High Performance Computing

What is it used for and why?

Reusing this material

epcc

THE UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH

Overview

- What is it used for?
  - Drivers for HPC
  - Examples of usage
- Why do you need to learn the basics?
  - Hardware layout and structure matters
  - Serial computing is required for parallel computing
  - Appreciation of fundamentals will help you get more from HPC and scientific computing
- Give you an introduction to modern HPC machines
  - On overview of how we interact with supercomputers

What is HPC used for?

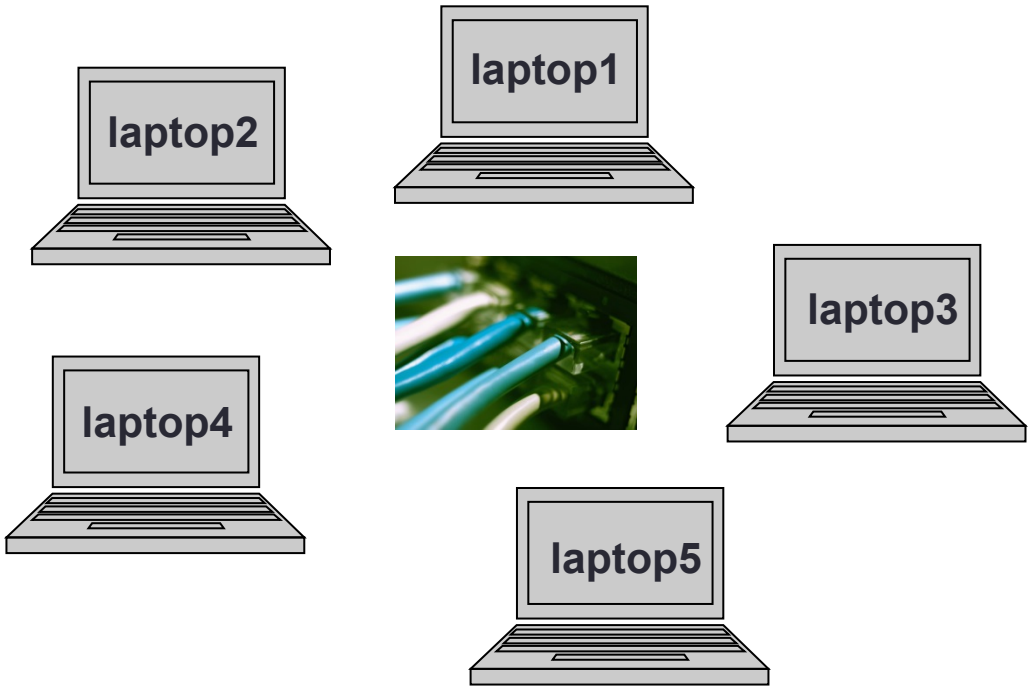
Drivers and examples

Why HPC?

- Scientific simulation and modelling drive the need for greater computing power.
- Single-core processors can not be made that have enough resource for the simulations needed.
  - Making processors with faster clock speeds is difficult due to cost and power/heat limitations
  - Expensive to put huge memory on a single processor
- Solution: parallel computing – divide up the work among numerous linked systems.

