MPI Shared Memory Model

MPI processes behaving as threads

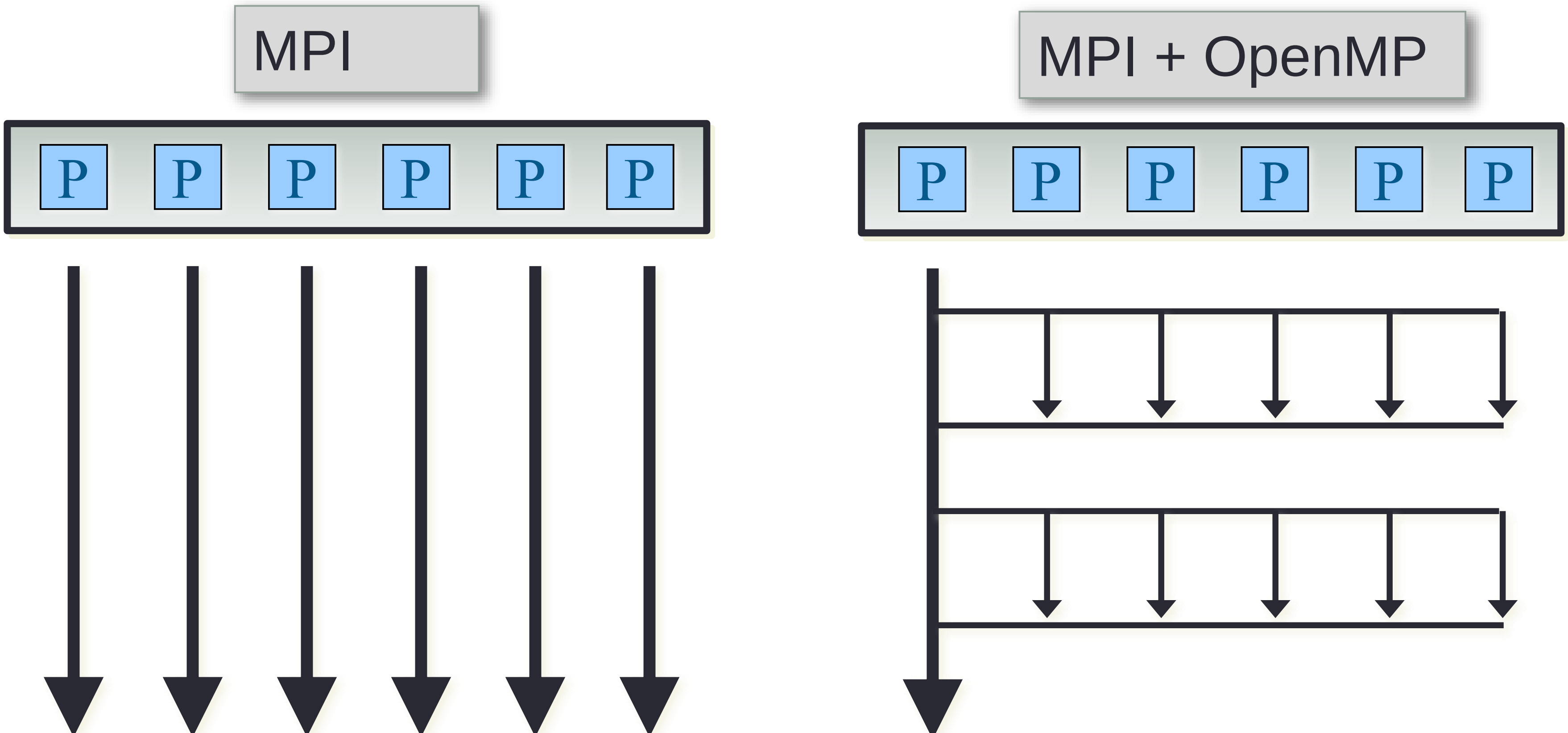
Reusing this material

Overview

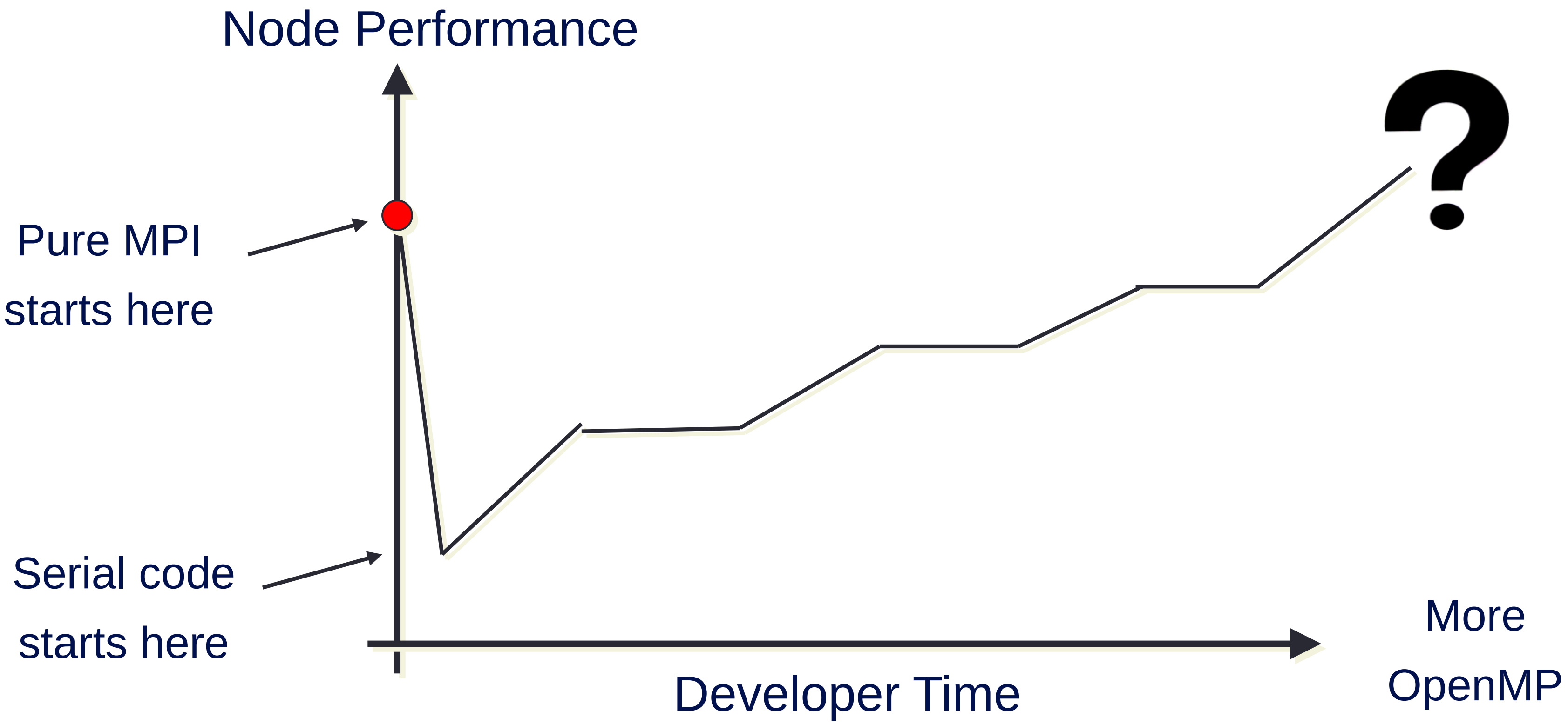
- Motivation
- Node-local communicators
- Shared window allocation
- Synchronisation

MPI + OpenMP

- In OMP parallel regions, all threads access shared arrays
  - why can't we do this with MPI processes?



