LCI: Low-level communication interface for asynchronous distributed-memory task model

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CCS CONCEPTS

• **Computer systems organization**;

ACM Reference Format:
Hoang-Vu Dang and Marc Snir. 2018. LCI: Low-level communication interface for asynchronous distributed-memory task model. In *Proceedings of ACM Conference (Conference'17).* ACM, New York, NY, USA, 2 pages. https://doi.org/0000001.0000001

1 BACKGROUND

Supercomputers are shifting towards increasing heterogeneity within compute nodes, with : machines different, specialized compute cores and accelerators and different types of memories. In addition, the speed of a node can increase or decrease over time due to power management, leading to to heterogeneity in time. Application codes are also becoming more adaptive – saving operations by adjusting to the evolution of the system they simulate. The complexity of such systems and their dynamic nature preclude static resource allocation and require increasing reliance on a dynamic runtime scheduler.

One programming model that is amenable to such approach is that of the *Asynchronous Task Model* (ATM): A program consists of a set of lightweight tasks that are dynamically scheduled when their dependencies have been satisfied. A runtime tracks those dependencies and schedule tasks so as to keep all compute devices busy and reduce communication. Recent examples of such models include Legion [1], PaRSEC [3], and the task model of OpenMP [14]. An ATM runtime is also the foundation for systems such as HPX [10], Charm++ [11] and Chapel [4]. The concepts however are not new: ATM is the descendant of hybrid dataflow modes that were studied in the 80's [8].

Previous research on such systems focused on shared memory parallelism and layered internode communication atop existing communication libraries such as MPI [12] or GASNet [2]. Neither was designed to support ATM: MPI was designed around the send-receive paradigm and GASNet was designed to support PGAS languages. The basic communication and synchronization paradigm of an ATM runtime is that of producer-consumer. The semantic mismatch between the functionality provided by MPI or GASNet and the needs of higher-level runtimes mean that the communication overhead at the level of MPI or GASNet is a small fraction of the total end-to-end overhead. It also means that the ability of Network Interface Controllers (NICs) to accelerate producer-consumer communication and coordination is limited as designed functionality is not exposed in MPI of GASNet. In particular, performance deteriorates with a large number of concurrent communications.

New lower-level communication libraries are emerging as newer standards that might replace the InfiniBand Verbs interface [9] such as Libfabric [7] and UCX [13]. Similarly, to past efforts, these libraries were designed to accelerate current communication patterns (message-passing, active messages), not to support new communication and synchronization patterns.

Our goal is to design and implement LCI, a communication library with new communication primitives to enable fast producer-consumer coordination with no serial bottleneck, to manage irregular, fine grain communication, to take advantage of early binding for recurring communication patterns and to provide new efficient synchronization mechanisms that match ATMs requirements. The communication library will be tightly integrated with task schedulers and memory managers and work with multiple CPUs/GPUs. It will be designed so as to be easily accelerated in NIC hardware and firmware.

LCI takes advantages of the lessons learned from the study of existing performance bottlenecks in MPI: overheads due to MPI semantics such as wildcard matching [6], overheads due to rarely used features such as derived datatypes, and memory consumption issues such as request and window management [5].

2 LCI SPECIFICATION

2.1 Endpoints

LCI communications are modeled around *endpoints*. A process may own multiple (logical) endpoints. The concept of endpoint need not be in 1-to-1 correspondence with the concept of rank in MPI. Depending on the implementation, an endpoint could be a hardware context (thus reducing the need to multiplex different types of communication through the same hardware pipeline, and providing better performance isolation); or it could be one virtual client of many using the same hardware channel. Also, an endpoint may correspond to multiple low-level protocols (e.g., shared memory and Infiniband). A parallel application starts with one endpoint at each involved process. All these initial endpoints are connected and can be used for communication between all involved processes. New endpoints can be created locally and exchanged with other processes, in order to connect.

Conference'17, July 2017, Washington, DC, USA

ACM ISBN 978-x-xxxx-xxxx-x/YY/MM…$15.00
https://doi.org/0000001.0000001

2.2 Producer/Consumer Specification

A basic point-to-point communication involves two processes and results in data being moved from a *source buffer* at the *producer process* to a *destination buffer* at the *consumer process*. LCI defines multiple ways to specify a buffer in a communication call.

Piggy-back: for small data that can be attached to a single packet.

Explicit: a pair of `<address, length>` is specified, which represents a contiguous buffer starting at virtual address `address` and containing `length` bytes.

Dynamic allocation: an (custom) *allocator* is specified which allocates dynamically the destination buffer. When an allocator is used, information on the allocated buffer is retrieved via the completion mechanism.

2.3 Completion events

Local completion of communication in LCI is specified through *completion events*. A completion event at the producer means that the source buffer can be reused; at the consumer it means that the destination buffer is ready for consumption. In order to reduce overheads, the completion mechanism is specified at the endpoint creation as a property of the endpoint, The following mechanisms are supported.

Completion queue: Entries providing information on completed communications are appended to a *completion queue*. The completion queue entries include the message metadata, origin endpoint and if needed, piggy back data or a buffer descriptor.

Synchronizer: A synchronization method that is applied to a synchronization object specified in the call. The synchronizer is an interface that can be overridden by the thread package so that it can be inlined. The synchronization object may have extra fields to hold the message metadata and the data itself, or a buffer descriptor. The simplest synchronizer provided by default is to set a flag.

Generic Handler: The call specifies a handler to execute upon completion. The handler is passed the message metadata and either the piggy back data or a buffer descriptor. This is similar to an Active Message.

2.4 One-sided and two-sided communication

In two-sided communication, the producer (sender) specifies the source buffer, the source endpoint where the completion event will be triggered and the destination endpoint where the data will be routed to. The consumer (receiver) specifies the destination buffer and the destination end-point to receive the data and trigger completion. Two-sided communication can specify a tag for matching between sender and receiver; however, no wildcard matching is allowed for scalable message-matching with many threads [6].

The one-sided communication is similar but takes effect by only one call, either on the producer side (Put) or the consumer side (Get); this call specifies additionally, the source/destination buffer depending on whether this is producer or consumer side.

3 PRELIMINARY RESULTS

We integrate LCI with our customized thread scheduler and compare its performance with traditional approach using MPI+OpenMP (latest MPICH and OpenMPI). This micro-benchmark spawns two processes in two different nodes, each creates a number of threads.

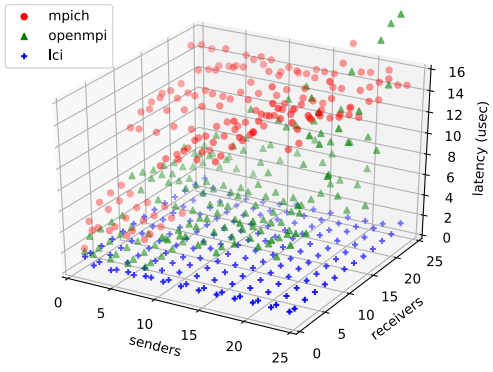

Figure 1: LCI outperforms MPICH and OpenMPI on OpenMP using multi-threaded point-to-point varying number of sender or receiver threads. Performance is done on Stampede2 cluster.

A thread in the sender process issues a send then a receive, while a thread in the receiver process issue a receive then a send that match a single thread of the sender process using an appropriate tag. The performance shows LCI consistently maintains low latency per message, while MPI+OpenMP degrades with more send/receive threads.

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