Linux on z/VM Performance

Understanding Disk I/O

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zLX02

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Agenda

• I/O Performance Model
• ECKD Architecture
• RAID Disk Subsystems
• Parallel Access Volumes
• Virtual Machine I/O
• Linux Disk I/O
Recommendation: Klapschaats (Clap Skate)
- Potential performance improvement (it depends)
- Comfortable on long distances (for some workloads)
- Need to practice (application changes)
- Additional maintenance (management overhead)
- Twice as expensive (investment cost)
Linux on z/VM Tuning Objective

Resource Efficiency

- Achieve SLA at minimal cost
  - “As Fast As Possible” is a very expensive SLA target
- Scalability has its limitations
  - The last 10% peak capacity is often the most expensive

Recommendations are not always applicable

- Every customer environment is different
- Very Few Silver Bullets
- Consultant skills and preferences

http://zvmpert.wordpress.com/
**Benchmark Challenges**

Benchmarks have limited value for real workload

- Every real life workload is different
  - All are different from synthetic benchmarks
  - There are just too many options and variations to try
- Benchmarks can help understand the mechanics
  - Provide evidence for the theoretical model

Use performance data from your real workload

- Focus on the things that really impact service levels

Given enough benchmarks, you end up with more new questions than answers...
Who Cares About Disk
“Disks are very fast today”
“Our response time is a few ms”

Selection Criteria
- Capacity
- Price

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Price</th>
<th>Capacity</th>
<th>Latency</th>
<th>Seek Time</th>
<th>Host Interface</th>
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© 2010 Brocade, SHARE in Seattle, “Understanding FICON I/O Performance”
Anatomy of Basic Disk I/O

Reading from disk
- Seek - Position the heads over the right track
- Latency - Wait for the right sector
- Read - Copy the data into memory

Average I/O Operation
- Seek over 1/3 of the tracks $\sim 10$ ms
- Wait for 1/2 a rotation $\sim 3$ ms
- Read the data $\sim 1$ ms

Host and disk decoupled by speed matching buffer.
Classic DASD Configuration

CKD – Count Key Data Architecture
- Large system disk architecture since 60’s
- Track based structure
  - Disk record size to match application block size
- Disk I/O driven by channel programs
  - Autonomous operation of control unit and disk
  - Reduced CPU and memory requirements
- ECKD – Extended Count Key Data
  - Efficient use of cache control units
  - Improved performance with ESCON and FICON channel

FBA – Fixed Block Architecture
- Popular with 9370 systems
- Not supported by z/OS
- Access by block number
- Uniform block size

Linux disk I/O does not exploit CKD features
Classic DASD Configuration

Channel Attached DASD
- Devices share a channel
- Disconnect and reconnect
- Track is cached in control unit buffer

IOSQ
- Device Contention
- Interrupt Latency

PEND
- **Channel Busy**
- Path Latency
- Control Unit Busy
- Device Busy

DISC
- **Seek**
- Latency
- Rotational Delay

CONN
- Data Transfer
- Channel Utilization

disk-io-response-time-metrics/
### Classic DASD Configuration

**Instrumentation provided by z/VM Monitor**

- **Metrics from z/VM and Channel**
  - Traditionally used to optimize disk I/O performance
- **Response time improvement through seek optimization**
  - Relocating data sets to avoid multiple hot spots
  - I/O scheduling – elevator algorithm

---

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<th>Time</th>
<th>Dev</th>
<th>Device</th>
<th>%Dev</th>
<th>&lt;SSCH/sec&gt;</th>
<th>Resp Ser Pend Disc Conn</th>
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<td>3390-?</td>
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<td>3390-?</td>
<td>15.8 198.9 977.4 0.8 0.8 0.1 0.5 0.2</td>
</tr>
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</table>