Consequences



- Some successes reported - usually due to “threshold” effects
  - not enough memory to use all cores with MPI
  - fixed scalability limit of MPI parallelisation (e.g. slab-based FFTs)

Exploiting Shared Memory

- With standard RMA
  - publish local memory in a collective shared window
  - can do read and write with MPI_Get / MPI_Put
  - plus appropriate synchronisation, e.g. MPI_Win_fence()
- Seems wasteful on a node
  - why can't we just read and write directly as in OpenMP?

- Requirement
  - technically requires the Unified model
    - where there is no distinction between RMA and local memory
  - can check this callng `MPI_Win_get_attr` with `MPI_WIN_MODEL`
    - model should be MPI_WIN_UNIFIED
  - this is not a restriction in practice for standard CPU architectures

Procedure

- Processes join separate communicators for each node
- Shared array allocation across all processes on a node
  - OS can arrange for it to be a single global array

- Access memory by indexing outside limits of local array
  - e.g. `localarray[-1]` will be last entry on the previous process

- Need appropriate synchronisation for local accesses

- Still need MPI calls for internode communication
  - e.g. standard send and receive

Splitting the communicator

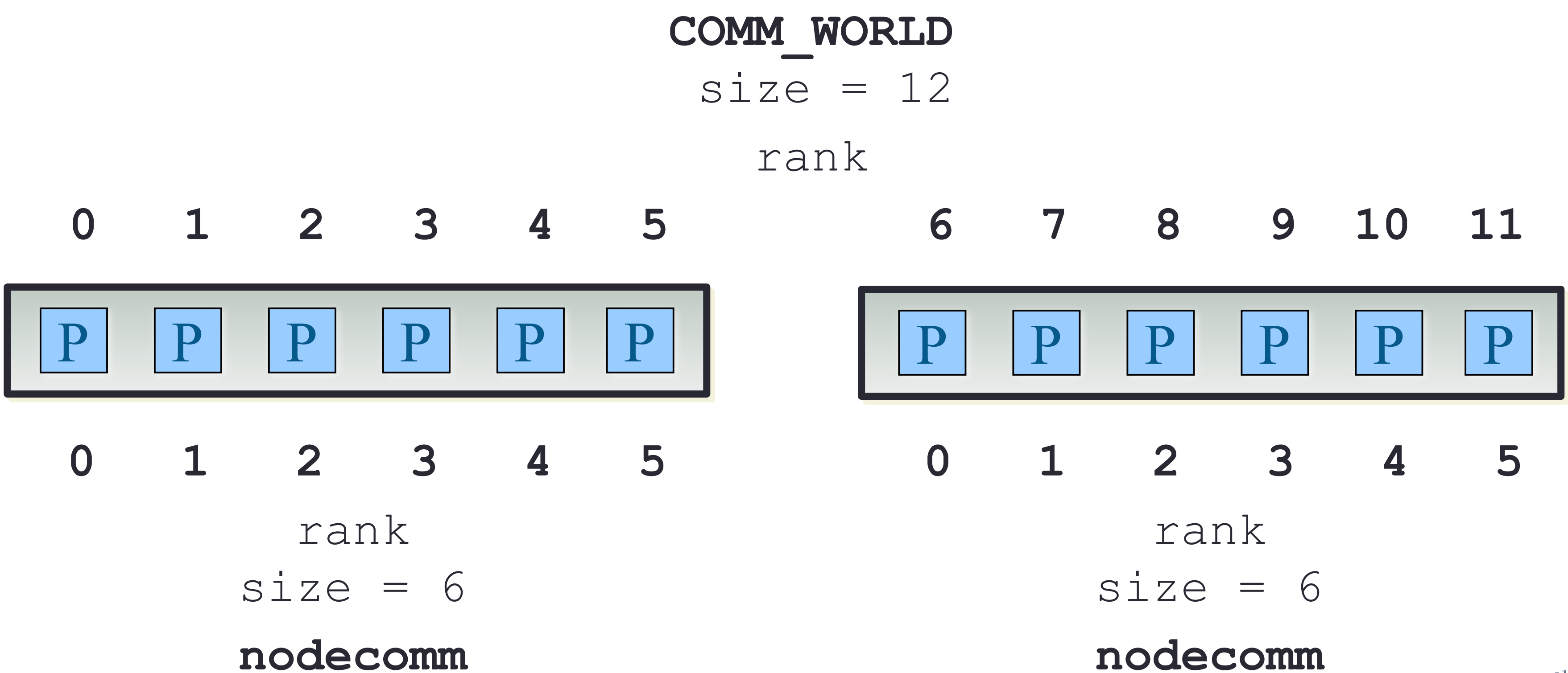
```
int MPI_Comm_split_type(MPI_Comm comm, int split_type,
  int key, MPI_Info  info, MPI_Comm *newcomm)
```

```
MPI_COMM_SPLIT_TYPE(COMM, SPLIT_TYPE, KEY, INFO,
                    NEWCOMM, IERROR)
INTEGER COMM, SPLIT_TYPE, KEY, INFO, NEWCOMM, IERROR
```

