F(v2)

A complete system integration of stream-based IP flow-record querier

Vaibhav Bajpai

Masters Thesis

School of Engineering and Science Jacobs University Bremen Bremen, Germany

June 2012

ABSTRACT

Short summary of the contents in English. . .

CONTENTS

Ι	INTR	ODUCTION	1
1	TRA	AFFIC MEASUREMENT APPROACHES	3
	1.1	Capturing Packets	3
	1.2	Capturing Flows	3
	1.3	Remote Monitoring	3
	1.4	Remote Metering	3
2	FLO	W EXPORT PROTOCOLS	5
	2.1	NetFlow	5
	2.2	IPFIX	5
	2.3	sFlow	5
3	LAN	IGUAGES AND TOOLS	7
	3.1	SQL-based Query Languages	7
		3.1.1 NetFlow exports as relational DBMS	7
		3.1.2 Data Stream Management System	7
		3.1.3 Gigascope	7
		3.1.4 Tribeca	7
	3.2	Filtering Languages	7
		3.2.1 flow-tools	7
		3.2.2 nfdump	7
	3.3	Procedural Languages	7
		3.3.1 FlowScan	7
		3.3.2 Clustering NetFlow Exports	7
		3.3.3 SiLK Analysis Suite	7
II	STA	TE OF THE ART	9
4	FLO	WY	11
	4.1	Python Framework	11
		4.1.1 PyTables and PLY	11
		4.1.2 Records	11
		4.1.3 Parsers and Statements	12
	4.2	Processing Pipeline	12
		4.2.1 Splitter	12
		4.2.2 Filter	13
		4.2.3 Grouper	14
		4.2.4 Group-Filter	14
		4.2.5 Merger	15
		4.2.6 Ungrouper	16
	4.3	Future Outlook	16
		4.3.1 Reduced Copying	16
		4.3.2 Using PyTables in-kernel searches	17
		4.3.3 Multithreaded Merger	17
5	FLO	WY IMPROVEMENTS USING MAP/REDUCE	19

	5.1 Map/Reduce Frameworks		
		5.1.1 Apache Hadoop	19
		5.1.2 The Disco Project	19
	5.2	Parallelizing Flowy	20
		5.2.1 Slicing Inputs	20
		5.2.2 Flowy as a Map Function	22
6	FLO	wy 2.0	23
		6.o.3 Unmodified Parts	23
		6.o.4 Early Improvements	24
		6.0.5 Data Format	24
		6.o.6 Rewrite of Core Algorithms in C	24
	6.1	Benchmarks	26
	6.2	Future Outlook	26
		6.2.1 System Integration	26
		6.2.2 Searching with Trees	27
		6.2.3 Specialized Functions in Inner Loops	27
		6.2.4 Efficient Multithreading	27
		6.2.5 Additional Functionality	28
7	F		29
8	FLO	WY: APPLICATIONS	31
	8.1	Application Identification using Flow Signatures	31
	8.2	Cybermetrics: User Identification	33
	8.3	IPv6 Transition Failure Identification	35
	8.4	TCP level Spam Detection	37
	8.5	OpenFlow	37
III	MOT	FIVATION	39
IV	WOF	RK PLAN	41
9	DES	IGN	43
10	IMP	LEMENTATION	45
11	PER	FORMANCE EVALUATION	47
12	CON	ICLUSION	49
			.,
V	IMPL	LEMENTATION AND EVALUATION	51
13	DES	IGN	53
14	IMP	LEMENTATION	55
15	PER	FORMANCE EVALUATION	57
16	FUT	URE WORK	59
17	CON	ICLUSION	61
VI	ДРР	ENDIX	63
A			65
A APPENDIX 65			
BII	BLIO	GRAPHY	66

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1 Figure 2 Figure 3 Figure 4 Figure 5 Figure 6 Figure 7 Figure 8	Flowy: Processing Pipeline [1]	0 1 1 3 4
Figure 9	NAT64 Setup [4]	
LIST OF	TABLES	
Table 1	Runtime Breakup of Individual Stages [5] 2	
Table 2 Table 3	Flowy vs Flowy2 [5]	
LISTINGS	5	
Listing 1	Filter Rule Struct [5]	
Listing 2	Merger Rule Struct [5]	
Listing 3	Flowy2 vs flow-tools [5]	
Listing 4 Listing 5	Skype Application Signature [6]	
Listing 5 Listing 6	Branch A [6]	
Listing 7	Branch A [4]	
Listing 8	Branch B-C-D [4]	

Listing 9	Skype Failure Signature [4]	36
ACRONYM	15	
IPFIX Interne	t Protocol Flow Information Export	
HDF Hierarc	chical Data Format	
LALR Look-A	shead LR Parser	
PLY Python	Lex-Yacc	
HDFS Hadoop	p Distributed File System	
API Applica	ation Programming Interface	
CNF Conjun	active Normal Form	
SSDP Simple	Service Discovery Protocol	
UDP User Da	atagram Protocol	
NAT-PMP Netv	work Address Translation Port Mapping Protocol	
ccTLD Countr	y Code Top-Level Domain	

HTTP Hypertext Transfer Protocol

Part I

INTRODUCTION

You can put some informational part preamble text here



TRAFFIC MEASUREMENT APPROACHES

- 1.1 CAPTURING PACKETS
- 1.2 CAPTURING FLOWS
- 1.3 REMOTE MONITORING
- 1.4 REMOTE METERING



FLOW EXPORT PROTOCOLS

- 2.1 NETFLOW
- 2.2 IPFIX
- 2.3 SFLOW



LANGUAGES AND TOOLS

- 3.1 SQL-BASED QUERY LANGUAGES
- 3.1.1 *NetFlow exports as relational DBMS*
- 3.1.2 Data Stream Management System
- 3.1.3 Gigascope
- 3.1.4 Tribeca
- 3.2 FILTERING LANGUAGES
- 3.2.1 *flow-tools*
- 3.2.2 *nfdump*
- 3.3 PROCEDURAL LANGUAGES
- 3.3.1 FlowScan
- 3.3.2 Clustering NetFlow Exports
- 3.3.3 SiLK Analysis Suite



Part II

STATE OF THE ART

You can put some informational part preamble text here



Flowy [7, 8] is the first prototype implementation of a stream-based flow record query language [9, 1, 10]. The query language allows to describe patterns in flow-records in a declarative and orthogonal fashion, making it easy to read and flexible enough to describe complex relationships among a given set of flows.

