

NVIDIA COLLECTIVE COMMUNICATION LIBRARY (NCCL)

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Developer Guide

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter 1. Overview	
Chapter 2. Collective Communication Primitives	3
2.1. Creating A Communicator	3
2.2. Operations	4
2.3. Data Pointers	7
2.4. CUDA Stream Semantics	8
2.5. Group Calls	8
2.5.1. Management Of Multiple GPUs From One Thread	8
2.5.2. Aggregated Operations (NCCL 2.2 and later)	9
2.5.2.1. Usage	9
2.6. Thread Safety	9
2.7. In-Place Operations	. 10
Chapter 3. Examples	. 11
3.1. Communicator Creation And Destruction Examples	
3.1.1. Example 1: Single Process, Single Thread, Multiple Devices	. 11
3.1.2. Example 2: One Device Per Process Or Thread	
3.1.3. Example 3: Multiple Devices Per Thread	
3.2. Communication Examples	. 19
3.2.1. Example 1: One Device Per Process Or Thread	
3.2.2. Example 2: Multiple Devices Per Thread	
Chapter 4. NCCL And MPI	. 21
4.1. API	. 21
4.2. Using NCCL Within An MPI Program	. 22
4.2.1. MPI Progress	.22
4.2.2. Inter-GPU Communication With CUDA-Aware MPI	. 23
Chapter 5. Troubleshooting	.24
5.1. Errors	. 24
5.2. Networking Issues	. 24
5.2.1. IP Network Interfaces	. 24
5.2.2. InfiniBand	.25
5.3. Known Issues	. 25
5.4. NCCL Knobs	.26
5.5. Support	. 33

Chapter 1. OVERVIEW

The NVIDIA[®] Collective Communications Library [™] (NCCL) (pronounced "Nickel") is a library of multi-GPU collective communication primitives that are topology-aware and can be easily integrated into applications.

Collective communication algorithms employ many processors working in concert to aggregate data. NCCL is not a full-blown parallel programming framework; rather, it is a library focused on accelerating collective communication primitives. The following collective operations are currently supported:

- AllReduce
- Broadcast
- Reduce
- AllGather
- ReduceScatter

Tight synchronization between communicating processors is a key aspect of collective communication. CUDA[®] based collectives would traditionally be realized through a combination of CUDA memory copy operations and CUDA kernels for local reductions. NCCL, on the other hand, implements each collective in a single kernel handling both communication and computation operations. This allows for fast synchronization and minimizes the resources needed to reach peak bandwidth.

NCCL conveniently removes the need for developers to optimize their applications for specific machines. NCCL provides fast collectives over multiple GPUs both within and across nodes. It supports a variety of interconnect technologies including PCIe, NVLink[™], InfiniBand Verbs, and IP sockets. NCCL also automatically patterns its communication strategy to match the system's underlying GPU interconnect topology.

Next to performance, ease of programming was the primary consideration in the design of NCCL. NCCL uses a simple C API, which can be easily accessed from a variety of programming languages. NCCL closely follows the popular collectives API defined by MPI (Message Passing Interface). Anyone familiar with MPI will thus find NCCL API very natural to use. In a minor departure from MPI, NCCL collectives take a "stream" argument which provides direct integration with the CUDA programming model. Finally, NCCL is compatible with virtually any multi-GPU parallelization model, for example:

- single-threaded
- multi-threaded, for example, using one thread per GPU
- multi-process, for example, MPI combined with multi-threaded operation on GPUs

NCCL has found great application in deep learning frameworks, where the **AllReduce** collective is heavily used for neural network training. Efficient scaling of neural network training is possible with the multi-GPU and multi node communication provided by NCCL.

Chapter 2. COLLECTIVE COMMUNICATION PRIMITIVES

Collective communication primitives are common patterns of data transfer among a group of CUDA devices. A communication algorithm involves many processors that are communicating together.

Each NCCL processor (GPU) is identified within the communication group by zerobased index or rank . Each *rank* uses a communicator object to refer to the collection of GPUs that are intended to work together for some task.

The creation of a communicator is the first step needed before launching any communication operation.

2.1. Creating A Communicator

When creating a communicator, a unique rank between **0** and **n-1** has to be assigned to each of the **n** CUDA devices which are part of the communicator. Using the same CUDA device multiple times as different ranks of the same NCCL communicator is not supported and may lead to hangs.

Given a static mapping of ranks to CUDA devices, the ncclCommInitRank and ncclCommInitAll functions will create communicator objects, each communicator object being associated to a fixed rank. Those objects will then be used to launch communication operations.

Before calling ncclCommInitRank, you need to first create a unique object which will be used by all processes and threads to synchronize and understand they are part of the same communicator. This is done by calling the ncclGetUniqueId function.

The ncclGetUniqueId function returns an ID which has to be broadcast to all participating threads and processes using any CPU communication system, for example, passing the ID pointer to multiple threads, or broadcasting it to other processes using MPI or another parallel environment using, for example, sockets.

You can also call the ncclCommInitAll function to create **n** communicator objects at once within a single process. As it is limited to a single process, this function does

not permit inter-node communication. ncclCommInitAll is equivalent to calling a combination of ncclGetUniqueId and ncclCommInitRank.

The following sample code is a simplified implementation of ncclCommInitAll:

```
ncclResult_t ncclCommInitAll(ncclComm_t* comm, int ndev, const
int* devlist) {
    ncclUniqueId Id;
    ncclGetUniqueId(&Id);
    ncclGroupStart();
    for (int i=0; i<ndev; i++) {
        cudaSetDevice(devlist[i]);
        ncclCommInitRank(comm+i, ndev, Id, i);
    }
    ncclGroupEnd();
}
```

2.2. Operations

Like MPI collective operations, NCCL collective operations have to be called for each rank (hence CUDA device) to form a complete collective operation. Failure to do so will result in other ranks waiting indefinitely.

2.2.1. AllReduce

The AllReduce operation is performing reductions on data, for example, sum and max, across devices and writing the result in the receive buffers of every rank.

The AllReduce operation is rank-agnostic. Any reordering of the ranks will not affect the outcome of the operations.

