Data Partitioning and Load Balancing
in Parallel Disk Systems [*]

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Technical Report A/02/96
Department of Computer Science
University of the Saarland
April 1996

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Abstract

Parallel disk systems provide opportunities for exploiting I/O parallelism in two possible ways, namely via inter-request and intra-request parallelism. In this paper we discuss the main issues in performance tuning of such systems, namely striping and load balancing, and show their relationship to response time and throughput. We outline the main components of an intelligent file system that optimizes striping by taking into account the requirements of the applications, and performs load balancing by judicious file allocation and dynamic redistributions of the data when access patterns change. Our system uses simple but effective heuristics that incur only little overhead. We present performance experiments based on synthetic workloads and real-life traces.

Keywords: parallel disk systems, performance tuning, file striping, data allocation, load balancing, disk cooling.

1 Introduction: Tuning Issues in Parallel Disk Systems

Parallel disk systems are of great importance to massively parallel computers since they are scalable and they can ensure that I/O is not the limiting factor in achieving high speedup [10, 55, 63]. However, to make effective use of the commercially available architectures, it is necessary to develop intelligent software tools that allow automatic tuning of the parallel disk system to varying workloads. The choice of a striping unit and whether to choose a file-specific striping unit versus a global striping unit are important parameters that affect the response time and throughput of the system. Equally important is the decision of how to allocate the data on the actual disks and how to perform redistribution of the data when access patterns change. These tuning options need to be performed dynamically, using simple but effective heuristics that incur only little overhead.

This paper presents a set of performance tuning techniques for parallel disk systems. These techniques are orthogonal to the techniques for high availability that are typically employed in parallel disk systems (e.g., RAID levels), and can be applied to a wide spectrum of applications ranging from conventional file systems and WWW servers to database systems. Throughout the paper we assume that the underlying computer architecture is that of a shared-memory multiprocessor; extensions to distributed-memory architectures are conceivable but are not considered in this paper.

In order to effectively exploit the potential for I/O parallelism in parallel disk systems, data must be partitioned and distributed across disks. The partitioning can be performed at two levels:

1. The physical (block or byte) level. The term *striping* is used for this variant of partitioning schemes which divides a file into fixed-size runs of logically consecutive data units that are assigned to disks in a round-robin manner [43, 51, 65, 68]. The *striping unit* denotes the number of consecutive data bytes or blocks stored per disk.

2. The application level. The term *declustering* has been employed in relational database systems to denote partitioning schemes that perform a horizontal division of a relation into fragments based on the values of one or several attributes. Among the schemes employed for single attribute partitioning are hashing and range partitioning [18, 27], while techniques based on Cartesian product files have been advocated for multiple attribute declustering (e.g., [20, 21, 29, 44]).

Striping has an advantage over application-level methods in that it can be applied as a generic low-level method for a wide spectrum of data types (all of which are ultimately mapped into block-structured files). In this paper we therefore restrict our attention to file striping for data partitioning. In the following, a file may denote a tablespace or indexspace in a relational database, a logical object cluster in an object-oriented database, a document such as WWW pages in a multimedia information system, or indeed simply a Unix-like sequence-of-blocks file. We shall use the term *striping width* of a file to denote the number of disks over which a file is spread. A logically consecutive portion of the file that resides on one disk and whose size is a striping unit is called a *run*. All runs of a file that are mapped to the same disk are combined into a single allocation unit called an *extent*.

Striping provides opportunities for exploiting I/O parallelism in two possible ways. Intra-request (intra-operation) parallelism allows the parallel execution of a single request by multiple disks. Inter-request (inter-operation) parallelism can be achieved if independent requests are being served by the disk system at the same time. The *degree of parallelism* in serving a single data request is the number of different disks on which the requested data resides.

1.1 Tuning Issues in Data Partitioning

The striping unit is an important parameter that must be chosen judiciously in order to reduce the service time of a single request or to improve the throughput of multiple requests [12, 13, 25, 33, 48, 80]. A large striping unit tends to cluster a file on one disk, which does not allow any degree of intra-request parallelism. In consequence, the service time of a request is not improved, but the throughput is optimal if the requests are uniformly spread across all disks. At the other end of the spectrum, a small striping

unit provides very good response time for light load, but severely limits the throughput, as the total amount of device-busy time consumed in serving a single request is increasing with decreasing striping unit. Consequently, for small striping units the response time may deteriorate under heavy load due to queueing delays. In practice, it is necessary to choose the striping unit such that a certain objective function is minimized. One such objective function aims at minimizing the response time subject to a constraint on the achievable throughput.

In [11, 12, 48] heuristic methods are proposed to determine the striping unit of a disk array, based on the knowledge of the average request size and the application's expected multiprogramming level, under the assumption of a closed queueing model. While these assumptions may be valid for relatively small multiprogramming levels, they do not scale up to data management systems with large numbers of concurrent users, which translates to high arrival rates with stochastic load fluctuation. It is most crucial for such systems to guarantee a certain level of performance during these peak periods. Most heuristic methods also advocate choosing a global striping unit, i.e., the same striping unit for all files in the system [11, 12, 48]. However, many applications such as multimedia information systems (e.g., in digital libraries or medical applications) exhibit highly diverse file characteristics making it desirable to be able to tune the striping unit individually for each file. Consider, for example, the case where a global striping unit may be appropriate at some moment in time, but later on the load is shifting causing some crucial files to exhibit unusually high response time. File-specific striping enables us to incrementally restripe only these crucial files, leaving the other files with the (old) global striping unit.

After the striping unit has been determined (globally or on file-specific basis) the file system must derive the striping width, i.e., the number of disks across which the file(s) is (are) spread. In our model, a file is either spread across all disks, or, if the file is relatively small, its width is obtained as the quotient of the file size and the striping unit. Similar response-time constraints to the ones discussed above, may justify, however, that some files be stored on a "dedicated" subset of disks in order to avoid contention, and hence their striping width would be limited by the number of disks in this subset. This specific consideration of incorporating response-time constraints is not pursued in this paper, however.

1.2 Tuning Issues in Data Allocation and Load Balancing

The striping unit(s) and striping width(s) are only some of the parameters that affect the response time or throughput of a parallel disk system. The

decision of how to allocate or place the files on the actual disks is an equally important one in order to obtain good *load balancing*. Load refers to the amount of work done by each disk and it affects both the response time and throughput. Balancing the load contributes towards minimizing the average length of the queues associated with the disk (minimizing the service time variance per disk would be another factor [49], which is not considered in this paper, however). Very small striping units lead to very good load balancing; in the extreme case each request involves all the disks in the system so that the load is perfectly balanced. But throughput considerations require for many applications that we choose large striping units (e.g., the size of a cylinder) [11, 12, 13, 33, 48, 51, 80]. Thus, load balancing needs to be performed even if striping is employed.

In order to perform disk load balancing it is necessary to take into account the frequencies of the requests to the various files or data partitions as well as the request sizes. To account for these parameters, the file system has to keep track of the following related statistics:

- the *heat* of extents and disks, where the heat is defined as the sum of the number of block accesses of an extent or disk per time unit, as determined by statistical observation over a certain period of time,

- and the *temperature* of extents, which is defined as the ratio between heat and size [14, 16, 42].

If the striping unit is a byte and all files are partitioned across all disks in the system, then we obtain a well balanced I/O load. While this approach may be adequate for supercomputer applications characterized by very large request sizes [41] (i.e., a high data rate), it certainly limits the throughput of transaction processing applications characterized by a high rate of read and write requests to small amounts of random information [33] (i.e., a high I/O rate). As soon as the striping unit is relatively large (e.g., a track or cylinder), the need for load balancing reappears immediately, even if the files are partitioned across all disks. This is due to the fact that the heat of the various blocks or extents are often distributed in a highly non-uniform manner.

1.3   Contribution and Outline of the Paper

This paper presents viable methods for several key issues in the automatic tuning of parallel storage systems. Various aspects of earlier versions of our approach have been published in [79, 80, 71, 72], and [78, 84] give an account of the more general project where this work has been embedded. In this paper, we emphasize the system perspective and we describe more advanced automatic tuning methods. We provide guidelines for potential

system architects of self-reliant storage systems and we give a comprehensive experimental evidence of the viability and benefits of our approach.

We present a procedure for performing data partitioning that is a significant extension to the algorithm outlined in [79]. In particular, our new algorithm takes into account queueing delays explicitly, by providing a computationally tractable analytical approximation for the fork-join queueing model [62]. We describe in detail an effective method for heat bookeeping and our demon-based dynamic migration procedure based on disk cooling. Although the problems of data partitioning and load balancing are orthogonal issues, they are not independent. The performance experiments reported in this paper clearly illustrate this issue and show that the combined effects of data partitioning and load balancing produce significant advantages over conventional striping methods based on physical device units (e.g, block, track).

The remainder of this paper is organized as follows. We will describe in Sections 2 and 3 the main components of an intelligent file manager for parallel disk systems that performs automatic data partitioning, data allocation, and load balancing by incremental reorganization steps. In Section 4 we report on performance studies of our file system based on synthetic workloads and real-life traces. We conclude with an outlook on additional research avenues that we plan to explore in order to generalize our approach.

2   Data Partitioning

We have developed an analytic model to determine heuristically the optimal striping unit and striping width on an individual file basis or on a global basis. These parameters can be chosen for each file individually, based upon the file's estimated average request size R, or globally by using instead the average request size over all files, denoted by $\overline{R}$. In either case the optimization can be carried out in one or two phases, A and B, depending upon the anticipated arrival rate of requests. For low arrival rates of requests, where we can assume that no queueing delays occur, Phase A chooses a degree of parallelism that minimizes the service time of an average request of size R (or $\overline{R}$) which is equivalent to minimizing the response time if the system operates in single user mode. Phase B chooses a degree of parallelism that minimizes the (multi-user) response time subject to the constraint that the achievable throughput is at least as high as the application's average arrival rate of requests to all files, denoted by $\overline{\lambda}$. The optimal degree of parallelism, P_{eff}, chosen for an average request is then adjusted by choosing the minimum (normalized as explained below) between the outcomes of Phases A and B. The striping unit and width are then derived from the optimal degree of parallelism, P_{eff}.

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Our Phase B optimization uses an open queueing model in order to take into account explicitly the throughput considerations and queueing delays. As mentioned before, the striping method proposed by Chen et al. [12, 48] is based on a closed queueing model. There, a heuristic formula is derived from experiments as well as approximative analytical treatment, which suggests a global striping unit of

$$SU = \sqrt{\frac{(L \ X \ (M-1) \ \overline{R}}{D}} \tag{1}$$

where L is the average latency (sum of seek and rotational delays) of a disk, X is the transfer rate of a disk, M is the multiprogramming level of the application, $\overline{R}$ is the average request size, and D is the number of disks. [11] further extends this approach by considering the impact of parity writes in a RAID level 5 system. Chen et al. [12, 48] also discuss the difficulty of estimating the multiprogramming level. As we pointed out earlier, we consider an open queueing model to be more appropriate for a data management system with a large number of users (as opposed, for example, to a file server in a LAN of workstations). In addition, an estimate of the average arrival rate of requests to all files, $\overline{\lambda}$, which is used in our model, is generally much easier to obtain than an estimate of M, the multiprogramming level.