4.1 PYTHON FRAMEWORK

Flowy is written in Python. The framework is subdivided into two main modules: the validator module and the execution module. The validator module is used for syntax checking and interconnecting of all the stages of the processing pipeline and the execution module is used to perform actions at each stage of the runtime operation.

4.1.1 PyTables and PLY

Flowy uses PyTables [11] to store the flow-records. PyTables is built on top of the Hierarchical Data Format (HDF) library and can exploit the hierarchical nature of the flow-records to efficiently handle large amounts of flow data. The pytables module provides methods to read/write to PyTables files. The FlowRecordsTable class instance within the module exposes an iterator interface over the records stored in the HDF file. The GroupsExpander class instance within the same module on the other hand exposes an iterator interface over the group records and facilitates ungrouping to flow records.

In addition, Flowy uses Python Lex-Yacc (PLY) for generating a Look-Ahead LR Parser (LALR) parser and providing extensive input validation, error reporting and validation on the execution modules.

4.1.2 Records

Flow-records are the principal unit of data exchange throughout Flowy's processing pipeline. The prototype implementation allows the Record class (defined in the record module) to be dynamically generated using get_record_class(...) allowing future implementations to easily plug in support for Internet Protocol Flow Information Export (IPFIX) or even newer versions of NetFlow [12] exports. The FlowToolsReader class instance (defined in ftreader module) provides an iterator over the records defined in flow-tools format.

This can be plugged into the RecordReader class instance (defined in record module) to instantly get Record class instances.

4.1.3 Parsers and Statements

The parser module holds definitions for the lexer and parser. The statements when parsed are implicitly converted into instances of classes defined in the statement module. The instances contain meta-information about the parsed statement such as the values, line numbers and sub-statements (if any).

4.2 PROCESSING PIPELINE

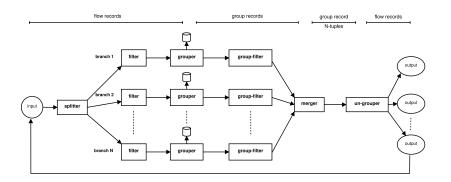


Figure 1: Flowy: Processing Pipeline [1]

The pipeline consists of a number of independent processing elements that are connected to one another using UNIX-based pipes. Each element receives the content from the previous pipe, performs an operation and pushes it to the next element in the pipeline. Figure 1 shows an overview of the processing pipeline. The flow record attributes used in this pipeline exactly correlate with the attributes defines in the IPFIX Information Model specified in RFC 5102 [13]. A complete description on the semantics of each element in the pipeline can be found in [9]

4.2.1 Splitter

The splitter takes the flow-records data as input in the flow-tools compatible format. It is responsible to duplicate the input data out to several branches without any processing whatsoever. This allows each of the branches to have an identical copy of the flow data to process it independently.

4.2.1.1 Splitter Implementation

The splitter module handles the duplication of the Record instances to separate branches. Instead of duplicating each flow-record to every branch (as specified in the specification), the implementation follows a pragmatic approach by filtering the records beforehand against all the defined filter rules to determine which branches a flow-record might end up in and saves this information in a record-mask tuple of boolean flags. The go(...) method in the Splitter class then iterates over all the (record, record-mask) pairs to dispatch the records to corresponding branches marked by their masks using the split(...) method. The class uses branch names to branch objects mapping to achieve the dispatch.

4.2.1.2 Splitter Validator

The splitter_validator module handles the splitter processing stage. The SplitterValidator class within the module uses the Parser and FilterValidator instances passed to it to create a Splitter instance and its child Branch instances.

4.2.2 Filter

The filter performs *absolute* filtering on the input flow-records data. The flow-records that pass the filtering criterion are forwarded to the grouper, the rest of the flow-records are dropped. The filter compares separate fields of a flow-record against either a constant value or a value on a different field of the *same* flow-record. The filter cannot *relatively* compare two different incoming flow-records

4.2.2.1 Filter Implementation

The filter module handles the filtering stage of the pipeline. Since in the implementation the filtering stage occurs before the splitting stage, a single Filter class instance suffices for all the branches. Within the filter module, each filtering statement is converted into a Rule class instance, against which the flow-records are matched. The Rule instances are constructed using the (branch mask, logical operator, arguments) tuple. After matching the records against the rules, the record's branch mask is set and is then used by the splitter to dispatch the records to the filtered branches.

4.2.2.2 Filter Validator

The filter_validator module handles the filter processing stage. The FilterValidator class within the module uses the Parser instance passed to it to create a Filter instance once the check on semantical constraints have passed. The constraints involve checking whether

records fields referenced in the filter definition exist, whether filters references in composite filter definitions exist and whether duplicate filter definitions are defined.

4.2.3 Grouper

The grouper performs aggregation of the input flow-records data. It consists of a number of rule modules that correspond to a specific subgroup. A flow-record in order to be a part of the group should be a part of at-least one subgroup. A flow-record can be a part of multiple subgroups within a group. In addition a flow-record cannot be part of multiple groups. The grouping rules can be either absolute or relative. The newly formed groups which are passed on to the group filter can also contain meta-information about the flow-records contained within the group using the aggregate clause defined as part of the grouper query.

4.2.3.1 Grouper Implementation

The grouper module handles the grouping of flow-records data. The Group class instance contains group-record's field information required for absolute filtering. It also contains the first and last records of the group required for relative filtering of the group-records. The AggrOp class instance handles the aggregation of group-records. The allowed aggregation operations are defined in aggr_operators module. Custom-defined aggregation operations are also supported using -aggr-import command line argument.

4.2.3.2 Grouper Validator

The grouper_validator module handles the grouper processing stage. The GrouperValidator class within the module uses the Parser and SplitterValidator instances passed to it to create a Grouper instance once the check on semantical constraints such as the presence of referenced names and non-duplicate names have passed. Three aggregation operations: union(rec_id), min(stime), max(etime) are added by default to each Grouper instance.

