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Subject: [PATCH -mm 1/3] i/o bandwidth controller documentation

Posted by [Andrea Righi](#) on Tue, 15 Jul 2008 20:40:47 GMT

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Documentation of the block device I/O bandwidth controller: description, usage, advantages and design.

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---

```
Documentation/controllers/io-throttle.txt | 282 ++++++
1 files changed, 282 insertions(+), 0 deletions(-)
create mode 100644 Documentation/controllers/io-throttle.txt
```

```
diff --git a/Documentation/controllers/io-throttle.txt b/Documentation/controllers/io-throttle.txt
```

```
new file mode 100644
```

```
index 0000000..9c53f6c
```

```
--- /dev/null
```

```
+++ b/Documentation/controllers/io-throttle.txt
```

```
@ @ -0,0 +1,282 @ @
```

```
+
```

```
+      Block device I/O bandwidth controller
```

```
+
```

```
+1. Description
```

```
+
```

```
+This controller allows to limit the I/O bandwidth of specific block devices for
+specific process containers (cgroups) imposing additional delays on I/O
+requests for those processes that exceed the limits defined in the control
+group filesystem.
```

```
+
```

```
+Bandwidth limiting rules offer better control over QoS with respect to priority
+or weight-based solutions that only give information about applications'
+relative performance requirements. Nevertheless, priority based solutions are
+affected by performance bursts, when only low-priority requests are submitted
+to a general purpose resource dispatcher.
```

```
+
```

```
+The goal of the I/O bandwidth controller is to improve performance
+predictability and provide performance isolation of different control groups
+sharing the same block devices.
```

```
+
```

```
+NOTE #1: If you're looking for a way to improve the overall throughput of the
+system probably you should use a different solution.
```

```
+
```

```
+NOTE #2: The current implementation does not guarantee minimum bandwidth
+levels, the QoS is implemented only slowing down I/O "traffic" that exceeds the
+limits specified by the user; minimum I/O rate thresholds are supposed to be
+guaranteed if the user configures a proper I/O bandwidth partitioning of the
+block devices shared among the different cgroups (theoretically if the sum of
+all the single limits defined for a block device doesn't exceed the total I/O
```

+bandwidth of that device).

+

## +2. User Interface

+

+A new I/O bandwidth limitation rule is described using the file

+blockio.bandwidth.

+

+The same file can be used to set multiple rules for different block devices

+relative to the same cgroup.

+

### +2.1. Configure I/O limiting rules

+

+The syntax to configure a limiting rule is the following:

+

```
+# /bin/echo DEV:BW:STRATEGY:BUCKET_SIZE > CGROUP/blockio.bandwidth
```

+

+ DEV is the name of the device the limiting rule is applied to.

+

+ BW is the maximum I/O bandwidth on DEVICE allowed by CGROUP; bandwidth must be expressed in bytes/s. A generic I/O bandwidth limiting rule for a block device DEV can be removed setting the BW value to 0.

+

+ STRATEGY is the throttling strategy used to throttle the applications' I/O requests from/to device DEV. At the moment two different strategies can be used:

+

+ 0 = leaky bucket: the controller accepts at most B bytes ( $B = BW * \text{time}$ ); further I/O requests are delayed scheduling a timeout for the tasks that made those requests.

+

+ Different I/O flow

```
+   |||
+   |v|
+   | v
+   v
```

```
+   .....
+   \  /
```

+ \ / leaky-bucket

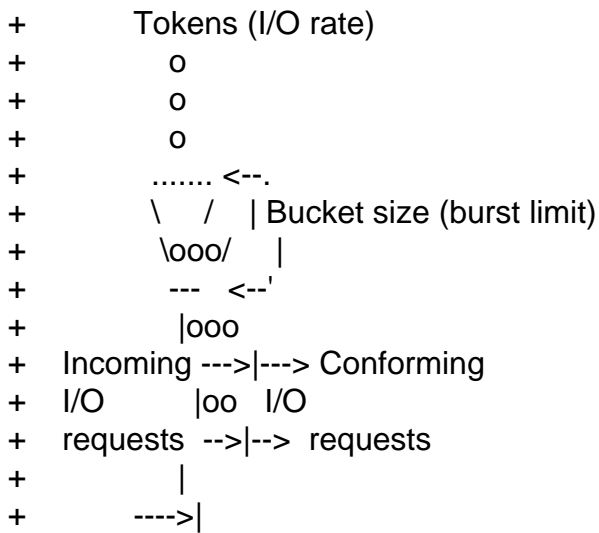
```
+   ---
+   |||
+   vvv
```

+ Smoothed I/O flow

+

+ 1 = token bucket: BW tokens are added to the bucket every seconds; the bucket can hold at the most BUCKET\_SIZE tokens; I/O requests are accepted if there are available tokens in the bucket; when a request of N bytes arrives N tokens are removed from the bucket; if fewer than N tokens are available the request is

+ delayed until a sufficient amount of token is available in  
+ the bucket.



