Parallel Matlab: RTExpress on 64-bit SGI Altix with SCSL and MPT

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Abstract

By late 2004, RTExpress™, a compiler and runtime environment that provides the capability for MATLAB® script files to be directly compiled and then executed on parallel high performance computers (HPC), will be released for the SGI platform, including the new Altix Itanium systems. [1] This new version of RTExpress™ will take advantage of the SGI hardware and software package, specifically 64-bit operation, the SGI MPT (Message Passing Toolkit), the SGI SCSL (Scientific Computing Software Library), and is the first version of RTExpress™ to utilize the advantages of a global shared-memory system. This paper presents the first test results using this new release. Improvement in corner-turn timing is anticipated due to the SGI NUMAlink interconnect fabric, as compared to other interconnect technology common in Linux clusters, such as Ethernet. Up to an order of magnitude improvement in corner turn performance, and overall 2D FFT performance is expected.

1 Introduction

The RTExpress™ environment is a software tool that assists a user in rapidly developing real-time embedded systems. RTExpress™ is a compiler and runtime environment that provides the capability for MATLAB® script files to be directly compiled and then executed on parallel high performance computers (HPC). RTExpress™ provides the capability to employ the power of an HPC on standard MATLAB® without having to recode the MATLAB® in the HPC target language. Its features include support for real-time data and machine performance visualization, multiple parallelization paradigms, multiple homogeneous parallel architectures, utilization of machine specific optimized vector libraries and native compilers, and the ability to change real-time algorithm parameters on-the-fly. [2]

The SGI Scientific Computing Software Library (SCSL) consists of several standard and proprietary scientific and math functions, optimized for use on the SGI platforms. Included in this package are BLAS (Basic Linear Algebra Subprograms) and LAPACK (Linear Algebra Package) libraries. The SCSL library supports 64-bit integer arguments, single and double precision, and real and complex data types. [3] RTExpress™ implementations have always taken advantage of vendor-supplied libraries, as possible, to fully exploit the target processing capabilities.

The SGI Message Passing Toolkit (MPT) combines the standard Message Passing Interface (MPI), which is utilized by RTExpress™, with the SHMEM Library, which extends the interprocessor communication for shared memory systems. [4] The MPT facilities are a key element for taking full advantage of the SGI NUMAlink Interconnect fabric. The Altix system combines the NUMAflex system architecture with the standard components, including the Intel Itanium 2 and the fully supported, 64-bit Linux operating system. [5]

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2 Performance Results

A MATLAB script performs the 2D complex FFT

```
init_matrix  =  ones(fftsize, fftsize) +
                j * ones(fftsize, fftsize)

loop
    store time t1
    a = fft(init_matrix)
    store time t2
    a = a'
    store time t3
    a = fft(a)
    store time t4
end loop
```

Elapsed times are computed, averaging time over several iterations.

The operation begins with initialization of a MATLAB matrix. Using RTExpress, the script is mapped, using the graphic tool, “mapit”, to several compute elements for a data-parallel operation. In this manner, the columns of the data matrix are distributed to the compute elements, thereby giving each compute element only a portion of the total number of columns to operate on. The resulting matrix is then transposed

and redistributed. This operation, the corner turn, is typically the limiting operation for 2D FFT performance. Lastly, the new columns are again operated on by the compute elements, this time over-writing the input matrix. This in-place FFT should perform slightly faster since the step to copy the input data is not required.

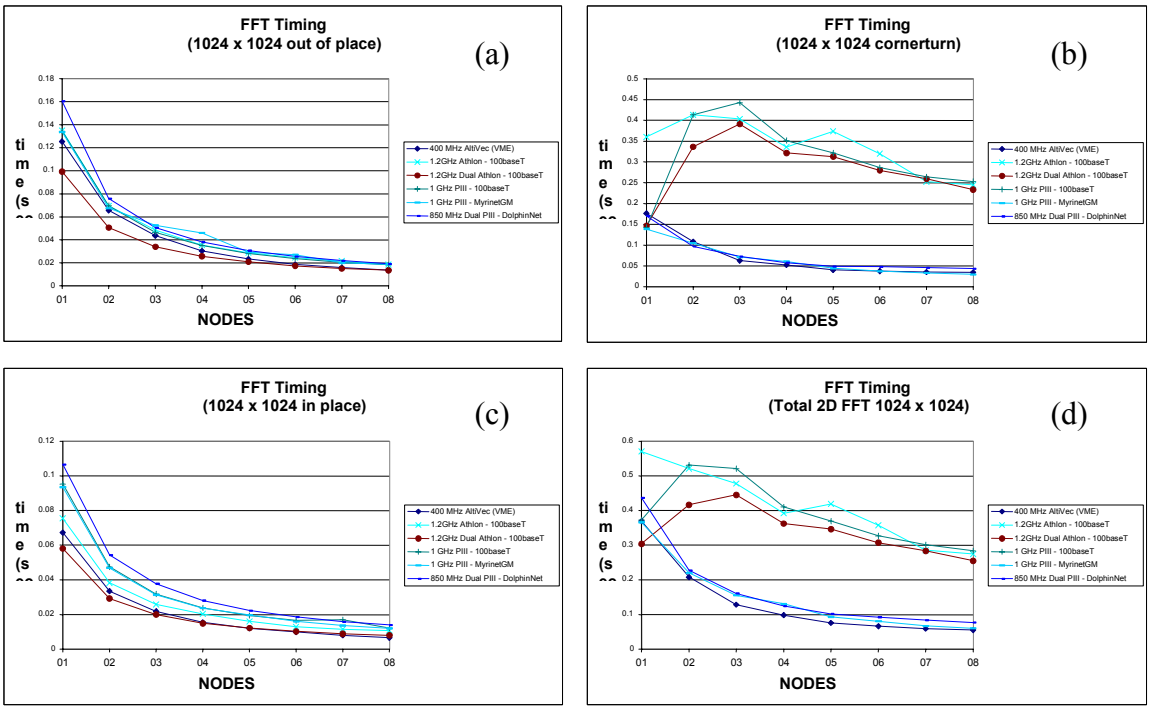

Figure 1 – RTExpress 2D FFT Performance Timing

The 2D FFT benchmark has been run on several platforms and interconnects, and Figure 1 shows some of the results taken for single-precision, complex 1k by 1k data set. Results have also been collected when running in double precision. The Corner turn performance (Fig 1b) provides an indication of the inter-processor communication capabilities of a particular system. To date, most systems have shown excellent scalable results for FFT performance (Fig 1a and Fig 1c), however, the total 2D FFT (Fig 1d) is limited by the performance of the corner turn. Most Linux clusters, utilizing standard 100base-T Ethernet have interconnect performance dominating the overall 2D FFT timing. Systems utilizing Myrinet™ or DolphiNet™ interconnects show a notable improvement to standard 100base-T. The timings from the SGI system will be compared to data displayed in Figure 1.

References

[1] M. Benincasa, R. Besler, D. Brassaw, R.L. Kohler, Jr. "Rapid Development of Real-Time Systems Using RTExpress", Proceedings of the 12th International Parallel Processing Symposium, pages 594-599, Mar 30 – Apr 3, 1998

[2] SCSL (Scientific Computing Software Library) http://www.sgi.com/software/scsl.html

[3] MPT (Message Passing Toolkit) http://www.sgi.com/software/mpt

[4] SGI Altix 3000 http://www.sgi.com/servers/altix

[5] M. Woodacre, D. Robb, D. Roe, K. Feind, "The SGI Altix 3000 Global Shared-Memory Architecture" SGI White Paper