2.1   Phase A: Minimizing Service Time

Given a number of files to be allocated, Phase A determines the optimal degree of partitioning on a file-specific (global) basis based on average request request size R ($\overline{R}$). This estimate can be derived in many cases from the file's type information. For example, in an OLTP system such as airline reservation or phone call switching and accounting, one can typically expect an average request size of a block. On the other hand, in a multimedia application such as digital libraries or medical archiving, we can expect that all requests will require access to an entire document (e.g., an image) and hence R would be the file size.

Let P be the degree of parallelism involved in serving an average request of size R, i.e., the number of disks involved in serving this request. In the absence of queueing delays, the expected service time, to be denoted by $T_{serv}(R, P)$, is in fact equal to the expected response time, to be denoted by $T_{resp}(R, P)$. The expected service time is given by:

$$T_{serv}(R, P) = \max_i(t_{seek,i} + t_{rot,i}) + t_{trans}(R, P) \tag{2}$$

where $t_{seek,i}$ and $t_{rot,i}$ $(i = 1, ..., P)$ denote the seek time and rotation time, respectively, of disk i involved in serving the request. For tractability purposes, we replace the right hand side by the following approximation:

$$T_{serv}(R, P) = \max_i(t_{seek,i}) + \max_i(t_{rot,i}) + t_{trans}(R, P) \qquad (3)$$

Thus, we note that the solution to equation (3) provides in fact an upper bound for $T_{serv}(R, P)$.

In order to obtain approximate distributions for $T_{seek} = \max_i(t_{seek,i})$ and $T_{rot} = \max_i(t_{rot,i})$ we make the standard assumption that the delays at each disk, i.e., seek times and rotation times are independent and identically distributed random variables [8, 45]. In addition, we assume that the delay probabilities are unconditional, i.e., the probability of a delay does not depend upon the probabilities of previous delays. In reality, there may be a certain degree of correlation among these variables, for example in the case of a synchronized disk array where all disks heads move in tandem. Also, in some applications, it is possible to have a sequence of requests to successive blocks on a disk; in other words the probability of a seek distance is conditional upon the probabilities of previous seek distances.

Let us denote by $d_{seek,i}$ and $d_{rot,i}$ $(i = 1, ...P)$ the dual random variables that give us the distances traveled on disk i by the head or arm, respectively, from the current location to the requested one. We shall compute first the expected values of $D_{seek} = \max_i(d_{seek,i})$ and $D_{rot} = \max_i(d_{rot,i})$ and use these values to derive the expected values of T_{seek} and T_{rot}.

Under the assumptions given above, the cumulative distribution functions for D_{seek} and D_{rot} can be computed, respectively, as the product of P cumulative distribution functions of the random variables, $d_{seek,i}$ and $d_{rot,i}$, corresponding to the P disks involved in serving the request.

We compute first the probability mass function of $d_{seek,i}$:

$$Prob[d_{seek,i} = z] = \frac{2(C - z)}{C^2} \qquad (4)$$

where C denotes the number of cylinders on one disk. From here be obtain the cumulative distribution function:

$$Prob[d_{seek,i} \leq z] = 1 - (1 - \frac{z}{C})^2 \qquad (5)$$

It was shown in [8] that the expected value $E[D_{seek}]$ is given by :

$$E[D_{seek}] = C(1 - \prod_{i=1}^{P} \frac{2i}{2i + 1}) \qquad (6)$$

The product in equation (6) can be approximated by the following expression, with constants $a = 0.577$ and $b = -0.118$:

$$E[D_{seek}] = C(1 - a - b \, ln(P)) \qquad (7)$$

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From here the expected value of T_{seek} can be approximated by the following linear equation with appropriate (disk-type-dependent) constants e and f:

$$E[T_{seek}] = eE[D_{seek}] + f \qquad (8)$$

We note here that the equation which converts seek distance in cylinders to seek time consists in fact of two components, a non-linear one and a linear one [8, 67]. However, in our model we are interested only in the expected value of the seek distance and the corresponding expected value of the seek time, and the expected value of the seek distance lies in the linear part of the distance-time equation.

The rotation distance on a given disk i, $d_{rot,i}$, gives the fraction of a full rotation that is necessary in order to position the arm on the first block of the current request. In order to compute $E[D_{rot}]$, we make the common assumption that $d_{rot,i}$ is a uniformly distributed variable in the range $[0, 1]$, thus:

$$Prob[d_{rot,i} \leq r] = r \qquad (9)$$

From here we obtain the cumulative distribution function of $D_{rot} = \max_i(d_{rot,i})$ as :

$$Prob[D_{rot} \leq r] = \prod_{i=1}^{P} Prob[d_{rot,i} \leq r] = r^P \qquad (10)$$

and furthermore $E[D_{rot}] = \frac{P}{P+1}$. It follows that the expected value of T_{rot} is given by:

$$E[T_{rot}] = \frac{P}{P+1} ROT \qquad (11)$$

where ROT denotes the rotation time of a disk.

It can be seen from these equations that as the degree of parallelism, P, increases, both the expected seek time, $E[T_{seek}]$, and the expected rotation time, $E[T_{rot}]$, increase also. For small requests these two components of service time are the dominant ones, hence the service time increases also. The only component of the service time that decreases with an increased degree of parallelism is the transfer time $t_{trans}(R, P)$. Each disk transfers $\frac{R}{P}$ blocks (assuming, for simplicity, identical subrequest sizes on the disks)), and if we ignore cylinder and head switches, the transfer time can be estimated as $\frac{R}{P}\frac{ROT}{B}$, where B is the number of blocks in a track. However, in order to account for the fact that these $\frac{R}{P}$ blocks span over track and cylinder boundaries we add corresponding correction terms and obtain:

$$E[t_{trans}(R,P)] = (n_{hs} - n_{cs})t_{hs} + n_{cs}t_{cs} + \frac{R}{PB}ROT \qquad (12)$$

where

n_{hs} is the number of head switches (including cylinder switches),
n_{cs} is the number of cylinder switches,
t_{hs} is the head switch delay, and
t_{cs} is the cylinder switch time (time for a seek of distance 1).

    Using simple probability arguments we estimate

$$n_{hs} = \lceil \frac{R/P}{B} \rceil - 1 + \frac{B - (R/P - (\lceil \frac{R/P}{B} \rceil - 1)B) - 1}{B} \quad \approx \frac{\frac{R}{P} - 1}{B} \qquad (13)$$

$$n_{cs} = \lceil \frac{R/P}{TB} \rceil - 1 + \frac{TB - (R/P - (\lceil \frac{R/P}{B} \rceil - 1)B) - 1}{TB} \quad \approx \frac{\frac{R}{P} - 1}{TB} \qquad (14)$$

and we obtain:

$$E[t_{trans}(R,P)] \;=\; (\frac{\frac{R}{P} - 1}{B} - \frac{\frac{R}{P} - 1}{TB})t_{hs} + \frac{\frac{R}{P} - 1}{TB}t_{cs} + \frac{R}{PB}ROT \quad (15)$$

where T is the number of tracks in a cylinder.

Combining the above results we obtain the following formula for the expected service time:

$$E[T_{serv}(R,P)] \;=\; eC(1 - a - bln(P)) + f + \frac{P}{P+1}ROT \qquad (16)$$

$$+ (\frac{\frac{R}{P} - 1}{B} - \frac{\frac{R}{P} - 1}{TB})t_{hs} + \frac{\frac{R}{P} - 1}{TB}t_{cs} + \frac{R}{PB}ROT$$

The trade-offs between increased seek and rotation time on one hand and reduced transfer time on the other hand for various degrees of parallelism are illustrated also in Figure 1. This example considers a file that is being striped across 4 disks with three different striping units and resulting degrees of intra-request parallelism. The figure traces the execution of an I/O request of size 4 blocks for the three configurations. In addition to the service time, the figure also illustrates the device-busy time for the given request, which is the sum of the times that the disks are involved in the request. For illustration purposes the seek and rotation times are combined together into latency time.

The optimal degree of parallelism, P_{opt}, can be determined by finding the minimum of the function $E[T_{serv}(R,P)]$, i.e., by solving the following cubic equation for P:

$$\frac{dE[T_{serv}(R,P)]}{dP} \quad = \quad \frac{ROT}{P+1} - \frac{eCb}{P} - \frac{PROT}{(P+1)^2} \tag{17}$$
$$+ (\frac{R}{P^2TB} - \frac{R}{P^2B})t_{hs} - \frac{R}{P^2TB}t_{cs} - \frac{RROT}{P^2B}$$
$$= \quad 0$$

2.2 Phase B: Minimizing Response Time by Considering Throughput and Queueing Delay

An increased degree of parallelism leads not only to trade-offs between seek and rotation time on one hand and reduced transfer time on the other hand, but also affects adversely the device-busy time of a request, i.e., the sum of the times that the disks are involved in the request and hence are not available for other requests. The relationship between the device-busy time and the various components of the response time is illustrated in the execution of requests in Figure 1. The throughput, measured as the number of requests completed per time unit, is inversely proportional to the average device-busy time of a request. Thus, higher degrees of parallelism lead to "unproductive" positioning times and, hence, to lower throughput.

The Phase A model for service time minimization has assumed that there are no interferences among the various requests and that no queueing delays occur. This is obviously not the situation in a multiprogramming environment; especially under heavy load, i.e., a high arrival rate, queueing delays play an important role. The scenario where each I/O request is served by a single disk is well understood and can be modeled via an M/G/1 queueing model [39]. We observe, however, that no general analytical model is known for so called fork-join queueing model [62, 52], i.e., for the case when I/O requests are served by multiple disks and the number of disks involved varies from request to request. An exception is the case when exactly two disks are being involved in serving every request [23, 24].

We present in this section a simplified and computationally tractable analytic approximation to a fork-join model, under the assumption of perfect load balance. More specifically, we compute first the mean response time on each disk, assuming the requests are equally distributed among the disks and that each disk can be represented as an M/G/1 system. Then, we use an approximation method outlined in [45] in order to compute the expected response time for requests with degree of parallelism $\overline{P}$ (averaged over the requests to all files) as the maximum among the response times of the $\overline{P}$ participating disks.

Our analytic approximation to the queueing model requires that we provide an estimate of the average arrival rate to all files in the system, denoted

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as $\overline{\lambda}$, in addition to the average request size, across all files, denoted as $\overline{R}$. Note that the value of $\overline{R}$ can be derived by sampling, or, alternatively, it can be computed from the average request sizes R_i to the individual files and the access frequencies of the files. The objective of Phase B is to compute the optimal value for $\overline{P}$, the average degree of parallelism.

Given that requests in our system have an average arrival rate of $\overline{\lambda}$ and an average degree of parallelism of $\overline{P}$, we obtain the overall arrival rate for the constituent subrequests as $\overline{\lambda} * \overline{P}$. Under the assumption of a perfectly balanced system where the subrequests are equally distributed among the disks, the subrequest arrival rate to a given disk i ($i = 1, ..., D$), to be denoted as λ_i, can be computed as:

$$\lambda_i = \frac{\overline{\lambda}\,\overline{P}}{D} \tag{18}$$

with D standing for the number of disks in the system.