DISC = Seek + Rotational Delay
Contemporary Disk Subsystem

Big Round Brown Disk
- Specialized Mainframe DASD
- One-to-one map of Logical Volume on Physical Volume
- Physical tracks in CKD format
- ECKD Channel Programs to exploit hardware capability

Contemporary Disk Subsystem
- Multiple banks of commodity disk drives
  - RAID configuration
  - Dual power supply
  - Dual controller
- Microcode to emulate ECKD channel programs
  - Data spread over banks, ranks, array sites
- Lots of memory to cache the data
RAID Configuration

RAID: Redundant Array of Independent Disks
- Setup varies among vendors and models
- Error detection through parity data
- Error correction and hot spares
- Spreading the I/O over multiple disks

Performance Considerations
- The drives are “just disks”
- RAID does not avoid latency
- Large data cache to avoid I/O
- Cache replacement strategy

Additional Features
- Instant copy
- Autonomous backup
- Data replication
RAID Configuration

Provides Performance Metrics like 3990-3
  - Model is completely different
  - DISC includes all internal operations
    - Reading data into cache
    - Data duplication and synchronization

Bimodal Service Time distribution
  - Cache read hit
    - Data available in subsystem cache
    - No DISC time
  - Cache read miss
    - Back-end reads to collect data
    - Service time unrelated to logical I/O

Average response time is misleading
  - Cache hit ratio
  - Service time for cache read miss
RAID Configuration

Statistics obtained from DASD subsystem

- Many DASD subsystems implement the 3990 metrics
  - Model is different so metrics don’t map completely
  - Some vendors cheat a bit to please z/OS Storage Management
  - Additional performance data with dedicated tools

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<th>Hit%</th>
<th>Read%</th>
<th>I/O Hits</th>
<th>Hit%</th>
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<th>Hit%</th>
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Example:
- Cache Hit Ratio: 90%
- Average DISC: 0.5 ms
- Service Time Miss: 5 ms

Read Prediction
- Detecting sequential I/O
- ECKD: Define Extent

RAID does not improve hit ratio
- Read-ahead can improve hit ratio
- RAID makes read ahead cheaper
RAID Configuration

Write statistics obtained from DASD subsystem

- DFW: DASD Fast Write - Stored in Non-Volatile Storage
- Write penalty for RAID configurations

<table>
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Disk I/O Example

210K blocks per second = 105 MB/s -> 6.3 GB written

105 MB/s & 272 context switches -> ~ 400 KB I/O’s

PAV Base + 2 Alias 326 I/O per sec

DISC time 1.2 ms for 1/3 of I/O's -> 3.9 ms subsystem response for writes

326 writes per second eligible for DFW

Could not keep up with writes

Every 3rd I/O had to wait

2194 tracks @ 48KB = 105 MB/s
Channel Instrumentation

Instrumentation provided by Channel Subsystem

- Channels often shared with other LPARs in the system
- Channel is a little computer system of its own
  - Processor and memory, different buses with different capacity
- High channel utilization will slow down the I/O
  - FICON is packet switched – longer PEND and CONN times
  - ESCON is connection switched – longer DISC times

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Time</th>
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FICON Fabric can present some challenges

- **FICON switches provide additional instrumentation**
  - High bandwidth and long distance – buffer credits
- **Strange numbers may indicate configuration issues**
  - Channels not configured
- **Report is useful to see I/O volume and block size**
  - Do the math to see whether connect time makes sense

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>CHP</th>
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S/390 I/O Model: Single Active I/O per Logical Volume

- Made sense with one logical volume per physical volume
- Too restrictive on contemporary DASD subsystems
  - Logical volume can be striped over multiple disks
  - Cached data could be accessed without real disk I/O
  - Even more restrictive with large logical volumes
Parallel Access Volumes

Base and Alias Subchannels

- Alias appear like normal device subchannel
  - Host and DASD subsystem know it maps on the same set of data
  - Simultaneous I/O possible on base and each alias subchannel
- DASD subsystem will run them in parallel when possible
  - Operations may be performed in different order
Access to cached data while previous I/O is still active

