HPCS : Client-Server Support for High Performance Computing

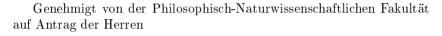
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Prof. Dr. Helmar Burkhart

Prof. Dr. Béat Hirsbrunner

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Prof. Dr. S. Schmid, Dekan

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Gérald Jean-Pierre Prétôt

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Abstract

Distributed and parallel computing are well-established and successful fields. In both certain levels of standardization have been achieved and reliable tools are available for software development and deployment. However, so far hardly any effort has been made, to *integrate* the two worlds in a generic way. This is the goal of the work presented here.

This thesis introduces a new model for client-server support for high-performance computing called HPCS. The model offers a generic approach to making parallel, high-performance implementations of compute services accessible to sequential clients in the form of software components. It exploits the abstraction provided by parallel data structures and parallel procedures to allow transparent access from remote clients. In HPCS parallel data structures are presented as abstract data objects and parallel procedures as services. Access is provided using standardized client-server interfaces such as the ones specified by the CORBA standard. This is done in a way that does not require the service programmer to be concerned with the client-server interface nor the client programmer with the parallel nature of the service implementation.

Call-persistent data objects and a minimal set of methods for their manipulation are proposed as a mechanism to work with parallel data structures that remain on the server between different service calls. A parallel request handler split into two components, the Multiplexer and the Dispatcher, provides transparent access to parallel services.

ACS, a concrete implementation of HPCS targeting the parallel programming language ALWAN and CORBA implementations is presented. Thus, ACS enables writing high-performance services in ALWAN which are translated into executable parallel programs and interfaces that allow access to the services from CORBA clients.

Sources of overhead are discussed and some measurements are presented that provide a feeling for the possible behavior of an HPCS application. Examples from the fields of volume rendering, signal processing and computational fluid dynamics demonstrate how ACS is used in applications.

Preface/Roadmap

The presentation of our work is divided into five parts:

Introduction The general ideas and motivation for our approach to client-server support for high-performance computing, are discussed. We have a brief look at the two technologies, the integration of which is the goal of this work: distributed and parallel computing, CORBA and ALWAN in particular. Part I concludes with an overview of work that is related to ours.

Design and Implementation We introduce an abstract approach to the integration of high-performance computing and client-server infrastructure (HPCS), and present ACS, an implementation for the ALWAN parallel computing system and CORBA. The ACS server and client programmers' views are described. Finally, we discuss the overhead incurred by HPCS and some rough measurements made in the ACS environment to give the reader a general feeling for the possible behavior of HPCS applications.

Demonstration Applications Three applications using parallel servers are presented: our main example, a 3D volume rendering application from the medical domain (RDVOL), but also a signal processing library/application (LIBSIG/IDAHO), and a simple, educational computational fluid dynamics code (CFD). These applications were used as test cases for ACS and to demonstrate how it works.

Future Work and Conclusions We attempt a look at how this work could be extended, conclude from the presented work the position and value of our approach and summarize our experience during the development of ACS.

Appendix The appendix contains the ALWAN-to-IDL mapping and the source code (IDL) of the demonstration applications, as well as source code of the program used for measurements. Raw data from the timing measurements is also listed.

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