The average subrequest size, to be denoted as $\overline{S}$, can be derived as:

$$\overline{S} = \frac{\overline{R}}{\overline{P}} \tag{19}$$

The service time for an individual subrequest to disk i, to be denoted by $t_{serv,i}(\overline{S})$, can be computed by using the standard formulae for the service time of a single disk. We can express the utilization of disk i, ρ_i, as:

$$\rho_i = \lambda_i * t_{serv,i}(\overline{S}) \tag{20}$$

Using our assumption that each disk can be viewed as an M/G/1 queue, the expected value of $t_{resp,i}(\overline{S})$, the response time of the subrequests served at disk i, is given as [39]:

$$E[t_{resp,i}(\overline{S})] = E[t_{serv,i}(\overline{S})] + \rho_i * E[t_{serv,i}(\overline{S})] * \frac{1 + c_i{}^2}{2(1 - \rho_i)} \tag{21}$$

where c_i^2 stands for the squared coefficient of variation of the service time of subrequests at disk i. c_i^2 is defined as the ratio of the corresponding variance (VAR) and expected service time:

$$c_i^2 = \frac{VAR[t_{serv,i}(\overline{S})]}{E[t_{serv,i}(\overline{S})]^2} \tag{22}$$

Also from M/G/1 queueing theory we obtain the formula below which relates the variance of the response time of individual subrequests on a disk i to the first three moments of their service time:

$$VAR[t_{resp,i}(\overline{S})] = VAR[t_{serv,i}(\overline{S})] + \frac{\lambda_i E[t_{serv,i}(\overline{S})^3]}{3(1 - \rho_i)} + \frac{\lambda_i^2 E[t_{serv,i}(\overline{S})^2]^2}{4(1 - \rho_i)^2} \tag{23}$$

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The response time for requests of size $\overline{R}$ served by $\overline{P}$ disks, to be denoted as $T_{resp}(\overline{R}, \overline{P})$, satisfies the equality:

$$E[T_{resp}(\overline{R}, \overline{P})] = \max_{i}(t_{resp,i}(\overline{S})) \tag{24}$$

In order to derive an analytic expression for the above equation, we make use of an approximation method presented in [45] which has been shown to be quite accurate if the response times of the individual subrequests, i.e., $t_{resp,i}$, obey a normal distribution. This approximation states that the expected response time for a request can be estimated as the response time of an individual subrequest plus a "correction" factor, which accounts for the slowest subrequest:

$$E[T_{resp}(\overline{R}, \overline{P})] \approx \begin{cases} E[t_{resp,i}(\overline{S})] + \sqrt{VAR[t_{resp,i}(\overline{S})]} \frac{\overline{P}-1}{\sqrt{2\overline{P}-1}} & for \ \overline{P} \leq 3 \\[4mm] E[t_{resp,i}(\overline{S})] + \sqrt{VAR[t_{resp,i}(\overline{S})]} \sqrt{2\log\overline{P}} & for \ \overline{P} > 3 \end{cases} \tag{25}$$

We have conducted a series of experiments and these have shown that the assumption of normally distributed response times for the individual subrequests is a valid one.

We observe that with an increase in the variance of the response time of individual subrequests, the correction factor increases correspondingly. The impact of the degree of parallelism $\overline{P}$ on the different components of the response time which we described informally in Figure 1 is taken into account implicitly by the correction factor in equation (25).

In order to calculate $E[T_{resp}]$ in equation (25) it is necessary to compute the first three moments of the subrequests' service time distribution, namely, $E[t_{serv,i}(\overline{S})]$, $E[t_{serv,i}(\overline{S})^2]$, and $E[t_{serv,i}(\overline{S})^3]$. For this calculation we need to derive the probability density function of $t_{serv,i}(\overline{S})$. The probability density functions of the corresponding seek and rotation times, i.e., $f_{seek,i}$ and $f_{rot,i}$, can be derived from equations (5) and (9), respectively; the probability density function of the transfer time, i.e., $f_{trans,i}$ is a constant whose value is obtained by setting $P = 1$ in equation (12). Finally, the probability density function for $t_{serv,i}(\overline{S})$ can be obtained by convoluting the probability density functions $f_{seek,i}$, $f_{rot,i}$, and $f_{trans,i}$. The full details of this derivation are given in [84].

The value $\overline{P}$ which minimizes equation (25) can be found iteratively, by going through the range of possible values for $\overline{P}$ (this is obviously bounded by D, the number of disks in the system). We choose this approach since equation (25) is not easily differentiable, unlike its counterpart in Phase A, namely, equation (16).

2.3 Putting It All Together: the Algorithm for Data Partitioning

The complete algorithm for data partitioning is outlined in Figure 2 below. If we anticipate a low arrival rate of requests and desire to perform optimization only by using Phase A, then Steps 2 and 3 are omitted. For file-specific partitioning Steps 1, 3, and 4 need to be iterated over the number of files in the system. On the other hand, for global partitioning, the above steps need to be executed only once, with one exception as explained below.

The effective degree of parallelism, P_{eff}, is computed in Step 3 by choosing the minimum between the the optimal degrees of parallelism computed in Steps 1 and 2. The factor $R_i/\overline{R}$ is used to normalize the outcome of Step 2. This is due to the fact that for requests larger than $\overline{R}$, we want the degree of parallelism of file i to exceed $\overline{P}$, and if R_i is smaller than $\overline{R}$, then $P_{eff,i}$ should be smaller than $\overline{P}$.

The optimal striping unit and striping width are then derived from $P_{eff,i}$ (or P_{eff}, respectively) in Step 4. If all I/O requests start at run boundaries then the striping unit of a file, SU_i, can be derived by using the formula $\lceil \frac{R_i}{P_{eff,i}} \rceil$. This is also the case when the requests are for individual blocks, i.e., $R_i = 1$, or for the entire file, i.e., $R_i = L_i$, with L_i being the file size. On the other hand, if the requests can start at any block inside a run, the formula above yields a striping unit which cannot support in most cases the degree of parallelism $P_{eff,i}$; this in fact increases $P_{eff,i}$ by one. In order to cover this case, the striping unit is derived by the alternative formula $\lceil \frac{R_i-1}{P_{eff,i}-1} \rceil$ which guarantees a degree of parallelism of $P_{eff,i}$ in all cases. In the case of $P_{eff,i} = 1$, the striping unit should be chosen as large as possible, i.e., $SU_i = L_i$, with L_i being the file size. Finally, the striping width, denoted as SW_i, is chosen as high as possible in order to support inter-request parallelism also, in addition to the intra-request parallelism optimized by the above steps. Notice that the striping width SW_i needs to be computed individually also in the case of global partitioning since some files may be too small to be spread over all the disks.

The algorithm outlined in Figure 2 accomplishes static partitioning, since all the files are allocated at the same time. However, the algorithm can be extended easily to perform dynamic partitioning. Dynamic partitioning and the complementary procedure of incremental repartitioning need to be performed when new files are added, old files are deleted, or when the access characteristics of some files change substantially. Let us discuss here the case when a new file needs to be added to the system. We need to recompute first the access characteristics specified in the input to the partitioning algorithm, i.e., to readjust $\overline{R}$, $\overline{S}$, and $\overline{\lambda}$ in order to account for the addition of the new file. In order to perform these calculations we need to estimate R_i, the average file request size, as well as λ_i, the average arrival rate of requests to the new file.

As discussed before, this information may be derived by sampling existing files of the same type, or may be provided as an administrator hint (e.g., when we consider a large database application). We then invoke the static partitioning algorithm given above on the new file in order to determine its effective degree of parallelism, $P_{eff,i}$, and its striping unit and width.

A companion incremental repartitioning procedure is invoked periodically. This procedure checks first if a trigger condition is satisfied in order to warrant incremental repartitioning. The trigger condition consists of two parts:

(1) $\overline{P}_{new} \neq \overline{P}_{old}$ and
(2) $E[t_{resp}(\overline{R}_{new}, \overline{P}_{new})] > E[t_{resp}(\overline{R}_{old}, \overline{P}_{old})] + \epsilon,$

with ϵ being a system determined parameter. The new set of statistics is computed by performing Steps 1 through 3 of the static partitioning algorithm; the old set of statistics is the one computed at the last invocation of this procedure. If the trigger condition is satisfied then we proceed to do incremental repartitioning of k files. The procedure considers candidate files for reorganization by using a list in which the files are sorted in descending order of heat. We use heat as an ordering criterium since this measures the product of arrival rate and file size; an early repartitioning of the hottest files will make the biggest contribution to the average degree of parallelism P_{opt}. Note that, although $\overline{P}_{new}$ may be different from $\overline{P}_{old}$, a particular file i may not need to be reorganized if the value of $P_{eff,i}$ does not change.

3   Load Balancing

The need for load balancing was mentioned already in Section 1 in the context of data allocation. Recall that load balancing does not become obsolete when striping is employed. Many applications require that we choose large striping units in order to achieve a certain throughput with multi-block requests. For example, Gray et al. have proposed the parity striping scheme [33], where the distribution of data blocks is based on a very large (possibly infinite) striping unit, and similar results on the throughput limits of fine-grained striping have been stated in [12, 13, 48, 51, 59, 79, 80]. However, a coarser striping unit increases the probability of load imbalance under a skewed workload [13, 51]. Addressing this tradeoff solely by tuning the striping unit is only a (bad) compromise. Thus, additional methods for load balancing are called for, regardless of whether data is partitioned or not.

Obviously, the load balance of a disk system depends on the placement of data, regardless of whether the files are partitioned or not. The data placement problem is similar to the file allocation problem in distributed

systems [19] and falls in the class of NP-hard problems (the simplest case is equivalent to the NP-complete problem of multiprocessor scheduling –see problem [SS8] in [26]). Hence, viable solutions must be based on heuristics. The worst-case performance of these heuristics methods can be measured in terms of their competitive ratio, which is defined as the ratio between the heat of the hottest disk under a given heuristic placement and the heat of the hottest disk under an optimal placement. Good heuristics based on greedy placement [32] or iterated bin-packing [17] are well understood for the static file allocation problem with non-partitioned files, where the heat of each file is known in advance. In the greedy algorithm,which was adopted in the Bubba parallel database machine [14], the files are first sorted by descending heat and then they are allocated in this order where in each step the disk with the lowest accumulated heat is selected. Under this greedy heuristic, the competitive ratio is bounded by $\frac{4}{3} - \frac{1}{3 \times number\ of\ disks} < 1.34$, while for the iterated bin-packing algorithm of [17] the corresponding competitive ratio is approximately 1.22. We observe here that these results are derived from specifically constructed "adversary" inputs, and there is experimental evidence that these heuristic allocation algorithms perform better for most realistic inputs.