4.2.4 Group-Filter

The group-filter performs *absolute* filtering on the input group-records data. The group-records that pass the filtering criterion are forwarded to the merger, the rest of the group-records are dropped. The group-filter compares separate fields (or aggregated fields) of a flow-record against either a constant value or a value on a different field of the *same* flow-record. The group-filter cannot *relatively* compare two different incoming group-records

4.2.4.1 Group-Filter Implementation

The groupfilter module handles the filtering of group-records. The GroupFilter class within the module iterates over the flow-records within the group and applies filtering rules across them. The filtering rules reuse the Rule class from the filter module. The flow-records are then added to the time index and stored in a pytables file for further processing. For groups that do *not* have a group-filter defined for them, run through a AcceptGroupFilter class instance.

The timeindex module handles the mapping of the time intervals to the flow-records. The time index is used by the merger stage to learn about the records that satisfy the Allen relations. The add(...) method in the TimeIndex class is used to add new records to the time index. The get_interval_records(...) method on the other hand is used to retrieve records within a particular time interval.

4.2.4.2 Group-Filter Validator

The groupfilter_validator module handles the group-filter processing stage. The GroupFilterValidator class within the module uses the Parser and Grouper instances passed to it to create a GroupFilter instance. The check for the referenced fields is performed against the aggregate clause defined in grouper statements. The class instance uses the AcceptGroupFilter instance in case a branch does *not* have a group filter defined for it.

4.2.5 *Merger*

The merger performs relative filtering on the N-tuples of groups formed from the N stream of groups passed on from the group-filter as input. The merger rule module consists of a number of a submodules, where the output of the merger is the set difference of the output of the first submodule with the union of the output of the rest of the submodules. The relative filtering on the groups are applied to express timing and concurrency constraints using Allen interval algebra [14]

4.2.5.1 Merger Implementation

The merger module handles the merging of stream of groups passed as input. It is implemented as a nested branch loop organized in an alphabetical order where every branch is a separate for-loop over its records. During iteration, each branch loop executes the rules that matches the arguments defined in the group record tuple and subsequently passes them to the lower level for further processing. The Merger class represents the highest level branch loop and as such it must iterate over all of its records since it does not have any rules to

impose restrictions on the possible records. The MergerBranch on the other hand represents an ordinary branch loop with rules.

4.2.5.2 Merger Validator

The merger_validator module handles the merger processing stage. The MergerValidator class within the module uses the Parser and GroupFilterValidator instances passed to it to create a Merger instance once the check on referenced fields and branch names has passed. In addition, the validator also ensures semantic checks on Allen algebra such as whether the Allen relation arguments are correctly ordered, whether the Allen rules with the same set of arguments are connected by an OR and whether each branch loop is reachable by an Allen relation (or a chain of Allen relations) from the top level branch.

4.2.6 Ungrouper

The ungrouper unwraps the tuples of group-records into individual flow-records, ordered by their timestamps. The duplicate flow-records appearing from several group-records are eliminated and are sent as output only once.

4.2.6.1 *Ungrouper Implementation*

The ungrouper module handles the unwrapping of the group-records. The generation of flow-records can also be suppressed using the -no-records-ungroup command line option. The Ungrouper class instance is initialized using a merger file and an explicit export order.

4.2.6.2 Ungrouper Validator

The ungrouper_validator module handles the ungrouper processing stage. The UngrouperValidator class within the module uses the Parser and MergerValidator instances passed to it to create a Ungrouper instance. This processing stage does *not* require any validation.

4.3 FUTURE OUTLOOK

4.3.1 Reduced Copying

The reset(...) method of the BranchMask class performs a deepcopy on objects which significantly lowers performance. The invocation of this method can be inhibited by either removing the branch mask mechanism for simpler queries or removing it entirely. In addition avoiding usage of immutable containers (tuples) can also reduce internal copying during mutation.

4.3.2 Using PyTables in-kernel searches

PyTables can accelerate flow-records selection using a where iterator. The where clause is passed to the PyTables kernel which is written in C, therefore the selection can occur at C speed and only the filtered flow-records reach the Python space. This would require PyTables in-kernel search query support in the filtering rules and the pytables module would have to be extended to read from PyTables filtered flow-records.

4.3.3 Multithreaded Merger

The merger stage in the processing pipeline is currently the most computation intensive operation and is unfortunately single-threaded. As suggested in [8] it should be possible to handle the outermost branch loop using multiple threads in a non-blocking fashion to improve performance.



Flowy, although clearly setting itself apart with its additional functionality to query intricate patterns in the flows demonstrates relatively high execution times when compared to contemporary flow-processing tools. A recent study [2] revealed that a sample query run on small record set (around 250MB) took 19 minutes on Flowy as compared to 45 seconds on flow-tools. It, therefore is imperative that the application will benefit from distributed and parallel processing. To this end, recent efforts were made to investigate possibility of making Flowy Map/Reduce aware [2]

5.1 MAP/REDUCE FRAMEWORKS

Map/Reduce is a programming model for processing large data sets by automatically parallelizing the computation across large-scale clusters of machines [15]. It defines an abstraction scheme where the users specify the computation in terms of a map and reduce function and the underlying systems hides away the intricate details of parallelization, fault tolerance, data distribution and load balancing behind an Application Programming Interface (API).

5.1.1 Apache Hadoop

Apache Hadoop is a Map/Reduce Framework written in Java that exposes a simple programming API to distribute large scale processing across clusters of computers [16]. However in order to make Flowy play well with the framework, the implementation either has to use a Python wrapper around the Java API or translate the complete implementation to Java through Jython. Even more since Flowy uses HDF files for it's I/O processing, staging the HDF files properly in the Hadoop Distributed File System (HDFS) [17] and then later streaming them using Hadoop Streaming utility would still be an issue as suggested in [2]

5.1.2 The Disco Project

Disco is a distributed computing platform using the Map/Reduce framework for large-scale data intensive applications [18]. The core of the platform is written in Erlang and the standard library to interface with the core is written in Python. Since the map and reduce jobs can be easily written as Python functions and dispatched to the worker

threads in a pre-packaged format, it is less difficult to setup Disco to utilize Flowy as a map function. In addition, the usage of HDF files for I/O processing pose no additional modifications whatsoever since the input data files can be anywhere and supplied to the worker threads in absolute paths.

