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# **FFS: A cryptographic cloud-based deniable filesystem through exploitation of online web services**

Store your sensitive data in plain sight

**GLENN OLSSON**

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Supervisors: Hamid Ghasemirahni, Zachory Peterson  
Examiner: Gerald Quentin Maguire Jr

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## Abstract

Many Online Web Service (OWS)s today, such as Flickr and Twitter, provide users with the possibility to post images which are stored on the platform for free. This thesis explores the idea of creating a cryptographically secure filesystem which stores its data on an online web service using encoded and encrypted images. More data can usually be stored in image posts than in a text posts on OWSs. The filesystem, named The Fejk Filesystem (FFS), provides users with free, deniable, and cryptographic storage by exploiting the storage provided by these online web services. The thesis compares the performance of FFS against two other filesystems. It can be concluded that FFS has limitations in mainly speed, making it unviable as a general-purpose usage, such as a substitute to the local filesystem on a computer. However, its portability and security makes it relevant for certain scenarios.

## Keywords

Filesystem, Fejk FileSystem, Cloud-based filesystem, Steganograhpic filesystem



## **Sammanfattning**

Sammanfattning på svenska

## **Nyckelord**

Filsystem, Fejk FileSystem, Molnbaserat filsystem, Steganografiskt filsystem



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To the people who said it could not be done.

Amsterdam, The Netherlands October 2022  
Glenn Olsson



# Contents

|          |  |           |
|----------|--|-----------|
| <b>1</b> | <b>Introduction</b>                              | <b>1</b>  |
| 1.1      | Problem . . . . .                                | 2         |
| 1.2      | Purpose and motivation . . . . .                 | 3         |
| 1.3      | Goals . . . . .                                  | 4         |
| 1.4      | Research Methodology . . . . .                   | 5         |
| 1.5      | Delimitations . . . . .                          | 5         |
| 1.6      | Structure of the thesis . . . . .                | 6         |
| <b>2</b> | <b>Background</b>                                | <b>7</b>  |
| 2.1      | Filesystems and data storage . . . . .           | 7         |
| 2.1.1    | Unix filesystems . . . . .                       | 7         |
| 2.1.2    | Distributed filesystems . . . . .                | 9         |
| 2.1.3    | Data storage and encoding . . . . .              | 10        |
| 2.2      | FUSE . . . . .                                   | 11        |
| 2.3      | Online web services . . . . .                    | 12        |
| 2.3.1    | Twitter . . . . .                                | 12        |
| 2.3.2    | Flickr . . . . .                                 | 13        |
| 2.4      | Cryptography . . . . .                           | 14        |
| 2.5      | Threats . . . . .                                | 15        |
| <b>3</b> | <b>Related work</b>                              | <b>17</b> |
| 3.1      | Steganography and deniable filesystems . . . . . | 17        |
| 3.2      | Cryptography . . . . .                           | 18        |
| 3.3      | Related filesystems . . . . .                    | 19        |
| 3.4      | Filesystem benchmarking . . . . .                | 21        |
| 3.5      | Summary . . . . .                                | 22        |
| <b>4</b> | <b>Method</b>                                    | <b>25</b> |
| 4.1      | Development environment specification . . . . .  | 25        |
| 4.2      | FFS . . . . .                                    | 26        |

|          |   |           |
|----------|---|-----------|
| 4.2.1    | Design overview . . . . .                   | 26        |
| 4.2.2    | Cache . . . . .                             | 30        |
| 4.2.3    | Encoding and decoding objects . . . . .     | 31        |
| 4.2.4    | Online web services . . . . .               | 33        |
| 4.2.5    | Implemented filesystem operations . . . . . | 36        |
| 4.2.5.1  | open . . . . .                              | 38        |
| 4.2.5.2  | create . . . . .                            | 38        |
| 4.2.5.3  | release . . . . .                           | 39        |
| 4.2.5.4  | opendir . . . . .                           | 39        |
| 4.2.5.5  | releasedir . . . . .                        | 39        |
| 4.2.5.6  | mkdir . . . . .                             | 39        |
| 4.2.5.7  | read . . . . .                              | 40        |
| 4.2.5.8  | readdir . . . . .                           | 40        |
| 4.2.5.9  | write . . . . .                             | 40        |
| 4.2.5.10 | rename . . . . .                            | 41        |
| 4.2.5.11 | truncate . . . . .                          | 41        |
| 4.2.5.12 | ftruncate . . . . .                         | 41        |
| 4.2.5.13 | unlink . . . . .                            | 42        |
| 4.2.5.14 | rmdir . . . . .                             | 42        |
| 4.2.5.15 | getattr . . . . .                           | 42        |
| 4.2.5.16 | fgetattr . . . . .                          | 43        |
| 4.2.5.17 | statfs . . . . .                            | 43        |
| 4.2.5.18 | access . . . . .                            | 43        |
| 4.2.5.19 | utimens . . . . .                           | 43        |
| 4.2.6    | FFS limitations . . . . .                   | 43        |
| 4.3      | Benchmarking . . . . .                      | 46        |
| 4.3.1    | Filesystems . . . . .                       | 46        |
| 4.3.2    | Tools . . . . .                             | 47        |
| <b>5</b> | <b>Results</b>                              | <b>53</b> |
| 5.1      | FFS . . . . .                               | 53        |
| 5.2      | Benchmarking . . . . .                      | 53        |
| <b>6</b> | <b>Discussion</b>                           | <b>59</b> |
| 6.1      | Filesystems . . . . .                       | 59        |
| 6.2      | Security and Deniability . . . . .          | 62        |
| 6.3      | Impact . . . . .                            | 66        |
| 6.3.1    | Societal impacts . . . . .                  | 66        |
| 6.3.2    | Environmental impact . . . . .              | 66        |

|  |           |
|--|-----------|
| <b>7 Conclusions and Future work</b>   | <b>69</b> |
| 7.1 Conclusions . . . . .  | 69        |
| 7.2 Future work . . . . .  | 70        |
| <b>References</b>  | <b>71</b> |
| <b>A Directory, InodeTable, and InodeEntry class and attributes representation</b> | <b>83</b> |
| <b>B Binary representation of FFS images and Classes</b>                           | <b>85</b> |
| B.1 Serialized C++ objects . . . . .   | 85        |
| B.2 FFS Images . . . . .   | 85        |
| <b>C IOZone benchmarking data</b>  | <b>90</b> |
| C.1 FFS . . . . .  | 90        |
| C.2 GCSF . . . . .   | 104       |
| C.3 Fejk FFS . . . . .   | 104       |
| C.4 APFS . . . . .   | 104       |



# List of Figures

|     |   |    |
|-----|---|----|
| 2.1 | Basic structure of inode-based filesystem . . . . .   | 8  |
| 2.2 | Simple visualization of how Filesystem in Userspace (FUSE) operations are executed . . . . .                | 12 |
| 4.1 | Basic structure of FFS inode-based structure . . . . .  | 27 |
| 4.2 | Simple visualization of the encoder and decoder of FFS . . . . .  | 33 |
| 4.3 | Visualization of how the write operation handles different offsets. . . . .                                 | 40 |
| 5.1 | Box plot of the IOZone output for the different tests for FFS . . . . .                                     | 55 |
| 5.2 | Box plot of the IOZone output for the different tests for Google Conducă Sistem de Fișiere (GCSF) . . . . . | 56 |
| 5.3 | Box plot of the IOZone output for the different tests for The Fejk Fejk Filesystem (FFFS) . . . . .         | 57 |
| 5.4 | Box plot of the IOZone output for the different tests for The Apple Filesystem (APFS) . . . . .             | 58 |
| 6.1 | Screenshot of the Flickr profile used for FFS . . . . .   | 64 |
| B.1 | Byte representation of the serialization of a <code>InodeTable</code> object . . . . .                      | 86 |
| B.2 | Byte representation of the serialization of an <code>InodeEntry</code> object . . . . .                     | 87 |
| B.3 | Byte representation of the serialization of an <code>Directory</code> object . . . . .                      | 88 |
| B.4 | Byte representation of the FFS image header . . . . .   | 88 |
| B.5 | Byte representation of the data stored as Pixel Color Data (PCD) in FFS images . . . . .                    | 89 |
| C.1 | IOZone output for FFS Forward Read . . . . .  | 92 |
| C.2 | IOZone output for FFS Forward Write . . . . .   | 93 |

|      |  |     |
|------|--|-----|
| C.3  | IOZone output for FFS Re-Read . . . . .            | 94  |
| C.4  | IOZone output for FFS Re-Write . . . . .           | 95  |
| C.5  | IOZone output for FFS Random read . . . . .        | 96  |
| C.6  | IOZone output for FFS Random write . . . . .       | 97  |
| C.7  | IOZone output for GCSF Forward Read . . . . .      | 98  |
| C.8  | IOZone output for GCSF Forward Write . . . . .     | 99  |
| C.9  | IOZone output for GCSF Re-Read . . . . .           | 100 |
| C.10 | IOZone output for GCSF Re-Write . . . . .          | 101 |
| C.11 | IOZone output for GCSF Random read . . . . .       | 102 |
| C.12 | IOZone output for GCSF Random write . . . . .      | 103 |
| C.13 | IOZone output for Fejk FFS Forward Read . . . . .  | 104 |
| C.14 | IOZone output for Fejk FFS Forward Write . . . . . | 105 |
| C.15 | IOZone output for Fejk FFS Re-Read . . . . .       | 106 |
| C.16 | IOZone output for Fejk FFS Re-Write . . . . .      | 107 |
| C.17 | IOZone output for Fejk FFS Random read . . . . .   | 108 |
| C.18 | IOZone output for Fejk FFS Random write . . . . .  | 109 |
| C.19 | IOZone output for APFS Forward Read . . . . .      | 110 |
| C.20 | IOZone output for APFS Forward Write . . . . .     | 111 |
| C.21 | IOZone output for APFS Re-Read . . . . .           | 112 |
| C.22 | IOZone output for APFS Re-Write . . . . .          | 113 |
| C.23 | IOZone output for APFS Random read . . . . .       | 114 |
| C.24 | IOZone output for APFS Random write . . . . .      | 115 |

# List of Tables

|      |  |     |
|------|--|-----|
| 3.1  | Comparison between features present in related filesystems and FFS. X means that the feature is supported and - means that it is not supported . . . . . | 23  |
| 4.1  | The versions of the libraries, APIs, and tools used by FFS . . . . .   | 26  |
| 4.2  | Filesystem operations implementable through the FUSE Application Programming Interfaces (API), and whether or not FFS implements them . . . . .          | 29  |
| C.1  | IOZone result for FFS Read . . . . .   | 90  |
| C.2  | IOZone result for FFS Write . . . . .  | 91  |
| C.3  | IOZone result for FFS Re-Read . . . . .  | 91  |
| C.4  | IOZone result for FFS Re-Write . . . . .   | 91  |
| C.5  | IOZone result for FFS Random read . . . . .  | 91  |
| C.6  | IOZone result for FFS Random write . . . . .   | 91  |
| C.7  | IOZone result for GCSF Read . . . . .  | 92  |
| C.8  | IOZone result for GCSF Write . . . . .   | 93  |
| C.9  | IOZone result for GCSF Re-Read . . . . .   | 94  |
| C.10 | IOZone result for GCSF Re-Write . . . . .  | 95  |
| C.11 | IOZone result for GCSF Random read . . . . .   | 96  |
| C.12 | IOZone result for GCSF Random write . . . . .  | 97  |
| C.13 | IOZone result for Fejk FFS Read . . . . .  | 98  |
| C.14 | IOZone result for Fejk FFS Write . . . . .   | 99  |
| C.15 | IOZone result for Fejk FFS Re-Read . . . . .   | 100 |
| C.16 | IOZone result for Fejk FFS Re-Write . . . . .  | 101 |
| C.17 | IOZone result for Fejk FFS Random read . . . . .   | 102 |
| C.18 | IOZone result for Fejk FFS Random write . . . . .  | 103 |
| C.19 | IOZone result for APFS Read . . . . .  | 105 |
| C.20 | IOZone result for APFS Write . . . . .   | 106 |
| C.21 | IOZone result for APFS Re-Read . . . . .   | 107 |

|  |     |
|--|-----|
| C.22 IOZone result for APFS Re-Write . . . . .     | 108 |
| C.23 IOZone result for APFS Random read . . . . .  | 109 |
| C.24 IOZone result for APFS Random write . . . . . | 110 |

# Listings

|     |  |    |
|-----|--|----|
| 2.1 | Pseudocode of a minimalistic inode filesystem structure . . . . .                                      | 8  |
| 4.1 | Pseudocode of traversing a given path, returning the <code>Directory</code> and the filename . . . . . | 37 |
| A.1 | The attributes classes representing directories and the inode table in FFS . . . . .                   | 83 |



## List of acronyms and abbreviations

|        |   |
|--------|---|
| ADD    | Additional authentication data                                    |
| AES    | Advanced Encryption Standard                                      |
| APFS   | Apple Filesystem  |
| API    | Application Programming Interfaces                                |
| CED    | Complete Encrypted Data   |
| DES    | Data Encryption Standard  |
| EASCII | Extended ASCII  |
| FFFS   | Fejk Fejk Filesystem  |
| FFS    | Fejk Filesystem   |
| FIFO   | First In First Out  |
| FOWS   | Fake Online Web Service   |
| FTP    | File Transfer Protocol  |
| FUSE   | Filesystem in Userspace   |
| GCM    | Galois/Counter Mode   |
| GCSF   | Google Conduce Sistem de Fișiere                                  |
| HKDF   | Hashed Message Authentication Code based Key Derivation Functions |
| I/O    | In- and output  |
| IV     | Initialization Vector   |
| LCED   | Length of Complete Encrypted Data                                 |
| LRU    | Least Recently Used   |
| NIST   | U.S. National Institute of Standards and Technology               |
| OSN    | Open Social Networks  |
| OWS    | Online Web Service  |
| PBKDF  | Password-Based Key Derivation Function                            |

|     |                        |
|-----|------------------------|
| PCD | Pixel Color Data       |
| RGB | Red Green Blue         |
| RSA | Rivest-Shamir-Adleman  |
| SHA | Secure Hash Algorithms |
| SSD | Solid-State drive      |
| VFS | Virtual Filesystem     |

# Chapter 1

## Introduction

To keep files and data secure we often use encrypted filesystems. However, while these filesystems hide the content of the data, they often do not conceal the existence of data. For instance, using snapshots of the filesystems from different moments in time, it could be possible to notice a difference in the data stored and therefore that data exists and where it is located. Snapshots could even reveal user passwords [1].

Deniable filesystems are intended to make the data deniable, meaning that the user is supposed to be able to plausibly deny the existence of data. This is often accomplished through the use of digital steganography. There are many reasons why this is important. For instance, in 2011, a Syrian man recorded videos of attacks on civilians carried out by Syrian security forces, which he wanted to share with the world [2]. By cutting his arm, he was able to hide a memory card inside the wound and smuggled it out of the country. However, if he would have used methods such as an encrypted deniable filesystem, the border control may not have been able to discover even the existence of data, even if they would have found the memory card. By only encrypting the data, the border control would have been able to see that he was trying to hide data and make him reveal the decryption key, either by legal measures or by force, which is why he smuggled it out.

There exist multiple deniable filesystems that are designed to combat this problem on physical devices, such as memory cards. However, even just carrying a memory card might subject you to suspicion of hiding data, no matter how the filesystem is designed. Another solution to hiding the data is therefore to hide it somewhere else, for instance online through the use of a cloud-based filesystem service, such as Google Drive. Someone searching your body and devices, at for instance an airport or border control, might not

realize that you are using a cloud-based filesystem service to hide your data. Although, more thorough investigations of a person might reveal user accounts used on the service, leading to legal processes where the service is forced to disclose your data. Even if you encrypt the data you upload to such a service, you can still be forced to reveal the decryption keys. What we want to achieve is a combination of a deniable filesystem and a cloud-based filesystem, where the data is stored using digital cryptographic and steganographic methods but without any company or person other than the user controlling the actual data. To accomplish this, we can store the data on online social media platforms.

Social media platforms such as Twitter and Flickr have many millions of daily users that post texts and images (for example, of their cats or funny videos). According to Henna Kermani at Twitter, they processed 200 GB of image data every second in 2016 [3]. The photos posted on Twitter, as opposed to the ones stored on cloud services such as Google Drive, are stored for free on the service for the user, for what seems to be an indefinite period. There is also no specified limit on how many images or tweets one can make. Although, as stated in their terms of service, such limits can be imposed on specific users whenever Twitter wishes, and tweets can be removed at any point in time [4].

This project created a cryptographic and deniable cloud-based filesystem called The Fejk Filesystem (FFS) which takes advantage of free online web services, such as Twitter and Flickr, for the actual storage. The idea was to save the user's files by posting an encrypted version of the file as images and text posts on these web services. The intention was not to create a revolutionary fast and usable filesystem but instead to explore how well it is possible to utilize the storage that Twitter and similar services provide their users for free, as a cryptographic and deniable cloud-based filesystem. Additionally, the performance and limits of this filesystem is analyzed and compared to alternative filesystems, such as Google Drive, to compare the advantages and disadvantages of the developed filesystem compared to professional filesystems. The security of the filesystem is discussed and an analysis of the steganographic capability of the developed filesystem is presented.

## 1.1 Problem

Current cryptographic filesystems are mainly based on local-disk solutions, and while services such as Google Drive might encrypt your data, it can be considered unsafe storage as they might give out your data. A cryptographic and deniable decentralized cloud-based filesystem where the data is not controlled by any entity other than the user can be of importance, for instance

for journalists in unsafe countries. Social media services often provide free storage which makes it a potentially good host of the data in such a filesystem as they would not be able to access the unencrypted data nor have any idea how the posts are connected, and it might even go unnoticed due to their constant heavy load of data from regular users of the services. Is it possible to exploit the storage on various social media services to create a cryptographic and deniable filesystem where the data is stored on these online web services through the use of free user accounts? What are the drawbacks of such a filesystem compared to similar filesystem solutions with regard to write and read speed, storage capacity, and reliability? Are there advantages to such a filesystem in regard to security and deniability?

## 1.2 Purpose and motivation

The purpose of this research is to explore the possibility to create a secure, steganographic cloud-based filesystem that stores data on Online Web Service (OWS)s and to compare the performance, benefits, and disadvantages of such a filesystem to existing steganographic filesystems and distributed filesystem services. A distributed filesystem service, such as Google Drive, provide data storage for users which can be both free and cost money. Even though Google Drive encrypts the user's data, they control the encryption and decryption keys, and the method of encryption [5]. This means that they can give out the user's files and data if faced with legal actions such as subpoenas. It also opens up the possibility of hackers gaining access to the files without the user having any way to control them.

The idea behind FFS is to have a decentralized cloud-based filesystem where only the user has access to the unencrypted data. By encrypting and decrypting the files locally before uploading and after downloading them to these services (end-to-end encryption), it is possible to ensure that the user is the only one who has access to the encryption and decryption keys and therefore the unencrypted data. Even if the web service would look at the data uploaded by the user, it is unreadable without the decryption key. An interesting aspect of this is that online web services, such as social media, provide users with essentially an unbounded amount of storage for free. Anyone can create any number of accounts on Twitter and Facebook without cost, and with enough accounts, one could potentially store all their data using such a filesystem. We aim to exploit the storage web services give their users for free. As the file data is stored in the open but only accessible by the user, and as FFS can be unmounted to hide its existence, it is steganographic.

There are several steganographic filesystems available but these lack certain aspects that FFS aims to solve. Some filesystems are based on the local disk of the device in use, such as the physical storage device on a computer or phone, or an external storage device connected to a computer or phone. While these filesystems have advantages compared to cloud-based solutions, such as latency, they lack accessibility as you need to have the device to access the content on it. It also means that when you want to share or transport the data, you must physically move the device which can mean problems as it could for instance be taken from you or be destroyed. Cloud-based solutions counter this by being available from any location that has internet access to the services used. However, existing cloud-based solutions introduce other disadvantages. One example is CovertFS [6] where data is stored in images posted on web services. The images are actual images representing something, meaning that there is a limit on how much steganographic data can be stored. CovertFS limit this to 4 kB which means that such a filesystem with a lot of data will require many images which could lead to suspicion from the owners of the web services. FFS stores as much data as possible in the images, meaning that less images are needed to store a file bigger than 4 kB. It also means that the images produced by FFS do not look like a normal image, but instead has seemingly randomly colored pixels. More examples of similar filesystems will be presented in Chapter 3.

## 1.3 Goals

The project aims to create a secure, deniable filesystem that stores its data on online web services by taking advantage of the storage provided to its users. This can be split into the following subgoals:

1. to create a mountable filesystem where files and directories can be stored, read, and deleted,
2. for the filesystem to store all the data on online web services rather than on the local disk,
3. for the system to be secure in the sense that even with access to the uploaded files and the software, the plain-text data is unreadable without the correct decryption key,
4. to provide the user of the filesystem with plausible deniability of its data in the sense that it is not possible to associate the user with FFS if the filesystem is not mounted,
5. to analyze the write and read speed, storage capacity, and reliability of the filesystem and compare it to commercial cloud-based filesystems

- and local filesystems, and,
6. to analyze and discuss environmental and ethical aspects of the filesystem.

## 1.4 Research Methodology

The filesystem created through this thesis will be developed on a Macbook laptop running macOS Monterey, version 12.3.1. It will be written in C++20 and use the Filesystem in Userspace (FUSE) macOS library [7] which enables the writing of a filesystem in userspace rather than in kernel space. FUSE is available on other platforms too, such as Linux, but the filesystem will be developed on a Macbook laptop thus macFUSE is chosen. C++ is chosen because the FUSE Application Programming Interfaces (API) is available in C, and C++ version 20 is well established and used. Further details about the development environment will be found in Section 4.1.

The resulting filesystem will be evaluated against other filesystems, both commercial distributed systems, such as Google Drive, and an instance of The Apple Filesystem (APFS) [8] on the Macbook laptop referenced above. Quantitative data will be gathered from the different filesystems through the use of experiments with the filesystem benchmarking software IOzone [9]. IOzone was chosen because it is, compared to tools such as Fio and Bonnie++, simpler to use while still powerful [10]. We will look at attributes such as the differences in read and write speeds between different filesystems, as well as the speed of random read and random write. However, according to Tarasov, Bhanage, Zadok, and Seltzer, benchmarking filesystems using benchmarking tools is difficult to perform in a standardized way [11] which will be taken into consideration during the evaluation and when concluding the thesis. Further discussion about this will be found in Section 3.4.

## 1.5 Delimitations

Due to limitations in time and as the system is only a prototype for a working filesystem and not a production filesystem, some features found in other filesystems are not implemented in FFS. The focus is to implement a subset of the POSIX standard functions, containing only crucial functions for a simple filesystem, specifically, the FUSE functions *open*, *read*, *write*, *mkdir*, *rmdir*, *readdir*, and *rename*. However, file access control is not a necessity and will therefore not be implemented, thus functions such as *chown* and *chmod* are

not going to be implemented. The reason is that the goal is to present and evaluate the *possibility* of creating a secure steganographic filesystem with a storage medium based on online web services and thus FFS will only aim to implement a minimal filesystem.

## 1.6 Structure of the thesis

Chapter 2 presents theoretical background information of filesystems and the basis of FFS while Chapter 3 mentions and analyzes related work. Chapter 4 describes the implementation and the design choices made for the system, along with the analysis methodology. Chapter 5 presents the results of the analysis and Chapter 6 discusses the findings and other aspects of the work. Lastly, Chapter 7 will finalize the conclusion of the thesis and discuss potential future work.

# Chapter 2

## Background

This chapter presents concepts and information that is relevant for understanding, implementing, and evaluating FFS. We first present the idea of inode-based filesystems and how data is stored in a filesystem. Following is the introduction of FUSE which will be used to implement FFS. Later sections present background information about Twitter and the potential threat adversaries of FFS.

### 2.1 Filesystems and data storage

This section presents how certain filesystems used today are structured. We present the idea of inode-based filesystems and distributed filesystems. Following, we describe how data is stored in a storage system and how this information can be used in FFS.

#### 2.1.1 Unix filesystems

A Unix filesystem uses a data structure called an *inode*. The inodes are found in an inode table and each inode keeps track of the size, blocks used for the file's data, and metadata for the files in the filesystem. A directory simply contains the filenames and each file or directory's inode id. The system can with an inode id find information about the file or directory using the inode table. Each inode can contain any metadata that might be relevant for the system, such as creation time and last update time.

Figure 2.1 shows an example inode filesystem and how it can be visualized. The blocks of an inode entry are where in the storage device the data is stored,

each block is often defined as a certain amount of bytes. Listing 2.1 describes a simple implementation of an inode, an inode table, and directory entries.

| Inode table |        |        |                     |  |
|-------------|--------|--------|---------------------|--|
| Inode       | Blocks | Length | Metadata attributes |  |
| 1           | 2      | 3415   | ...                 |  |
| 2           | 1,3    | 2012   | ...                 |  |
| 3           | 4,6    | 9861   | ...                 |  |
| 4           | 5      | 10     | ...                 |  |

| Directory tables |       |         |       |            |       |
|------------------|-------|---------|-------|------------|-------|
| /                |       | /fizz   |       | /fizz/buzz |       |
| Name             | Inode | Name    | Inode | Name       | Inode |
| ./               | 1     | ./      | 5     | ./         | 4     |
| ../              | 1     | ../     | 1     | ../        | 5     |
| fizz/            | 3     | buzz/   | 2     | baz.ipa    | 6     |
| foo.png          | 5     | bar.pdf | 4     |            |       |

| Directory structure |                  |                  |  |         |
|---------------------|------------------|------------------|--|---------|
| /                   | fizz/<br>foo.png | buzz/<br>bar.pdf |  | baz.ipa |

Figure 2.1: Basic structure of inode-based filesystem

Listing 2.1: Pseudocode of a minimalistic inode filesystem structure

```

struct inode_entry {
    int length
    int[] blocks
    // Metadata attributes are defined here
}

struct directory_entry {
    char* filename
    int inode
}

// Maps inode_id to an inode_entry
map<int, inode_entry> inode_table

```

Different filesystems provide different features and limitations. The Extended Filesystem (ext) exists in four different versions: ext, ext2, ext3, and ext4. This filesystem is often used on Unix systems. Each iteration brings new

features and changes the limitations. For instance, comparing the two latest iterations, ext3 and ext4, ext4 can theoretically store files up to 16 TiB while ext3 can store files up to 2 TiB [12]. Additionally, ext4 supports timestamps in units of nanoseconds while et3 only supports timestamps with a resolution of one second. Additionally, ext4 natively supports encryption at the directory level through the use of the fscrypt API [13].

APFS is a modern filesystem that is used on iPhones and Mac and can store files with a size up to 9 EB [14]. It supports timestamps in units of nanoseconds and is built to be used on Solid-State drive (SSD) [15]. It also supports modern features that its predecessor Mac OS Extended (HFS+) does not support, such as Snapshots and Space Sharing. APFS natively supports encryption of the filesystem volume [16].

### 2.1.2 Distributed filesystems

Filesystems are used to store data, for instance locally on a hard drive of a computer, or in the cloud. Google Drive is an example of a filesystem that enables users to save their data online with up to 15 GB for free [17] using Google's clusters of distributed storage devices, meaning that the data is saved on Google's servers which can be located wherever they have data centers [18]. Paying customers can have a greater amount of storage using the service. Apple's iCloud and Microsoft's OneDrive are two additional examples of distributed filesystems where users have the option of free-tier and paid-tier storage.

Cloud-based filesystems, as opposed to a filesystem on a physical disk, are accessible from multiple computers and devices without requiring the user to connect a physical disk to the computer. Instead, as the filesystem is accessible through the internet, it can be accessed regardless of the user's location and on multiple devices, as long as a connection to the filesystem can be established. Thus, even if the user would lose their computer or if it would malfunction, the data on the cloud-based filesystem can still be accessed which means that the data could still be recovered. These filesystems are often owned by companies, such as Google Drive and Apple's iCloud, as they are big companies that can provide reliable storage. This also means that they have their agenda and policies, and as they are hosting the data they have the possibility of accessing your data. The data is often encrypted, but in the case of Google Drive, they have access and control of the encryption and decryption keys which in turn means that they have access and control of the data stored [5]. While they mention in their Terms of Service that the user

retains ownership of the data [19], they also mention that they can disclose your data for legal reasons and that they retain the right to review the content uploaded by users [20]. Controlling the encryption and decryption keys also enables the possibility of hackers gaining access to your data by attacking Google. iCloud uses end-to-end encryption for some parts of the service, but not for the whole suite [21]. For instance, backup data and iCloud drive are not end-to-end encrypted while the Keychain and Memoji data are.

### 2.1.3 Data storage and encoding

Different file types have different protocols and definitions of how they should be encoded and decoded, for instance, a JPEG and a PNG file can be used to display similar content but the data they store is different. At the lowest level, storage devices often represent files as a string of binary digits no matter the file type (however there are non-binary storage devices [22], but this is outside the scope of this thesis). If one would represent an arbitrary file of  $X$  bytes, each byte (0x00 - 0xFF) can be represented as a character such as the Extended ASCII (EASCII) keyset and we can therefore decode this file as  $X$  different characters. Using the same set of characters for encoding and decoding we can get a symmetric relation for representing a file as a string of characters. EASCII is only one example of such a set of characters, any set of strings with 256 unique symbols can be used to create such a symmetric relation, for instance, 256 different emojis or a list of 256 different words. However, if we are using a set of words we would also have to introduce a unique separator so that the words can be distinguished. If we would use a single space character as the separator, we could make the encoded text look like a text document; however, random words one after another lead to a high probability of creating an unstructured text document. Further, if punctuation is introduced, for instance as part of some words, the text document could look like it contains random and unstructured sentences.

This string of  $X$  bytes can also be used as the data in an image. An image can be abstracted as a  $h * w$  matrix, where each element is a pixel of a certain color. In an image with 16-bit Red Green Blue (RGB) color depth, each pixel consists of three 16-bit values, i.e. three pairs of bytes. One can therefore imagine that we can use this string of  $X$  bytes to assign colors in this pixel matrix by assigning the first two bytes as the first pixel's red color, the next two bytes as the same pixel's color green color, and so forth. The seventh and eighth bytes would represent the second pixel's red color. This means that  $X$

bytes of data can be represented as

$$\text{ceil}\left(\frac{X}{2 * 3}\right)$$

pixels, where *ceil* rounds a float to the closest larger integer. For a file of 1 MB, i.e.  $X = 1\ 000\ 000$  we need 166 667 pixels in an image with 16-bit RGB color depth. The values of  $h$  and  $w$  are arbitrary but if we for instance want a square image we can set  $h = w = 409$  which means that there will be 167 281 pixels in total, and the remaining 614 pixels will just be fillers to make the image a reasonable size. Using filler pixels requires us to keep track of the number of bytes that we store in the image so that we do not read the filler bytes when the image is decoded. However, we could choose  $h = 1$  and  $w = 166\ 667$  which would mean a very wide image but would not require filler pixels. The string of bytes  $X$  is referred to as the Pixel Color Data (PCD).

This means that we can represent any file as a string of bytes which can then be encoded into text or as an image, which can be posted on for instance social media. However, there is a possibility that the social media services compress the images uploaded which could lead to data loss in the image, which would mean that the decoded data would be different from the encoded data. In this case, we would not be able to retrieve the original data that was stored unless we would use methods such as error-correcting codes. The error-correcting codes would have to be stored in a ensured lossless format, for instance, as a text post on an OWS.

## 2.2 FUSE

FUSE is a library that provides an interface to create filesystems in userspace rather than in kernel space which is otherwise often considered the standard when writing commercial filesystems [23]. The reason to implement a filesystem in kernel space is that it leads to faster system calls than when writing a filesystem in userspace. However, while filesystems written with FUSE are generally slower than kernel-based filesystems, using FUSE simplifies the process of creating filesystems. macFUSE is a port of FUSE that operates on Apple's macOS operating system and it extends the FUSE API [7]. macFUSE provides an API for C and Objective C.

Figure 2.2 presents an overview how FUSE works. FUSE consists of a kernel space part and a userspace part that perform different tasks [24]. The kernel part of FUSE operates with the Virtual Filesystem (VFS) which is a

layer in both the Linux kernel and the macOS kernel that exposes a filesystem interface for userspace applications [25, 26]. The VFS interface is independent of the underlying filesystem and is an abstraction of the underlying filesystem operations which can be used on any filesystem the VFS supports. The userspace part of FUSE communicates with the kernel space part through a block device. Operations on a mounted FUSE filesystem are sent to the VFS from the user application, which is then sent to the kernel part of FUSE. If needed, the operations are transmitted to the userspace part of FUSE where the operation is handled and a response is sent back to the VFS and the user application through the FUSE kernel module. However, some actions can be handled by the FUSE kernel module directly, such as if the file is cached in the kernel part of FUSE [24]. The response is then sent back to the user application from the kernel module through the VFS.