In practice, realistic algorithms for static allocation of non-partitioned files need to consider additional parameters and system constraints such as controller contention and storage space limitation. A comprehensive, heuristic optimization method which considers some of these constrained is presented in [82], where a non-linear programming solution embedded in a queueing network model is described. Moreover, in many application environments,the files are not allocated all at the same time, but rather some files are allocated dynamically. For this dynamic case, the following "canonical" extension of the greedy heuristic mentioned above has been studied intensively in the theory of online algorithms: a new file is placed on the disk with the currently lowest accumulated heat, and the heat of the target disk is then incremented by the heat of the new file. It has been shown that this online greedy method guarantees a competitive ratio of $r = 2 - \frac{1}{number\ of\ disks}$ [32]; This worst-case bound can be further improved, to a minor extent, by more sophisticated allocation heuristics [5, 40]. However, it has also been shown that no online algorithm can achieve a competitive ratio better than $1 + \frac{1}{\sqrt{2}} \approx 1.7$ [22]. When additional constraints on the set of eligible disks are taken into account, the best possible competitive ratio is bounded (from below) by $1 + \lceil \log_2(number\ of\ disks) \rceil$ [3]. The problem of data allocation in parallel disk systems has an additional constraint that is not considered in any of the works mentioned above. Namely, in order to support intra-request parallelism it is necessary to allocate the extents of a file on different disks.

Not only are files to be created or deleted dynamically, but files can grow

or shrink. In addition, the access characteristics of files can change over time, and what was originally a good allocation under a certain workload may not be any longer the case later in time. In order to deal with all these dynamics of change it is necessary to incorporate into a file manager another tuning component that can redistribute the load by migrating data from one disk to another at any time a certain imbalance in load is detected. Migration of entire files has been considered in the context of replicated file systems. On the other hand, migration of file portions has been considered for scalable, distributed hashing schemes but with different objective functions [2, 6, 9, 50, 75, 76, 83]. The only work that considers data migration in the context of disk load balancing is [38]; however, this work is restricted to off-line and monolithic (i.e., non-incremental) reorganization.

The load balancing component of our intelligent file system consists of two independent modules: one that performs file allocation and a second one that performs dynamic redistribution of data. These components are described in Subsections 3.1 and 3.2. Subsection 3.3 explains how our system keeps track of the heat and temperature of extents and disks.

3.1   Data Allocation

We have extended the greedy algorithm of [32] in order to deal with (dynamic) allocation of partitioned files [79]. In the static case where all files are given in advance, the algorithm first sorts all extents by descending heat and the extents are allocated in sort order. For each extent to be allocated the algorithm selects the disk with the lowest accumulated heat among the disks which have not yet been assigned another extent of the same file. This method is illustrated in Figure 3 and is contrasted with a standard round-robin scheme. The figure shows the placement of three files each consisting of three extents with heat proportional to the height of the corresponding boxes. We denote by i.j the extent j of file i. Observe that in Figure 3 extents 2.2, 1.2, and 3.1 are allocated in this order to the current disk with the lowest accumulated disk; however, when extent 3.3 is to be allocated we do not choose disk 3 since it holds already an extent of file 3, but instead of this allocate it on disk 2.

In the dynamic case, the sorting step, is eliminated and the algorithm uses only the information about the heat of the files which have been allocated and for which statistics are collected already. Thus, as compared to the canonical extension discussed in the previous section, the heat of the target disk remains unchanged at the time of an extent allocation. The heat will adjusted correspondingly only after enough accesses to the newly allocated extent have been recorded.

The disk selection can be made in such a way as to consider also, if so desired, the cost of additional I/Os necessary to perform partial disk

reorganization. Partial disk reorganization may have to be performed if, due to file additions and deletions, there is room to store an extent on a disk but the space is not contiguous. Even more expensive is the situation when disk i has the lowest heat and may appear as the obvious choice to store a new extent of a file, but this disk does not have enough free space. In order to make room for the new extent we have to migrate one or more extents to a different disk. In order to account for these reorganization costs we associate with every disk a status variable with regard to the extent chosen for allocation. The status variable can take the values FREE, FRAG, and FULL, depending upon whether the disk (1) has enough free space for the extent, (2) has enough space but the the space is fragmented, or (3) does not have enough free space. Our file allocation algorithm has the option of selecting disks in increasing heat order without regard to their status. Alternatively, we may select the disks in multiple passes, where in the first pass we only choose those that have status FREE. More details and experimental studies on this combined free-space management and data allocation method are given in [79]. In the current paper, we do not further consider the impact of fragmented or full disks.

3.2 "Disk Cooling"

In order to perform dynamic heat redistribution we employ in our system a dynamic load balancing step, called disk cooling. Basically, disk cooling is a greedy procedure which tries to determine the best candidate, i.e., extent, to remove from the hottest disk in order to minimize the amount of data that is moved while obtaining the maximal gain. The temperature metric is used as the criterion for selecting the extents to be reallocated, because temperature reflects the benefit/cost ratio of the reallocation since benefit is proportional to heat (i.e., reduction of heat) and cost is proportional to size (of the reallocated extents). This approach is illustrated in Figure 4; the basic disk cooling algorithm is given in Figure 5. The extent to be moved, denoted by e, is reallocated on the coolest disk, denoted by t, such that t does not hold already an extent of the corresponding file and t has enough contiguous free space.

In our system the disk cooling procedure is implemented as a background demon which is invoked at fixed intervals in time. The procedure checks first if the trigger condition is satisfied or not (Steps 1 and 2 in Figure 5). If the trigger condition is false, the system is considered load balanced and no cooling action is performed. In the basic disk cooling procedure the system is not considered load balanced if the heat of the hottest disk exceeds the average disk heat by a certain quantity δ. It is important to observe that during each invocation of the procedure different disks can be selected as candidates for cooling after each cooling step.

Our procedure considers implicitly the cost/benefit ratio of a considered cooling action and only schedules it for execution if is considered beneficial. These cost considerations are reflected in Step 5 of the algorithm. The hottest disk is likely to have already a heavy share of the load, which we can "measure" by observing if its queue is non-empty. A cooling action would most likely increase the load imbalance if a queue is present at the source disk since it implies additional I/Os for the reorganization process. Hence, we choose not to schedule the cooling action if this condition is satisfied. We also consider the cooling move not to be cost-beneficial if, would it be executed, the heat of the target disk would exceed the heat of the source disk. Hence, although our background demon is invoked a fixed number of times, only a fraction of these invocations result in data migration.

Our generic disk cooling procedure can be generalized in a number of ways. In [72] we have shown how an explicit objective function based on disk heat variance (DHV) can be used in a more general test for the cost/benefit of a cooling action. Thus, the benefit is computed by comparing the DHV after the potential cooling step with the DHV before the potential cooling step. In addition, we can consider also explicitly the cost of performing the cooling. Thus, a more accurate calculation of benefit and cost would consider not only the reduction in heat on the origin disk and the increase in heat on the target disk, but also the additional heat caused by the reorganization process itself. The cooling process is executed during two intervals of time, the first corresponding to the read phase of the action and the second corresponding to the write phase of the action. The additional heat generated during these phases can be computed by dividing the size of the extent to be moved by the corresponding duration of the phase. The duration times of the read and write phase of a cooling action can be estimated by using a queueing model, as shown in [72].

Our disk cooling procedure can be fine-tuned so that the unit of reallocation is chosen dynamically in order to increase the potential of a positive cost/benefit ratio. In the basic procedure given in Figure 5 the unit of redistribution is assumed to be an extent. However, in the case of large extents that are very hot the cost of a redistribution may be prohibitive. In this case, we can subdivide further an extent into a number of fixed-size *fragments* and use a fragment as the unit of redistribution. Since all fragments of an extent are of the same size we can now base the choice of the migration candidates (see Step 3 in Figure 5) on the heat statistic instead of temperature.

In addition, the increase in the number of allocation units of a file also requires that we remove the allocation constraint on the target disk, namely we do not require anymore that the disk should hold only one fragment of a file. Hence, we put here the objective of a balanced load above the requirement that the file partitioning is optimal.

3.3 Heat Tracking

The dynamic tracking of the heat of blocks is implemented based on a moving average of the interarrival time of requests to the same block. Conceptually, we keep track of the times when the last k requests to each block occurred, where k is a fine-tuning parameter (in the range from 5 to 50). To illustrate this bookkeeping procedure, assume that a block is accessed at the points in time t_1, t_2,..., t_n ($n > k$). Then the average interarrival time of the k last requests is $\frac{t_n - t_{n-k+1}}{k}$, and the estimated heat of the block is the corresponding reciprocal $\frac{k}{t_n - t_{n-k+1}}$. Upon the next access to this block, say at time t_{n+1}, the block heat is re-estimated as $\frac{k}{t_{n+1} - t_{n-k+2}}$.

One may conceive an alternative method for heat tracking that keeps a count of the number of requests to a block within the last T seconds, where T would be a global tuning parameter. The problem with such a global approach is that it cannot track the heat of both hot and cold blocks in an equally responsive manner. Hot blocks would need a relatively short value of T to ensure that we become aware of heat variations quickly enough. Cold blocks, on the other hand, would need a large value of T to ensure that we see a sufficient number of requests to smooth out stochastic fluctuations. The moving-average method for the interarrival time does not have this problem since a fixed value of k actually implies a short observation time window for hot blocks and a long window for cold blocks. Moreover, extensive experimentation with traces from real applications with evolving access patterns has shown that our tracking method works well for a wide spectrum of k values; the heat estimation is fairly insensitive to the exact choice of k [84]. Furthermore, under the assumption that requests to a block arrive according to a Poisson process (i.e., with exponentially distributed interarrival time), the heat estimate would be Erlang-k distributed and the minimum k for achieving a desired statistical confidence in the heat estimate can be derived analytically [46].

The adopted heat tracking method is very responsive to sudden increases of a block's heat; the new access frequency is fully reflected in the heat estimate after k requests, which would take only a short while for hot blocks (and reasonable values of k). However, the method adapts the heat estimate more slowly when a block exhibits a sudden drop of its heat. In the extreme case, a hot block may suddenly cease to be accessed at all. In this case, we would continue to keep the block's old heat estimate as there are no more new requests to the block. To counteract this form of erroneous heat estimation, we employ an additional "aging" method for the heat estimates. The aging is implemented by periodically invoking a demon process that simulates "pseudo requests" to all blocks. Whenever such a pseudo request would lead to a heat reduction, the block's heat estimate is updated; otherwise the pseudo request is ignored. For example, assume that there is

a pseudo request at time t' and consider a block with heat H. We compute tentatively the new heat of the block as $H' = \frac{k}{t' - t_{n-k+2}}$, but we update the heat bookkeeping only if $H' < H$. We notice that this selective aging method is much more effective than the global one proposed in [69]. The complete heat tracking method is illustrated in Figure 6.

The described heat tracking method requires a space overhead of $(k+1)$ floating-point numbers per block. Since we want to keep this bookkeeping information in memory for fast cooling decisions, it is usually unacceptable to track the heat of each individual block. In order to reduce the overhead involved in heat tracking, we actually apply the heat estimation procedure to entire extents (or fragments of a specified size). We keep track of the times $t_n, \ldots, t_{n-k+1}$ of the last k requests that involve any blocks of the extent in the manner described above, and also we keep the number of accessed blocks within the extent for each of the last k requests. Assume that the average number of accessed blocks is R. Then the heat of the extent is estimated by $\frac{kR}{t_n - t_{n-k+1}}$. Finally, we estimate the heat of a fraction of an extent by assuming that each block in the extent has the same heat (which is extent heat divided by extent size). This extent-based heat tracking method reduces substantially the space overhead of the block-based estimation procedure.[†] On the other hand, our experimental studies (including studies with application traces) have shown that the loss in accuracy versus block-based heat tracking is minimal.