+ Leaky bucket is more precise than token bucket to respect the bandwidth  
+ limits, because bursty workloads are always smoothed. Token bucket, instead,  
+ allows a small irregularity degree in the I/O flows (burst limit), and, for  
+ this, it is better in terms of efficiency (bursty workloads are not smoothed  
+ when there are sufficient tokens in the bucket).

+ BUCKET\_SIZE is used only with token bucket (STRATEGY == 1) and defines the  
+ size of the bucket in bytes.

+ CGROUP is the name of the limited process container.

+Also the following syntaxes are allowed:

+ remove an I/O bandwidth limiting rule  
+# /bin/echo DEV:0 > CGROUP/blockio.bandwidth

+ configure a limiting rule using leaky bucket throttling (ignore bucket size):  
+# /bin/echo DEV:BW:0 > CGROUP/blockio.bandwidth

## +2.2. Show I/O limiting rules

+All the defined rules and statistics for a specific cgroup can be shown reading  
+the file blockio.bandwidth. The following syntax is used:

+\$ cat CGROUP/blockio.bandwidth

+MAJOR MINOR BW STRATEGY LEAKY\_STAT BUCKET\_SIZE BUCKET\_FILL TIME\_DELTA

+ MAJOR is the major device number of DEV (defined above)

+ MINOR is the minor device number of DEV (defined above)

```

+
+- BW, STRATEGY and BUCKET_SIZE are the same parameters defined above
+
+- LEAKY_STAT is the amount of bytes currently allowed by the I/O bandwidth
+ controller (only used with leaky bucket strategy - STRATEGY == 0)
+
+- BUCKET_FILL represents the amount of tokens present in the bucket (only used
+ with token bucket strategy - STRATEGY == 1)
+
+- TIME_DELTA can be one of the following:
+ - the amount of jiffies elapsed from the last I/O request (token bucket)
+ - the amount of jiffies during which the bytes given by LEAKY_STAT have been
+ accumulated (leaky bucket)
+
+Multiple per-block device rules are reported in multiple rows
+(DEVi, i = 1 .. n):
+
+$ cat CGROUP/blockio.bandwidth
+MAJOR1 MINOR1 BW1 STRATEGY1 LEAKY_STAT1 BUCKET_SIZE1 BUCKET_FILL1
TIME_DELTA1
+MAJOR1 MINOR1 BW2 STRATEGY2 LEAKY_STAT2 BUCKET_SIZE2 BUCKET_FILL2
TIME_DELTA2
+...
+MAJORn MINORn BWn STRATEGYn LEAKY_STATn BUCKET_SIZEn BUCKET_FILLn
TIME_DELTAn
+
+2.3. Examples
+
+* Mount the cgroup filesystem (blockio subsystem):
+ # mkdir /mnt/cgroup
+ # mount -t cgroup -oblockio blockio /mnt/cgroup
+
+* Instantiate the new cgroup "foo":
+ # mkdir /mnt/cgroup/foo
+ --> the cgroup foo has been created
+
+* Add the current shell process to the cgroup "foo":
+ # /bin/echo $$ > /mnt/cgroup/foo/tasks
+ --> the current shell has been added to the cgroup "foo"
+
+* Give maximum 1MiB/s of I/O bandwidth on /dev/sda for the cgroup "foo", using
+ leaky bucket throttling strategy:
+ # /bin/echo /dev/sda:$((1024 * 1024)):0:0 > \
+ > /mnt/cgroup/foo/blockio.bandwidth
+ # sh
+ --> the subshell 'sh' is running in cgroup "foo" and it can use a maximum I/O
+ bandwidth of 1MiB/s on /dev/sda
+

```

```

+* Give maximum 8MiB/s of I/O bandwidth on /dev/sdb for the cgroup "foo", using
+ token bucket throttling strategy, bucket size = 8MiB:
+ # /bin/echo /dev/sdb:$((8 * 1024 * 1024)):1:$((8 * 1024 * 1024)) > \
+ > /mnt/cgroup/foo/blockio.bandwidth
+ # sh
+ --> the subshell 'sh' is running in cgroup "foo" and it can use a maximum I/O
+ bandwidth of 1MiB/s on /dev/sda (controlled by leaky bucket throttling)
+ and 8MiB/s on /dev/sdb (controlled by token bucket throttling)
+
+* Run a benchmark doing I/O on /dev/sda and /dev/sdb; I/O limits and usage
+ defined for cgroup "foo" can be shown as following:
+ # cat /mnt/cgroup/foo/blockio.bandwidth
+ 8 16 8388608 1 0 8388608 -522560 48
+ 8 0 1048576 0 737280 0 0 216
+
+* Extend the maximum I/O bandwidth for the cgroup "foo" to 16MiB/s on /dev/sda:
+ # /bin/echo /dev/sda:$((16 * 1024 * 1024)):0:0 > \
+ > /mnt/cgroup/foo/blockio.bandwidth
+ # cat /mnt/cgroup/foo/blockio.bandwidth
+ 8 16 8388608 1 0 8388608 -84432 206436
+ 8 0 16777216 0 0 0 0 15212
+
+* Remove limiting rule on /dev/sdb for cgroup "foo":
+ # /bin/echo /dev/sdb:0:0:0 > /mnt/cgroup/foo/blockio.bandwidth
+ # cat /mnt/cgroup/foo/blockio.bandwidth
+ 8 0 16777216 0 0 0 0 110388
+
+3. Advantages of providing this feature
+
+* Allow I/O traffic shaping for block device shared among different cgroups
+* Improve I/O performance predictability on block devices shared between
+ different cgroups
+* Limiting rules do not depend of the particular I/O scheduler (anticipatory,
+ deadline, CFQ, noop) and/or the type of the underlying block devices
+* The bandwidth limitations are guaranteed both for synchronous and
+ asynchronous operations, even the I/O passing through the page cache or
+ buffers and not only direct I/O (see below for details)
+* It is possible to implement a simple user-space application to dynamically
+ adjust the I/O workload of different process containers at run-time,
+ according to the particular users' requirements and applications' performance
+ constraints
+* It is even possible to implement event-based performance throttling
+ mechanisms; for example the same user-space application could actively
+ throttle the I/O bandwidth to reduce power consumption when the battery of a
+ mobile device is running low (power throttling) or when the temperature of a
+ hardware component is too high (thermal throttling)
+
+4. Design