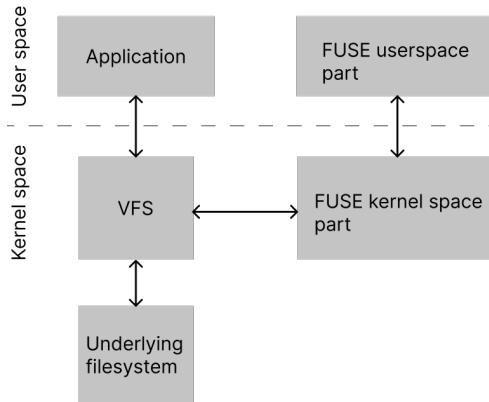


Figure 2.2: Simple visualization of how FUSE operations are executed

## 2.3 Online web services

This section presents two OWSs, Twitter and Flickr, where one can create free-tier accounts. On both of these OWSs, free-tier accounts can make numerous posts for free. The OWSs each provide a free-to-use API for non-commercial development.

### 2.3.1 Twitter

Twitter is a micro-blog online where users can sign up for a free account and create public posts (tweets) using text, images, and videos. Each post has

a unique id associated with it [27]. Text posts are limited to 280 characters while images can be up to 5 MB and videos up to 512 MB [28]. A post with images can contain up to 4 images in one post. There is also a possibility to send private messages to other accounts, where each message can contain up to 10 000 characters and the same limitations on files. However, direct messages older than 30 days are not possible to retrieve through Twitter's API [29]. It is possible to create threads of Twitter posts where multiple tweets can be associated in chronological order.

Twitter's API defines technical limits of how many times certain actions can be executed by a user [30]. A maximum of 2 400 tweets can be sent per day, and the limit is further broken down into smaller limits at semi-hourly intervals. Hitting a limit means that the user account no longer can perform the actions that the limit represents until the time period has elapsed.

### 2.3.2 Flickr

Flickr is a public image and video hosting service used to store and share photos and videos. Unlike Twitter, a post on Flickr is based on an image or video. The post can, optionally, have a title, a description, or both. However, the post must have exactly one photo or video. Flickr supports multiple image- and video formats, including PNG and MP4 [31]. Size restrictions are set for each post, depending on the media type. Images uploaded to Flickr can be a maximum of 200 MB and a video can be a maximum of 1 GB. Further, free-tier accounts can only have a total of 1 000 photos or videos on their account. A Flickr Pro account has unlimited storage on Flickr but is still subject to the per-item limit of 200 MB and 1 GB for images and videos, respectively [32]. Flickr Pro costs between EUR 7.49 to EUR 5.49 per month, depending on the subscription time the user signs up for. The description of a post has a limit of 65535 characters according to Shhexy Corin [33]. This has been verified through testing. The title of a post has also been discovered through testing to have a limit of 255 characters.

The images and videos uploaded to Flickr are stored in their original form **without any compression** and can be downloaded by the user as the same file as was uploaded [34]. Flickr also stores other formats of the file, such as thumbnails. User accounts can restrict who, other than themselves, can download the original image. Restricting who can download the file helps ensure that no-one else can read the original file data, but also requires the user to authenticate with Flickr to download the image meaning it is not possible to anonymously download the image data. The original video can only be

downloaded by the user [34]. Flickr does not state if it will always be possible to download the original versions of the file. Further, Flickr states that it retains the right to remove user content from the service at any time [35].

The Flickr API defines a query limit of 3 600 requests per hour, per application, across all API calls [36]. However, according to Sam Judson in 2013, this is not a hard limit [37]. There is no official information from Flickr about what happens if you break the hourly request limit. The Flickr API states that the API is monitored on other factors as well [36]. If abuse is detected, Flickr reserves the right to revoke API keys.

## 2.4 Cryptography

The Advanced Encryption Standard (AES) is an encryption standard established by the The U.S. National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST), more specificity specifying the Rijndael block cipher [38]. AES is a symmetrical cipher, meaning that the same key is used for encryption and decryption. AES is used to make the data confidential so that no one except the person with the key can access the unencrypted data. AES produces 128-bit encrypted cipher blocks and supports key sizes of 128 bits, 192 bits, or 256 bits. The security of AES has been heavily researched since its introduction in the early 2000s, and literature has found it is well resistant to quantum attacks as well [39].

While AES is a good standard for the confidentiality of the data, confidentiality is often not enough to secure the data [40]. The importance of ensuring the authenticity of the data is also high. This means that we want to know that the data has not been modified since it was encrypted. This problem can be solved by using authenticated encryption [41]. Galois/Counter Mode (GCM) is a block cipher mode of operation which provides authenticated encryption [42]. GCM can be used together with AES to provide secure, authenticated encryption of data. To encrypt using GCM, the encryption function requires a key, a randomized Initialization Vector (IV) and the data to encrypt. The output is the encrypted cipher text and an authentication tag. The decryption function of GCM requires the same key and IV as was used as input in the encryption function, as well as the authentication tag and the cipher text received as output by the encrypting function. Further, both the encryption function and the decryption support Additional authentication data (ADD) to be provided. ADD is data that should be authenticated, but not encrypted. If ADD is provided to the encryption function, it must also be provided to the decryption function.

The key used when encrypting using AES is often derived from a password that the user provides. Password-Based Key Derivation Function (PBKDF)s are functions that can be used to derive a key used for, for instance, AES. The input to a PBKDF is a secret, such as a password [43]. An example of a PBKDF schema is the Hashed Message Authentication Code based Key Derivation Functions (HKDF) presented by Krawczyk [44][45] which utilizes a hashing algorithm that provide a pseudo-random key. HKDF supports multiple hashing algorithms. The security of HKDF is partially dependent on the security of the hashing algorithm used. A well-defined suit of hashing algorithms is the The Secure Hash Algorithms (SHA), which covers, among other hash functions, SHA-256 [46]. SHA-256 is a cryptographic hash function that outputs a 256-bit pseudo-random cipher from its input, which can, for instance, be a password. Further, HKDF uses a salt to improve the security of the provided secret. The salt is random data used to further diffuse the produced key, making two keys with the same secret but different salts, different [47]. The salt does not have to be secret and is sometimes stored with the produced cipher so that the decryption function easily can re-use the salt when deriving the decryption key. If the key used for encryption and the key used for decryption are derived using different salts, the keys will differ and the cipher cannot be decrypted.

Alternative encryption solutions are, among others, Rivest-Shamir-Adleman (RSA) and Data Encryption Standard (DES). RSA is an asymmetrical cipher, meaning that it uses a public key and a private key for encryption and decryption. According to Mahajan and Sachdeva, asymmetric encryption techniques are more computationally intensive than symmetrical encryption techniques and are almost 1 000 times slower than symmetrical techniques [48]. Mahajan and Sachdeva found that AES is the fastest algorithm for encryption and decryption between RSA, DES, and AES while maintaining very good security. This further makes AES a good choice as the cryptography technique for FFS.

## 2.5 Threats

To consider a filesystem secure it is important to imagine different potential adversaries who might attack the system. Considering that FFS has no real control of the data stored on the different services, all the data must be considered to be stored in an insecure system. Even if we could hide the posts made on the online web service, for instance, Twitter, by making the profile private, we must still consider that Twitter themselves could be an adversary

or that they could potentially give out information, such as tweets or direct messages, to entities such as the police. Twitter's privacy policy mentions that they may share, disclose, and preserve personal information and content posted on the service, even after account deletion for up to 18 months [49]. Therefore, to achieve security the data stored must always be encrypted. We assume that an adversary has access to all knowledge about FFS, including how the data is converted, encrypted, and posted. We also assume they know which websites and accounts could host data from the filesystem - but we assume they do **not** have the decryption key. However, even though the data is encrypted, other properties such as your IP address can be known which can expose the user's identity. The problem of these other sources of information external to FFS is not addressed in FFS but remains for future work.

Other than adversaries for FFS, we might also imagine that the underlying services might face attacks that can potentially harm the security of the system or even cause the service to go offline, potentially indefinitely. One solution is to use redundancy - by duplicating the data over multiple services, we can more confidently believe that our data will be accessible as the probability of all services going offline at the same time is lower.

The deniability of FFS is an important aspect of the filesystem. Potential threat adversaries are agents that the user is trying to hide the data from, such as governing states. For the system to be completely deniable, an adversary should not be able to gain any information about the potential data in the system, this includes even the existence of data. When FFS is unmounted there should be no trace of FFS ever being present in the device. We will assume that an adversary is competent and can analyze the software and hardware completely. We assume that the adversary can gain access to the user's computer where FFS has been mounted previously, but that they do not have access to the machine while FFS is mounted. It is assumed that the adversary might have snapshots of the user's computer before and after FFS was mounted, but that no snapshots were taken while FFS was mounted. For instance, a country's border agents might take a snapshot of the computer's storage device every time the user passes through the border, but the user might mount FFS during the time inside the country.

# Chapter 3

## Related work

The research area of creating filesystems to improve security, reliability, and deniability is not new and has been well worked on previously. This chapter presents previous work that is related to this thesis. This includes other filesystems that share similarities with the idea of FFS, for instance with the idea of unconventional storage media and steganography.

### 3.1 Steganography and deniable filesystems

Steganography is the art of hiding information in plain sight and has been around for ages. Today, a major part of steganography is hiding malicious code in for instance images, called stegomalware or stegoware. Stegomalware is an increasing problem and in a sample set of examined real-life stegomalware, over 40% of the cases used images to store the malicious code [50]. While FFS will not include malicious code in its images, this stegomalware problem has fostered the development of detection techniques of steganography in for instance social media, and it is well-researched.

Twitter has been exposed to allowing steganographic images that contain any type of file easily [51]. David Buchanan created a simple python script of only 100 lines of code that can encode zip files, mp3 files, and any file imaginable in an image of the user's choosing [52]. He presents multiple examples of this technique on his Twitter profile\*. The fact that the images are available for the public's eye might be evidence that Twitter's steganography detection software is not perfect. However, it is also possible that Twitter has chosen to not remove these posts.

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\* <https://twitter.com/David3141593>

Other examples of steganographic data storage on Open Social Networks (OSN)s include the paper presented by Ning, Singh, Madhyastha, Krishnamurthy, Cao, and Mohapatra where the authors build a system for private communication on public photo-sharing web services [53]. Due to the web services processing of uploaded multimedia, they first researched how the integrity of steganographic data could be maintained after being uploaded to these services. Following this, they presented an approach that ensured the integrity of the hidden messages in the uploaded images, while also maintaining a low likelihood of discovery from the steganographic analysis. Beato, De Cristofaro, and Rasmussen also explores the idea of undetectable communications over OSNs in another paper [54]. While implementation is not carried out, they present an idea where messages are encoded together with a cover object and a cryptographic key to produce a steganographic message which is then posted to the OSN. A web-based user interface client with a PHP server backend is presented as the method the users would use to create and share their secret messages.

A steganographic, or deniable, filesystem is a system that does not expose files stored on this system without credentials - neither how many files are stored, their sizes, their content, or even if there exist any files in the filesystem [55]. This is also known as a rubber hose filesystem because of the characteristic that the data only can be proven to exist with the correct encryption key which only is accessible if the person is tortured and beaten with a rubber hose because of its simplicity and immediacy compared to the complexity of breaking the key by computational techniques.

## 3.2 Cryptography

Some papers choose to invent their encryption methods rather than using established standards. Chuman, Sirichotedumrong, and Kiya proposes a scrambling-based encryption scheme for images that splits the picture into multiple rectangular blocks that are randomly rotated and inverted, both horizontally and vertically, along with shuffling of the color components [56]. This is used to demonstrate the security and integrity of images sent over insecure channels. The paper uses Twitter and Facebook to exhibit this. Despite its improvement and compatibility of a common image format, such as bitstream compliance, due to its well-proven security FFS will use AES as its encryption method.

### 3.3 Related filesystems

Multiple steganographic filesystems have been presented previously but many of these are focused on filesystems for physical storage disks to that the user has access. For instance, Timothy Peters created DEFY, a deniable filesystem using a log-based structure in 2014 [57]. DEFY was built to be used exclusively on SSD found in mobile devices to provide a steganographic filesystem that could be used on Android phones. Further examples of local disk-based filesystems can be found in [1, 55, 58, 59], among other papers. However, this paper aims to create a filesystem that is not based on a physical disk but rather a cloud-based steganographic filesystem that uses online web services as its storage medium.

In 2007, Baliga, Kilian, and Iftode presented an idea of a covert filesystem that hides the file data in images and uploads them to web services, named CovertFS [6]. The paper lacks implementation of the filesystem but they present an implementation plan which includes using FUSE. They limit the filesystem such that each image posted will only store a maximum of 4 kB of steganographic file data and the images posted on the web services will be actual images. This is different from the idea of FFS where the images will be purely the encrypted file data and will therefore not be an image that represents anything but will instead look like random color noise. An implementation of CovertFS has been attempted by Sosa, Sutton, and Huang which also used Tor to further anonymize the users [60].

In 2016, Szczypiorski introduced the idea of StegHash - a way to hide steganographic data on OSN by connecting multimedia files, such as images and videos, with hashtags [61]. Specifically, images were posted to Twitter and Instagram along with certain permutations of hashtags that pointed to other posts through the use of a custom-designed secret transition generator. StegHash managed to store short messages with 10 bytes of hidden data with a 100% success rate, while longer messages with up to 400 bytes of hidden data had a success rate of 80%. Bieniasz and Szczypiorski later presented SocialStegDisc which was a filesystem application of the idea presented with StegHash [62]. Multiple posts could be required to store a single file and each post referenced the next post like a linked list, which means that you only need the root post to read all the data. This is unlike the idea of FFS where a table will be kept to keep track of which posts store a certain file, and in what order they should be concatenated, similar to the idea of an inode table. SocialStegDisc lacks actual implementation of the filesystem but similar to CovertFS presents the idea of a social media-based filesystem.

TweetFS is a filesystem created by Robert Winslow that stores the data on Twitter [63], created in 2011. It was created as a proof of concept to show that it is possible to store file data on Twitter. The filesystem uses sequential text posts to store the data. The filesystem is not mounted to the operating system, instead, the user interacts with a Python script through the command line. This makes the filesystem less convenient from a user perspective, compared to a mounted filesystem where the files can be browsed using a user interface or command line. There are two commands available: `upload` and `download` which upload and download files or directories, respectively. Names and permissions of files and directories are maintained throughout the upload and download process. The tweets are not encrypted but are enciphered into English words which makes them look like nonsense paragraphs, similar to what we mentioned in Section 2.1.3 about how arbitrary data can be encoded as plain text. This makes the filesystem less secure than an encrypted version as it can be read by anyone with access to the decoder. However, it does introduce a steganographic element to the filesystem.

In 2006, Jones created GmailFS - a mountable filesystem that uses Google's Gmail to store the data [64, 65]. The filesystem was written in Python using FUSE and was presented well before the introduction of Google Drive in 2012. It does not support encryption as the plain file data is stored in emails. Today, Gmail and Google Drive share their storage quota and GmailFS has since become redundant as Google Drive is an easier filesystem to use. GMail Drive is another example of a Gmail-based filesystem and it was influenced by GmailFS [66]. GMail Drive has been declared dead by its author since 2015.

Google Conduce Sistem de Fișiere (GCSF) is a filesystem that stores its data on Google Drive, built using FUSE [67, 68]. On the other hand, Google Drive provides a desktop application [69] that presents a mounted volume in the local filesystem, representing the user's Google Drive filesystem. The mountable volume provided by the desktop application does not always sync the stored data directly, but might instead store it locally until a later time. To enable direct synchronization of the data to Google Drive, GCSF interacts with the Google Drive REST API rather than the mounted filesystem volume. One benefit of always synchronizing the data with Google Drive is that the duration of a filesystem operation can be measured easily. For instance, a write operation on a file in GCSF will not complete before the new file data has been completely stored on Google Drive. Therefore, the duration from the start of the filesystem operation until its end includes the time it takes to upload the file. On the other hand, the duration of a filesystem operation on the mountable volume provided by the Google Drive Desktop application does

not always include the time it takes to upload the file, this can occur at a later time. One difference between GCSF and the idea of FFS is that GCSF does not encrypt the data stored in the filesystem. While the data is, as mentioned previously, encrypted by Google Drive, the encryption keys are controlled by Google Drive, not the user of GCSF. The data stored on GCSF is also stored as its original files in Google Drive, not as images as FFS intends to store the data. The Google Drive filesystem architecture is utilized by GCSF, for instance by using its directory hierarchy structure. This allows GCSF to avoid creating its own inode table and directory structures, as Google Drive provides the functionality these structures similarly provide FFS, through the Google Drive API. The development of GCSF started in 2018 [68], and the repository in GitHub has around 2 300 starts as of writing.

Another Google Drive-based filesystem is `google-drive-ocamlfuse` [70], developed for Linux using FUSE. The project is well received online. The repository has around 6 700 stars on GitHub at the time of writing and there are multiple articles online about the project [71–73]. The filesystem is well developed and, as of writing, well maintained. The filesystem supports filesystem operations such as symbolic links, Unix ownership, and multiple account support. According to the author of GCSF, GCSF tends to be faster than `google-drive-ocamlfuse` for certain operations, including reading cached files [74, 75]. `google-drive-ocamlfuse` has no native support of macOS but is focused on Linux.

Zadok, Badulescu, and Shender created Cryptfs, a stackable Vnode filesystem that encrypted the underlying, potentially unencrypted, filesystem [76]. By making the filesystem stackable, any layer can be added on top of any other, and the abstraction occurs by each Vnode layer communicating with the one beneath. There is a potential to further stack additional layers by using tools such as FiST [77]. This approach enables one to create not only an encrypted filesystem but also to provide redundancy by replicating data to different underlying filesystems. If these filesystems are independent, then this potentially increases availability and reliability. FFS aims to achieve stackability through the use of FUSE.

## 3.4 Filesystem benchmarking

IOzone is a filesystem benchmarking tool that is used to measure performance and analyze a filesystem [9]. It is built for, among other platforms, Apple’s macOS where FFS will be built, run, and tested. However, as mentioned previously, filesystem benchmarking is more complicated than one might

imagine. Different filesystems might perform differently on small and big file sizes among other things, which means that we can never compare benchmarking outputs as just single numbers. We must instead compare different aspects of the filesystems. In 2011 Tarasov, Bhanage, Zadok, and Seltzer presents a paper where they criticize several papers due to their lack of scientific and honest filesystem benchmarking [11]. The problem with benchmarking a filesystem is all the different components that are involved when interacting with a filesystem. For instance, they mention how benchmarking the I/O of the filesystem, such as bandwidth and latency, is different from benchmarking on-disk operations, such as the performance of file read and write operations. The benchmarking tools can for instance rarely affect or determine how the filesystem handles caching and pre-fetching. This means that benchmarking the read and write performance of different filesystems can be misleading as they might handle this differently, meaning that the result could be different depending on for instance the distance between the files on the disk. Two files could be adjacent on the disk on one filesystem and therefore one could be pre-fetched into the cache when the other one is read. Considerations about such factors must be present when analyzing the results of the benchmarking.

Tarasov, Bhanage, Zadok, and Seltzer also lists several different filesystem benchmarking tools available and used by the papers they reviewed, and how well the tools can analyze certain aspects of a filesystem [11]. IOZone is listed as being compatible with multiple different benchmarking types and as it is simpler to use [10] and still maintained. Due to these factors, IOZone was chosen as the benchmarking tool for FFS.

## 3.5 Summary

As presented, different filesystems provide different features and drawbacks. In Table 3.1 we display a summary of characteristics and features of some filesystems mentioned above and how FFS compares. As can be seen, FFS mainly lacks certain filesystem operations which are not the focus of FFS as it is a proof of concept.

Table 3.1: Comparison between features present in related filesystems and FFS. X means that the feature is supported and - means that it is not supported

|                                   | <b>ext4</b> | <b>Google Drive</b> | <b>DEFY</b> | <b>TweetFS</b> | <b>FFS</b> |
|-----------------------------------|-------------|---------------------|-------------|----------------|------------|
| Mountable                         | X           | X                   | X           | -              | X          |
| Read/Write/Remove file            | X           | X                   | X           | X              | X          |
| Read/Write/Remove directory       | X           | X                   | X           | X              | X          |
| Hard links                        | X           | -                   | X           | -              | -          |
| Soft links                        | X           | -                   | X           | -              | -          |
| File and directory access control | X           | X                   | -           | X              | -          |
| Encrypted                         | X           | X*                  | X           | -              | X          |
| Steganographic                    | -           | -                   | X           | X              | X          |
| Cloud-based                       | -           | X                   | -           | X              | X          |

\* As mentioned, the user has no control over this encryption



# Chapter 4

## Method

This chapter presents the methodology of implementing FFS and the specifications of the development environment. We also present the benchmarking tools and methodology used to acquire the quantitative data for the evaluation of the filesystem.

### 4.1 Development environment specification

Development of FFS was done on a 15 inch 2016 year model Macbook Pro laptop with a 2.6 GHz Quad-Core Intel Core i7 processor and 16 GB 2133 MHz LPDDR3 memory. The storage device of the computer was a 250 GB SSD running an encrypted APFS partition as the filesystem. Apple claims that the SSD has a read speed of 3.1 GB/s and a write speed of 2.2 GB/s. The computer used to develop FFS was running macOS.

Table 4.1 presents the version of the libraries, APIs and tools used by FFS. FFS was developed using C++ and compiled using Apple clang. FFS uses the ImageMagick Magick++ library [78] for image processing. macFUSE [7] is used for FFS to use the FUSE API. cURLpp [79] is a cURL [80] C++ wrapper used by FFS to make HTTP requests. libOauth [81] is used by FFS to sign and encode HTTP requests according to the OAuth [79] standard. Flickrcurl [82] is a C library used by FFS to communicate with parts of the Flickr API. Crypto++ [83] is a C++ library providing cryptographic schemes. FFS uses Crypto++ to encrypt and decrypt the data stored in FFS, and to derive the keys used in the encryption and decryption algorithm.

FFS was developed for use on a single computer for simplicity, and the version used for the operating system, libraries, and tools were the most recent up-to-date versions when the development of the filesystem started. To avoid

Table 4.1: The versions of the libraries, APIs, and tools used by FFS

| Library, API, or tool | Version                 |
|-----------------------|-------------------------|
| C++                   | 20                      |
| Apple clang           | 13.0.0                  |
| Apple clang target    | x86_64appledarwin21.4.0 |
| ImageMagick Magick++  | 7.1.029                 |
| macFUSE               | 4.2.5                   |
| FUSE API              | 26                      |
| cURLpp                | 0.8.1                   |
| libOauth              | 1.0.3                   |
| Flickcurl             | 1.26                    |
| Crypto++              | 8.6                     |
| macOS Monterey        | 12.5                    |

re-writing the source code to handle new API designs, these versions remained the same throughout the development process.

## 4.2 FFS

The artifact that was developed as a result of this thesis is the Fejk Filesystem (FFS). It uses an OWS to store the data but behaved as a mountable filesystem for the users. As mentioned in Section 1.5 the filesystem is a proof-of-concept and does not support all functionalities that other filesystems do, such as links or access permissions. The reasoning is that these behaviors are not required for a useable system. Additionally, when comparing FFS to distributed filesystems such as Google Drive, many of these other filesystems also do not support functionality such as links.

### 4.2.1 Design overview

FFS uses images to store the data of files, directories, and the inode table of the filesystem. These images are uploaded to an OWS, such as Flickr, as image posts. As mentioned in Section 2.3, there can be limitations of the size of these posts for certain OWSs. To support file sizes bigger than these limitations, bigger files will be split into multiple posts, requiring FFS to keep track of a list of posts. Figure 4.1 presents the basic outline of FFS and an example content of the filesystem. FFS is based on the idea of inode filesystems and

uses an inode table to store information about the files and directories in the filesystem. However, instead of an inode pointing to specific blocks in a disk, the inode table of FFS will instead keep track of the id numbers of the posts on the OWS where the file or directory is located. The inode table entry for each file or directory will also contain metadata about the entry, such as its size and a boolean indicating if the entry is a directory or not.

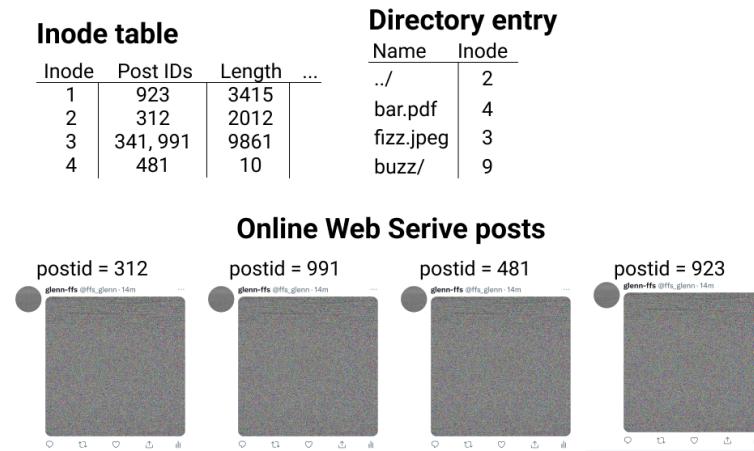


Figure 4.1: Basic structure of FFS inode-based structure

The directories and inode table are represented as classes in C++. Appendix A visualizes the main attributes of the `Directory`, `InodeTable`, and `InodeEntry` classes. There can be multiple `Directory` and `InodeEntry` objects in the computers' memory and the filesystem, but there will only exist one relevant `InodeTable` instance. The `Directory` class is a data structure that stores mappings between filenames and the files' and directories' inode, for all files and directories stored in that directory. The `InodeEntry` is a data structure that keeps track of a file's or directory's information, such as where the data is stored and its metadata, such as size and creation timestamp. The `InodeTable` stores a mapping between an inode and the file's `InodeEntry`. The `InodeTable` has always at least one entry which is the root directory. This entry has a constant inode value of 0 for simplicity to look up the root directory. With the help of the root directory, all the files lower in the directory hierarchy can be found. The inode of all files and directories other than the root directory has a unique inode greater than 0. The `InodeTable` is always the most recent image saved on the OWS, making it easy to find it on the OWS.

To read the content of a known filename in a directory has three steps using these data structures:

1. The `Directory` object of the directory provides the inode of the given filename.
2. The inode is used to get the `InodeEntry` from the `InodeTable`.
3. Using the inode entry, the file can be located.

The location of a file or directory is an ordered list of unique IDs of the image posts on the OWS. The data received by downloading these images, decoding them (as described in Subsection 4.2.3), and concatenating them, can be read as a file or represented as a `Directory` object, depending on whether the `InodeEntry` is marked as a file or a directory.

As directories only know the filename's inode, the `Directory` object does not have to be updated (and thus uploaded) when a file or directory in it is edited, for instance adding data. Only the `InodeEntry`, and thus the `InodeTable`, needs to be updated with the new post IDs of the new file or directory. This saves computation time as every request to the OWS takes time. However, if the filename is edited or the file or directory is moved to another location, the parent directory of the file or directory would have to be edited, and thus its corresponding `Directory` object has to be updated.

When a new file or directory is created, it is saved in its parent directory with its filename and an inode. The same inode is used in the inode table to keep track of the file's or directory's inode entry. As shown in Appendix A, the inode is represented as an unsigned 32-bit integer. The inode is calculated by adding one to the currently greatest inode. This means that new files and directories will always receive a greater inode value than the ones currently in the inode table. This naïve approach to inode generation does not take into account that there might be an available inode less than the greatest inode in the inode table (for instance, due to the deletion of a previously created file). However, this inode generation approach is fast and will not be a problem until the integer overflows. As the inode is represented using a 32-bit integer, FFS would need to have saved over four billion files before the inode value would overflow. This scenario is outside the scope of this proof-of-concept filesystem.

FFS does not support all filesystem operations that are implementable through FUSE, instead, FFS implements a subset of them as shown in Table 4.2. The implemented operations are the most essential operations required for a working filesystem [84]. Operations such as `chown` provide extended capabilities of the filesystem but these are not required for a proof-of-concept filesystem. The functionality of the filesystem operations

implemented by FFS and their implementation details are described in Subsection 4.2.5.

Table 4.2: Filesystem operations implementable through the FUSE API, and whether or not FFS implements them

| <b>Filesystem operations implemented by FFS</b> | <b>Filesystem operations not implemented by FFS</b> |
|---|---|
| open  | readlink  |
| opendir   | symlink   |
| release   | link  |
| releasedir                                      | chmod   |
| create  | chown   |
| mkdir   | fsync   |
| read  | fsyncdir  |
| readdir   | lock  |
| write   | bmap  |
| rename  | setxattr  |
| truncate  | getxattr  |
| ftruncate                                       | listxattr   |
| unlink  | ioctl   |
| rmdir   | flush   |
| getattr   | poll  |
| fgetattr  |   |
| statfs  |   |
| access  |   |
| utimens   |   |

A file, a Directory, or the Inode Table has to be uploaded to the OWS when it is modified to save its current information. As it takes time to make requests to the OWS, FFS is designed to make as few requests as possible while still saving the data required. Therefore, only the directory or file that is affected by a change is uploaded to the system, while those unaffected can remain the same. The inode table has to be updated with every change of a file or directory as it contains the location of the file or directory.

FFS can be mounted to the local filesystem using FUSE, similar to how you can mount a network drive or a File Transfer Protocol (FTP) server. The mounted FFS volume operates similarly to any other drive and can be accessed using, for instance, Mac's Finder or a shell terminal.

## 4.2.2 Cache

FFS implements a simple in-memory Least Recently Used (LRU) cache for the downloaded content. The cache consists of two data structures:

**Cache Map** a mapping between a post ID and its image data, and

**Cache Queue** a queue keeping track of the cached post IDs.

The cache stores a maximum of 20 image posts. The data stored in the cache is the encrypted image data. To avoid FFS using too much memory, the cache is configured so that images greater than 5 MB are not cached. Each time an image is uploaded or downloaded, it is added to the Cache Map with its post ID as the key. The post ID is also added to the beginning of the Cache Queue. If the Cache Queue exceeds 20 elements, the last element of the queue is removed, and the corresponding entry in the Cache Map is erased, thus the entry is fully erased from the cache. The queue ensures that the cache is limited to 20 entries, and by using the First In First Out (FIFO) valuation method, the queue ensures that the oldest element in the cache is removed when the cache exceeds the limit. When a file or directory is removed from the filesystem, all its data is also removed from the cache, if it is stored there.

Before a post with a specified post ID is downloaded from the OWS, the cache is checked to see if the cache is storing this post ID. If so, the stored image is returned. Otherwise, the process continues by downloading the image from the OWS and then adding it to the cache. When the thesis states that a file or directory is downloaded, it is implied that the cache is also checked and the data is possibly returned by the cache instead of requiring a download of the data from the OWS.

FFS separately caches both the root directory and the inode table. As both of these data structures are used in many of the filesystem operations, it is important that they can be accessed quickly and not be removed from the cache. Their cache entries are updated when the files are uploaded to the OWS.

FFS separately also caches the inode and the parent directory of open files, and the file's data if it has been modified. A file is opened with the use of the `open` or `create` filesystem operation, as described further down in Section 4.2.5. When a file is opened it is associated with a file handle identifier which is used for subsequent filesystem operations to refer to the file rather than using the path to the file in the filesystem. When a user is writing data to a file, multiple `write` file operations might be executed. For instance, when writing a 100 B file two `write` operations might be executed:

- One with `offset = 0` and with a buffer size of 50 B bytes, and

- One with `offset = 50` and with a buffer size of 50 B.

To save computation time by not having to download the file from the OWS, or even decrypt the image data found in FFS's regular cache, FFS stores the modified file data separately in memory. When a file with a file handle is modified or read, FFS checks if the file handle has any modified data associated with it, before it is checking the regular cache. If there is data associated with the file handle, then this data is used for the file operation. If the file operation was a modifying operation, such as a `write` operation, the new data is associated with the file handle and stored in memory. When the file is closed with a subsequent `close` file operation, the modified data is encoded, encrypted and uploaded to the OWS. There is no limit to how many files can be open in the filesystem at the same time, nor how much modified data can be associated with a file handle. Further, if a file is not closed, the associated data is not disassociated with the file handle and is kept in the memory until the filesystem is shut down.

### 4.2.3 Encoding and decoding objects

Entities that FFS stores on the OWS, and therefore also encodes and decodes, are: files, Directory objects, and the Inode Table object. All of these entities are stored on the OWS using PNG images with 16-bit RGB color depth. The inode table and the directories are represented as C++ objects in memory during runtime but are serialized into a binary representation before they are encoded into images. The files saved to FFS are read into memory in a binary format before being encoded into images. All the data encoded into images are encoded similarly, and a detailed description of the binary structures can be found in Appendix B.