4   Experimental Results

In this section we present an experimental performance evaluation of the file striping and allocation and load balancing algorithms presented above. The testbed for these experiments was built on top of the file system prototype FIVE [84]. FIVE runs on shared-memory multiprocessors under Solaris and a few other Unix versions. It can manage either real data on real disks (i.e., raw partitions), or it can interact with a simulated disk system to estimate the impact the virtual resources. The disk simulation keeps track of exact arm positions as well as rotational positions of the disk head. Our simulator considers head switch delays and incorporates a realistic estimation of the seek time as a nonlinear function of the seek distance, as well as other details of real disks [67]. In the simulation mode, FIVE makes use of the process-oriented simulation library CSIM [73] which manages the bookkeeping for the virtual disks (e.g., disk queues). For the experiments reported here we used

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[†]Additional approximation techniques to further decrease the space overhead are described in [84]. When memory consumption is extremely critical, one can even employ an approximation that requires only keeping the values of t_n and t_{n-k+1} and thus has constant space overhead independently of k.

a simulated parallel disk system whose parameters are described in Table 1.

FIVE allows for the striping of files on an individual or global basis and incorporates heuristic algorithms for file striping, allocation, and dynamic load balancing, as described in Sections 2 and 3. These algorithms can be invoked on-line, i.e., concurrently with regular requests to existing files. We have implemented a load generator that can generate synthetic workloads according to specified parameter distributions, or analyze (and filter) existing traces and feed them as input to FIVE. For the performance studies reported here we mostly relied on synthetic workloads, for which we could control and systematically vary all relevant parameters. A representative set of experiments with a synthetic workload is described in Subsection 4.1. We also report on disk cooling studies using two trace-based experiments in Subsection 4.2. Further trace-based performance studies with FIVE can be found in [84].

# disks	32	capacity of one disk	539 MBytes
block size	1 KByte	capacity of the disk system	17.2 GBytes
track size	35 blocks	revolutions per minute	4400 rpm
# tracks per cylinder	11	average seek time	12 ms
# cylinders per disk	1435	transfer rate per disk	2.44 MBytes/s

Table 1: Hardware characteristics of the simulated disk system

4.1 Experiments With Synthetic Workload

For these experiments we generated a set of 10000 files and two types of workloads, one with a uniform access pattern and the second with a skewed access pattern, as we shall describe in more detail below. The files themselves were identical for both workloads, and in both cases each (read or write) request accessed an entire file. The file sizes were hyperexponentially distributed such that each file belongs to one of three different classes with certain mean values (and exponential distribution of file sizes within each class). Files of class A had a mean size of 20 KBytes, files of class B had a mean size of 500 KBytes, and files of class C had a mean size of 1000 KBytes. Class C files were not accessed in the generated workload; they represent "passive" data that occupies disk space and thus influence seek times. Class A files represent relatively small data objects, e.g., simple HTML documents on the WWW. Class B files, on the other hand, represent relatively large multimedia data objects. The important point here is that the workload covered a wide spectrum of request sizes, which we consider to be a particular challenge

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of advanced applications such as HTTP servers, multimedia information systems, and object-oriented database systems. In both workloads, we assigned the same probability of selection to files from the two classes A and B. Table 2 summarizes the common characteristics of both synthetic workloads.

# of files of class A	1000
# of files of class B	1000
fraction of files of class A	0.5
fraction of files of class B	0.5
average size of file class A	20 KBytes
average size of file class B	500 KBytes
overall average request size	260 KBytes
standard deviation of request size	416 KBytes
read fraction	0.7

Table 2: Characteristics of the synthetic workload

4.1.1 Workload With Uniform Access Frequencies

In this subsection we consider a workload with uniform access frequencies: read and write accesses are generated to file classes of type A or B, such that each file within a class has the same probability of selection. We generated a sequence of 1 million file requests with exponentially distributed interarrival times.

We compared first the response time of five different striping strategies, namely a file-specific one (*Opt*) and four global strategies (*Gopt, Block, Track, Cylinder*) under light load (i.e., an arrival rate of 1 request/second), so that queueing effects were negligible. These striping strategies are:

1. *Opt*: files are partitioned based on the first step of the heuristic approach described in Section 2 that minimizes response time in single-user mode.

2. *Gopt*: the striping unit for each file is the global optimum of 8 KBytes, which was determined by using the first step of the heuristic method of Section 2 under the assumption that all files have the same average request size $R = 260$ KBytes.

3. *Block*: the striping unit for each file is a block (i.e., 1 KByte).

4. *Track*: the striping unit for each file is a track (i.e., 35 KBytes).

5. *Cyl*: the striping unit for each file is a cylinder (i.e., 385 KBytes).

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Note that for this first set of experiments we assumed a light load, hence the striping unit for Opt and Gopt was computed without regard to throughput and queueing delay considerations. Table 3 shows the average response time for the five different striping methods; these performance figures are further broken down into different categories of request sizes in Table 4.

The Opt method outperforms all other methods for almost all request size categories. However, the advantage over Block striping is marginal at best. The improvement is significant only for request sizes up to 10 (or possibly 20) KBytes. For larger requests, the latency of the "slowest" disk rapidly approaches the maximum latency under both Opt and Block, so that the aggressive intra-request parallelism of the Block method does not incur an additional penalty once the degree of parallelism exceeds a certain number. As we will see below, the Block method exhibits severe drawbacks when the request arrival rate is increased so that disk arm contention and the resulting queueing delays become a factor, whereas the Opt method scales much better with increasing load.

Compared to the Track and Cyl methods, Opt achieves significant improvements in the order of 30 percent (in the case of Track) for medium to large requests between 50 and 500 KBytes. For very large requests, all methods (except Cyl) spread a file across all 32 disk, so that the performance differences eventually become negligible when the request size is further increased beyond 1 MByte.

The global striping method Gopt turned out to be very competitive to the file-specific striping method Opt; the advantage of Opt is more or less negligible throughout the spectrum of request sizes. We also compared these two methods with Gbest, the best possible global striping strategy whose striping unit was found through exhaustive trials. For this particular workload the Gbest method has a striping unit of 5 KBytes and its performance was almost identical to that of Opt and Gopt. So, although file-specific striping did not prove to be truly superior to global striping in these experiments, the positive conclusion from these light-load experiments is that our heuristic optimization method did indeed approximate the real optimum very well.

Opt	Gopt (8 KB)	Block	Track	Cyl
24.54	24.75	24.54	28.86	81.84

Table 3: Average response time in milliseconds of the synthetic workload under light load ($\lambda = 1$)

In order to take into account throughput requirements and queueing delays we performed a second set of experiments in which we varied the request

request size [KB]	Opt	Gopt (8KB)	Block	Track	Cyl
≤ 10	16.97	17.06	19.18	16.84	17.63
11–50	22.04	21.26	21.22	24.50	26.18
51–100	22.97	23.81	22.28	31.23	48.94
101–200	24.58	25.91	24.42	34.56	86.41
201–500	27.48	28.45	27.35	36.38	168.39
501–1000	33.83	34.66	33.79	38.46	200.38
> 1000	49.75	50.01	49.65	53.29	207.27

Table 4: Average response time in milliseconds for different request sizes of the synthetic workload under light load ($\lambda = 1$)

arrival rate. For this set of experiments, we also considered two additional striping strategies, namely:

1. *Opt-140*: the optimal file-specific striping unit is computed with the additional constraint that a request arrival rate of $\lambda = 140$ must be supported. Accordingly, files are partitioned subject to the constraint that the average degree of intra-request parallelism is bounded by 3 (as computed by the heuristics described in Section 2).

2. *Gopt-140*: the optimal global striping unit is computed for a request arrival rate of $\lambda = 140$. The corresponding striping unit size is $\lceil 260/3 \rceil$ = 87 KBytes.

Table 5 shows the average response times of the various striping methods as a function of the request arrival rate, which was varied from 20 up to 140 requests per second. Note that although the figures show explicitly only response time, a fast growing curve for response time implies that beyond a relatively small value for the arrival rate the throughput reaches saturation. This also explains the ∞ entries in Table 5: they denote those experiments where the arrival rate exceeded the sustainable throughput and thus led to excessive queueing and a continuously growing backlog of requests.

As Table 5 shows, the Opt method scales up with increasing arrival rate much better than Block striping. However, for sufficiently high arrival rate, Opt is clearly outperformed by Track and Cyl striping, the reason being that the latter two methods employ lower degrees of intra-request parallelism and can thus sustain higher load. The figures also show the trend that Cyl will eventually pass Track, as it is even more conservative in terms of parallelism and resource consumption.

The striping methods that are specifically tuned for a particular arrival rate outperform both Track and Cyl by almost a factor of two (in the case

of λ=140). This demonstrates very nicely the need for application-specific tuning of striping units. We also determined through exhaustive trials the best possible striping units for the Gbest method under different arrival rates. For λ=140 the response time of Gbest was approximately 110 ms, and this was obtained for a global striping unit of 70 KBytes. We note, however, that such a tuning method that is based on exhaustive trials is completely infeasible in practice. Thus, the fact that both the Opt and the Gopt methods approached the real optima within approximately 10 to 15 percent is indeed a successful result and demonstrates the viability of our tuning heuristics.

λ	Opt	Gopt (8KB)	Block	Track	Cyl	Opt140	Gopt140 (87KB)
20	29.62	29.71	31.84	32.42	90.36	42.08	44.66
40	38.13	37.79	48.76	37.15	100.53	47.31	50.04
60	55.17	53.35	126.20	43.66	112.76	53.83	56.81
80	112.48	97.02	∞	53.16	128.00	62.31	65.59
100	∞	1033.67	∞	69.13	147.39	74.18	77.73
120	∞	∞	∞	102.86	173.50	91.64	96.21
140	∞	∞	∞	206.71	211.29	121.26	127.49

Table 5: Average response time in milliseconds for the synthetic workload as a function of the request arrival rate λ

In the above experiment, the Opt methods achieved only very small improvements over the corresponding Gopt methods. This almost negligible advantage of Opt over Gopt does not seem to justify the increased software complexity of file-specific striping. However, file-specific striping allows for incremental restriping of individual files when changing workload characteristics require higher I/O rates or data rates for some crucial files. A global striping unit strategy does not support this type of reconfiguration. Thus, for global striping, a change of the striping unit requires unloading all files, re-initializing the disk system with the new striping unit and reloading the data. This costly procedure leads to a significant downtime of the system. For this reason, we still believe that file-specific striping is an essential requirement for data management in parallel disk systems.

