Available online at www.sciencedirect.com
ScienceDirect
J. Parallel Distrib. Comput. 66 (2006) 1366–1378
Journal of Parallel and Distributed Computing
www.elsevier.com/locate/jpdc

Fast shared-memory algorithms for computing the minimum spanning forest of sparse graphs

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Received 14 March 2005; received in revised form 20 May 2006; accepted 1 June 2006
Available online 18 July 2006

Abstract

Minimum spanning tree (MST) is one of the most studied combinatorial problems with practical applications in VLSI layout, wireless communication, and distributed networks, recent problems in biology and medicine such as cancer detection, medical imaging, and proteomics, and national security and bioterrorism such as detecting the spread of toxins through populations in the case of biological/chemical warfare. Most of the previous attempts for improving the speed of MST using parallel computing are too complicated to implement or perform well only on special graphs with regular structure. In this paper we design and implement four parallel MST algorithms (three variations of Borůvka plus our new approach) for arbitrary sparse graphs that for the first time give speedup when compared with the *best* sequential algorithm. In fact, our algorithms also solve the minimum spanning forest problem. We provide an experimental study of our algorithms on symmetric multiprocessors such as IBMs pSeries and Sun's Enterprise servers. Our new implementation achieves good speedups over a wide range of input graphs with regular and irregular structures, including the graphs used by previous parallel MST studies. For example, on an arbitrary random graph with $1M$ vertices and $20M$ edges, our new approach achieves a speedup of 5 using 8 processors. The source code for these algorithms is freely available from our web site.

Keywords: Parallel graph algorithms; Connectivity; High-performance algorithm engineering

1. Introduction

Given an undirected connected graph G with n vertices and m edges, the minimum spanning tree (MST) problem finds a spanning tree with the minimum sum of edge weights. MST is one of the most studied combinatorial problems with practical applications in VLSI layout, wireless communication, and distributed networks [26,36,38], recent problems in biology and medicine such as cancer detection [5,21,22,25], medical imaging [2], and proteomics [30,12], and national security and bioterrorism such as detecting the spread of toxins through populations in the case of biological/chemical warfare [6], and is often a key step in other graph problems [28,24,35,37].

While several theoretic results are known for solving MST in parallel, many are considered impractical because they are too complicated and have large constant factors hidden in the asymptotic complexity. Pettie and Ramachandran [32] designed a randomized, time-work optimal MST algorithm for the EREW PRAM, and using EREW to QSM and QSM to BSP emulations from [13], mapped the performance onto QSM and BSP models. Cole et al. [9,10] and Poon and Ramachandran [33] earlier had randomized linear-work algorithms on CRCW and EREW PRAM. Chong et al. [7] gave a deterministic EREW PRAM algorithm that runs in logarithmic time with a linear number of processors. On the BSP model, Adler et al. [1] presented a communication-optimal MST algorithm. Katriel et al. [20] have recently developed a new pipelined algorithm that uses the cycle property and provide an experimental evaluation on the special-purpose NEC SX-5 vector computer.

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[1] This work was supported in part by NSF Grants CAREER CCF-0611589, CNS 0614915, ACI-00-93039, NSF DBI-0420513, ITR ACI-00-81404, DEB-99-10123, ITR EIA-01-21377, Biocomplexity DEB-01-20709, and ITR EF/BIO 03-31654; and DARPA Contract NBCH30390004.

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doi:10.1016/j.jpdc.2006.06.001

In this paper we present our implementations of MST algorithms on shared-memory multiprocessors that achieve for the first time in practice reasonable speedups over a wide range of input graphs, including arbitrary sparse graphs, a challenging problem. In fact, if G is not connected, our algorithms find the MST of each connected component; hence, solving the minimum spanning forest problem.

We start with the design and implementation of a parallel Borůvka's algorithm. Borůvka's algorithm is one of the earliest MST approaches, and the Borůvka iteration (or its variants) serves as a basis for several of the more complicated parallel MST algorithms, hence its efficient implementation is critical for parallel MST. Three steps characterize a Borůvka iteration: *find-min*, *connect-components*, and *compact-graph*. *Find-min* and *connect-components* are simple and straightforward to implement, and the *compact-graph* step performs bookkeeping that is often left as a trivial exercise to the reader. JáJá [18] describes a compact-graph algorithm for dense inputs. For sparse graphs, though, the compact-graph step often is the most expensive step in the Borůvka iteration. Section 2 explores different ways to implement the compact-graph step, then proposes a new data structure for representing sparse graphs that can dramatically reduce the running time of the compact-graph step with a small cost to the find-min step. The analysis of these approaches is given in Section 3.

In Section 4 we present a new parallel MST algorithm for symmetric multiprocessors (SMPs) that marries the Prim and Borůvka approaches. In fact, the algorithm when run on one processor behaves as Prim's, and on n processors becomes Borůvka's, and runs as a hybrid combination for $1 < p < n$, where p is the number of processors.

Our target architecture is SMPs. Most of the new high-performance computers are clusters of SMPs having from two to over 100 processors per node. In SMPs, processors operate in a true, hardware-based, shared-memory environment. SMP computers bring us much closer to PRAM, yet it is by no means the PRAM used in theoretical work—synchronization cannot be taken for granted, memory bandwidth is limited, and good performance requires a high degree of locality. Designing and implementing parallel algorithms for SMPs requires special considerations that are crucial to a fast and efficient implementation. For example, memory bandwidth often limits the scalability and locality must be exploited to make good use of cache. This paper presents the first results of actual parallel speedup for finding an MST of irregular, arbitrary sparse graphs when compared to the best known sequential algorithm. In Section 5 we detail the experimental evaluation, describe the input data sets and testing environment, and present the empirical results. Finally, Section 6 provides our conclusions and future work. A preliminary version of this paper appears in [3].

1.1. Related experimental studies

Although several fast PRAM MST algorithms exist, to our knowledge there is no parallel implementation of MST that achieves significant speedup on sparse, irregular graphs when compared against the best sequential implementation. Chung and Condon [8] implement parallel Borůvka's algorithm on the TMC CM-5. On a 16-processor machine, for geometric, structured graphs with 32,000 vertices and average degree 9 and graphs with fewer vertices but higher average degree, their code achieves a relative parallel speedup of about four, on 16 processors, over the sequential Borůvka's algorithm, which was already 2–3 times slower than their sequential Kruskal algorithm. Dehne and Götz [11] studied practical parallel algorithms for MST using the BSP model. They implement a dense Borůvka parallel algorithm, on a 16-processor Parsytec CC-48, that works well for sufficiently dense input graphs. Using a fixed-sized input graph with 1000 vertices and 400,000 edges, their code achieves a maximum speedup of 6.1 using 16 processors for a random dense graph. Their algorithm is not suitable for the more challenging sparse graphs.