5.2 PARALLELIZING FLOWY



Figure 2: Parallelizing Flowy using Map/Reduce [2]

In an attempt to parallelize Flowy, it was run as a map function on a successful single node Disco installation as shown in 2. Although the setup on a multiple node cluster would be theoretically almost equivalent, Flowy has not yet been tested in such a scenario.

5.2.1 Slicing Inputs

When running several instances of Flowy, it is imperative to effectively slice the input flow-records data in such a way so as to minimize the redundancy in distribution of input. To achieve this, the semantics of the flow-query needs to be examined from the simplest to the most complex cases. However, it is also important to realize that as of now it is not possible to *leave* out any stage in the Flowy's processing pipeline and the following examination was based on such an assumption.

5.2.1.1 *Using* only *Filters*

A flow query that involves only the filtering stage of the processing pipeline can slice its input flow data by either adding explicit export timestamps to allow each branch to skip records or separate out the input flow data into multiple input files for each branch.

5.2.1.2 Using Groupers

A flow query that also involves groupers and group-filters cannot use static slice boundaries since the grouping rules can be either absolute or relative. As a result, Flowy needs to be made aware of slice boundaries by passing the timestamps as command line parameters. In such a scenario, each branch will skip the pre-slices, whereby the actual slices and the post-slices will be processed to create relevant groups as shown in figure 3. It is advisable to slice the flow-records at low traffic spots to avoid the risk of cutting the records belonging to the same group. The idea of skipping pre-slices and sweeping across

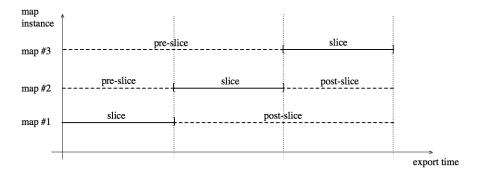


Figure 3: Slice Boundaries Aware Flowy [2]

post-slices can result in many fragmented redundant groups. These can be identified by the reduce function by removing the groups that are a proper subset of the previous group in the slice at the cost of additional complexity as shown in figure 4



Figure 4: Flowy: Redundant Groups [2]

5.2.1.3 Using Mergers

The relative dependency in the merger stage of the pipeline is even worse, since the comparison needs to take place between groups resulting from the output of separate map functions. This calls for inhibiting parallelism up to and including the group-filter stage. As

a result each worker thread would return back its filtered groups to the master node, which then would apply the rules of the merger stage to all the received groups at once in a reduce function. In such a scenario, although the branch with the longest runtime complexity will become the bottleneck for the merger, the overall runtime would still be dramatically reduced when the number of branches are large as suggested in [19]

5.2.2 Flowy as a Map Function

A Disco job function is created that contains the map/reduce function definitions and a location of an input file of flow-records data. A sliceIt(...) function within a newly defined sliceFileCreator module is used to create the input file. The function takes a HDF file and number of worker threads as input and writes out the slices in the input file by equally dividing HDF timespan by the number of worker threads.

In this way, the input file gets slice times for each worker thread in a separate line, which the Disco job function eventually reads to spawn a new map function with the slice times passed as arguments. The map function then starts an instance of Flowy and passes the slice times and the HDF file as command line parameters for processing.

This required modification to the flowy_exec module to add support for extra parameters. The filter stage of the pipeline was modified to allow for skipping of the pre-slices in the flow-records data. The grouper stage was modified as well to restrict creation of new groups that do *not* fall within the passed slice boundaries. However, the modification of the reduce function to work with the files pushed out by each Flowy instance of the map function to merge groups from each branch and eliminate duplicate records is left open.

In an attempt to make the first prototype implementation of Flowy comparable with the contemporary flow-record analysis tools, the substitution of the performance hit sections of the Python code was thought out. Flowy 2.0 [5] is the outcome of a complete rewrite of the core of the prototype implementation in C making it relatively faster in orders of magnitude.

no. of records	overall	filter	grouper	merger
103k	1177s	28s(2%)	240s(20%)	909s(77%)
337k	20875s	110s(1%)	2777s(13%)	17988s(86%)
656k	70035s	202s(0%)	8499s(12%)	61334s(87%)
868k	131578s	274s(0%)	15913s(12%)	115391s(87%)
1161k	234714s	1212s(1%)	25480s(11%)	208022s(88%)

Table 1: Runtime Breakup of Individual Stages [5]

The runtime breakup of individual stages of the processing pipeline as shown in 1 reveal that the grouper and merger incur a massive performance hit. A quick investigation hints towards usage of large deep nested loops in the merger with a worst-case $O(\mathfrak{n}^3)$ runtime complexity.

In addition, pushing the flow-records data from one stage of the pipeline to another involved deep copying of the whole flow data whereby a mere passing across of a reference across a pipeline in a branch would have sufficed. Similar behavior is visible when the grouper when passing group records saved the individual flow-records in a temporary location tagged with the groups and/or subgroups they belonged to.

The decision decision to use PyTables to read and write flow-records in HDF format also added to the complexity. Since, the input flow-records were most of the time in either flow-tools or nfdump file-formats, each time they had to be converted into HDF file formats prior to Flowy's execution which was unnecessary.

6.0.3 Unmodified Parts

The flow-querier parser written in PLY and the validators written for each stage of the processing pipeline that check for semantics correctness were left unmodified, since their execution time was invariant of the size of the input data and slightly varying on the query complexity in itself.

6.0.4 Early Improvements

Thread affinity masks were set for each new thread created to delegate the thread to a separate processor core. try/except blocks were narrowed down to only code that needed to be exception handled. A test-suite was developed with few sample queries and input traces to validate Flowy's results for regression analysis. A setup.py script was written to facilitate installation of Flowy and its dependencies and options.py was replaced with flowy.conf configuration file with the standard human-readable key-value pairs. The command line option handling was switched from optparse to argparse module and a switch was added for easy profiling. The profiling output was modified as well to allow standard tab delimiters which can be easily parsed by other tools. The flow query was also extended to allow file contents to be supplied using stdin. Variable names that are now part of Python identifiers were renamed.