```

+  
+The I/O throttling is performed imposing an explicit timeout, via  
+`schedule_timeout_killable()` on the processes that exceed the I/O bandwidth  
+dedicated to the cgroup they belong to. I/O accounting happens per cgroup.  
+  
+It just works as expected for read operations: the real I/O activity is reduced  
+synchronously according to the defined limitations.  
+  
+Write operations, instead, are modeled depending of the dirty pages ratio  
+(write throttling in memory), since the writes to the real block devices are  
+processed asynchronously by different kernel threads (`pdflush`). However, the  
+dirty pages ratio is directly proportional to the actual I/O that will be  
+performed on the real block device. So, due to the asynchronous transfers  
+through the page cache, the I/O throttling in memory can be considered a form  
+of anticipatory throttling to the underlying block devices.  
+  
+Multiple re-writes in already dirtied page cache areas are not considered for  
+accounting the I/O activity. This is valid for multiple re-reads of pages  
+already present in the page cache as well.  
+  
+This means that a process that re-writes and/or re-reads multiple times the  
+same blocks in a file (without re-creating it by `truncate()`, `ftruncate()`,  
+`creat()`, etc.) is affected by the I/O limitations only for the actual I/O  
+performed to (or from) the underlying block devices.  
+  
+Multiple rules for different block devices are stored in a linked list, using  
+the `dev_t` number of each block device as key to uniquely identify each element  
+of the list. RCU synchronization is used to protect the whole list structure,  
+since the elements in the list are not supposed to change frequently (they  
+change only when a new rule is defined or an old rule is removed or updated),  
+while the reads in the list occur at each operation that generates I/O. This  
+allows to provide zero overhead for cgroups that do not use any limitation.  
+  
+WARNING: per-block device limiting rules always refer to the `dev_t` device  
+number. If a block device is unplugged (i.e. a USB device) the limiting rules  
+defined for that device persist and they are still valid if a new device is  
+plugged in the system and it uses the same major and minor numbers.  
+  
+NOTE: explicit sleeps are *\*not\** imposed on tasks doing asynchronous I/O (AIO)  
+operations; AIO throttling is performed returning `-EAGAIN` from `sys_io_submit()`.  
+Userspace applications must be able to handle this error code opportunely.  
+  
+5. Todo  
+  
+\* Try to reduce the cost of calling `cgroup_io_throttle()` on every  
+ `submit_bio(READ, ...)`; this is not too much expensive, but the call of  
+ `task_subsys_state()` has surely a cost. A possible solution could be to  
+ temporarily account I/O in the current `task_struct` and call

+ cgroup\_io\_throttle() only on each X MB of I/O. Or on each Y number of I/O  
+ requests as well. Better if both X and/or Y can be tuned at runtime by a  
+ userspace tool.  
+  
+\* Think an alternative design for general purpose usage; special purpose usage  
+ right now is restricted to improve I/O performance predictability and  
+ evaluate more precise response timings for applications doing I/O. To a large  
+ degree the block I/O bandwidth controller should implement a more complex  
+ logic to better evaluate real I/O operations cost, depending also on the  
+ particular block device profile (i.e. USB stick, optical drive, hard disk,  
+ etc.). This would also allow to appropriately account I/O cost for seeky  
+ workloads, respect to large stream workloads. Instead of looking at the  
+ request stream and try to predict how expensive the I/O cost will be, a  
+ totally different approach could be to collect request timings (start time /  
+ elapsed time) and based on collected informations, try to estimate the I/O  
+ cost and usage (idea proposed by Andrew Morton <akpm@linux-foundation.org>).  
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1.5.4.3

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Containers mailing list  
Containers@lists.linux-foundation.org  
<https://lists.linux-foundation.org/mailman/listinfo/containers>

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