The input to the image encoder is the binary data to encode as an image. A header (FFS header) is prepended to the binary data, containing among other things, the size of the data and a timestamp of when the data was encoded. The FFS header and the input data are encrypted using authenticated encryption, utilizing GCM and AES. The key used for the encryption is derived using the HKDF function utilizing the SHA-256 hashing algorithm, along with a random 64 B salt vector, re-generated every time new data is encrypted. The salt is stored with the cipher to ensure that the decryption algorithm uses the same salt to derive the decryption key. The secret used in the HKDF is a password provided by the user. HKDF also uses a random IV, re-generated every time new data is encrypted. The length of the IV is set to 12 bytes. The resulting data from the encryption is the salt, the IV, and the encrypted cipher

(including the authentication tag). These three data points are concatenated into a string of bytes. This string of bytes is referred to as the Complete Encrypted Data (CED).

The dimensions of an FFS image is based on the amount of bytes stored, as described in Section 2.1.3. The stored data is the CED, prepended with the Length of the CED (the Length of Complete Encrypted Data (LCED)) using 4 bytes. For an image of  $X = \text{ceil}(\frac{4+LCED}{6})$  pixels, FFS will set the width  $w$  of the image as  $w = \text{ceil}(\sqrt{X})$ . Further, the height  $h$  of the image is set as  $h = \text{ceil}(\frac{X}{w})$ . This will require  $(w * h) - X$  filler bytes and will create an image with similar height and width. For certain values of  $X$ ,  $h$  will be equal to  $w$ . For other values of  $X$ ,  $h = w - 1$ . The resulting data encoded as pixels in the image is, in order:

- 4 bytes representing the LCED,
- The CED data, and
- Filler bytes.

The content of the filler bytes are randomized.

The data consisting of the LCED, CED, and filler bytes are encoded into PCD for a PNG with 16 RGB bit color depth using the Magick++ library. The result is an image with a high probability of what looks like randomized colors for each pixel. This is because most pixels are encrypted data and therefore the bytes representing this data are seemingly random.

To decode an FFS image, the decoder first interprets the 4 first bytes as the LCED. The salt and IV are retrieved from the CED as they are of known length. The decryption key is derived using the IV and salt and results in the same key as the encryption key because AES is a symmetric cipher algorithm. The remaining bytes of the CED ( $LCED - \text{len}(IV) - \text{len}(salt)$  bytes) are decrypted using the decryption key. The decrypted data consists of the FFS header concatenated with the original stored data. The FFS header is asserted to be in the correct format before the original binary data is returned from the decryption function. Figure 4.2 visualizes the encoder and decoder for all data saved in FFS.

The encryption and decryption methods used are state-of-the-art solutions as defined and implemented by Crypto++ [83]. Crypto++ is a widely-used and well-maintained C++ library for cryptography, and as of writing has no reported CVE security vulnerabilities for the functionality used by FFS [85].

An FFS image has an upper size limit, defined by the OWS used. If the data to be stored in FFS, such as a file, exceeds this limit, it is split into multiple data arrays of sizes less than this limit. Each data array is encrypted and encoded as images independently of each other, and will be encrypted using different

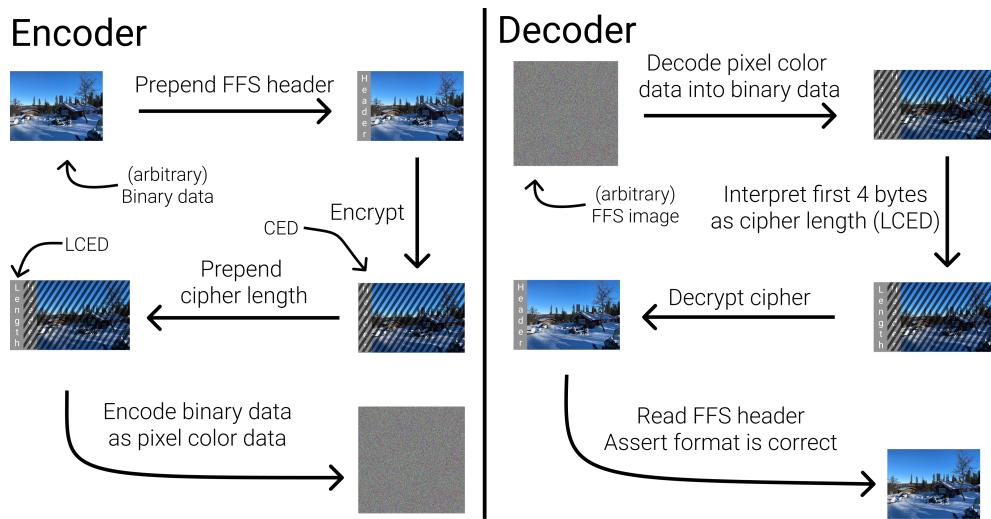


Figure 4.2: Simple visualization of the encoder and decoder of FFS. The input of the encoder is the binary data to store in FFS, eg. a file, and the output is the FFS image to upload to the OWS. The input to the decoder is an FFS image, and the output is the binary data stored on FFS, eg. a file

salts and IVs. Only the inode table stores the different post IDs in the order they are encoded in. While files and directories stored in FFS can be separated into multiple images, the inode table is limited to only one image for simplicity when interacting with the OWS. This introduces a size limit of the inode table, limiting the filesystem. More details about the limits of FFS are found in Subsection 4.2.6.

#### 4.2.4 Online web services

As FFS is a proof-of-concept filesystem, it only uses one OWS as its storage medium. However, for a production filesystem, multiple OWSs would be beneficial. This would enable features such as redundancy by using replication over multiple OWSs, for instance in case one OWS would stop working.

The initial intention of FFS was to use Twitter as the OWS. Initial research for the thesis found that it was possible to upload a file and download the same file without any data loss. However, it was later found that this was not a reliable conclusion. Some images uploaded to Twitter were converted to another image format when they were stored by Twitter, which meant that the decoder could not decode the data as it expected another image format. Other images were compressed or re-coded which led to data loss when

downloading the image. As the decoder of FFS images relies on a specific binary representation of the image, this meant that the images could not be decoded into the previously uploaded data. Twitter has previously publicly announced changes to the way they store images [86] and even suggested workarounds [87] for users who are concerned about the potential data loss. However, during research for the thesis, it was concluded that the workarounds mentioned in [87] no longer work on Twitter. For instance, some PNG images less than 900x900px that have been uploaded to Twitter, have not been able to be downloaded as the same image, which contradicts the workaround mentioned by the Twitter employee. Further changes may have been made to the data management of images on Twitter since the initial research for the thesis; however, an official announcement has not been found.

Flickr saves the original version of the uploaded image and thus it can be used to download the same image as was uploaded. This also means that data that is encoded into an FFS-encoded image can be uploaded, downloaded, and decoded into the same data as before. While they do not assure that they will always support original images, they also do not indicate that this would change. Therefore, Flickr can be used at this moment for the proof-of-concept filesystem that FFS is. A free-tier Flickr account is therefore used for FFS. However, as was noted in Section 2.3.2, only the user can download the original file - other users might get another file when downloading the image post.

Flickr provides an extensive free REST API for non-commercial use. A user can create applications and generate access tokens for the application. These application tokens are later used to request tokens from users who authenticate using Flickr's web interface and allow the application to do requests for the user. The application will then receive access tokens for the user, which are used to authenticate with the API for the API calls that require authentication.

Flickr provides the ability to search for all the images posted by a user and to sort these results by the time of posting. In FFS, every time an image is uploaded to Flickr, it is due to some modification in the filesystem, for instance, a write operation to a file or a creation of a new directory. For every modification in the filesystem, the inode table will have to be updated. Therefore, we can ensure that the inode table is always the most recently uploaded image to Flickr by configuring FFS to upload all other images first, for instance, the newly written file. This provides FFS with a simple way of querying the inode table from Flickr - by simply requesting the most recently uploaded image on the Flickr account.

While the Flickr API is extensive in its functionality, FFS only uses a few of the provided capabilities; specifically FFS uses:

- Upload an image and return the post ID,
- Query the most recent image by a user, and return the URL and post ID of the original uploaded image,
- Get the URL to the original uploaded image given a post ID,
- Remove an image given a post ID, and,
- Get the image data of the image given its URL.

For instance, to download the original image given a post ID, two requests are required:

1. Get the URL to the original uploaded image given a post ID,
2. Get the image data of the image given its URL.

For benchmarking purposes, a fake variant of FFS, The Fejk Fejk Filesystem (FFFS), has also been developed. FFFS uses a Fake Online Web Service (FOWS), which stores the data on the local APFS filesystem. The FOWS is used by FFFS just as Flickr is used by FFS, by storing encoded images on it. By storing the images on the local filesystem, the filesystem operation's duration is shorter as the local filesystem operations are in general faster than the network requests. This allows us to analyze the theoretical performance limit of FFS, and how it would perform if the OWS used had very low latency and the network connection to the OWS had very high bandwidth and low delay. By analyzing FFFS, we can also estimate how much of the filesystem operation time is affected by the time of the network requests. The time  $T$  of an FFS filesystem operation can be modeled like:

$$T = t_{\text{ffs}} + t_{\text{ows}}$$

where  $t_{\text{ffs}}$  is the time that FFS takes, for example for a read operation on a file associated with a file handle;

- to find the file in the inode table,
- decode and decrypt the image data,
- read the specified amount of data, and,
- to output the data.

This time will be approximately consistent for the same request for the same file size. However, computer memory cache misses/hits and process scheduling, among other factors, can fluctuate the value of  $t_{\text{ffs}}$ . In contrast,  $t_{\text{ows}}$  is the total time required to complete all requests to the OWS for a filesystem operation. For instance, for a similar read operation as above this consists of:

- to download all the directories in the file path,
- query the Flickr API for the URL pointing to the most recently uploaded image, and,
- to download the images representing the file to read.

Depending on the OWS, the latency and bandwidth of the internet connection between the user's machine and the OWS's server can differ a lot. Duplicate requests to the same OWS can also differ significantly due to, for instance, server load balancing and a difference in number of requests from other users at the time of the requests. Further, the request could be replaced by a fast cache hit in the FFS cache. However, for a FOWS,  $t_{ows}$  can be replaced by  $t_{fows}$  which will have approximately consistent values for duplicate operations, because the local filesystem is not affected by the network connection or the current traffic by other users of the OWS. The local filesystem requests by other applications on the machine can also be minimized by not using other applications on the machine while running the benchmarking tool to ensure filesystem requests by the FOWS can be handled quickly by the operating system. However,  $t_{fows}$  is affected by, among other things, the underlying storage device of the local filesystem, process scheduling, and FFS cache hits/misses which can still affect the value of  $t_{fows}$ .

Due to limitations in the library `Flickcurl` used for uploading images to Flickr, the image to be uploaded to Flickr first has to be saved to the local filesystem. `Flickcurl` reads the image from the disk, before uploading it. Therefore, FFS saves a temporary file on the local filesystem when data is uploaded to Flickr. This temporary file is stored in the `/tmp` directory of the local filesystem and is removed by FFS immediately after the file has been uploaded. However, it is not certain that the operating system removes or overwrites the file data on the storage device, and thus there are ways to recover the deleted data, by for instance adversaries [88–90]. Although, these methods require you to decrypt the APFS volume, requiring the decryption password. Without this password, the data cannot be recovered. Even with the decryption password, it is not certain that the data is recoverable. If an adversary obtains proof that an FFS image has been present in the `/tmp` directory, they could conclude that FFS has been used to store data, reducing the deniability of the filesystem.

#### 4.2.5 Implemented filesystem operations

This section gives a detailed description of all the FUSE operations implemented by FFS, and how they are implemented by FFS. Further

**Listing 4.1:** Pseudocode of traversing a given path, returning the `Directory` and the filename

```

# Traverse a given path and return the parent directory
# object
# and filename of the path
traverse_path(path) -> (Directory, string):
    # Fetches inode table from the \gls{OWS}
    inode_table := get_inode_table()

    split_path := path.split("/")
    # The filename could be either the name of a file
    # or the name of a directory
    filename := split_path.last
    dirs := split_path.remove_last()

    # Get the root dir from cache
    curr_dir = cache.get_root_dir()

    # While there are still directories to traverse,
    # get the next directory in the list from current
    # directory
    while (!dirs.empty())
        dir_name := dirs.pop_first()
        inode := curr_dir.inode_of(filename=dir_name)
        inode_entry = inode_table.entry_of(inode=
            inode)
        # Download the image posts defined by the
        # post IDs in the inode entry
        curr_dir = download_as_dir(inode_entry)

    return (curr_dir, filename)

```

explanations about the intended functionality of the operations can be found in Kuenning's report [84].

The path of a file is sometimes provided for the filesystem operation and traversed by FFS to understand the requested location. An example path is `/foo/bar/buz.txt` or `/foo/bar/baz/`. A path is traversed with the following pseudo-code shown in Listing 4.1.

When traversing a path, FFS has to fetch all parent directories in the hierarchy. The file or directory with the filename is not fetched while traversing the path, as it might not be necessary for the operation. All operations that rely on the path of a file or directory have to download all parent directories of the path. However, the directories in the path could be cached and therefore would not be required to be downloaded from the OWS. Furthermore, the

`open`, `opendir`, and `create` operations associate a file handle with a file or directory. This enables certain subsequent filesystem operations to use the file handle instead of traversing the string path. This saves time because the path traversing only occurs once for potentially multiple filesystem operations, and the result is saved in the filesystem state.

After every operation that modifies the inode table, the inode table is uploaded to the OWS and cached. Therefore, it is assumed that the inode table is always up to date in memory and on the OWS. This will be true as long as there are not multiple FFS instances working with the same OWS account at the same time. This multiuse scenario has undefined behavior as there is no locking implemented for FFS.

All filesystem operations are synchronous unless specified. Further, FUSE is running in single-thread mode meaning that a filesystem operation call must complete before another can begin. This helps limit the risk of data races as two processes cannot call different operations that, for instance, modify the inode table at the same time.

#### 4.2.5.1 `open`

Given a path to a file, the file is associated with a file handle. The file handle is used in subsequent operations to avoid traversing the file path multiple times. The file is not downloaded from the OWS, only the parent directories are downloaded during the path traversing as explained above. An `open` call must, eventually, be followed by a `release` call. Although, multiple other operation calls can occur between these events.

#### 4.2.5.2 `create`

This operation creates an empty file in the filesystem given a path and associates a file handle with the file, similar to `open`. The empty file will not be uploaded to the OWS as it has no data associated with it. A new entry is added to the parent directory with the filename and a generated inode, and the parent directory is updated in the OWS. The new posts representing the parent directory in the OWS are associated with the inode entry of the parent directory in the inode table, and the old posts are deleted in the OWS. A new inode entry is also created in the inode table, representing the new, empty, file. The inode table is updated in the OWS, and the old inode table is removed.

#### 4.2.5.3 `release`

Given a file handle, this operation closes the file in the filesystem, disassociating the file handle from the file. The current states of the file and the inode table are saved to the OWS, and the previous versions of the file and inode table are deleted from the OWS. Subsequent operations for the file will require path traversing as the file handle can no longer be used.

The file must have a file handle associated with it before `release` is called. This requires a preceding `open` or `create` call for the file.

#### 4.2.5.4 `opendir`

Given a path to a directory, the directory is associated with a file handle. The file handle is used in subsequent operations to avoid traversing the file path multiple times. The directory is not downloaded from the OWS, only the parent directories are downloaded during the path traversing as explained above. An `opendir` call must, eventually, be followed by a `releasedir` call. Although, multiple other operation calls can occur between these events.

#### 4.2.5.5 `releasedir`

Given a file handle, this operation closes the directory in the filesystem, disassociating the file handle from the directory. The current states of the directory and the inode table are saved to the OWS, and the previous versions of the directory and inode table are deleted from the OWS. Subsequent operations for the directory will require path traversing as the file handle can no longer be used.

The directory must have a file handle associated with it before `releasedir` is called. This requires a preceding `opendir` call.

#### 4.2.5.6 `mkdir`

This operation creates an empty directory in the filesystem given a path. The directory is not uploaded to the OWS as it has no data associated with it. The parent directory is modified and updated in the OWS, and the old versions of the parent directory are deleted in the OWS. The parent directory entry in the inode table is modified with the new posts, and a new entry is created for the new directory. The inode table is updated in the OWS, and the old version of the table is removed from the OWS.

As opposed to `create` for files, this operation does not associate a file handle with the directory.

#### 4.2.5.7 `read`

This operation reads a number of bytes, starting from a set offset, from the file specified by the file handle. The data is read into a provided buffer. The full file is downloaded and read into memory, even if just a small part of the file is requested. The file is also cached so that subsequent requests for the same file are faster.

#### 4.2.5.8 `readdir`

This operation reads the filenames inside the directory specified by a file handle. The result includes all filenames in the directory, and the special ". " and "... " directories.

#### 4.2.5.9 `write`

This operation writes  $s$  bytes from a data array  $a$ , starting at the provided offset  $o$ , to the existing file at the provided file handle. All the data of the current file is read into memory. Starting from the offset, the new data from  $a$  overwrites the current data of the file, until  $s$  bytes have been written. If  $o + s$  is greater than the file's size, the file size is set to  $o + s$ . If  $o + s$  is less than the file's size, the data from position  $o + s$  and forward remains the same, and the file size is not modified. See Figure 4.3 for a visualization of the result of a `write` operation given different offsets. The parent directory does not have to be modified.

The file and inode table are not updated on the OWS, this occurs instead in the subsequent `release` call. However, the data is associated with the file handle so that subsequent filesystem calls uses this new file data.

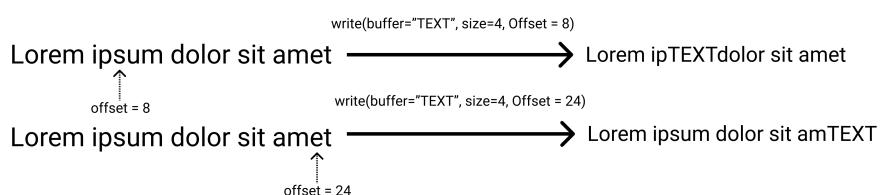


Figure 4.3: Visualization of how the write operation handles different offsets.

#### 4.2.5.10 rename

This operation renames a file or directory to a new path. Both the old path and the new path have to be traversed to locate the parent directories and the file or directory to rename. The file or directory entry in the old parent directory is removed, and the old parent directory is updated to the OWS. A new entry is created in the new parent directory, with the new filename. The new parent directory is updated to the OWS. The inode entry of the renamed file or directory does not have to be modified. However, as both the old parent directories and the new parent directory are updated in the OWS, their inode entries need to be updated with the new posts. The inode table is updated to the OWS and the old table is removed from the OWS. The old posts associated with the old parent directory and the new parent directory are removed from the OWS.

The new path could be in the same directory as the file or directory currently is in. This will not affect the process mentioned above; however, the path will only have to be traversed once, and the parent directory will only be removed and updated once.

#### 4.2.5.11 truncate

This operation truncates or extends the file in the given path, to the provided size  $s$ . The full current file is downloaded into memory. The data of the current file is written to a new buffer until either the file is fully written, or until  $s$  bytes have been written. If the current file's size is smaller than  $s$ , the remaining bytes are written as the NULL character. The new file data is uploaded to the OWS, and the old data is removed from the OWS. The inode table entry is updated with the new posts and uploaded to the OWS. The old inode table is removed from the OWS.

#### 4.2.5.12 ftruncate

This operation is similar to `truncate`, but is called from a user context which means it has a file handle associated with it. The operation truncates or extends the file in the given file handle, to the provided integer  $s$ . The full current file is read into memory, either from the OWS or from the cache. The data of the current file is written to a new buffer until either the file is fully written, or until  $s$  bytes have been written. If the current file's size is smaller than  $s$ , the remaining bytes are written as the NULL character.

The file and inode table are not updated to the OWS, this occurs instead in

the subsequent `release` call. However, the data is associated with the file handle so that subsequent filesystem calls uses this new file data.

#### **4.2.5.13 unlink**

This operation removes a file given the file path. The file is removed from the parent directory, and the parent directory is updated to the OWS. The old parent directory data is removed on the OWS. The removed file's entry in the inode table is also removed, and the inode table updates the entry for the parent directory with its new posts. The inode table is then updated on the OWS and the old inode table is removed on the OWS. Finally, the data of the removed file is removed from the OWS. The last step is not necessary for a working filesystem; however, to save space on the OWS, this is done. If the OWS permits unlimited images and sizes, this step could be omitted to save time.

#### **4.2.5.14 rmdir**

Similar to `unlink`, this operation removes the directory at the path. The directory and all its subdirectories are traversed, and the post IDs of these files and directories are recorded for deletion later. Following this, the entry of the removed directory is removed from the parent directory. The inode entry for the removed directory is removed. The parent directory is updated to the OWS, and the inode table is updated with the new posts of the parent directory. Following this, the inode table is updated to the OWS. The old parent directory and the old inode table are removed from the OWS.

The operation also starts a new thread, where all the posts of files and subdirectories inside the removed directory, are removed from the OWS. They are removed to save space on the OWS, and a separate thread is used to minimize the delay for subsequent file operations. There is no data race involved as the API is thread-safe, and the posts are no longer associated with any data structures on the main thread and would not be accessed there. This also means that this thread can be run with a lower priority.

#### **4.2.5.15 getattr**

This operation returns attributes about a file or directory given a path. This includes permissions, the number of entries (if the provided path points to a directory), timestamps of creation, timestamps of last access, and timestamps of last modification. However, as mentioned previously, FFS does not

implement all features, such as permissions. Instead of keeping track of a file's or directory's permissions, all calls to a valid path will return full read, write, and execute permissions for everyone. However, the timestamps are stored in the inode table of FFS. The file or directory pointed to by the path does not need to be downloaded, all the metadata that FFS stores is accessible through the inode entry in the inode table, and the inode table is always cached.

#### **4.2.5.16 fgetattr**

This operation is similar to `getattr` but is called from a user program context meaning that the file has a file handle associated with it. Other than skipping the path traverse step, this operation returns the equivalent information as `getattr`.

#### **4.2.5.17 statfs**

This operation returns metadata information about FFS. This includes, among other things, the maximum filename size and the filesystem ID. The operation has a short computation time as it does not have to download or upload any files. The only variable information is read from the inode table which is stored in memory and thus does not have to be downloaded from the OWS.

#### **4.2.5.18 access**

This operation, given a path returns whether or not the path can be accessed. As long as the path is valid, this always returns true.

#### **4.2.5.19 utimens**

This operation, provided new timestamps, updates the last access timestamp, the last modified timestamp, or both, of the file or directory at the given path. The file or directory does not have to be downloaded. However, the inode entry for the file's or directory's inode is updated with the new timestamps if they are newer than the previous timestamps but not greater than the current time since epoch. The new state of the inode table is updated to the OWS, and the old version is removed from the OWS.

### **4.2.6 FFS limitations**

FFS has numerous limitations due to both implementation decisions and OWS limits. As Flickr allows a free-tier user account to store up to 1 000 images of

up to 200 MB per image, this allows storage of up to 200 GB of images per account on Flickr. However, as the inode table is required to be stored on the filesystem, a maximum of 999 images can be used to save file and directory data. This limits the filesystem to a maximum of 999 files and directories when utilizing one free-tier account on Flickr, which also limits the maximum storage of file- and directory images to 199.8 GB.

While Flickr supports each image to be up to 200 MB, it is not possible to use the full 200 MB to store the file or directory data. The image includes, among other things, a PNG header, other PNG attributes, and the CED which in total is of greater size than the unencrypted data. To ensure that the PCD along with the PNG header and other PNG attributes does not exceed the limit of 200 MB, FFS limits the PCD size to allow at least 10 MB for the PNG header and other PNG attributes, meaning that the PCD can be a maximum of 190 MB. The cryptographic variables IV, salt, and the authentication tag are stored in the CED using 12, 16, and 64 bytes respectively, for a total of 92 bytes. The size limit means that these 92 bytes, along with the encrypted cipher text, cannot exceed 190 MB, meaning that the encrypted cipher text cannot exceed  $190\ 000\ 000 - 92 = 189\ 999\ 908$  B. However, as AES is a block cipher producing cipher blocks of 16 bytes, the resulting cipher text must be divisible by 16. The largest encrypted cipher text that FFS allows is therefore  $\text{floor}(\frac{189\ 999\ 906}{16}) * 16 = 189\ 999\ 904$  bytes. Due to plain text padding, the unencrypted plain text can be a maximum of one byte less than this value [91], meaning that the plain text can be a maximum of 189 999 903 B. For simplicity, this is rounded down to 189 MB, leaving almost 11 MB in total for the PNG header and other PNG attributes. Therefore, 189 MB is set as the maximum amount of data FFS will store per image. Data greater than 189 MB in size is split into multiple encoded images. For instance, a file of 200 MB will be stored as 189 MB in one image, and 11 MB in another.

189 MB of usable data per image gives FFS a maximum storage capacity of 188.811 GB using 999 files and directories on one free-tier account on Flickr. Each file with data requires at least one image, thus there can be a maximum of 998 non-empty files and directories in the filesystem, excluding the root directory. However, there could also be just one single entry of 188.811 GB stored in the filesystem, which would have to represent the root directory.

The inode table keeps the information about empty files and directories even though they store no data on the OWS. The inode of a file or directory is an unsigned 32-bit integer, meaning that the inode table could theoretically store up to over four billion files and directories. However, due to the constraints mentioned above, most of these files and directories would have to be empty

as Flickr limits the number of images stored. An empty file requires 37 B in the inode table, consisting of the inode, length, and other variables that must exist for an inode entry. As the inode table is limited to one single image on the OWS, the inode table is limited to a maximum size of 189 MB. Further, the size of the inode table is 4 B plus the size of each entry, and one of these entries is the root directory. Even if a file is empty, it is still stored with its filename and inode in its parent directory. A non-empty directory in the inode table requires approximately (depending on the post ID length generated by the OWS) 12 B per file or directory it contains. The maximum number of empty files and directories  $X$  that the inode table can store is therefore, approximately:

$$X = \text{ceil}\left(\frac{189\,000\,000 - 4 - (12 * X)}{37}\right) + 1, X = 3\,857\,143$$

The additional directory is the root directory. Thus, the maximum number of files and directories that the inode table can store is close to four million; however, this requires all files and directories, except the root directory, to be empty. These calculations are based on a single free-tier Flickr account. However, future work of FFS could include multiple user accounts and multiple services. This could increase the limits on the filesystem.

Limits to the file sizes also depend on the machine where FFS is mounted. When a file is read or written to, the complete file is read into memory. This requires the computer to provide at least as much memory as the size of the file. Further, the cache of FFS can store up to 20 images with a size of 5 MB in memory, requiring 100 MB of memory. However, even if the computer has less memory available, more memory can often be provided through swap on the hard disk. Apple ensures that the swapped data is securely encrypted on the hard disk [92]. However, using a swap puts a constraint on the available storage of the computer to be sufficient to store this data. Further, as FFS temporarily saves the data on the local filesystem before it is uploaded to Flickr, the storage device must have sufficient storage available. For instance, a file larger than the available storage on the local filesystem cannot be saved to FFS. If the local filesystem has no available storage, very few filesystem operations can be performed on FFS as any operation that modifies the inode table requires the new inode table to be saved to the local filesystem before it is uploaded to Flickr.

FFS also stores data associated with file handles of modified and open files in memory. The amount of open files in FFS is unbounded, and the amount of data FFS can store per file handle is also unbounded. Further, the data associated with the file handle is not removed from memory until the file is

closed. This presents a potential memory overflow scenario if, for instance, many files are opened and modified without being closed afterwards.

Another limitation of FFS is the rate limits presented by the Flickr API. Flickr allows up to 3 600 API requests per hour, after which the API keys may be revoked by Flickr. 3 600 requests per hour equals 60 requests per minute, or 1 request per second. If the average request takes less than a second for constant, sequential Flickr API calls, the API keys could be revoked. Further, some requests are sent concurrently to Flickr which means that FFS could reach 3 600 API calls faster. However, as long as FFS is not constantly serving filesystem calls, the API limit should be of little concern.

A limitation of FFS that is not possible to quantify is the bandwidth and latency of the network connection from the user to Flickr. The connection can vary significantly depending on for instance the network load at a given moment and the geographic location of the user. A slow network connection is not something FFS can solve, but is left as an exercise for the reader.

## 4.3 Benchmarking

This section describes the methodology and execution of the different filesystem benchmarks. Two different filesystems that are relevant to FFS: (1) APFS and (2) GCSF, are compared with the result of two different instances of FFS: (1) one instance that uses Flickr as its OWS, and (2) one instance that uses a FOWS by storing the encoded images in the local filesystem on the test machine.

### 4.3.1 Filesystems

To analyze the performance of FFS, a filesystem benchmarking tool is used to compare FFS against other filesystems that are relevant to FFS. The filesystems FFS is compared to are:

1. An encrypted APFS partition on an SSD,
2. An instance of GCSF, and,
3. An instance of FFFS using an encrypted APFS filesystem on an SSD as its FOWS.

The encrypted APFS filesystem was used as a reference for a local filesystem without the required internet connection. It is the local filesystem of the development environment for FFS. It was selected as it will give the analysis an example of a modern, well-used, and fast filesystem, and how the benchmark data of FFS and other filesystems compare to this local filesystem.

GCSF was selected to compare FFS against another network-based filesystem. While GCSF is not a steganographic filesystem, it is a filesystem that stores its data on an OWS, namely Google Drive. The reason GCSF was used instead of, for instance, the official Google Drive mountable filesystem volume provided by the Google Drive Desktop application, is that GCSF provides instant upload of the files and directories to Google Drive using the Google Drive REST API. The instant upload provided by GCSF enables us to easily measure the duration of a file operation. For instance, a write operation on a file in GCSF will not complete before the new file data has been completely stored on Google Drive. Another reason why GCSF was chosen was because it is a recent filesystem compared to other related filesystems. Some of the other filesystems discussed in Section 3.3 were developed many years before FFS and thus no longer work as expected, for instance, due to changes in the API, or because the OWS manages the uploaded data differently than previously.

The instance of FFFS using a FOWS of an encrypted APFS was chosen to be compared to FFS so that the duration of the FUSE filesystem operations could be further analyzed. As the filesystem operations of FFFS are similar to the ones of FFS, other than the network request being replaced by local filesystem operations, it is possible to analyze the effect of the OWS latency, the OWS internet connection bandwidth and latency, and the OWS data processing speed has on the filesystem performance. Comparing the benchmark results of FFFS and APFS allows us to analyze the FFS overhead as FFFS is dependent on the performance of APFS. Especially for file operations where FFFS must interact with the storage medium, for instance, write operations and read operations for files not in the cache, FFFS cannot outperform APFS as it will require the execution time of the APFS file operation as well as the internal FFS computation time.

### 4.3.2 Tools

IOZone [9] is a filesystem benchmarking tool used to analyze the performance of filesystem file operations using different tests on a file [93]. Examples of tests that IOZone provides support for are: reading and writing, reading and writing randomly, and reading backward. Each test can be run with different file sizes and different buffer sizes used for the read- or write operation. Normally, multiple buffer sizes are used for each test, for each file size tested. The buffer size starts at 4 kB and increases by a multiple of two up to a buffer size equal to the file size. Multiple file sizes are often used for benchmarking

tests as well. For instance, one could run the IOZone tests with file size 1024 kB and 2048 kB, which would utilize the following values of the file size and buffer size for each test specified:

1. File size = 1024 kB, buffer size = 4 kB,
2. File size = 1024 kB, buffer size = 8 kB,
3. File size = 1024 kB, buffer size = 16 kB,
4. File size = 1024 kB, buffer size = 32 kB,
5. File size = 1024 kB, buffer size = 64 kB,
6. File size = 1024 kB, buffer size = 128 kB,
7. File size = 1024 kB, buffer size = 256 kB,
8. File size = 1024 kB, buffer size = 512 kB,
9. File size = 1024 kB, buffer size = 1024 kB,
10. File size = 2048 kB, buffer size = 4 kB,
11. File size = 2048 kB, buffer size = 8 kB,
12. File size = 2048 kB, buffer size = 16 kB,
13. File size = 2048 kB, buffer size = 32 kB,
14. File size = 2048 kB, buffer size = 64 kB,
15. File size = 2048 kB, buffer size = 128 kB,
16. File size = 2048 kB, buffer size = 256 kB,
17. File size = 2048 kB, buffer size = 512 kB,
18. File size = 2048 kB, buffer size = 1024 kB, and
19. File size = 2048 kB, buffer size = 2048 kB

When IOZone reads from a file it has written to, it asserts that the file content is what it wrote previously to verify that the filesystem stores the data properly. This is not documented in the IOZone documentation [93] but was discovered during testing. However, while it asserts that file operations function correctly, it does not verify all aspects of the filesystem functionality. Further, as IOZone does not state that the file operations are tested, it cannot be assumed that the file operations are correct. Additionally, IOZone does not test if directory hierarchies work as expected, nor if multiple files can be stored at the same time. IOZone is a benchmarking tool used for evaluating the performance of the file operations of a filesystem, not testing the functionality. However, certain cases of the functionality of both FFS and GCSF was tested, and to support directory hierarchies and multiple files as expected. Future work could research the functionality of these filesystems utilizing online storage systems. APFS is expected to have full functionality as it is a professionally developed and widely used filesystem.

