Advanced Parallel Programming

Miscellaneous MPI-IO topics

Dr David Henty
HPC Training and Support
d.henty@epcc.ed.ac.uk
+44 131 650 5960

MPI-IO Errors

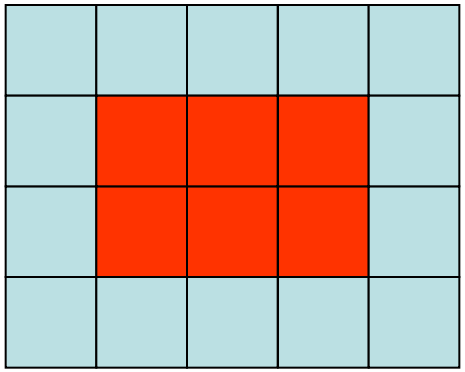
- Unlike the rest of MPI, MPI-IO errors are not fatal
  - probably don't want your program to crash if a file open fails
  - always need to check the error code!
- Many different error codes can be reported
  - I would suggest simply quitting if **`ierr != MPI_SUCCESS`**
- Can change this behaviour for file operations
  - same functionality as **`MPI_Errhandler_create`** etc.
  - called **`MPI_File_create_errhandler`**, ...
  - error handlers are attached to file handles rather than communicators
  - can set handler to be **`MPI_ERRORS_ARE_FATAL`**

Size of File on Disk

- Useful to check length of output file
  - `ls -l <filename>`
  - check that size (in bytes) is what you expect
- Can be confusing if file already exists
  - length will be increased if new file is longer than existing file
  - but may not be decreased if new file is shorter!
- Delete old files before running your test programs

Datatype for **MPI_File_read / write**

- Usually pass the basic type of the array being processed
  - eg **MPI_FLOAT**, **MPI_REAL**
- Can pass derived types
  - useful for receiving the core of an array when local arrays have halos



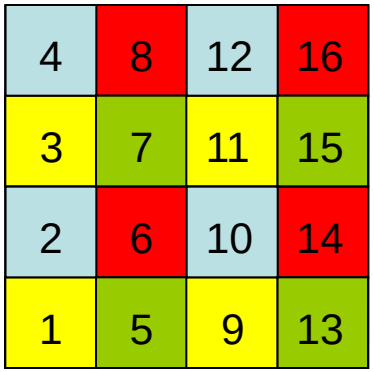
```
MPI_File_read_all(fh, &x[1][1], 1, vector3x2, ...);

MPI_FILE_READ_ALL(fh, x(2,2)  , 1, vector3x2, ...)
```

  - or could use a 3x2 subarray and pass **&x[0][0]** or **x(1,1)**

General Decompositions

- We have just considered block decompositions
  - where local array size is an exact multiple of global array size
- If the sizes don't match
  - define different sized subarrays on each process
  - eg processes at the edge of the grid have smaller subsections
- This does not generalize to block-cyclic decompositions
  - how do we specify discontinuous subarrays?



Distributed Arrays

```
int MPI_Type_create_darray(int size, int rank,
  int ndims, int array_of_gsizes[],
  int array_of_distribs[], int array_of_dargs[],
  int array_of_psizes[], int order,
  MPI_Datatype oldtype, MPI_Datatype *newtype);

MPI_TYPE_CREATE_DARRAY(SIZE, RANK, NDIMS
  ARRAY_OF_GSIZES, ARRAY_OF_DISTRIBS, ARRAY_OF_DARGS,
  ARRAY_OF_PSIZES, ORDER, OLDTYPE, NEWTYPE, IERR)

INTEGER SIZE, RANK, NDIMS, ARRAY_OF_GSIZES(*),
  ARRAY_OF_DISTRIBS(*), ARRAY_OF_DARGS(*),
  ARRAY_OF_PSIZES(*), ORDER, OLDTYPE, NEWTYPE, IERR
```

- See the man page for full details!
  - uses HPF conventions for block-cyclic distributions

