I/O Performance trade-offs among RNTuple's persistent layouts for DUNE Data Products

S M Shovan, *FCSI Summer Intern'25*

July 31, 2025

Fermi National Accelerator Laboratory

Outline

Introduction

Introduction

- The Deep Underground Neutrino Experiment (DUNE) is projected to record roughly 30 PB of liquid-argon TPC data per year [1]—far beyond the scale of previous neutrino experiments.
- DUNE's **Phlex** test-stand at Fermilab provides realistic hit/wire samples to prototype read-out and offline storage.
- ROOT's new `RNTuple` backend is a candidate for the long-term DUNE data model, promising faster compression, cluster-aware reads, and thread-safe writes.
- This study benchmarks alternative RNTuple *persistent layouts* (AOS/SOA, vertical splits, granularity levels) for realistic data products.
- Focus data products: `recob::Hit` (charge deposits) and `recob::Wire` (ROI-compressed waveforms).

Motivation

- A single DUNE far-detector module streams about 1.2 TB/s of raw data before compression [2]; naive storage could potentially overwhelm the archival budget.
- Efficient layout choice can cut file size and accelerate cluster reads needed for GPU/CPU reconstruction farms.

Problem Statement

- Which RNTuple persistent layout minimises read time, write time and on-disk footprint for DUNE Hit/Wire hierarchies?
- How does vertical splitting such as one RNTuple for all data products interact with horizontal granularities (event, spill, element) under Phlex workloads?
- How does the choice of persistent layout affect the performance of the read and write operations?

Objectives

- Benchmark seven layout variants on a 1 M-event Phlex dataset (`recob::Hit`, `recob::Wire` with ROIs).
- Measure: write throughput, cold/warm read latency, compressed file size, and multi-thread scaling (1–64 threads).
- Quantify trade-offs of ROI flattening, vertical split depth, and SOA vs. AOS.

Persistent Layouts

Data Layouts: AOS vs. SOA

Array of Structures (AOS)

Stores complete objects in an array.

```
struct Hit {
long long EventID;
unsigned int fChannel;
float fPeakTime;
};
// Array: [Hit1, Hit2, ...]
```

Example: Hit, Wire (per-item entries).

Structure of Arrays (SOA)

Separate arrays per field.

```
struct Hits {
vector<long long> EventID;
vector<unsigned int> fChannel;
vector<float> fPeakTime;
};
// Columns: EventID[ ], fChannel[
], fPeakTime[ ], ...
```

Example: Hits, Wires (per-event vectors).