AllReduce starts with independent arrays $\mathbf{v}_{\mathbf{k}}$ of \mathbf{N} values on each of \mathbf{K} ranks and ends with identical arrays \mathbf{s} of \mathbf{N} values, where $\mathbf{S}[\mathbf{i}] = \mathbf{v}_0$ $[\mathbf{i}] + \mathbf{v}_1$ $[\mathbf{i}] + \dots + \mathbf{v}_{\mathbf{k}-1}$ $[\mathbf{i}]$, for each rank \mathbf{k} .

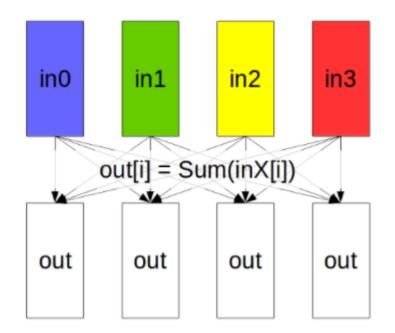


Figure 1 AllReduce operation: each rank receives the reduction of input values across ranks.

2.2.2. Broadcast

The Broadcast operation copies an **n**-element buffer on the root rank to all ranks.

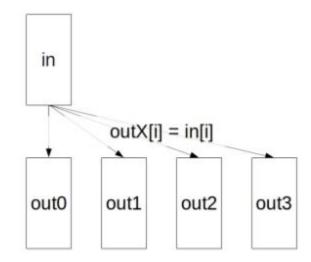
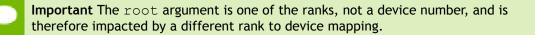


Figure 2 Broadcast operation: all ranks receive data from a root rank.



2.2.3. Reduce

The Reduce operation is performing the same operation as AllReduce, but writes the result only in the receive buffers of a specified root rank.

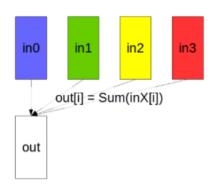


Figure 3 Reduce operation: one rank receives the reduction of input values across ranks.

Important The **root** argument is one of the ranks, not a device number, and is therefore impacted by a different rank to device mapping.

A Reduce, followed by a Broadcast, is equivalent to the AllReduce operation.

2.2.4. AllGather

In the **AllGather** operation, each of the κ processors aggregates \mathbf{N} values from every processor into an output of dimension $\kappa \star \mathbf{N}$. The output is ordered by rank index.

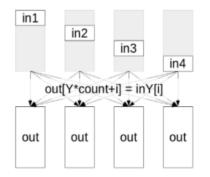


Figure 4 AllGather operation: each rank receives the aggregation of data from all ranks in the order of the ranks.

The **AllGather** operation is impacted by a different rank or device mapping since the ranks determine the data layout.



Executing ReduceScatter, followed by AllGather, is equivalent to the AllReduce operation.

2.2.5. ReduceScatter

The **ReduceScatter** operation performs the same operation as the **Reduce** operation, except the result is scattered in equal blocks among ranks, each rank getting a chunk of data based on its rank index.

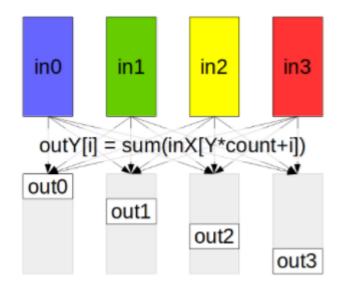


Figure 5 ReduceScatter operation: input values are reduced across ranks, with each rank receiving a sub-part of the result.

The **ReduceScatter** operation is impacted by a different rank or device mapping since the ranks determine the data layout.

2.3. Data Pointers

In general NCCL will accept any CUDA pointers that are accessible from the CUDA device associated to the communicator object. This includes:

- device memory local to the CUDA device
- host memory registered using CUDA SDK APIs cudaHostRegister or cudaGetDevicePointer
- managed and unified memory

The only exception is device memory located on another device but accessible from the current device using peer access. NCCL will return an error in that case to avoid programming errors (only when **NCCL_CHECK_POINTERS=1** since 2.2.12).

2.4. CUDA Stream Semantics

NCCL calls are associated to a stream and are passed as the last argument of the collective communication function. The NCCL call returns when the operation has been effectively enqueued to the given stream, or returns an error. The collective operation is then executed asynchronously on the CUDA device. The operation status can be queried using standard CUDA semantics, for example, calling cudaStreamSynchronize or using CUDA events.

2.5. Group Calls

2.5.1. Management Of Multiple GPUs From One Thread

When a single thread is managing multiple devices, group semantics must be used. This is because every NCCL call may have to block, waiting for other threads or ranks to arrive, before effectively posting the NCCL operation on the given stream.

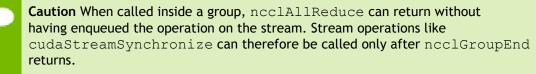
Hence, a simple loop on multiple devices like shown below could block on the first call waiting for the other ones:

```
for (int i=0; i<nLocalDevs; i++) {
   ncclAllReduce(..., comm[i], stream[i];
}</pre>
```

To define that these calls are part of the same collective operation, use the ncclGroupStart and ncclGroupEnd functions. For example:

```
ncclGroupStart();
for (int i=0; i<nLocalDevs; i++) {
   ncclAllReduce(..., comm[i], stream[i];
}
ncclGroupEnd();
```

This will tell NCCL to treat all calls between ncclGroupStart and ncclGroupEnd as a single call to many devices.



Contrary to NCCL 1.x, there is no need to set the CUDA device before every NCCL communication call within a group, but it is still needed when calling ncclCommInitRank within a group.

2.5.2. Aggregated Operations (NCCL 2.2 and later)

The group semantics can also be used to have multiple collective operations performed within a single NCCL launch. This is useful for reducing the launch overhead, in other words, latency, as it only occurs once for multiple operations.

2.5.2.1. Usage

Aggregation of collective operations can be done simply by having multiple calls to NCCL within a **ncclGroupStart** / **ncclGroupEnd** section.

