mail message is sent to indicate the action performed.

If the host fails to respond within 10 minutes, it is assumed to have "crashed" and its hostname is recorded in a "crashed" file. The last job it processed is extracted from the log file and reinserted to the top of the job queue list. Again, a mail message is sent to indicate job resumption. When the machine finally reboots, the machine monitoring tool automatically forks the job queue script.

This tool successfully handles nearly all machines running nearly all types of database computations. The only manual intervention required occurs when our file server is rebooted. In this case, a check of all machines is done to ensure no potential errors.

The job queue mechanism with automatic restart upon machine reboot is ideal for a set of identical workstations (with identical performance) and no other users on the network. Since many workstations we use belong to other faculty and staff members who are active during the day, a second tool has been developed to monitor these machines for activity. Whenever activity is detected, the computations are checkpointed and one of two actions are taken. If the workstation swap space is large, the process is suspended and the operating system migrates the process to the swap space. The monitoring tool restarts the process after 10 minutes of workstation inactivity. If the workstation does not have sufficient available swap space, the process is terminated, the job reinserted to the top of the queue, and a mail message is sent to us describing the action taken. A new process is then started on the workstation after normal working hours and monitoring resumes at that time.

Since the database structure and the mini-slice breakdown allows us a high degree of parallelism, we can always productively use additional workstations. At our peak, we have had 90 machines performing databases computations in the background at low priority. The machines are a heterogeneous collection of Sun, SGI, HP, and MIPS workstations. Using a single job queue list for a diverse variety of machines is infeasible because of varying processor speeds, amount of available RAM per processor, and daytime restrictions for privately owned machines. Consequently, the job queue list has been sub-divided into four separate lists and each machine obtains its work from one of the lists. These queues are called `prime`, `non-prime`, `slow`, and `small`. Workstations using `prime` are assumed to be fast, have sufficient memory to handle any job type, and are always accessible. This queue contains immediate, high-priority jobs such as `lookup`, `noio`, or `que` for the database slice being computed. Workstations using `non-prime` are similar to those using `prime` except daytime restrictions apply. Thus, this queue is fed low priority work during the day and high priority work during evenings and weekends. All slow workstations with sufficient memory to handle any job type read their jobs from `slow`. This queue usually contains medium to low priority jobs. Finally, machines with restricted amounts of memory (for example 8 megabytes or less) obtain their jobs from `small`. This queue contains jobs which are low priority and require small amounts of memory (principally `DoCaptures()`).

Another important tool we have developed is `addq`. Manually adding work to the queues occasionally introduced errors. To eliminate this, `addq` takes a computation, breaks it into mini-slices (roughly 10 million positions per slice) and adds it to the work queue. This utility is invoked with the name of a queue, the work type to be performed, and the database slice to be acted on. For example,

```
addq p lookup 3113.01
```

appends

```
lookup 3113.01 -max 02 -s 1 -n 00
lookup 3113.01 -max 02 -s 1 -n 01
```

to the `prime` queue for `3113.01` with 17,035,200 positions. In Figure 8, the verification of `3113.02` was added using `addq`.

The primary advantage with using job queues has been obtaining nearly 100% machine utilization for our computations. Very few machines sit idle waiting for the last mini-slice of a dependency to be completed. The job queue, in addition to the the tools just described, has also reduced the manual labor required for database computations. Most effort is now spent moving files between disks, archiving files to tape, and planning the correct order to insert work into the queues to maximize machine utilization.

Appendix C gives a brief summary of the tools used to manage our network supercomputer.

5.3. Using a "Real" Supercomputer

Our retrograde analysis program has also been implemented on a shared memory multiprocessor, the BBN TC2000 [7]. The basic algorithms, and most of the source code, remain the same but the hardware, software and human overheads are different.

On the TC2000, each process of the parallel job is equivalent to a process working on a mini-slice in the network supercomputer. The entire active and mirror databases are stored in shared memory to eliminate the I/O on those pages. When a process needs to access a portion of the databases that is part of a different mini-slice, it can simply do a read from shared memory. As previously, a process can look up the value of a position in a different mini-slice, but it can only change positions in its own mini-slice. With the network of workstations, the distributed processes operating on the same database use a shared file system to communicate partial results. Each process works on a disjoint mini-slice, but as soon as a page is flushed to disk, another parallel process can access the new results. In effect, the network file system emulates the communication power of shared memory, albeit with relatively high latency and low bandwidth. Having shared memory supported in hardware, as with the TC2000, reduces the high overheads of the workstation network. Partial results can be used by other processes more readily, thus increasing the ability to resolve positions more quickly.