2. Designing data structures for parallel Borůvka's algorithms on SMPs

Borůvka's MST algorithm lends itself more naturally to parallelization, since other approaches like Prim's and Kruskal's are inherently sequential, with Prim's growing a single MST one branch at a time, while Kruskal's approach scans the graph's edges in a linear fashion. Three steps comprise each iteration of parallel Borůvka's algorithm:

1. *find-min*: for each vertex v label the incident edge with the smallest weight to be in the MST.
2. *connect-components*: identify connected components of the induced graph with edges found in Step 1.
3. *compact-graph*: compact each connected component into a single supervertex, remove self-loops and multiple edges; and re-label the vertices for consistency.

Steps 1 and 2 (find-min and connect-components) are relatively simple and straightforward; in [8], Chung and Condon discuss an efficient approach using pointer-jumping on distributed memory machines, and load balancing among the processors as the algorithm progresses. Simple schemes for load-balancing suffice to distribute the work roughly evenly to each processor. For pointer-jumping, although the approaches proposed in [8] can be applied to shared-memory machines, experimental results show that this step only takes a small fraction of the total running time.

Step 3 (compact-graph) shrinks the connected components and relabels the vertices. For dense graphs that can be represented by an adjacency matrix, JáJá [18] describes a simple and efficient implementation for this step. For sparse graphs this step often consumes the most time yet no detailed discussion appears in the literature. In the following subsections we describe our design of three Borůvka approaches that use different data structures, and compare the performance of each implementation.

2.1. Bor-EL: edge list representation

In this implementation of Borůvka's algorithm (designated *Bor-EL*), we use the edge list representation of graphs, with

each edge (u, v) appearing twice in the list for both directions (u, v) and (v, u). An elegant implementation of the compact-graph step sorts the edge list (using an efficient parallel sample sort [16]) with the supervertex of the first endpoint as the primary key, the supervertex of the second endpoint as the secondary key, and the edge weight as the tertiary key. When sorting completes, all of the self-loops and multiple edges between two supervertices appear in consecutive locations, and can be merged efficiently using parallel prefix-sums.

2.2. Bor-AL: adjacency list representation

With the adjacency list representation (but using the more cache-friendly adjacency arrays [31]) each entry of an index array of vertices points to a list of its incident edges. The compact-graph step first sorts the vertex array according to the supervertex label, then concurrently sorts each vertex's adjacency list using the supervertex of the other endpoint of the edge as the key. After sorting, the set of vertices with the same supervertex label are contiguous in the array, and can be merged efficiently. We call this approach *Bor-AL*.

Both *Bor-EL* and *Bor-AL* achieve the same goal that self-loops and multiple edges are moved to consecutive locations to be merged. *Bor-EL* uses one call to sample sort while *Bor-AL* calls a smaller parallel sort and then a number of concurrent sequential sorts. We make the following algorithm engineering choices for the sequential sorts used in this approach. The $O(n^2)$ insertion sort is generally considered a bad choice for sequential sort, yet for small inputs, it outperforms $O(n \log n)$ sorts. Profiling shows that there could be many short lists to be sorted for very sparse graphs. For example, for one of our input random graphs with $1M$ vertices, $6M$ edges, 80% of all 311,535 lists to be sorted have between 1 and 100 elements. We use insertion sort for these short lists. For longer lists we use a non-recursive $O(n \log n)$ merge sort.

Bor-ALM is an alternative adjacency list implementation of Borůvka's approach for Sun Solaris 9 that uses our own memory management routines for dynamic memory allocation rather than using the system heap. While the algorithm and data structures in *Bor-ALM* are identical to that of *Bor-AL*, we allocate private data structures using a separate memory segment for each thread to reduce contention to kernel data structures, rather than using the system `malloc()` that manages the heap in a single segment and causes contention for a shared kernel lock.

2.3. Bor-FAL: flexible adjacency list representation

For the previous two approaches, conceivably the compact-graph step could be the most expensive step for a parallel Borůvka's algorithm. Next we propose an alternative approach with a new graph representation data structure (that we call *flexible adjacency list*) that significantly reduces the cost for compacting the graph. Similar to Johnson and Metaxas's [19] "edge-plugging" method, ours is simple to implement and we do not need to shrink the adjacency list during the grafting steps. However, our new approach differs significantly from edge-plugging in that we create a data structure with more spatial locality, and hence a better cache hit ratio leading to higher performance.

The flexible adjacency list augments the traditional adjacency list representation by allowing each vertex to hold multiple adjacency lists instead of just a single one; in fact it is a linked list of adjacency lists (and similar to *Bor-AL*, we use the more cache-friendly adjacency array for each list). During initialization, each vertex points to only one adjacency list. After the connect-components step, each vertex appends its adjacency list to its supervertex's adjacency list by sorting together the vertices that are labeled with the same supervertex. We simplify the compact-graph step, allowing each supervertex to have self-loops and multiple edges inside its adjacency list. Thus, the compact-graph step now uses a smaller parallel sort plus several pointer operations instead of costly sortings and memory copies, while the find-min step gets the added responsibility of filtering out the self-loops and multiple edges. Note that for this new approach (designated *Bor-FAL*) there are potentially fewer memory write operations compared with the previous two approaches. This is important for an implementation on SMPs because memory writes typically generate more cache coherency transactions than do reads.

In Fig. 1 we illustrate the use of the flexible adjacency list for a 6-vertex input graph. After one Borůvka iteration, vertices 1, 2, and 3, form one supervertex and vertices 4, 5, and 6, form a second supervertex. Vertex labels 1 and 4 represent the supervertices and receive the adjacency lists of vertices 2 and 3, and vertices 5 and 6, respectively. Vertices 1 and 4 are relabeled as 1 and 2. Note that most of the original data structure is kept intact so that we might save memory copies. Instead of re-labeling vertices in the adjacency list, we maintain a separate lookup table that holds the supervertex label for each vertex. We easily obtain this table from the connect-components step. The find-min step uses this table to filter out self-loops and multiple edges.

3. Analysis

Here we analyze the complexities of the different Borůvka variants. Helman and JáJá's SMP complexity model [16] provides a reasonable framework for the realistic analysis that favors cache-friendly algorithms by penalizing non-contiguous memory accesses. Under this model, there are two parts to an algorithm's complexity, M_E the memory access complexity and T_C the computation complexity. The M_E term is the number of non-contiguous memory accesses, and the T_C term is the running time. The M_E term recognizes the effect that memory accesses have over an algorithm's performance. Parameters of the model includes the problem size n and the number of processors p.

