

Parallel & Cluster Computing

Distributed Parallelism

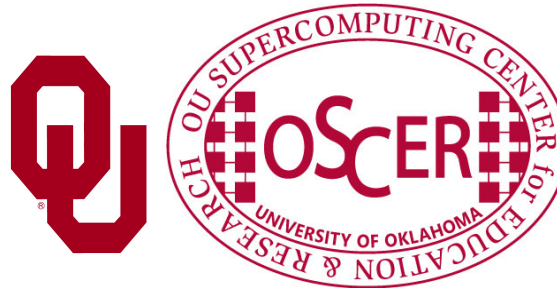
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OU Supercomputing Center for Education & Research

University of Oklahoma

SC08 Education Program's Workshop on Parallel & Cluster Computing

August 10-16 2008



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SC08 Parallel & Cluster Computing: Distributed Parallelism
University of Oklahoma, August 10-16 2008





Outline

- The Desert Islands Analogy
- Distributed Parallelism
- MPI



SC08 Parallel & Cluster Computing: Distributed Parallelism
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The Desert Islands Analogy



An Island Hut

- Imagine you're on an island in a little hut.
- Inside the hut is a desk.
- On the desk is:
 - a phone;
 - a pencil;
 - a calculator;
 - a piece of paper with numbers;
 - a piece of paper with instructions.



Instructions

- The **instructions** are split into two kinds:
- **Arithmetic/Logical**: e.g.,
 - Add the 27th number to the 239th number
 - Compare the 96th number to the 118th number to see whether they are equal
- **Communication**: e.g.,
 - dial 555-0127 and leave a voicemail containing the 962nd number
 - call your voicemail box and collect a voicemail from 555-0063 and put that number in the 715th slot

Is There Anybody Out There?

- If you're in a hut on an island, you **aren't specifically aware** of anyone else.
- Especially, you don't know whether anyone else is working on the same problem as you are, and you don't know who's at the other end of the phone line.
- All you know is what to do with the voicemails you get, and what phone numbers to send voicemails to.



Someone Might Be Out There

- Now suppose that Horst is on another island somewhere, in the same kind of hut, with the same kind of equipment.
- Suppose that he has the same list of instructions as you, but a different set of numbers (both data and phone numbers).
- Like you, he doesn't know whether there's anyone else working on his problem.

Even More People Out There

- Now suppose that Bruce and Dee are also in huts on islands.
- Suppose that each of the four has the exact same list of instructions, but different lists of numbers.
- And suppose that the phone numbers that people call are each others'. That is, your instructions have you call Horst, Bruce and Dee, Horst's has him call Bruce, Dee and you, and so on.
- Then you might all be working together on the same problem.



All Data Are Private

- Notice that you can't see Horst's or Bruce's or Dee's numbers, nor can they see yours or each other's.
- Thus, everyone's numbers are **private**: there's no way for anyone to share numbers, **except by leaving them in voicemails.**

Long Distance Calls: 2 Costs

- When you make a long distance phone call, you typically have to pay two costs:
- **Connection charge**: the **fixed** cost of connecting your phone to someone else's, even if you're only connected for a second
- **Per-minute charge**: the cost per minute of talking, once you're connected
- If the connection charge is large, then you want to make as few calls as possible.

Like Desert Islands

- Distributed parallelism is very much like the Desert Islands analogy:
- Processors are independent of each other.
- All data are private.
- Processes communicate by passing messages (like voicemails).
- The cost of passing a message is split into the latency (connection time) and the bandwidth (time per byte).

Latency vs Bandwidth on topdawg

- In 2006, we benchmarked the Infiniband interconnect on OU's large Linux cluster (`topdawg.oscer.ou.edu`).
- **Latency** – the time for the first bit to show up at the destination – is about 3 microseconds;
- **Bandwidth** – the speed of the subsequent bits – is about 5 Gigabits per second.
- Thus, on topdawg's Infiniband:
 - the 1st bit of a message shows up in 3 microsec;
 - the 2nd bit shows up in 0.2 nanosec.
 - So latency is **15,000 times worse** than bandwidth!

Latency vs Bandwidth on topdawg

- In 2006, we benchmarked the Infiniband interconnect on OU's large Linux cluster (`topdawg.oscer.ou.edu`).

Latency – the time for the first bit to show up at the destination – is about 3 microseconds;

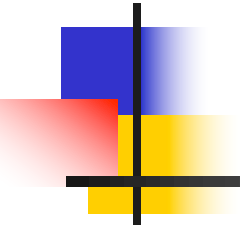
Bandwidth – the speed of the subsequent bits – is about 5 Gigabits per second.

