

Building the M-grid

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Meeting with Saethor L Jonsson

CSC, Espoo, September 26th 2005



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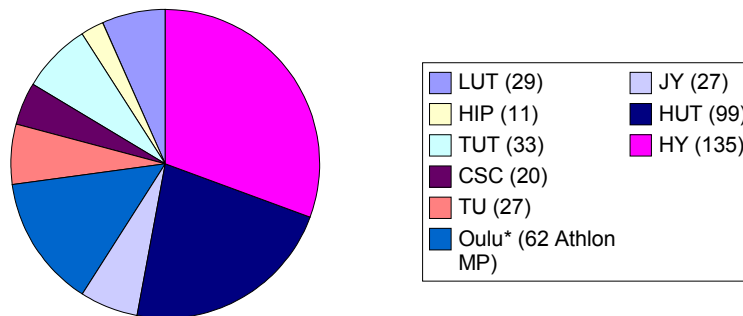
Finnish Material Sciences Grid (M-grid)

- **Joint project between seven Finnish universities, Helsinki Institute of Physics and CSC, the Finnish IT center for science**
- **Jointly funded by the Academy of Finland and the participating universities**
 - Funding application Nov 2003, deployment Oct 2004
- **First large initiative to put Grid middleware into production use in Finland**
- **Based on Linux clusters, targeted for serial and "pleasantly parallel" applications**
- **Users mainly physicists and chemists**



Hardware and CPU Distribution

- **Dual AMD Opteron 1.8-2.2 GHz nodes with 2-8 GB memory, 80-320 GB local disk, 1-2 TB shared storage, 2xGbit Ethernet, remote administration hardware**
- **Number of CPUs: 410 (computing nodes only), 1.5 Tflops theoretical computing power**
 - CSC's new cluster `sepeli.csc.fi` will be added soon
- **9 sites, size of sites varies greatly**



Software Choices



- **NPACI Rocks Cluster Distribution**

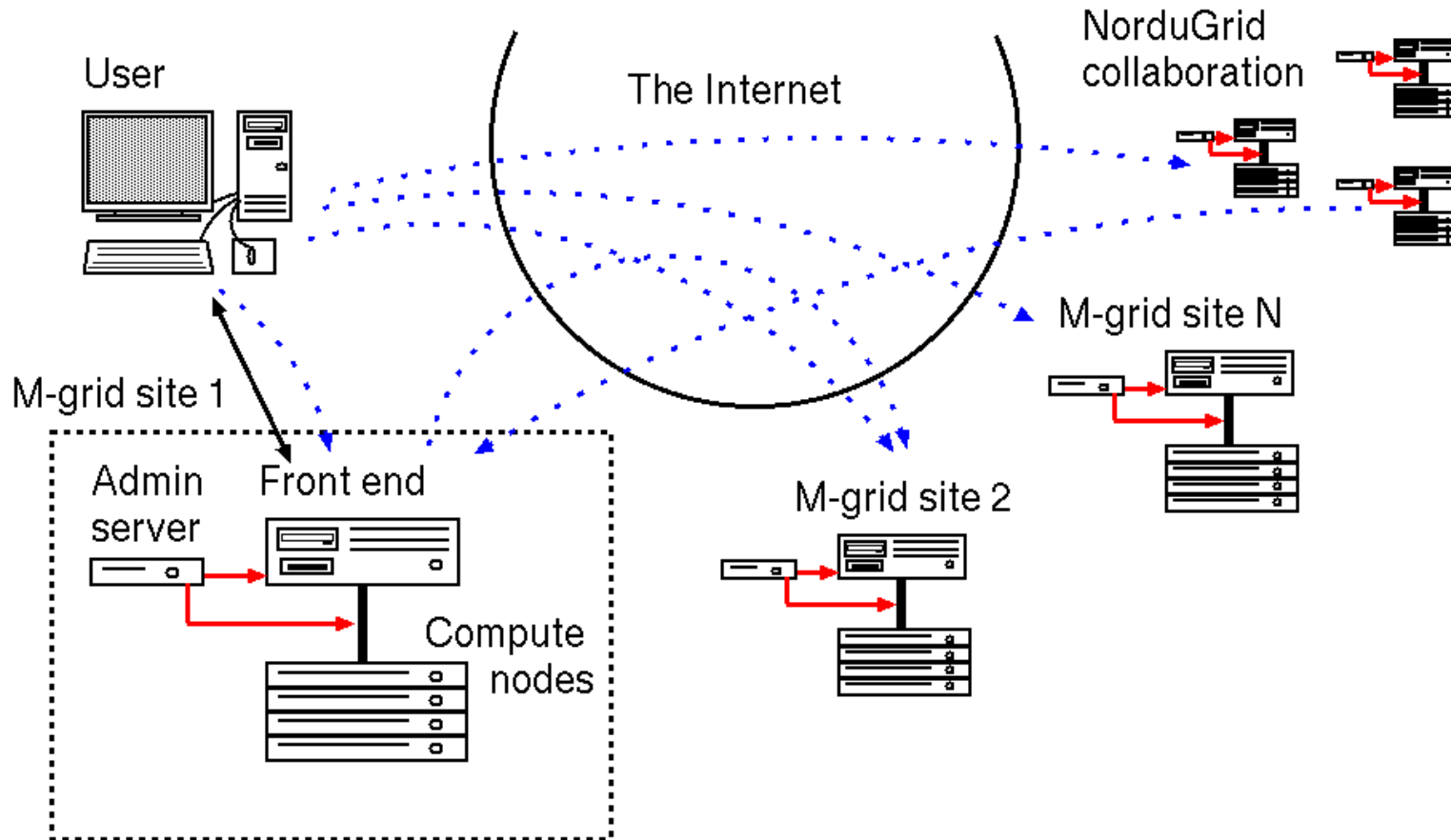
- Main developers in the San Diego Supercomputing Center, U.S.A.
- Based on Red Hat Enterprise Linux 3.0 source packages, but customized for clusters
- <http://www.rocksclusters.org>

