

Advanced Message-Passing Programming

Basic MPI-IO calls



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Overview

- Lecture will cover
 - MPI-IO model
 - basic file handling routines
 - setting the file view
 - achieving performance

Comparing MPI-IO and Controller IO

- Controller IO uses a single process for read and write
- This requires a buffer to hold entire file on controller
 - not scalable to many processes due to memory limits
- MPI-IO model
 - each process describes what subsections of the file it owns
 - this is done using standard MPI datatypes
 - these are passed into the MPI-IO routines
 - data is automatically read and transferred directly to local memory
 - there is no single large buffer and no explicit controller process

MPI-IO Approach

- Four stages
 - open file
 - set file view
 - read or write data
 - close file
- All the complexity is hidden in setting the file view
 - this is where the derived datatypes appear
- Write is probably more important in practice than read
 - but exercises concentrate on read
 - makes for an easier progression from serial to parallel IO examples

Opening a File

```
MPI_File_open(MPI_Comm comm, char *filename, int amode,  
              MPI_Info info, MPI_File *fh)
```

```
MPI_FILE_OPEN(COMM, FILENAME, AMODE, INFO, FH, IERR)  
CHARACTER* (*) FILENAME  
INTEGER COMM, AMODE, INFO, FH, IERR
```

- Attaches a file to the File Handle
 - use this handle in all future IO calls
 - analogous to C file pointer or Fortran unit number
- Routine is collective across the communicator
 - must be called by all processes in that communicator
- Access mode specified by amode
 - common values are: `MPI_MODE_CREATE`, `MPI_MODE_RDONLY`,
`MPI_MODE_WRONLY`, `MPI_MODE_RDWR`

Examples

```
MPI_File fh;  
int amode = MPI_MODE_RDONLY;  
MPI_File_open(MPI_COMM_WORLD, "data.in", amode,  
              MPI_INFO_NULL, &fh);  
  
integer fh  
integer amode = MPI_MODE_RDONLY  
call MPI_FILE_OPEN(MPI_COMM_WORLD, 'data.in', amode,  
                    MPI_INFO_NULL, fh, ierr)
```

- Must specify create as well as write for new files

```
int      amode = MPI_MODE_CREATE | MPI_MODE_WRONLY;  
integer amode = MPI_MODE_CREATE + MPI_MODE_WRONLY
```

- will return to the info argument later

Closing a File

```
MPI_File_close(MPI_File *fh)
```

```
MPI_FILE_CLOSE(FH, IERR)
```

```
INTEGER FH, IERR
```

- Routine is collective across the communicator
 - must be called by all processes in that communicator

Reading Data

```
MPI_File_read_all(MPI_File fh, void *buf, int count,  
                  MPI_Datatype datatype, MPI_Status *status)  
  
MPI_FILE_READ_ALL(FH, BUF, COUNT, DATATYPE, STATUS, IERR)  
  INTEGER FH, COUNT, DATATYPE, STATUS(MPI_STATUS_SIZE), IERR
```

- Reads **count** objects of type **datatype** from the file on each process
 - this is collective across the communicator associated with **fh**
 - similar in operation to C **fread** or Fortran **read**
- No offsets into the file are specified in the read
 - but processes do not all read the same data!
 - actual positions of read depends on the process's own file view
- Similar syntax for write

Setting the File View

```
int MPI_File_set_view(MPI_File fh, MPI_Offset disp,  
                      MPI_Datatype etype, MPI_Datatype filetype,  
                      char *datarep, MPI_Info info);  
  
MPI_FILE_SET_VIEW(FH, DISP, ETYPE, FILETYPE, DATAREP, INFO, IERR)  
INTEGER FH, ETYPE, FILETYPE, INFO, IERR  
CHARACTER*(*) DATAREP  
INTEGER(KIND=MPI_OFFSET_KIND) DISP
```

- **disp** specifies the starting point in the file *in bytes*
- **etype** specifies the elementary datatype which is the building block of the file
- **filetype** specifies which subsections of the global file each process accesses
- **datarep** specifies the format of the data in the file
- **info** contains hints and system-specific information – see later

File Views

- Once set, the process only sees the data in the view
 - different start positions depending on displacement and/or leading gaps in datatype
 - for 2D sections can use MPI vectors or subarray datatypes
 - can then do linear reads – holes in datatype are skipped over