Another advantage of a multiprocessor machine is the ease with which parallel processes are created and synchronized. The TC2000 is designed to be used as a multiprocessor, therefore the different processes of a parallel job can be started with a single command instead of having to update one or more network job queues. The homogeneous nature of the TC2000 processors also make process placement a trivial task. Furthermore, with the network of workstations, the central scheduling process implicitly synchronizes the processes by how and when it initiates them. Only when one iteration of the database is complete are processes for the next iteration initiated. There is also the overhead of starting up new processes in the network environment, but in a shared memory multiprocessor the processes can simply synchronize with a barrier mechanism and continue. Processes are not repeatedly initiated and exited which reduces the startup overheads and also the human overhead of having to manage the job queues.

Clearly, the BBN TC2000 with its dedicated interconnection network, hardware supported shared memory and parallel processors mainly offers a performance advantage to the network of workstations. However, the fact that over a hundred parallel processes are available and the fact that the machine is designed to run parallel programs leads to a substantial performance advantage over a network of dozens of workstations using specialized software to manage the distributed processes. We do not exclusively use the TC2000 for the database computations because the addition of the network supercomputer significantly increases our throughput.

6. Conclusions

During the academic term, we have access to 25-30 workstations in our department, mainly machines on professor's desks and in graduate student laboratories. These machines allow us to compute roughly 300 million database positions per day. The BBN TC2000 and an additional 60 workstations that we get access to between academic terms allow even greater throughput. The overall throughput averages out to 425 million positions per day.

The `4b4w` subset of the 8-piece databases is the last database to be computed. Completing the rest of the 8-piece databases is a daunting task. The 186 billion positions in the `5b3w` endgame will take over a year to complete. Completing this is necessary before the `5b4w` database (1,997,749,399,776 positions) can be computed. Unless additional computing resources and further motivation can be found, it is unlikely we will tackle this task.

When we first started out in 1989, the 5-piece databases seemed an impossible task given the workstation environment that we had. Now the 7-piece databases are a "trivial" problem. The evolution from a single machine, large address space algorithm to a distributed solution that minimizes disk space, execution time and I/O operations has taken a long time and an enormous effort. Whether it was all worthwhile depends on the outcome of the next *Chinook*-Tinsley match (tentatively scheduled for 1994) and whether the databases we have are sufficient to solve the game of checkers.

Since most of the database construction process is now automated, we could, in theory, let it continue to run and add 300-400 million positions per day to the databases. However, the other users in our computing environment may have something to say about that! Instead, the network supercomputer tools we developed for this project will be applied to other aspects of checkers. For example, our work queues will be modified to specify opening positions. In this way, we can distribute the task of building and verifying an opening book. As well, when we start trying to solve the game of checkers, we can use our network supercomputer to solve different subtrees in the search space in parallel.

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Finally, the cooperation of the faculty, staff and graduate students in the Department of Computing Science at the University of Alberta is appreciated. They have tolerated our thirst for machine cycles with very few complaints.

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Appendix A: Algorithms

In this section, the pseudo code for the various algorithms discussed in this paper are given. The code assumes the following routines:

`MakeMove( pos, move )`

In position `pos`, `move` is made, leading to a new position stored in `pos`.

`UnMakeMove( pos, move )`

In position `pos`, a `move` is undone, modifying `pos` back to the state it was before `move` was played. `MakeMove` and `UnMakeMove` are inverses of each other.

`SetupPosition( pos, db, index )`

Position number `index` in `db` is converted to a board position `pos`.

`index = Index( pos )`

Convert position `pos` into its unique number `index`. `SetupPosition` and `Index` are inverses of each other.

`numb = CaptureMoves( pos, moves )`

In position `pos`, find all the legal capture moves. The number of moves found is returned in `numb`, with the moves being stored in the array `moves`.

`numb = NonCaptureMoves( pos, moves )`

In position `pos` there are no capture moves. Find all the legal non-capture moves. The number of moves found is returned in `numb`, with the moves being stored in the array `moves`.

`SetValue( db, index, value )`

Set the value of position `index` in database `db` to `value`. Valid values are `WIN`, `LOSS`, `DRAW` and `UNKNOWN`.

`childvalue = GetValue( db, index )`

In database `db`, return the value of position `index`.