A C library was written to parse and read/write flow-records in flow-tools compatible format. The C library was connected to the Python prototype using Cython [20][21]. This allowed the flow-records to be easily referenced by an identifier, thereby giving away the need to every time copy all the flow-records when moving ahead in the processing pipeline. Cython was used since it allowed to write C extensions in a Pythonic way by strong-typing variables, calling native C libraries and allowing usage of pointers and structs, thereby providing the best of both worlds [22].

6.0.5 Data Format

A custom C library was written to directly read/write data in the flow-tools format to provide a drop-in replacement for PyTables and overcome the overhead of format conversions. The library sequentially reads the complete flow-records into memory to support random access required for relative filtering. Each flow-record is stored in a char array and the offsets to each field are stored in a separate struct. The array of such records are indexed allowing fast retrieval in O(1) time. The C library is currently limited to support *only* flow-tools formats; nfdump file formats are yet to be supported.

6.o.6 Rewrite of Core Algorithms in C

A design decision was made to rewrite the entire processing pipeline in C. However, currently the core cannot parse the flow-query file, therefore the execution is triggered by a tedious manual filling of the structs by the contents of the query.

```
struct filter_rule {
1
2
     size_t field_offset;
     uint64_t value;
3
     uint64_t delta;
4
5
     bool (*func)(
       char *record,
6
7
       size_t field_offset,
8
       uint64_t value,
9
       uint64_t delta);
10
   };
```

Listing 1: Filter Rule Struct [5]

A filter stage struct is shown in listing 1. The field to be filtered is indicated using a field_offset and field_length in the char array of a records. The value to be compared against with is also supplied which can be either a static value or another field of a record. func is a function pointer to the operation that is to be carried out on a record whose record identifier is passed to it. The filter runs in O(n) time as it needs to traverse through all the records of the char array.

```
1
   struct merger_rule {
2
     size_t branch1;
     size_t field1;
3
4
     size_t branch2;
5
     size_t field2;
6
     uint64_t delta;
7
     bool (*func)(struct group *group1,
8
       size_t field1,
9
       struct group *group2,
10
       size_t field2,
       uint64_t delta);
11
   };
12
```

Listing 2: Merger Rule Struct [5]

Similarly, a merger stage struct is shown in listing 2. branch{1,2} are branch identifiers and field{1,2} are the aggregated field identifers in the order of aggregation. func is a function pointer pointing to the operation to be carried out. The merger runs in $O(n^k)$ time where k is the number of branches. The char arrays in each branch are disjoint since a record cannot be part of more than one group.

The current core implementation also strictly adheres to the processing pipeline shown in figure 1. As such, it is not currently possible to skip stages. In addition it is not currently possible to have more than

one merger or grouper in the flow-query or aggregate fields in the grouper module since char array storage is not possible.

6.1 BENCHMARKS

Number of records	Flowy	Flowy 2.0
103k	1177s	0.3s
337k	20875s	3.4s
656k	70035s	13s
868k	131578s	23s
1161k	234714s	86s

Table 2: Flowy vs Flowy2 [5]

A flow query with the union aggregations stripped off was used as a sample to compare the runtime performance of Flowy [8] with Flowy2 [5]. The benchmarks are shown in figure 2. It is conspicuous how well the replacement of the core algorithms from Python to C turned out to be.

```
1  $ time sh -c "flow-cat traces | flow-filter -P80"
2  $ time sh -c "flow-cat traces | ./flowy"
```

Listing 3: Flowy2 vs flow-tools [5]

In another test, Flowy2's functionality was reduced to absolute filtering to compare its performance with a state-of-the-art flow-tools analysis tool using 3. It turned out Flowy2 performed just as comparable if not better on an average.

6.2 FUTURE OUTLOOK

In a follow up to a commendable effort in making the Flowy prototype drastically improve by orders of magnitude, the author in [5] has suggested numerous areas of improvement to make the software fully functional again.

6.2.1 System Integration

The Python prototype is currently left unused. The idea is at this stage is to allow the Python prototype to parse and validate the flow query file which in turn would pass the contents to a Cython wrapper which on the fly will forward them to the core to properly fill in the structs.

At this point, the C core will process the query pipeline and eventually forward back the results to the Python prototype which it can use to display the results in a human friendly format.

6.2.2 Searching with Trees

The benchmarks performed in [5] had a complexity of $O(n^2)$ for the grouper and merger. This was when the number of branches in the pipeline was reduced to maximum of 2 and the flow-query had a single module for both the merger and grouper. With the current implementation, this complexity is deemed to increase exponentially as the number of records, branches and the grouper, merger modules in the flow-query increase. Therefore, having a search tree lookup for the grouper and merger stage would help bring the runtime costs down, whereby one of the fields will be traversed sequentially in O(n) time and for each field comparison will be performed by search tree lookups in $O(\log(n))$ time bringing down the complexity to $O(n\log(n))$. B+trees would essentially work in this case, since records can still be traversed sequentially along a list after a search tree lookup.

6.2.3 Specialized Functions in Inner Loops

The comparison operations are currently passed an offset and the length of the field type to be compared as shown in listings 1, 2. The length needs to be checked before making a cast to an appropriate type inside these functions. Such checks can be avoided by writing specialized functions for each combination of the field type (33) and supported operations (19) totaling to 20K functions. Such functions can be dynamically generated from the Python code and would take around 3MiB of space in memory as suggested in [5] which looks like worth the effort considering these functions are invoked from the innermost loops in each stage of the pipeline, and therefore squeezing such optimizations would go a long way in improving the C core.

6.2.4 Efficient Multithreading

The core C implementation currently has limited multithreading. Each branch in the pipeline runs on a separate thread and uses affinity masks to delegate the thread to a separate processor core. However, this implies that merger and ungrouper stages still remain single-threaded and the multithreaded utilization largely depends on the query being executed. The situation can be improved by writing a pthreads wrapper that auto detects the number of available cores, creates a appropriate size thread pool and equally divides the tasks among the threads in the pool. This would also lead to increased

complexity of managing mutual exclusion of shared memory and needs to be investigated.

