CMSC 714
Lecture 20
Parallel I/O

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Notes

- Exam on Thursday
- Group Project presentations next Thursday and following Tuesday
  – final report due Friday, May 12

IBM GPFS

- Designed to support high throughput parallel applications, including multimedia
  – well suited for scientific computations
  – still used in many of Top 500 supercomputers
- Main idea is to use parallel I/O to increase performance and scale to large configurations
  – increase bandwidth by spreading reads and writes (even to a single file) across multiple disks, especially for sequential access
  – avoid the "one file per parallel process" model, or sending all I/O through one node
  – use internal high performance switch, plus separate I/O nodes, for I/O from parallel processes running on nodes
  – files can be both striped across multiple I/O nodes, and across multiple disks in each I/O node

IBM GPFS

- Each node runs a demon (mmfsd) to provide I/O services
  – one demon runs a *metanode service*, to serve file metadata (ownership, permissions), and inode/directory updates
  – one demon runs a *stripe group manager*, to keep track of available disks
  – a *token manager* to synchronize concurrent access to files, maintain consistency across caches
  – each application node demon mounts a file system and performs file accesses (through switch, to I/O nodes that have the disks with the data)
- Client-side caching
  – inside Virtual Shared Disk (VSD) layer in kernel (server is on I/O nodes)
  – *pagepool* in each application node's memory
  – read-ahead discovers sequential and constant stride access patterns
  – write behind allows application to continue after data copied into pagepool – cost is extra copy to pagepool
- Experiments show that GPFS scales well to very high absolute performance for sequential accesses
  – need big transfer sizes for non-sequential accesses to get decent performance – use MPI-IO to aggregate (collective I/O)
  – 1 server can handle up to maybe 6 clients – this is technology dependent (switch, disks, processors)

Active Disks

- Goal is to move the computation to the data, by offloading processing to disk resident processors
- Motivation is that even fast host processor will be unable to keep many disks busy if it's doing any serious processing of the data
  - you say MapReduce, but why not do MapReduce at the disk?
  - in later work, just attach the right number of disks to a host (technology dependent), and do processing in host
- Stream-based programming model
  - *disklets* that read from one or more input streams, write to one or more output streams
  - disklets configured and controlled from host, and have limited capabilities, to protect again errors or malicious code
    - read data into fixed sized buffers (chunk at a time)
    - no dynamic memory allocation
    - I/O ops initiated from host program

Active Disks

- Applications include data warehousing, image processing, satellite data processing, …
  - examples of how to write disklets given for all of those
  - performance comparison against host only programs with conventional disks
  - not completely fair, since the Active Disk implementations use processing power from multiple disk processors
    - but each disk processor is less powerful
  - simulation-based experiments, but fairly detailed, accurate simulations – used multiple datasets, quite large for the time, data striped in large chunks across disks (256KB)
- Experiments show that Active Disks scales well with more disks, performs better than conventional architecture when significant processing on data is required
  - puts much less stress on network between disks and host than conventional architecture
  - host can become a bottleneck when used for collecting and redistributing data from multiple disks