For a sparse graph G with n vertices and m edges, as the algorithm iterates, the number of vertices decreases by at least half in each iteration, so there are at most $\log n$ iterations for all of the Borůvka variants. (All logarithms throughout this paper are based two, unless otherwise noted.)

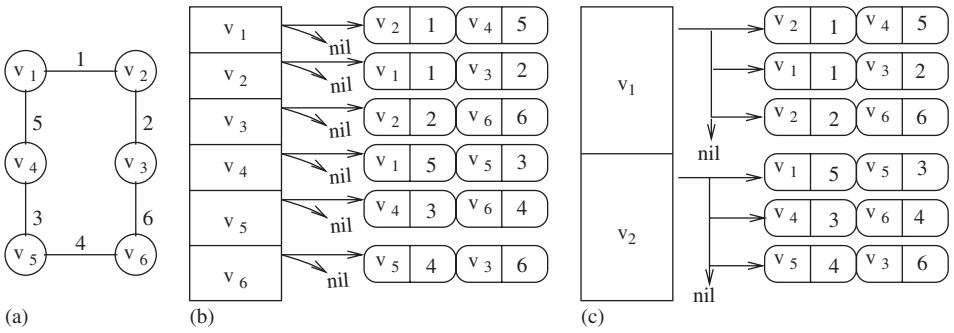

Fig. 1. Example of flexible adjacency list representation: (a) input graph; (b) initialized flexible adjacency list; (c) flexible adjacency list for one iteration.

First we consider the complexity of *Bor-EL*. The find-min and connect-components steps are straightforward. As the input representation in our implementation is laid out such that the incident edges for each vertex are in contiguous locations, all memory accesses for the find-min step are contiguous. Non-contiguous memory accesses occur when "graft-and-shortcut" happens. After fin-min, each vertex v sets $D[v]$ to u if edge (u, v) is the lightest incident edge to v. Accesses to D are non-contiguous, and there are in total n such accesses. To find the connected components, pointer-jumping is performed on D, which incurs $n \log n$ (worst-case) non-contiguous accesses. Hence for find-min and connect-components (assuming balanced load among processors),

$$M_{\mathrm{E}} = \frac{n + n \log n}{p}.$$

The aggregate complexity in one iteration is characterized by

$$T(n, p) = \langle M_{\mathrm{E}} \ ; \ T_{\mathrm{C}} \rangle = \left\langle \frac{n + n \log n}{p} \ ; \ \mathrm{O}\left(\frac{m+n \log n}{p}\right) \right\rangle.$$

The parallel sample sort that we use in *Bor-EL* for compact-graph has the complexity of

$$T(n, p) = \langle M_{\mathrm{E}} \ ; \ T_{\mathrm{C}} \rangle = \left\langle \left(4 + 2\frac{c \log \frac{l}{p}}{\log z}\right) \frac{l}{p} \ ; \ \mathrm{O}\left(\frac{l}{p} \log l\right) \right\rangle,$$

with high probability where l is the length of the list and c and z are constants related to cache size and sampling ratio [16]. The cost of the compact-graph step, by aggregating the cost for sorting and for manipulating the data structure, is

$$\begin{aligned} T(n, p) &= \langle M_{\mathrm{E}} \ ; \ T_{\mathrm{C}} \rangle \\ &= \left\langle \left(4 + 2\frac{c \log(2m/p)}{\log z}\right) \frac{2m}{p} \ ; \ \mathrm{O}\left(\frac{2m}{p} \log 2m\right) \right\rangle. \end{aligned}$$

The value of m decreases with each successive iteration-dependent on the topology and edge weight assignment of the input graph. Because the number of vertices is reduced by at least half each iteration, m decreases by at least $\frac{n}{2}$ edges each iteration. For the sake of simplifying the analysis, though, we use m unchanged as the number of edges during each iteration; clearly an upper bound of the worst case. Hence, the complexity of *Bor-EL* is given as

$$\begin{aligned} T(n, p) &= \langle M_{\mathrm{E}} \ ; \ T_{\mathrm{C}} \rangle \\ &= \left\langle \left(\frac{8m + n + n \log n}{p} + \frac{4mc \log(2m/p)}{p \log z} \right) \log n \ ; \right. \\ &\quad \left. \mathrm{O}\left(\frac{m}{p} \log m \log n\right) \right\rangle. \end{aligned}$$

We justify the use of the upper bound m as follows. For random sparse graphs m decreases slowly in the first several iterations of *Bor-EL*, and the graph becomes denser (as n decreases at a faster rate than m) until a certain point, m decreases drastically. Table 1 illustrates how m changes for two random sparse graphs. For planar or near-planar graphs often seen in practical applications, edge density (m/n) is essentially constant across any number of Borůvka steps.

In Table 1 for graph G_1, eight iterations are needed for Borůvka's algorithm. Until the fourth iteration, m is still more than half of its initial value. Yet at the next iteration, m drastically reduces to about 10% of its initial value. Similar behavior is also observed for G_2. As for quite a substantial number of iterations m decreases slowly, for simplicity it is reasonable to assume that m remains unchanged (an upper bound for the actual m).

Table 1 also suggests that instead of growing a spanning tree for a relatively denser graph, if we can exclude heavy edges in the early stages of the algorithm and decrease m, we may have a more efficient parallel implementation for many input graphs because we may be able to greatly reduce the size of the edge list. After all, for a graph with $m/n \geqslant 2$, more than half of the edges are not in the MST. In fact several MST algorithms exclude edges from the graph using the "cycle" property. Cole et al. [10] present a linear-work algorithm that first uses random sampling to find a spanning forest F of graph G, then identifies the heavy edges to F and excludes them from the final MST. The algorithm presented in [20], an inherently sequential procedure, also excludes edges according to the "cycle" property of MST.

Table 1
Example of the rate of decrease of the number m of edges for two random sparse graphs

Iteration	$G_1 = 1,000,000$ vertices, 6,000,006 edges				$G_2 = 10,000$ vertices, 30,024 edges			
	$2m$	Decrease	% dec.	m/n	$2m$	Decrease	% dec.	m/n
1	12000012	N/A	N/A	6.0	60048	N/A	N/A	3.0
2	10498332	1501680	12.5	21.0	44782	15266	25.4	8.9
3	10052640	445692	4.2	98.1	34378	10404	23.2	33.5
4	8332722	1719918	17.2	472.8	6376	28002	80.5	35.0
5	1446156	6886566	82.6	534.8	156	6220	97.6	6.0
6	40968	1405188	97.2	100.9	2	154	98.7	0.5
7	756	40212	98.2	13.5				
8	12	744	98.4	1.5				

The $2m$ column gives the size of the edge list, the *decrease* column shows how much the size of the edge list decreases in the current iteration, the *% dec.* column gives the percentage that the size of the edge list decreases in the current iteration, and m/n shows the density of the graph.