In the following example, we launch one broadcast and two **allReduce** operations together as a single NCCL launch.

```
ncclGroupStart();
ncclBroadcast(sendbuff1, recvbuff1, count1, datatype, root, comm, stream);
ncclAllReduce(sendbuff2, recvbuff2, count2, datatype, comm, stream);
ncclAllReduce(sendbuff3, recvbuff3, count3, datatype, comm, stream);
ncclGroupEnd();
```

It is not permitted to use different streams for a given NCCL communicator. This sequence is erroneous:

```
ncclGroupStart();
ncclAllReduce(sendbuff1, recvbuff1, count1, comm, stream1);
ncclAllReduce(sendbuff2, recvbuff2, count2, comm, stream2);
ncclGroupEnd();
```

It is, however, permitted to combine aggregation with multi-GPU launch and use different communicators in a group launch as shown in the Management Of Multiple GPUs From One Thread section. When combining multi-GPU launch and aggregation, ncclGroupStart and ncclGroupEnd can be either used once or at each level. The following example groups the allReduce operations from different layers and on multiple CUDA devices:

```
ncclGroupStart();
for (int i=0; i<nlayers; i++) {
   ncclGroupStart();
   for (int g=0; g<ngpus; g++) {
      ncclAllReduce(sendbuffs[g]+offsets[i], recvbuffs[g]+offsets[i], counts[i],
      datatype[i], comms[g], streams[g]);
   }
   ncclGroupEnd();
}
ncclGroupEnd();
```

The NCCL operation will only be started as a whole during the last call to ncclGroupEnd. The ncclGroupStart and ncclGroupEnd calls within the for loop are not necessary and do nothing. Also, a given communicator comms[g] is always used with the same stream streams[g].

2.6. Thread Safety

NCCL primitives are generally not thread-safe, however, they are re-entrant. Multiple threads should use separate communicator objects.

2.7. In-Place Operations

Contrary to MPI, NCCL does not define a special "in-place" value to replace pointers. Instead, NCCL optimizes the case where the provided pointers are effectively "in place".

For **ncclBroadcast** and **ncclAllreduce** functions, this means that passing **sendBuff == recvBuff** will perform in place operations, storing final results at the same place as initial data was read from.

For **ncclReduceScatter** and **ncclAllGather**, in place operations are done when the per-rank pointer is located at the rank offset of the global buffer. More precisely, these calls are considered in place:

```
ncclReduceScatter(data, data+rank*recvcount, recvcount, datatype,
op, comm, stream);
ncclAllGather(data+rank*sendcount, data, sendcount, datatype, op,
comm, stream);
```

Chapter 3. EXAMPLES

The examples in this section provide an overall view of how to use NCCL in various environments, combining one or multiple techniques:

- using multiple GPUs per thread/process
- using multiple threads
- using multiple processes the examples with multiple processes use MPI as parallel runtime environment, but any multi-process system should be able to work similarly.

Ensure that you always check the return codes from the NCCL functions. For clarity, the following examples do not contain error checking.

3.1. Communicator Creation And Destruction Examples

The following examples demonstrate common use cases for NCCL initialization.

3.1.1. Example 1: Single Process, Single Thread, Multiple Devices

In the specific case of a single process, **ncclCommInitAll** can be used. Here is an example creating a communicator for 4 devices, therefore, there are 4 communicator objects:

ncclComm_t comms[4]; int devs[4] = { 0, 1, 2, 3 }; ncclCommInitAll(comms, 4, devs);

Next, you can call NCCL collective operations using a single thread, and group calls, or multiple threads, each provided with a comm object.

At the end of the program, all of the communicator objects are destroyed:

Examples

```
for (int i=0; i<4; i++)
   ncclCommDestroy(comms[i]);</pre>
```

The following code depicts a complete working example with a single process that manages multiple devices:

```
#include <stdio.h>
#include "cuda runtime.h"
#include "nccl.h"
#define CUDACHECK(cmd) do {
 cudaError t e = cmd;
 if( e != cudaSuccess ) {
   printf("Failed: Cuda error %s:%d '%s'\n",
                                                            \
          FILE , LINE _, cudaGetErrorString(e));
    exit(EXIT FAILURE);
  }
} while(0)
#define NCCLCHECK(cmd) do {
 ncclResult t r = cmd;
 if (r!= ncclSuccess) {
   printf("Failed, NCCL error %s:%d '%s'\n",
                                                            \backslash
          FILE , LINE ,ncclGetErrorString(r));
                                                      /
    exit(EXIT FAILURE);
  }
} while(0)
int main(int argc, char* argv[])
 ncclComm t comms[4];
  //managing 4 devices
  int nDev = 4;
 int size = 32*1024*1024;
 int devs[4] = \{ 0, 1, 2, 3 \};
  //allocating and initializing device buffers
  float** sendbuff = (float**)malloc(nDev * sizeof(float*));
 float** recvbuff = (float**)malloc(nDev * sizeof(float*));
 cudaStream t* s =
 (cudaStream t*)malloc(sizeof(cudaStream t)*nDev);
  for (int i = 0; i < nDev; ++i) {
   CUDACHECK (cudaSetDevice (i));
    CUDACHECK(cudaMalloc(sendbuff + i, size * sizeof(float)));
    CUDACHECK(cudaMalloc(recvbuff + i, size * sizeof(float)));
    CUDACHECK(cudaMemset(sendbuff[i], 1, size * sizeof(float)));
    CUDACHECK(cudaMemset(recvbuff[i], 0, size * sizeof(float)));
    CUDACHECK(cudaStreamCreate(s+i));
  }
  //initializing NCCL
 NCCLCHECK(ncclCommInitAll(comms, nDev, devs));
  //calling NCCL communication API. Group API is required when
using
  //multiple devices per thread
 NCCLCHECK(ncclGroupStart());
```

```
for (int i = 0; i < nDev; ++i)
  NCCLCHECK(ncclAllReduce((const void*)sendbuff[i],
(void*)recvbuff[i], size, ncclFloat, ncclSum,
       comms[i], s[i]));
NCCLCHECK(ncclGroupEnd());
 //synchronizing on CUDA streams to wait for completion of NCCL
operation
 for (int i = 0; i < nDev; ++i) {</pre>
   CUDACHECK(cudaSetDevice(i));
   CUDACHECK(cudaStreamSynchronize(s[i]));
 }
 //free device buffers
 for (int i = 0; i < nDev; ++i) {
   CUDACHECK(cudaSetDevice(i));
   CUDACHECK(cudaFree(sendbuff[i]));
   CUDACHECK(cudaFree(recvbuff[i]));
 }
 //finalizing NCCL
 for(int i = 0; i < nDev; ++i)</pre>
     ncclCommDestroy(comms[i]);
printf("Success \n");
 return 0;
```

3.1.2. Example 2: One Device Per Process Or Thread

When one thread or process is affected to each thread, ncclCommInitRank can be used as a collective call to create a communicator. Each thread or process will get its own object.

