

Design and Implementation of Network Performance Aware Applications Using SAGA and Cactus

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Abstract—This paper demonstrates the use of appropriate programming abstractions – SAGA and Cactus – that facilitate the development of applications for distributed infrastructure. SAGA provides a high-level programming interface to Grid-functionality; Cactus is an extensible, component based framework for scientific applications. We show how SAGA can be integrated with Cactus to develop simple, useful and easily extensible applications that can be deployed on a wide variety of distributed infrastructure, independent of the details of the resources. Our model application can gather and analyze network performance data and migrate across heterogeneous resources. We outline the architecture of our application and discuss how it imparts important features required of eScience applications. As a proof-of-concept, we present details of the successful deployment of our application over distinct and heterogeneous Grids and present the network performance data gathered. We also discuss several interesting use cases for such an application – which can be used either as stand-alone network diagnostic agent, or in conjunction with more complex scientific applications.

I. INTRODUCTION

A critical component in the original definition of e-Science by John Taylor, is the notion of an e-Infrastructure that will enable novel and different research [1]. Conversely, e-Science applications must be able to utilize e-Infrastructure – whether sophisticated services, or the next generation networks or customized supercomputers – to perform better, faster and different domain specific research [2], [3]. But can applications be easily developed to exploit e-Infrastructure in ways that were not possible before and thus be used to perform “novel” (better, faster and different) research? Such e-Infrastructure, almost by definition, is dynamic – changing in both qualitative and quantitative aspects. Thus the question is how can we design and develop e-Science applications, that on the one hand are not limited by the complexity of e-Infrastructure, while on the other hand are immune to the evolving nature of such infrastructure?

There are several plausible solutions to the above conundrum, but arguably one of the most significant is the need for programming abstractions that enable the easy creation of applications that are independent of the details of the underlying infrastructure. In other words, the ability to develop novel applications that can be explicitly created and programmed to harness features provided by the e-infrastructure is critical. It is generally accepted that there exist rather limited support for the development of such distributed applications, in particular high-level programming abstractions that could facilitate the development of such applications are missing.

SAGA is a simple high-level programming abstraction that provides some of these requirements. It has been compared to the MPI [4] for Grid Programming, in that SAGA provides

simplified method calls at the right level of abstraction for the most commonly required Grid-functionality. In addition to being simple, an additional critical feature of SAGA is that it is on the road to becoming a community standard, thus strengthening the analogy with MPI. SAGA in conjunction with Cactus – which is a component based framework that enables the creation of modular parallel and distributed applications – provides an appropriately layered abstraction that enables the creation of middleware independent applications. The SAGA-Cactus approach is consistent with the central tenet of an effective e-Infrastructure as outlined in Ref. [3]: the e-Science community should focus on building higher-level services specific to the application domain, while responsibility for the design of the basic components of a reliable underlying infrastructure is left to the IT industry.

In this paper, we report on the development of a network-centric application using SAGA and Cactus, that is capable of acquiring application-specific network characteristic data. This data can be analyzed by the application to dynamically determine the optimal set of resources to utilize, and having done so is capable of migrating to the optimal set of resources. This application can be deployed on any resource independent of the middleware stack. All that is required is support for SAGA *adaptors* – the middleware specific glue layer that enables the middleware to parse the appropriate SAGA function calls and implement the correct functionality. As SAGA becomes a standard [5], [6], [7] there will be increased willingness on the part of middleware developers and resource providers to provide these adaptors to the application community. Additionally, as the deployment of SAGA and required adaptors becomes wider (pervasive) and deeper (greater functionality), there is an increased incentive for application developers to use SAGA.

The highlights of this paper are:

Demonstrate the usefulness of SAGA for Grid application development: SAGA provides a high-level programming interface to Grid functionality, and thus presents arguably, for the first time ever, the ability to develop complete and sophisticated applications using simple Grid function calls. This paper demonstrates the utility of SAGA for creating applications that can perform across dynamic and heterogeneous infrastructure.

Integrate SAGA and Cactus: Cactus has a proven track record of enabling high-performance application with novel functionality [8], [9]. Thus it is natural that we try to utilize the many important and interesting features that it provides for developing novel distributed e-Science applications. As alluded to, we do so by interfacing SAGA with Cactus and thus are able to draw on the many advantages of using SAGA

function calls from within a Cactus application. The result is the first application that uses these two important application-level abstraction(s) to create a truly distributed application.¹

Utilize the advantages of proper programming abstractions: Although we focus on a specific application – gathering network characteristics for a Poisson Equation solver and migrating the application – thanks to the architecture and abstractions used, similar functionality can be trivially incorporated in more sophisticated and complex applications.