4	8	12	16
3	7	11	15
2	6	10	14
1	5	9	13

rank 1 (0,1)	rank 3 (1,1)
rank 0 (0,0)	rank 2 (1,0)

global file

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	----	----	----	----	----	----	----

rank 1 filetype

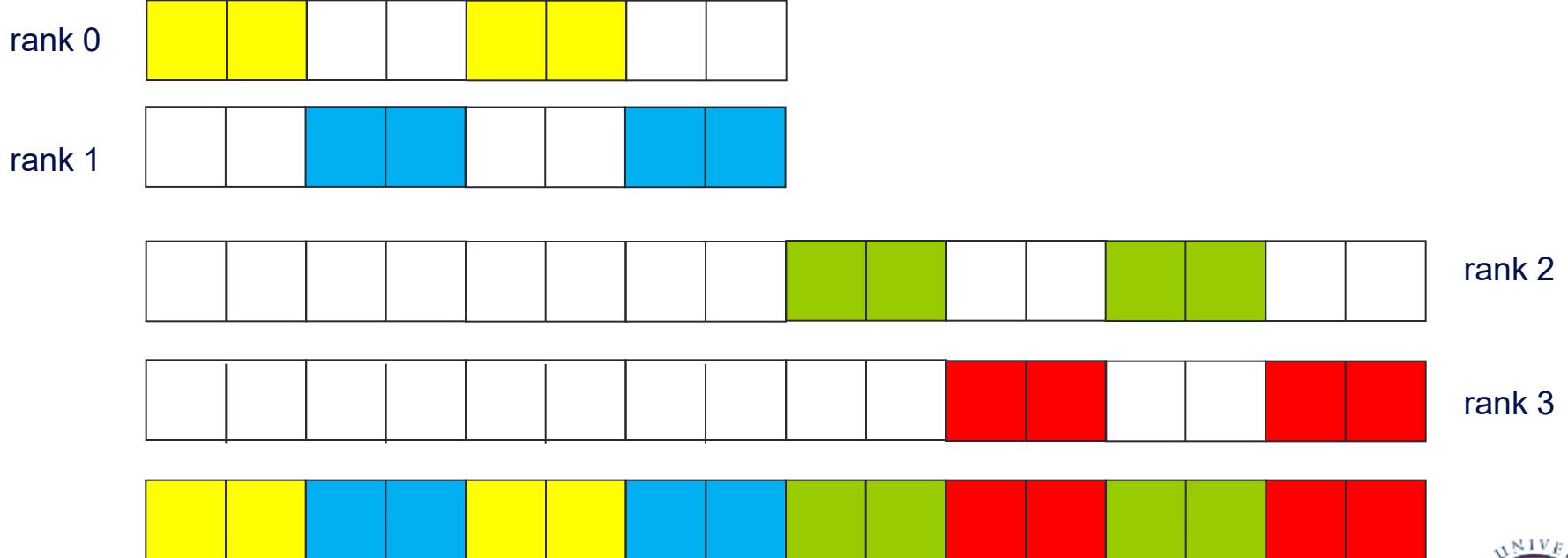
rank 1 view of file

3	4	7	8
---	---	---	---

Filetypes Should Tile the File

4	8	12	16
3	7	11	15
2	6	10	14
1	5	9	13

rank 1 (0,1)	rank 3 (1,1)
rank 0 (0,0)	rank 2 (1,0)



Data Representation

- `datarep` is a string that can be
 - “**native**”
 - “**internal**”
 - “**external32**”
- Fastest is “**native**”
 - raw bytes are written to file exactly as in memory
- Most portable is “**external32**”
 - should be readable by MPI-IO on any platform
- Middle ground is “**internal**”
 - portability depends on the implementation
- I would recommend “**native**”
 - convert file format by hand as and when necessary

Choice of Parameters (1)

- Many different combinations are possible
 - choices of displacements, filetypes, etypes, datatypes, ...
- Simplest approach is to set **disp** = 0 everywhere
 - then specify offsets using datatypes with leading gaps when setting view
 - non-zero **disp** could be useful for skipping global header (eg metadata)
 - **disp** must be of the correct type in Fortran (NOT a default integer)
 - **CANNOT** specify '0' for the displacement: need to use a variable

```
INTEGER(KIND=MPI_OFFSET_KIND) DISP = 0  
CALL MPI_FILE_SET_VIEW(FH, DISP, ...)
```