Layout Strategies

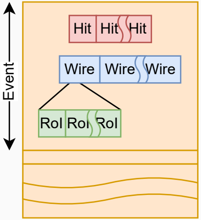

Figure 1: AOS Layout

Layout Strategies

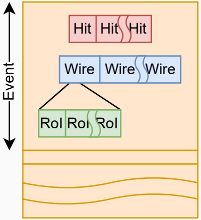

Figure 1: AOS Layout

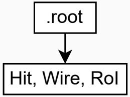

Figure 2: 1 RNTuple for all data products

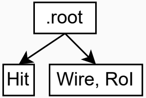

Figure 3: 1 RNTuple per data product

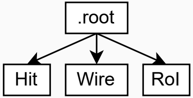

Figure 4: 1 RNTuple per group

Layout Strategies

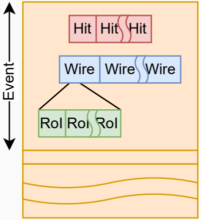

Figure 1: AOS Layout

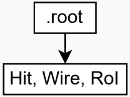

Figure 2: 1 RNTuple for all data products

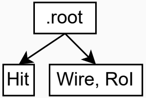

Figure 3: 1 RNTuple per data product

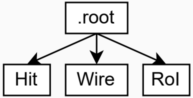

Figure 4: 1 RNTuple per group

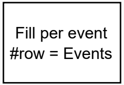

Figure 5: 1 fill/row per event

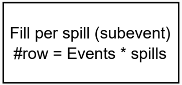

Figure 6: 1 fill/row per spill

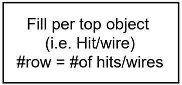

Figure 7: 1 fill/row per top object

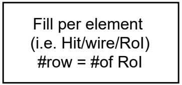

Figure 8: 1 fill/row per element

Layout Strategies: AOS vs SOA

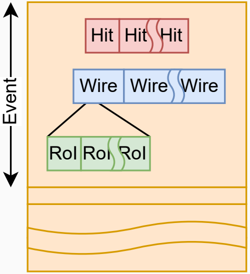

Figure 9: AOS Layout

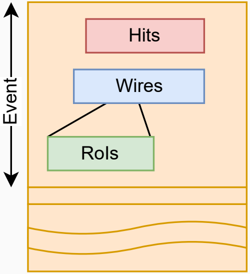

Figure 10: SOA Layout

Granularity vs. Vertical Split Matrix

Horizontal Granularity	1 NTuple (all DP)	1 NTuple / DP	1 NTuple / group
Event-wise	`event_allDP()`	`event_perDP()`	`event_perGroup()`
Spill-wise	`spill_allDP()`	`spill_perDP()`	`spill_perGroup()`
Top-object-wise	–	`topObject_perDP()`	`topObject_perGroup()`
Element-wise	–	`element_perDP()`	`element_perGroup()`

DP = Data Product

Parallel Optimizations

Write Optimization: Multi-Threaded Chunking

Parallel Chunking Divide events into thread-specific ranges for concurrent filling.

```
std::vector<unsigned int> seeds = generateSeeds(nThreads);
for (int th = 0; th < nThreads; ++th) {
int first = th * chunkSize;
int last = std::min(first + chunkSize, totalEvents);
futures.emplace_back(std::async(
std::launch::async, thinWorkFunc, first, last, seeds[th], th ));}
```

Example: `executeInParallel` writers.

Project Use: Scales writes with cores for large datasets.

Read Optimization: Cluster-Aware Splitting

Cluster Splitting Split read ranges by cluster boundaries to avoid duplicates.

```
auto clusters = split_range_by_clusters(*reader, nChunks);
for (auto& chunk :  clusters) {
futures.push_back(std::async(
&processChunk, chunk.first, chunk.second
));
}
```

Helper Function Defines cluster-based splits.

```
std::vector<std::pair<size_t, size_t>>
split_range_by_clusters(ROOT::RNTupleReader& reader, int nChunks)
```

Project Use: Enhances read efficiency by reducing redundant reads.

Challenges

Parallel Write Challenge: File Corruption Solution

Problem: Concurrent Flushes Unsynchronized cluster flushes cause file corruption in multi-threaded writes. **Example Issue**: Threads overwriting shared file regions.

Solution: Mutex Synchronization Lock during flushes to serialize access per cluster.

```
for (int idx = first; idx < last; ++idx) {
// Generate data for hits/wires
if (hitStatus.ShouldFlushCluster()) {
hitContext.FlushColumns();
{ std::lock_guard<std::mutex> lock(mutex); }
hitContext.FlushCluster();
}
}
```

Project Use: Ensures thread-safe parallel writes without corruption.

ROI Flattening vs. Custom Dictionary

ROI Flattening (Non-Dictionary)

Flattens hierarchical ROI data into vectors for efficient storage without custom classes.

```
struct Wires {
vector<unsigned int> fSignalROI_nROIs;
vector<size_t> fSignalROI_offsets;
vector<float> fSignalROI_data;
};
```

Example: Used in non-dictionary experiments for raw vector-based I/O.

Custom Dictionary (ROOT Classes)

Uses structured classes with ClassDef for ROOT's dictionary system, enabling object-oriented I/O.

```
struct RegionOfInterest {
size_t offset;
vector<float> data;
ClassDef(RegionOfInterest, 3)
};
```

Example: Used in dictionary experiments for type-safe, hierarchical data handling.

Results

Evaluation Metrics

- **Write Throughput:** Total events per second during RNTuple serialization.
- **Cold Read Time:** Latency for first access after file creation, reflecting raw I/O.
- **Warm Read Time:** Latency when data is cached, measuring memory locality effects.
- **Compressed File Size:** Total on-disk footprint post-write, accounting for RNTuple's column-wise compression.
- **Multi-thread Scaling:** Performance variation from 1 to 64 threads for write and read workloads.