The following code is an example of a communicator creation in the context of MPI, using one device per MPI rank.

First, we retrieve MPI information about processes:

```
int myRank, nRanks;
MPI_Comm_rank(MPI_COMM_WORLD, &myRank);
MPI_Comm_size(MPI_COMM_WORLD, &nRanks);
```

Next, a single rank will create a unique ID and send it to all other ranks to make sure everyone has it:

```
ncclUniqueId id;
if (myRank == 0) ncclGetUniqueId(&id);
MPI Bcast(id, sizeof(id), MPI BYTE, 0, 0, MPI COMM WORLD);
```

Finally, we create the communicator:

```
ncclComm_t comm;
ncclCommInitRank(&comm, nRanks, id, myRank);
```

We can now call the NCCL collective operations using the communicator.

Finally, we destroy the communicator object:

\

 \backslash

ncclCommDestroy(comm);

The following code depicts a complete working example with multiple MPI processes and one device per process:

```
#include <stdio.h>
#include "cuda runtime.h"
#include "nccl.h"
#include "mpi.h"
#include <unistd.h>
#include <stdint.h>
#define MPICHECK(cmd) do {
 int e = cmd;
 if( e != MPI SUCCESS ) {
   printf("Failed: MPI error %s:%d '%d'\n",
          FILE , LINE_, e);
                                  exit(EXIT FAILURE);
  }
} while(0)
#define CUDACHECK(cmd) do {
                                                      /
 cudaError t e = cmd;
 if( e != cudaSuccess ) {
                                                      /
   printf("Failed: Cuda error %s:%d '%s'\n",
          FILE__,_LINE__, cudaGetErrorString(e));
                                                      \
    exit(EXIT FAILURE);
  }
} while(0)
#define NCCLCHECK(cmd) do {
                                                      /
 ncclResult_t r = cmd;
 if (r!= ncclSuccess) {
   printf("Failed, NCCL error %s:%d '%s'\n",
          FILE__,_LINE__,ncclGetErrorString(r));
                                                      exit(EXIT FAILURE);
                                                       /
 }
} while(0)
static uint64 t getHostHash(const char* string) {
 // Based on DJB2, result = result * 33 + char
 uint64 t result = 5381;
 for (int c = 0; string[c] != '\0'; c++) {
   result = ((result << 5) + result) + string[c];</pre>
  }
 return result;
}
static void getHostName(char* hostname, int maxlen) {
 gethostname(hostname, maxlen);
 for (int i=0; i< maxlen; i++) {</pre>
   if (hostname[i] == '.') {
        hostname[i] = ' \setminus 0';
        return;
    }
  }
int main(int argc, char* argv[])
```

```
{
 int size = 32*1024*1024;
 int myRank, nRanks, localRank = 0;
 //initializing MPI
 MPICHECK(MPI Init(&argc, &argv));
 MPICHECK(MPI Comm rank(MPI COMM WORLD, &myRank));
 MPICHECK(MPI Comm size(MPI COMM WORLD, &nRanks));
 //calculating localRank based on hostname which is used in
selecting a GPU
 uint64_t hostHashs[nRanks];
 char hostname[1024];
 getHostName(hostname, 1024);
 hostHashs[myRank] = getHostHash(hostname);
 MPICHECK (MPI Allgather (MPI IN PLACE, 0, MPI DATATYPE NULL,
hostHashs, sizeof(uint64 t), MPI BYTE, MPI COMM WORLD));
 for (int p=0; p<nRanks; p++) {</pre>
    if (p == myRank) break;
    if (hostHashs[p] == hostHashs[myRank]) localRank++;
 }
 ncclUniqueId id;
 ncclComm t comm;
 float *sendbuff, *recvbuff;
 cudaStream t s;
 //get NCCL unique ID at rank 0 and broadcast it to all others
 if (myRank == 0) ncclGetUniqueId(&id);
 MPICHECK(MPI Bcast((void *)&id, sizeof(id), MPI BYTE, 0,
MPI COMM WORLD));
 //picking a GPU based on localRank, allocate device buffers
 CUDACHECK(cudaSetDevice(localRank));
 CUDACHECK(cudaMalloc(&sendbuff, size * sizeof(float)));
 CUDACHECK(cudaMalloc(&recvbuff, size * sizeof(float)));
 CUDACHECK (cudaStreamCreate(&s));
 //initializing NCCL
 NCCLCHECK(ncclCommInitRank(&comm, nRanks, id, myRank));
 //communicating using NCCL
 NCCLCHECK(ncclAllReduce((const void*)sendbuff, (void*)recvbuff,
size, ncclFloat, ncclSum,
       comm, s));
 //completing NCCL operation by synchronizing on the CUDA stream
 CUDACHECK(cudaStreamSynchronize(s));
 //free device buffers
 CUDACHECK(cudaFree(sendbuff));
 CUDACHECK(cudaFree(recvbuff));
 //finalizing NCCL
 ncclCommDestroy(comm);
 //finalizing MPI
 MPICHECK(MPI Finalize());
```

```
printf("[MPI Rank %d] Success \n", myRank);
return 0;
```

3.1.3. Example 3: Multiple Devices Per Thread

You can combine both multiple process or threads and multiple device per process or thread. In this case, we need to use group semantics.

The following example combines MPI and multiple devices per process (=MPI rank).