An effective e-Science application: The application we developed using SAGA and Cactus, although simple is a meaningful and useful e-Science application. We will establish this fact by collecting and analyzing network performance characteristics across heterogeneous infrastructure – using SAGA function calls. In addition to providing a core motivation, we will discuss several use cases that can benefit from simple extensions and generalizations of the application we develop.

The outline of the paper is as follows: In the next section we describe the details of the components that are used to develop the application that we have developed to monitor network characteristics using SAGA and Cactus, and provide both the motivation for the specific application as well as several use case(s) for the (generalized version of the) application. This section provides details of the algorithm that the application uses to spawn itself onto a set of resources. In Section III, we discuss the architecture of the application. Section IV provides a brief description of the heterogeneous Infrastructure (test-bed) that we use to deploy this application. Finally we present the data collected by this application and some simple analysis in Section V.

II. APPLICATION: DESCRIPTION AND MOTIVATION

A. Application Outline

The aim of our model application is to show the potential and ease of use of a SAGA-enabled Cactus framework application. Our application consists of a exemplary distributed simulation that uses the added SAGA functionality to dynamically determine its ideal migration target based on ad-hoc and statistical network characteristics and to migrate itself in a heterogeneous Grid environment. Although this a model application it can be easily adapted to more complex scientific applications. Furthermore, our model application can be used as an autonomous benchmarking agent for Grid resources. In this section we briefly describe SAGA and the Cactus framework and discuss our motivation to use SAGA to incorporate high-level Grid functionality into Cactus.

1) *SAGA: The Simple API for Grid Applications (SAGA)* is an API standardization effort within the Open Grid Forum (OGF) [10] – an international committee that coordinates the standardization of Grid middleware and architectures. SAGA provides a simple, POSIX-style API to the most common Grid functions at a sufficiently high-level of abstraction so as to

¹It is interesting to note that although we use the Cactus framework, in principle, Cactus can be swapped for any framework which provides similar levels of abstraction and functionality and which is consistent with the common component architecture.

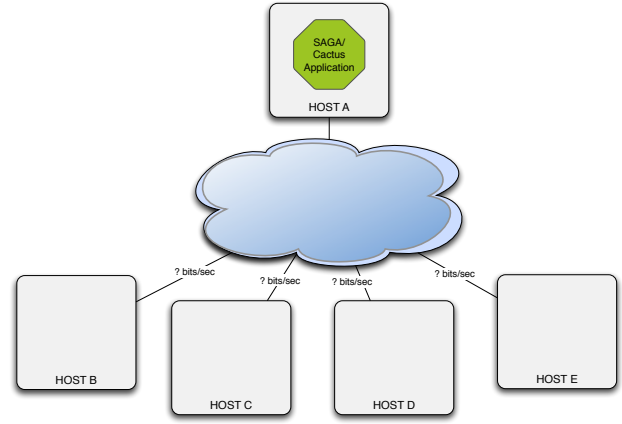


Fig. 1: The model application is a distributed simulation that uses ad-hoc network measurement and collected network statistics to determine its ideal migration target within a heterogeneous Grid environment.

be able to be independent of the diverse and dynamic Grid environments. The SAGA specification defines interfaces for the most common Grid-programming functions grouped as a set of functional packages. Version 1.0 [7] of the specification has been submitted to the OGF editorial pipeline and is currently under review. It defines the following packages:

- File package - provides methods for accessing local and remote filesystems, browsing directories, moving, copying, and deleting files, setting access permissions, as well as zero-copy reading and writing
- Replica package - provides methods for replica management such as browsing logical filesystems, moving, copying, deleting logical entries, adding and removing physical files from a logical file entry, and search logical files based on attribute sets.
- Job package - provides methods for describing, submitting, monitoring, and controlling local and remote jobs. Many parts of this package were derived from the largely adopted DRMAA [11] specification.
- Stream package - provides methods for authenticated local and remote socket connections with hooks to support authorization and encryption schemes.
- RPC package - is an implementation of the GGF GridRPC API [12] definition and provides methods for unified remote procedure calls.