Latency is **15,000 times worse** than bandwidth!

That's like having a long distance service that charges

- \$150 to make a call;
- 1¢ per minute – after the **first 10 days** of the call.

Distributed Parallelism



Like Desert Islands

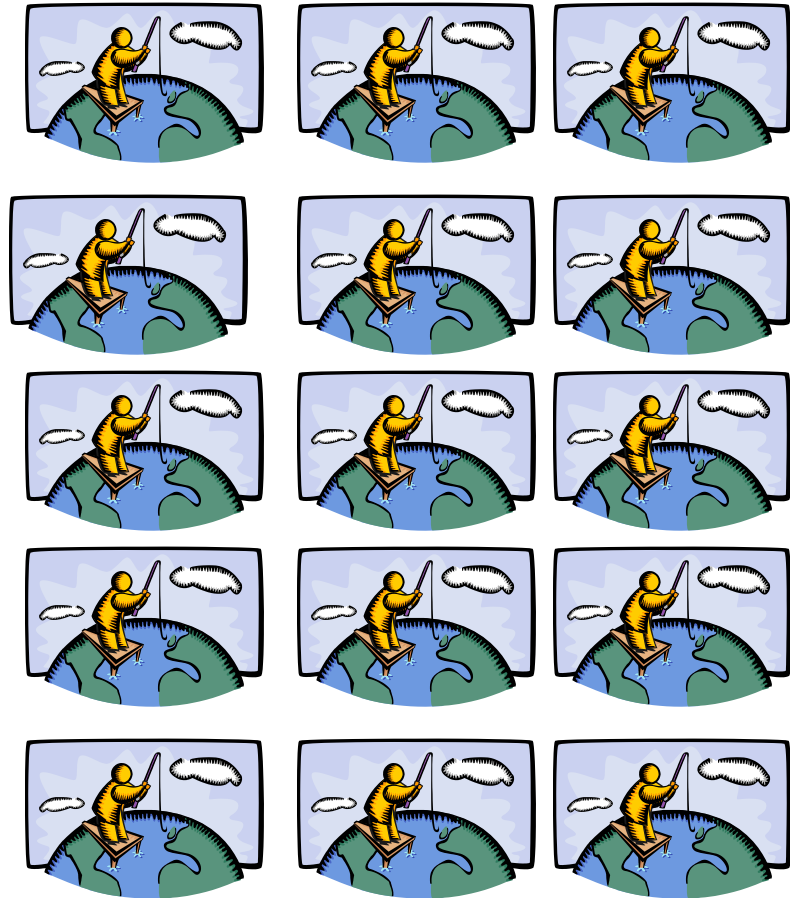
Distributed parallelism is very much like the Desert Islands analogy:

- processes are **independent** of each other.
- All data are **private**.
- Processes communicate by **passing messages** (like voicemails).
- The cost of passing a message is split into:
 - **latency** (connection time)
 - **bandwidth** (time per byte)

Parallelism

Parallelism means doing multiple things at the same time: you can get more work done in the same amount of time.

Less fish ...



More fish!



What Is Parallelism?

Parallelism is the use of multiple processing units – either processors or parts of an individual processor – to solve a problem, and in particular the use of multiple processing units operating concurrently on different parts of a problem. The different parts could be different tasks, or the same task on different pieces of the problem's data.





Kinds of Parallelism

- Shared Memory Multithreading (our topic last time)
- Distributed Memory Multiprocessing (today)
- Hybrid Shared/Distributed



Why Parallelism Is Good

- **The Trees**: We like parallelism because, as the number of processing units working on a problem grows, we can solve **the same problem in less time**.
- **The Forest**: We like parallelism because, as the number of processing units working on a problem grows, we can solve **bigger problems**.



Parallelism Jargon

- **Threads**: execution sequences that share a single memory area (“**address space**”)
- **Processes**: execution sequences with their own independent, private memory areas

... and thus:

- **Multithreading**: parallelism via multiple threads
- **Multiprocessing**: parallelism via multiple processes

As a general rule, **Shared Memory Parallelism** is concerned with **threads**, and **Distributed Parallelism** is concerned with **processes**.

Jargon Alert

In principle:

- “shared memory parallelism” → “multithreading”
- “distributed parallelism” → “multiprocessing”

In practice, these terms are often used interchangeably:

- Parallelism
- Concurrency (not as popular these days)
- Multithreading
- Multiprocessing

Typically, you have to figure out what is meant based on the context.