First, we retrieve MPI information about processes:

```
int myRank, nRanks;
MPI_Comm_rank(MPI_COMM_WORLD, &myRank);
MPI_Comm_size(MPI_COMM_WORLD, &nRanks);
```

Next, a single rank will create a unique ID and send it to all other ranks to make sure everyone has it:

```
ncclUniqueId id;
if (myRank == 0) ncclGetUniqueId(&id);
MPI Bcast(id, sizeof(id), MPI BYTE, 0, 0, MPI COMM WORLD);
```

Then, we create our **ngpus** communicator objects, which are part of a larger group of **ngpus*nRanks**:

```
ncclComm_t comms[ngpus];
ncclGroupStart();
for (int i=0; i<ngpus; i++) {
   cudaSetDevice(devs[i]);
   ncclCommInitRank(comms+i, ngpus*nRanks, id, myRank*ngpus+i);
}
ncclGroupEnd();
```

Next, we call NCCL collective operations using a single thread, and group calls, or multiple threads, each provided with a comm object.

At the end of the program, we destroy all communicators objects:

```
for (int i=0; i<ngpus; i++)
ncclCommDestroy(comms[i]);</pre>
```

The following code depicts a complete working example with multiple MPI processes and multiple devices per process:

```
exit(EXIT_FAILURE);
 }
} while(0)
#define CUDACHECK(cmd) do {
 cudaError t e = cmd;
 if( e != cudaSuccess ) {
    printf("Failed: Cuda error %s:%d '%s'\n",
                                                              /
          FILE__,_LINE__,cudaGetErrorString(e));
                                                       /
    exit(EXIT FAILURE);
 }
} while(0)
#define NCCLCHECK(cmd) do {
 ncclResult t r = cmd;
 if (r!= ncclSuccess) {
    printf("Failed, NCCL error %s:%d '%s'\n",
                                                              /
          FILE__,_LINE__,ncclGetErrorString(r));
    exit(EXIT FAILURE);
 }
} while(0)
static uint64 t getHostHash(const char* string) {
 // Based on DJB2, result = result * 33 + char
 uint64 t result = 5381;
  for (int c = 0; string[c] != '\0'; c++) {
    result = ((result << 5) + result) + string[c];</pre>
  }
 return result;
static void getHostName(char* hostname, int maxlen) {
 gethostname(hostname, maxlen);
  for (int i=0; i< maxlen; i++) {</pre>
    if (hostname[i] == '.') {
        hostname[i] = ' \setminus 0';
        return;
    }
  }
int main(int argc, char* argv[])
 int size = 32*1024*1024;
 int myRank, nRanks, localRank = 0;
  //initializing MPI
 MPICHECK(MPI_Init(&argc, &argv));
MPICHECK(MPI_Comm_rank(MPI_COMM_WORLD, &myRank));
 MPICHECK(MPI_Comm_size(MPI_COMM_WORLD, &nRanks));
 //calculating localRank which is used in selecting a GPU
 uint64_t hostHashs[nRanks];
 char hostname[1024];
 getHostName(hostname, 1024);
 hostHashs[myRank] = getHostHash(hostname);
 MPICHECK (MPI Allgather (MPI IN PLACE, 0, MPI DATATYPE NULL,
hostHashs, sizeof(uint64 t), MPI BYTE, MPI COMM WORLD));
```

```
for (int p=0; p<nRanks; p++) {</pre>
    if (p == myRank) break;
    if (hostHashs[p] == hostHashs[myRank]) localRank++;
 }
 //each process is using two GPUs
int nDev = 2;
float** sendbuff = (float**)malloc(nDev * sizeof(float*));
float** recvbuff = (float**)malloc(nDev * sizeof(float*));
cudaStream t* s =
(cudaStream t*)malloc(sizeof(cudaStream t)*nDev);
 //picking GPUs based on localRank
for (int i = 0; i < nDev; ++i) {</pre>
  CUDACHECK(cudaSetDevice(localRank*nDev + i));
   CUDACHECK(cudaMalloc(sendbuff + i, size * sizeof(float)));
  CUDACHECK(cudaMalloc(recvbuff + i, size * sizeof(float)));
   CUDACHECK(cudaMemset(sendbuff[i], 1, size * sizeof(float)));
   CUDACHECK(cudaMemset(recvbuff[i], 0, size * sizeof(float)));
   CUDACHECK(cudaStreamCreate(s+i));
 }
ncclUniqueId id;
ncclComm t comms[nDev];
//generating NCCL unique ID at one process and broadcasting it
to all
if (myRank == 0) ncclGetUniqueId(&id);
MPICHECK(MPI Bcast((void *)&id, sizeof(id), MPI BYTE, 0,
MPI COMM WORLD));
//initializing NCCL, group API is required around
ncclCommInitRank as it is
//called across multiple GPUs in each thread/process
NCCLCHECK(ncclGroupStart());
for (int i=0; i<nDev; i++) {</pre>
    CUDACHECK(cudaSetDevice(localRank*nDev + i));
    NCCLCHECK(ncclCommInitRank(comms+i, nRanks*nDev, id,
myRank*nDev + i));
 }
NCCLCHECK(ncclGroupEnd());
 //calling NCCL communication API. Group API is required when
using
 //multiple devices per thread/process
NCCLCHECK(ncclGroupStart());
for (int i=0; i<nDev; i++)</pre>
    NCCLCHECK(ncclAllReduce((const void*)sendbuff[i],
(void*)recvbuff[i], size, ncclFloat, ncclSum,
          comms[i], s[i]));
NCCLCHECK (ncclGroupEnd());
//synchronizing on CUDA stream to complete NCCL communication
for (int i=0; i<nDev; i++)</pre>
     CUDACHECK(cudaStreamSynchronize(s[i]));
 //freeing device memory
for (int i=0; inDev; i++) {
```

```
CUDACHECK(cudaFree(sendbuff[i]));
CUDACHECK(cudaFree(recvbuff[i]));
}
//finalizing NCCL
for (int i=0; i<nDev; i++) {
    ncclCommDestroy(comms[i]);
}
//finalizing MPI
MPICHECK(MPI_Finalize());
printf("[MPI Rank %d] Success \n", myRank);
return 0;
```

3.2. Communication Examples

The following examples demonstrate common patterns for executing NCCL collectives.