The two critical aspects of SAGA are its *simplicity* of use and the fact that it is well on the road to becoming a community *standard*. It is important to note, that these two properties are provide the added value of using SAGA for Grid application development. Simplicity arises from being able to limit the scope to only the most common and important grid-functionality required by applications. There a major advantages arising from its simplicity and imminent standardization. Standardization represents the fact that the

interface is derived from a wide-range of applications using a collaborative approach and the output of which is endorsed by the broader community.

For our current work we incorporated the SAGA C++ reference implementation [13] into the Cactus Code Framework to provide the needed Grid programming functionality. The SAGA C++ reference implementation is being developed in close conjunction with the OGF standard. Furthermore, our C++ implementation is the basis for the development of the SAGA C++ language binding specification currently going on at OGF, ensuring full conformance with the main SAGA API specification. The current 0.6 release implements all functional packages described above as well as an additional Advert-service package which will most-likely be incorporated into a future version of the OGF standard. The available Grid-middleware bindings (adaptors) delivered with current 0.6 release of the SAGA C++ reference implementation comprise a complete set of local adaptors, an SQLite3 and PostgreSQL advert-service adaptor, and Globus preWS adaptors for the file (GridFTP) and job (GRAM2) package.

2) *The Cactus Code* [14]: Cactus [15] is a framework for high performance scientific computing designed for scientists and engineers to develop and run codes for solving complex problems. Developing code for high performance parallel machines has many challenges including scalability, efficiency (for computation, communication and input/output), portability and flexibility. Frameworks such as Cactus allow scientists and engineers to develop modules which can then be used together with modules written by other researchers to solve complex computational problems. The framework provides tools ranging from basic computational building blocks to complete toolkits that can be used to solve complex problems in astrophysics, computational fluid dynamics or other disciplines. Tools developed in the Cactus Code framework run on a wide range of architectures including desktop PC's, supercomputers and computational Grids. Cactus and its associated toolkits are publicly available for download from the Cactus Code website.

From an architectural standpoint, the Cactus Code framework consists of a central part (the "flesh") and code modules ("thorns"). The flesh serves as a module manager, scheduling the routines of the thorns and passing data between thorns. Thorns perform tasks ranging from setting up the computational grid, decomposing the computational grid for parallel processing, providing boundary and initial conditions, communication of data from one processor to another, solving partial differential equations to input and output and visualization streaming. There are code modules that provide simulation control tools, such as the HTTPD thorn that sets up a web server for the simulation and allows researchers to control a simulation or view sample output from a web interface. Thorns can also provide custom developed scientific or engineering applications, such as computational fluid dynamics or gravitational physics.

Features of Cactus which make it particularly suited to take advantage of a Grid environment include its portability,

architecture independent checkpoint and restart capabilities, steering interface, and a well designed interface in the flesh for providing information about grid variables, scheduling, parameters and so on.

Cactus has been a driving application for many Grid computing projects. An early experiment in 2000 called the Cactus Worm [16] showed how any Cactus application could be autonomously migrated around the resources of the eGrid in Europe simply by adding a new thorn which used the Globus MDS, GRAM and GridFTP APIs to access Grid capabilities. A later collaboration with the GRADS project added dynamic capabilities for resource selection and contract negotiation [17]. These experiences led to the EU GridLab project which experimented with Cactus migration as a driving scenario [18].

Cactus was also used for early experiments in metacomputing, showing how incorporating adaptive techniques into the Cactus driver layer, such as dynamic load balancing, configuration of ghostzones, and use of data compression could lead to acceptable scaling for large MPI applications across multiple supercomputers. This work was awarded the Gordon Bell prize in 2001 [8].

3) *Why SAGA and Cactus?*: Because of the modular structure of Cactus, any functionality provided by a specific thorn is immediately available to any of the other thorns in the configuration. For this reason we implemented a set of new Cactus thorns providing an extensible set of functions allowing the collection of netperf [19] based network performance metrics. Additionally, the extensible nature of this set of thorns permits additional metrics for any Cactus based application in the future. To integrate SAGA functionality into Cactus, a SAGA thorn was developed that provides the basic SAGA installation information (header files, libraries etc.) to the thorns that require SAGA capabilities. SAGA provides different packages with a consistent and uniform flavor, thus implementing thorns that have different functionality (performance measurement and migrate thorns) using different SAGA packages is preferable. Last but not least, using SAGA and Cactus enables applications to specify and customize the network performance characteristics that it needs; as we shall see later, the ability to do so is a very useful feature.