While IOZone supports multiple different file operation tests, the thesis only uses a subset of these for benchmarking. Among other reasons, certain tests failed when ran on GCSF. Furthermore, tests such as backward reading lack relevance as it tests a rare case of filesystem operations. The documentation of IOZone [93] claims that the software MSC Nastran

uses backward-read. The documentation also mentions that only a few operating systems provide enhancements for backward reading, although many operating systems provide enhancements for forward-reading. As FFS is intended as a proof-of-concept filesystem and is not intended as a general-purpose filesystem, only relevant tests were chosen. The IOZone benchmarking tests used in the thesis are: Forward- Read and Write, Forward-Re-Read and Re-Write, and Random- Read and Write. The *Forward* specifier will sometimes be omitted in the thesis when the tests are referenced. For instance, when mentioning the Read test, we refer to the Forward Read test.

The IOZone documentation [93] states that to get the most accurate performance results from the benchmarking, the maximum file size of the tests should be set to a value bigger than the filesystem cache. While the FFS cache limit is known to be 5 MB, the cache size limit or the existence of such a limit for the other filesystems, such as GCSF, is unknown. The documentation states that when the cache is unknown, it should be set to greater than the physical memory of the system. However, as the memory of the computer where the benchmarking is run is 16 GB, this is bigger than reasonable for testing FFS and GCSF. Each doubled file size takes exponentially much more time as both the file size and the buffer size are doubled. Further, it has been found that both GCSF and FFS occasionally crash during benchmarking due to, among other factors, unstable internet connections, meaning that a benchmarking test of 16 GB might never be complete due to the filesystem crashing first. The file sizes used for the IOZone tests are therefore set as:

1. 1024 kB,
2. 2048 kB,
3. 4096 kB,
4. 8192 kB, and
5. 16 384 kB

The buffer sizes tested are:

1. 4 kB,
2. 8 kB,
3. 16 kB,
4. 32 kB,
5. 64 kB,
6. 128 kB,
7. 256 kB,
8. 512 kB,
9. 1024 kB,
10. 2048 kB,

11. 4096 kB,
12. 8192 kB, and
13. 16 384 kB

However, the maximum buffer size for each file size is the file size itself. For instance, for a file size of 4096 kB, IOZone will run the tests for buffer sizes up to, and including, 4096 kB. It can not run tests with a buffer size greater than 4096 kB.

When benchmarking the filesystems using IOZone, an argument is passed to include the time to close a file (using the `close` filesystem operation) in the total time of a test. This is important as FFS, and potentially other filesystems save the data to the storage medium only after the device is closed. In the case of FFS, if the time of closing the file was not included, the performance of the filesystem would appear to be higher than it is.

IOZone produces a log of the benchmarking results for the filesystem it benchmarked. This log contains a report of each test (file operation) with performance data for each file size, and for each buffer size for each file size benchmarked for the test. The performance of the filesystem is measured in kilobytes per second.

The benchmarking of FFS and GCSF were both started simultaneously as they both depend on an internet connection. For a fair comparison of the two filesystems, they should be run with similar internet connection constraints. During the benchmarking of the two filesystems, an automatic speed test was conducted every five minutes to survey the current internet connection. The speed test uses Bredbandskollen's command line interface tool [94] which measures the latency, upload-, and download speed of an internet connection to a measurement server in Sweden, Norway, or Denmark [95]. The benchmarking tests of FFS and GCSF were carried out in Amsterdam in The Netherlands using an ethernet connection to a fiber-connected router. While the internet connection to the measurement server is not sure to be equal to the internet connection to the servers of Flickr or Google Drive, it is used as a reference point of the internet connection.



# Chapter 5

## Results

This section presents the results of the thesis. The resulting filesystem is presented in Section 5.1. The benchmarking data outputted from IOZone is presented in Section 5.2

### 5.1 FFS

The artifact developed as a result of the thesis is FFS, which uses Flickr as its OWS. The source code of FFS can be found on GitHub at <https://github.com/GlennOlsson/FFS> [96]. The filesystem provides free cloud-based cryptographic and deniable storage as a mountable volume. The filesystem requires the user to provide their Flickr API keys and an encryption password. The API keys are used to authenticate with the Flickr API, and the password is used to derive the encryption and decryption keys. These values are passed to FFS as environment variables.

### 5.2 Benchmarking

This section presents the result from the IOZone benchmarking tests run on each filesystem. The output result is divided into a table for each test for each filesystem. Each table presents the benchmark performance of the test for each file size and each buffer size. Each table has five rows and 13 columns, where each cell is the performance of the test with the specific file size and buffer size. The complete data tables and graphs presenting the performance of each file system for the different file sizes can be found in Appendix C.

The IOZone benchmarking for FFS ran for 41 minutes, and the IOZone benchmarking for GCSF took 20 minutes. They were started at the same time

and the internet speed tests ran every five minutes until the benchmarking of FFS was completed. In total, eight speed tests were conducted with an average latency of 15.22 ms. The average download speed was 90.96 Mbit/s and the average upload speed was 92.95 Mbit/s.

Combining the 55 data points in one table, we get the overall performance of a test. Using this data, we can plot a box plot presenting the spread of the values in the table. Figure 5.1 presents a box plot of the benchmarking results of FFS. It can be observed that the Read, Re-Read, and Random Read operations are significantly faster than the Write, Re-Write, and Random Write operations. The Write, Re-Write, and Random Write operations all have a wide spread of values. It can also be noted that the median performance of Re-Read and Random Read are better than the median performance of Read. The median performance of Re-Read and Random Read are comparable where Random Read has a bigger spread of values.

Figure 5.2 presents a box plot of the benchmarking results of GCSF. It shows that Write, Re-Write, and Random Write have significantly less performance than the results of Read, Re-Read, and Random Read. It can be noted that the median performance of Re-Write and Random Write are similar, and both are less than the median performance of Write. The median performance of Re-Read and Random Read are higher than the median performance of Read.

Figure 5.3 presents a box plot of the benchmarking results of FFFS. In this plot, one can see that the spread of the values from Write and Re-Write is high. Looking at Table C.14, we can see that certain values are indeed greater than the most, such as `file size = 2048, buffer size = 128` where the performance is 116 330 kB/s which is significantly more than most values in the table. Further, Figure 5.3 shows that Read, Re-Read and Random Read have similar performances, where the median and best performance of Re-Read and Random Read is better than the median and best performance of Read. Random Write has less of a spread than Write and Re-Write has, and the median performance of Random Write is better than the median performance of both Write and Re-Write.

Figure 5.4 presents a box plot for APFS. In this figure, it is possible to see that the performance of the different write operations is lower than the performance of the read operations. Further, it can be noted that the median performance of the Re-Read and the Re-Write tests is better than the performance of the standard Read and Write tests. The median performance of Random Read is similar to the median performance of Read, but the median performance of Random Write is significantly lower than the median

performance of Write.

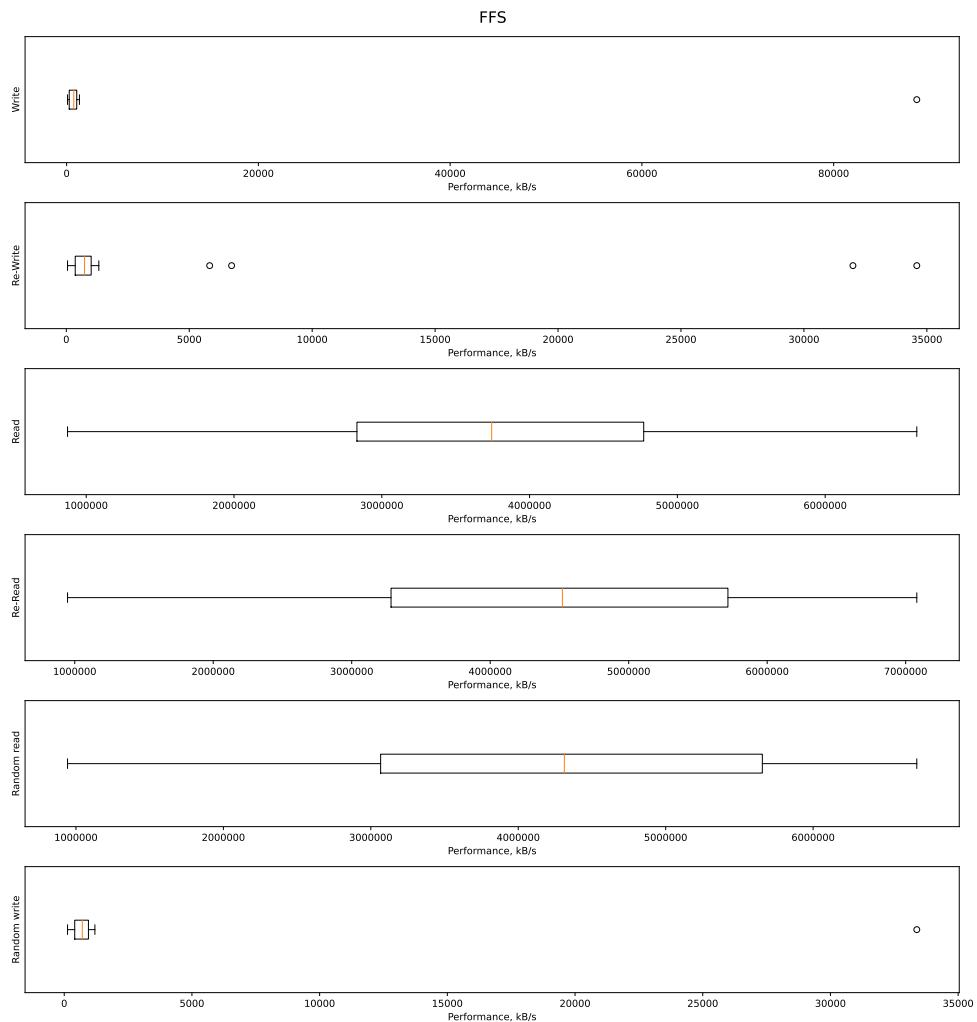


Figure 5.1: Box plot of the IOZone output for the different tests for FFS

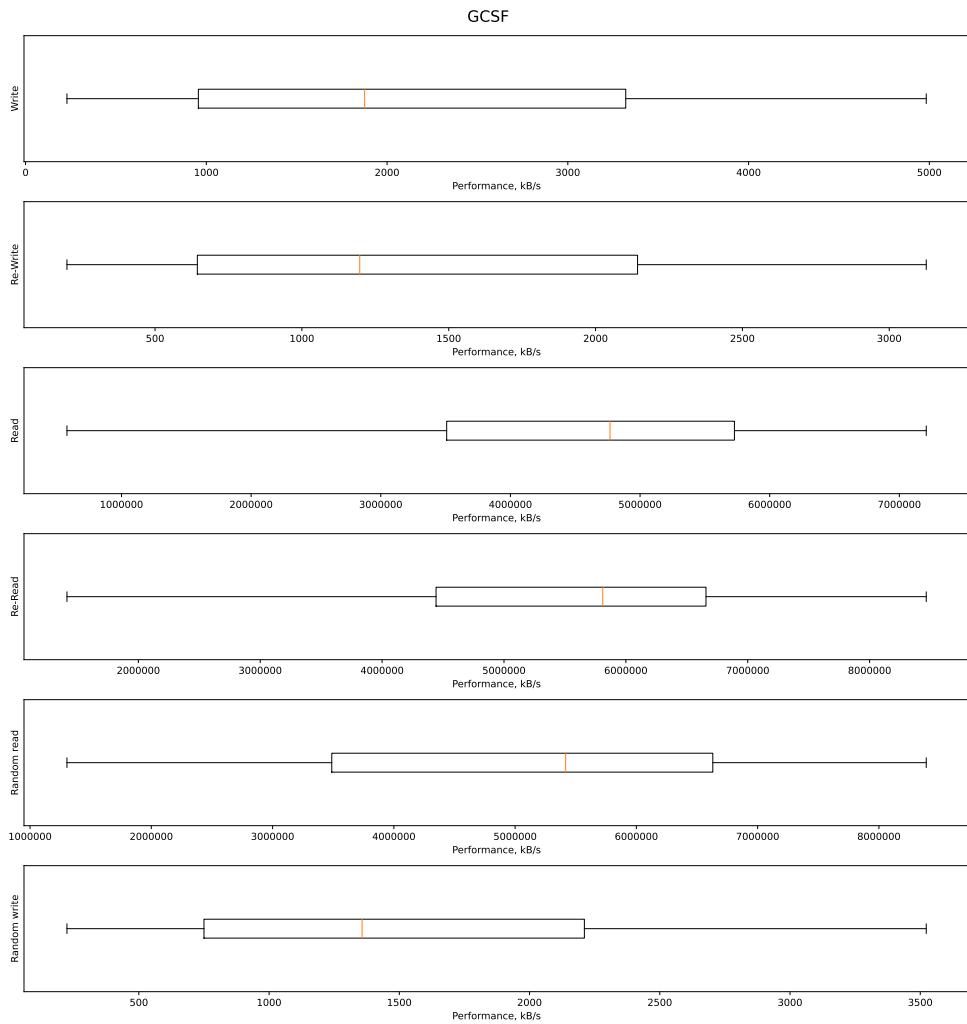


Figure 5.2: Box plot of the IOZone output for the different tests for GCSF

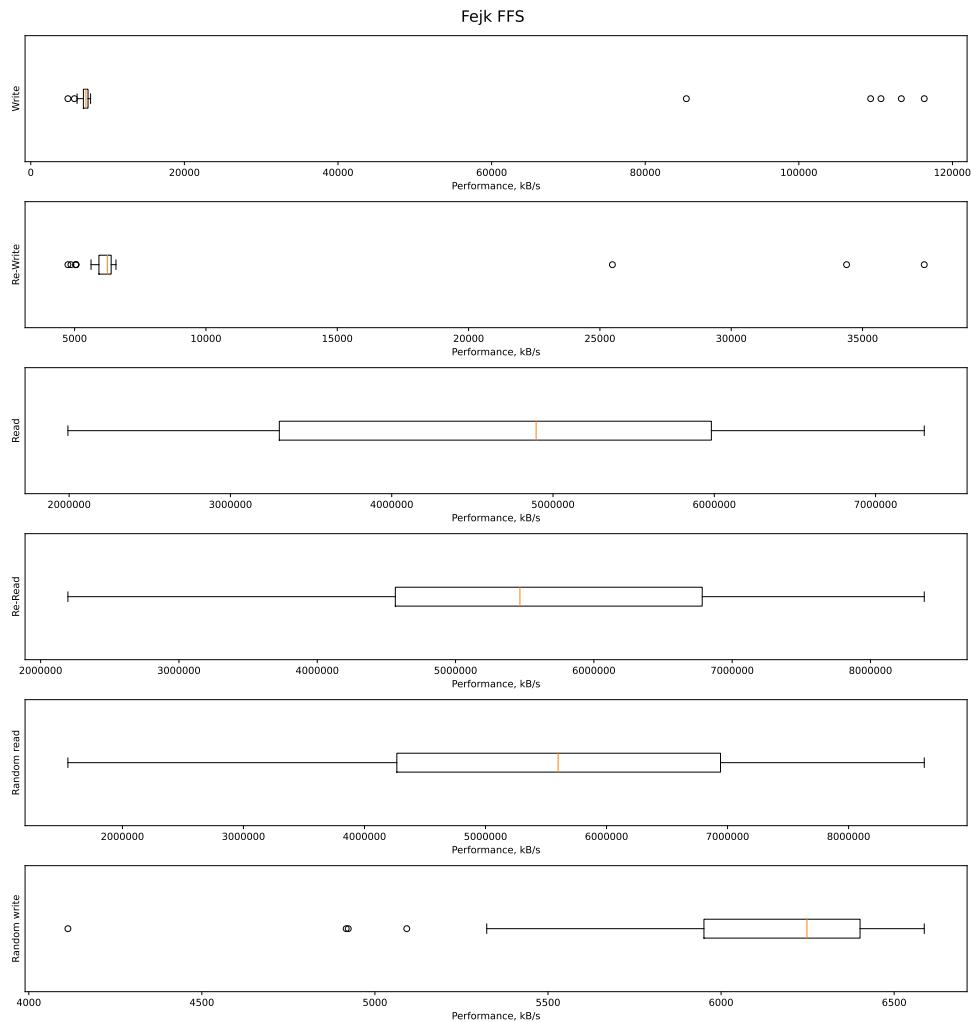


Figure 5.3: Box plot of the IOZone output for the different tests for FFFS

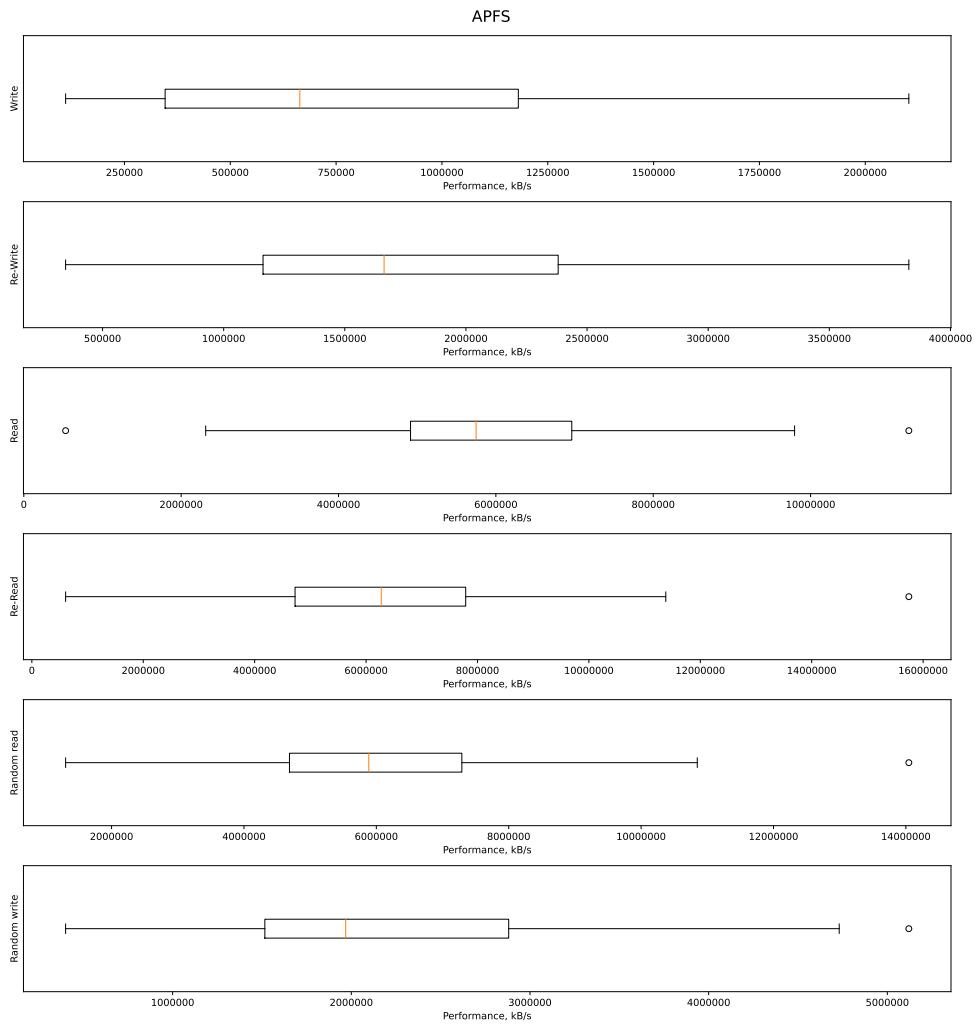


Figure 5.4: Box plot of the IOZone output for the different tests for APFS

# Chapter 6

## Discussion

This chapter presents discussions and analysis of the results. The presented benchmarking results are analyzed and discussed. Further, FFS's deniability and security are analyzed and discussed. Potential societal impacts of FFS are also introduced.

### 6.1 Filesystems

Figure C.1, C.3, and C.5 show that FFS performs poorly for Read operations with a small buffer size. Beginning at 4 kB buffer size, the performance in general goes up with the first few buffer sizes. This indicates that the overhead of the FFS read operation is high as the performance gets better when it can read fewer buffers. Overhead of the read operation includes, among other things, the time to fetch the image from Flickr if it is not in the cache, and decrypting the image which is required even if the image is cached. Further, it is expected that Re-Read should perform better than Read when the file size is small enough to fit in the cache. However, this is not an obvious conclusion that can be drawn from the result. Looking at table C.3, it shows that there is no significant drop in performance for file sizes bigger than the 5 MB cache file size limit. The performance is even better for the file sizes bigger than the cache file size limit than for the file sizes smaller than the cache file size limit for certain buffer sizes, such as `buffer_size = 512kB` where the performance only increases for bigger file sizes. However, as Figure 5.1 shows, the average performance of Re-Read is better than the average performance of Read for FFS. This supports the theory that the cache will increase the performance of the filesystem.

One interesting comparison is between the benchmark results of FFS and

GCSF. Both filesystems are cloud-based FUSE filesystems dependent on an internet connection to their respective storage servers. Knowing that the benchmarking of the two filesystems was started at the same time, and the FFS benchmarking took 41 minutes while the GCSF benchmarking took 20 minutes, it is already notable that GCSF is overall faster than FFS for the specified benchmarking test, using the defined file sizes and buffer sizes. The data presented in Section 5.2 and Appendix C further confirms the conclusion that FFS is slower than GCSF. For instance, the Read test of GCSF performed in general better than the Read test of FFS. The median performance of the GCSF Read test is significantly better than the median performance of the FFS Read test. Looking at Figure 5.1 and Figure 5.2 we can see that FFS produced much bigger spread of the values than GCSF did, especially for the Write, Re-Write, and Random Write tests. One outlier of the Write test of FFS performed at 88 671 kB/s, namely for `file size = 8192kB, buffer size = 2048kB` as can be seen in Table C.1. This is better performance than any of the performance data points of GCSF for the Write, Re-Write, and Random Write tests.

Comparing FFFS benchmarking results against the APFS benchmarking results, we can compare the theoretical best performance of FFS against a general-purpose highly-used filesystem. In Table C.13 and Table C.19 we can see that the read operation perform almost similarly for FFFS and APFS, where APFS is in general faster than FFFS. However, for certain data points, such as `file size = 4096kB, buffer size = 4kB`, FFFS has higher throughput than APFS with 2 866 270 kB/s for FFFS and 2 402 508 kB/s for APFS. The cache of the filesystems can influence the performance of the read operation a lot. In the case of FFFS, the filesystem will cache the written data as long as its size is less the limit of 5 MB. However, there is no significant difference between the FFFS performance of reading a file that fits in the FFFS cache, and one that does not. All files that are read in FFFS that are not in the FFFS cache are read from disk, which invokes at least one APFS read operation. While the APFS read operation called might not be called with the same buffer size as the read operation called by IOZone on FFFS, the performance of the FFFS read operation cannot exceed the APFS read operation. However, the similarity of the performance between the filesystem indicates that FFS implements fast read operations, and that the read operation performance of FFS depends to a high extent on the internet bandwidth and latency to the OWS, as well as the OWS's data processing performance.

While the values of the read operation for FFFS and APFS are comparable to each other, this is not the case for all tests. For instance is the write operation

of FFFS much slower than the write operation of APFS as can be seen in Table C.14 and Table C.20. The write operation of FFFS has about 2-3% the performance of the write operation of APFS. The reason for this can be the fact that FFFS has to encrypt the data stored, including creating all the cryptographic variables such as the salt and the IV. While APFS is also an encrypted filesystem, it is possible that the cryptographic functions are much faster than for FFFS as they for instance can be run in kernel space, while FFFS is running in user space.

FFFs and GCSF are comparable in some tests, which is interesting as GCSF is dependent on an internet connection while FFFS is not. The median performance of the Read test on GCSF is slightly worse than the medium performance of the Read test on FFFS. Meanwhile, the median Re-Read performance of GCSF is better than the median Re-Read performance of FFFS. This indicates that GCSF implements a faster cache than FFFS. One reason might be that the FFFS cache stores the encrypted version of the image, meaning that before the data is read, the image must first be decrypted and decoded. As Google Drive provides the raw data of the file stored, it is possible that GCSF stores the raw data in its cache meaning that the data in the read operation can be returned faster. Re-Write and Random Write tests on FFFS outperform the same tests on GCSF. This is reasonable as the data written to GCSF must be uploaded to Google Drive, while the data written to FFFS is stored on the local disk. Uploading 16 MB of data with the average (reference point) upload speed of 92.95 Mbit/s would take about 1.4 s. Meanwhile, we can see in Table C.20 that APFS can write 16 MB of data as fast as  $1\ 539\ 559\ \text{kB/s} = 1549.559\ \text{MB/s}$ , meaning it would take about 10 ms to write the data. However, the data written by FFFS is larger than 16 MB as the saved data by FFFS is inflated by encryption and PNG attributes.

It is easy to see, and it is not unexpected, that APFS outperforms FFS in performance. As a professional local filesystem, APFS will always have better performance than FFS. Further, like FFFS, the performance of FFS depends on the performance of APFS as the file which is uploaded to Flickr first needs to be saved on disk. This dependency could be removed, for instance by providing the temporary file to the FlickCURL library via a FUSE filesystem. Further, the median performance of the Re-Read test on FFS is about 72% of the performance of the Re-Read test on APFS. With higher bandwidth and with another OWS, it is possible that FFS could increase its performance. In contrast, the median performance of the Re-Read test on FFS is about 76% of the median performance of the same test on GCSF.

## 6.2 Security and Deniability

The data stored in FFS images is encrypted with state-of-the-art encryption standards. Using AES-GCM, FFS does not only provide confidentiality of the data, but it also provides the authenticity of the data. The cryptographic algorithms are implemented using good cryptographic standards, such as cryptographic secure number generators [97]. However, the security of FFS is dependent on, among other things, the password the user chooses. A bad password, for instance, short or commonly used, is easily breakable for an adversary. An adversary who has access to an FFS encrypted image could brute-force the bad password used to derive the encryption key much faster than they could brute-force the encryption key. FFS does not put any constraints on the password used - as long as it is at least one byte it is acceptable for FFS. This puts the responsibility on the user for the choice of password constraints.

FFS puts a lot of trust in the open-source library Crypto++ [83]. Crypto++ provides cryptographic functions that FFS uses for, among other things, deriving the encryption key, encrypting the data, and verifying the authentication tag. While there are no reported CVE security vulnerabilities as of writing citeCryptoppSecurityVulnerabilities, there may be vulnerabilities that have not yet been discovered or that have been found but not published in the CVE database. There is also a possibility that FFS provides vulnerabilities, such as side channels, which could be exploited. FFS is developed by a single author without a review from anyone else.

Anyone with access to Flickr.com can view and download the original images stored by FFS, both registered users on Flickr, and anonymous visitors. An example of how the profile might look is shown in Figure 6.1. The images found on the account present little information about the filesystem. For users unaware of FFS who view the Flickr profile, they see different sizes of images with seemingly randomly generated pixel colors. However, for adversaries who know about the details of FFS, more information can be retrieved. For instance, they could assume that the most recently uploaded image to Flickr is representing the inode table. However, as we assume the adversary does not have access to the decryption key, they cannot read the data of the image and thus cannot verify that this is indeed the inode table. The exact number of files and directories in FFS cannot be known precisely without access to the content of the inode table. Even if the Flickr account has, for instance, 15 images stored, and we know that one represents the inode table and one represents the root directory, it is not possible to conclude if other images stores file data or

directory data. The remaining 13 images in the example could represent:

- one big single file split over 13 images, or
- one big single directory split over 13 images, or
- 13 different files, or
- 13 different directories, or
- 1 directory and 12 different files, or
- 13 copies of the same file, et cetera.

It is also not possible to know if an image stored on Flickr has been uploaded by FFS or by the user manually to further diffuse the amount of data stored on the service. For instance, by encrypting random data using FFS's encoder and uploading the images to Flickr, but without saving the posts in the inode table or in a directory of FFS, the images will look indistinguishable from the other images on Flickr. Only with access to the decrypted inode table can one know if the image is stored in FFS or not. However, it is possible that Flickr could have logs about the uploaded images, and be able to distinguish images uploaded from the API from the user interface. Future research could extend FFS to post encrypted random data at random time intervals to automatically diffuse the knowledge about the images on the OWS. This would mean that even Flickr would not be able to distinguish the uploaded data as it would all be uploaded from the same service. One drawback of storing images on Flickr that are not stored in FFS is that it decreases the storage capacity of FFS.

The size of data stored in an image is not completely hidden. While the exact number of bytes of unencrypted data that the image stores is not possible to know without the decryption key, it is possible to get an estimate. If you know the binary structure of the image (as presented in Appendix B), you can find out how many bytes the encrypted cipher is, the value of the IV data, the value of the salt used for the encryption key derivation, and the value of the authentication tag. By knowing the length of the cipher, the length of the unencrypted data can be placed in a range. The length of the cipher  $L_c$  in bytes is divisible by 16 (as AES is a 16-byte block cipher), and the length of the plain text must be less than  $L_c$  due to the requirement of at least one bit of padding [91]. The smallest possible size for the length of the plain text is  $L_c - 16$ . Therefore, the length of the plain text  $L_p$  is:

$$L_c - 16 \leq L_p < L_c$$

By examining all the images stored on Flickr and their maximum possible value of  $L_p$ , it is possible to know the largest possible amount of data which is stored by FFS on Flickr at a certain time. However, it is **not** possible to know

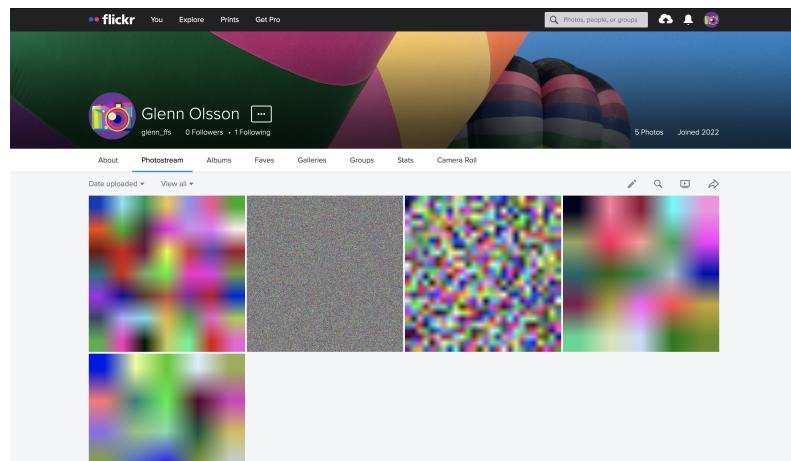


Figure 6.1: Screenshot of the Flickr profile used for FFS. At the moment of the screenshot, the filesystem is storing a previous version of this thesis in a directory inside the root directory. The images seen are the inode table, the thesis data, the root directory data, the subdirectory (containing the thesis) data, and a temporary file containing extra attributes of the thesis document created by macOS while FFS was mounted (this file is sometimes referred to as a *turd* [98]).

if all this data is stored on FFS through entries in the inode table. It is also **not** possible to know if the plain text represents a file or directory without the decrypted data of the inode table.

If a user supplies a different password when mounting FFS than used previously, the images stored on Flickr cannot be decrypted. When FFS tries to read the image it believes represents the inode table (the most recently uploaded image) and it fails, it will simply create a new inode table representing an empty filesystem, and upload the image representing this inode table, essentially replacing the potentially previous inode table (if it existed). As it is not possible to know if the images already uploaded to Flickr represent an inode table without the correct decryption key, it is impossible to determine if the image that could have represented the inode table was indeed an inode table encrypted with another password, or if it was some arbitrary data. In a potential rubber-hose situation\*, the user of the filesystem could easily claim that they uploaded FFS images with arbitrary data, using randomly generated keys that they do not remember and that the filesystem is empty. There is no way to prove the existence of any meaningful data on Flickr without

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\* When an adversary might torture the user, with for instance a rubber hose. See Section 3.1

the decryption key. As the FFS encoder also uses random salting for the encryption key, it is not even possible to prove that the images are encrypted with the same password as the encryption keys will differ for all images, even when the same password is used.