3.2.1. Example 1: One Device Per Process Or Thread

If you have a thread or process per device, then each thread calls the collective operation for its device, for example, **AllReduce**:

```
ncclAllReduce(sendbuff, recvbuff, count, datatype, op, comm,
stream);
```

After the call, the operation has been enqueued to the stream. Therefore, you can call **cudaStreamSynchronize** if you want to wait for the operation to be complete:

```
cudaStreamSynchronize(stream);
```

For a complete working example with MPI and single device per MPI process, see Example 2: One Device per Process or Thread.

3.2.2. Example 2: Multiple Devices Per Thread

When a single thread manages multiple devices, you need to use group semantics to launch the operation on multiple devices at once:

```
ncclGroupStart();
for (int i=0; i<ngpus; i++)
   ncclAllReduce(sendbuffs[i], recvbuff[i], count, datatype, op,
   comms[i], streams[i]);
ncclGroupEnd();
```

After **ncclGroupEnd**, all of the operations have been enqueued to the stream. Therefore, you can now call **cudaStreamSynchronize** if you want to wait for the operation to be complete:

```
for (int i=0; i<ngpus; i++)
  cudaStreamSynchronize(streams[i]);</pre>
```

For a complete working example with MPI and multiple devices per MPI process, see Example 3: Multiple Devices per Thread.

Chapter 4. NCCL AND MPI

4.1. API

The NCCL API and usage is similar to MPI but there are many minor differences. The following list summarizes these differences:

Using multiple devices per process

Similarly to the concept of MPI endpoints, NCCL does not require ranks to be mapped 1:1 to MPI ranks. A NCCL communicator may have many ranks associated to a single process (hence MPI rank if used with MPI).

ReduceScatter operation

The ncclReduceScatter operation is similar to the MPI_Reduce_scatter_block operation, not the MPI_Reduce_scatter operation. The MPI_Reduce_scatter function is intrinsically a "vector" function, while MPI_Reduce_scatter_block (defined later to fill the missing semantics) provides regular counts similarly to the mirror function MPI_Allgather. This is an oddity of MPI which has not been fixed for legitimate retro-compatibility reasons and that NCCL does not follow.

Send and Receive counts

In many collective operations, MPI allows for different send and receive counts and types, as long as sendcount*sizeof(sendtype) == recvcount*sizeof(recvtype). NCCL does not allow that, defining a single count and a single data-type.

For **AllGather** and **ReduceScatter** operations, the count is equal to the per-rank size, which is the smallest size; the other count being equal to **nranks*count**. The function prototype clearly shows which count is provided, for example:

sendcount for ncclAllgather

recvcount for ncclReduceScatter



When performing or comparing AllReduce operations using a combination of ReduceScatter and AllGather, define the sendcount and recvcount as the total count divided by the number of ranks, with the correct count rounding-up, if it is not a perfect multiple of the number of ranks.

In-place operations

For more information, see In-place Operations.

For more information about the NCCL API, see NCCL API Guide.

4.2. Using NCCL Within An MPI Program

NCCL can be easily used in conjunction with MPI. NCCL collectives are similar to MPI collectives, therefore, creating a NCCL communicator out of an MPI communicator is straightforward. It is therefore easy to use MPI for CPU-to-CPU communication and NCCL for GPU-to-GPU communication.

However, some implementation details in MPI can lead to issues when using NCCL inside an MPI program.

4.2.1. MPI Progress

MPI defines a notion of *progress* which means that MPI operations need the program to call MPI functions (potentially multiple times) to make progress and eventually complete.

In some implementations, progress on one rank may need MPI to be called on another rank. While this is usually bad for performance, it can be argued that this is a valid MPI implementation.

As a result, blocking in a NCCL collective operations, for example calling cudaStreamSynchronize, may create a deadlock in some cases because not calling MPI will not make other ranks progress, hence reach the NCCL call, hence unblock the NCCL operation.

In that case, the cudaStreamSynchronize call should be replaced by a loop like the following:

```
cudaError_t err = cudaErrorNotReady;
int flag;
while (err == cudaErrorNotReady) {
  err = cudaStreamQuery(args->streams[i]);
  MPI_Iprobe(MPI_ANY_SOURCE, MPI_ANY_TAG, MPI_COMM_WORLD, &flag,
MPI_STATUS_IGNORE);
}
```

4.2.2. Inter-GPU Communication With CUDA-Aware MPI

Using NCCL to perform inter-GPU communication concurrently with CUDA-aware MPI may create deadlocks.

NCCL creates inter-device dependencies, meaning that after it has been launched, a NCCL kernel will wait (and potentially block the CUDA device) until all ranks in the communicator launch their NCCL kernel. CUDA-aware MPI may also create such dependencies between devices depending on the MPI implementation.

Using both MPI and NCCL to perform transfers between the same sets of CUDA devices concurrently is therefore not guaranteed to be safe.

Chapter 5. TROUBLESHOOTING

Ensure you are familiar with the following known issues and useful debugging strategies.

5.1. Errors

NCCL calls may return a variety of return codes. Ensure that the return codes are always equal to **ncclSuccess**. If any call fails, and returns a value different from **ncclSuccess**, setting **NCCL_DEBUG** to **WARN** will make NCCL print an explicit warning message before returning the error.

Errors are grouped into different categories.

- ncclUnhandledCudaError and ncclSystemError indicate that a call to an external library failed.
- ncclInvalidArgument and ncclInvalidUsage indicates there was a programming error in the application using NCCL.

In either case, refer to the NCCL warning message to understand how to resolve the problem.

5.2. Networking Issues

5.2.1. IP Network Interfaces

NCCL auto-detects which network interfaces to use for inter-node communication. If some interfaces are in state **up**, however are not able to communicate between nodes, NCCL may try to use them anyway and therefore fail during the **init** functions or even hang.

For more information about how to specify which interfaces to use, see NCCL Knobs topic, particularly the **NCCL_SOCKET_IFNAME** knob.

5.2.2. InfiniBand

Before running NCCL on InfiniBand, running low-level InfiniBand tests (and in particular the **ib_write_bw** test) can help verify which nodes are able to communicate properly.