B. Motivation: Automated Checkpoint and Transfer of Applications:

Cactus black hole runs can last many days while queues typically last much less than one day. Hence a mechanism to automatically migrate a simulation to another machine is useful. With changing resource requirements during a simulation (as is the case with adaptive mesh refinement) a mechanism which can take advantage of faster, cheaper or more powerful machines is even more advantageous than simple migration. As the primary Cactus simulation starts, it progresses through the schedule of the routines in the configuration. One of these routines regularly checks for the time left for the simulation in the queue. Once that time is near a certain limit, usually a value set by the user, a checkpoint of the simulation is

forced and the simulation termination routines are called. Checkpoint files can vary in size from a few Gigabytes to a few TeraBytes and generally depend on the size of the problem being solved. Blackhole Cactus simulations run on up to thousands of processors and checkpoint to around 500 MegaBytes per processor [20] [21] [22]. With many terabytes of data that need to be transferred, the knowledge of which resources can be readied first will be important.

C. Additional Use Cases

We present three different usage scenarios; the first two represent classes of application, while the third is related to the specific case of remote visualization on optical lightpaths. We illustrate how all three use cases can benefit greatly from our model applications or minor variants thereof.

1) *Tightly-Coupled Applications*: We pose the following questions: If a tightly-coupled application, say a distributed MPI code, had N potential resources to choose from, which M should it choose based upon network performance connecting those M resources? As a distributed MPI applications, requires all-to-all communication, if we choose M out of N resources, then there are $\frac{N!}{M!(N-M)!}$ possible combinations. Which of these combinations will have the best network performance and thus how to choose the best M out of N resources [23]. This is a problem that has been encountered – admittedly so far with small values of M and N , but soon with M and N sufficiently large that simple (non-scalable) solutions adopted so far (e.g., phoning system administrators) will not work.

Given a fixed partition scheme, the general problem of how to distribute an application over M resources is a non-trivial one. There are potentially two distinct, orthogonal issues that need to be considered: choosing resources that provide optimal scheduling versus optimal distribution (network performance). It is possible that the M resources to choose are not necessarily the optimal M to choose from a scheduling perspective, i.e., it is plausible that they have very different queue load factors, or one or more of the M resources have the longest wait times. Resolving this coupled problem is not within scope of this paper - it requires extension to the information services that SAGA provides currently, so as to interact additionally with something like the Network Weather Service [24], [25], [26]. But assuming that the M resources are computationally equal, the problem then becomes an issue of how to partition the problem such that communication is optimal.² As alluded to, the general formulation of the problems involves all-to-all communication, i.e., a fully-connected graph. Specific implementations however, could lead to graphs with less edges. Also, communication might require symmetrical or asymmetrical data transfer, i.e. not equally weighted edges. Either way, the ability to solve for an optimal configuration (based upon a fixed partition scheme) is trivially solved by a

²We are not interested in the general decomposition problem; as it is beyond the scope of this paper and we believe difficult to “generalize” to a range of applications; we will be concerned with the reduced problem, where the problem of interest is which M resources to choose such that the collective network performance is best.

thorn that can be capable of implementing algorithms for flow optimization on graphs, i.e. min-cut/max-flow [27].

Having determined which M resources to use, the way forward could be using a Grid co-allocator such as HARC [28]; that is, having identified the best M resources from a network performance perspective, we leave the co-scheduling of these M resources to HARC which is an implementation of Paxos (two-phase) Commit Algorithm. We will report on the interfacing of HARC with SAGA in the future.

2) *Loosely Coupled Applications*: Having focused on computationally-intensive applications for the tightly-coupled applications, we will take the opportunity to discuss data-centric examples for loosely coupled application. Specifically we will discuss data scheduling and placement jobs.

Stork [29], [30] is a specialized scheduler for data placement activities in heterogeneous environments. It elevates data placement activities to “first class citizens” on the Grid just like the computational jobs by enabling such data placement jobs to be queued, scheduled, monitored, managed, and even check-pointed. Importantly, it ensures that they complete successfully and without any human interaction.