6.2.5 Additional Functionality

The core C implementation currently can only parse flow-records in flow-tools and support for nfdump file formats is left out. The comparison (» and «) and aggregation (intersect) operations are not full blown and can be extended. The possibility to write the filters in Conjunctive Normal Form (CNF) form still needs to investigated.

7



FLOWY: APPLICATIONS

The developed stream-based flow-querier helped to underpin a number of recent research efforts to solve real-world application problems that were deemed difficult before. This was possible due to the power and flexibility of the flow-query language to suit itself from generic to specific needs thereby opening doors of innovation. This section documents such efforts that use the in-house flow query language as well as a few others that exploit the flow level characteristics of the traffic patterns in general.

8.1 APPLICATION IDENTIFICATION USING FLOW SIGNATURES

The idea behind this study was to identify applications using flow traces on a network by analyzing potential left-behind signatures that describe them [23, 6]. This was based on the hypothesis that each application type generates unique flow signatures that might work as a fingerprint feature. To achieve this, a collection of network traces were recorded from several users and subsequently analyzed. The identified signatures were formalized by writing flow queries that were executed on Flowy [7]. Several separate instances of the network traces were queried to evaluate the approach and come to a conclusion.

```
splitter S {}

splitter S {}

merger M {
    module m1 {
        branches A, B
        A.srcip = B.srcip
        A o B OR B o A
    }

export m1

splitter S {}

input" -> S
    branch A -> F_SSDP -> G_SSDP -> M
    S branch B -> F_NAT_PMP -> GF_NAT_PMP -> M
    M -> U -> "output"
```

Listing 4: Skype Application Signature [6]

A formalized Flowy query to identify Skype from the flow traces for an instance is described in listing 4. The filter, grouper and group-filter sections of each branch are shown separately in listings 6 and 5. Additional queries identifying variety of web browsers, mail clients, IM clients and media players can be found in [6].

```
filter F_SSDP {
    dstport = 1900
    port = protocol("UDP")
    dstip = 239.255.255.250
}

grouper G_SSDP {
    module g1 {
        srcip = scrip
        dstip = dstip
        srcport = srcport
    }
    aggregate srcip, sum(bytes) as B
}

groupfilter GF_SSDP {
    B = 321
}
```

```
filter F_NAT_PMP {
   dstport = 5351
   port = protocol("UDP")
}

grouper G_NAT_PMP {
   module g1 {
      srcip = scrip
      dstip = dstip
   }

aggregate srcip, sum(bytes) as B
}

groupfilter GF_NAT_PMP {
   B = 160
   }
```

Listing 5: Branch A [6]

Listing 6: Branch B [6]

The filter F_SSDP is used to identify the four identical User Datagram Protocol (UDP) multicast messages the client sends out using Simple Service Discovery Protocol (SSDP) [24]. Similarly F_NAT_PMP filter is used to identify four Network Address Translation Port Mapping Protocol (NAT-PMP) [25] messages sent over UDP. The groupers G_SSDP and G_NAT_PMP group together flow records with the same source and destination IP address and the aggregate clauses describe the meta information with unique source IP addresses for each group records along with the total bytes carried within each group. The meta information is used to further filter the group-records in GF_SSDP and GF_NAT_PMP modules.

UserID	Skype	Opera	Amarok	Chrome	Live
u0	~	0	×	0	0
u1	~	0	0	0	0
u2	0	0	0	0	0
u3	~	0	×	0	0
u4	0	0	0	0	0
u5	V	0	V	V	0
u6	0	0	0	0	0
u7	0	V	V	0	0
u8	0	0	0	0	0
u9	~	V	V	~	0

Table 3: Application Flow Signatures: Results [6]

The identification results obtained from the analysis of flow-traces from ten unique users are compiled together in table 3. The results demonstrate a success rate of 96% for the five applications tested. This study reveals that it is possible to identify applications from their network flow fingerprints and is a first step towards automating the complete process whereby machine learning techniques would be used to automatically generate flow-queries and identify new applications and even more so newer versions of the same application.

8.2 CYBERMETRICS: USER IDENTIFICATION

The idea of identification of users based on biometric patterns such as keystroke dynamics [26], mouse interactions [27] or activity cycles in online games [28] has been long known. This study takes the idea even further by using flow-record patterns as a characteristic (cybermetrics) to identify a user on a network [3, 29]. Such a cybermetric user identification can be used for the purpose of providing secure access, system administration and network management. The feature extraction module of the analyzer as shown in figure 5 uses three distinct feature sets that could possibly be used to identify a user from a flow-record trace.



Figure 5: Cybermetrics: Overview [3]

Initial research efforts started with identifying application signatures in flow-records in [23, 6] and became relevant because different people have different preferences in the applications they use and as such a set of applications in flow-records is a characteristic feature of a user. Flowy queries were formalized for four different set of applications and tested against a known set of users. The evaluation results of the derived queries as shown in table 3 demonstrated a strong evidence of presence (or absence) of applications and thereby provided an eventual marker for user identification.

application signatures



Figure 6: Geographical Preferences [3]

geographical preferences The authors also looked into the geographical affiliations of different users by analyzing the Country Code Top-Level Domain (ccTLD) of the browsed websites. They proposed a hypothesis that a user's origins strongly influences their browsing activity. The analysis of the results established that the top five visited ccTLDs constituted more than 85% of the overall number of a user's visits as shown in figure 6.

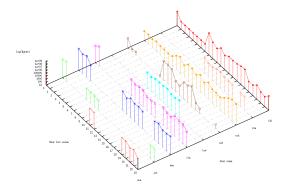


Figure 7: Daily Distributions for HTTP Traffic [3]

flow-record statistics

In the end, the authors introduced a proof-of-concept method of user differentiation based on statistical features. These features considered daily distributions of parameters that were based on different port numbers. For instance, figure 7 shows the daily distribution of different users based on their Hypertext Transfer Protocol (HTTP) traffic usage. It was also witnessed that the time duration also played a key role in the process of feature formation, whereby the number of longer flows increased with the duration and consequently resulted in higher cross-correlations as shown in figure 8



Figure 8: Cross Correlation of Traces with Varying Times [3]

This research is a first attempt to identify users based on their network flow fingerprints and the on-going effort is focussing on sophisticated machine learning techniques to learn behavioral patterns of known users to identify them in the future from their current network-flow traces.