As mentioned, we do however assume that an adversary has access to the structure of FFS images as well. To counter this, the user who wants to hide its data could, after creating a filesystem containing meaningful information, mount FFS again with another password. FFS would then create a new inode table and upload this table, creating a dummy FFS. In a rubber-hose situation, the user could give up the password to the dummy FFS instance, which is empty. The adversary can verify that this password indeed decrypts the most recently uploaded image and that the unencrypted image data represents an empty inode table. If the user proceeds to claim that they do not know the passwords of the other images, the adversary cannot prove that they contain meaningful data nor that they have been uploaded by the user. These images could, for instance, have been uploaded by another user of FFS. Further, with no password constraints by FFS, a user could also create a dummy FFS with a password that is easily breakable, to make the adversary believe they found the correct password if they perform a brute-force attack. As long as the user remembers which post represents the inode table, the images uploaded after this inode table could simply be removed from Flickr before mounting FFS with the correct password when the user wants to access their actual FFS instance. Alternatively, the user could save the image representing the inode table in another storage medium and upload it again when they want to access their actual FFS instance.

One aspect where FFS is better than GCSF is its security against the potential adversary of the store owners. GCSF stores the data in its original format on Google Drive, essentially providing an overlay filesystem for Google Drive. While this can be desired in certain situations, such as using GCSF on one machine and the Google Drive website on another, it gives Google Drive access to your data. As mentioned, Google Drive encrypts your data from outside agents, but as they control the encryption and decryption keys themselves, the data stored can be accessed by the company. For instance, the data could be given to authorities who are requesting it with a subpoena. FFS on the other hand gives the user control of all its data. While Flickr can give out the images uploaded by FFS, this data can be accessed by anyone with access to Flickr.com anyway. A subpoena by authorities will not help more than possibly providing them with the IP addresses of origin of the uploaded content. The only way to access unencrypted data is by using the password that the user

controls. This provides FFS with one aspect of better security than GCSF, but this might also be a factor why FFS is slower than GCSF. By requiring the data to be encrypted when it is written and uploaded, and decrypted when it is downloaded and read, FFS will need to compute new cryptographic variables every time a file or directory is written which requires a lot of computations. Further, every time an image is read it must be decrypted, even if it is in the cache of FFS. Decrypting an image requires a lot of computations as well as, other than decrypting the data, the decryption key must first be derived from the password. Meanwhile, it is possible that Google Drive is caching the unencrypted files, or performing the cryptographic computations on high-performance computers requiring less computation time. So while gaining a security aspect of the filesystem, FFS sacrifices the performance of the filesystem operations.

## 6.3 Impact

This section presents the impact FFS could have. Section 6.3.1 presents societal impacts that FFS could introduce. Section 6.3.2 presents the environment impacts that FFS.

### 6.3.1 Societal impacts

Secure and hidden data is not only for the better good. As the data stored on FFS cannot be decrypted by bad guys no good guys, illegal data could be stored on the system without anyone knowing about it. It is known that end-to-end encryption does not only have a positive impact on society, for instance, terrorist organizations are also known to be using it to spread their messages across the internet [99]. FFS could potentially provide secure storage for illegal groups such as terrorist organizations and child pornography rings. It is not possible to limit who uses FFS, by other means than not publishing the source code of the filesystem. However, this does not prevent criminal organizations to use other end-to-end encrypted filesystems or develop their own. Some terrorist organizations consist of well-educated engineers who could develop similar technologies for their organization [100].

### 6.3.2 Environmental impact

FFS uses Flickr's data centers to store its data. Globally, data centers have a huge environmental impact. It has been estimated that they use over 2%

of the world's electricity [101] and emit roughly the same amount of carbon dioxide as the global airline industry emits burning aircraft fuel [102]. These data centers are always on and are always consuming energy. When storing the data on a local filesystem instead, the device can be powered off while the filesystem is not in use, such as by detaching an external storage drive.

Further, as mentioned previously, encrypting and encoding the stored data as images requires more storage than the actual data stored. This means that more storage is required to store all the data in FFS, as opposed to storing the same data on a local filesystem. It also means that the network request will carry more data than necessary, requiring more energy. This fact is also true when comparing FFS to a cloud-based filesystem, such as Google Drive. While both Google Drive and FFS store their data in data centers, the data that Google Drive stores can be less than the same file stored in FFS due to the overhead of FFS. Further, Google Drive can be optimized as a filesystem as it is the intention of Google Drive. Meanwhile, FFS is exploiting Flickr's image storage and is not optimized as filesystem storage. For instance, Google Drive can optimize the cache of the filesystem to better reflect a filesystem cache, reducing power consumption. However, as Flickr handles large amounts of data, Flickr has probably implemented energy-efficient solutions for retrieving images.



# Chapter 7

## Conclusions and Future work

This chapter presents the conclusions from the thesis from what has been discussed under Chapter 6. Finally, future work on the topic is discussed.

### 7.1 Conclusions

FFS is a cryptographic and deniable cloud-based filesystem with free storage through exploiting online web services. Compared to other filesystems, FFS is slow and is not suitable as a multi-purpose filesystem, for instance as a hard drive for a computer. It performed poorly even compared to another cloud-based filesystem, GCSF. However, one key difference between these two filesystems is that FFS manages the cryptography of the filesystem, while GCSF delegates this task to Google Drive. This provides security benefits for FFS, but might also contribute to the slower computation time. The results also show that even when removing the dependency of an internet connection is FFS performing poorly, especially for the read operations compared to GCSF and APFS. The write operations of FFFS perform better than GCSF and FFS. The read operations of FFS and FFFS are more similar than the write operations, however, FFFS outperforms FFS at every read operation as well leading to the conclusion that the internet connection and the OWS influence the file operations significantly. With better read performance than write performance, FFS is best suited as a many-read-few-write filesystem.

While the filesystem is slow, it provides security aspects such as end-to-end encryption and deniability. As long as the filesystem is not mounted to the computer, it is not possible to prove how much data is stored on FFS, or even prove that data is stored on FFS. End-to-end cryptography provides the user with confidential data. Further, by using authenticated encryption, FFS

provides the user with proof of the authenticity of the data it stores.

## 7.2 Future work

As mentioned previously, FFS does not implement all features that the POSIX standard defines. Future development for FFS could be to implement more of these functions, such as links and file permissions. This could make FFS resemble a regular filesystem further. Another improvement could be to move from userspace using FUSE, to kernel space. This could speed up filesystem operations. Another feature that could be interesting to evaluate is the possibility to share files with other users, similar to Google Drive.

Even though the files are encrypted so that the data is confidential, further research could include hiding the user's online activity through the use of for instance Tor. Currently, the integrity of the user is not considered but for FFS to be further plausibly deniable, this should be addressed as the user could otherwise be identified by its IP address and other online fingerprints that could be provided by the online web services.

To improve the dependability of FFS, support for more online web services could be implemented. For instance, GitHub provides free user accounts with many gigabytes of data. Even free-tier distributed filesystems, such as Google Drive, could be utilized. If multiple user accounts are used in coordination over multiple services, FFS could achieve even more storage.

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# Appendix A

## Directory, InodeTable, and InodeEntry class and attributes representation

This chapter present pseudo-code of the different data structures used by FFS. Listing A.1 presents the attributes each C++ class stores in-memory, which is also encoded into the binary representation of the object when it is serialized before uploaded to the OWS.

Listing A.1: The attributes classes representing directories and the inode table in FFS

```
# typedef inode_id = uint32_t

# Represents a directory in \gls{FFS}. Keeps track
# of the filename and inode of each file
class Directory
    # Map of (filename, inode id) representing
    # the content of the directory
    map<string, inode_id> entries

# Represents an entry in the inode table,
# representing a file or directory
class InodeEntry
    # The size of the file (not used for
    # directories)
```

```
    uint32_t length

    # True if the entry describes a directory,
    # false if it describes a file
    uint8_t is_dir

    # When the file first was created
    uint64_t time_created
    # When the file was last accessed
    uint64_t time_accessed
    # When the file was last modified
    uint64_t time_modified

    # A list representing the posts of the file
    # or directory.
    string [] post_ids

# Represents the inode table of the filesystem. The
# table consists of multiple inode entries
class InodeTable
    # Map of (inode id, inode entry) for each
    # file and directory in the filesystem
    map<inode_t, InodeEntry> entries
```

# Appendix B

## Binary representation of FFS images and Classes

This appendix visualizes the binary structures produced when serializing the `InodeTable`, the `InodeEntry`, and the `Directory` objects, and the binary structure of the encoded FFS images. The models are in terms of bytes, index 0 indicating the first byte, index 1 indicating the second byte, etc.

### B.1 Serialized C++ objects

The `InodeTable`, `InodeEntry`, and the `Directory` class all have one `serialize` and one `deserialize` method each. The `serialize` method converts the object's data into binary form, and the `deserialize` method converts the serialized data into an object. The deserializer expects the same format of its input data as the serializer produces. The figures in this section visualize the serialized output of the different classes. Figure B.1 visualizes the serialized format of the `InodeTable`. Figure B.2 visualizes the serialized format of the `InodeEntry`. Figure B.3 visualizes the serialized format of the `Directory`.

### B.2 FFS Images

An FFS image consists of multiple binary structures, including the FFS header and the encrypted data. This section visualizes these binary structures. Figure B.4 visualizes binary format of the FFS header. Figure B.5 visualizes the PCD of FFS images stored on the OWS.

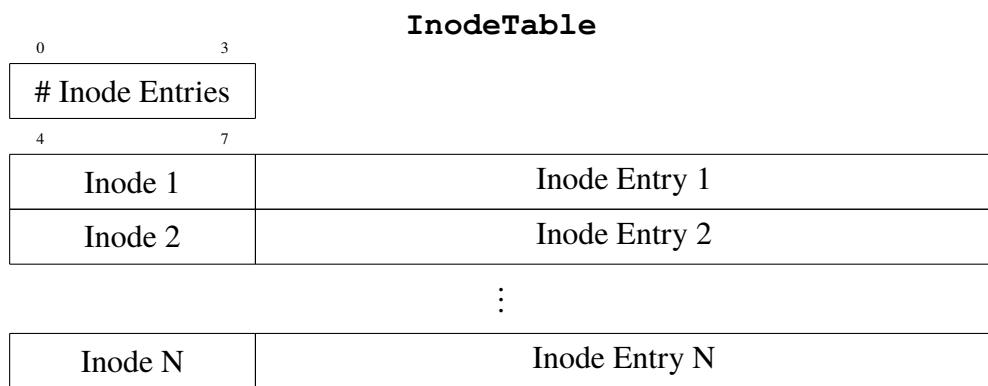


Figure B.1: # Inode Entries is an unsigned integer representing the amount of inode entries the inode table contains. Following are # Inode Entries entries of an unsigned integer representing the inode of the inode entry, and the serialization of the corresponding InodeEntry object

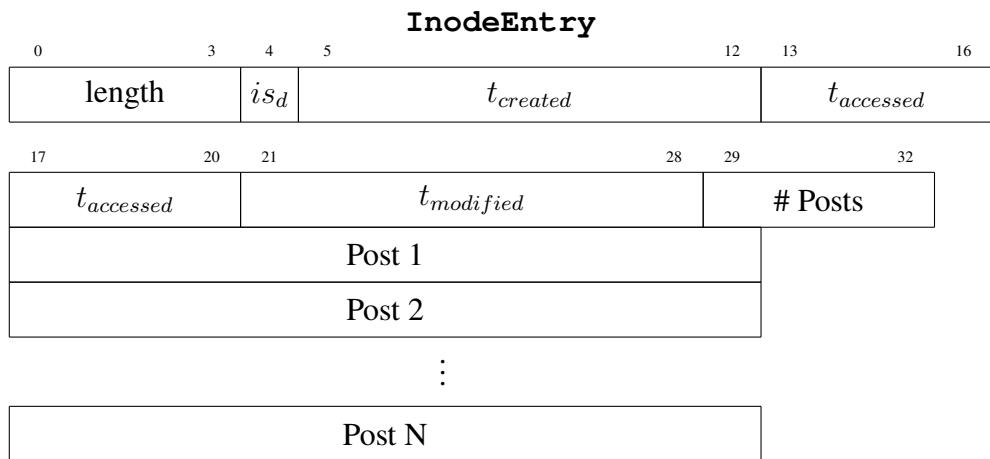


Figure B.2: Byte representation of a serialized `InodeEntry`, representing a file or directory stored in FFS. `length` is an unsigned integer representing the amount of data stored on FFS by the file or directory, for instance the size of the file. `isd` is a boolean with the value true ( $\neq 0$ ) if the inode entry represents a directory, and false ( $= 0$ ) if the inode entry represents a file. `tcreated`, `taccessed`, and `tmodified` are unsigned integers represents timestamps of when the file or directory was created, last accessed and last modified, respectively. # Posts is an unsigned integer representing the amount of posts the file or directory is stored in on the OWS. Following are # Posts null-terminated strings representing each post ?? in the OWS. The size of this field depends on the OWS used, for instance does Flickr often generate 11-byte post IDs. However, as the strings are null-terminated, the deserializer can read the bytes until the null-character is found

| Directory |            |
|-----------|------------|
| 0         | 3          |
| # Entries |            |
| 4         | 7          |
| Inode 1   | Filename 1 |
| Inode 2   | Filename 2 |
| :         |            |
| Inode 3   | Filename 3 |

Figure B.3: Byte representation of a serialized Directory. # Entries is an unsigned integer representing the amount of entries in the directory. Following are # Entries inode-filename pairs. The Inode is an integer representing the inode of the file or directory, corresponding to the file's or directory's entry in the inode table. The filename is a null-terminated strings representing the filename of the file or directory in FFS. The size of this field can vary from filename to filename. However, as the strings are null-terminated, the deserializer can read the bytes until the null-character is found

| FFS Header |     |     |   |   |           |    |             |
|------------|-----|-----|---|---|-----------|----|-------------|
| 0          | 1   | 2   | 3 | 4 | 11        | 12 | 15          |
| 'F'        | 'F' | 'S' | V |   | Timestamp |    | Data length |

Figure B.4: ' F ' and ' S ' are the literal letters F and S in ?? code. V is an integer representing the version of the FFS image produced. Timestamp is an unsigned integer representing the number of milliseconds since Unix epoch when the image was encoded. Data length is an unsigned integer representing the number of bytes stored after the header. Following the header is Data length bytes, containing the actual data stored in the image.

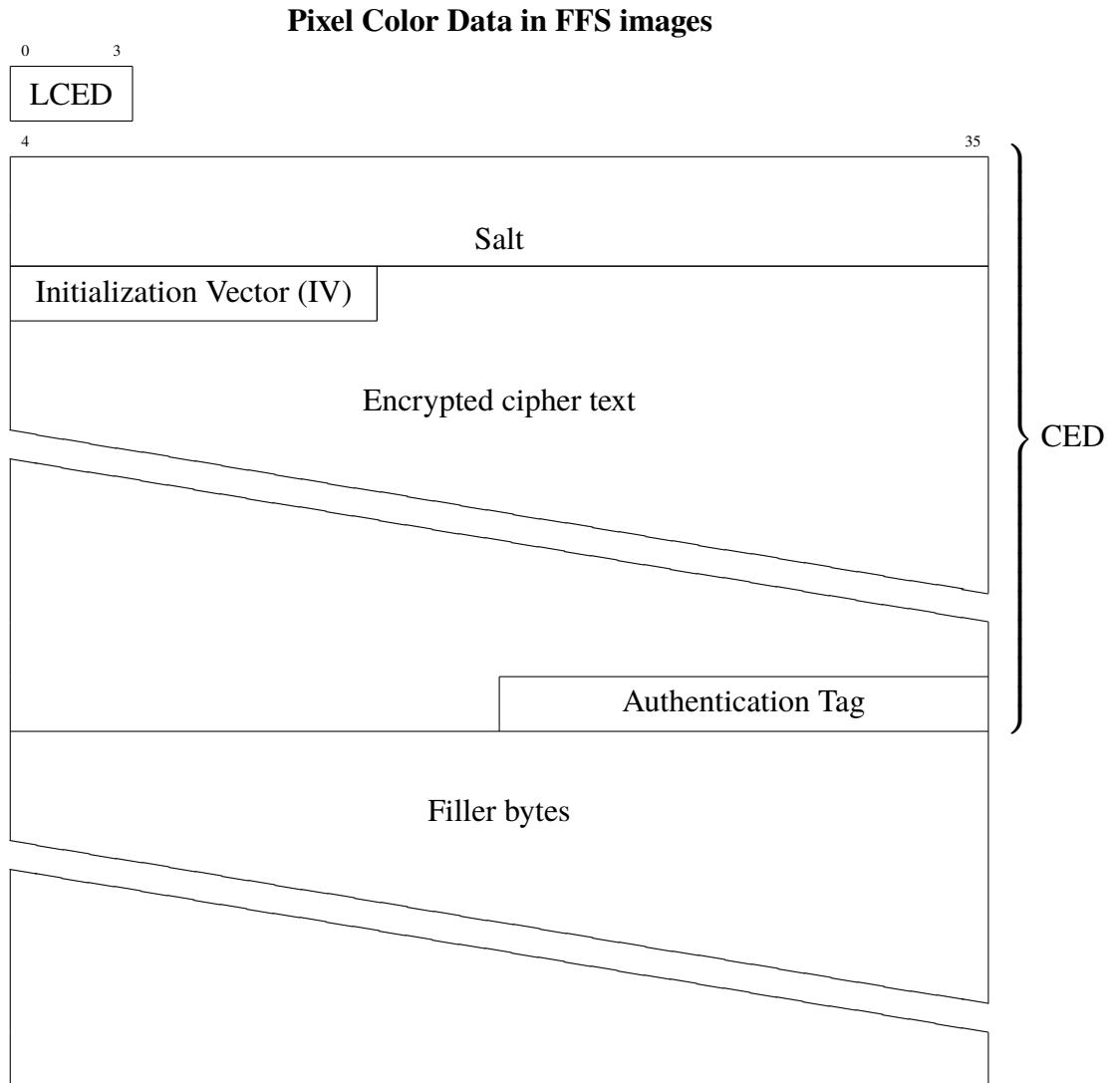


Figure B.5: Byte representation of the data stored as PCD in FFS images. LCED is an unsigned integer representing the Length of the CED. The Salt is a 64-byte randomized vector used to derive the encryption and decryption key. The IV is a 12-byte randomized vector used as the initial state of the encryption and decryption methods. Following is the Encrypted cipher text of variable size, depending on the size of the unencrypted data. The FFS header and the data to be stored, for instance the data of a file, is what is encrypted to become the Encrypted cipher text. The Authentication Tag is a 16-byte vector produced by the authenticated encryption method, and verified by the decryption method, to ensure data integrity has been upheld. Following is a number of filler bytes, depending on the size of the preceding data, to ensure the image has enough number of pixels for its calculated dimensions.

# Appendix C

## IOZone benchmarking data

This appendix contains tables and figures of the IOZone benchmarking outputs produced. Each section contains the tables and figures for the benchmarking results of the specific filesystem. Each table and each figure represents one IOZone test. Each table presents the throughput in kilobytes per second for a test, for the different file sizes and buffer sizes, both presented in kB. Each graph in the figures visualizes the performance of the filesystem for different file sizes. The x-axis shows the buffer size in kilobytes, and the y-axis is the throughput in kilobytes per second.

### C.1 FFS

Table C.1: IOZone result for FFS Read

| File size (kB) | Buffer size (kB) |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |
|----------------|------------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
|                | 4                | 8       | 16      | 32      | 64      | 128     | 256     | 512     | 1024    | 2048    | 4096    | 8192    | 16384   |
| 1024           | 873705           | 1635675 | 2044438 | 2270300 | 3066069 | 2275110 | 2370545 | 3532609 | 3567824 |         |         |         |         |
| 2048           | 1860176          | 2645657 | 3938881 | 3696494 | 3255235 | 2771120 | 4405533 | 3743207 | 2892423 | 3130664 |         |         |         |
| 4096           | 2360583          | 1793342 | 2929815 | 3806915 | 4241099 | 4795088 | 3871253 | 5107271 | 3297602 | 4718699 | 3515562 |         |         |
| 8192           | 2512998          | 1952390 | 3632950 | 3742562 | 5322300 | 4721816 | 4749227 | 6321001 | 6187815 | 3723500 | 4506310 | 5291970 |         |
| 16384          | 2498271          | 3786446 | 4627011 | 3795229 | 5915013 | 6478199 | 6619859 | 6579926 | 6595715 | 5931862 | 4705264 | 4929022 | 5066012 |

Table C.2: IOZone result for FFS Write

| File size (kB) | Buffer size (kB) |      |     |      |      |      |     |      |      |       |      |      |       |
|----------------|------------------|------|-----|------|------|------|-----|------|------|-------|------|------|-------|
|                | 4                | 8    | 16  | 32   | 64   | 128  | 256 | 512  | 1024 | 2048  | 4096 | 8192 | 16384 |
| <b>1024</b>    | 242              | 230  | 276 | 269  | 238  | 248  | 270 | 222  | 254  |       |      |      |       |
| <b>2048</b>    | 97               | 429  | 453 | 163  | 121  | 181  | 392 | 426  | 530  | 409   |      |      |       |
| <b>4096</b>    | 747              | 492  | 778 | 599  | 751  | 715  | 753 | 656  | 716  | 255   | 676  |      |       |
| <b>8192</b>    | 1018             | 1017 | 900 | 1130 | 1046 | 958  | 247 | 1193 | 1117 | 88671 | 992  | 1179 |       |
| <b>16384</b>   | 1053             | 1234 | 989 | 1335 | 1060 | 1338 | 765 | 761  | 1321 | 1278  | 1198 | 1258 | 1262  |

Table C.3: IOZone result for FFS Re-Read

| File size (kB) | Buffer size (kB) |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |
|----------------|------------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
|                | 4                | 8       | 16      | 32      | 64      | 128     | 256     | 512     | 1024    | 2048    | 4096    | 8192    | 16384   |
| <b>1024</b>    | 948157           | 2260740 | 3281592 | 2540189 | 1815435 | 2115949 | 3541348 | 3046495 | 3821805 |         |         |         |         |
| <b>2048</b>    | 2188069          | 3286370 | 4500161 | 4663865 | 4432815 | 4321315 | 5280246 | 4521480 | 5293261 | 5267294 |         |         |         |
| <b>4096</b>    | 2721431          | 1901520 | 3140855 | 6013663 | 6068897 | 5736555 | 5696610 | 5664678 | 4501111 | 6204794 | 3453374 |         |         |
| <b>8192</b>    | 2797840          | 2854319 | 4864885 | 4304757 | 5626466 | 6486879 | 5814021 | 6311712 | 7067279 | 4053382 | 4493932 | 5241116 |         |
| <b>16384</b>   | 2598600          | 3568766 | 4164613 | 5259892 | 5866036 | 6954141 | 7019493 | 7080244 | 7071501 | 6008099 | 5595225 | 5496324 | 5359160 |

Table C.4: IOZone result for FFS Re-Write

| File size (kB) | Buffer size (kB) |      |      |      |     |      |      |      |       |       |      |      |       |
|----------------|------------------|------|------|------|-----|------|------|------|-------|-------|------|------|-------|
|                | 4                | 8    | 16   | 32   | 64  | 128  | 256  | 512  | 1024  | 2048  | 4096 | 8192 | 16384 |
| <b>1024</b>    | 209              | 273  | 226  | 239  | 281 | 159  | 100  | 182  | 31994 |       |      |      |       |
| <b>2048</b>    | 354              | 139  | 66   | 50   | 473 | 371  | 146  | 482  | 434   | 464   |      |      |       |
| <b>4096</b>    | 722              | 741  | 779  | 573  | 680 | 812  | 649  | 667  | 741   | 34591 | 639  |      |       |
| <b>8192</b>    | 719              | 863  | 117  | 840  | 976 | 953  | 872  | 956  | 805   | 1322  | 5831 | 1057 |       |
| <b>16384</b>   | 874              | 1008 | 1124 | 1097 | 968 | 1101 | 1082 | 1015 | 1193  | 1031  | 6722 | 1149 | 757   |

Table C.5: IOZone result for FFS Random read

| File size (kB) | Buffer size (kB) |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |
|----------------|------------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
|                | 4                | 8       | 16      | 32      | 64      | 128     | 256     | 512     | 1024    | 2048    | 4096    | 8192    | 16384   |
| <b>1024</b>    | 942952           | 1774189 | 3103735 | 3029305 | 3001782 | 2300703 | 3937426 | 3821805 | 4079544 |         |         |         |         |
| <b>2048</b>    | 1846977          | 2794560 | 4240255 | 4462754 | 4741090 | 5719737 | 6092991 | 4312636 | 3169944 | 3210223 |         |         |         |
| <b>4096</b>    | 2116840          | 1650988 | 2850103 | 4099419 | 5551194 | 5461198 | 6158088 | 5497899 | 3146031 | 5572803 | 3968731 |         |         |
| <b>8192</b>    | 2050494          | 2428626 | 4029614 | 4686395 | 5343822 | 6266816 | 5708730 | 6575012 | 6703285 | 5516264 | 5531360 | 5191229 |         |
| <b>16384</b>   | 1796127          | 2954176 | 4046414 | 4309294 | 6079322 | 6357730 | 6079322 | 6442366 | 5702479 | 5936474 | 6122653 | 5148758 | 5608926 |

Table C.6: IOZone result for FFS Random write

| File size (kB) | Buffer size (kB) |      |      |     |      |      |     |     |      |       |      |      |       |
|----------------|------------------|------|------|-----|------|------|-----|-----|------|-------|------|------|-------|
|                | 4                | 8    | 16   | 32  | 64   | 128  | 256 | 512 | 1024 | 2048  | 4096 | 8192 | 16384 |
| <b>1024</b>    | 200              | 274  | 243  | 130 | 273  | 210  | 242 | 220 | 183  |       |      |      |       |
| <b>2048</b>    | 148              | 382  | 404  | 463 | 219  | 489  | 420 | 516 | 418  | 482   |      |      |       |
| <b>4096</b>    | 265              | 730  | 757  | 753 | 572  | 612  | 765 | 461 | 592  | 33381 | 707  |      |       |
| <b>8192</b>    | 523              | 875  | 439  | 926 | 990  | 970  | 930 | 760 | 930  | 443   | 927  | 905  |       |
| <b>16384</b>   | 1126             | 1048 | 1036 | 734 | 1129 | 1136 | 855 | 966 | 976  | 1006  | 1187 | 1115 | 1201  |

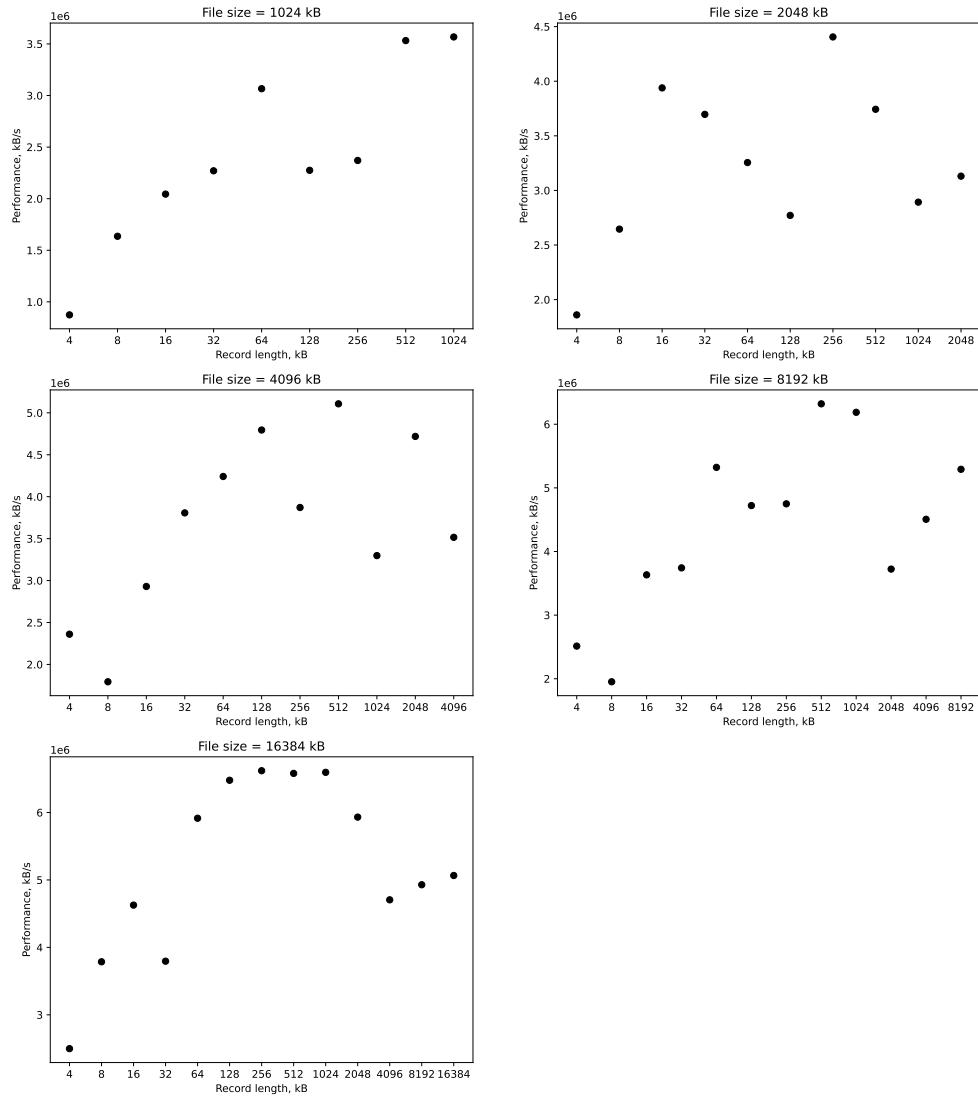


Figure C.1: IOZone output for FFS Forward Read

Table C.7: IOZone result for GCSF Read

| File size (kB) | Buffer size (kB) |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |
|----------------|------------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
|                | 4                | 8       | 16      | 32      | 64      | 128     | 256     | 512     | 1024    | 2048    | 4096    | 8192    | 16384   |
| 1024           | 903860           | 1087111 | 3794792 | 2573677 | 3210456 | 3483896 | 3835457 | 3436508 | 5219904 | 3436508 | 3436508 | 3436508 | 3436508 |
| 2048           | 1663811          | 2709070 | 3555722 | 5478953 | 3391470 | 3292669 | 5904523 | 7207495 | 5403134 | 4423683 |         |         |         |
| 4096           | 1905950          | 2728780 | 4188367 | 3857345 | 5642353 | 6649056 | 6311938 | 6410863 | 5445618 | 5093643 | 4977067 |         |         |
| 8192           | 579472           | 3532842 | 3713439 | 5244315 | 4768340 | 6643663 | 4282224 | 3957671 | 5494212 | 5159270 | 4659702 | 5155399 | 5789435 |
| 16384          | 2691208          | 3620090 | 4594528 | 5150687 | 5910434 | 5935961 | 6951327 | 6052550 | 5719090 | 6875519 | 5964297 | 5789435 | 5736755 |