When performing point-to-point transfers, Stork considers how to best tune-up the parameters of the underlying protocol it is using. For example, parameter values can change from protocol to protocol, i.e. for GridFTP they are: number of parallel streams, TCP buffer size and I/O block size. Stork currently uses existing external network monitoring tools to estimate these numbers for any given transfer. The PerfMatrix thorn can be easily generalized to permit experimentation with various protocols (e.g., TCP vs UDP vs UDT, GridFTP parameters) and parameters associated with these transport protocols. But a crucial feature of Stork is that it does not have an internal monitoring system that would enable it to determine network characteristic and thus make the network performance-based decisions that are most meaningful for the application at hand. Thus a logical next step is to create an interface such that Stork can trivially query and determine the network characteristics that it needs. In other words our model application can be used by Stork to make decisions about which resources to use for data placement.

3) *Distributed Visualization*:: The traditional visualization pipeline is: data source (which could be a computational simulation) feeds into a renderer which inputs into a display. Remote visualization could have one or all aspects of the pipeline located remotely.

It is not difficult to see that remote visualization – whether one large rendering problem is broken up and distributed or several “computational sources” feed one single renderer – is sensitive to network performance. Thus simple queries like, which M computational resources have the same (best?) network characteristics to the renderer?

Arguably the most common class of applications utilizing lightpaths are remote visualization applications [31]. Even though the QoS lightpaths might be specified upfront, when combining lightpaths, the end-to-end performance is often different from single point-to-point theoretical performance;

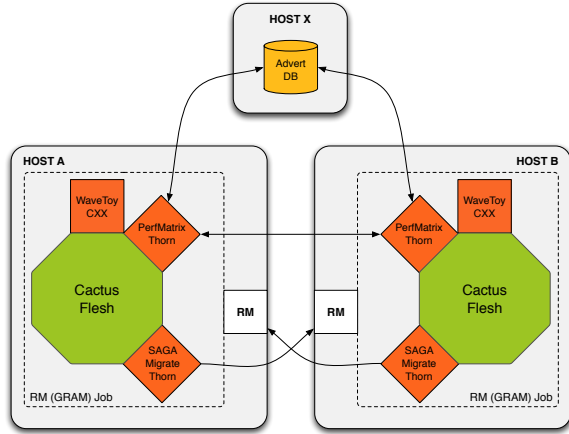


Fig. 2: The components of the application. The Cactus framework orchestrates the WaveToy thorn as an example for a distributed calculation, the NetPerf thorn for network performance measurement, and the SAGA Migration thorn for replication and migration. The Advert DB stores and archives the measurement results. Note that the application runs under the control of a Resource Manager (RM) using SAGA’s job management package.

thus the appropriate choice of the resources is useful.

Ref. [32] showed how the performance of high-performance realtime interactive applications is sensitive to network characteristics. When the transfer rate requirements are relatively low, Ref. [32] detailed how network latency and jitter can influence the performance of high-end simulations. Our application can be trivially generalized to acquire latency and jitter statistics and thus enable applications to make the decision about which machines to use for remote visualization and interactivity.

III. APPLICATION IMPLEMENTATION AND CONTROL FLOW

A. Application Architecture

The general architecture of the model application is based on the programming abstraction provided by the Cactus framework. A set of thorns that provide specific functionality are orchestrated by the Cactus flesh as depicted in Fig. 2. The novelty in this Cactus application is that the complete SAGA API is known by the Cactus build and deployment system and therewith transparently accessible from within any thorn. With the SAGA functionality available it was easy to implement Cactus thorns that can interact with remote resource managers (e.g. Globus GRAM2), copy, read, and write files from and to remote locations (e.g. Globus GridFTP), and access a remote PostgreSQL based advert service as logging and storage facility. The properties and implementations of the individual thorns are described in this section.

1) *WaveToy*: The WaveToy thorn implements the simulation of a 3D scalar field produced, for example by two orbiting sources. This is a simple thorn, but is part of a class of more complex systems, including Einstein’s field equations, Maxwell’s or Navier-Stokes equations.

2) *PerfMatrix*: The PerfMatrix thorn takes care of the intrinsic network performance measurement and persistent storage of the results. Currently, the implementation uses netperf [19] to measure unidirectional end-to-end throughput. Netperf is implemented as a simple client-server model consisting of two executables:

- netserver: the measurement endpoint waiting for incoming connections
- netperf: the initiator of a measurement connecting to a netserver endpoint

The PerfMatrix algorithm uses a list of computational resources which are potential migration targets for the application. After starting up, the initial application spawns itself onto all available hosts.³ Once all jobs have been launched, the original spawning application first establishes netperf connections with all the spawned applications; this is followed by the spawned applications establishing netperf connections amongst each other, following the scheme shown in Fig. 3. The job spawning, control, and I/O redirection is done entirely using SAGA’s job management package. Once a netperf process returns a throughput result, the PerfMatrix thorn uses the SAGA advert-service package to announce the result to a central PostgreSQL database which is also used as a centralized logging facility. After all netperf processes have finished and published their results, the database contains a host-to-host throughput performance matrix along with a timestamp which is available to other thorns as well as other applications.