AOS vs SOA: Write Performance Comparison

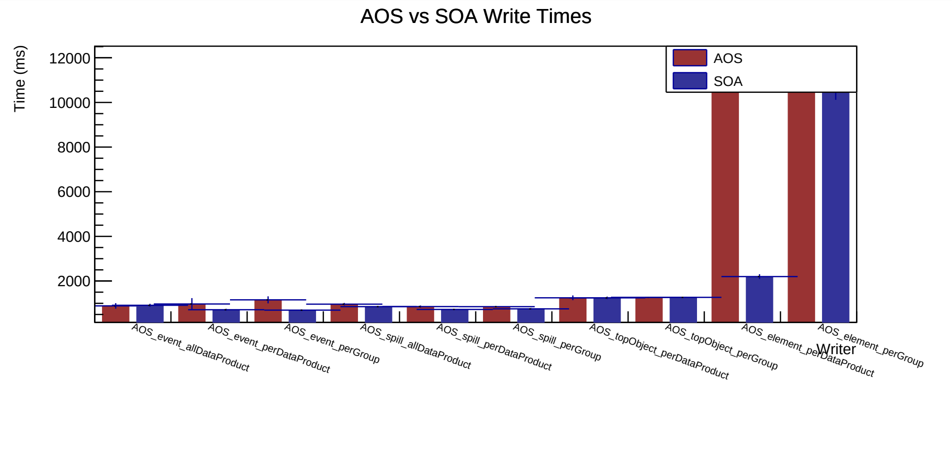

Figure 11: Write Performance Comparison: AOS vs SOA approaches across different data organization strategies. Red bars represent AOS (Array of Structures) performance, while blue bars show SOA (Structure of Arrays) performance.

CPU Time Overheads

Writer	A	B	C
`event_perGroup`	✓	✓	
`spill_perGroup`	✓	✓	✓
`element_perData`	✓	✓	
`topObject_perData`		✓	
`event_perData`		✓	
`spill_perData`		✓	✓

- **A – ROI flattening:** dominant for *element* and *perGroup* writers.
- **B – Multiple NTuples:** extra `Fill`/Flush cycles & mutex contention.
- **C – Spill re-partitioning:** additional work unique to *spill* writers.

AOS vs SOA: Cold Read Performance Comparison

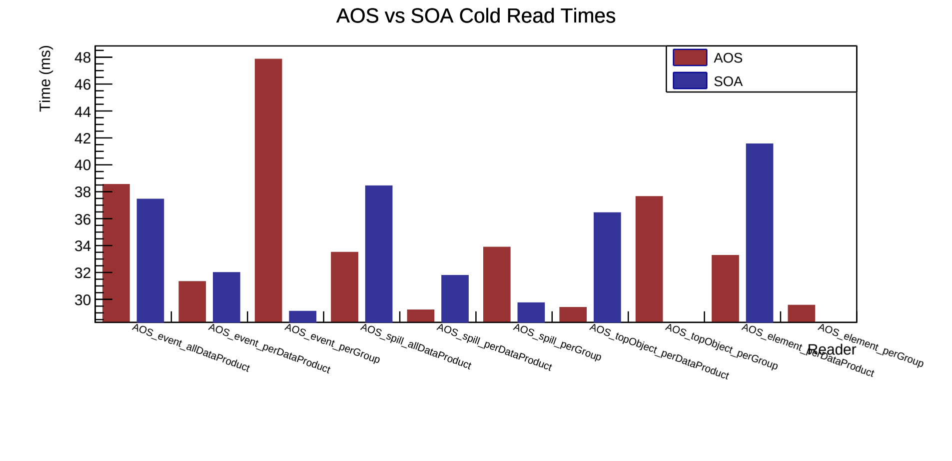

Figure 12: Cold Read Performance Comparison: Initial read times for AOS vs SOA implementations.