4.1.2 Workload With Skewed Access Frequencies

In order to study the influence of data access skew and the effectiveness of our "disk cooling" procedure, we have modified the synthetic workload of the previous subsection so that the distribution of file access frequencies followed a Zipf-like curve (everything else was identical to the previous setup). Thus,

if the files are numbered from 1 to N, the probability of accessing a file numbered i, with i < N, is given by the formula: [47]:

$$Prob[i \leq s] = (\frac{s}{N})^{log(X/100)/log(Y/100)} \qquad (26)$$

where X and Y are parameters that were set to 70 and 30, respectively. The parameter N denotes the number of active files, i.e. files in classes A and B, which is set to 2000 in our experiments. This probability distribution results in a self-similar, skewed access pattern where a fraction X of the requests refers to a fraction Y of the files, and this skew is recursively repeated within the fraction X of "hot" files. Such skew patterns are common in many OLTP and database applications, and they have been observed for WWW servers as well [7].

In order to study the effects of load balancing in isolation we did not perform any caching of the data in these experiments. Note that load balancing is still a crucial problem even if caching is used. Caching would keep the hottest blocks in main memory, but the remaining blocks can still exhibit a significant access skew.

Table 6 shows the average response time results for this experiment as a function of the arrival rate λ. We considered three different striping strategies, namely, Gopt140, Track, and Cyl. We do not show explicitly the results for the strategies Block and Opt140; the Block strategy could sustain only a throughput of about 60 requests per second and started thrashing at this point, while the performance of the Opt140 strategy was almost identical to that of Gopt140. All files were pre-allocated based on a round-robin scheme, and we compared the case without cooling against the case with cooling switched on. The latter case is denoted by the "-C" suffix in Table 6. A cooling step was attempted every $100/\lambda$ seconds (i.e., equivalently, every 100 regular requests), the migration units were entire extents, and the load imbalance threshold δ was set to 5 percent (see Section 3.2).

The response time figures demonstrate that access skew does have a disastrous effect on performance, unless it is counteracted by load balancing. For example, at an arrival rate of 120 requests per second, the average response time of Track striping without cooling degrades by a factor of 2 compared to the workload with uniform access frequencies. The underlying reason is that under the skewed load the hottest disk had a much higher utilization (and corresponding average queue length) than the overall disk system and thus formed a premature bottleneck; at λ=120 the hottest disk had a utilization of 0.94 and an average queue length of 10.3 while the average disk utilization and queue length (averaged over all disks) were 0.79 and 3.5, respectively (under Track striping). In fact, all methods without cooling started thrashing at an arrival rate of 130 requests per second or earlier. The cooling procedure was able to reduce the utilization and the average queue length

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λ	Gopt140 (87KB)	Track	Cyl	Gopt140-C	Track-C	Cyl-C
20	46.57	33.38	98.34	47.23	34.23	96.66
40	53.30	38.92	124.66	53.59	39.98	113.91
60	62.81	47.05	∞	64.02	48.09	157.58
80	77.93	60.39	∞	77.73	61.68	∞
100	111.87	87.52	∞	110.63	87.20	∞
110	176.13	117.80	∞	117.20	109.72	∞
120	∞	203.30	∞	152.74	163.72	∞
125	∞	438.65	∞	188.88	221.42	∞
130	∞	∞	∞	199.63	429.76	∞

Table 6: Average response time in milliseconds for the skewed synthetic workload as a function of the request arrival rate λ

of the hottest disk down to 0.89 and 5.5, respectively, at λ=120 and could thus improve the average response time significantly. When approaching the thrashing region, the response times of any striping strategy with cooling switched on are an order of magnitude lower compared with the same strategy with cooling turned off. Note that cooling does incur a certain overhead by migrating extents between disks. This leads to a small increase of the overall disk utilization, and this is why the cooling methods exhibit a slightly higher response time than the no-cooling methods under light load. However, when the extra load due to cooling becomes a critical factor, cooling is inactivated automatically, as described in Section 3.2. An analysis of the invocation frequency distribution of cooling steps over the duration of an experiment shows that the cooling frequency is high in the first tenth of the experiment, and as soon as the load is sufficiently balanced (as estimated by the heat bookkeeping) cooling is invoked only very infrequently due to occasional load fluctuations that exceed the imbalance threshold.

Among the three cooling variants that are shown in Table 6 the Gopt-λ-C method showed significant advantages over Track-C striping under high load, with response time improvements up to a factor of two. This demonstrates that although load balancing and striping are orthogonal strategies they are not independent; rather well tuned striping units and the cooling procedure exhibit synergetic effects. Note that under the skewed load, the Gopt-λ method without cooling could not sustain a throughput of λ, as all our heuristic calculations for the derivation of striping units are based on uniform access frequencies (i.e., overly optimistic assumptions). Track striping, on the other hand, achieves a better load balance because of its finer

striping units, but is still much inferior to the case with both tuned striping units and cooling.

In summary, application-specifically tuned striping in combination with cooling shows significant performance advantages over conventional methods. Not surprisingly, load imbalance is only an issue under high load when queueing delays start becoming a factor. One may argue that an easy cure against load imbalance thus is to keep disk utilization low. However, for many applications, this implies unnecessarily high costs as their performance requirements could be met with fewer disks at higher utilization. Furthermore, although system administration rules of thumb dictate that the disk utilization should generally be kept below 50 percent, this is often impossible during load peaks or when user demands grow faster than one can purchase additional disks. In fact, it is often exactly during load peaks, e.g., the Monday morning rush hour for retail banking or the hours right after an important sports event for a WWW server, when good response time matters most.

4.2 Experiments With Application Traces

To study the viability of the developed tuning procedures in a realistic application setting, we also conducted extensive experiments based on block access traces from a variety of applications including on-line transaction processing, file systems, office document management, and WWW servers. Most of these experiments confirmed the results of the previous subsection. However, while such traces capture several essential characteristics of real-life application workloads (e.g., workload evolution over time, including transient load peaks), one has to be extremely careful about generalizing trace-based results. Traces constitute short-term snapshots with certain peculiarities that are not necessarily of fundamental nature. For this reason, we preferred deriving our basic performance results from a precisely controllable synthetic workload, as discussed in the previous subsection, and we restrict ourselves in this subsection to two sample results that were obtained with a WWW server trace and a trace from a bank's on-line transaction processing system.

4.2.1 World-Wide-Web Server

This study is based on a trace that was recorded with the httpd logging facility on the WWW server ucmp1.berkeley.edu of the UC Museum of Paleontology at Berkeley over a time period of 120 hours. Note that the fact that the requests were traced at the server site automatically factors out (client) caching. The trace contains 181,914 read accesses to an entirety of 9126 HTML and other files with heavily skewed access frequencies. The average request size was 14 KBytes, and the standard deviation of the requests size distribution was 28 KBytes.

We studied this trace under a spectrum of load levels. This was done by "speeding up" the arrivals in the original trace in the following way. Consider two requests r_i and r_{i+1} in the original trace which have an interarrival time of δ_i. Using a speed-up factor of α the interarrival time between the requests becomes δ_i/α. Thus, in more general terms, if the original trace has an average interarrival time of $1/\lambda$, a trace with speed-up factor α has an average interarrival time of $1/(\lambda\alpha)$. Note that this method of "speeding up" a trace, albeit somewhat speculative, preserves all access characteristics of the original workload other than its arrival rate; particularly, the relative interarrival times between requests are preserved which is essential to capture load bursts. The only case where the "speed-up" transformation would seriously distort the workload is when a large number of consecutive requests are correlated and must have a certain interarrival time. But this case is rather unlikely given that a WWW server trace is typically based on a high number of concurrent users.

Because of the small average request size and the moderate variance of request sizes, tuning the striping unit was not really an issue for this workload. Rather the challenge in this trace was to cope well with the access skew in combination with the dynamic load fluctuations. So we concentrated ourselves on the impact of cooling, and compared a round-robin allocation for a striping unit of one track (i.e., 35 KBytes) without cooling, labeled "Track", versus the case with cooling, labeled "Track-C". Cooling was invoked every 100 seconds of the original time scale (or, equivalently, every $100/\alpha$ seconds of the accelerated trace), with entire extents as migration units and an imbalance threshold of $\delta = 0.05$. Table 7 shows the average response time of Track versus Track-C as a function of the acceleration factor α.

α	Track	Track-C
100	16.68	16.50
300	18.39	17.57
500	21.13	19.63
700	27.58	24.61
900	79.11	24.86
1000	203.36	28.57

Table 7: Average response time in milliseconds for the WWW workload as a function of the request arrival rate λ

Cooling exhibits noticeable performance even under medium load, and dramatically improves response time by an order of magnitude for the highest measured load. For α=1000, the average disk utilization was 24 percent and

the utilization of the hottest disk was 67 percent without cooling. With cooling, the average utilization increased slightly up to 25 percent because of the additional load incurred by data migrations, but the utilization of the hottest disk was reduced down to 39 percent, which accounted for the dramatic performance gain. Note that an average utilization of 25 percent appears to be a very light load; however, one has to take into account that the load fluctuates heavily over time with very long disk queues built up during the load peaks. In terms of average disk queue lengths the improvement by cooling was even more impressive: without cooling, the average queue length of the hottest disk (averaged over all points of time when a request was enqueued) was 63, whereas with cooling, this measure was 1.6 (i.e., 1 request in service and an expected value of 0.6 for the number of requests that wait in the queue). This effect is illustrated in Figure 7, which shows the response time and the cooling frequency as they vary over the duration of the experiment, for the case of $\alpha=1000$. The improvement of response time due to cooling even exceeds a factor of 20 during the load peak.

4.2.2 On-line Transaction Processing

A second study with real application workloads was based on an I/O trace from the OLTP system of a large Swiss bank (Union Bank of Switzerland). The database for this study consists of 166 files with a total size of 23 GBytes. The I/O trace contains approximately 550,000 I/O requests to these files, recorded during one hour. As in a typical OLTP application, most requests read or write a single block (of size 8 KBytes in this application); the average request size is approximately 9 KBytes with low variance. Thus, this workload does not warrant any specific tuning of the striping unit, so that we chose Track striping as the partitioning method. All files were allocated using a round-robin scheme. The workload exhibits heavily skewed access frequencies both across files and within the hot files. In addition, the trace contains significant fluctuations in the access frequencies and in the overall arrival rate of requests.

We compared the performance of round-robin placement without cooling to round-robin allocation augmented with the cooling procedure. The cooling method improved the average response time of the requests by approximately a factor of 2 under high load.

As with the WWW experiment we measured response time versus different "speed-up" factors of the arrival rate. The results in Figure 8 are based on an arrival rate "speed-up" factor of 10. As Figure 8 shows, the cooling method could not improve response time in the initial light-load phase, since the load imbalance of the vanilla method did not yet incur any severe queueing. However, the cooling method did collect heat statistics during this phase. This enabled the cooling method to rebalance the disk load by data

migration. Then during the load peak (represented in Figure 8 by the sharp increase of response time), the cooling method achieved a response time improvement by a factor of 5.3. Note that many OLTP applications have "soft" response time constraints such as ensuring a certain response time for 95 percent of the transactions. Thus, it is crucial to guarantee acceptable response time even during load peaks.