`mirror = MIRROR( db )`

`MIRROR` is a macro that returns the `mirror` database of `db`.

`NQueue( db, index )`

Add the position represented by `db` and `index` to a queue of positions. It assumes there is a global variable `PositionQueue` indexed by `QSize` which is initialized to 0. Each addition to the queue increments `QSize`. This queue is processed by `DoQueue`.

`DeQueue( db, index )`

Remove the position from the head of the `PositionQueue`, returning its database in `db` and position number in `index`.

`convert = Conversion( move )`

Determine whether `move` will cause a conversion to a previously computed database. Conversion occurs by a capture move, or by advancing the leading checker.

```
/* Compute(): generic driver routine for database computations.        */
/* Called with a function of either DoCaptures(), DoWinningMoves(),    */
/* DoNonCaptures(), DoLookups(), DoNoIo() or DoVerify().               */

Compute( db, fromindex, toindex, function )
database db;
int fromindex, toindex;
void function();
{
     int index;

     for( index = fromindex; index < toindex; index++ ) {
          function( db, index );
     }
}
```

Figure A1: Compute().

```
/* DoCaptures(): resolve all capture positions */

DoCaptures( db, index )
database db;
int index;
{
     int i, value, numb, childvalue, moves[ MAX_MOVES ];
     position pos;

     value = GetValue( db, index );
     if( value != UNKNOWN )
          return;
     SetupPosition( pos, db, index );
     numb = CaptureMoves( pos, moves );
     if( numb == 0 )
          return;

     value = LOSS;
     for( i = 0; i < numb; i++ ) {
          MakeMove( pos, moves[ i ] );
          childvalue = GetValue( MIRROR( db ), Index( pos ) );
          UnMakeMove( pos, moves[ i ] );
          if( childvalue == LOSS ) {
               value = WIN;
               break;
          }
          if( childvalue == DRAW )
               value = DRAW;
     }
     SetValue( db, index, value );
}
```

Figure A2: DoCaptures().

```
/* DoWinningMoves(): extend all losing positions to their predecessor */
/* winning positions.                                                  */

DoWinningMoves( db, index )
database db;
int index;
{
     int i, value, numb, moves[ MAX_MOVES ];
     position pos;

     value = GetValue( db, index );
     if( value != LOSS )
          return;
     SetupPosition( pos, db, index );
     numb = NonCaptureMoves( pos, moves );

     for( i = 0; i < numb; i++ ) {
          MakeMove( pos, moves[ i ] );
          SetValue( MIRROR( db ), Index( pos ), WIN );
          UnMakeMove( pos, moves[ i ] );
     }
}
```

Figure A3: DoWinningMoves().

```
/* DoNonCaptures(): try to resolve each non-capture position.  It may  */
/* require repeated passes over the data to resolve all the positions. */

DoNonCaptures( db, index )
database db;
int index;
{
     int i, value, numb, childvalue, moves[ MAX_MOVES ];
     position pos;

     value = GetValue( db, index );
     if( value != UNKNOWN )
          return;
     SetupPosition( pos, db, index );
     numb = NonCaptureMoves( pos, moves );

     value = LOSS;
     for( i = 0; i < numb; i++ ) {
          MakeMove( pos, moves[ i ] );
          childvalue = GetValue( MIRROR( db ), Index( pos ) );
          UnMakeMove( pos, moves[ i ] );
          if( childvalue == LOSS ) {
               value = WIN;
               break;
          }
          if( childvalue == DRAW && value != UNKNOWN )
               value = DRAW;
          else if( childvalue == UNKNOWN )
               value = UNKNOWN;
     }
     if( value != UNKNOWN ) {
          SetValue( db, index, value );
          if( value != DRAW )
               NQueue( db, index );
     }
}
```

Figure A4: DoNonCaptures().

```
/* DoQueue(): resolve all positions in the PositionQueue and their  */
/* predecessors.  Called with either DoNonCaptures() or DoNoIo().   */

DoQueue( function )
void function();
{
     database db;
     int index;

     while( QSize != 0 ) {
          DQueue( db, index );
          function( db, index );
     }
}
```