5.3. Known Issues

Ensure you are familiar with the following known issues:

Sharing Data

In order to share data between ranks, NCCL may require shared system memory for IPC and pinned (page-locked) system memory resources. The operating system's limits on these resources may need to be increased accordingly. Please see your system's documentation for details. In particular, Docker[®] containers default to limited shared and pinned memory resources. When using NCCL inside a container, it is recommended that you increase these resources by issuing:

```
--shm-size=1g --ulimit memlock=-1
```

in the command line to

nvidia-docker run

Concurrency between NCCL and CUDA calls (NCCL up to 2.0.5 or CUDA 8)

NCCL uses CUDA kernels to perform inter-GPU communication. The NCCL kernels synchronize with each other, therefore, each kernel requires other kernels on other GPUs to be also executed in order to complete. The application should therefore make sure that nothing prevents the NCCL kernels from being executed concurrently on the different devices of a NCCL communicator.

For example, let's say you have a process managing multiple CUDA devices, and, also features a thread which calls CUDA functions asynchronously. In this case, CUDA calls could be executed between the enqueuing of two NCCL kernels. The CUDA call may wait for the first NCCL kernel to complete and prevent the second one from being launched, causing a deadlock since the first kernel will not complete until the second one is executed. To avoid this issue, one solution is to have a lock around the NCCL launch on multiple devices (around ncclGroupStart and ncclGroupEnd when using a single thread, around the NCCL launch when using multiple threads, using thread synchronization if necessary) and take this lock when calling CUDA from the asynchronous thread.

Starting with NCCL 2.1.0, this issue is no longer present when using CUDA 9, unless Cooperative Group Launch is disabled in the NCCL_LAUNCH_MODE=PARALLEL setting.

5.4. NCCL Knobs

A *knob* is a type of environment variable that can you can turn on or off by setting specific values. These environment variables should be set in the context of running NCCL. The following table lists all of the available knobs that can be modified in NCCL.

Environment Variable	Description	Values Accepted
NCCL_P2P_DISABLE	The NCCL_P2P_DISABLE variable disables the P2P transport, which uses CUDA direct access between GPUs, using NVLink or PCI.	Define and set to 1 to disable P2P.
NCCL_P2P_LEVEL (since 2.3.4)	2.3.4) the P2P transport between GPUs. The level describes the maximum distance between GPUs where we use P2P.	0 : Never use P2P (always disabled)
		1 : Use P2P when GPUs are on the same PCI switch.
		2 : Use P2P when GPUs are connected through PCI switches (potentially multiple hops).
		3 : Use P2P when GPUs are on the same PCI root complex, potentially going through the CPU.
		4 : Use P2P even across PCI root complexes (always enabled).
NCCL_SHM_DISABLE	The NCCL_SHM_DISABLE variable disables the Shared Memory (SHM) transports.	Define and set to 1 to disable SHM.
	SHM is used between devices when peer-to-peer cannot happen, therefore, host memory is used. NCCL uses network (InfiniBand or IP sockets) to	

Table 1 Knobs available for modification in NCCL

Environment Variable	Description	Values Accepted
	communicate between the CPU sockets when SHM is disabled.	
NCCL_SOCKET_IFNAME	The NCCL_SOCKET_IFNAME variable specifies which IP interface to use for communication.	Define to a list of prefixes to filter interfaces to be used by NCCL. For example, eth, ib would only select interfaces starting with eth or ib.
		Using the ^ symbol, NCCL will exclude interfaces starting with any prefix in that list. For example, ^eth, ib would select interfaces not starting with eth or ib.
		The loopback interface (10) is disabled by default and will only be enabled if explicitly selected.
NCCL_DEBUG	The NCCL_DEBUG variable controls the debug information that is displayed from NCCL. This variable is commonly used for debugging.	VERSION Prints the NCCL version at the start of the program. WARN Prints an explicit error message whenever any NCCL call errors out.
NCCL_BUFFSIZE	The NCCL_BUFFSIZE variable controls the amount of buffer to	Default is 4194304 (4 MB). Values are integers, in bytes. The
	share data between two GPUs. Use this variable if you encounter memory constraint issues when using NCCL or you think that a different buffer size would improve performance.	recommendation is to use powers of 2. For example, 1024 will give a 1K buffer.
NCCL_NTHREADS	The NCCL_NTHREADS variable sets the number of CUDA threads per CUDA block. NCCL	Default is 256. The values allowed are 64, 128 and 256.

Environment Variable	Description	Values Accepted
	will launch one block per communication ring.	
	Use this variable if you think your GPU clocks are low and you want to increase the number of threads.	
	You can also use this variable to reduce the number of threads to decrease the GPU workload.	
NCCL_RINGS	The NCCL_RINGS variable overrides the rings that NCCL forms by default. Rings are sequences of ranks. They can be any permutations of ranks. NCCL filters out any rings that do not contain the number of ranks in the NCCL communicator. In general, the ring formation is dependent on the hardware topology connecting the GPUs in your system.	Ranks from 0 to n-1, where n is the number of GPUs in your communicator. The ranks can be separated by any non-digit character, for example, " ", "-", except " ". Multiple rings can be specified separated by the pipe character " ". For example, if you have 4 GPUs in a communicator, you can form communication rings as such:0 1 2 3 3 2 1 0.
		This will form two rings, one in each direction.
NCCL_MAX_NRINGS (since 2.0.5)	The NCCL_MAX_NRINGS variable limits the number of rings NCCL can use. Reducing the number of rings also reduces the number of CUDA blocks used for communication, hence the impact on GPU computing resources.	Any value above or equal to 1.
NCCL_MIN_NRINGS (since 2.2.0)	Controls the minimum number of rings you want NCCL to use. Increasing the number of rings also increases the number of CUDA blocks NCCL uses, which may be useful to improve	Default is platform dependent. Set to a integer value, up to 12 (before 2.3.4) or 16 (since 2.3.4).