Load Balancing

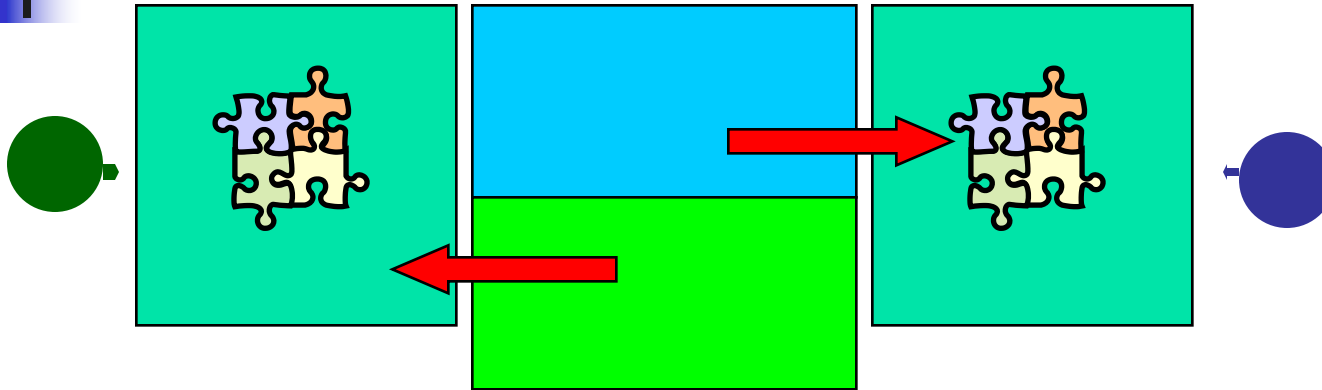
Suppose you have a distributed parallel code, but one process does 90% of the work, and all the other processes share 10% of the work.

Is it a big win to run on 1000 processes?

Now, suppose that each process gets exactly $1/N_p$ of the work, where N_p is the number of processes.

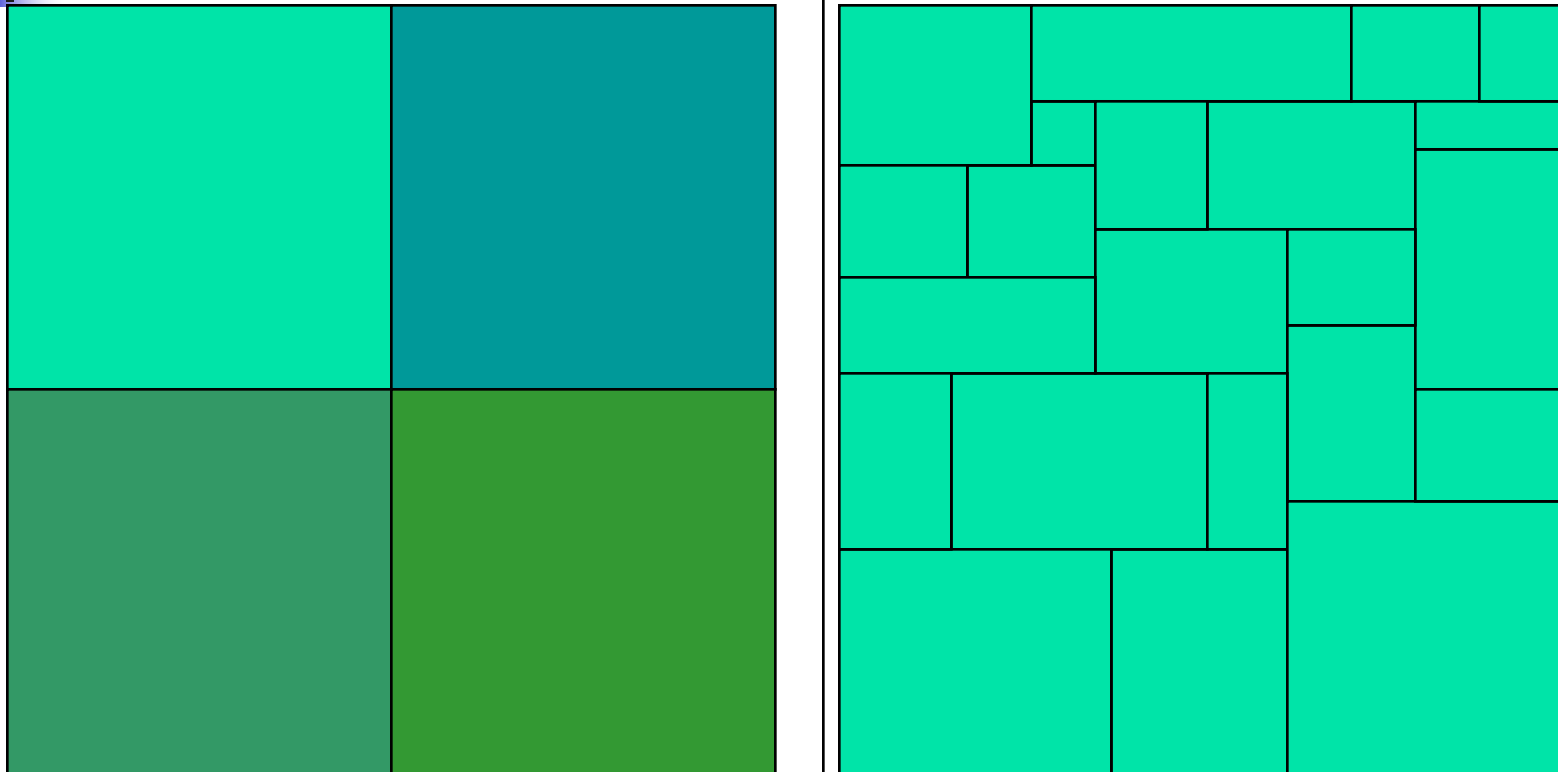
Now is it a big win to run on 1000 processes?