- comm: parent communicator, e.g. MPI_COMM_WORLD
- split_type: MPI_COMM_TYPE_SHARED
- key: controls rank ordering within sub-communicator
- info: can just use default: MPI_INFO_NULL

Example

```
MPI_Comm_split_type(MPI_COMM_WORLD, MPI_COMM_TYPE_SHARED,
                    rank, MPI_INFO_NULL, &nodecomm);
```



Allocating the array

```
int MPI_Win_allocate_shared (MPI_Aint size, int disp_unit,
  MPI_Info info, MPI_Comm comm, void *baseptr, MPI_Win *win)

MPI_WIN_ALLOCATE_SHARED(SIZE, DISP_UNIT, INFO, COMM, BASEPTR,
                        WIN, IERROR)
  INTEGER(KIND=MPI_ADDRESS_KIND) SIZE, BASEPTR
  INTEGER DISP_UNIT, INFO, COMM, WIN, IERROR
```

- size: window size in bytes
- disp_unit: basic counting unit in bytes, e.g. sizeof(int)
- info: can just use default: MPI_INFO_NULL
- comm: parent comm (must be within a single node)
- baseptr: allocated storage
- win: allocated window

Traffic Model Example

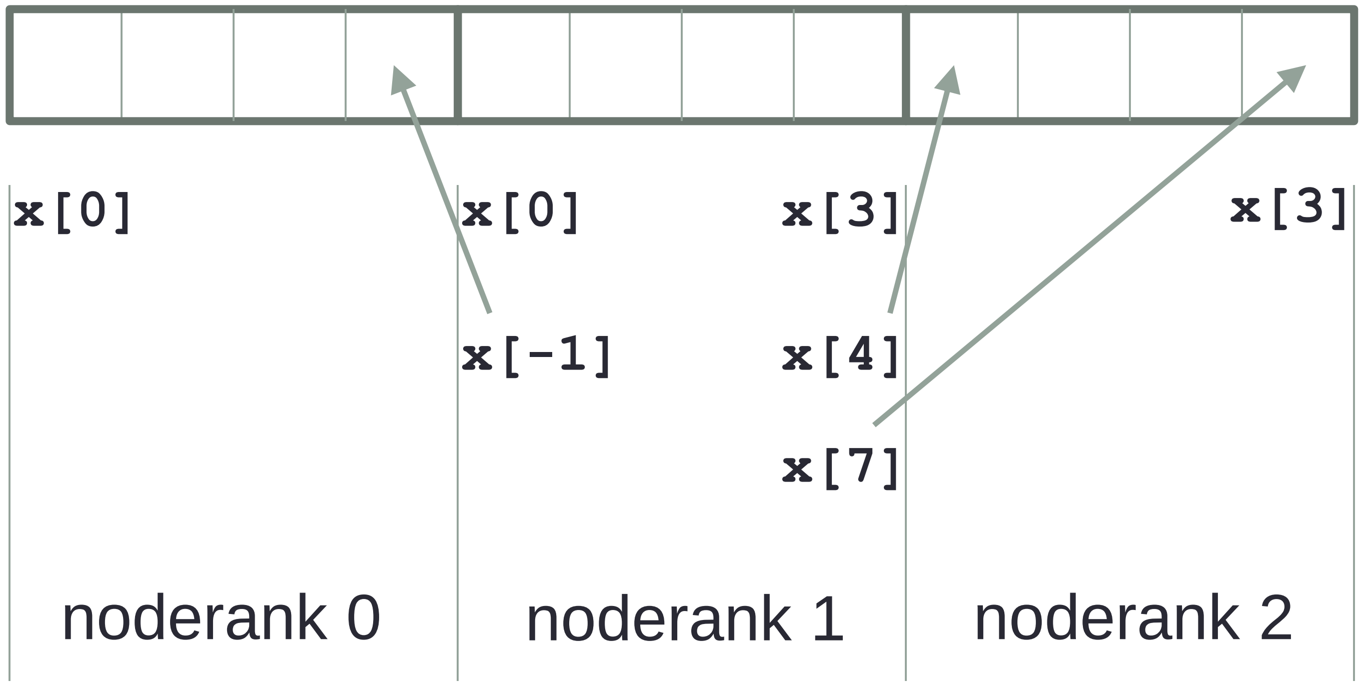
```
MPI_Comm nodecomm;
int *oldroad;
MPI_Win nodewin;
MPI_Aint winsize;
int displ_unit;

winsize = (nlocal+2)*sizeof(int);

// displacements counted in units of integers
disp_unit = sizeof(int);

MPI_Win_allocate_shared(winsize, disp_unit,
            MPI_INFO_NULL, nodecomm, &oldroad, &nodewin);
```

Shared Array with nlocal = 2



- Default is contiguous block of memory across processes
  - use value of info, alloc_shared_noncontig = true, to relax this

Accessing another rank's memory

- In previous diagram
  - rank 1 can access rank 2's x[0] by referencing its own `x[4]`
- Might be more convenient to reference as `xrank2[0]`
  - but how do we find out address for xrank2?