- I/O throughput mainly determined by cache miss operations
  - Assumes moderate hit ratio and an alias subchannel

Example

- Cache hit ratio of 90%
  - Cache hit response time 0.5 ms
  - Cache miss response 5.5 ms
Parallel Access Volumes

Queuing of next I/O closer to the device
- Interesting with high cache hit ratio when PEND is significant
- Avoids delay due to PEND time
  - Service time for cache hit determined only by CONN time
  - Assuming sufficient alias subchannels

Example
- Cache hit ratio of 95%
  - Cache hit response time 0.5 ms
  - Cache miss response 5.5 ms

![Diagram showing single subchannel and base alias with elapsed times: PEND 0.2 ms, DISC 5.0 ms, CONN 0.3 ms.](image)
Parallel Access Volumes

Multiple parallel data transfers over different channels

- Parallel operations retrieving from data cache
  - Depends on DASD subsystem architecture and bandwidth
  - Configuration aspects (ranks, banks, etc)
  - Implications on FICON capacity planning

- Cache hit service time improved by the number of channels
  - Combined effect: service time determined by aggregate bandwidth
  - Assumes infinite number of alias subchannels
  - Assumes sufficiently high cache hit ratio

```
Single Subchannel

Base Alias Alias Alias Alias
PEND 0.2 ms DISC 5.0 ms CONN 0.3 ms
```
Performance Benefits

1. Access to cached data while previous I/O is still active
   - Avoids DISC time for cache miss
2. Queuing the request closer to the device
   - Avoid IOSQ and PEND time
3. Multiple operations in parallel retrieving data from cache
   - Utilize multiple channels for single logical volume
   - Lots of things to learn about device utilization

Restrictions

- PAV is chargeable feature on DASD subsystems
  - Infinite number of alias devices is unpractical and expensive
- Workload must issue multiple independent I/O operations
  - Typically demonstrated by I/O queue for the device (IOSQ time)
Parallel Access Volumes

Static PAV
- Alias devices assigned in DASD Subsystem configuration
- Association observed by host Operating System

Dynamic PAV
- Assignment can be changed by higher power (z/OS WLM)
- Moving an alias takes coordination between parties
- Linux and z/VM tolerate but not initiate Dynamic PAV

HyperPAV
- Pool of alias devices is associated with set of base devices
- Alias is assigned for the duration of a single I/O
- Closest to “infinite number of alias devices assumed”
CP does not exploit PAV for its own I/O (page, spool)

Virtual machines can exploit PAV

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Dedicated DASD</th>
<th>z/VM Minidisks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PAV-unaware</td>
<td>Limited to single threaded I/O</td>
<td>Transparently exploits PAV for stacked minidisks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PAV-aware</td>
<td>Exploits PAV through dedicated base and alias devices</td>
<td>Over-committted multi-threaded I/O</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Stacked minidisks results in parallel I/O

- Different minidisks on the same logical volume
  - For different guests
  - For the same guest

- Common desire to reduce the number of subchannels
  - Small pseudo full-pack volumes without PAV
  - Large stacked volumes with PAV
  - Large pseudo full-pack volumes with PAV
Virtual machines are just like real machines
- Prepare a channel program for the I/O
- Issue a SSCH instruction to virtual DASD (minidisk)
- Handle the interrupt that signals completion

*z/VM does the smoke and mirrors*
- Translate the channel program
  - Virtual address translation, locking user pages
  - Fence minidisk with a Define Extent CCW
- Issue the SSCH to the real DASD
- Reflect interrupt to the virtual machine

**Diagnose I/O**
- High-level Disk I/O protocol
- Easier to manage
- Synchronous and Asynchronous
Linux provides different driver modules