8.3 IPV6 TRANSITION FAILURE IDENTIFICATION

The IPv4 address space depletion is upon us and has become more imminent in the last few years. While IPv6 can readily expand the extent of the Internet, deploying it alone is clearly not a solution today and hence there are a continuum of transitioning solutions that would help in this migration. In this study [4] we evaluated the compatibility of popular applications with such transitioning solutions: NAT64 [30] and Dual-Stack Lite [31]. The goal was to find potential failures by identifying application failure signatures left behind in the flow-record traces using Flowy. These failure signatures could later be used by service providers to automate the detection and eventually shorten the deployment verification cycle.



Figure 9: NAT64 Setup [4]

In the NAT64 deployment testbed as shown in figure 9, the authors witnessed failure in 3 applications: Skype, OpenVPN and Transmission. Flowy queries were defined to establish failure signatures for each application. A formalized Flowy query to identify Skype failure signature for an instance is described in listing 9. The filter sections of each branch are shown separately in listings 7 and 8.

application operation under NAT64

```
filter f-mDNS {
   dstport = 5353
   srcport = 5353
   dstip = 224.0.0.251
   duration > 1 sec
   duration < 5 sec
}</pre>
```

Listing 7: Branch A [4]

```
filter f-login1 {
   dstport = 443
   duration > 55 sec
   duration < 59 sec
}</pre>
```

Listing 8: Branch B-C-D [4]

Filter f-mDNS is used to filter multicast messages used by Skype to discover clients in the link-local network sent to the destination IP address-port combination (224.0.0.251:5353). Filter f-login1 is used

skype failure signature to filter 3 unsuccessful attempts to contact the login server each in a separate branch. The source port and the duration increases with decreasing number of packets for each subsequent flow.

```
splitter S {}
 3
     grouper g-login1 {
        module g1 {
           srcport = srcport
           dstip = dstip
dstport = dstport
10
        aggregate srcip, dstip, srcport, td,
12
        sum(packets) as pckt-sum, count(rec_id) as n
13
14
15
     merger M {
        branches mDNS, LOGIN1, LOGIN2, LOGIN3
16
18
        LOGIN1.srcip = LOGIN2.srcip
        LOGIN2.srcip = LOGIN3.srcip
LOGIN1.dstip = LOGIN2.dstip
LOGIN2.dstip = LOGIN3.dstip
19
21
        LOGIN1.srcport = LOGIN2.srcport rdelta 1
LOGIN2.srcport = LOGIN3.srcport rdelta 1
23
        LOGIN1.pckt-sum > LOGIN2.pckt-sum
26
        LOGIN2.pckt-sum > LOGIN3.pckt-sum
28
29
        mDNS.td < LOGIN1.td
        mDNS.td < LOGIN2.td
31
        mDNS.td < LOGIN3.td
32
33
        mDNS < LOGIN1
        mDNS < LOGIN2
35
        mDNS < LOGIN3
36
     "input"-> S
S br mDNS -> f-mDNS -> g-mDNS -> gf-mDNS -> M
S br LOGIN1 -> f-login1 -> g-login1 -> gf-login1 -> M
S br LOGIN2 -> f-login2 -> g-login2 -> gf-login2 -> M
S br LOGIN3 -> f-login3 -> g-login3 -> gf-login3 -> M
39
```

Listing 9: Skype Failure Signature [4]

The groupers count the number of packets in each flow-records using pckt-sum which is later utilized by the merger stage to distinguish the branches. The group-filter stage finally is used to filter out groups with more than one record.

The NAT64 translation works when the applications running on the IPv6-only host explicitly make DNS requests to allow DNS64 to capture and masquerade them as fake IPv6 addresses that are eventually sent to the NAT64 box. If the applications use IPv4 literals to contact the servers, DNS64 is skipped and therefore NAT64 cannot perform the translation. This was reason behind the failure of the other two applications (OpenVPN and Transmission).

This study sets across a baseline to automate the failure detection by formalizing queries against flow-records. While a more exhaustive study encompassing wider set of applications still needs to be carried out, it is imperative that this unique approach is not just limited to IPv6 transition technologies, but can be utilized to identify failures in more generic cases.

failure when using IPv4 literals

- 8.4 TCP LEVEL SPAM DETECTION
- 8.5 OPENFLOW



Part III MOTIVATION



Part IV

WORK PLAN

You can put some informational part preamble text here



DESIGN



IMPLEMENTATION



PERFORMANCE EVALUATION





Part V

IMPLEMENTATION AND EVALUATION

You can put some informational part preamble text here



DESIGN





PERFORMANCE EVALUATION





CONCLUSION



Part VI

APPENDIX





APPENDIX

Put your appendix here.