  - especially if we've allowed MPI to give us non-contiguous memory
- Rank 2 could MPI_Send its value of x to rank 0
  - will not work in general!
- Separate processes can have different virtual addresses (i.e. pointer values) for the same physical location
  - OS may do this deliberately to foil buffer overflow hacking attacks
- Must use special call
  - see `MPI_Win_shared_query()`
  - gives us a local pointer which we can use to access remote data

Synchronisation

- Can do halo swapping by direct copies
  - need to ensure data is ready beforehand and available afterwards
  - requires synchronisation, e.g. MPI_Win_fence
  - takes hints – can just set to default of 0

- Entirely analogous to OpenMP
  - bracket remote accesses with omp_barrier or begin / end parallel

```
MPI_Win_fence(0, nodecomm);
oldroad[nlocal+2] = oldroad[nlocal]
oldroad[-1]       = oldroad[1];
MPI_Win_fence(0, nodecomm);
```

Off-node comms

- Direct read / write only works within node
- Still need MPI calls for inter-node
  - e.g. noderank = 0 and noderank = nodesize-1 call MPI_Send / Recv
  - could actually use *any* rank to do this ...
- This must take place in MPI_COMM_WORLD

Conclusion

- Relatively simple syntax for shared memory in MPI
  - much better than roll-your-own solutions
- Possible use cases
  - on-node computations without needing MPI
  - one copy of static data per node (not per process)

- Advantages
  - an incremental "plug and play" approach unlike MPI + OpenMP
- Disadvantages
  - no automatic support for splitting up parallel loops
  - global array may have halo data sprinkled inside
  - may not help in some memory-limited cases