Figure 8 also shows the frequency of the data migration steps invoked by our cooling method, varying over time. The figure shows that our algorithm was careful enough so as not to initiate too many cooling steps during the high-load phases; rather the data migrations were performed mostly during the low-load phases, thus improving the load balance for the next high-load phase at low cost. This robustness is achieved by explicitly trading off the benefit of cooling versus its additional cost, as discussed in Section 3.

5 Conclusion

We have demonstrated the need for tuning the data placement in parallel disk systems, and we have presented various tuning heuristics for data partitioning, data allocation, and load balancing. The feasibility of the developed methods has been shown in a number of performance experiments, including simulations based on real-life traces.

We have developed an extended optimization procedure for file striping that takes into account explicitly throughput requirements and queueing delays and in the process we have developed an analytical approximation to the well known fork-join problem [62] in the specific setting of parallel disk systems. We have shown that our procedure for tuning the striping unit(s) of files is a very effective method for workloads with large variations in request sizes. Such workloads arise, for example, in combined OLTP/decision-support applications, multimedia information systems, and many other advanced database applications. Our extended optimization that considers both steps of our heuristic outperforms all other striping methods for the specified load value or higher, while being competitive also for lighter load.

While file-specific striping at best provides marginal performance gains over a properly chosen global striping unit, we nevertheless believe that file-specific striping is important as a prerequisite for incremental repartitioning of files. Incremental repartitioning is crucial in order to cope with evolving performance requirements and in order to support system scalability. For example, when the throughput requirements of an application increase, we can repartition merely the hottest files in order to meet the new throughput goal, which is possible since our approach supports file-specific striping units. Similarly, if more disks are added to a system, restriping of the most crucial files allows us to take advantage of the additional resources.

The methods for data allocation and redistribution complement the data partitioning objective of minimizing queueing delays at the disks under heavy load, by distributing the load across the disks as evenly as possible and by selectively redistributing the load dynamically by means of "disk cooling" steps. Since our optimization procedure for data partitioning is based on uniform access frequencies, the combination of appropriately tuned striping and disk cooling is necessary to deal with skews in data access. By coupling these two procedures our experiments have shown that, at high loads, we can obtain substantial performance gains. The dynamic load redistribution procedure has been shown to be efficient and robust, i.e., it performs disk cooling at a small cost and very selectively, i.e, only during periods of low activity. We observe here that our procedures for data allocation and redistribution can be integrated with techniques for clustering the hottest files (extents) on each disk in its center [4, 69] and with disk scheduling algorithms that reorder the requests in a queue (e.g., an "elevator" algorithm).

Our future work will be centered around the following two major issues: combining the developed data placement methods with techniques for providing fault tolerance and high availability, and generalizing our approach towards shared-nothing parallel database systems and systems based on networks of workstations.

Our placement methods are orthogonal to the proposed fault tolerance techniques in that they can be combined, in a straightforward manner, with arbitrary variants of either mirroring (e.g., mirrored disks, interleaved declustering, or chained declustering [8, 15, 35, 64, 74]) or error-correcting codes (e.g., parity groups of some type [30, 31, 36, 37, 53, 54, 60, 61, 57, 56, 58, 66, 70]) or simply conventional logging [34]. However, the placement of data replicas or error-correcting information does itself provide additional degrees of freedom that should be taken into account by an integrated approach in order to ensure the best possible performance and availability for given system costs [81].

In order to generalize our approach to a general shared-nothing parallel database system we need to consider the impact of communication and CPU costs, in addition to the disk I/O service time. For the partitioning problem, the optimal partition size (e.g., the interval width in an interleaved range-partitioning scheme for relational data [28]) would again be derived from the optimal degree of parallelism, in analogy to our approach for striping. However, the operations under consideration are more complex (e.g., relational operators such as selection or join), and the performance for a given degree of parallelism depends also on communication overhead and startup costs (thus requiring a generalization of our notion of latency) as well as on the operations' CPU time consumption (hence requiring a generalization of our notion of transfer time).

In all these considerations an underlying assumption is that the system

consists of homogeneous processing nodes (e.g., the same disk type is used in the entire system). A further, even more challenging step would be to consider also heterogeneous systems where the processing nodes can differ in their performance characteristics (processor speed, memory size, disk storage and performance capacity). For example, networks of workstations, also known as NOW [1], are evolving as a paradigm for high performance computing. In order to make NOW a viable approach for large-scale data management it is crucial to develop appropriate self-tuning and self-reliant data placement and storage techniques. A first approach along these lines, with specific consideration to load balancing, is presented in [77].

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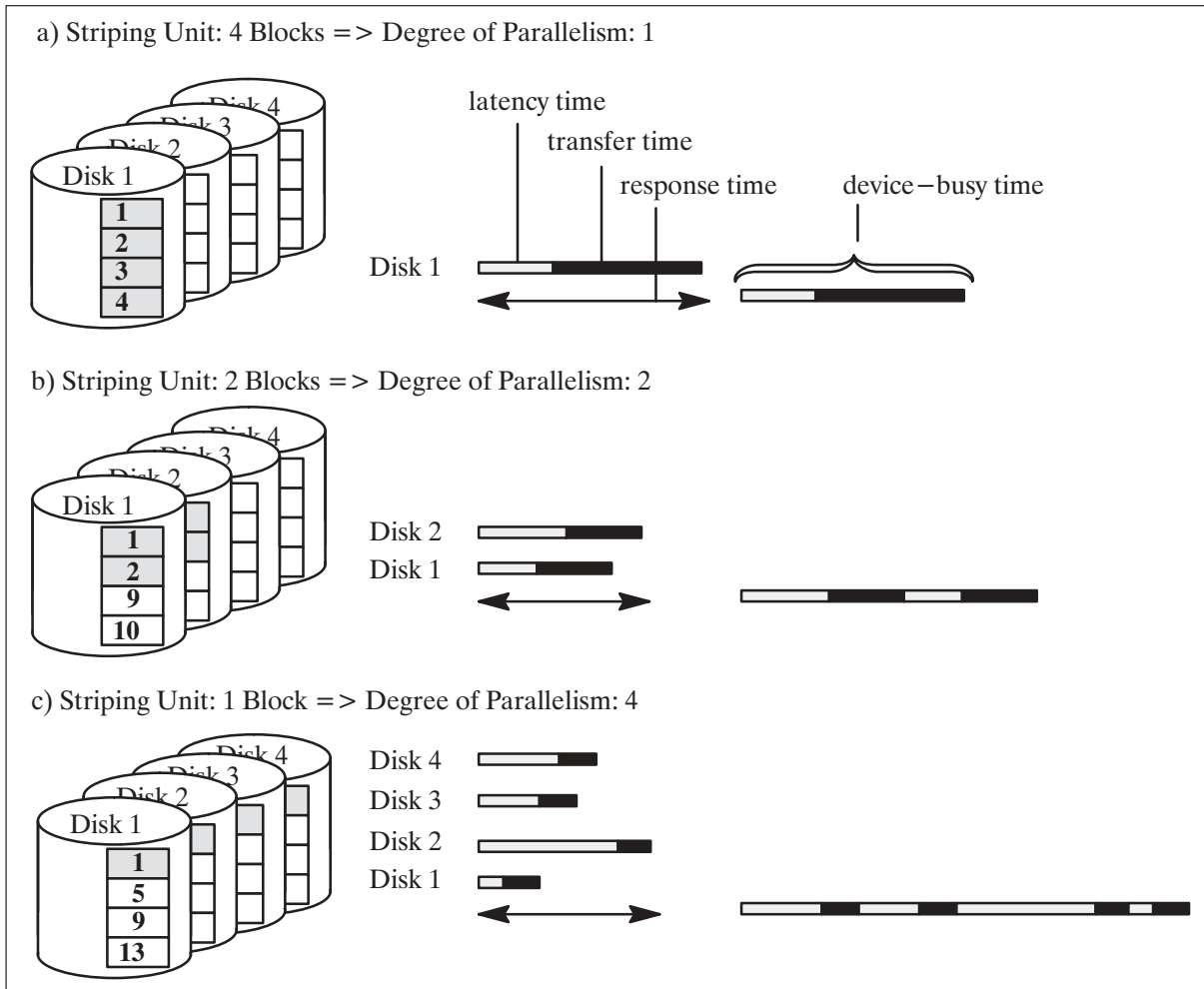
a) Striping Unit: 4 Blocks => Degree of Parallelism: 1

b) Striping Unit: 2 Blocks => Degree of Parallelism: 2

c) Striping Unit: 1 Block => Degree of Parallelism: 4

Figure 1: Striping with different striping units

Input: D = number of disks
         $\overline{R}$ = average request size over all files
         R_i = average request size of file i – for file-specific partitioning
         $\overline{L}$ = average file size
         L_i = size of file i – for file-specific partitioning
         $\overline{\lambda}$ = average arrival rate of requests

Output: SU_i = optimal striping unit of file i – for file-specific partitioning
         SU = optimal global striping unit
         SW_i = optimal striping width of file i

Step 1: Apply Phase A optimization with respect to service time
         a.   File specific partitioning:
              determine $P_{opt,i}$, the optimal degree of parallelism for file i,
              by setting $R = R_i$ in equation (16)
         b.   Global partitioning:
              determine P_{opt}, the optimal average degree of parallelism,
              by setting $R = \overline{R}$ in equation (16)

Step 2 : Apply Phase B optimization to determine $\overline{P}$,
         the optimal (average) degree of parallelism for the requested throughput, $\overline{\lambda}$.

Step 3: Determine the effective degree of parallelism
         a.   File specific partitioning:
              $P_{eff,i} = \min_i(P_{opt,i}, \overline{P}R_i/\overline{R})$
         b.   Global partitioning:
              $P_{eff} = \min(P_{opt}, \overline{P})$

Step 4: Determine optimal striping unit and width
         a.   File specific partitioning:
              $SU_i = \lceil (R_i - 1)/(P_{eff,i} - 1) \rceil$ for $1 < R_i < L_i$
                      $\lceil R_i/P_{eff,i} \rceil$ otherwise
              $SW_i = \min_i(D, \lceil L_i/SU_i \rceil)$
         b.   Global partitioning:
              Compute SU as in step 4a by replacing R_i by $\overline{R}$, L_i by $\overline{L}$, and $P_{eff,i}$ by P_{eff}
              Compute SW_i as in step 4a