Without going into the input-dependent details of how vertex degrees change as the Borůvka variants progress, we compare the complexity of the first iteration of *Bor-AL* with *Bor-EL* because in each iteration these approaches compute similar results in different ways. For *Bor-AL* the complexity of the first iteration is

$$\begin{aligned} T(n,p) &= \langle M_{\mathrm{E}}\ ;\ T_{\mathrm{C}}\rangle \\ &= \left\langle \left(\frac{8n+5m+n\log n}{p} \right.\right. \\ &\quad \left. + \frac{2nc\log(n/p)+2mc\log(m/n)}{p\log z}\right)\ ; \\ &\quad \left.\mathrm{O}\left(\tfrac{n}{p}\log m+\tfrac{m}{p}\log(m/n)\right)\right\rangle. \end{aligned}$$

While for *Bor-EL*, the complexity of the first iteration is

$$\begin{aligned} T(n,p) &= \langle M_{\mathrm{E}}\ ;\ T_{\mathrm{C}}\rangle \\ &= \left\langle \left(\frac{8m+n+n\log n}{p} + \frac{4mc\log(2m/p)}{p\log z}\right)\ ; \right. \\ &\quad \left.\mathrm{O}\left(\tfrac{m}{p}\log m\right)\right\rangle. \end{aligned}$$

We see that *Bor-AL* is a faster algorithm than *Bor-EL*, as expected, since the input for *Bor-AL* is "bucketed" into adjacency lists, versus *Bor-EL* that is an unordered list of edges, and sorting each bucket first in *Bor-AL* saves unnecessary comparisons between edges that have no vertices in common. We can consider the complexity of *Bor-EL* then to be an upper bound of *Bor-AL*.

In *Bor-FAL* n reduces at least by half while m stays the same. Compact-graph first sorts the n vertices, then assigns $\mathrm{O}(n)$ pointers to append each vertex's adjacency list to its supervertex's. For each processor, sorting takes $\mathrm{O}\left(\frac{n}{p}\log n\right)$ time, and assigning pointers takes $\mathrm{O}(n/p)$ time assuming each processor gets to assign roughly the same amount of pointers. Updating the lookup table costs each processor $\mathrm{O}(n/p)$ time. As n decreases at least by half, the aggregate running time for compact-graph is

$$T_{\mathrm{C}}(n,p)_{\mathrm{cg}} = \frac{1}{p}\sum_{i=0}^{\log n}\frac{n}{2^i}\log\frac{n}{2^i} + \frac{2}{p}\sum_{i=0}^{\log n}\frac{n}{2^i} = \mathrm{O}\left(\tfrac{n\log n}{p}\right),$$

$$M_{\mathrm{E}}(n,p)_{\mathrm{cg}} \leqslant \frac{8n}{p} + \frac{4cn\log(n/p)}{p\log z}.$$

With *Bor-FAL*, to find the smallest-weight edge for the supervertices, all the m edges will be checked, with each processor covering $\mathrm{O}(m/p)$ edges. The aggregate running time is $T_{\mathrm{C}}(n,p)_{\mathrm{fm}} = \mathrm{O}(m\log n/p)$ and the memory access complexity is $M_{\mathrm{E}}(n,p)_{\mathrm{fm}} = m/p$. For the finding connected component step, each processor takes $T_{\mathrm{cc}} = \mathrm{O}\left(n\log\frac{n}{p}\right)$ time, and $M_{\mathrm{E}}(n,p)_{\mathrm{cc}} \leqslant 2n\log n$. The complexity for the whole Borůvka's algorithm is

$$\begin{aligned} T(n,p) &= T(n,p)_{\mathrm{fm}} + T(n,p)_{\mathrm{cc}} + T(n,p)_{\mathrm{cg}} \\ &\leqslant \left\langle \frac{8n+2n\log n+m\log n}{p} + \frac{4cn\log(n/p)}{p\log z}\ ; \right. \\ &\quad \left.\mathrm{O}\left(\tfrac{m+n}{p}\log n\right)\right\rangle. \end{aligned}$$

It would be interesting and important to check how well our analysis and claim fit with the actual experiments. Detailed performance results are presented in Section 5. Here we show that *Bor-AL* in practice runs faster than *Bor-EL*, and *Bor-FAL* greatly reduces the compact-graph time. Fig. 2 shows for the three approaches the breakdown of the running time for the three steps.

Immediately we can see that for *Bor-EL* and *Bor-AL* the compact-graph step dominates the running time. *Bor-EL* takes much more time than *Bor-AL*, and only gets worse when the graphs get denser. In contrast the execution time of compact-graph step of *Bor-FAL* is greatly reduced: in the experimental section with a random graph of $1M$ vertices and $10M$ edges,

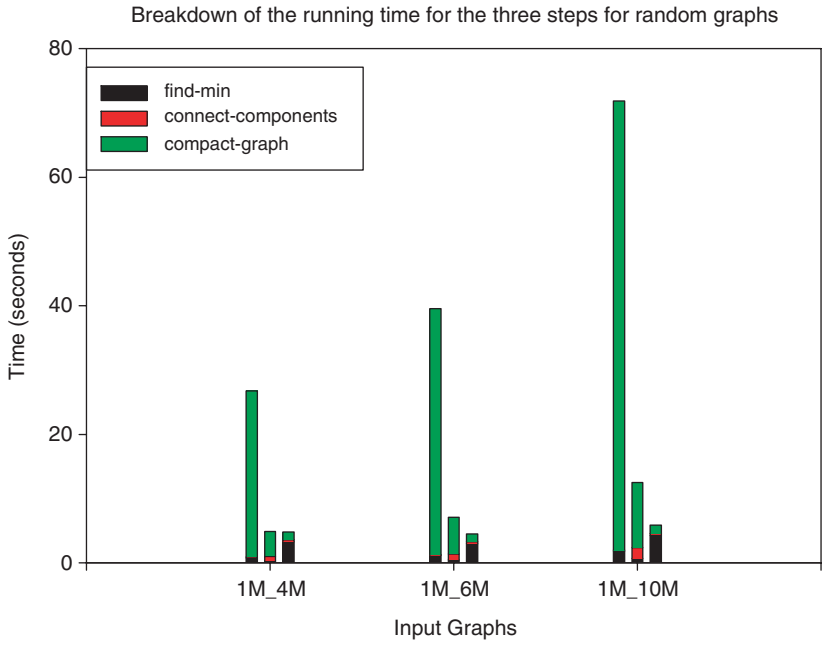

Fig. 2. Running times for the find-min, connect-components, and compact-graph steps of the *Bor-EL*, *Bor-AL*, and *Bor-ALM* approaches (the three groups from left to right, respectively) of the parallel MST implementations using random graphs with $n = 1M$ vertices and $m = 4M$, $6M$, and $10M$ edges (the bars from left to right, respectively, in each group).