Generic Parallel Machine

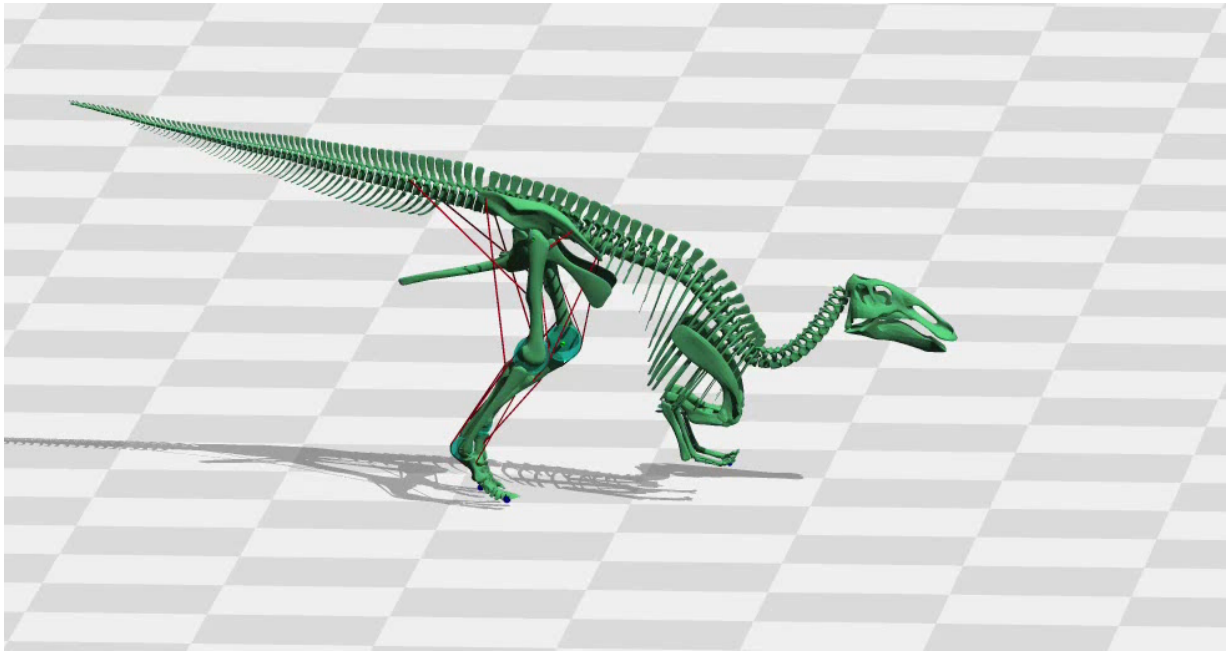
- Good conceptual model is collection of multicore laptops
  - come back to what "multicore" actually means later on …
- Connected together by a network



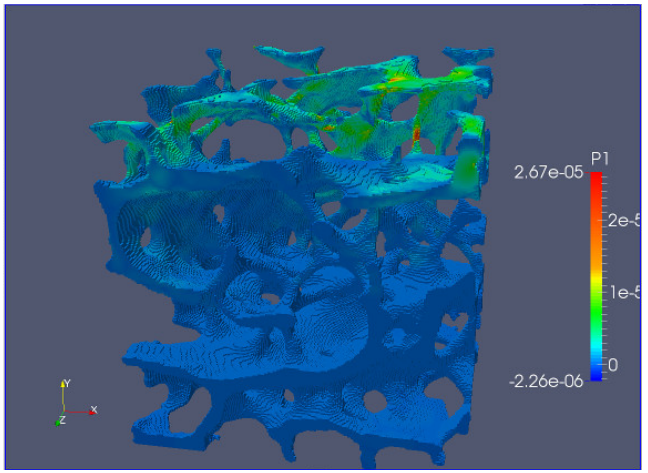
- Each laptop is called a *compute node*
  - each has its own operating system and network connection
- Suppose each node is a quadcore laptop
  - total system has 20 processor-cores