Unstructured Data

- Imagine a particle simulation
  - each particle is a compound object with a type and position (x,y,z)
    - eg a C struct or Fortran type
  - each particle has unique global identifier 1, 2, 3, ..., N-1, N
- Particles move around
  - at the end of a simulation, each process will have:
    - a different numbers of particles
    - with a random mixture of global identifiers
- Two choices
  - write to file in the order they appear in the processes
  - write to file with position based on global identifier

Approach

- Define a derived type to match the particle object
  - eg **`MPI_PARTICLE`**
  - use this as the etype
- Writing in process order
  - need to know where to start in the file
  - calculate the sum of the number of particles on previous ranks
    - using **`MPI_Scan`**
- Writing in global order
  - call **`MPI_Type_indexed`** (or **`create_indexed_block`**)
  - use this as the filetype
  - write multiple instances of **`MPI_PARTICLE`**

Unstructured Meshes

- Similar to global ordering of particles
  - each element has both a local and global identifier
  - want the file to be ordered by the global id

- Define an **`MPI_ELEMENT`**
  - use this as the etype
  - create an indexed filetype based on global id

Blocking IO

- This code spends a lot of time waiting while saving to disk

```
define big arrays: old and new
loop many times
  ! do a computationally expensive operation
  new = expensive_function(old)
  old = new
  every 10 iterations:
    save_to_disk(old)
 end loop
```

Non-blocking IO

- This code overlaps computation and IO

```
define big arrays: old and new
loop many times
  ! do a computationally expensive operation
  new = expensive_function(old)
  if (saving to disk):
    finish: isave_to_disk(old)
  old = new
  every 10 iterations:
    start: isave_to_disk(old)
 end loop
```

Non-blocking IO in MPI-IO

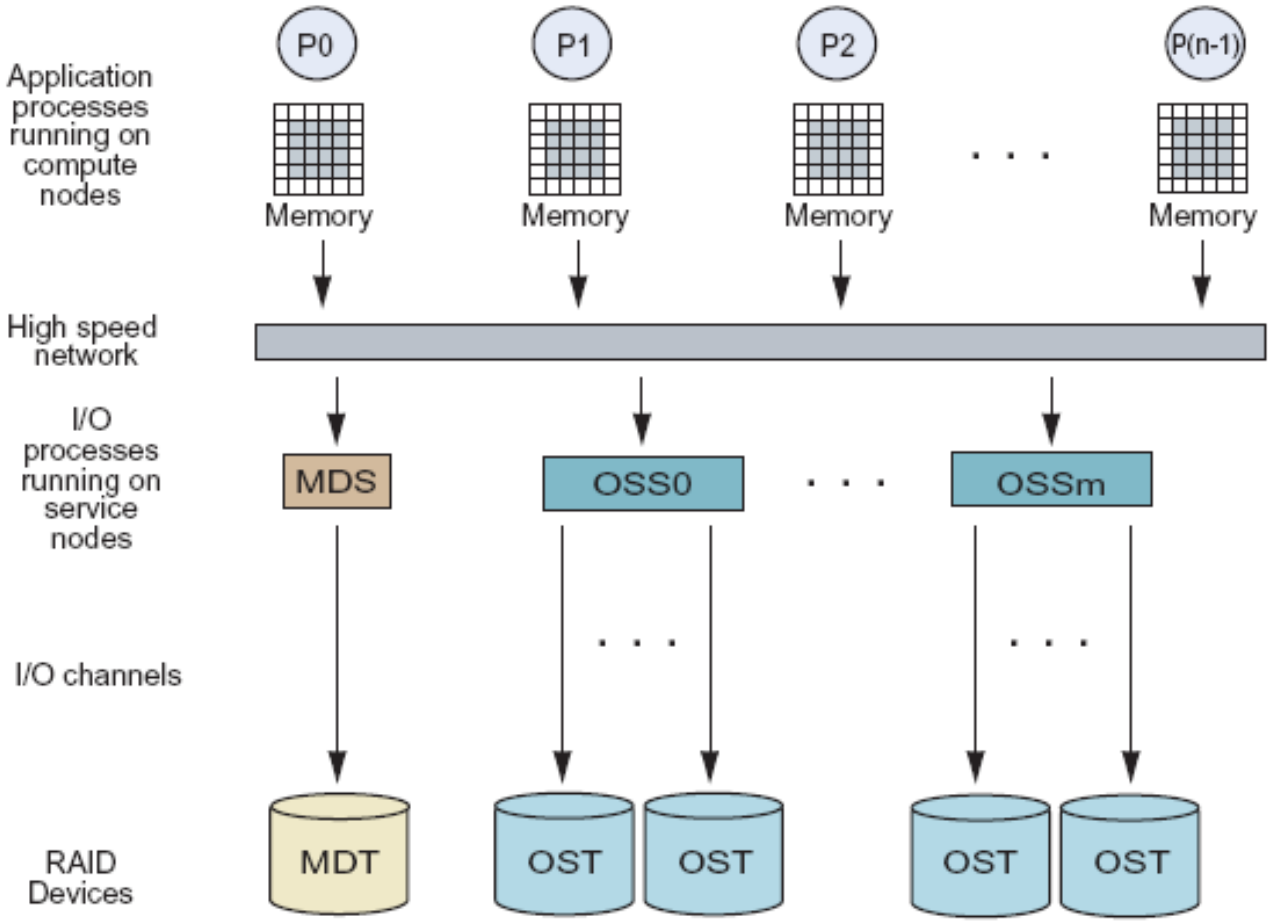
- Two forms
- General non-blocking
  - **`MPI_File_iwrite(fh, buf, count, datatype, request)`**
  - finish by waiting on **`request`**
  - but no collective version
- Split collective
  - **`MPI_File_write_all_begin(fh, buf, count, datatype)`**
  - **`MPI_File_write_all_end(fh, buf, status)`**
  - only a single outstanding IO operation at any one time
  - allows for collective version