3) *Advert-service database*: SAGA’s advert-service package describes a key-value based hierarchical attribute interface for storing arbitrary information. The currently available adaptor is capable to map these structures to an relational SQL schema and store them in local (SQLite) and remote (PostgreSQL) RDBMS.

SAGA’s advert-service offers a convenient way to simplify the difficult task of centralized data collection and logging within distributed applications. The advert structure consists of two hierarchical trees: one for logging (containing the host name, a timestamp, and the log message) and one for the throughput performance matrix (containing a timestamp and the matrix itself). Since every matrix is stored with a timestamp, every time the NetPerf thorn gets triggered, an additional matrix is added to the advert-service which leads to a growing stack of time-series data. This time-series can in turn be analyzed by the SAGAMigrate thorn to determine if and where to migrate. Since all data stored in the advert-service can be directly accessed using SAGA’s high-level interface, it is easy to browse the time-series data from other applications. A simple tool that generates boxplots (Fig. 4) from the performance matrices is proof of the simplicity.

4) *SAGAMigrate*: The SAGAMigrate thorn is a Cactus thorn written in C++ that uses SAGA functions (for example

³This approach is different from the original non-centralized spawning scheme shown in Fig. 3. The reason for our implementation using centralized spawning is the Globus Toolkit’s (4.0.5) inability of full credential forwarding.

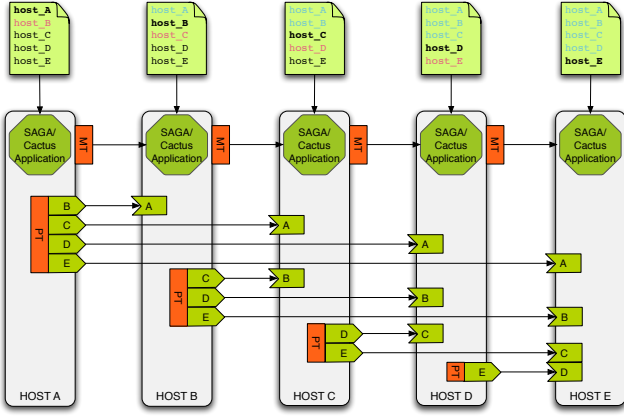


Fig. 3: The algorithm used by the PerfMatrix thorn. Based on a list of resources, the application spawns itself, launches Netperf endpoints and measures the throughput of all possible connections.

file.copy and job.description.create_job) to perform a simulation migration. SAGAMigrate copies a restart parameter file and the checkpoint file(s) from one machine to another (for example using the SAGA Globus adaptors).

B. Control Flow

PerfMatrix measures the bandwidth between the primary simulation host and a list of other candidate hosts. The results are stored in a table accessible to other thorns in the configuration. The SAGAMigrate thorn scans the table for the best candidate host to migrate to. Once the best candidate host is selected, the SAGAMigrate thorn copies the checkpoint and parameter files from the primary host to the best candidate host and restarts the Cactus simulation to pick up where it had left off on the primary host.

The current implementation has SAGAMigrate select the best host based on the maximum bandwidth connectivity to that host. Our current implementation uses SAGAMigrate parameters, variables that can be set at runtime and are steerable, to set the network benchmark executable. With steerable parameters, the user can decide at runtime what the best metric is and set the appropriate benchmark parameters in SAGAMigrate. With a more sophisticated performance metric the selection algorithm would require revision beyond the current “maximum bandwidth” approach, for example measurements to be made, by a query to the Network Weather Service [33], [34] or a small application benchmark to estimate time to completion.

Another use of SAGAMigrate is to move simulation results from one machine to another to run a different application. A typical scenario would be a Cactus simulation migrating its results to another machine and starting an analysis tool, a data mining tool or a visualization application. With a fully parameterized interface to both application and data, the current implementation of SAGAMigrate can perform basic workflow staging across machines and applications.