epcc

THE UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH

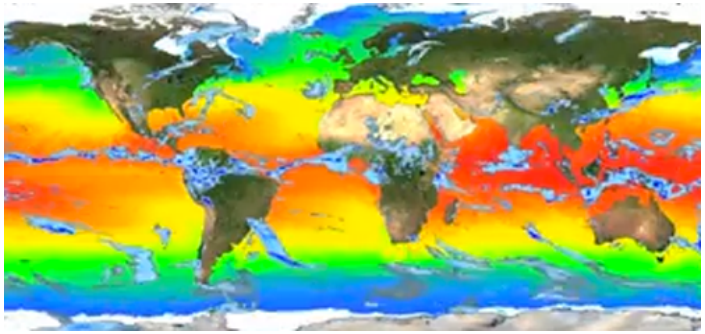


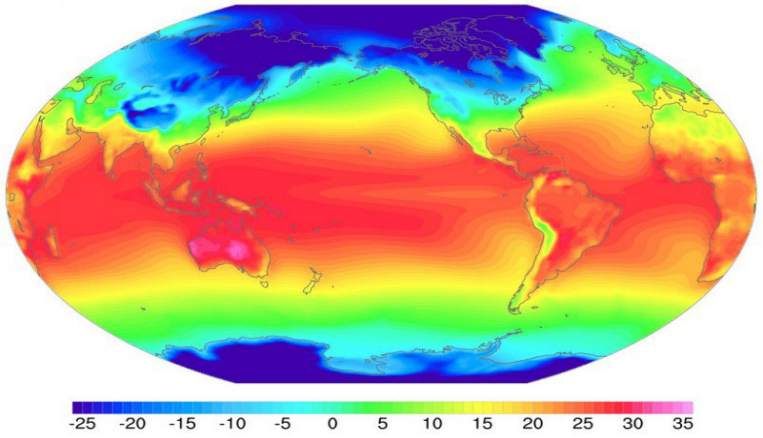
Modelling dinosaur gaits
Dr Bill Sellers, University of Manchester