Serial IO

- How can I read MPI-IO files in a serial program?
- Using native format
  - data is raw bytes
  - use **`fread`** in C or direct access unformatted IO in Fortran
  - see **`ioread.c`** and **`ioread.f90`** for examples
  - Fortran approach is quite old-fashioned (direct access IO)
    - new `access="stream"` functionality makes this a bit simpler
- Other MPI-IO formats will require more work!
- Note that you can do single process IO in MPI-IO
  - pass **`MPI_COMM_SELF`** to **`MPI_File_open`**

Performance

- Recall schematic overview of parallel file system Lustre



Application-side parallel IO

- Implementing MPI-IO has achieved
  - all data going to a single file
  - minimal stress on Meta Data Server (MDS) – a serial bottleneck
  - potential for many processes to write simultaneously

- But …
  - performance requires multiple parallel writes to disk
  - in Lustre, requires multiple Object Storage Servers (OSS) writing to multiple Object Storage Targets (OST)
  - an OSS is like an IO server, an OST is like a physical disk

- User has control over assignment of files to OSTs
  - but default is only a few OSTs
  - MPI-IO performance not much better than naïve master IO

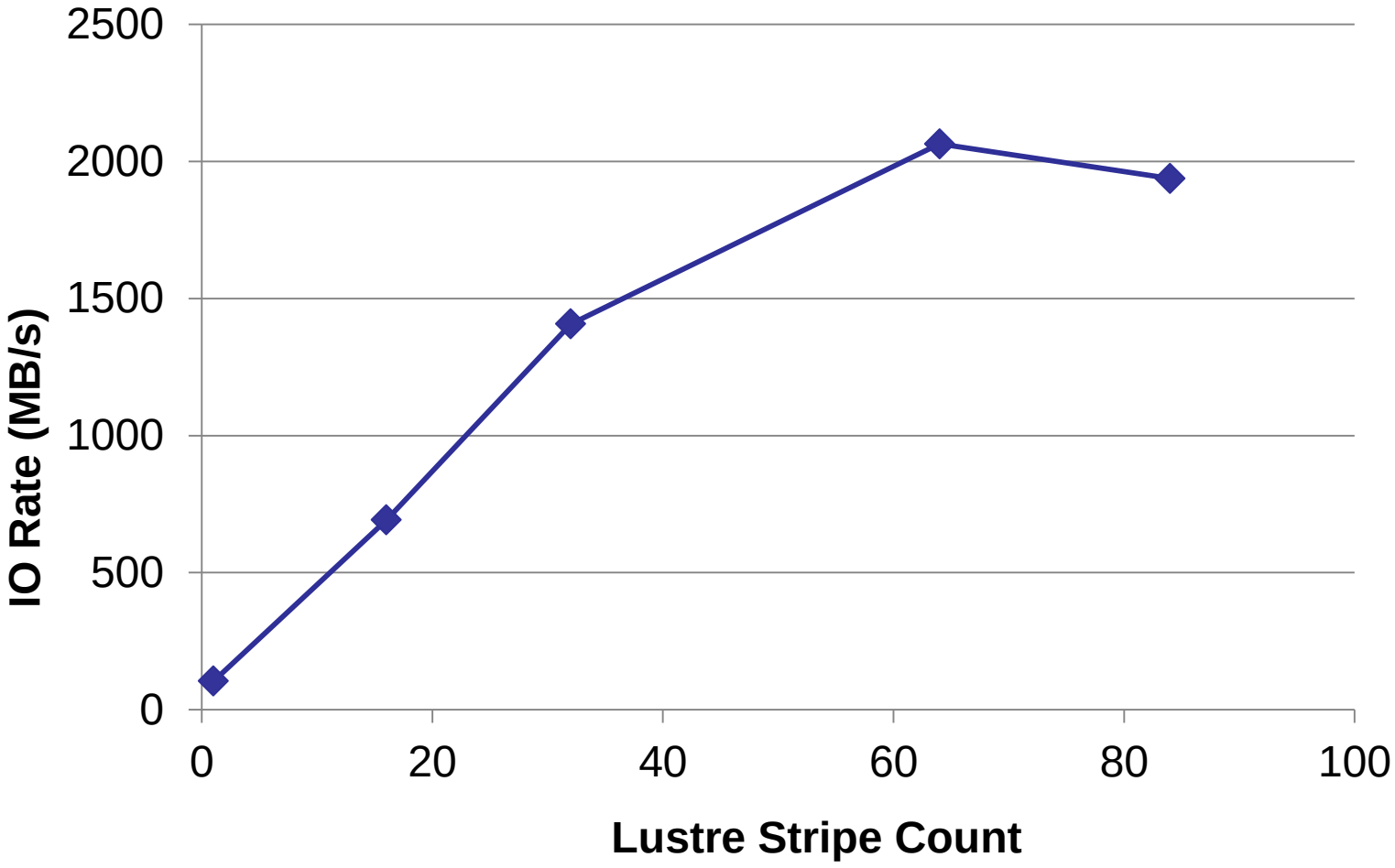
Lustre Striping

- Can split a file across multiple OSTs
  - each block is called a “stripe”

- **`lfs setstripe -c 8 <filename>`**
  - stripes across 8 OSTs
  - has substantial benefits for performance

- Test case
  - 2048 x 2048 x 2048 array across 4096 processors (16 x 16 x 16)
  - file size is 32 GB
  - identical IO approach as used exercise
    - generalised to 3D
    - local halos automatically stripped off with derived type in MPI-IO write call

Results on HECToR



Documentation

- MPI-2 web pages
- Another tutorial
  - **www.sdsc.edu/us/training/workshops/institute2005/docs/Thakur-MPI-IO.ppt**
- MPI-2 book

  http://www-unix.mcs.anl.gov/mpi/usingmpi2/