it is over 50 times faster than *Bor-EL*, and over 7 times faster than *Bor-AL*. Actually the execution time of the compact-graph step of *Bor-FAL* is almost the same for the three input graphs because it only depends on the number of vertices. As predicted, the execution time of the find-min step of *Bor-FAL* increases. And the connect-components step only takes a small fraction of the execution time for all approaches.

4. A new parallel MST algorithm

In this section we present a new non-deterministic shared-memory algorithm for finding a minimum spanning tree/forest that is quite different from Borůvka's approach in that it uses multiple, coordinated instances of Prim's sequential algorithm running on the graph's shared data structure. In fact, the new approach marries Prim's algorithm (known as an efficient sequential algorithm for MST) with that of the naturally parallel Borůvka approach. In our new algorithm essentially we let each processor simultaneously run Prim's algorithm from different starting vertices. We say a tree is *growing* when there exists a lightweight edge that connects the tree to a vertex not yet in another tree, and *mature* otherwise. When all of the vertices have been incorporated into mature subtrees, we contract each subtree into a supervertex and call the approach recursively until only one supervertex remains. When the problem size is small enough, one processor solves the remaining problem using the best sequential MST algorithm. If no edges remain between supervertices, we halt the algorithm and return the minimum spanning forest. The detailed algorithm is given in Algorithm 1.

Input: Graph $G = (V, E)$ represented by adjacency list A with $n = |V|$
n_b: the base problem size to be solved sequentially.
Output: MSF for graph G
begin
while $n > n_b$ **do**
1. Initialize the *color* and *visited* arrays
for $v \leftarrow i\frac{n}{p}$ *to* $(i+1)\frac{n}{p} - 1$ **do**
$color[v] = 0$, $visited[v] = 0$
2. Run Algorithm 2
3. **for** $v \leftarrow i\frac{n}{p}$ *to* $(i+1)\frac{n}{p} - 1$ **do**
if $visited[v] = 0$ **then** find the lightest incident edge e to v, and label e to be in the MST
4. With the found MST edges, run connected components on the induced graph, and shrink each component into a supervertex
5. Remove each supervertex with degree 0 (a connected component)
6. Set $n \leftarrow$ the number of remaining supervertices; and $m \leftarrow$ the number of edges between the supervertices
7. Solve the remaining problem on one processor
end

Algorithm 1: Parallel algorithm for new MSF approach, for processor p_i, for $(0 \leqslant i \leqslant p-1)$. Assume w.l.o.g. that p divides n evenly.

In Algorithm 1, step 1 initializes each vertex as uncolored and unvisited. A processor *colors* a vertex if it is the first processor to insert it into a heap, and labels a vertex as *visited* when it is

Input: (1) p processors, each with processor ID p_i, (2) a partition of adjacency list for each processor (3) array *color* and *visited*

Output: A spanning forest that is part of graph G's MST

begin

1. **for** $v \leftarrow i\frac{n}{p}$ *to* $(i+1)\frac{n}{p}-1$ **do**
   - 1.1 **if** $color[v] \neq 0$ **then** v is already colored, continue
   - 1.2 $my\_color = color[v] = v+1$
   - 1.3 insert v into heap H
   - 1.4 **while** H *is not empty* **do**
     - $w = heap\_extract\_min(H)$
     - **if** *(*$color[w] \neq my\_color$*) OR (any neighbor u of w has color other than* 0 *or my_color)* **then** break
     - **if** $visited[w] = 0$ **then**
       - $visited[w] = 1$, and label the corresponding edge e as in MST
       - **for** *each neighbor u of w* **do**
         - **if** $color[u] = 0$ **then** $color[u] = my\_color$
         - **if** u *in heap* H **then** $heap\_decrease\_key(u, H)$
         - **else** $heap\_insert(u, H)$

end

Algorithm 2: Parallel algorithm for new MST approach based on Prim's that finds parts of MST, for processor p_i, for $(0 \leqslant i \leqslant p-1)$. Assume w.l.o.g. that p divides n evenly.

extracted from the heap; i.e., the edge associated with the vertex has been selected to be in the MST. In step 2 (Algorithm 2) each processor first searches its own portion of the list for uncolored vertices from which to start Prim's algorithm. In each iteration a processor chooses a unique color (different from other processors' colors or the colors it has used before) as its own color. After extracting the minimum element from the heap, the processor checks whether the element is colored by itself, and if not, a collision with another processor occurs (meaning multiple processors try to color this element in a race), and the processor stops growing the current sub-MST. Otherwise, it continues.

We prove that Algorithm 1 finds a MST of the given graph. w.l.o.g., we assume all the edges have distinct weights.

Lemma 1. *On an SMP with sequential memory consistency, subtrees grown by Algorithm 2 do not touch each other, in other words, no two subtrees share a vertex.*

Proof. Step 1.4 of Algorithm 2 grows subtrees following the fashion of Prim's algorithm. Suppose two subtrees T_1 and T_2 share one vertex v. We have two cases:

- case 1: T_1 and T_2 could be two trees grown by one processor, or
- case 2: each tree is grown by a different processor.

v will be included in a processor's subtree only if when it is extracted from the heap and found to be colored as the processor's current color (step 1.4 of Algorithm 2).

Case 1: If T_1 and T_2 are grown by the same processor p_i (also assume without loss of generality T_1 is grown before T_2 in iterations k_1 and k_2, respectively, with $k_1 < k_2$), and processor p_i chooses a unique color to color the vertices (step 1.2 of Algorithm 2), then v is colored $k_1 p + i$ in T_1, and later colored again in T_2 with a different color $k_2 p + i$. As before coloring a vertex, each processor will first checks whether it has already been colored (step 1.1 of Algorithm 2), this means when processor p_i checks whether v has been colored, it does not see the previous coloring. This is a clear contradiction of sequential memory consistency.