Load Balancing



Load balancing means giving everyone roughly the same amount of work to do.

Load Balancing



Load balancing can be easy, if the problem splits up into chunks of roughly equal size, with one chunk per process. Or load balancing can be very hard.



Load Balancing Is Good

When every process gets the same amount of work, the job is *load balanced*.

We like load balancing, because it means that our speedup can potentially be linear: if we run on N_p processes, it takes $1/N_p$ as much time as on one.

For some codes, figuring out how to balance the load is trivial (e.g., breaking a big unchanging array into sub-arrays).

For others, load balancing is very tricky (e.g., a dynamically evolving collection of arbitrarily many blocks of arbitrary size).



Parallel Strategies

- **Client-Server**: One worker (the server) decides what tasks the other workers (clients) will do; e.g., Hello World, Monte Carlo.
- **Data Parallelism**: Each worker does exactly the same tasks on its unique subset of the data; e.g., distributed meshes (weather etc).
- **Task Parallelism**: Each worker does different tasks on exactly the same set of data (each process holds exactly the same data as the others); e.g., N-body.
- **Pipeline**: Each worker does its tasks, then passes its set of data along to the next worker and receives the next set of data from the previous worker.



MPI: The Message-Passing Interface

Most of this discussion is from [1] and [2].

What Is MPI?

The *Message-Passing Interface* (MPI) is a standard for expressing distributed parallelism via message passing.

MPI consists of a *header file*, a *library of routines* and a *runtime environment*.

When you compile a program that has MPI calls in it, your compiler links to a local implementation of MPI, and then you get parallelism; if the MPI library isn't available, then the compile will fail.

MPI can be used in Fortran, C and C++.

MPI Calls

MPI calls in **Fortran** look like this:

```
CALL MPI_Funcname (... , errcode)
```

In **C**, MPI calls look like:

```
errcode = MPI_Funcname (... ) ;
```

In C++, MPI calls look like:

```
errcode = MPI::Funcname (... ) ;
```

Notice that **errcode** is returned by the MPI routine **MPI_Funcname**, with a value of **MPI_SUCCESS** indicating that **MPI_Funcname** has worked correctly.

MPI is an API

MPI is actually just an *Application Programming Interface* (API).

An API specifies what a call to each routine should look like, and how each routine should behave.

An API does not specify how each routine should be implemented, and sometimes is intentionally vague about certain aspects of a routine's behavior.

Each platform has its own MPI implementation.

Example MPI Routines

- **MPI_Init** starts up the MPI runtime environment at the beginning of a run.
- **MPI_Finalize** shuts down the MPI runtime environment at the end of a run.
- **MPI_Comm_size** gets the number of processes in a run, N_p (typically called just after **MPI_Init**).
- **MPI_Comm_rank** gets the process ID that the current process uses, which is between 0 and N_p-1 inclusive (typically called just after **MPI_Init**).