- [1] V. Marinov and J. Schönwälder, "Design of a Stream-Based IP Flow Record Query Language," in *Proceedings of the 20th IFIP/IEEE International Workshop on Distributed Systems: Operations and Management: Integrated Management of Systems, Services, Processes and People in IT, DSOM '09, (Berlin, Heidelberg), pp. 15–28, Springer-Verlag, 2009.*
- [2] P. Nemeth, "Flowy Improvements using Map/Reduce," bachelor's thesis, Jacobs University Bremen, Campus Ring 1, 28759 Bremen, Germany, May 2010.
- [3] N. Melnikov, "Cybermetrics: Identification of Users through Network Flow Analysis," Master's thesis, Jacobs University Bremen, Campus Ring 1, 28759 Bremen, Germany, August 2010.
- [4] V. Bajpai, N. Melnikov, and J. Schönwälder, "Automated Failure Identification under IPv6 Transition Mechanisms." 2012.
- [5] J. Schauer, "Flowy 2.0: Fast Execution of Stream based IP Flow Queries," bachelor's thesis, Jacobs University Bremen, Campus Ring 1, 28759 Bremen, Germany, May 2011.
- [6] V. Perelman, "Flow signatures of Popular Applications," bachelor's thesis, Jacobs University Bremen, Campus Ring 1, 28759 Bremen, Germany, May 2010.
- [7] K. Kanev, N. Melnikov, and J. Schönwälder, "Implementation of a stream-based IP flow record query language," in *Proceedings of the Mechanisms for autonomous management of networks and services, and 4th international conference on Autonomous infrastructure, management and security*, AIMS'10, (Berlin, Heidelberg), pp. 147–158, Springer-Verlag, 2010.
- [8] K. Kanev, "Flowy Network Flow Analysis Application," Master's thesis, Jacobs University Bremen, Campus Ring 1, 28759 Bremen, Germany, August 2009.
- [9] V. Marinov, "Design of an IP Flow Record Query Language," Master's thesis, Jacobs University Bremen, Campus Ring 1, 28759 Bremen, Germany, August 2009.
- [10] V. Marinov and J. Schönwälder, "Design of an IP Flow Record Query Language," in *Proceedings of the 2nd international conference on Autonomous Infrastructure, Management and Security: Resilient Networks and Services*, AIMS '08, (Berlin, Heidelberg), pp. 205–210, Springer-Verlag, 2008.

- [11] F. Alted and M. FernÃ;ndez-Alonso, "PyTables: Processing And Analyzing Extremely Large Amounts Of Data In Python," 2003.
- [12] B. Claise, "Cisco Systems NetFlow Services Export Version 9." RFC 3954 (Informational), Oct. 2004.
- [13] J. Quittek, S. Bryant, B. Claise, P. Aitken, and J. Meyer, "Information Model for IP Flow Information Export." RFC 5102 (Proposed Standard), Jan. 2008. Updated by RFC 6313.
- [14] J. F. Allen, "Maintaining knowledge about temporal intervals," *Communications of the ACM*, vol. 26, pp. 832–843, November 1983.
- [15] J. Dean and S. Ghemawat, "Mapreduce: simplified data processing on large clusters," in *Proceedings of the 6th conference on Symposium on Opearting Systems Design & Implementation Volume 6*, (Berkeley, CA, USA), pp. 10–10, USENIX Association, 2004.
- [16] T. White, *Hadoop: The Definitive Guide*. Definitive Guide Series, O'Reilly, 2010.
- [17] K. Shvachko, H. Kuang, S. Radia, and R. Chansler, "The Hadoop Distributed File System," in *Mass Storage Systems and Technologies* (MSST), 2010 IEEE 26th Symposium on, pp. 1–10, May 2010.
- [18] P. Mundkur, V. Tuulos, and J. Flatow, "Disco: A Computing Platform for Large-Scale Data Analytics," in *Proceedings of the 10th ACM SIGPLAN workshop on Erlang*, Erlang '11, (New York, NY, USA), pp. 84–89, ACM, 2011.
- [19] J. Schauer, N. Melnikov, and J. Schönwälder, "F." 2012.
- [20] D. S. Seljebotn, "Fast numerical computations with Cython," in *Proceedings of the 8th Python in Science Conference* (G. Varoquaux, S. van der Walt, and J. Millman, eds.), (Pasadena, CA USA), pp. 15 22, 2009.
- [21] I. Wilbers, H. P. Langtangen, and Å. Ødegård, "Using Cython to Speed up Numerical Python Programs," in *Proceedings of MekIT'09* (B. Skallerud and H. I. Andersson, eds.), pp. 495–512, NTNU, Tapir, 2009.
- [22] S. Behnel, R. Bradshaw, C. Citro, L. Dalcin, D. Seljebotn, and K. Smith, "Cython: The Best of Both Worlds," *Computing in Science Engineering*, vol. 13, pp. 31 –39, march-april 2011.
- [23] V. Perelman, N. Melnikov, and J. Schonwalder, "Flow signatures of Popular Applications," in *Integrated Network Management (IM)*, 2011 IFIP/IEEE International Symposium on, pp. 9–16, May 2011.

- [24] M. Bodlaender, "UPnP 1.1 Designing for Performance Compatibility," *Consumer Electronics, IEEE Transactions on*, vol. 51, pp. 69 75, feb. 2005.
- [25] S. Cheshire, M. Krochmal, and K. Sekar, "NAT port mapping protocol (NAT-PMP)," Internet-Draft draft-cheshire-nat-pmp-03.txt, IETF Secretariat, Fremont, CA, USA, Apr. 2008.
- [26] F. Bergadano, D. Gunetti, and C. Picardi, "User Authentication through Keystroke Dynamics," *ACM Trans. Inf. Syst. Secur.*, vol. 5, pp. 367–397, November 2002.
- [27] A. Ahmed and I. Traore, "A New Biometric Technology Based on Mouse Dynamics," *IEEE Transactions on Dependable and Secure Computing*, vol. 4, pp. 165 –179, July-Sept 2007.
- [28] K.-T. Chen and L.-W. Hong, "User identification based on Game-Play Activity Patterns," in *Proceedings of the 6th ACM SIGCOMM workshop on Network and System Support for Games*, NetGames '07, (New York, NY, USA), pp. 7–12, ACM, 2007.
- [29] N. Melnikov and J. Schönwälder, "Cybermetrics: User Identification through Network Flow Analysis," in *Proceedings of the Mechanisms for autonomous management of networks and services, and 4th international conference on Autonomous infrastructure, management and security,* AIMS'10, (Berlin, Heidelberg), pp. 167–170, Springer-Verlag, 2010.
- [30] M. Bagnulo, P. Matthews, and I. van Beijnum, "Stateful NAT64: Network Address and Protocol Translation from IPv6 Clients to IPv4 Servers." RFC 6146 (Proposed Standard), Apr. 2011.
- [31] A. Durand, R. Droms, J. Woodyatt, and Y. Lee, "Dual-Stack Lite Broadband Deployments Following IPv4 Exhaustion." RFC 6333 (Proposed Standard), Aug. 2011.



DECLARATION	
Put your declaration here.	
Bremen, Germany, June 2012	
	 Vaibhav Bajpai