Case 2: Assume that v is a vertex found in two trees T_1 and T_2 grown by two processors p_1 and p_2, respectively. We denote t_v as the time that v is colored. Suppose when v is added to T_1, it is connected to vertex v_1, and when it is added to T_2, it is connected to v_2. Since v is connected to v_1 and v_2, we have that $t_{v_1} < t_v$ and $t_{v_2} < t_v$. Also $t_v < t_{v_1}$ and $t_v < t_{v_2}$ since after adding v to T_1 we have not seen the coloring of v_2 yet, and similarly after adding v to T_2 we have not seen the coloring of v_1 yet. This is a contradiction of step 1.4 in Algorithm 2, and hence, a vertex will not be included in more than one growing tree. □

Lemma 2. *No cycles are formed by the edges found in Algorithm 1.*

Proof. In step 2 of Algorithm 1, each processor grows subtrees. Following Lemma 1, no cycles are formed among these trees. Step 5 of Algorithm 1 is the only other step that labels edges, and the edges found in this step do not form cycles among themselves (otherwise it is a direct contradiction of the correctness of Borůvka's algorithm). Also these edges do not form any cycles with the subtrees grown in step 2. To see this, note that each of these edges has at least one endpoint that is not shared by any of the subtrees, so the subtrees can be treated as "vertices." Suppose l such edges and m subtrees form a cycle, we have l edges and $l+m$ vertices, which means $m = 0$. Similarly edges found in step 5 do not connect two subtrees together, but may increase the sizes of subtrees. □

Lemma 3. *Edges found in Algorithm 1are in the MST.*

Proof. Consider a single iteration of Algorithm 1 on graph G. Assume after step 5, we run parallel Borůvka's algorithm to get the MST for the reduced graph. Now we prove that for the spanning tree T we get from G, every edge e of G that is not in T is a T-heavy edge. Let us consider the following cases:

- Two endpoints of e are in two different subtrees. Obviously e is T-heavy because we run Borůvka's algorithm to get the MST of the reduced graph (in which each subtree is now a vertex).
- Two endpoints u, v of e are in the same subtree that is generated by step 1.4. According to Prim's algorithm e is T-heavy.

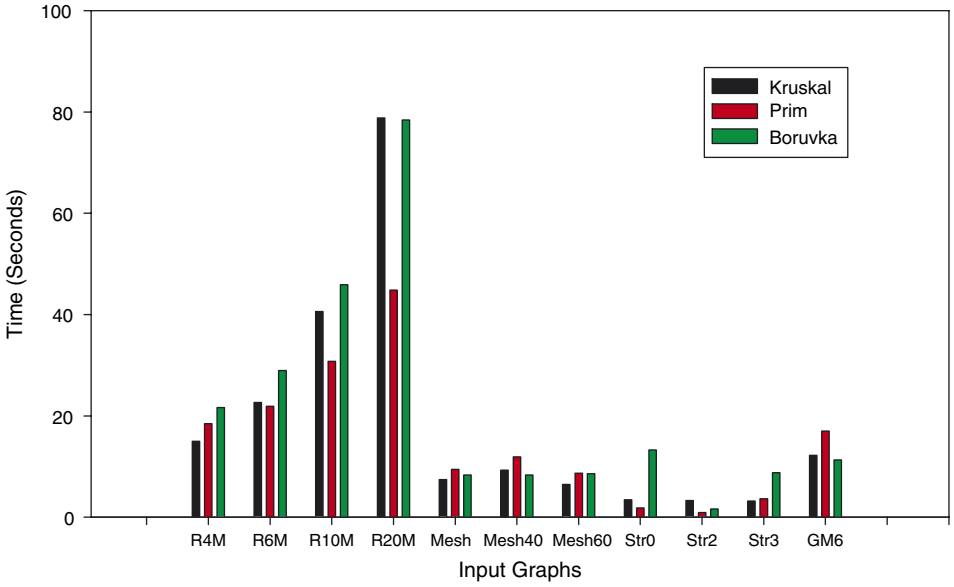

Fig. 3. Comparison of three sequential MST algorithms across several input graphs.

- Two endpoints u, v of e are in the same subtree, u is in the part grown by step 1.4 and v is in part grown by step 3. It is easy to prove that e has larger weight than all the weights of the edges along the path from u to v in T.
- Two endpoints u, v are in the same subtree, both u and v are in parts generated by step 5. Again e is T-heavy.

In summary, we have a spanning tree T, yet all the edges of G that are not in T are T-heavy, so T is a MST. □

Theorem 1. *For connected graph G, Algorithm 1 finds the MST of G.*

Proof. Theorem 1 follows by repeatedly applying Lemma 3. □

The algorithm as given may not keep all of the processors equally busy, since each may visit a different number of vertices during an iteration. We balance the load simply by using the work stealing technique as follows. When a processor completes its partition of $\frac{n}{p}$ vertices, an unfinished partition is randomly selected, and processing begins from a decreasing pointer that marks the end of the unprocessed list. It is theoretically possible that no edges are selected for the growing trees, and hence, no progress made during an iteration of the algorithm (although this case is highly unlikely in practice). For example, if the input contains $\frac{n}{p}$ cycles, with cycle i defined as vertices $\{i\frac{n}{p}, (i+1)\frac{n}{p}, \ldots, (i+p-1)\frac{n}{p}\}$, for $0 \leqslant i < \frac{n}{p}$, and if the processors are perfectly synchronized, each vertex would be a singleton in its own mature tree. A practical solution that guarantees progress with high probability is to randomly reorder the vertex set, which can be done simply in parallel and without added asymptotic complexity [34].

4.1. Analysis

Our new parallel MST algorithm possesses an interesting feature: when run on one processor the algorithm behaves as Prim's, and on n processors becomes Borůvka's, and runs as a hybrid combination for $1 < p < n$, where p is the number of processors. In addition, our new algorithm is novel when compared with Borůvka's approach in the following ways.

1. Each of p processors in our algorithm finds for its starting vertex the smallest-weight edge, contracts that edge, and then finds the smallest-weight edge again for the contracted supervertex. We do not find all the smallest-weight edges for all vertices, synchronize, and then compact as in the parallel Borůvka's algorithm.
2. Our algorithm adapts for any number p of processors in a practical way for SMPs, where p is often much less than n, rather than in parallel implementations of Borůvka's approach that appear as PRAM emulations with p coarse-grained processors that emulate n virtual processors.