- **ECKD** – Native ECKD DASD
  - Minidisk or dedicated DASD
  - Also for Linux in LPAR
- **FBA** – Native FBA DASD
  - Does not exist in real life
  - Virtual FBA – z/VM VDISK
  - Disk in CMS format
  - Emulated FBA – EDEVICE
- **DIAG** – z/VM Diagnose 250
  - Disk in CMS reserved format
  - Device independent

- Real I/O is done by z/VM

- No obvious performance favorite
  - Very workload dependent
Linux Disk I/O

Instrumentation provided by z/VM Monitor

- I/O counters kept by z/VM

Screen: ESASEEK
DASD Seeks Analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Dev</th>
<th>Device</th>
<th>Mdisk</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Seeks</th>
<th>Seeks Pct</th>
<th>Dist</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>08:47:00</td>
<td>954A</td>
<td>PR954A 3390-9</td>
<td>PR954A:</td>
<td>0 10016</td>
<td>7923</td>
<td>7923 100 266</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>08:47:00</td>
<td>ROB02</td>
<td>0300</td>
<td>1 3138</td>
<td>5471</td>
<td>5471 100 193</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>08:47:00</td>
<td>ROB02</td>
<td>0302</td>
<td>6680 9729</td>
<td>2452</td>
<td>2452 100 429</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Screen: ESAUSR3
User Resource Utilization - Part 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>UserID</th>
<th>DASD Block I/O Hits</th>
<th>Mdisk Virt Cache I/O</th>
<th>Pct</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>08:49:00</td>
<td>ROB01</td>
<td>1701 1059 0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>08:48:00</td>
<td>ROB01</td>
<td>6542 7197 28</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>08:47:00</td>
<td>ROB01</td>
<td>16982 14720 0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>08:46:00</td>
<td>ROB01</td>
<td>56 0 0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Virtual Machine I/O also uses other resources

- CPU – CCW Translation, dispatching
- Paging – Virtual machine pages for I/O operation
Linux Disk I/O

Linux Physical Block Device
- Abstract model for a disk
  - Divided into partitions
- Data arranged in blocks (512 byte)
- Blocks referenced by number

Linux Block Device Layer
- Data block addressed by
  - Device number (major / minor)
  - Block number
- All devices look similar

Linux Page Cache
- Keep recently used data
- Buffer data to be written out
Buffered I/O

- By default Linux will buffer application I/O using Page Cache
  - Lazy Write – updates written to disk at “later” point in time
  - Data Cache – keep recently used data “just in case”
  - Read Ahead – avoid I/O for sequential reading

- Performance improvement
  - More efficient disk I/O
  - Overlap of I/O and processing
**Buffered I/O**

- By default Linux will buffer application I/O using Page Cache
  - Lazy Write – updates written to disk at “later” point in time
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- Performance improvement
  - More efficient disk I/O
  - Overlap of I/O and processing

**Direct I/O**

- Avoids Linux page cache
  - Application decides on buffering
  - No guessing at what is needed next

- Same performance at lower cost
  - Not every application needs it
Linux Disk I/O

**Synchronous I/O**
- Single threaded application model
- Processing and I/O are interleaved

**Asynchronous I/O**
- Allow for overlap of processing and I/O
- Improves single application throughput
- Assumes a balance between I/O and CPU

**Matter of Perspective**
- From a high level everything is asynchronous
- Looking closer, everything is serialized again

**Linux on z/VM**
- Many virtual machines competing for resources
- Processing of one user overlaps I/O of the other
- Unused capacity is not wasted

“What is the value of good I/O response when nobody is waiting?”
Myth of Linux I/O Wait Percentage