More Example MPI Routines

- **MPI_Send** sends a message from the current process to some other process (the *destination*).
- **MPI_Recv** receives a message on the current process from some other process (the *source*).
- **MPI_Bcast** *broadcasts* a message from one process to all of the others.
- **MPI_Reduce** performs a *reduction* (e.g., sum, maximum) of a variable on all processes, sending the result to a single process.

MPI Program Structure (F90)

```
PROGRAM my_mpi_program
  IMPLICIT NONE
  INCLUDE "mpif.h"
  [other includes]
  INTEGER :: my_rank, num_procs, mpi_error_code
  [other declarations]
  CALL MPI_Init(mpi_error_code)      !! Start up MPI
  CALL MPI_Comm_Rank(my_rank,      mpi_error_code)
  CALL MPI_Comm_size(num_procs, mpi_error_code)
  [actual work goes here]
  CALL MPI_Finalize(mpi_error_code) !! Shut down MPI
END PROGRAM my_mpi_program
```

Note that MPI uses the term “rank” to indicate process identifier.

MPI Program Structure (in C)

```
#include <stdio.h>
#include "mpi.h"
[other includes]

int main (int argc, char* argv[])
{ /* main */
  int my_rank, num_procs, mpi_error;
  [other declarations]
  mpi_error = MPI_Init(&argc, &argv); /* Start up MPI */
  mpi_error = MPI_Comm_rank(MPI_COMM_WORLD, &my_rank);
  mpi_error = MPI_Comm_size(MPI_COMM_WORLD, &num_procs);
  [actual work goes here]
  mpi_error = MPI_Finalize();          /* Shut down MPI */
} /* main */
```

MPI is SPMD

MPI uses kind of parallelism known as
Single Program, Multiple Data (SPMD).

This means that you have one MPI program – a single executable – that is executed by all of the processes in an MPI run.

So, to differentiate the roles of various processes in the MPI run, you have to have **if** statements:

```
if (my_rank == server_rank) {  
    ...  
}
```



Example: Hello World

1. Start the MPI system.
2. Get the rank and number of processes.
3. If you're **not** the server process:
 1. Create a “hello world” string.
 2. Send it to the server process.
4. If you **are** the server process:
 1. For each of the client processes:
 1. Receive its “hello world” string.
 2. Print its “hello world” string.
5. Shut down the MPI system.

hello_world_mpi.c

```
#include <stdio.h>
#include <string.h>
#include "mpi.h"

int main (int argc, char* argv[])
{ /* main */
    const int    maximum_message_length = 100;
    const int    server_rank           = 0;
    char         message[maximum_message_length+1];
    MPI_Status   status;               /* Info about receive status */
    int          my_rank;              /* This process ID */
    int          num_procs;           /* Number of processes in run */
    int          source;              /* Process ID to receive from */
    int          destination;         /* Process ID to send to */
    int          tag = 0;              /* Message ID */
    int          mpi_error;           /* Error code for MPI calls */

    [work goes here]

} /* main */
```

Hello World Startup/Shut Down

[header file includes]

```
int main (int argc, char* argv[])  
{ /* main */
```

[declarations]

```
mpi_error = MPI_Init(&argc, &argv);  
mpi_error = MPI_Comm_rank(MPI_COMM_WORLD, &my_rank);  
mpi_error = MPI_Comm_size(MPI_COMM_WORLD, &num_procs);  
if (my_rank != server_rank) {
```

[work of each non-server (worker) process]

```
} /* if (my_rank != server_rank) */
```

```
else {
```

[work of server process]

```
} /* if (my_rank != server_rank)...else */
```

```
mpi_error = MPI_Finalize();
```

```
} /* main */
```

Hello World Client's Work

[header file includes]

```
int main (int argc, char* argv[])  
{ /* main */
```

[declarations]

[MPI startup (MPI_Init etc)]

```
    if (my_rank != server_rank) {  
        sprintf(message, "Greetings from process #%d!",  
                my_rank);  
        destination = server_rank;  
        mpi_error =  
            MPI_Send(message, strlen(message) + 1, MPI_CHAR,  
                    destination, tag, MPI_COMM_WORLD);  
    } /* if (my_rank != server_rank) */
```

```
else {
```

[work of server process]

```
    } /* if (my_rank != server_rank)...else */  
    mpi_error = MPI_Finalize();  
} /* main */
```