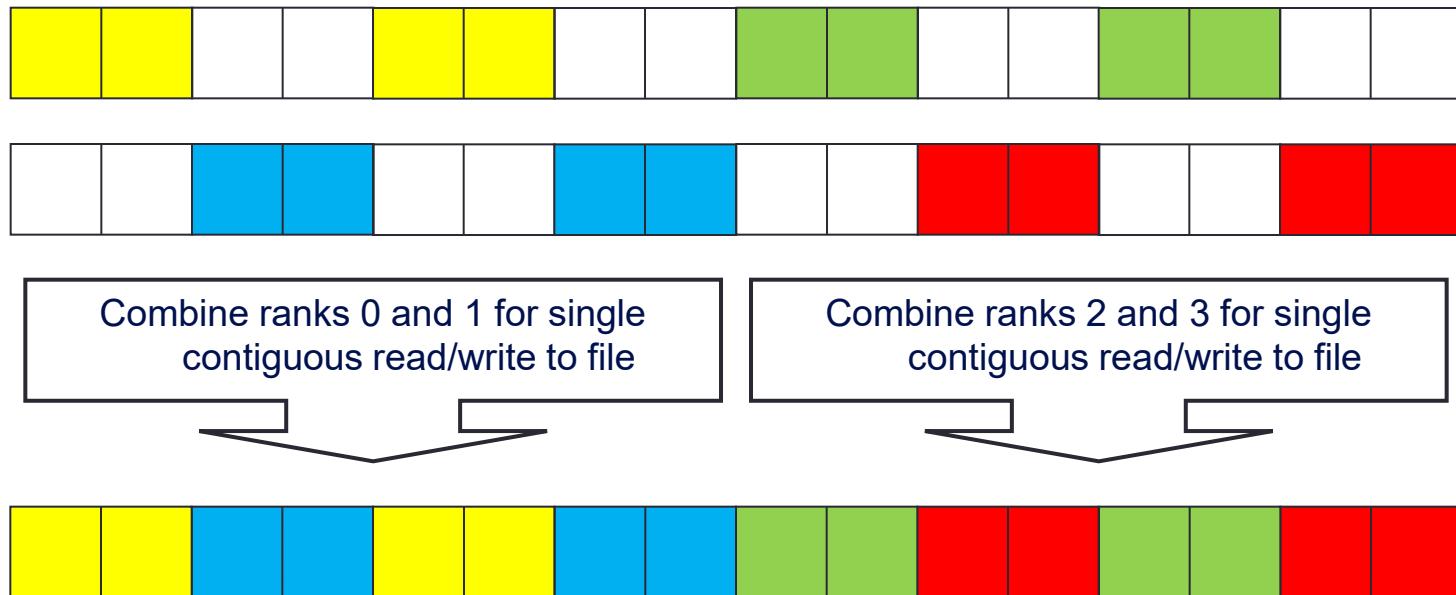
- I would recommend setting the view with subarray types
 - and zero displacements

Choice of Parameters (2)

- Can also use vector datatypes in the view
 - each process then specifies a different, non-zero value of disp
- Problems
 - disp is specified in bytes so need to know the size of the **etype**
 - files are linear 1D arrays
 - need to do a calculation for displacement of element of 2D array
 - something like `i*NY + j` (in C) or `j*NX + i` (in Fortran)
 - then multiply by the number of bytes in a float or REAL
- Using vector types + displacements is one of the exercises
- **etype** normally something like **MPI_REAL** or **MPI_FLOAT**
 - **datatype** in read/write calls is usually the same as the **etype**
 - however, can play some useful tricks (see extra exercises re halos)

Collective IO

- For read and write, “_all” means operation is collective
 - all processes attached to the file are taking part
- Other IO routines exist which are individual (delete “_all”)
 - functionality is the same but performance will be slower
 - collective routines can aggregate reads/writes for better performance



INFO Objects and Performance

- Used to pass optimisation hints to MPI-IO
 - implementations can define any number of allowed values
 - these are portable in as much as they can be ignored!
 - can use the default value `info = MPI_INFO_NULL`
- Info objects can be created, set and freed (see manual for details)
 - `MPI_Info_create`
 - `MPI_Info_set`
 - `MPI_Info_free`
- Using appropriate values may be key to performance
 - e.g. setting buffer sizes, blocking factors, number of IO nodes, ...
 - but is dependent on the system and the MPI implementation
 - need to consult the MPI manual for your machine
 - on ARCHER2, easier to tune Lustre file system than use MPI-IO hints

Summary

- MPI-IO calls deceptively simple
- User must define appropriate filetypes so file view is correct on each process
 - this is the difficult part!
- Use collective calls whenever you can
 - enables IO library to merge reads and writes
 - enables a smaller number of larger IO operations from/to disk