Figure A5: DoQueue().

```
/* DoLookups(): for each non-capture position, resolve all references */
/* to previously computed databases.  This pass obviates the need to  */
/* reference these databases in any subsequent computation (except    */
/* verification). At the end of this pass, a value of win or loss is  */
/* accurate, but a draw means the position is either a tie or a win   */
/* (it cannot be a loss).                                             */

DoLookups( db, index )
database db;
int index;
{
     int i, value, numb, childvalue, moves[ MAX_MOVES ], conv;
     position pos;

     value = GetValue( db, index );
     if( value != UNKNOWN )
          return;
     SetupPosition( pos, db, index );
     numb = NonCaptureMoves( pos, moves );

     value = LOSS;
     conv = 0;
     for( i = 0; i < numb; i++ ) {
          if( Conversion( moves[ i ] ) == NO )
               continue;
          conv++;
          MakeMove( pos, moves[ i ] );
          childvalue = GetValue( MIRROR( db ), Index( pos ) );
          UnMakeMove( pos, moves[ i ] );
          if( childvalue == LOSS ) {
               value = WIN;
               break;
          }
          if( childvalue == DRAW )
               value = DRAW;
     }
     if( conv == numb && value == LOSS ) {
          /* Special case where all moves are conversions */
          SetValue( db, index, LOSS );
     }
     else if( value != LOSS )
          SetValue( db, index, value );
}
```

Figure A6: DoLookups().

```
/* DoNoIo(): resolve all non-capture positions.  Each position has either */
/* its exact value or a lower bound on its value.  Successor positions'   */
/* values can be viewed as upper bounds.  See if there is enough inform-   */
/* ation to resolve a position's value.                                   */

DoNoIo( db, index )
database db;
int index;
{
     int i, value, numb, childvalue, moves[ MAX_MOVES ], before;
     position pos;

     before = GetValue( db, index );
     if( before == WIN || before == LOSS )
          return;
     SetupPosition( pos, db, index );
     numb = NonCaptureMoves( pos, moves );

     value = ( before == DRAW ) ? DRAW : LOSS;
     for( i = 0; i < numb; i++ ) {
          if( Conversion( moves[ i ] ) == YES )
               continue;
          MakeMove( pos, moves[ i ] );
          childvalue = GetValue( MIRROR( db ), Index( pos ) );
          UnMakeMove( pos, moves[ i ] );
          if( childvalue == LOSS ) {
               value = WIN;
               break;
          }
          if( childvalue == WIN || before == DRAW )
               continue;
          if( childvalue == DRAW )
               value = DRAW;
          else if( childvalue == UNKNOWN && value == LOSS )
               value = UNKNOWN;
     }
     if( before == UNKNOWN && value == DRAW )
          value = UNKNOWN;
     if( value != before ) {
          SetValue( db, index, value );
          NQueue( db, index );
     }
}
```

Figure A7: DoNoIo().

```
/* DoVerify(): check each position’s value to see if it is consistent  */
/* with its successor positions.                                        */

DoVerify( db, index )
database db;
int index;
{
     int i, dbvalue, value, numb, childvalue, moves[ MAX_MOVES ];
     position pos;

     dbvalue = GetValue( db, index );
     if( dbvalue == UNKNOWN )
     {
          printf( "ERROR: position %d UNKNOWN", index );
          exit(-1);
     }
     SetupPosition( pos, db, index );
     numb = NonCaptureMoves( pos, moves );

     value = LOSS;
     for( i = 0; i < numb; i++ ) {
          MakeMove( pos, moves[ i ] );
          childvalue = GetValue( MIRROR( db ), Index( pos ) );
          UnMakeMove( pos, moves[ i ] );
          if( childvalue == LOSS ) {
               value = WIN;
               break;
          }
          if( childvalue == DRAW )
               value = DRAW;
     }
     if( value != dbvalue ) {
          printf( "ERROR: position %d is %d; should be %d",
                    index, dbvalue, value );
          exit(-1);
     }
}
```

Figure A8: DoNonCaptures().

Appendix B: Indexing/Deindexing Functions

The following formulas show how to compute the checkers indexing function. They can easily be adopted for chess, using 64 instead of 32 as the number of squares on the board and 8 instead of 4 for the number of squares in a row. The formulas given are for an arbitrary number of kings and checkers. Their properties are exactly the same as for kings and pawns in chess. Thus these formulas could be used as is for indexing king and pawn endgames. Some modifications are required to introduce other piece types.

All slices are enumerated by determining the number of positions within the slice and then assigning a unique number (with no gaps) to each position. First, the squares of the board are mapped from the black side and are numbered 0 to 31. Black rank 0 contains squares 0-3, rank 1 squares 4-7, and so on. Squares within each rank are numbered in increasing order from left to right. Note that rank i for black corresponds to rank $7 - i$

for white. Figure 9 displays this mapping.