The performance of our new algorithm is dependent on its granularity $\frac{n}{p}$, for $1 \leqslant p \leqslant n$. The worst-case is when the granularity is small, i.e., a granularity of 1 when $p = n$ and the approach turns to Borůvka. Hence, the worst case complexities are similar to that of the parallel Borůvka variants analyzed previously. Yet in practice we expect our algorithm to perform better than parallel Borůvka's algorithm on sparse graphs because their lower connectivity implies that our algorithm behaves like p simultaneous copies of Prim's algorithm with some synchronization overhead. In this case, the computation complexity is $O(\frac{m \log n}{p})$ (assuming balanced load among processors). We do not give M_E as the memory access behavior is dependent on the various heap implementations. Instead, we compare the perfor-

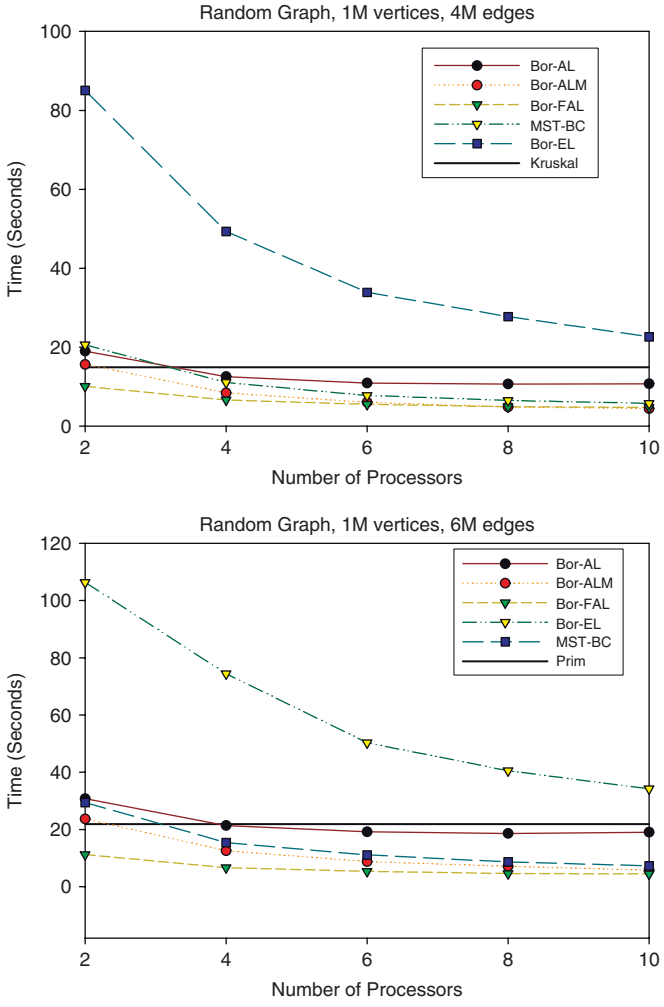

Fig. 4. Comparison of parallel MST algorithms for a random graph with $n = 1M$ vertices and $m = 4M$ and $6M$ edges.

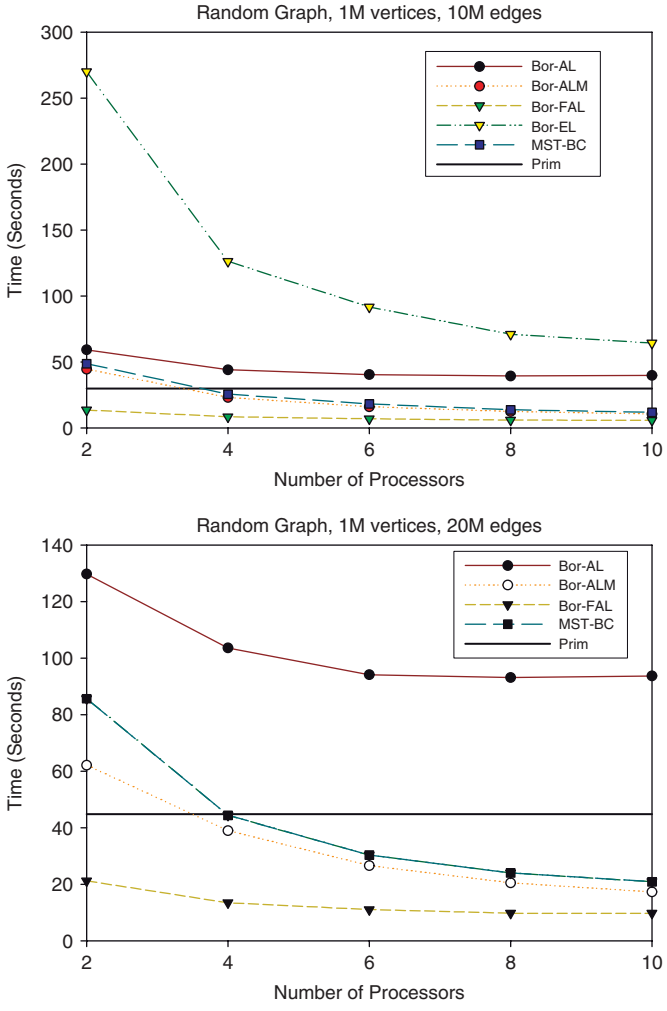

Fig. 5. Comparison of parallel MST algorithms for a random graph with $n = 1M$ vertices and $m = 10M$ and $20M$ edges.

mance of the new algorithm with implementations of Borůvka's algorithms in Section 5.

5. Experimental results

This section summarizes the experimental results of our implementations and compares our results with previous experimental results. We tested our shared-memory implementation on the Sun E4500, a uniform-memory-access (UMA) shared-memory parallel machine with 14 UltraSPARC II 400 MHz processors and 14 GB of memory. Each processor has 16 Kbytes of direct-mapped data (L1) cache and 4 Mbytes of external (L2) cache. The algorithms are implemented using POSIX threads and a library of parallel primitives developed by our group [4].

5.1. Experimental data

Next we describe the collection of sparse graph generators that we use to compare the performance of the parallel MST graph algorithms. Our generators include several employed in previous experimental studies of parallel graph algorithms for related problems. For instance, we include the **2D60** and **3D40** mesh topologies used in the connected component studies of [15,23,17,14], the random graphs used by [15,8,17,14], and the geometric graphs used by [15,17,23,14,8].

Regular and irregular meshes: Computational science applications for physics-based simulations and computer vision commonly use mesh-based graphs. All of the edge weights are uniformly random.

- *2D Mesh*: The vertices of the graph are placed on a 2D mesh, with each vertex connected to its four neighbors whenever they exist.
- *2D60*: 2D mesh with the probability of 60% for each edge to be present.
- *3D40*: 3D mesh with the probability of 40% for each edge to be present.