IV. INFRASTRUCTURE USED & DEPLOYMENT DETAILS

A. Infrastructure

We use two different Grids to deploy our application and collect data: LONI (a State-wide Grid) and GumboGrid (a LSU campus wide Grid).⁴

The Louisiana Optical Network Initiative [36] (LONI) is the result of the convergence of recent trends in computing: advances in the seamless coupling of distributed and heterogeneous resources along with remarkable advances in optical networking which now enables networks to be first-class resources, i.e. schedulable and with a given quality-of-service. In addition to providing dedicated lightpaths,⁵ LONI also provides an anticipated 85 teraflops of computational capacity. It has 5 IBM Power5 575 AIX machines installed at various university campuses in Louisiana, along with 6 Dell 5 teraflop Intel Linux machines housed at 6 LONI member institutions, and 1 Dell 50 teraflop Intel Linux machine (Queen Bee, currently ranked 23 on the Top 500 list). The infrastructure provided by LONI – dedicated lightpaths with powerful machines at the endpoints – opens the door for new applications with interesting functionality and features.

GumboGrid is a small campus-wide Grid built out of two development Beowulf style clusters, each of these having 5 nodes. Both clusters are located at different locations on the LSU campus and, do not share a special interconnection with each other. Interestingly, in measuring the network characteristics of the Grid resources used we have a hybrid of best-effort networks and dedicated lightpaths. Traffic between the LONI machines is over dedicated lightpaths, while traffic GumboGrid machines is over best-effort networks as is that traffic between the GumboGrid machines and between LONI.

B. Deployment

The deployment of applications across a pool of heterogeneous machines belonging to different Grids and organizations can be a difficult task. Different versions and availability of libraries and compilers makes every single machine a unique environment. Although it is technically possible to stage-in all required applications and libraries and even to compile the application sources on the fly using SAGA, we decided to deploy pre-build binaries on all machines since this exercise is not part of this work’s focus.

Since both, the Cactus framework and SAGA aim to be as platform-independent as possible, the deployment process was rather straightforward - the only noteworthy problems occurred during the initial attempt to build SAGA on LONI’s 64bit AIX 5L nodes. The problems were mainly caused by the IBM’s xIC++ compiler’s inability to handle C++ partial template instantiation, a broken AIX pthread implementation and the absence of usable debugging tools. Although the deployment

⁴We also deployed our application successfully on SURAGrid [35] but were unable to get performance data due to *unusual* firewall issues.

⁵A lightpath is a direct network path from one computer to another for which a permanent or temporary connection of fiber-optic cables is configured without using routers. Traffic on a lightpath does not encounter any other traffic. It therefore reaches its destination without congestion or contention.

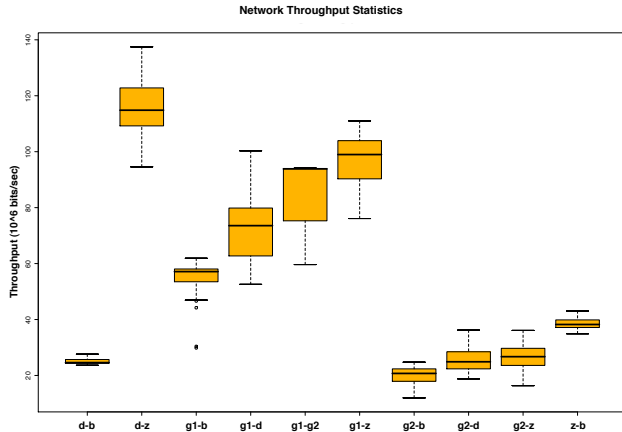


Fig. 4: Network throughput statistics extracted from the advert-service database after running the NetPerf thorn for 12 hours in 10 min. intervals. The letters on the X-axis stand for: d(ucky.loni.org), b(luedawg.loni.org), z(cke.loni.org), g1 (gg101.cct.lsu.edu), g2 (gg201.cct.lsu.edu)

process on AIX was very time consuming it eventually led to a vastly improved SAGA build system and a more conservative use of C++ template mechanisms which ensures the support of other non-standard compilers.

V. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The SAGAMigrate thorn from WaveToyCXX application parsed data gathered and based upon that was able to determine which machine to migrate too. The data gathered over twelve hours at a sampling interval of ten minutes between the five different resources is shown (using the Box-and-Whitney format) in Fig 4. As the data collected shows, our simple application can now serve as a stand-alone diagnostic tool for networks maintenance and monitoring. Simple extensions to the features of the network monitoring thorns, will make it a full-fledged network diagnostic tool to meet the needs of LONI for the different use cases discussed in Section II C.