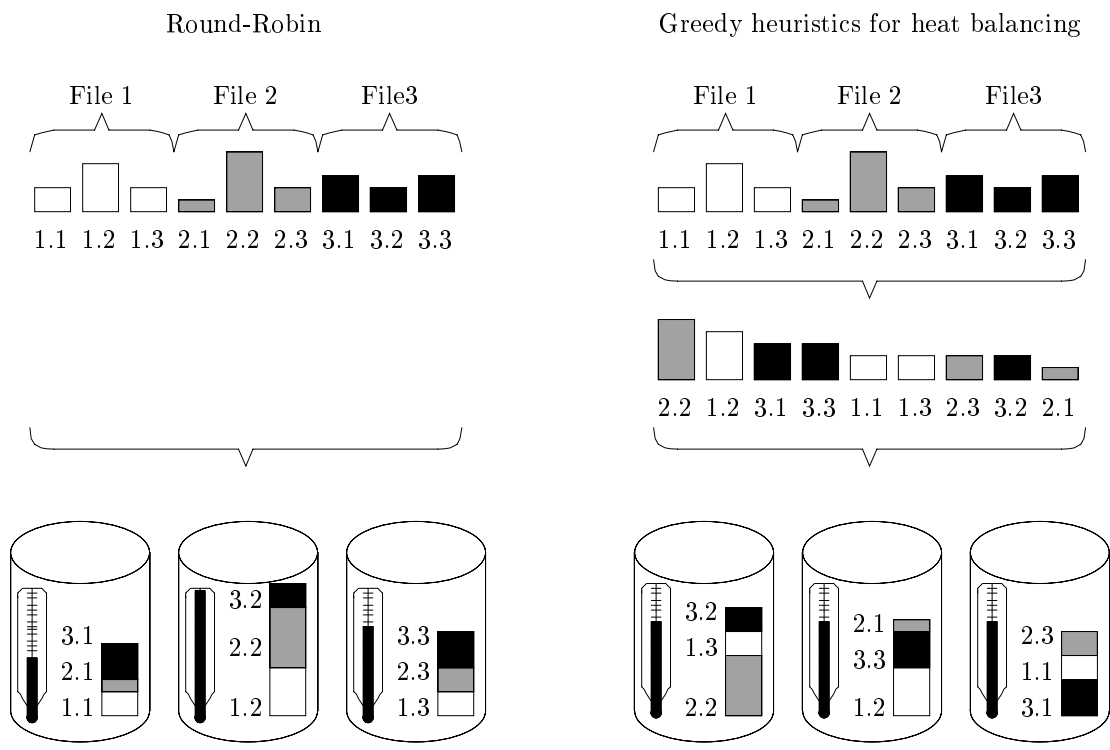Figure 2: Data partitioning algorithm
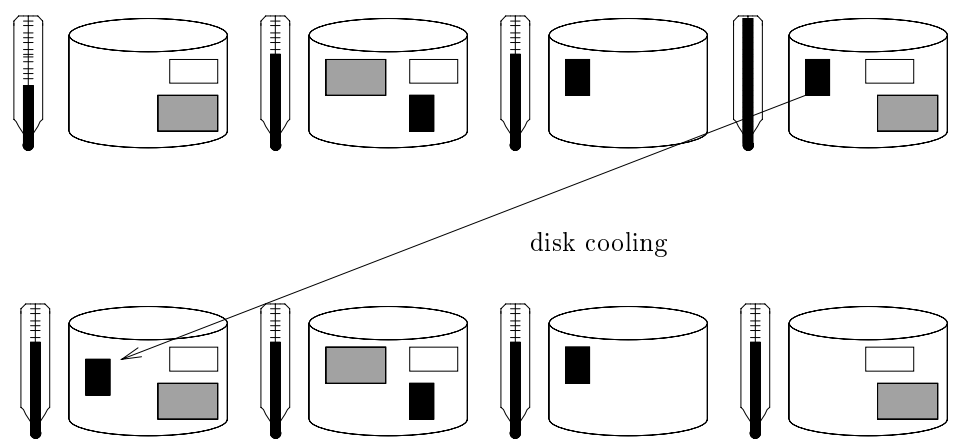

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Figure 3: Illustration of static allocation heuristics

Figure 4: Illustration of "disk cooling"

```
Input:     D     - number of disks
           H_j   - heat of extent j
           H*_i  - heat of disk i
           H̄     - average disk heat
           E_i   - list of extents on disk i sorted in descending temperature order
           D̄     - list of disks sorted in ascending heat order
```

Input: D - number of disks
H_j - heat of extent j
$H_i^\star$ - heat of disk i
$\overline{H}$ - average disk heat
E_i - list of extents on disk i sorted in descending temperature order
$\overline{D}$ - list of disks sorted in ascending heat order

Step 0:   Initialization: target = not_found
Step 1:   Select the hottest disk s
Step 2:   Check trigger condition:
           if $H_s > \overline{H} \times (1 + \delta)$ then
Step 3:   while (E_s not exhausted) and (target == not_found) do
                   Select next extent e in E_s
Step 4:   while ($\overline{D}$ not exhausted) and (target == not_found) do
                       Select next disk t in $\overline{D}$ in ascending heat order
                       if (t does not hold an extent of the file to which e belongs)
                           and STATUS(t) == FREE then
                           target = found
                       fi
                   endwhile
               endwhile
Step 5 :   if s has no queue then
                   $H_s^{\star\prime} = H_s^\star - H_e$
                   $H_t^{\star\prime} = H_t^\star + H_e$
                   if $H_t^{\star\prime} < H_e$ then
                       reallocate extent e from disk s to disk t
                       update heat of disks s and t:
                       $H_s^\star = H_s^{\star\prime}$
                       $H_t^\star = H_t^{\star\prime}$
                   fi
               fi
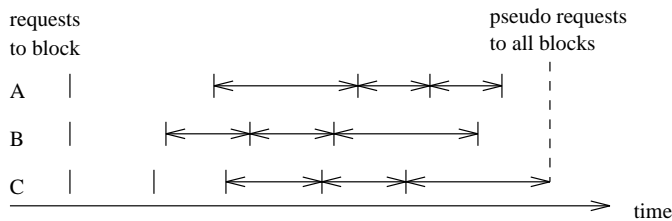   fi

Figure 5: Basic disk cooling algorithm

Figure 6: Illustration of the heat tracking method for $k = 3$. The relevant interarrival times are shown by the double-ended arrows.
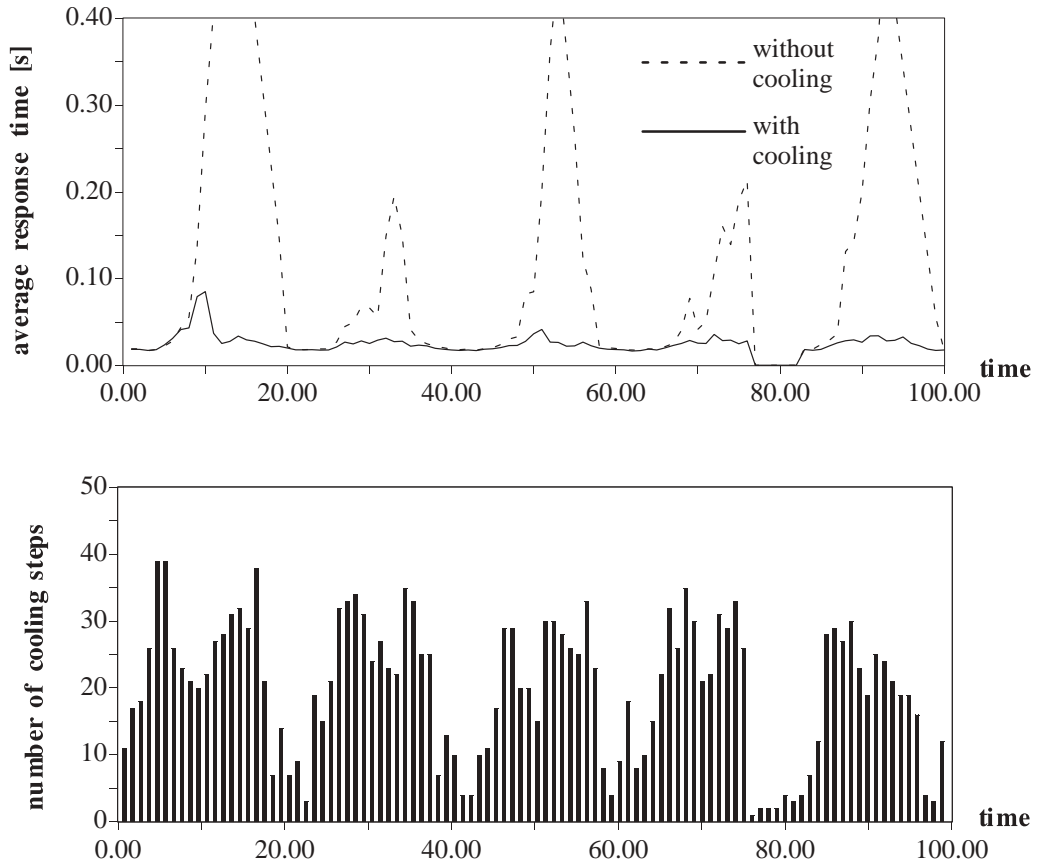
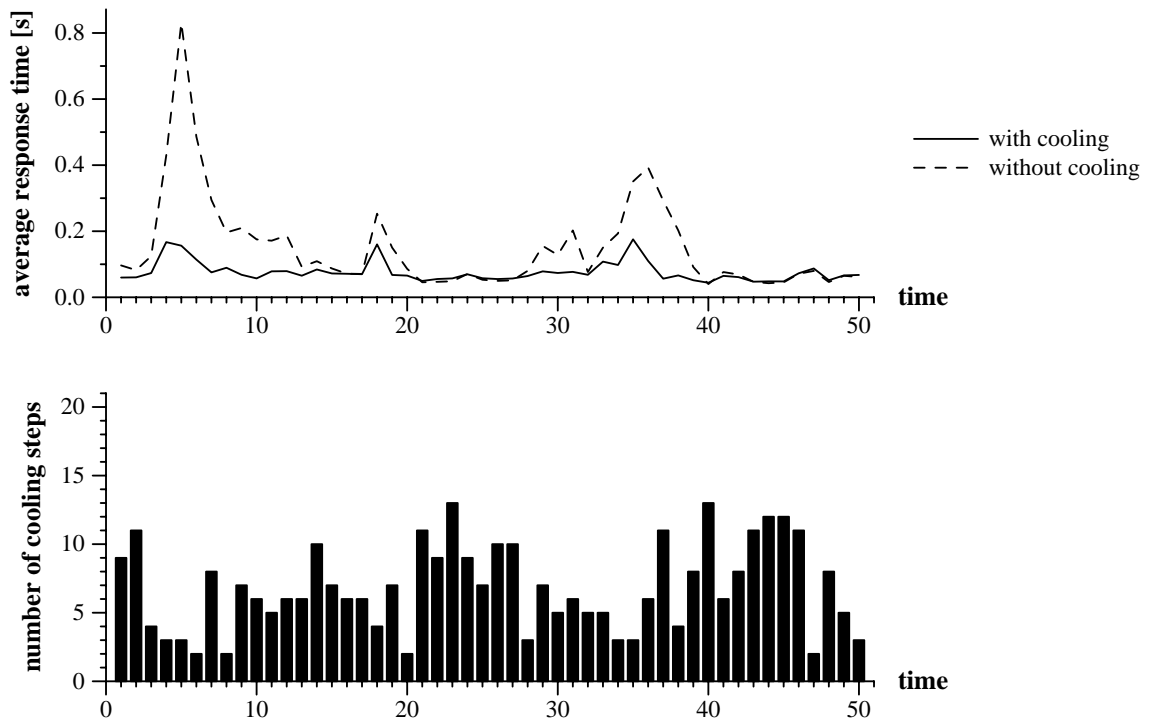Figure 7: Response time and cooling frequency for the WWW workload varying over time

Figure 8: Average response time and cooling frequency for the OLTP work-load varying over time