AOS vs SOA: Warm Read Performance Comparison

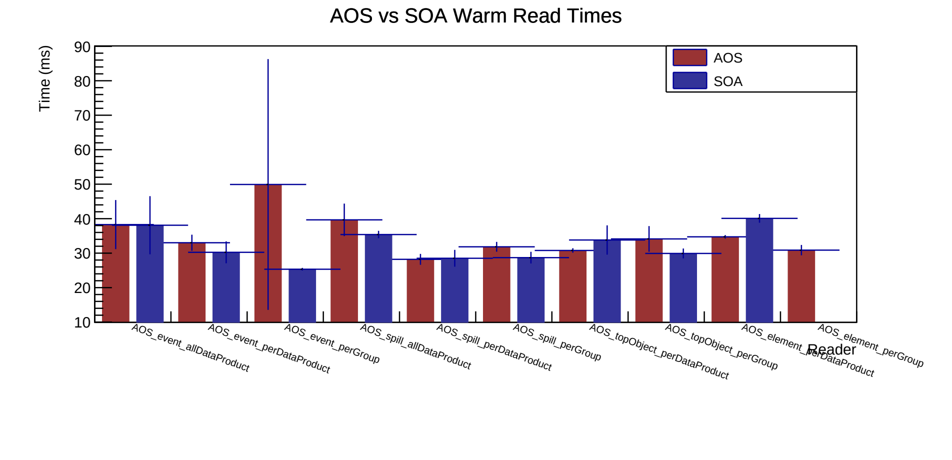

Figure 13: Warm Read Performance Comparison: Subsequent read times for AOS vs SOA implementations.

AOS vs SOA: File Size Comparison

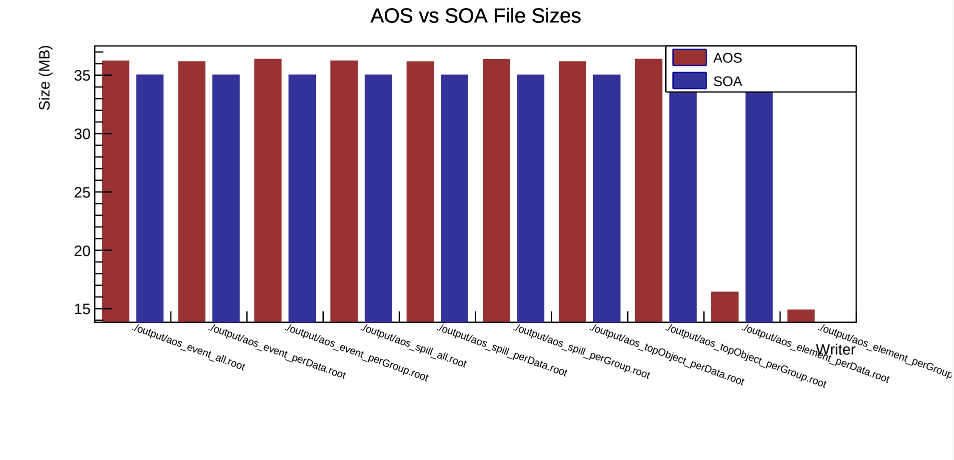

Figure 14: File Size Comparison: Storage efficiency of AOS vs SOA approaches.

File Size Insights

Writer variant	Size (% of most)
`aos_element_perData.root`	47%
`soa_element_perData.root`	100%
`aos_element_perGroup.root`	42%
`soa_element_perGroup.root`	39%
`aos_event_* / aos_spill_*`	∼103%
`soa_event_* / soa_spill_*`	100%

Key Take-aways

- Deep nesting & high row counts double basket overhead (offset tables, headers, CRC).
- Flattened `perGroup` writers cut size roughly in half by removing ROI nesting.

Trade-offs

Trade-off Analysis

Future Considerations

References i

[1] DUNE Collaboration, “Deep Underground Neutrino Experiment Technical Design Report–VolumeII: DUNE Physics,” 2020, Sec.2.6.

[2] DUNE Collaboration, “Data Acquisition System for the DUNE Far Detector,” IEEE NSS/MIC Proc., 2023.

Thank you!

Questions?