The PerfMatrix thorn provides the capability to use either Time Series (historical) data or instantaneous real-time data for analysis. The ability to collect and analyze both sets is important: for relatively short-lived transactions real-time data is the more useful information in order to make placement decisions. For long-time transfers, say of the order of many terabytes or petabytes, the historical activity is more relevant, especially if network characteristics are bursty

It is important to mention that similar to solving the computational job-placement problems (which as alluded to, is a combination of the job-scheduling and transfer), solving the generalized data-placement problem – which in turn is a composition of data-scheduling and transfer – is non-trivial. Current network tests and parameterizations implemented in the PerfMatrix thorn are simple and, there are no attempts at dynamical optimization. Advanced modeling techniques such as Markov-State transition models and others derived

from Queuing Theory are required to solve the complete placement problem – for both the data and computational cases as discussed Sections II C. It is important to note that whatever the underlying prediction mechanism or model, it can be encapsulated within a thorn and used by any application. Arguably for the first time ever, it is possible to interface different performance and prediction model directly with the application, and not at the middleware level or external has been made possible.

A critical feature of this application which arise from using the correct abstractions (SAGA and Cactus) is *the ability to separate the computational logic from the distributed logic*. For example, jobs on different resources, establish connections pair wise and collect information which is published to an advert service through SAGA’s job-management package, whilst the PerfMatrix thorn remains independent of the distributed aspects of the set of netperf end-points. Additionally, beyond compiling the application code on the other resources, there is no need for the application to know about the details of the middleware/platform of the remote resources.

VI. FUTURE WORK AND CONCLUSION

We have demonstrated that with the use of high-level grid primitives and abstraction layers (SAGA and Cactus), development of grid aware applications is made much easier. Integrating SAGA in Cactus allows developers to focus on computational logic and algorithms and not have to worry about the details of implementing the grid functionality. To do this without these appropriately abstracted layers is difficult if not impossible. We developed PerfMatrix and SAGAMigrate thorns. The former acquires and analyzes application-specific network characteristics; the latter migrates applications respectively. We have also demonstrated how these thorns act as service applications, which can be easily interfaced with legacy applications and handle a wide range of performance requirements. As discussed in Section II, PerfMatrix and SAGAMigrate thorns can be easily extended to accommodate the requirements of a wide range of applications – tightly-coupled, loosely-coupled and remote-visualization.

In fact, efforts are now underway to extend and interface an appropriate PerfMatrix thorn for distributed MPI applications [23]. We have also begun work on creating the relevant PerfMatrix thorn, to determine an optimal resource configuration for remote visualization applications on LONI.

Our experience should serve as useful input to the community – resource providers and middleware developer - to support the development and deployment of SAGA Adaptors. We created a single set of Globus adaptors and deployed them on distinct Grids. Our application successfully utilized these adaptors, without any further customization, which goes to show that the widespread availability of SAGA adaptors is an important step towards the creation of distributed applications that can be universally deployed (i.e. independent of the details of the resource’s middleware and configuration detail). We hope to motivate both middleware developers and resource providers (such as TeraGrid, EGEE, etc.) to subscribe to the

SAGA philosophy and thereby contribute to the development of SAGA adaptors for their middleware stack as well as deploying these SAGA adaptors.

We also discussed how the deployment of this model application across two distinct Grids was trivial as it only required the deployment of the appropriate SAGA adaptors. Thus developing both applications and tools using SAGA is an effective mechanism for ensuring inter-operability across different middleware distributions – even at the application level – something that is arguably missing in current Grid Interoperation efforts [37]

There are many applications that need to use federated Grids [23], [37]. Utilizing SAGA to develop, or at least provide Grid-functionality is a useful strategy. Therefore, if the development and deployment of applications across federated grids is to be facilitated, SAGA adaptor activity – development and deployment, needs to be self-sustaining and thus requires explicit support, from both the middleware developers and resource providers.

The success of e-Science critically depends upon the availability of e-Infrastructure. But the promise of e-Science will be hollow without delivery of the applications and application-enabling paradigms and technology that can effectively utilize this new infrastructure. We believe SAGA is an important first step in this direction.

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