Bone modelling
Prof Michael Fagan, University of Hull

Community Earth System Model

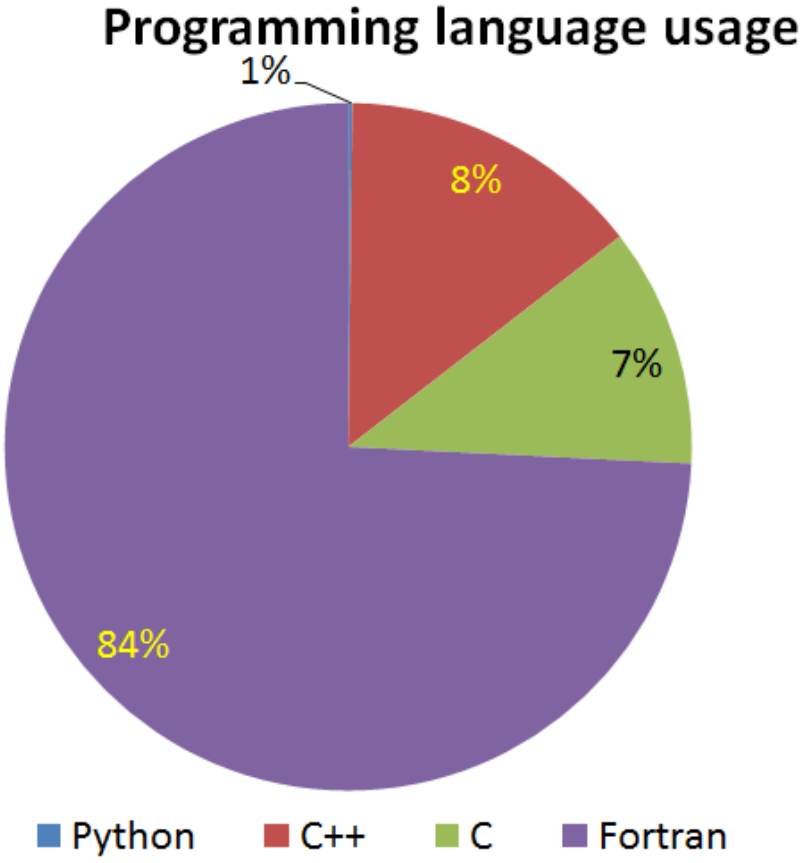


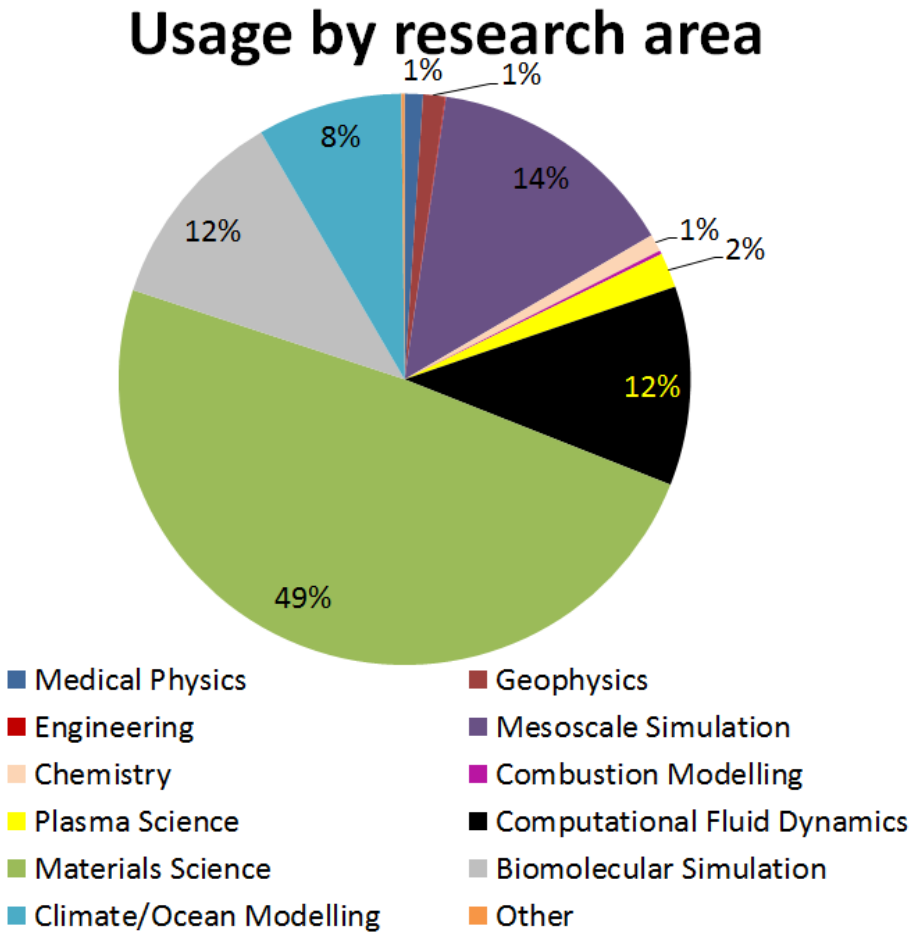


epcc

THE UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH

Usage statistics on UK national service





epcc

THE UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH

The Fundamentals

Why do I need to know this?

Parallel Computing

- Parallel computing and HPC are intimately related
  - higher performance requires more processor-cores
- Understanding the different parallel programming models allows you to understand how to use HPC resources effectively

Hardware Layout

- Understanding the different types of HPC hardware allows you to understand why some things are better on one resource than another
- Allows you to choose the appropriate resource for your application
- Allows you to understand the ways to parallelise your serial application
- Gives you an appreciation of the parts that are important for performance

Serial Computing

- Without an understanding of how serial computing operates it is difficult to understand parallel computing
  - What are the factors that matter for serial computation
  - How does the compiler produce executable code?
  - Which bits are automatic and which parts do I have to worry about
  - What can or can't the operating system do for me?

What do we mean by “performance”?

- For scientific and technical programming use FLOPS
  - Floating Point OPerations per Second
  - 1.324398404 + 3.6287414 = ?
  - 2.365873534 * 2443.3147 = ?
- Modern supercomputers measured in PFLOPS (PetaFLOPS)
  - Kilo, Mega, Giga, Tera, Peta, Exa = 10^3, 10^6, 10^9, 10^{12}, 10^{15}
- Runtime is often used for specific code runs
- Other disciplines have their own performance measures
  - frames per second, database accesses per second, …