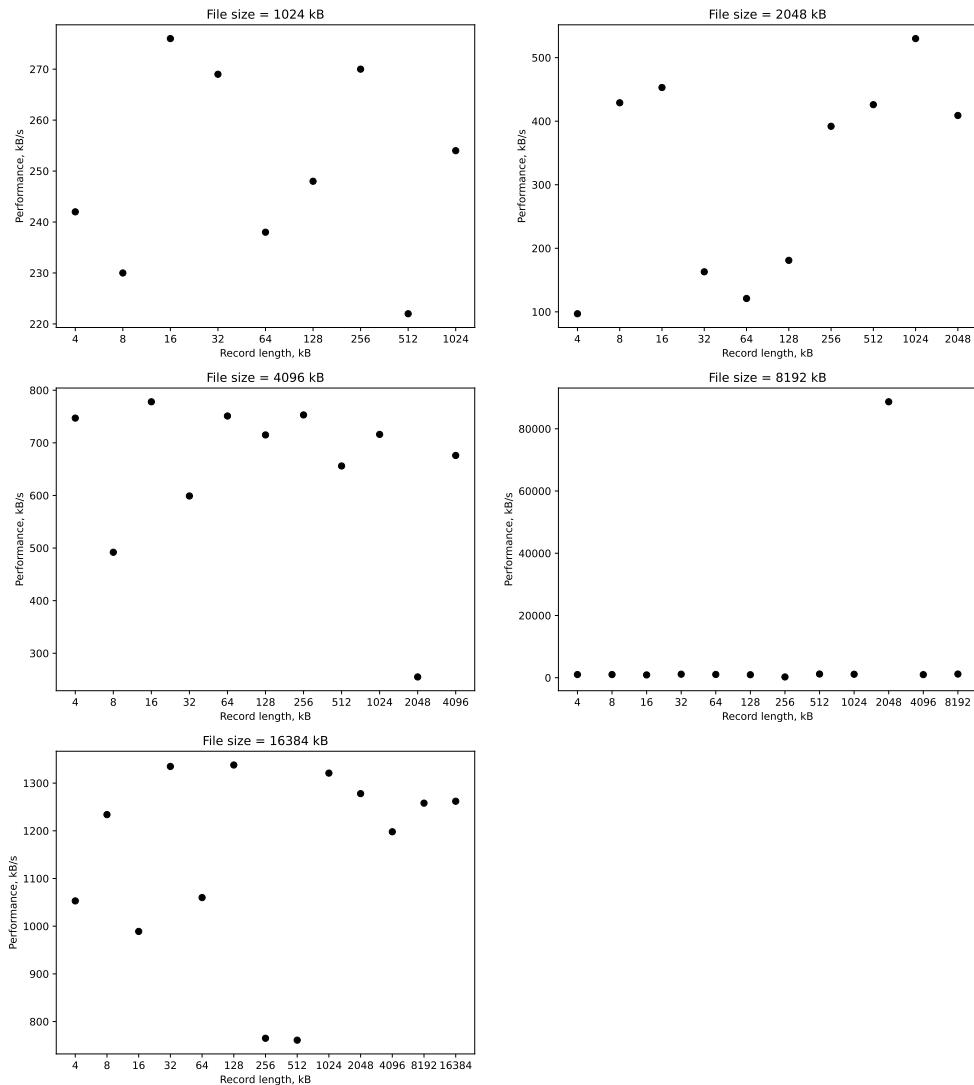


Figure C.2: IOZone output for FFS Forward Write

Table C.8: IOZone result for GCSF Write

| File size (kB) | Buffer size (kB) |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |       |
|----------------|------------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|-------|
|                | 4                | 8    | 16   | 32   | 64   | 128  | 256  | 512  | 1024 | 2048 | 4096 | 8192 | 16384 |
| <b>1024</b>    | 229              | 505  | 413  | 505  | 479  | 515  | 535  | 541  | 523  |      |      |      |       |
| <b>2048</b>    | 447              | 1028 | 957  | 1003 | 938  | 957  | 965  | 422  | 955  | 999  |      |      |       |
| <b>4096</b>    | 1872             | 1808 | 1876 | 1947 | 1795 | 1730 | 1895 | 1779 | 519  | 1811 | 1703 |      |       |
| <b>8192</b>    | 3065             | 3250 | 3253 | 3328 | 2764 | 3214 | 3313 | 3014 | 2484 | 3165 | 3144 | 3234 |       |
| <b>16384</b>   | 4370             | 4705 | 4651 | 4518 | 4848 | 4855 | 4739 | 4624 | 4609 | 4786 | 4739 | 4752 | 4983  |

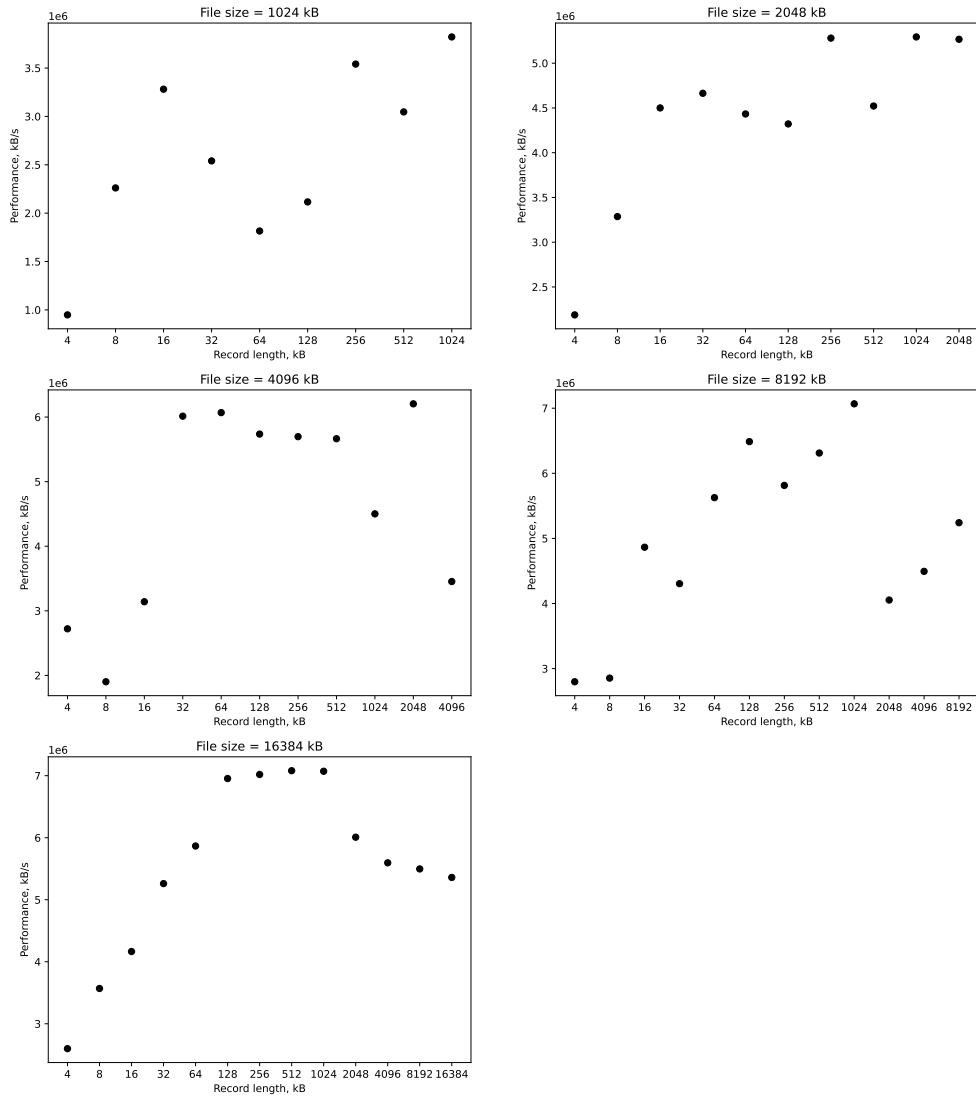


Figure C.3: IOZone output for FFS Re-Read

Table C.9: IOZone result for GCSF Re-Read

| File size (kB) | 4       | 8       | 16      | 32      | 64      | 128     | 256     | 512     | 1024    | 2048    | 4096    | 8192    | 16384   |
|----------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| 1024           | 1835608 | 1414304 | 4470172 | 3567824 | 4433259 | 3908759 | 4783849 | 2837198 | 5853003 |         |         |         |         |
| 2048           | 2913021 | 4367454 | 5785224 | 6378005 | 5769681 | 3543986 | 6802261 | 8464610 | 6440169 | 5884299 |         |         |         |
| 4096           | 2448388 | 3416292 | 4452120 | 5955295 | 6041154 | 7001316 | 6213770 | 5389246 | 6815229 | 6005255 | 5810280 |         |         |
| 8192           | 3217865 | 4558321 | 4929091 | 6405850 | 6713763 | 6611703 | 7167528 | 7373641 | 6590145 | 6703285 | 4776295 | 5184180 |         |
| 16384          | 2898845 | 4149775 | 5004037 | 6104162 | 7004468 | 7275131 | 7585931 | 7291341 | 6815511 | 7278984 | 6335457 | 5785536 | 5570732 |

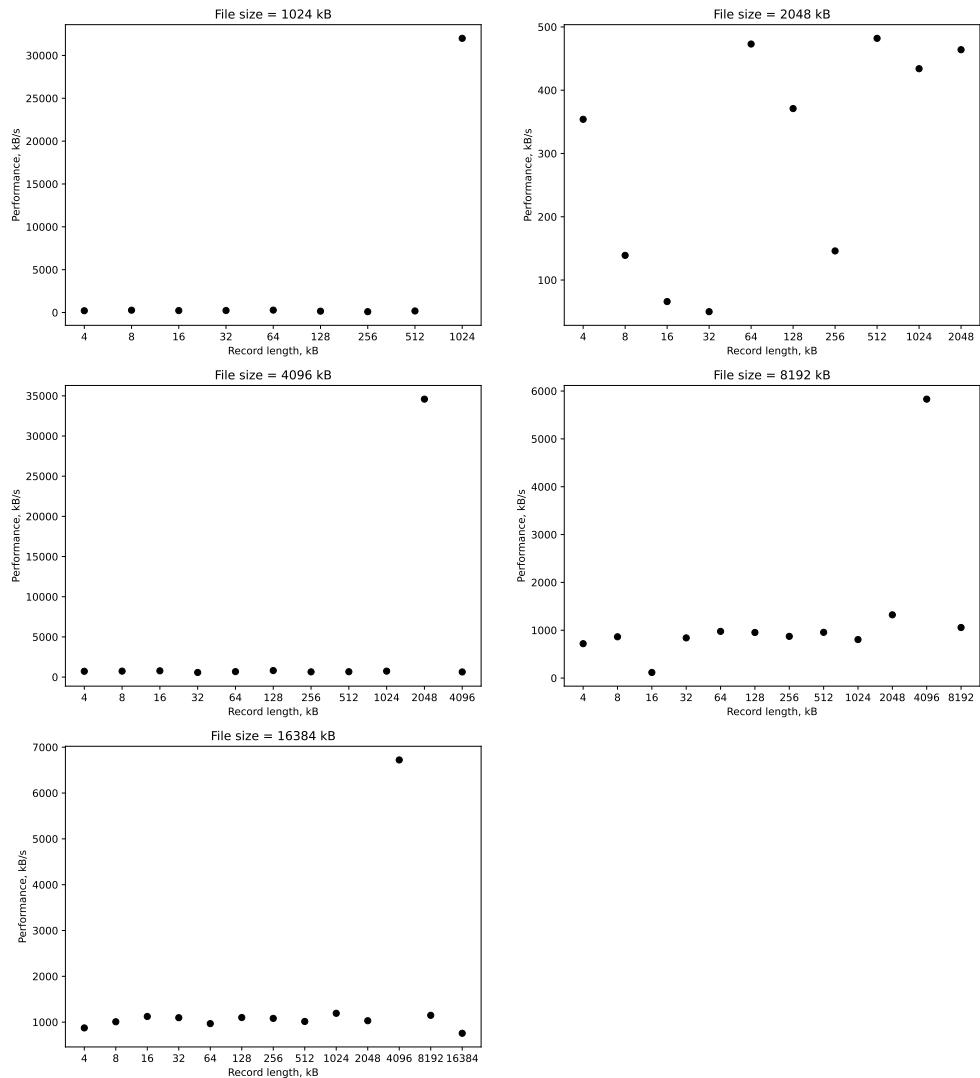


Figure C.4: IOZone output for FFS Re-Write

Table C.10: IOZone result for GCSF Re-Write

| File size (kB) | Buffer size (kB) |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |       |
|----------------|------------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|-------|
|                | 4                | 8    | 16   | 32   | 64   | 128  | 256  | 512  | 1024 | 2048 | 4096 | 8192 | 16384 |
| <b>1024</b>    | 352              | 201  | 409  | 412  | 487  | 420  | 200  | 442  | 438  |      |      |      |       |
| <b>2048</b>    | 600              | 765  | 625  | 759  | 731  | 722  | 663  | 742  | 703  | 718  |      |      |       |
| <b>4096</b>    | 934              | 1100 | 795  | 762  | 1295 | 1501 | 1421 | 1424 | 1444 | 1423 | 1209 |      |       |
| <b>8192</b>    | 293              | 1197 | 318  | 602  | 2306 | 2086 | 2254 | 2239 | 2247 | 2201 | 2252 | 2200 |       |
| <b>16384</b>   | 1420             | 1472 | 1264 | 1563 | 695  | 2986 | 2074 | 2996 | 3126 | 3033 | 2649 | 3000 | 2890  |

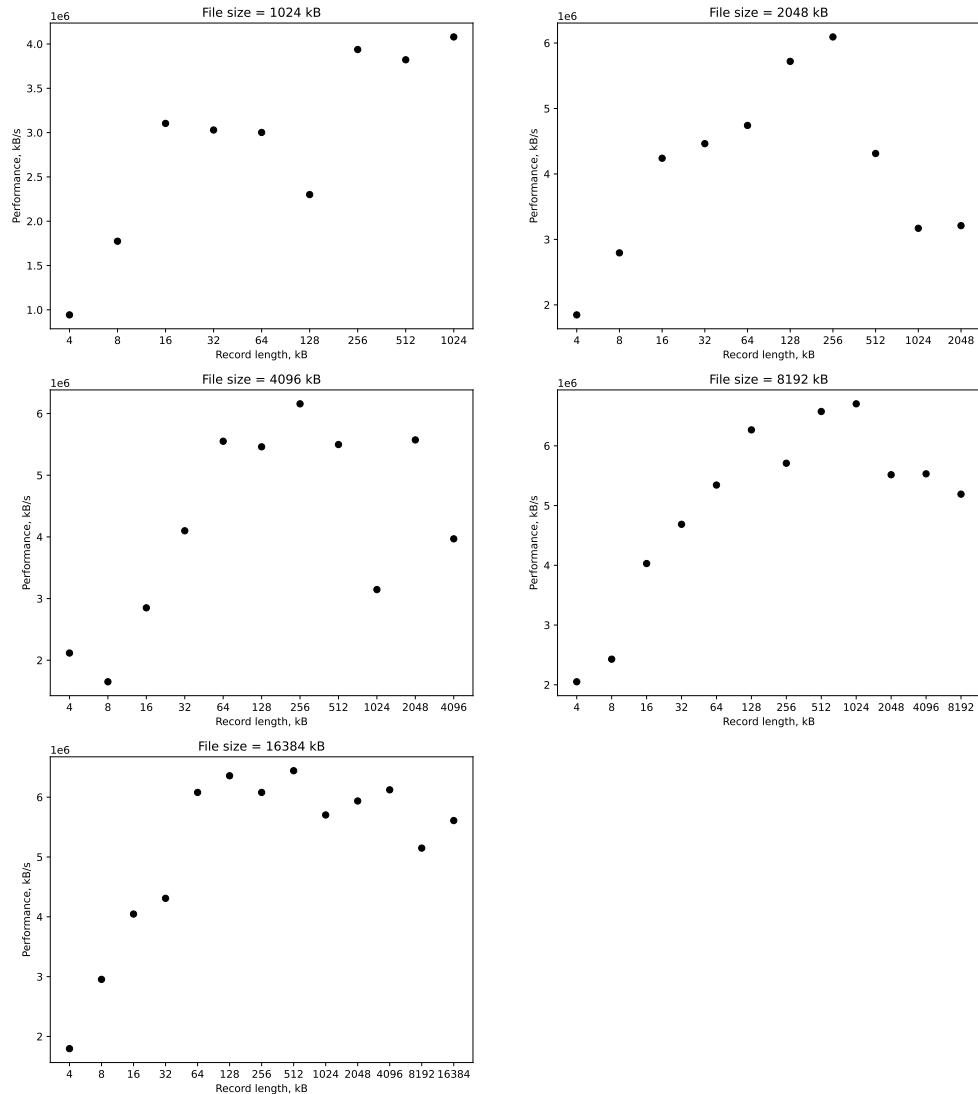


Figure C.5: IOZone output for FFS Random read

Table C.11: IOZone result for GCSF Random read

| File size (kB) | Buffer size (kB) |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |
|----------------|------------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
|                | 4                | 8       | 16      | 32      | 64      | 128     | 256     | 512     | 1024    | 2048    | 4096    | 8192    | 16384   |
| 1024           | 1304348          | 1610528 | 4079544 | 3003881 | 4199201 | 3835457 | 4334822 | 3239514 | 4783849 | 3239514 |         |         |         |
| 2048           | 2250555          | 3513544 | 5303064 | 7477273 | 5416763 | 3336148 | 6759439 | 8390200 | 3624742 | 5144271 |         |         |         |
| 4096           | 1894600          | 2736168 | 3124291 | 5779008 | 5535098 | 7087972 | 6420447 | 5721272 | 7314299 | 6480999 | 6060333 |         |         |
| 8192           | 2315532          | 3448109 | 3462355 | 5777847 | 6244039 | 5347148 | 7074554 | 7224798 | 6725591 | 6989645 | 5610847 | 5333039 |         |
| 16384          | 2009294          | 3109505 | 4169920 | 5403406 | 6534875 | 6998048 | 7320858 | 6745267 | 6725463 | 7420464 | 5931862 | 5814418 | 5714334 |

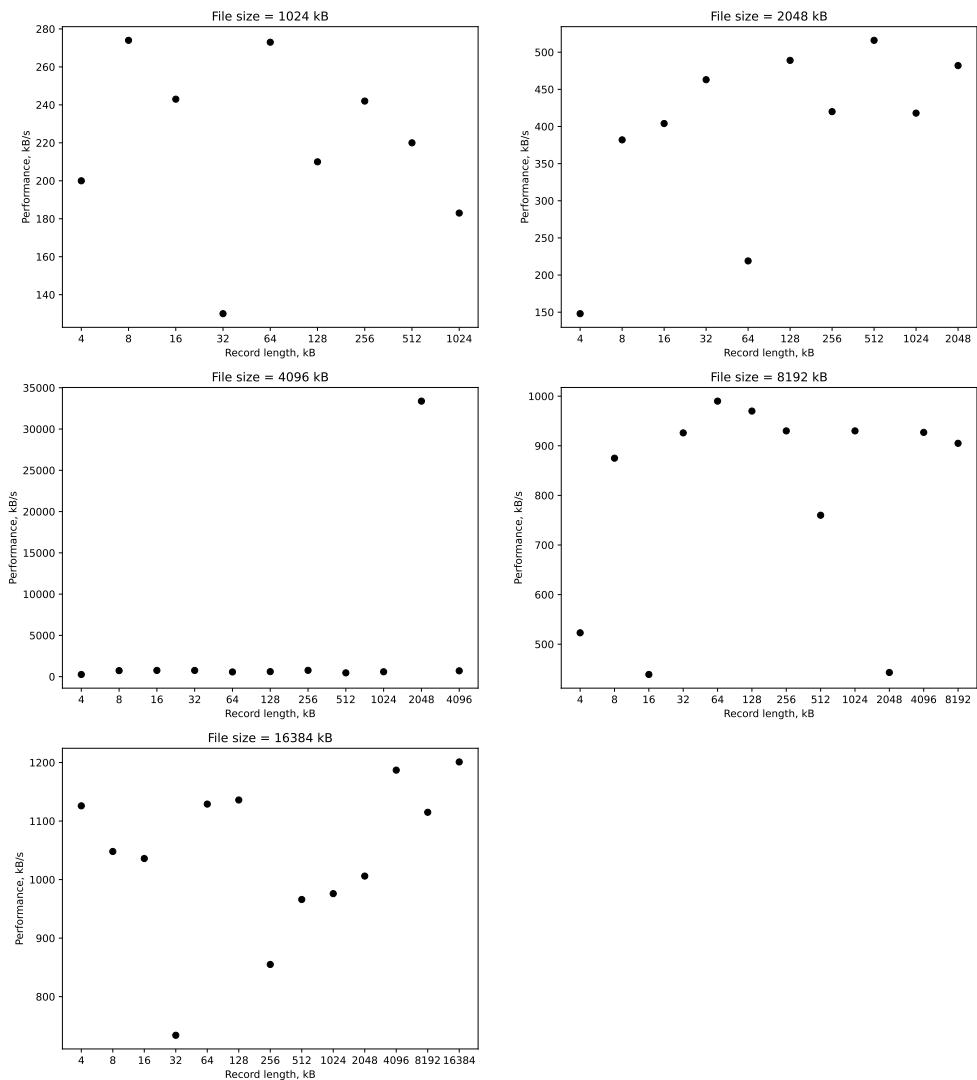


Figure C.6: IOZone output for FFS Random write

Table C.12: IOZone result for GCSF Random write

| File size (kB) | Buffer size (kB) |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |       |
|----------------|------------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|-------|
|                | 4                | 8    | 16   | 32   | 64   | 128  | 256  | 512  | 1024 | 2048 | 4096 | 8192 | 16384 |
| <b>1024</b>    | 451              | 261  | 394  | 439  | 383  | 383  | 372  | 224  | 466  |      |      |      |       |
| <b>2048</b>    | 687              | 811  | 785  | 808  | 715  | 632  | 712  | 798  | 805  | 564  |      |      |       |
| <b>4096</b>    | 888              | 1337 | 1459 | 1363 | 1440 | 1323 | 1403 | 1473 | 1099 | 1426 | 1231 |      |       |
| <b>8192</b>    | 2208             | 865  | 2220 | 2293 | 2177 | 2227 | 2213 | 2120 | 2151 | 2233 | 2207 | 2130 |       |
| <b>16384</b>   | 1282             | 1357 | 1560 | 3266 | 3523 | 2971 | 2604 | 2931 | 3001 | 3044 | 2973 | 3090 | 1270  |

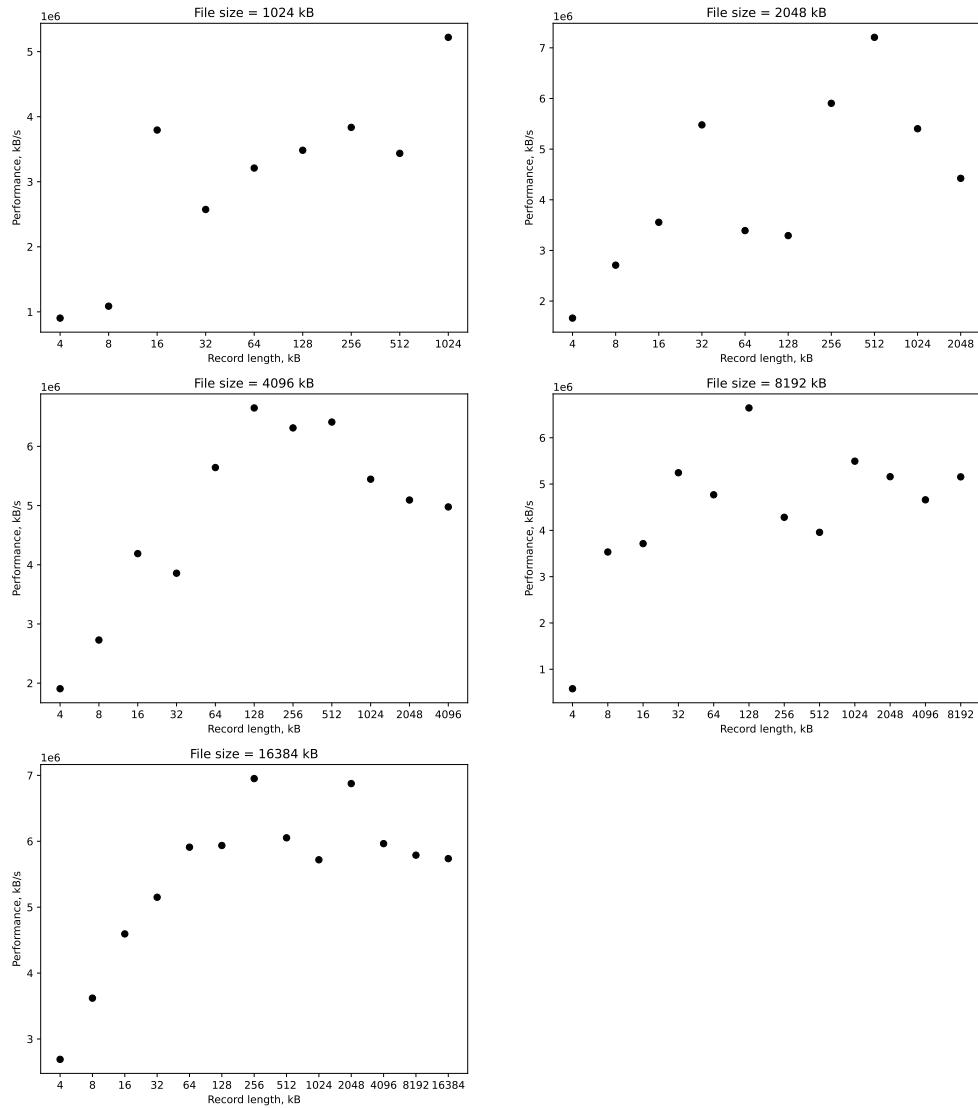


Figure C.7: IOZone output for GCSF Forward Read

Table C.13: IOZone result for Fejk FFS Read

| File size (kB) | Buffer size (kB) |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |
|----------------|------------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
|                | 4                | 8       | 16      | 32      | 64      | 128     | 256     | 512     | 1024    | 2048    | 4096    | 8192    | 16384   |
| 1024           | 1992279          | 3314514 | 4114719 | 3791442 | 3241960 | 3239514 | 2008114 | 3160839 | 3291652 |         |         |         |         |
| 2048           | 2243502          | 2913021 | 4796687 | 5280246 | 3835124 | 5900467 | 5238385 | 4796687 | 3931669 | 4697018 |         |         |         |
| 4096           | 2866270          | 3096138 | 4501111 | 2375927 | 5841891 | 6449370 | 5581856 | 5810280 | 7301864 | 4404184 | 5382492 |         |         |
| 8192           | 3010894          | 2750802 | 4196452 | 5665431 | 6616796 | 6838023 | 6410631 | 6211306 | 6643663 | 4571055 | 5765244 | 5553712 |         |
| 16384          | 3230846          | 3842338 | 4895314 | 5683144 | 6063230 | 6619859 | 6407526 | 7173368 | 6590654 | 6511962 | 6316241 | 5391113 | 5329650 |

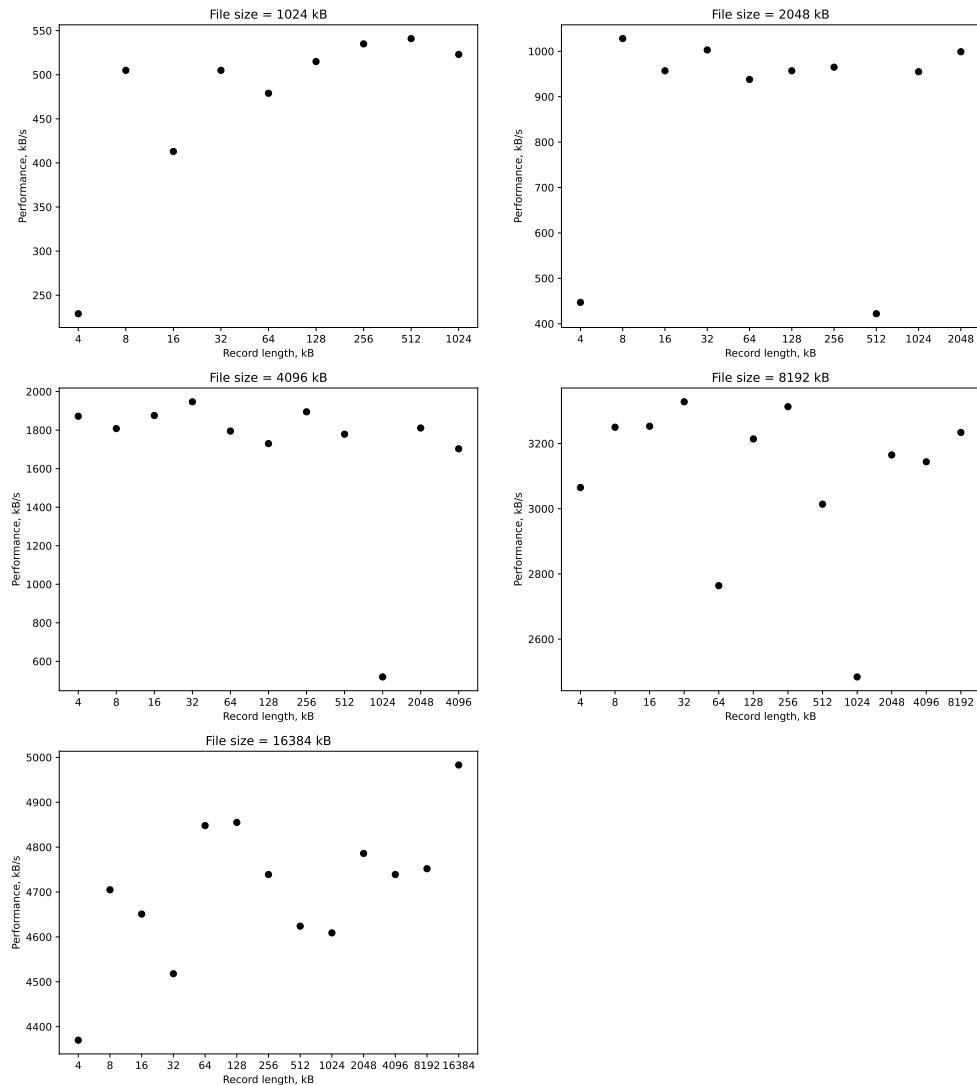


Figure C.8: IOZone output for GCSF Forward Write

Table C.14: IOZone result for Fejk FFS Write

| File size (kB) | Buffer size (kB) |      |      |      |      |        |       |      |        |        |      |      |       |
|----------------|------------------|------|------|------|------|--------|-------|------|--------|--------|------|------|-------|
|                | 4                | 8    | 16   | 32   | 64   | 128    | 256   | 512  | 1024   | 2048   | 4096 | 8192 | 16384 |
| 1024           | 6486             | 6595 | 6647 | 6667 | 6558 | 6559   | 85355 | 7342 | 6026   |        |      |      |       |
| 2048           | 6499             | 6807 | 7030 | 7035 | 7233 | 116330 | 7192  | 6963 | 109349 | 7212   |      |      |       |
| 4096           | 6614             | 7140 | 7266 | 6590 | 7044 | 7187   | 7103  | 7250 | 7226   | 6897   | 6983 |      |       |
| 8192           | 4833             | 5677 | 6189 | 7044 | 6998 | 7219   | 7231  | 7167 | 110695 | 113346 | 7182 | 7269 |       |
| 16384          | 7163             | 7174 | 7479 | 7516 | 7569 | 7787   | 7473  | 7774 | 7688   | 7628   | 7438 | 7294 | 7503  |