- Shown in “top” and other Linux tools
- High percentage: good or bad?
- Just shows there was idle CPU and active I/O
  - Less demand for CPU shows high iowait%
  - Adding more virtual CPUs increases iowait%
  - High iowait% does not indicate an “I/O problem”

```
top - 11:49:20 up 38 days, 21:27,  2 users,  load average: 0.57, 0.13, 0.04
Tasks:  55 total,   2 running,  53 sleeping,   0 stopped,   0 zombie
Cpu(s):  0.3%us,  1.3%sy,  0.0%ni,  0.0%id,  96.7%wa,  0.3%hi,  0.3%si,  1.0%st
```

```
top - 11:53:32 up 38 days, 21:31,  2 users,  load average: 0.73, 0.38, 0.15
Tasks:  55 total,   3 running,  52 sleeping,   0 stopped,   0 zombie
Cpu(s):  0.0%us, 31.1%sy,  0.0%ni,  0.0%id,  62.5%wa,  0.3%hi,  4.3%si,  1.7%st
```
Myth of Linux Steal Time

- Shown in “top” and other Linux tools
  - “We have steal time, can the user run native in LPAR?”
- Represents time waiting for resources
  - CPU contention
  - Paging virtual machine storage
  - CP processing on behalf of the workload
  - Idle Linux guest with application polling
- Linux on z/VM is a shared resource environment
  - Your application does not own the entire machine
  - Your expectations may not match the business priorities
- High steal time may indicate a problem
  - Need other data to analyze and explain

```
top - 11:53:32 up 38 days, 21:31,  2 users,  load average: 0.73, 0.38, 0.15
Tasks:  55 total,   3 running,  52 sleeping,   0 stopped,   0 zombie
Cpu(s):  0.0%us, 31.1%sy,  0.0%ni,  0.0%id, 62.5%wa,  0.3%hi, 4.3%si,  1.7%st
```

“It was not yours, so nothing was stolen...”
Logical Block Devices
- Device Mapper
- Logical Volume Manager

Creates new block device
- Rearranges physical blocks

Avoid excessive mixing of data
Be aware for more exotic methods
- Mirrors and redundancy
- Anything beyond RAID 0
- Expensive overkill

concatenation

striping
Disk Striping

- Function provided by LVM and mdadm
- Engage multiple disks in parallel for your workload

Like shipping with many small trucks

- Will the small trucks be faster?
  - What if everyone does this?
- What is the cost of reloading the goods?
  - Extra drivers, extra fuel?
- Will there be enough small trucks?
  - Cost of another round trip?
Performance Aspects of Striping

- Break up a single large I/O into many small ones
  - Expecting that small ones are quicker than a large ones
  - Expect the small ones to go in parallel
- Engage multiple I/O devices for your workload
  - No benefit if all devices already busy
  - Your disk subsystem may already engage more devices
  - You may end up just waiting on more devices

Finding the Optimal Stripe Size is Hard

- Large stripes may not result in spreading of the I/O
- Small stripes increases cost
  - Cost of split & merge proportional to number of stripes
- Some applications will also stripe the data
- Easy approach: avoid it until performance data shows a problem
Claim: ECKD formatting is less efficient
- “because it requires low-level format”

Is this likely to be true?
- Design is from when space was very expensive
- Fixed Block has low level format too – but hidden from us

ECKD allows for very efficient use of disk space
- Allows application to pick most efficient block size
- Capacity of a 3390 track varies with block size
  - 48 KB with 4K block size
  - 56 KB as single block
- Complicates emulation of 3390 tracks on fixed block device
  - Variable length track size (log-structured architecture)
  - Fixed size a maximum capacity (typically 64 KB for easy math)

Claim in various IBM presentations
Conclusion

Avoid doing synthetic benchmarks
  - Hard to correlate to real life workload

Measure application response
  - Identify any workload that does not meet the SLA
  - Review performance data to understand the bottleneck
    - Be aware of misleading indicators and instrumentation
    - Some Linux experts fail to understand virtualization
  - Address resources that cause the problem
    - Don’t get tricked into various general recommendations

Performance Monitor is a must
  - Complete performance data is also good for chargeback
  - Monitoring should not cause performance problems
  - Consider a performance monitor with performance support
Linux on z/VM Performance

Understanding Disk I/O

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