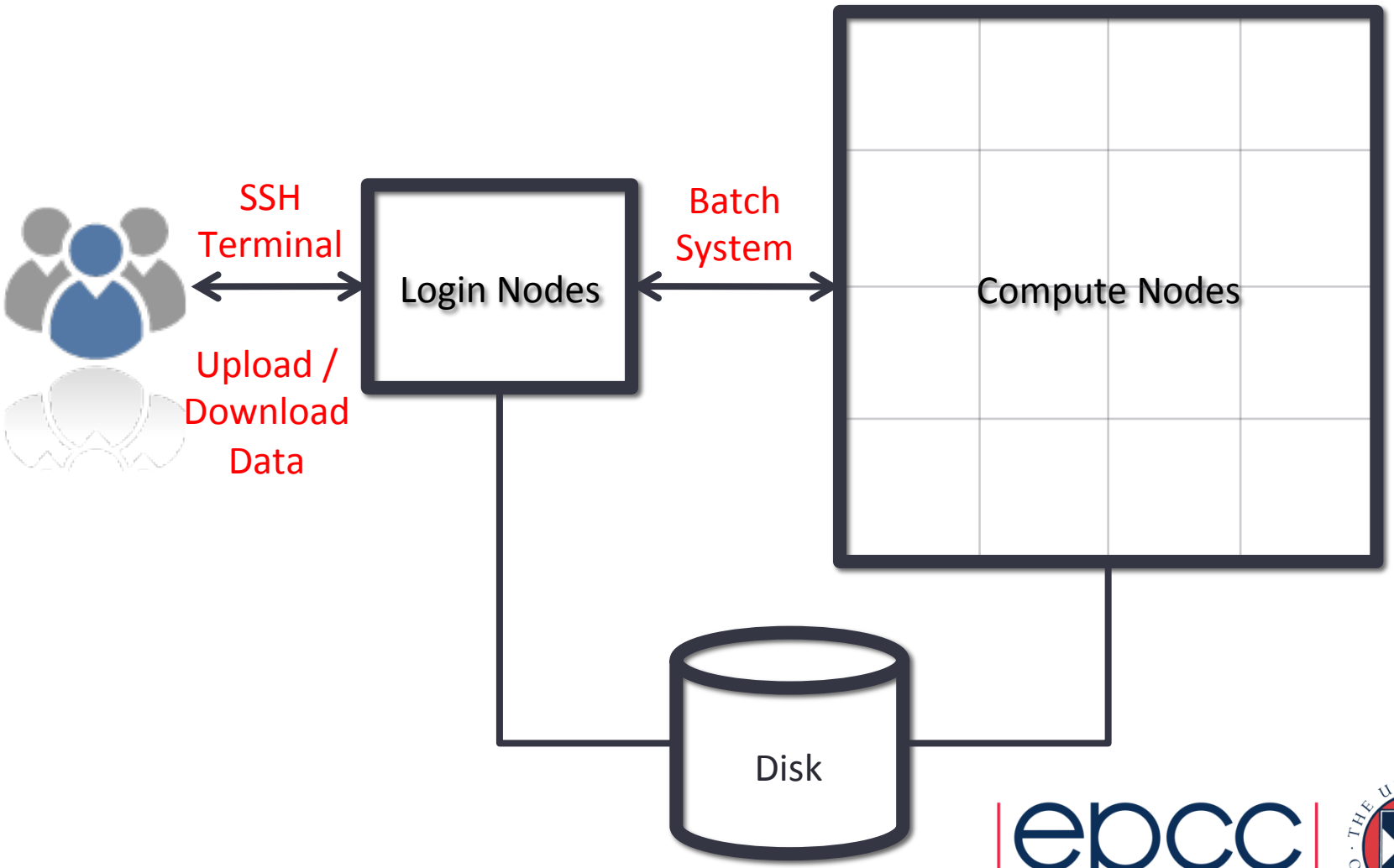
HPC Layout and Use

Starting concepts

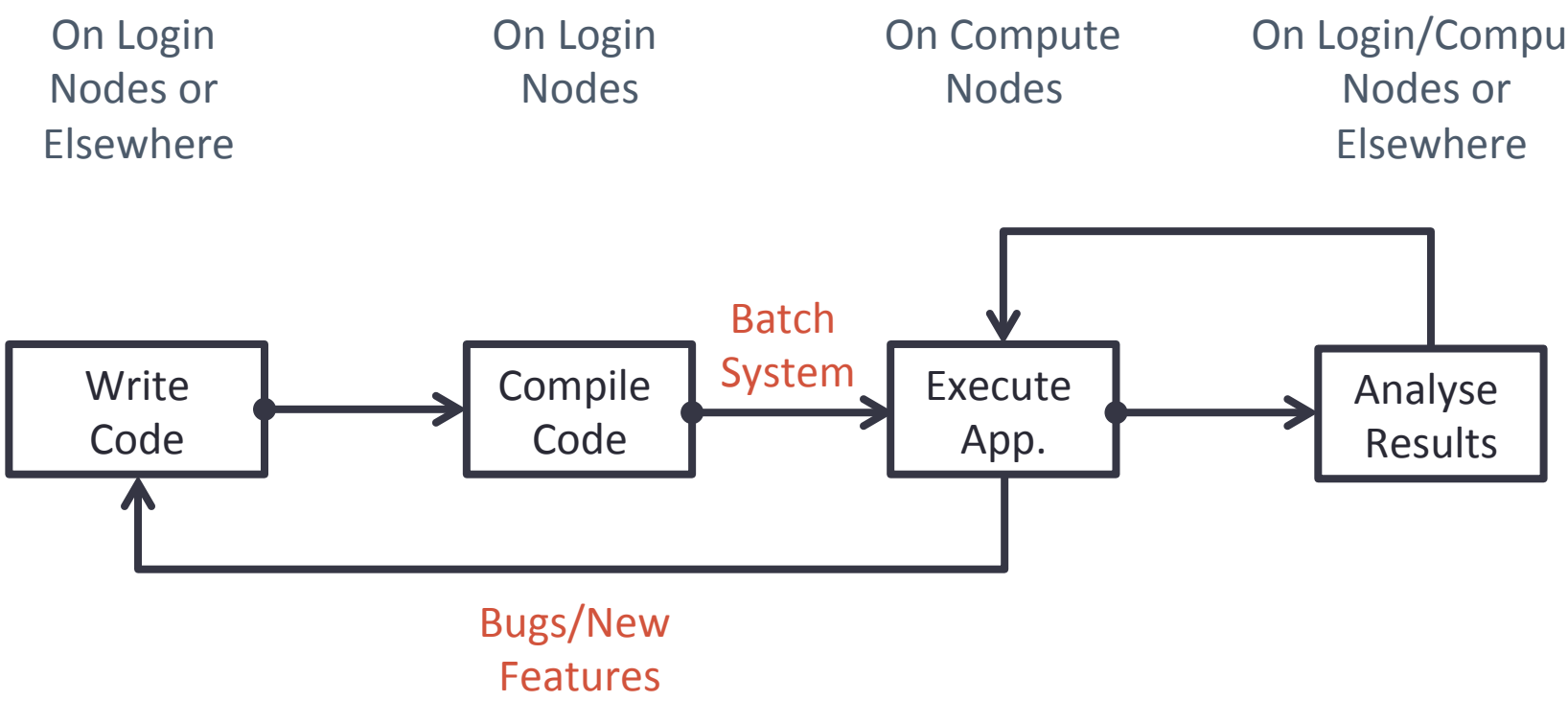
Differences from Desktop Computing

- Do not log on to compute nodes directly
  - submit jobs via a batch scheduling system
- Not a GUI-based environment
- Share the system with many users
- Resources more tightly monitored and controlled
  - disk quotas
  - CPU usage

Typical HPC system layout



Typical Software Usage Flow



Summary

Summary

- High Performance Computing = parallel computing
- Run on multiple processor-cores at the same time
- Typically use fairly standard processors
  - but many thousands of them
- Fast network for inter-processor communications