Hello World Server's Work

[header file includes]

```
int main (int argc, char* argv[])  
{ /* main */
```

[declarations, MPI startup]

```
if (my_rank != server_rank) {
```

[work of each client process]

```
} /* if (my_rank != server_rank) */
```

```
else {
```

```
    for (source = 0; source < num_procs; source++) {
```

```
        if (source != server_rank) {
```

```
            mpi_error =
```

```
                MPI_Recv(message, maximum_message_length + 1,  
                        MPI_CHAR, source, tag, MPI_COMM_WORLD,  
                        &status);
```

```
                fprintf(stderr, "%s\n", message);
```

```
        } /* if (source != server_rank) */
```

```
    } /* for source */
```

```
} /* if (my_rank != server_rank)...else */
```

```
mpi_error = MPI_Finalize();
```

```
} /* main */
```



How an MPI Run Works

- Every process gets a copy of the executable: *Single Program, Multiple Data* (SPMD).
- They all start executing it.
- Each looks at its own rank to determine which part of the problem to work on.
- Each process works **completely independently** of the other processes, except when communicating.

Compiling and Running

```
% mpicc -o hello_world_mpi hello_world_mpi.c
```

```
% mpirun -np 1 hello_world_mpi
```

```
% mpirun -np 2 hello_world_mpi
```

```
Greetings from process #1!
```

```
% mpirun -np 3 hello_world_mpi
```

```
Greetings from process #1!
```

```
Greetings from process #2!
```

```
% mpirun -np 4 hello_world_mpi
```

```
Greetings from process #1!
```

```
Greetings from process #2!
```

```
Greetings from process #3!
```

Note: The compile command and the run command vary from platform to platform.

Why is Rank #0 the server?

```
const int server_rank = 0;
```

By convention, the server process has rank (process ID) #0.

Why?

A run must use at least one process but can use multiple processes.

Process ranks are 0 through N_p-1 , $N_p \geq 1$.

Therefore, every MPI run has a process with rank #0.

Note: Every MPI run also has a process with rank N_p-1 , so you could use N_p-1 as the server instead of 0 ... but no one does.

Why “Rank?”

Why does MPI use the term rank to refer to process ID?

In general, a process has an identifier that is assigned by the operating system (e.g., Unix), and that is unrelated to MPI:

```
% ps
```

```
      PID  TTY      TIME  CMD
52170812  ttyq57  0:01  tcsh
```

Also, each processor has an identifier, but an MPI run that uses fewer than all processors will use an arbitrary subset.

The rank of an MPI process is neither of these.

Compiling and Running

Recall:

```
% mpicc -o hello_world_mpi hello_world_mpi.c
```

```
% mpirun -np 1 hello_world_mpi
```

```
% mpirun -np 2 hello_world_mpi
```

```
Greetings from process #1!
```

```
% mpirun -np 3 hello_world_mpi
```

```
Greetings from process #1!
```

```
Greetings from process #2!
```

```
% mpirun -np 4 hello_world_mpi
```

```
Greetings from process #1!
```

```
Greetings from process #2!
```

```
Greetings from process #3!
```

Deterministic Operation?

```
% mpirun -np 4 hello_world_mpi
```

```
Greetings from process #1!
```

```
Greetings from process #2!
```

```
Greetings from process #3!
```

The order in which the greetings are printed is deterministic.

Why?

```
for (source = 0; source < num_procs; source++) {  
    if (source != server_rank) {  
        mpi_error =  
            MPI_Recv(message, maximum_message_length + 1,  
                    MPI_CHAR, source, tag, MPI_COMM_WORLD,  
                    &status);  
        fprintf(stderr, "%s\n", message);  
    } /* if (source != server_rank) */  
} /* for source */
```

This loop ignores the receive order.

Message = Envelope+Contents

```
MPI_Send(message, strlen(message) + 1,  
MPI_CHAR, destination, tag,  
MPI_COMM_WORLD);
```

When MPI sends a message, it doesn't just send the contents; it also sends an "envelope" describing the contents:

Size (number of elements of data type)

Data type

Source: rank of sending process

Destination: rank of process to receive

Tag (message ID)

Communicator (e.g., `MPI_COMM_WORLD`)

MPI Data Types

C		Fortran 90	
<code>char</code>	<code>MPI_CHAR</code>	<code>CHARACTER</code>	<code>MPI_CHARACTER</code>
<code>int</code>	<code>MPI_INT</code>	<code>INTEGER</code>	<code>MPI_INTEGER</code>
<code>float</code>	<code>MPI_FLOAT</code>	<code>REAL</code>	<code>MPI_REAL</code>
<code>double</code>	<code>MPI_DOUBLE</code>	<code>DOUBLE PRECISION</code>	<code>MPI_DOUBLE_PRECISION</code>

MPI supports several other data types, but most are variations of these, and probably these are all you'll use.