Environment Variable	Description	Values Accepted
	performance; however, it uses more CUDA compute resources.	
	This is especially useful when using aggregated collectives on platforms where NCCL would usually only create one ring.	
NCCL_CHECKS_DISABLE	-	Default is 0. Set the value to 1 to
(since 2.0.5)	are useful during development but can increase the latency.	disable checks.
(deprecated in 2.2.12)	They can be disabled to improve performance in production.	
NCCL_CHECK_POINTERS (since 2.2.12)	Enable checking of the CUDA memory pointers on each	Default is 0, set to 1 to enable checking.
	collective call. Checks are useful during development but can increase the latency.	Setting to 1 restores the original behavior of NCCL prior to 2.2.12.
NCCL_LAUNCH_MODE	Controls how NCCL launches	The default value is to use
(since 2.1.0)	CUDA kernels.	cooperative groups (CUDA 9 and later) unless running a job with one GPU per process.
		Setting it to PARALLEL uses the previous launch system which can be faster, but is prone to deadlocks when running a job with multiple GPUs per process.
NCCL_IB_DISABLE	The NCCL_IB_DISABLE variable disables the IB transport that is to be used by NCCL. Instead, NCCL will fallback to using IP sockets.	Define and set to 1 to force IP sockets usage.
NCCL_IB_HCA	The NCCL_IB_HCA variable specifies which RDMA interface to use for communication.	Define to a list of prefixes to filter interfaces to be used by NCCL.
		Using the ^ symbol, NCCL will exclude interfaces starting with any prefix in that list of prefix.
		Specific ports can also be specified using :.

Environment Variable	Description	Values Accepted
		Examples: mlx5 : Use all ports of all cards starting with mlx5. mlx5_0:1,mlx5_1:1 Use ports 1 of cards mlx5_0 and mlx5_1. ^mlx5_1:2 Do not use port 2 of card mlx5_1.
NCCL_IB_TIMEOUT	The NCCL_IB_TIMEOUT variable controls the InfiniBand Verbs Timeout. For more information, see InfiniBand.	The default value used by NCCL is 14. Values can be 1-22.
	The timeout is computed as 4.096 µs * 2 ^ timeout, and the right value is dependent on the size of the network. Increasing that value can help on very large networks, for example, if NCCL is failing on a call to ibv_poll_cq with error 12.	
	For more information, see section 12.7.34 of the InfiniBand specification (Local Ack Timeout).	
NCCL_IB_RETRY_CNT(since 2.1.15)	Controls the InfiniBand retry count. For more information, see InfiniBand.	Default value is 7.
	For more information, see section 12.7.38 of the InfiniBand specification.	
NCCL_IB_GID_INDEX (since 2.1.4)	Defines the Global ID index used in RoCE mode. See the show_gids command to set this value. For more information, see InfiniBand.	Default value is 0.

Environment Variable	Description	Values Accepted
	For more information, see the InfiniBand specification or vendor documentation.	
NCCL_IB_SL (since 2.1.4)	Defines the InfiniBand Service Level. For more information, see InfiniBand.	Default value is 1.
	For more information, see the InfiniBand specification or vendor documentation.	
NCCL_IB_TC (since 2.1.15)	Defines the InfiniBand traffic class field. For more information, see InfiniBand.	Default value is 0.
	For more information, see the InfiniBand specification or vendor documentation.	
NCCL_IB_CUDA_SUPPORT	The NCCL_IB_CUDA_SUPPORT variable is used to disable GPU Direct RDMA.	By default, NCCL enables GPU Direct RDMA, if the topology permits it. This variable can disable this behavior.
		Define and set to 0 to disable GPU Direct RDMA.
NCCL_IB_GDR_LEVEL (since 2.3.4)	Finely control when to use the GPU Direct RDMA between an	0 : Never use GPU Direct RDMA (always disabled)
	IB NIC and a GPU. The level describes the maximum distance between the NIC and the GPU	1 : Use GPU Direct RDMA when GPU and NIC are on the same PCI switch.
		2 : Use GPU Direct RDMA when GPU and NIC are connected through PCI switches (potentially multiple hops).
		3 : Use GPU Direct RDMA when GPU and NIC are on the same PCI root complex, potentially going through the CPU.
		4 : Use GPU Direct RDMA even across PCI root complexes (always enabled).

Environment Variable	Description	Values Accepted
NCCL_NET_GDR_READ	The NCCL_NET_GDR_READ variable enables GPU Direct RDMA when sending data. By default, NCCL uses GPU Direct RDMA to receive data directly in GPU memory. However, when sending data, the data is first stored in CPU memory, then goes to the InfiniBand card.	Default value is 0. Define and set to 1 to use GPU Direct RDMA to send data to the NIC directly (bypassing CPU).
	Reading directly GPU memory when sending data is known to be slightly slower than reading from CPU memory.	
<pre>NCCL_SINGLE_RING_THRESHOLD (since 2.1.0)</pre>	Set the limit under which NCCL will only use one ring. This will limit bandwidth but improve latency.	Default value is 256kB on GPUs with compute capability 7 and above. Otherwise, the default value is 128kB on others. Values are integers, in bytes.
NCCL_LL_THRESHOLD (since 2.1.0)	Set the size limit under which NCCL uses low-latency algorithms.	Default is 16kB. Values are integers, in bytes.
NCCL_DEBUG_FILE (since 2.2.12)	Direct the NCCL debug logging output to a file. The filename format can be set to filename. %h.%p where %h is the hostname and %p is the process PID.	The default output file is stdout unless this env variable is set. Setting NCCL_DEBUG_FILE will cause NCCL to create and overwrite any previous files of that name.
		If the filename is not unique across all the job processes, then the output may be lost or corrupted.

Environment Variable	Description	Values Accepted
NCCL_DEBUG_SUBSYS (since 2.3.4)	Filter the NCCL_DEBUG=INFO output based on subsystem. A comma separated list of the subsystems to include in the NCCL debug log traces. Prefixing the subsystem name with '^' will disable the logging for that subsystem.	The default value is INIT. Supported subsystem names are INIT (stands for initialization), COLL (stands for collectives), P2P (stands for peer-to-peer), SHM (stands for shared memory), NET (stands for network), and ALL (includes every subsystem).

5.5. Support

Register for the NVIDIA Developer Program to report bugs, issues and make requests for feature enhancements. For more information, see: https://developer.nvidia.com/ developer-program.

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