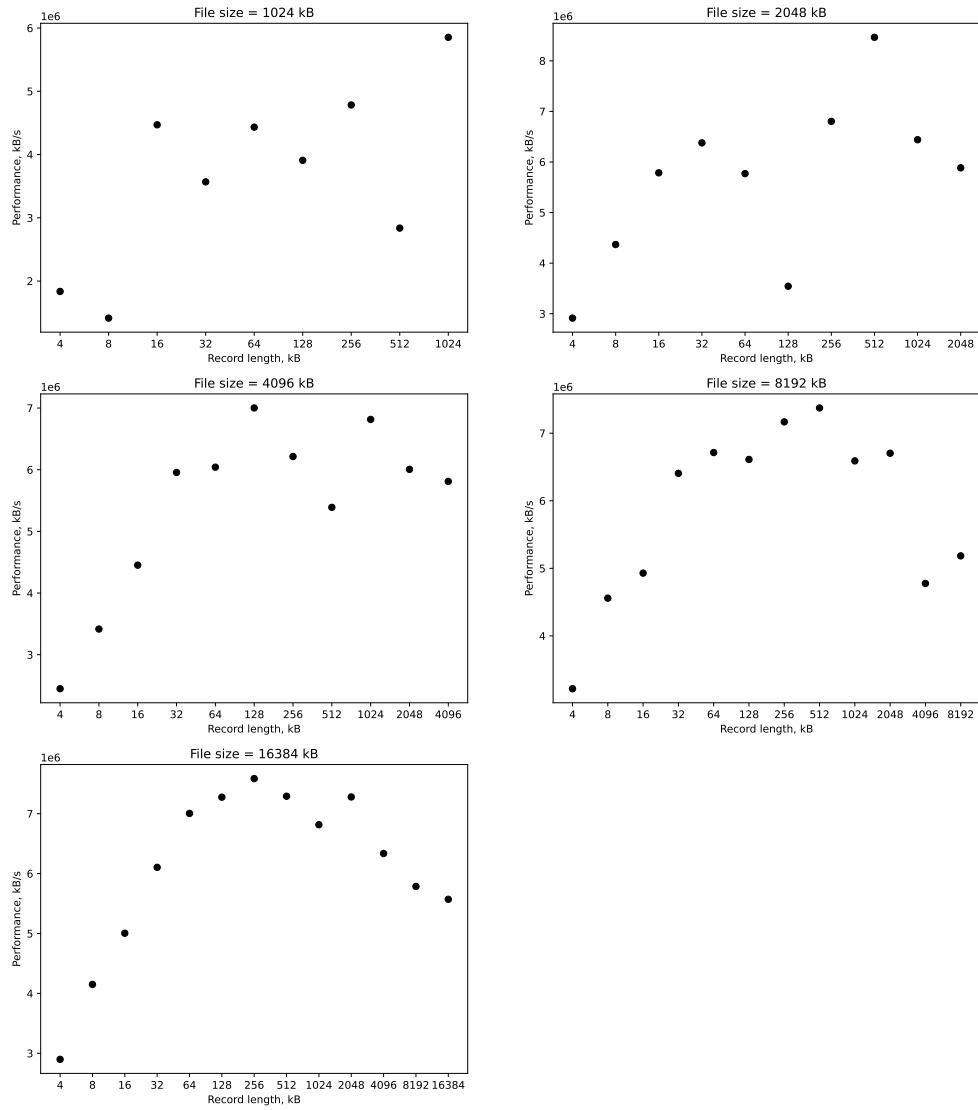


Figure C.9: IOZone output for GCSF Re-Read

Table C.15: IOZone result for Fejk FFS Re-Read

| File size (kB) | Buffer size (kB) |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |
|----------------|------------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
|                | 4                | 8       | 16      | 32      | 64      | 128     | 256     | 512     | 1024    | 2048    | 4096    | 8192    | 16384   |
| 1024           | 2197132          | 4029784 | 4574926 | 5652717 | 5417427 | 4493556 | 5120336 | 3941039 | 4594502 |         |         |         |         |
| 2048           | 3024831          | 2994254 | 4911886 | 5765808 | 4741090 | 7059413 | 5020987 | 5184636 | 4886737 | 6629029 |         |         |         |
| 4096           | 3122019          | 3540193 | 5468151 | 4376138 | 7038605 | 7925004 | 6659365 | 6321227 | 7715028 | 5490871 | 5291314 |         |         |
| 8192           | 2886449          | 2338541 | 4554091 | 6249718 | 5940679 | 7793434 | 7236972 | 8062248 | 6272536 | 7281448 | 5465373 | 5509188 |         |
| 16384          | 3351874          | 3992114 | 5232657 | 6129753 | 7356911 | 7861915 | 7123547 | 8388806 | 7180114 | 6907309 | 6511962 | 4982992 | 5403831 |

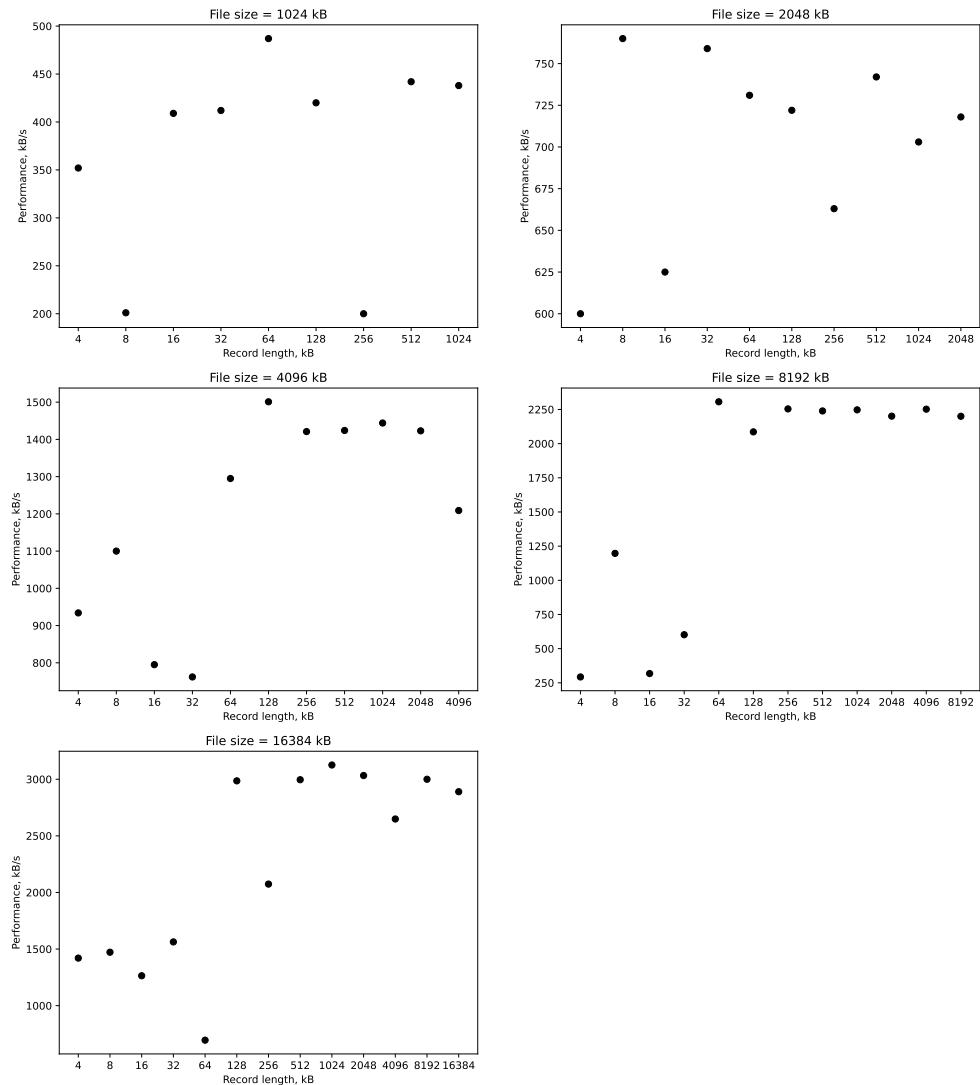


Figure C.10: IOZone output for GCSF Re-Write

Table C.16: IOZone result for Fejk FFS Re-Write

| File size (kB) | Buffer size (kB) |      |      |      |      |      |      |       |       |       |      |      |       |
|----------------|------------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|-------|-------|-------|------|------|-------|
|                | 4                | 8    | 16   | 32   | 64   | 128  | 256  | 512   | 1024  | 2048  | 4096 | 8192 | 16384 |
| <b>1024</b>    | 4860             | 6161 | 6096 | 5938 | 6321 | 6364 | 6297 | 5894  | 6383  |       |      |      |       |
| <b>2048</b>    | 5942             | 6061 | 6376 | 6386 | 6418 | 6268 | 6373 | 34391 | 37349 | 6452  |      |      |       |
| <b>4096</b>    | 6084             | 6174 | 6233 | 6413 | 6370 | 6415 | 6422 | 6143  | 6434  | 6392  | 6433 |      |       |
| <b>8192</b>    | 4744             | 5055 | 5045 | 5912 | 5832 | 5625 | 5764 | 5798  | 5917  | 25475 | 5799 | 5912 |       |
| <b>16384</b>   | 6109             | 6150 | 5047 | 6336 | 6474 | 6574 | 6391 | 6498  | 6381  | 5934  | 6154 | 6245 | 6322  |

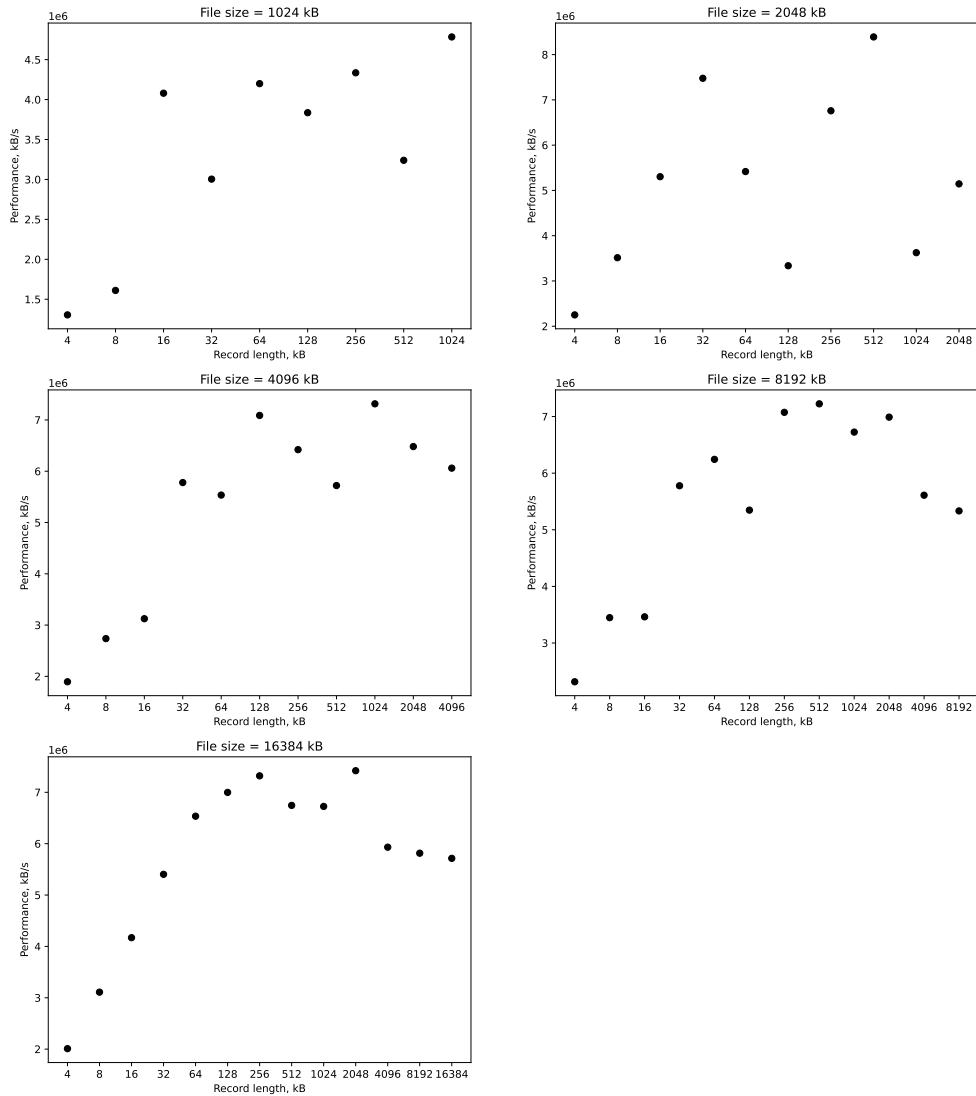


Figure C.11: IOZone output for GCSF Random read

Table C.17: IOZone result for Fejk FFS Random read

| File size (kB) | Buffer size (kB) |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |
|----------------|------------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
|                | 4                | 8       | 16      | 32      | 64      | 128     | 256     | 512     | 1024    | 2048    | 4096    | 8192    | 16384   |
| <b>1024</b>    | 1549519          | 3085895 | 4805258 | 5751117 | 4232305 | 6569179 | 5630486 | 4805258 | 5564829 | 4805258 |         |         |         |
| <b>2048</b>    | 2455806          | 3020577 | 5593112 | 7237860 | 5251194 | 8261095 | 6024617 | 4829046 | 2348384 | 6479029 |         |         |         |
| <b>4096</b>    | 2299908          | 3129412 | 4853336 | 3834958 | 7286380 | 8625273 | 7367624 | 7197849 | 7225093 | 5565581 | 5944991 |         |         |
| <b>8192</b>    | 2271747          | 2173593 | 4003788 | 5599873 | 6720329 | 7340560 | 7261443 | 8030217 | 6191160 | 5504775 | 5979968 | 5872650 |         |
| <b>16384</b>   | 2310146          | 2878929 | 4302549 | 5402132 | 7053355 | 6860418 | 7005182 | 7533538 | 6318564 | 7040348 | 6878271 | 5483167 | 5457909 |

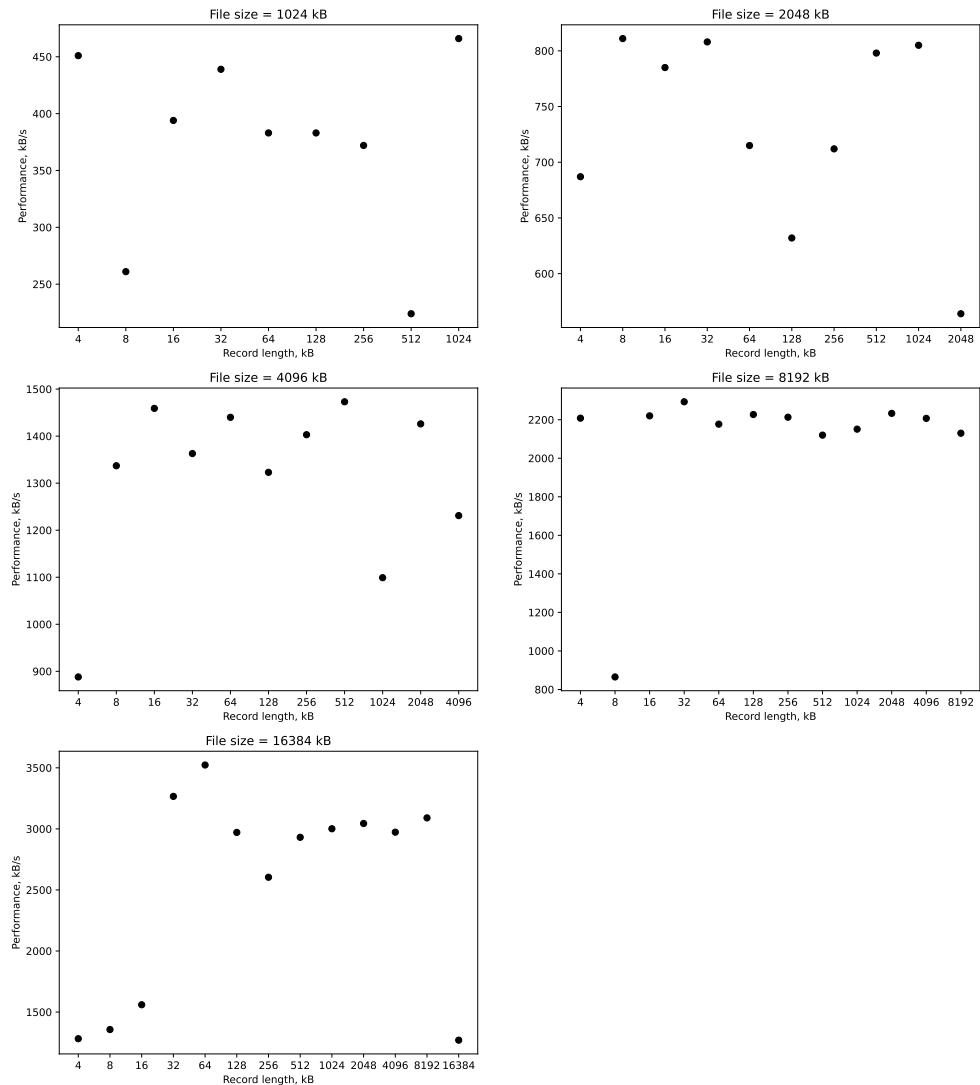


Figure C.12: IOZone output for GCSF Random write

Table C.18: IOZone result for Fejk FFS Random write

| File size (kB) | Buffer size (kB) |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |       |
|----------------|------------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|-------|
|                | 4                | 8    | 16   | 32   | 64   | 128  | 256  | 512  | 1024 | 2048 | 4096 | 8192 | 16384 |
| <b>1024</b>    | 5864             | 6137 | 6251 | 6146 | 6362 | 6252 | 5775 | 6457 | 6352 |      |      |      |       |
| <b>2048</b>    | 5869             | 6190 | 6252 | 6124 | 6398 | 6533 | 6415 | 6331 | 6587 | 6546 |      |      |       |
| <b>4096</b>    | 5871             | 6067 | 6273 | 6436 | 6521 | 6467 | 6325 | 6507 | 6495 | 6433 | 6474 |      |       |
| <b>8192</b>    | 4923             | 4113 | 4917 | 5871 | 5843 | 5937 | 5954 | 5965 | 5961 | 5907 | 5954 | 6169 |       |
| <b>16384</b>   | 6151             | 6081 | 5323 | 6342 | 6399 | 6219 | 6462 | 6278 | 6355 | 5947 | 5092 | 6248 | 6404  |

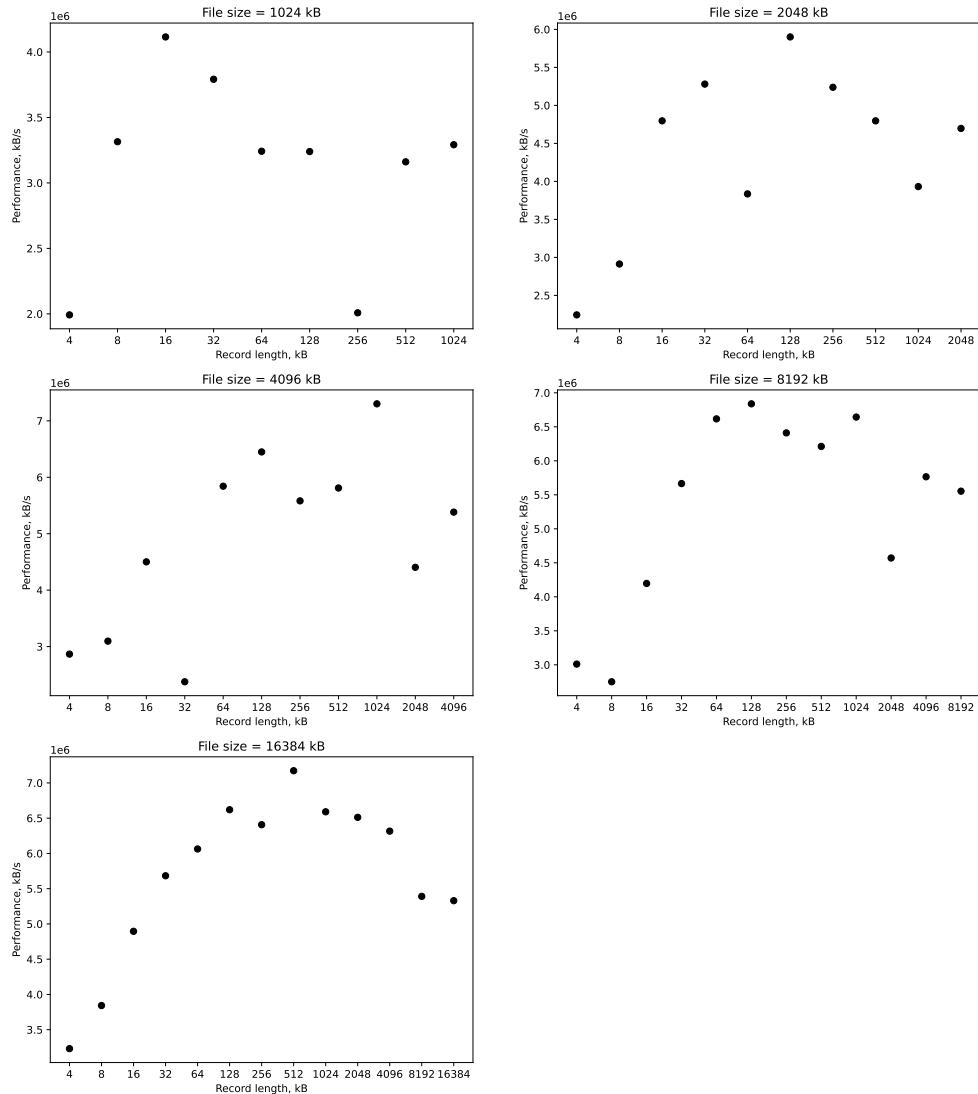


Figure C.13: IOZone output for Fejk FFS Forward Read

## C.2 GCSF

## C.3 Fejk FFS

## C.4 APFS

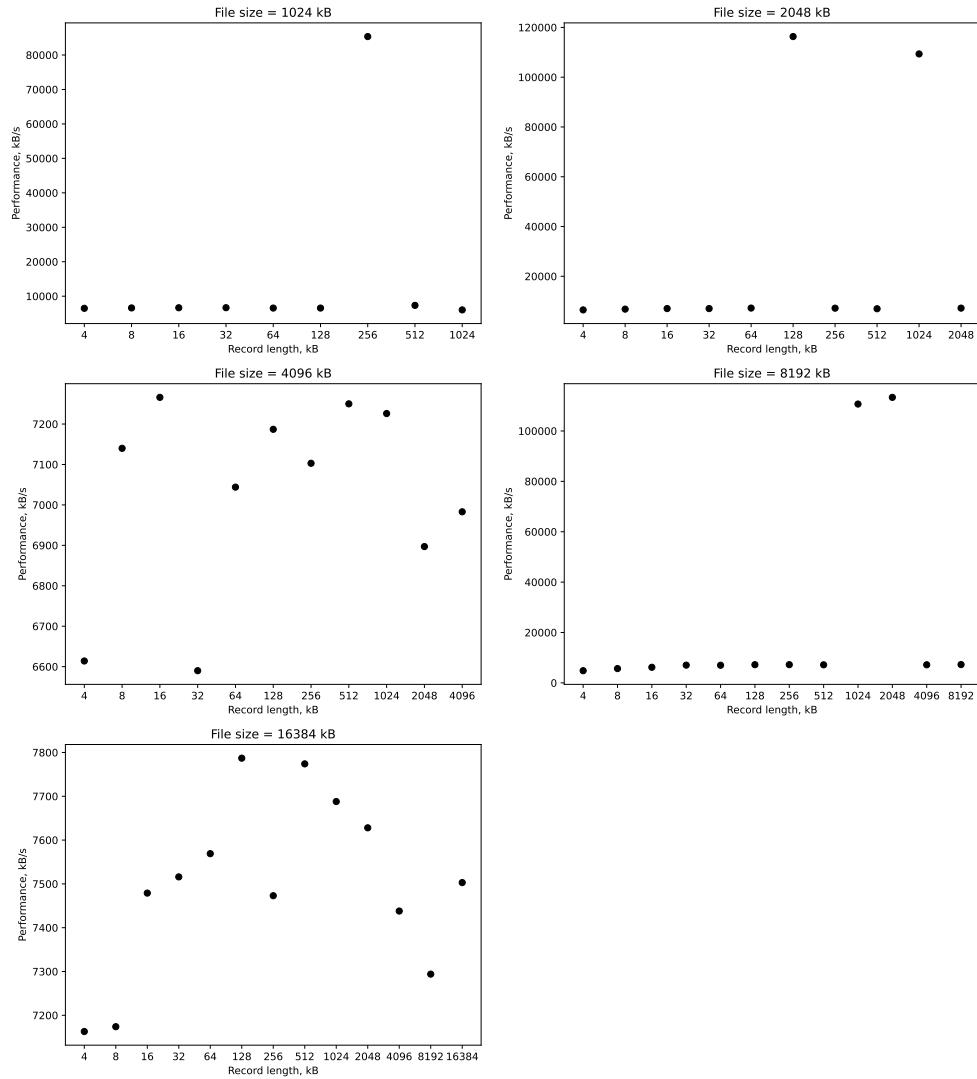


Figure C.14: IOZone output for Fejk FFS Forward Write

Table C.19: IOZone result for APPS Read

| File size (kB) | Buffer size (kB) |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |          |         |         |         |         |
|----------------|------------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|----------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
|                | 4                | 8       | 16      | 32      | 64      | 128     | 256     | 512     | 1024     | 2048    | 4096    | 8192    | 16384   |
| 1024           | 2311849          | 3821805 | 5065980 | 7369466 | 8542002 | 4876180 | 7869040 | 4114719 | 11249091 |         |         |         |         |
| 2048           | 2354177          | 3430751 | 4994712 | 5769681 | 8398403 | 9796850 | 7065219 | 6939647 | 7789164  | 8221561 |         |         |         |
| 4096           | 2402508          | 3491981 | 4876757 | 6022095 | 5475122 | 5953231 | 7301864 | 7774379 | 6989921  | 5411313 | 6094733 |         |         |
| 8192           | 2474985          | 3314080 | 5653313 | 5588034 | 5748846 | 6720329 | 6045199 | 5851647 | 5966469  | 7891886 | 5716328 | 5645881 |         |
| 16384          | 2773652          | 531358  | 2567147 | 4954252 | 6065906 | 6208391 | 5221128 | 7634813 | 5999183  | 6731392 | 5716711 | 5603438 | 5559465 |

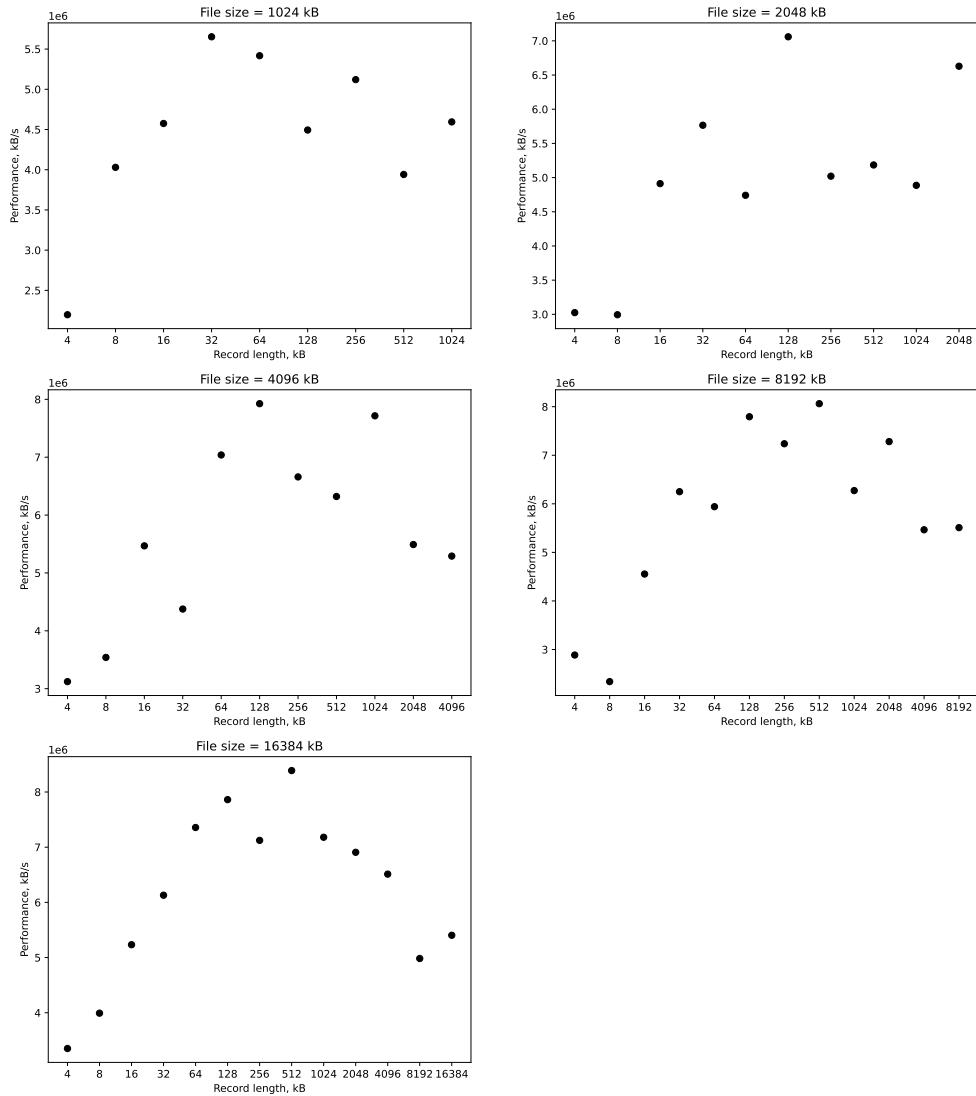


Figure C.15: IOZone output for Fejk FFS Re-Read

Table C.20: IOZone result for APFS Write

| File size (kB) | Buffer size (kB) |        |        |        |        |         |        |         |         |         |         |         |         |
|----------------|------------------|--------|--------|--------|--------|---------|--------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
|                | 4                | 8      | 16     | 32     | 64     | 128     | 256    | 512     | 1024    | 2048    | 4096    | 8192    | 16384   |
| 1024           | 157562           | 280097 | 419520 | 220777 | 271116 | 1091532 | 854752 | 1687075 | 305782  |         |         |         |         |
| 2048           | 180154           | 251044 | 414476 | 397980 | 425248 | 664300  | 379685 | 1344739 | 1421279 | 2102899 |         |         |         |
| 4096           | 186197           | 340567 | 351651 | 934714 | 486051 | 1136174 | 771788 | 1353618 | 784547  | 735918  | 1231902 |         |         |
| 8192           | 200062           | 251335 | 403762 | 604799 | 537746 | 1224736 | 745948 | 1595914 | 1381695 | 1063479 | 1439766 | 445727  |         |
| 16384          | 207663           | 216404 | 111071 | 574597 | 729051 | 1050647 | 941932 | 630420  | 1114024 | 1460506 | 1495696 | 1490829 | 1539559 |

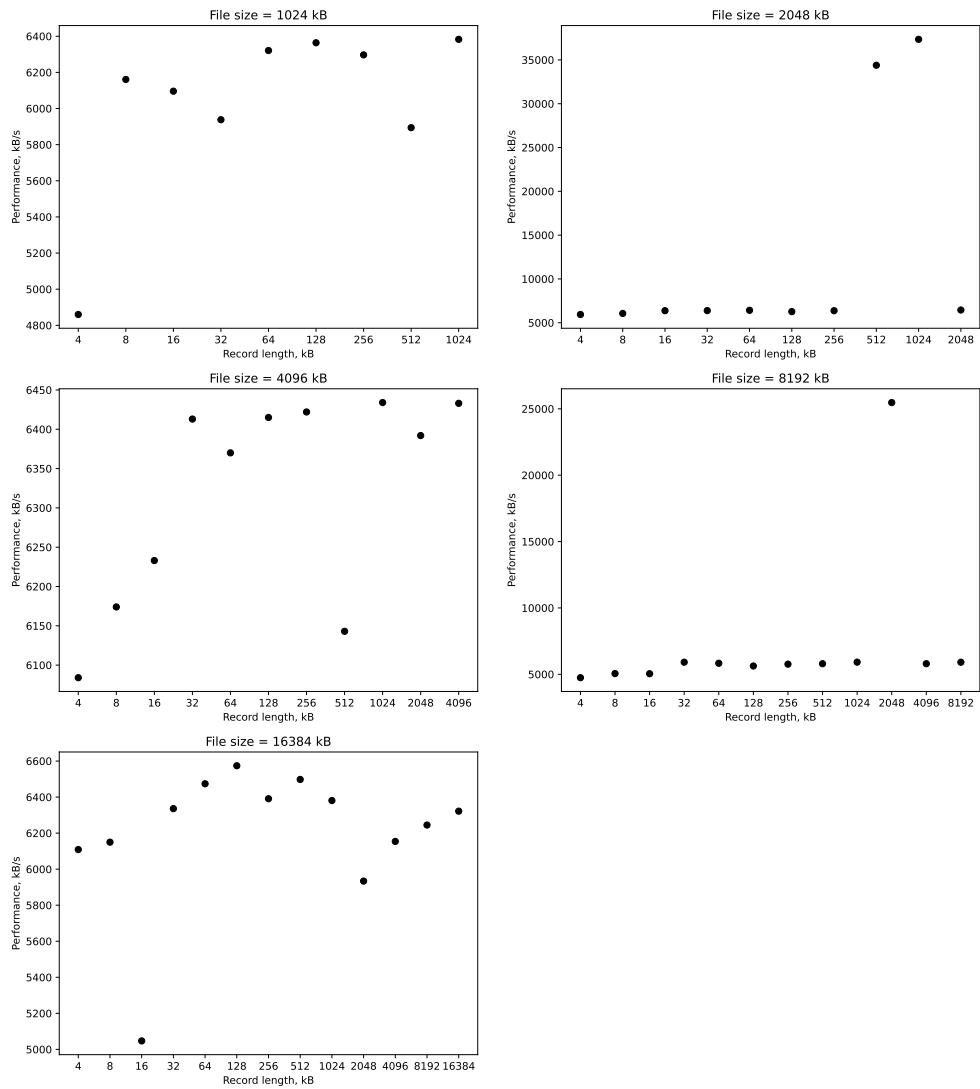


Figure C.16: IOZone output for Fejk FFS Re-Write

Table C.21: IOZone result for APFS Re-Read

| File size (kB) | Buffer size (kB) |         |         |         |          |          |          |         |          |          |         |         |         |
|----------------|------------------|---------|---------|---------|----------|----------|----------|---------|----------|----------|---------|---------|---------|
|                | 4                | 8       | 16      | 32      | 64       | 128      | 256      | 512     | 1024     | 2048     | 4096    | 8192    | 16384   |
| 1024           | 2504637          | 4029784 | 6093831 | 8122014 | 9677584  | 6327241  | 10557785 | 7577494 | 15743686 |          |         |         |         |
| 2048           | 2519185          | 3744839 | 5640860 | 6717153 | 10555264 | 11380325 | 8029434  | 7999524 | 9149853  | 10889797 |         |         |         |
| 4096           | 2483786          | 3503374 | 5360658 | 5800471 | 6272759  | 6905631  | 8409937  | 8865630 | 6638778  | 5666546  | 7135072 |         |         |
| 8192           | 2494390          | 3771731 | 5177930 | 6660405 | 7172016  | 7461712  | 6621897  | 6267959 | 6287458  | 8444674  | 3995873 | 5569014 |         |
| 16384          | 2780610          | 1256141 | 606254  | 4280039 | 5968441  | 6689455  | 3986324  | 8159708 | 6191610  | 6389653  | 5640230 | 5170063 | 5550036 |