Message Tags

```
for (source = 0; source < num_procs; source++) {
    if (source != server_rank) {
        mpi_error =
            MPI_Recv(message, maximum_message_length + 1,
                    MPI_CHAR, source, tag,
                    MPI_COMM_WORLD, &status);
        fprintf(stderr, "%s\n", message);
    } /* if (source != server_rank) */
} /* for source */
```

The greetings are **printed** in **deterministic** order not because messages are sent and received in order, but because each has a **tag** (message identifier), and **MPI_Recv** asks for a specific message (by tag) from a specific source (by rank).

Parallelism is Nondeterministic

```
for (source = 0; source < num_procs; source++) {
    if (source != server_rank) {
        mpi_error =
            MPI_Recv(message, maximum_message_length + 1,
                    MPI_CHAR, MPI_ANY_SOURCE, tag,
                    MPI_COMM_WORLD, &status);
        fprintf(stderr, "%s\n", message);
    } /* if (source != server_rank) */
} /* for source */
```

The greetings are printed in non-deterministic order.



Communicators

An MPI communicator is a collection of processes that can send messages to each other.

MPI_COMM_WORLD is the default communicator; it contains all of the processes. It's probably the only one you'll need.

Some libraries create special library-only communicators, which can simplify keeping track of message tags.

Broadcasting

What happens if one process has data that everyone else needs to know?

For example, what if the server process needs to send an input value to the others?

```
MPI_Bcast(length, 1, MPI_INTEGER,  
source, MPI_COMM_WORLD);
```

Note that **MPI_Bcast** doesn't use a tag, and that the call is the same for both the sender and all of the receivers.

All processes have to call **MPI_Bcast** at the same time; everyone waits until everyone is done.

Broadcast Example: Setup

```
PROGRAM broadcast
```

```
  IMPLICIT NONE
```

```
  INCLUDE "mpif.h"
```

```
  INTEGER, PARAMETER :: server = 0
```

```
  INTEGER, PARAMETER :: source = server
```

```
  INTEGER, DIMENSION(:), ALLOCATABLE :: array
```

```
  INTEGER :: length, memory_status
```

```
  INTEGER :: num_procs, my_rank, mpi_error_code
```

```
  CALL MPI_Init(mpi_error_code)
```

```
  CALL MPI_Comm_rank(MPI_COMM_WORLD, my_rank,      &  
&      mpi_error_code)
```

```
  CALL MPI_Comm_size(MPI_COMM_WORLD, num_procs, &  
&      mpi_error_code)
```

```
  [input]
```

```
  [broadcast]
```

```
  CALL MPI_Finalize(mpi_error_code)
```

```
END PROGRAM broadcast
```

Broadcast Example: Input

```
PROGRAM broadcast
```

```
  IMPLICIT NONE
```

```
  INCLUDE "mpif.h"
```

```
  INTEGER, PARAMETER :: server = 0
```

```
  INTEGER, PARAMETER :: source = server
```

```
  INTEGER, DIMENSION(:), ALLOCATABLE :: array
```

```
  INTEGER :: length, memory_status
```

```
  INTEGER :: num_procs, my_rank, mpi_error_code
```

```
[MPI startup]
```

```
  IF (my_rank == server) THEN
```

```
    OPEN (UNIT=99, FILE="broadcast_in.txt")
```

```
    READ (99, *) length
```

```
    CLOSE (UNIT=99)
```

```
    ALLOCATE(array(length), STAT=memory_status)
```

```
    array(1:length) = 0
```

```
  END IF !! (my_rank == server) ...ELSE
```

```
[broadcast]
```

```
  CALL MPI_Finalize(mpi_error_code)
```

```
END PROGRAM broadcast
```

Broadcast Example: Broadcast

```
PROGRAM broadcast
```

```
  IMPLICIT NONE
```

```
  INCLUDE "mpif.h"
```

```
  INTEGER, PARAMETER :: server = 0
```

```
  INTEGER, PARAMETER :: source = server
```

```
[other declarations]
```

```
[MPI startup and input]
```

```
  IF (num_procs > 1) THEN
```

```
    CALL MPI_Bcast(length, 1, MPI_INTEGER, source, &
```

```
    & MPI_COMM_WORLD, mpi_error_code)
```

```
    IF (my_rank /= server) THEN
```

```
      ALLOCATE(array(length), STAT=memory_status)
```

```
    END IF !! (my_rank /= server)
```

```
    CALL MPI_Bcast(array, length, MPI_INTEGER, source, &
```

```
    MPI_COMM_WORLD, mpi_error_code)
```

```
    WRITE (0,*) my_rank, ": broadcast length = ", length
```

```
  END IF !! (num_procs > 1)
```

```
  CALL MPI_Finalize(mpi_error_code)
```

```
END PROGRAM broadcast
```