- **NorduGrid ARC Grid middleware**

- The most popular middleware in Nordic countries, one of the few suitable for production use
- <http://www.nordugrid.org>



Grid — The Whole Picture



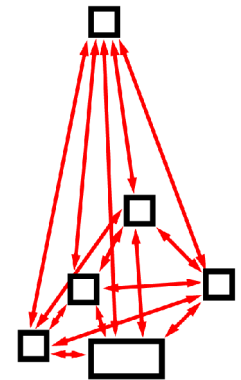
System Administration in M-grid

- **Tasks divided between CSC and site administrators**
- **CSC administrators**
 - Maintain (remotely) the OS, batch queue system, Grid middleware and certain libraries for all sites except Oulu
 - Separate small test cluster for testing new software releases
- **Site administrators**
 - Local applications and libraries, system monitoring, user support
- **Regular meetings of administrators & support network**



Goals of Shared System Administration

- **Centrally administered foundation while maintaining local control**
 - A new paradigm — traditionally in Finland HPC resources have been centralized at CSC
- **Easier for universities than setting up their own system from scratch**
 - However, needs a significant amount of work both from CSC and the local sysadmins
- **Take advantage of the local sysadmin expertise in software used by the local researchers**
 - Faster and better user support



36 pairs for collaboration!



Positive Experiences

- **Local sysadmins have found CSC support valuable**
 - Having also local control (root) is important psychologically
- **Participants have used their expertise to pick up suitable tasks, fruitful discussion on the mailing list**
- **Collaboration has strengthened relationships between groups also in their research**
- **Systems are closer to the user**
 - Easier to talk to the own group sysadmin, less support requests to CSC
- **Local sysadmins are often also users**
=> direct usability feedback to CSC



Negative Experiences

- **Configuring the batch queue system took time**
 - Initially used Sun Grid Engine v. 5.3 which wasn't very well suited for clusters, v 6.0 was capable but complicated
- **Wiki-based FAQ hasn't really taken off**
- **User documentation became scattered**
 - Mainly due to lack of human resources (people assigned to other projects before finishing the docs)
 - Compiling the documentation needs central coordination
- **Some users found support poor**
 - Clearly divided between sites: on some sites users are very happy



User Experiences

- **Users got started relatively quickly: the average total load of the M-grid soon rose above 50%, currently close to 100% in most clusters**
- **Performance has been quite satisfactory**
- **Problems centered around Fortran compiler and MPI runs**
 - MPI works, but killed jobs can leave unfreed resources behind
 - One compiler isn't satisfactory for everybody: currently Pathscale, Portland Group and GNU compilers used



Grid Use

- **Policy: Users may submit jobs both locally and through Grid interface**
 - Grid jobs have higher priority than local jobs in 20% of each system, and may fill all available free nodes
- **NorduGrid ARC middleware was installed in August 2005**
 - Problems with the 64 bit environment and Sun Grid Engine support took time (mostly solved now)
 - Little grid use yet, time will show how users adopt the Grid environment; our collaborative network will hopefully be helpful



Security Challenges in the Grid

- **Grid crosses organizational boundaries**
=> Collaboration and mutual trust needed!
- **Some new risks and all the old ones with wider impact area**
 - Compromised user account most probable method of intrusion
- **Definitions of responsibilities necessary to build trust**
 - Risk analysis
 - Acceptable use policy
 - Incident response



Security Challenges in the Grid (cont.)

- **Getting all the relevant parties involved**
 - Computing centers, university IT departments, local admins, CERTs and also users
 - International collaboration
- **Distributed systems with hundreds of users are always vulnerable**
 - Focus on detecting break-ins quickly
 - Clear procedures how to act when a system is compromised
- **Data protection and privacy issues**
 - Implementation details vary between sites



Conclusion

- **Sharing system administration tasks can work**
 - Partners need to know each other — face to face meetings are very useful in avoiding flame wars
- **User support in a distributed system potentially very good but needs special attention**
- **Grid projects can strengthen ties between groups even before actual Grid use**
- **Rocks Cluster Distribution is one good choice for a Linux cluster operating system**
- **International collaboration on security and policies needed**



More Information

- M-grid home page: <http://www.csc.fi/proj/mgrid/>
- Rocks home page: <http://www.rocksclusters.org>
- NorduGrid home page: <http://www.nordugrid.org>
- Contact people:
 - Arto Teräs <arto.teras@csc.fi>
 - Kai Nordlund <kai.nordlund@helsinki.fi>
 - Olli-Pekka Lehto <oplehto@csc.fi> (Rocks)
 - Urpo Kaila <urpo.kaila@csc.fi> (security)
- Thank you! Questions?

