Parallel Program Design Patterns and Strategies

Mike Bailey
mjb@cs.oregonstate.edu
Oregon State University

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The goal of this section is to look at some of the common design and programming patterns one encounters in parallel programming and to understand some of the nuances one encounters.

The Functional Decomposition Design Pattern

Overall Problem

Thread 0
Thread 1
Thread 2
Thread 3

The Functional (or Task) Decomposition Design Pattern

Climate
Animals
Plants
Money

Credit: Maxis (Sim Park)

Task Distribution Design Patterns for Parallelism

Thread-to-Thread
Broadcast
Reduction
Gather

Task Distribution Design Patterns for Parallelism

Decentralized (Peer)

Input
Output

“Peer-threads”
Multicore Block Data Decomposition:
1D Heat Transfer Example

You have a steel bar. Each section of the bar starts out at a different temperature. There are no incoming heat sources or outgoing heat sinks (i.e., ignore boundary conditions). Ready, go! How do the temperatures change over time?

The fundamental differential equation here is:

\[ \rho C \frac{\partial T}{\partial t} = k \frac{\partial^2 T}{\partial x^2} \]

where:
- \( \rho \) is the density in kg/m³
- \( C \) is the specific heat capacity measured in Joules / (kg·°K)
- \( k \) is the coefficient of thermal conductivity measured in Watts / (meter·°K)

(These units work because a Watt is a Joule/second.)

In plain words, this all means that temperatures, left to themselves, try to even out. The greater the temperature differential, the faster the evening-out process goes.

As a side note: the quantity \( \frac{k}{\rho C} \) has the unlikely units of m²/sec!
1D Data Decomposition: Partitioning Strategies

Should you allocate the data as one large global-memory block (i.e., shared)?

Or, should you allocate it as separate arrays, each dedicated to its own core?

Does it matter?

Allocate as One Large Continuous Global or Malloc’ed Array

float *Temps = (float *)malloc(ARRAYSIZE*sizeof(float));

float *Temps = new float[ARRAYSIZE];

<<allocate a new[] array the same way>>

Core #0 Core #1 Core #2 Core #3

<< copy the new[] array to the Temps[] array >>

Allocate as Separate Sub-arrays

We could make each sub-array as a thread-local (i.e., private) variable. This would put each sub-array on each thread’s individual stack. But, let’s not do that just in case these arrays might be large enough to overflow the stack. Although, if we did, it wouldn’t change this story.

Be sure to start each sub-array on its own cache line boundary. (See cache notes.)

But, now when we

<<compute ΔTi using Ti-1, Ti, and Ti+1>>

at the boundaries, Ti-1 or Ti+1 might be in another sub-array.

So, we need some logic to reach into the other sub-array to get the adjacent temperature. It is no longer as easy as saying Temps[i-1] or Temps[i+1].

1D Compute-to-Communicate Ratio

Compute : Communicate ratio = N : 2

where N is the number of compute cells per core

In the above drawing, Compute : Communicate is 4 : 2

How do more Cores Interact with the Compute-to-Communicate Ratio?

In this case, with 4 cores, Compute : Communicate = 4 : 2

In this case, with 8 cores, Compute : Communicate = 2 : 2

Think of it as a Goldilocks and the Three Bears sort of thing. :-) 

Too little Compute : Communicate and you are spending all your time sharing data values across threads and doing too little computing

Too much Compute : Communicate and you are not spreading out your problem among enough threads to get good parallelism.

Performance as a Function of Number of Nodes

MegaNodes Computed Per Second

# of Nodes to Compute

# of Threads
Performance as a Function of Number of Threads

![Graph](image)

2D Heat Transfer Equation

\[
\rho c \frac{\partial T}{\partial t} = \frac{\partial}{\partial x} \left( \kappa \frac{\partial T}{\partial x} \right) + \frac{\partial}{\partial y} \left( \kappa \frac{\partial T}{\partial y} \right)
\]

\[
\frac{\partial^2 T}{\partial x^2} + \frac{\partial^2 T}{\partial y^2}
\]

Direction Issue: Decomposition Order Matters (think cache)

float Array[A][B];

In 2D problems, this is often (but not always) thought of as:

float Array[NX][NY];

Where N is the dimension of compute nodes per core

The 2D Compute: Communicate ratio is sometimes referred to as Area-to-Perimeter

2D Compute-to-Communicate Ratio

In addition to the issues of size of the compute block, you also have issues of direction.

2D Domain (Data) Decomposition

Direction Issue: Decomposition Order Matters (think cache)

2D Heat Transfer Equation

3D Heat Transfer Equation
3D Domain (Data) Decomposition

3D Block, *, *
3D *, Block, *
3D *, *, Block

Direction Issue: Decomposition Order Matters (think cache)

float Array[A][B][C];

In 3D problems, this is often (but not always) thought of as:
float Array[NZ][NY][NX];

3D Compute-to-Communicate Ratio

Compute : Communicate ratio = N^2 : 6N = N : 6
where N is the dimension of compute nodes per core

In 3D the Compute : Communicate ratio is sometimes referred to as Volume-to-Surface