Broadcast Compile & Run

```
% mpif90 -o broadcast broadcast.f90
```

```
% mpirun -np 4 broadcast
```

```
0 : broadcast length = 16777216
```

```
1 : broadcast length = 16777216
```

```
2 : broadcast length = 16777216
```

```
3 : broadcast length = 16777216
```

Reductions

A **reduction** converts an array to a scalar: for example, sum, product, minimum value, maximum value, Boolean AND, Boolean OR, etc.

Reductions are so common, and so important, that MPI has two routines to handle them:

MPI_Reduce: sends result to a single specified process

MPI_Allreduce: sends result to all processes (and therefore takes longer)

Reduction Example

```
PROGRAM reduce
  IMPLICIT NONE
  INCLUDE "mpif.h"
  INTEGER, PARAMETER :: server = 0
  INTEGER :: value, value_sum
  INTEGER :: num_procs, my_rank, mpi_error_code

  CALL MPI_Init(mpi_error_code)
  CALL MPI_Comm_rank(MPI_COMM_WORLD, my_rank,
    mpi_error_code)
  CALL MPI_Comm_size(MPI_COMM_WORLD, num_procs,
    mpi_error_code)
  value_sum = 0
  value      = my_rank * num_procs
  CALL MPI_Reduce(value, value_sum, 1, MPI_INT, MPI_SUM, &
    & server, MPI_COMM_WORLD, mpi_error_code)
  WRITE (0,*) my_rank, ": reduce value_sum = ", value_sum
  CALL MPI_Allreduce(value, value_sum, 1, MPI_INT, MPI_SUM, &
    & MPI_COMM_WORLD, mpi_error_code)
  WRITE (0,*) my_rank, ": allreduce value_sum = ", value_sum
  CALL MPI_Finalize(mpi_error_code)
END PROGRAM reduce
```

Compiling and Running

```
% mpif90 -o reduce reduce.f90
```

```
% mpirun -np 4 reduce
```

```
3 : reduce value_sum = 0
```

```
1 : reduce value_sum = 0
```

```
2 : reduce value_sum = 0
```

```
0 : reduce value_sum = 24
```

```
0 : allreduce value_sum = 24
```

```
1 : allreduce value_sum = 24
```

```
2 : allreduce value_sum = 24
```

```
3 : allreduce value_sum = 24
```



Why Two Reduction Routines?

MPI has two reduction routines because of the high cost of each communication.

If only one process needs the result, then it doesn't make sense to pay the cost of sending the result to all processes.

But if all processes need the result, then it may be cheaper to reduce to all processes than to reduce to a single process and then broadcast to all.



Non-blocking Communication

MPI allows a process to start a send, then go on and do work while the message is in transit.

This is called *non-blocking* or *immediate* communication.

Here, “immediate” refers to the fact that the call to the MPI routine returns immediately rather than waiting for the communication to complete.

Immediate Send

```
mpi_error_code =  
    MPI_Isend(array, size, MPI_FLOAT,  
              destination, tag, communicator, request);
```

Likewise:

```
mpi_error_code =  
    MPI_Irecv(array, size, MPI_FLOAT,  
              source, tag, communicator, request);
```

This call starts the send/receive, but the send/receive won't be complete until:

```
MPI_Wait(request, status);
```

What's the advantage of this?



Communication Hiding

In between the call to `MPI_Isend/Irecv` and the call to `MPI_Wait`, both processes can do work!

If that work takes at least as much time as the communication, then the cost of the communication is effectively zero, since the communication won't affect how much work gets done.

This is called *communication hiding*.



Rule of Thumb for Hiding

When you want to hide communication:

- as soon as you calculate the data, send it;
- don't receive it until you need it.

That way, the communication has the maximal amount of time to happen in *background* (behind the scenes).

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**Thanks for your
attention!**



Questions?



References

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- [2] W. Gropp, E. Lusk and A. Skjellum, *Using MPI: Portable Parallel Programming with the Message-Passing Interface*, 2nd ed. MIT Press, 1999.