White

	28		29		30		31
24		25		26		27	
	20		21		22		23
16		17		18		19	
	12		13		14		15
8		9		10		11	
	4		5		6		7
0		1		2		3	

Black

Figure 9: Mapping of Checkerboard Squares.

Let:

nbk = number of black kings
nwk = number of white kings
nbp = number of black checkers
nwp = number of white checkers
rbp = rank of leading black checker
rwp = rank of leading white checker.

The method for computing the number of positions in a slice starts with an empty board. The first value computed is the number of positions which have only *nbp* black checkers with leading rank *rbp*. This value is added to the number of positions created by adding *nwp* white checkers with leading rank *rwp*. This is then summed to the number of positions obtained by adding *nbk* black kings and *nwk* white kings to the board. The final sum represents the number of positions for the slice.

The first value is obtained by computing the number of positions which have the leading black rank less than or equal to *rbp* (where *rbp* is between 0 and 6) and then subtracting the number of positions which have the leading black rank less than or equal to *rbp* − 1. Using combinatorial arithmetic, this is formulated as:

$$MaxBP = \binom{4\times(rbp+1)}{nbp} - \binom{4\times rbp}{nbp} \ .$$

A different formulation is used to determine the number of white checker positions with *nwp* white checkers and leading white checker rank *rwp* because *nbp* squares (of which some may be within the first *rwp* ranks) are now occupied by black checkers. The procedure below resolves the number of white checker positions:

1. Compute the minimum square number of *rwp*:

$$MinSqNum_{rwp} = 4\times(7-rwp) \ .$$

2. Compute the maximum available squares for *rwp*:

$$MaxAvail_{rwp} = 4 \times (rwp + 1) \ .$$

3. For each black checker configuration with leading checker rank *rbp* (i.e. for $0 \le i < MaxBP$):
   3.1. Compute the number of squares within white ranks 0 to *rwp* occupied by black checkers:

   $$NumBP = \#of\_black\_checker\_squares \ge MinSqNum_{rwp} \ .$$

   3.2. Subtract from $MaxAvail_{rwp}$ to obtain the actual number of available white checker squares:

   $$Avail_{rwp} = MaxAvail_{rwp} - NumBP \ .$$

   3.3. Compute $Avail_{rwp-1}$.
   3.4. Compute the number of white checker positions with leading rank *rwp* for this black checker configuration:

   $$NumWP_i = \binom{Avail_{rwp}}{nwp} - \binom{Avail_{rwp-1}}{nwp} \ .$$

   3.5. Add this value to the total number of white checker positions:

   $$MaxWP = MaxWP + NumWP_i \ .$$

Calculations for *MaxBK* and *MaxWK* are much simpler because the multi-directional mobility of the kings does not require specifying a leading rank. Hence, the number of positions with *nbk* black kings given *nbp* black checkers and *nwp* white checkers is:

$$MaxBK = \binom{32 - nbp - nwp}{nbk} \ ,$$

and the number of positions with *nwk* white kings given *nbp* black checkers, *nwp* white checkers, and *nbk* black kings is:

$$MaxWK = \binom{32 - nbp - nwp - nbk}{nwk} \ .$$

Thus, the total number of positions for the slice is:

$$NumPos = MaxBP \times MaxWP \times MaxBK \times MaxWK \ .$$

The enumeration algorithm initially assigns the *nbp* black checkers to the black side of the board on squares (0, 1, ..., $nbp - 1$). If the leading rank is greater than zero then the last checker is assigned to the square $rbp \times 4$. White checkers are placed on the white side of the board: (31, 30, ..., 31-($nwp - 1$)). Again, if the leading white rank is greater than zero then the last checker is assigned to the square $31 - (rwp \times 4)$. Each white checker is checked for possible conflicts with other pieces already on the board before its square is assigned. If such a conflict is present, the starting white checker square is decremented. Black kings are assigned initial squares of (0, 1, ..., $nbk - 1$). As with the white checkers, each black king square is checked for possible conflicts. This time, however, a conflict results in an increment of the starting king square. White kings are handled similarly to black kings.

Each position is representable by four tuples, one for each set of pieces. These are expressed as $(bp_{0,} bp_{1,} \ldots, bp_{nbp-1})$, $(wp_{0,} wp_{1,} \ldots, wp_{nwp-1})$, $(bk_{0,} bk_{1,} \ldots, bk_{nbk-1})$, and $(wk_{0,} wk_{1,} \ldots, wk_{nwk-1})$. The entries in each tuple correspond to square numbers occupied by their pieces, sorted left to right in increasing order.