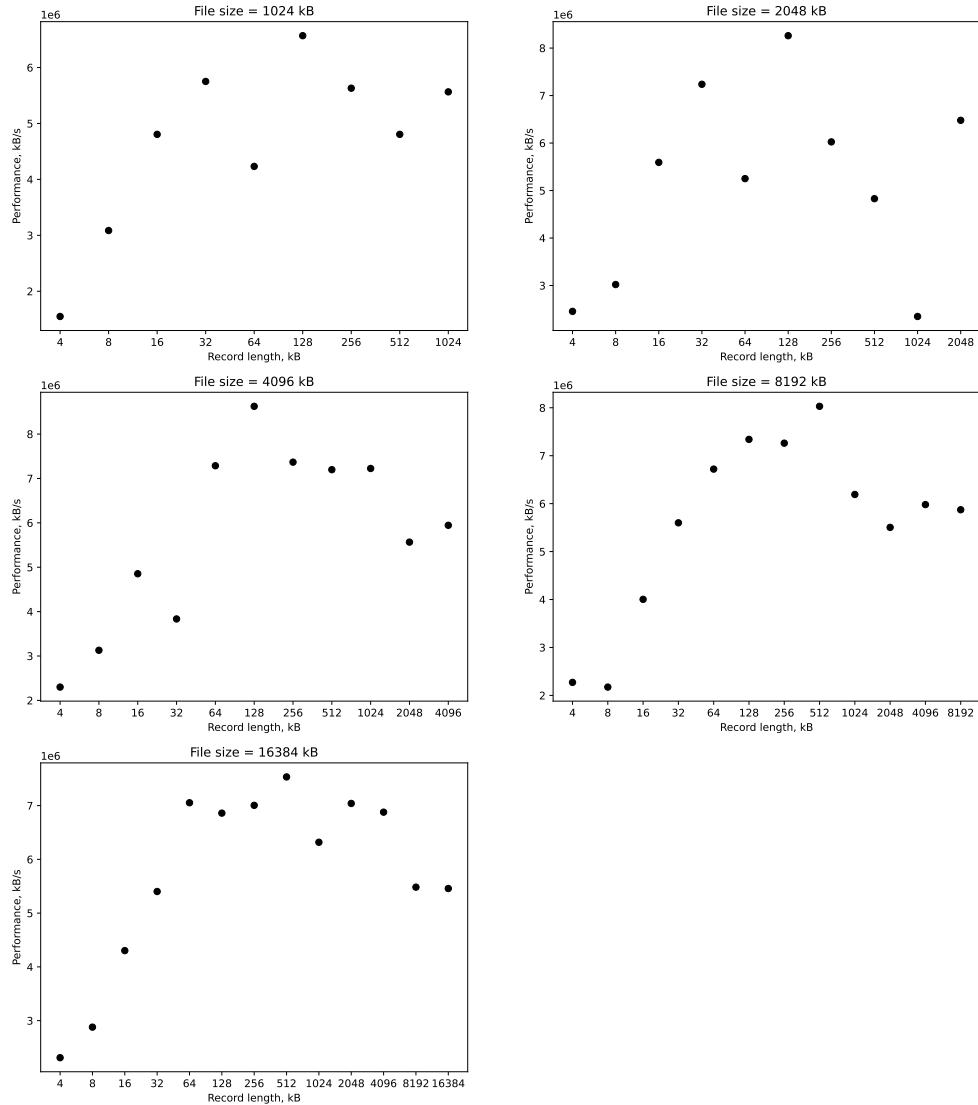


Figure C.17: IOZone output for Fejk FFS Random read

Table C.22: IOZone result for APFS Re-Write

| File size (kB) | Buffer size (kB) |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |
|----------------|------------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
|                | 4                | 8       | 16      | 32      | 64      | 128     | 256     | 512     | 1024    | 2048    | 4096    | 8192    | 16384   |
| 1024           | 642400           | 951728  | 1408275 | 1909888 | 2751762 | 3791442 | 2179295 | 3048658 | 3643490 |         |         |         |         |
| 2048           | 608446           | 945527  | 1662201 | 1959469 | 2066474 | 3372826 | 3828284 | 2598439 | 2888532 | 2367804 |         |         |         |
| 4096           | 677926           | 1044889 | 1340731 | 2741845 | 1937548 | 2393804 | 3516281 | 2509913 | 2592481 | 2261757 | 2666519 |         |         |
| 8192           | 598353           | 862858  | 1344287 | 1329412 | 1790987 | 1617704 | 1997565 | 1398624 | 1787539 | 2196801 | 1596582 | 2065036 |         |
| 16384          | 652360           | 347573  | 666533  | 1155516 | 1502005 | 1012176 | 1213357 | 1719758 | 1153731 | 1169438 | 1312296 | 1423211 | 1557847 |

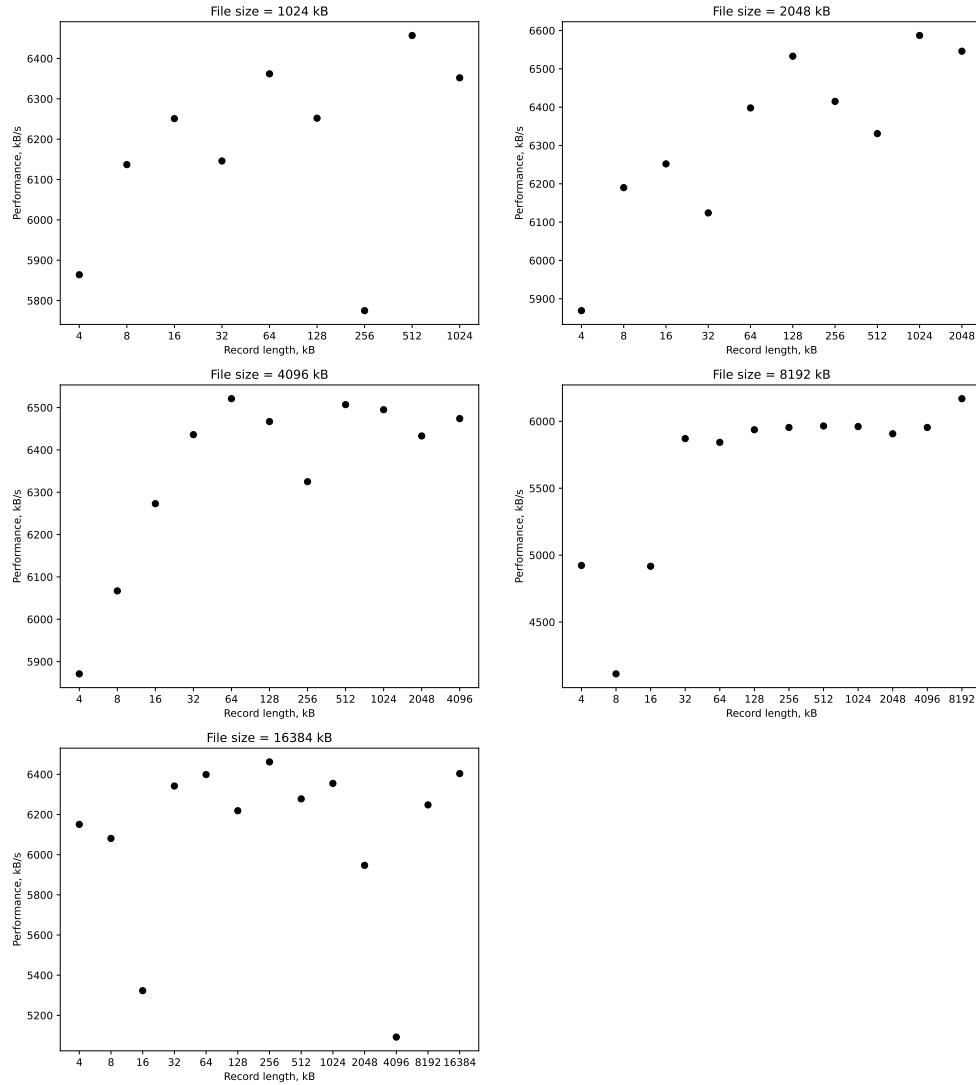


Figure C.18: IOZone output for Fejk FFS Random write

Table C.23: IOZone result for APFS Random read

| File size (kB) | Buffer size (kB) |         |         |         |          |          |         |         |          |         |         |         |         |
|----------------|------------------|---------|---------|---------|----------|----------|---------|---------|----------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
|                | 4                | 8       | 16      | 32      | 64       | 128      | 256     | 512     | 1024     | 2048    | 4096    | 8192    | 16384   |
| 1024           | 1305935          | 2900425 | 4783849 | 6489770 | 8262639  | 6355328  | 7269678 | 8122014 | 14044758 |         |         |         |         |
| 2048           | 1742803          | 2771120 | 5626082 | 5750369 | 10179991 | 10848538 | 9664580 | 8643474 | 8940345  | 9752360 |         |         |         |
| 4096           | 1772435          | 2610602 | 4591331 | 5409609 | 6361016  | 7515892  | 6512939 | 9801354 | 6370451  | 5885924 | 7314299 |         |         |
| 8192           | 1733431          | 2736125 | 4855947 | 5281396 | 6491781  | 7243074  | 5911041 | 6866721 | 6748045  | 8325988 | 3730372 | 5561803 |         |
| 16384          | 1941677          | 2037532 | 1415967 | 3636950 | 5324694  | 6395004  | 5206097 | 8135557 | 6054683  | 5804105 | 5681264 | 5243037 | 5045925 |

Table C.24: IOZone result for APFS Random write

| File size (kB) | 4                | 8       | 16      | 32      | 64      | 128     | 256     | 512     | 1024    | 2048    | 4096    | 8192    | 16384   |
|----------------|------------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
|                | Buffer size (kB) |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |
| <b>1024</b>    | 495165           | 889815  | 1211964 | 2348509 | 3335105 | 1935711 | 1968537 | 3281592 | 5120336 |         |         |         |         |
| <b>2048</b>    | 556530           | 1037456 | 2048243 | 1863404 | 3029098 | 4730646 | 4257067 | 3606479 | 4088876 | 4441984 |         |         |         |
| <b>4096</b>    | 585548           | 894700  | 1375841 | 2080188 | 2254337 | 2908979 | 2860543 | 3373360 | 3669496 | 2907010 | 2901120 |         |         |
| <b>8192</b>    | 589696           | 925644  | 1667397 | 1933928 | 2231469 | 2482495 | 2348612 | 2431548 | 2029780 | 2487707 | 1891555 | 2121651 |         |
| <b>16384</b>   | 577247           | 401085  | 669005  | 1328919 | 1809178 | 1825082 | 1656297 | 1702755 | 1716836 | 1669131 | 1971592 | 1699428 | 1775476 |

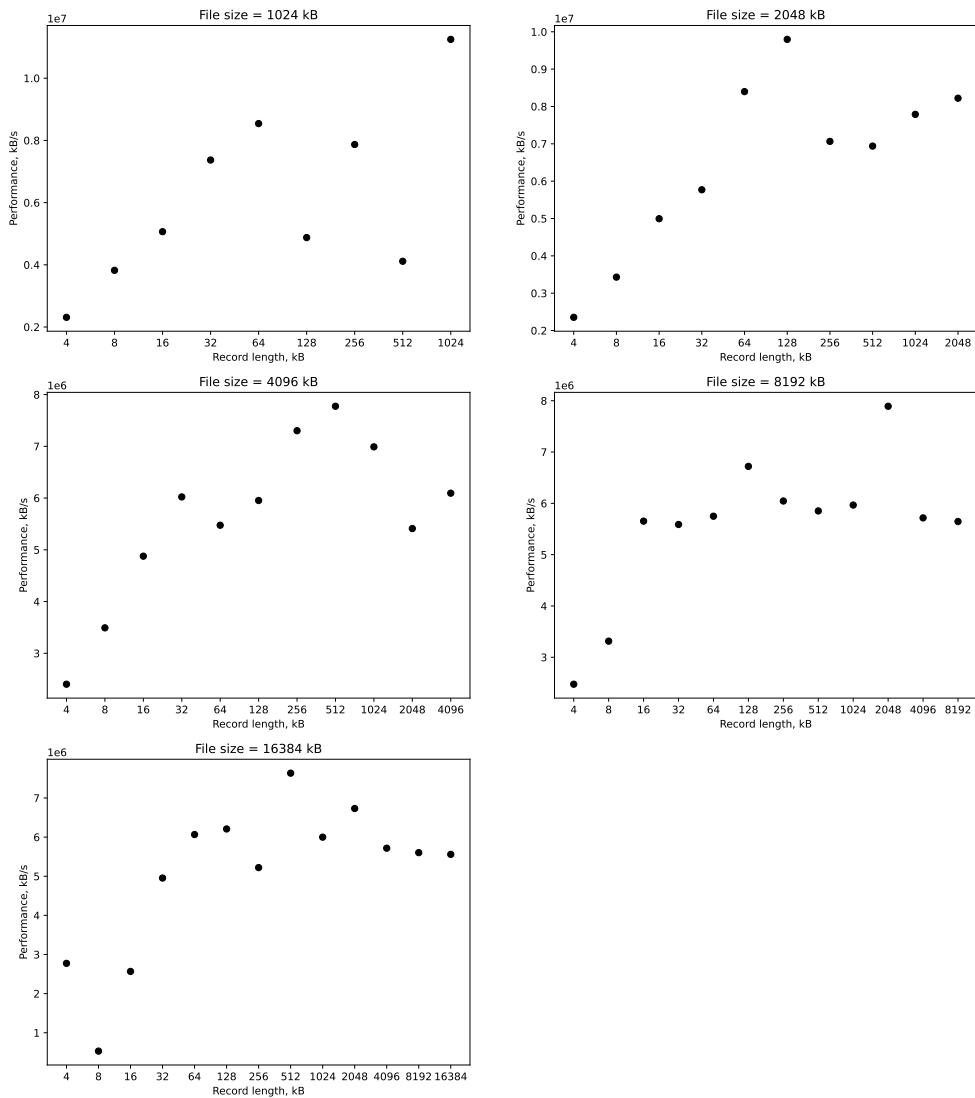


Figure C.19: IOZone output for APFS Forward Read

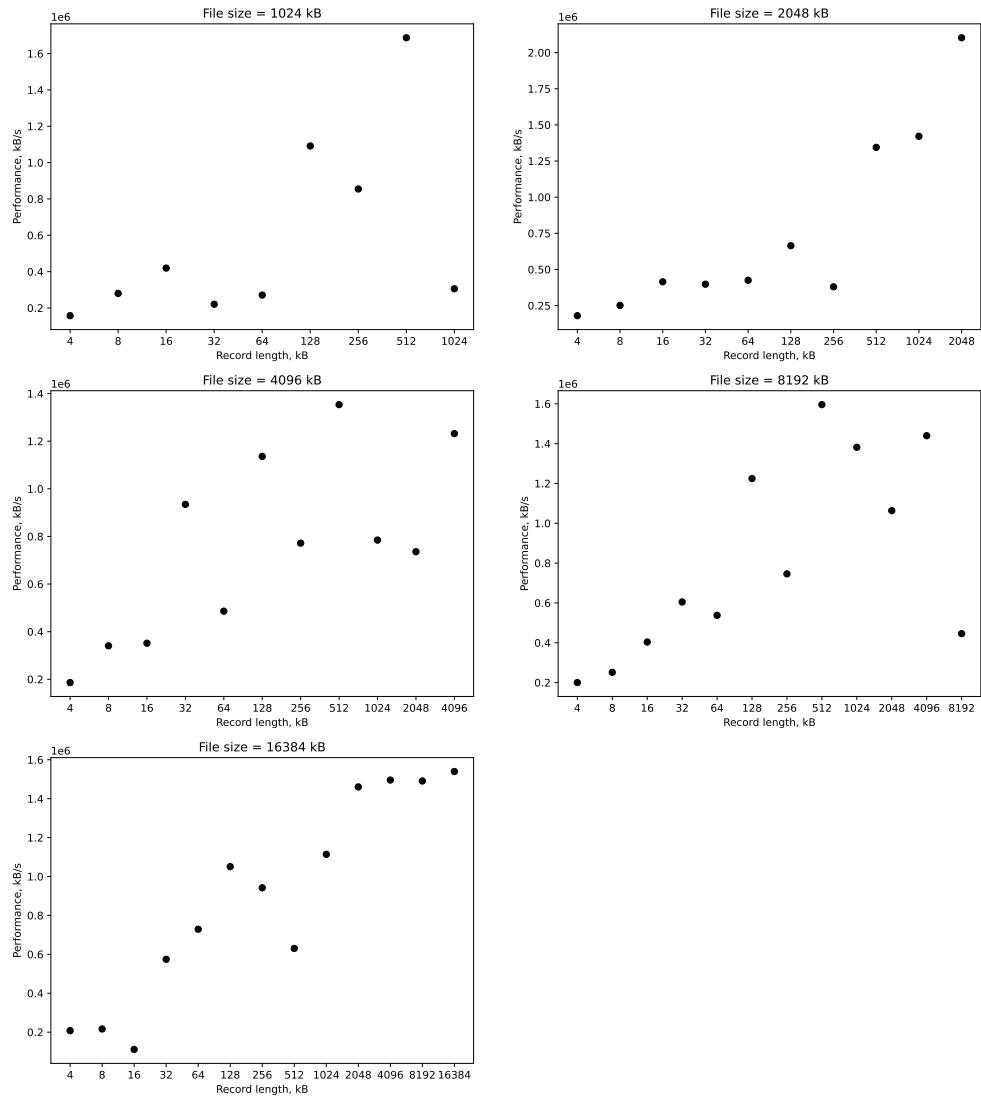


Figure C.20: IOZone output for APFS Forward Write

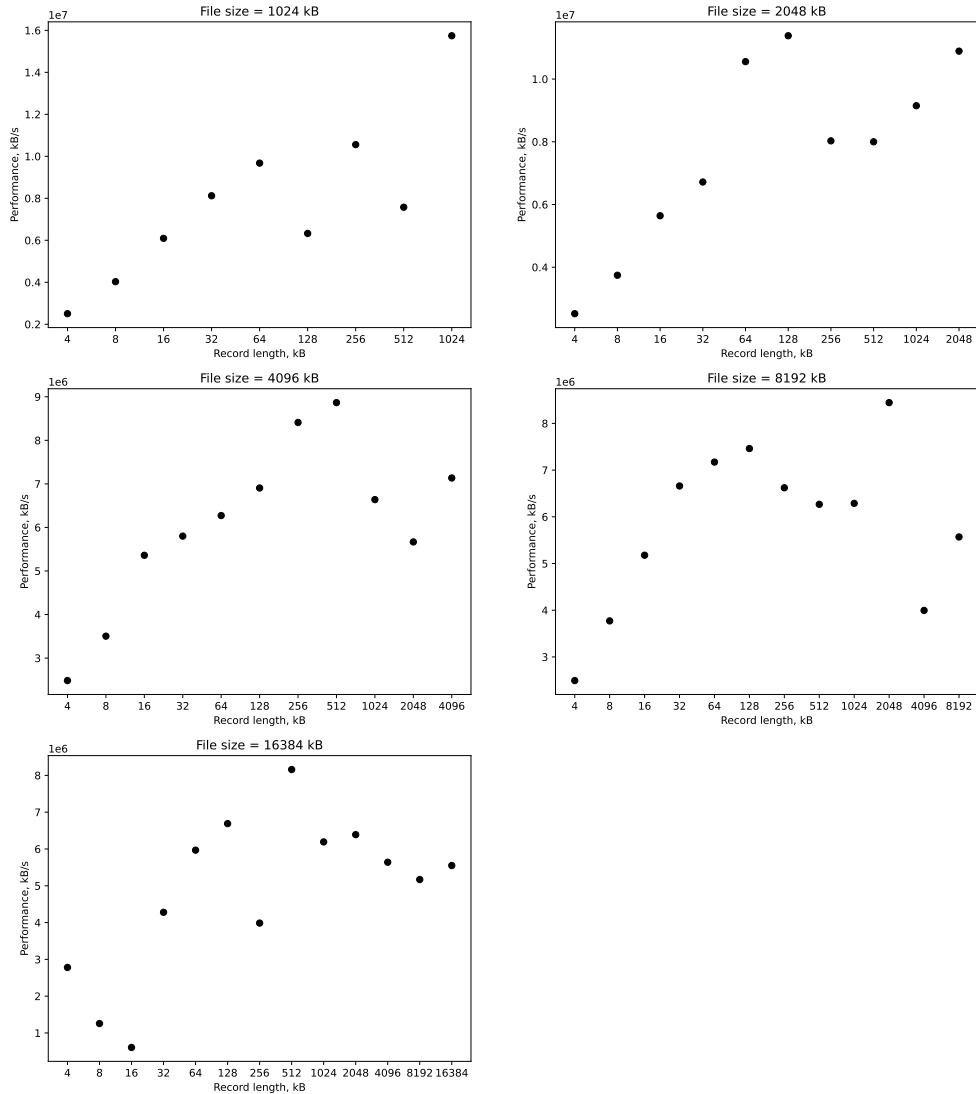


Figure C.21: IOZone output for APFS Re-Read

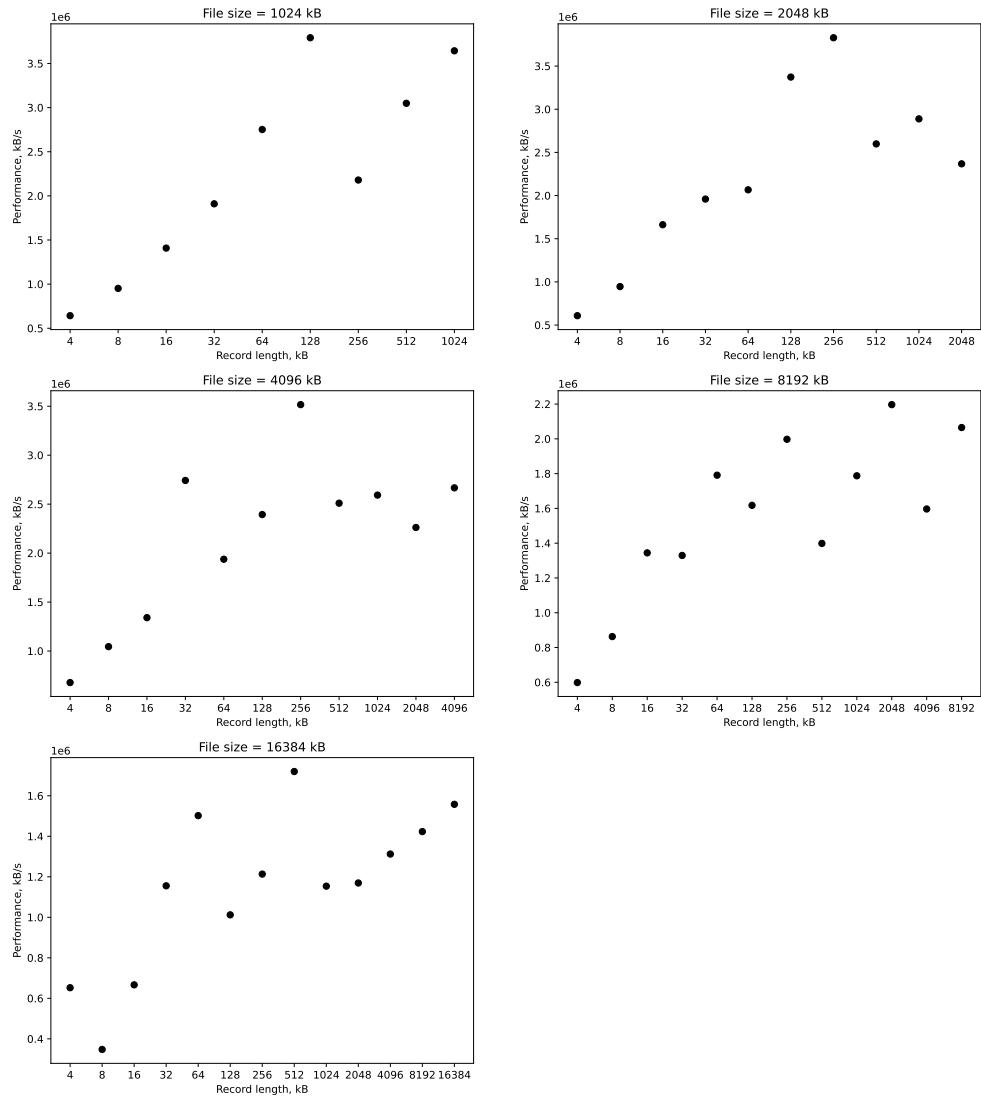


Figure C.22: IOZone output for APFS Re-Write

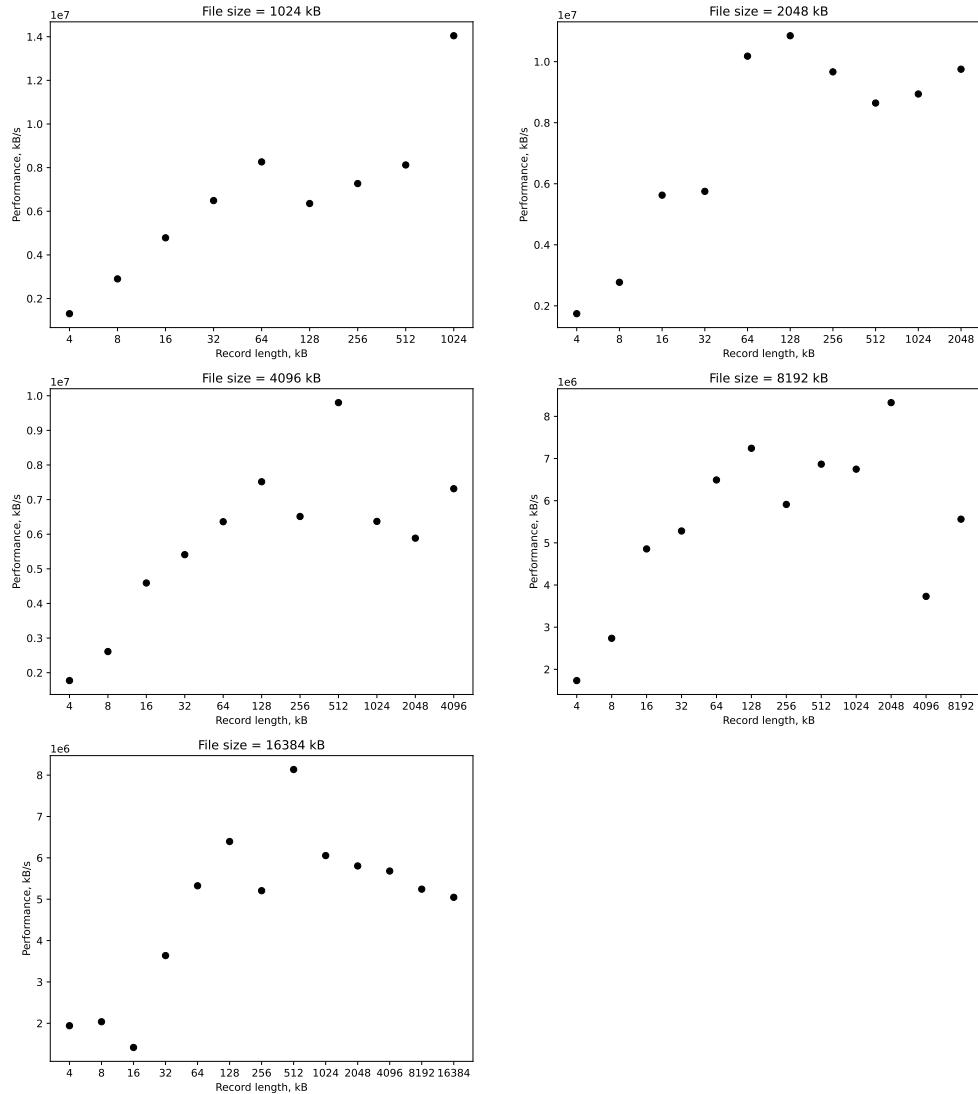


Figure C.23: IOZone output for APFS Random read

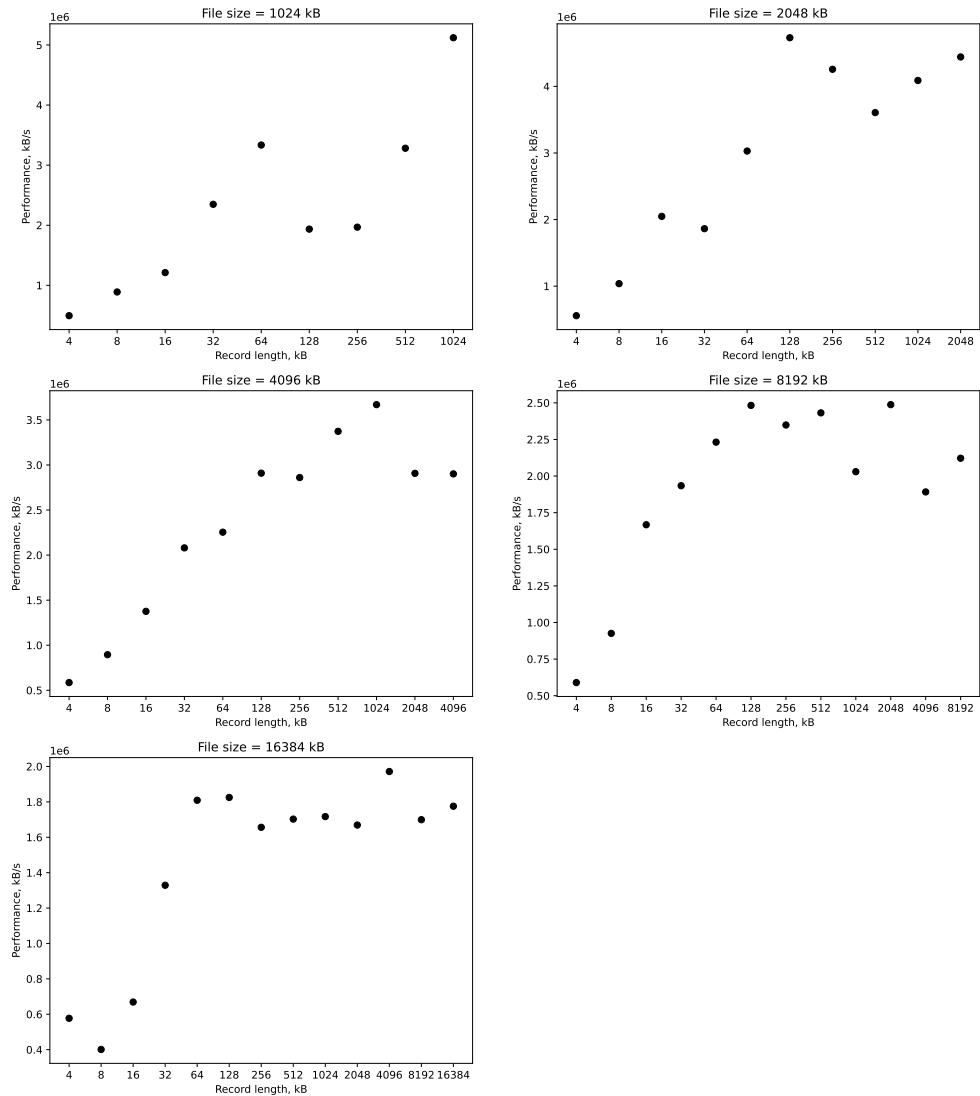


Figure C.24: IOZone output for APFS Random write



# For DIVA

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