The next index for a tuple, Sq_i, is determined by scanning left to right and incrementing the first element satisfying either $Sq_i < Sq_{i+1} - 1$, or $i = n$ and $Sq_n < LastSq$ $(= 32)$. If neither of these two conditions can be met, the last position for the tuple has been reached. Otherwise, Sq_i is checked for piece conflicts and, if necessary, incremented again until a vacant square is found. Elements $Sq_{0,} Sq_{1,} \ldots, Sq_{i-1}$ are reset to 0, 1, ..., $i - 1$ and similar conflict checks are made with each.

The tuples are ordered *wk*, *bk*, *wp*, and *bp* from least significant to most significant. The next position is obtained by incrementing the lowest available element from the lowest significant tuple. If the tuple affected is not the least significant tuple, then all lower ordered tuples are reset.

The deindexing function takes a numerical value and creates the position corresponding to this number. Recall from the discussion of the indexing function the values *MaxBP*, *MaxWP*, *MaxBK*, *MaxWK*, and $NumWP_i$. For any index n where $0 \le n < NumPos$, the method to compute the position described by n is generalized as follows:

1. Initialize tuples *bp*, *wp*, *bk*, and *wk*.
2. Set $i = 0$.
3. If $n < MaxWK$ then increment tuple *wk* n times, and exit.
4. If $n < MaxBK \times MaxWK$ then increment tuple *bk* b times where $n = (b \times MaxWK) + r$. Set $n = n - (b \times MaxWK)$ and go to Step 3.
5. If $n < NumWP_i \times MaxBK \times MaxWK$ then increment tuple *wp* b times where $n = (b \times MaxBK \times MaxWK) + r$. Set $n = n - (b \times MaxBK \times MaxWK)$ and go to Step 4.
6. Since $n \ge NumWP_i \times MaxBK \times MaxWK$, tuple *bp* must be incremented. The number of times this tuple is incremented is determined by the values $NumWP_i$ obtained when the number of positions in the slice was first determined. Note $0 \le i < MaxBP$.

   6.1. If $n \ge NumWP_i \times MaxBK \times MaxWK$ then increment tuple *bp*; else go to Step 5.

   6.2. Set $n = n - (NumWP_i \times MaxBK \times MaxWK)$, $i = i + 1$, and go to Step 6.1.

The above algorithm requires minor modification whenever one (or more) of the tuples is the empty set.

Appendix C: Network Supercomputer

The following shell scripts and files form the basis for our network supercomputer.

`db.list.p`   Job queue for prime workstations.

`db.list.n`   Job queue for non-prime workstations.

`db.list.m` Job queue for workstations with less available memory.

`db.list.s` Job queue for slow workstations.

`vidb` Edit a job list queue file. This script creates a lock file which prevents any other process from editing the specified job queue file while an editing session is in progress.

`addq` Add syntactically correct job entries to a specific job queue.
Example: `addq p lookup 3113.01`

`capcheck` Display status of capture pass for a specified slice.
Example: `capcheck 3113.01`

`lookcheck` Display status of lookup pass for a specified slice.
Example: `lookcheck 3113.01`

`noncheck` Display status of non-capture pass for a specified slice.
Example: `noncheck 3113.01`

`vercheck` Display status of slice verification.
Example: `vercheck 3113.01`

`hosts` List of workstations eligible for computing databases. Each entry has the following format:
`hostname queue_suffix platform_type memory_size public_or_private night_only`,
where *hostname* is the workstation name, *queue_suffix* is one of *p*, *n*, *m*, *s* and represents the queue the workstation reads its jobs from, *memory_size* is the amount of available random access memory for page tables, *public_or_private* indicates if a database computation on the workstations should be suspended during normal working hours, and *night_only* specifies if the database process should run only at night and on weekends, and be terminated otherwise.

`dbstatus` Display status of active database computations on all workstations listed in the *hosts* file.

`dbstart` Start database processes on a target list of workstations. The program checks the *hosts* file to find the architecture of each machine, and spawns the appropriate executable. For example, `dbstart host1 host2` forks a database process on `host1` and `host2`.

`wswatch` Monitor a workstation for interactive activity. If activity is detected, either suspend the process until the interactive session is complete, or checkpoint and terminate the process.

`wsmonitor` Monitor all workstations computing databases for machine crashes and reboots.