Structured graphs: These graphs are used by Chung and Condon (see [8] for detailed descriptions) to study the performance of parallel Borůvka's algorithm. They have recursive structures

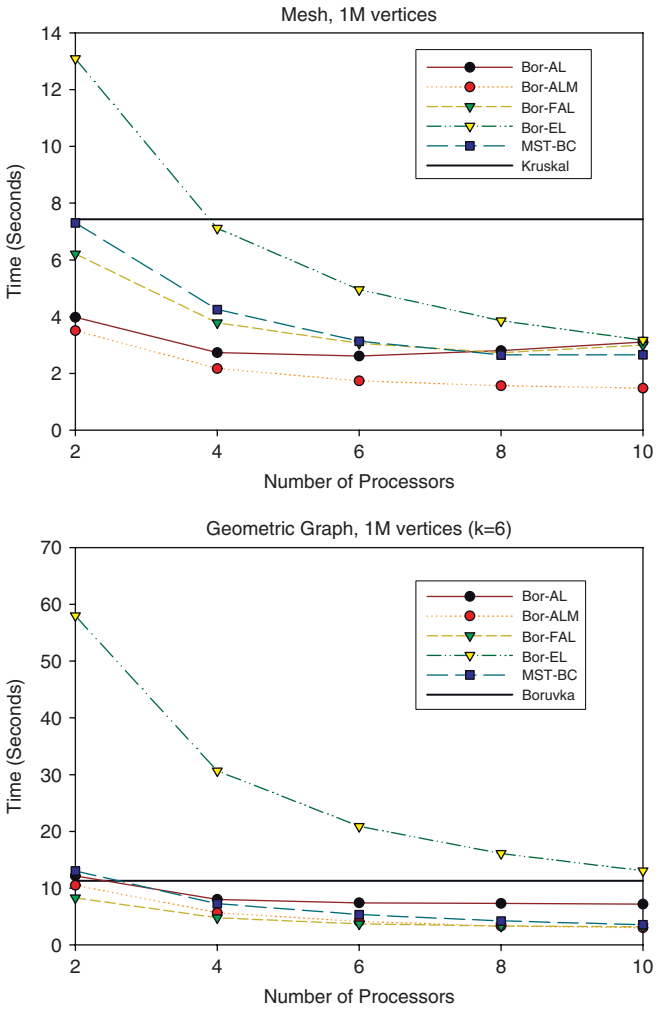

Fig. 6. Comparison of parallel MST algorithms for a regular mesh with $n = 1M$ vertices (top) and for a geometric graph with fixed degree $k = 6$ (bottom).

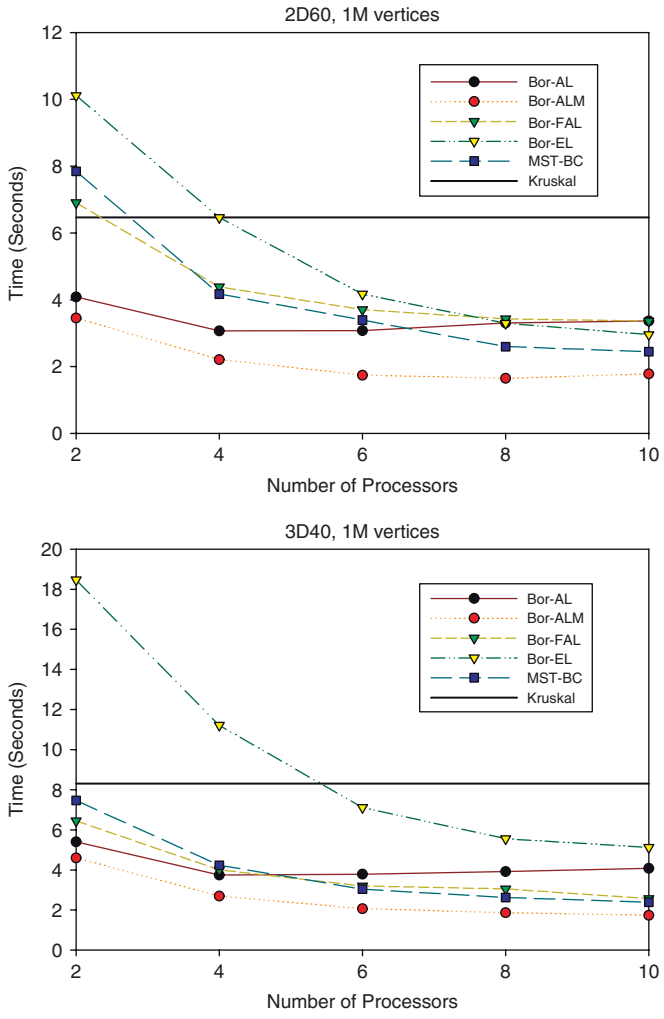

Fig. 7. Comparison of parallel MST algorithms for regular and irregular meshes: the *2D60* (top) and *3D40* (bottom).

that correspond to the iteration of Borůvka's algorithm and are degenerate (the input is already a tree).

- *str0*: At each iteration with n vertices, two vertices form a pair. So with Borůvka's algorithm, the number of vertices decrease exactly by a half in each iteration.
- *str1*: At each iteration with n vertices, $\sqrt{n}$ vertices form a linear chain.
- *str2*: At each iteration with n vertices, $n/2$ vertices form linear chain, and the other $n/2$ form pairs.
- *str3*: At each iteration with n vertices, $\sqrt{n}$ vertices form a complete binary tree.

Random graph: We create a random graph of n vertices and m edges by randomly adding m unique edges to the vertex set. Several software packages generate random graphs this way, including LEDA [27]. The edge weights are selected uniformly and at random.

Geometric graphs: In these k-regular graphs, n points are chosen uniformly and at random in a unit square in the Cartesian plane, and each vertex is connected to its k nearest neighbors. Moret and Shapiro [29] use these in their empirical study of sequential MST algorithms.

5.2. Performance results and analysis

In this section we offer a collection of our performance results that demonstrate for the first time a parallel MST implementation that exhibits speedup when compared with the best sequential approach over a wide range of sparse input graphs. We implemented three sequential algorithms: Prim's algorithm with binary heap, Kruskal's algorithm with non-recursive merge sort (which in our experiments has superior performance over qsort, GNU quicksort, and recursive merge sort for large inputs) and the $m \log m$ Borůvka's algorithm.

Previous studies such as [8] compare their parallel implementations with sequential Borůvka (even though they report that sequential Borůvka is several times slower than other MST algorithms) and Kruskal's algorithm. We observe Prim's algorithm can be 3 times faster than Kruskal's algorithm for some inputs. Density of the graphs is not the only determining fac-

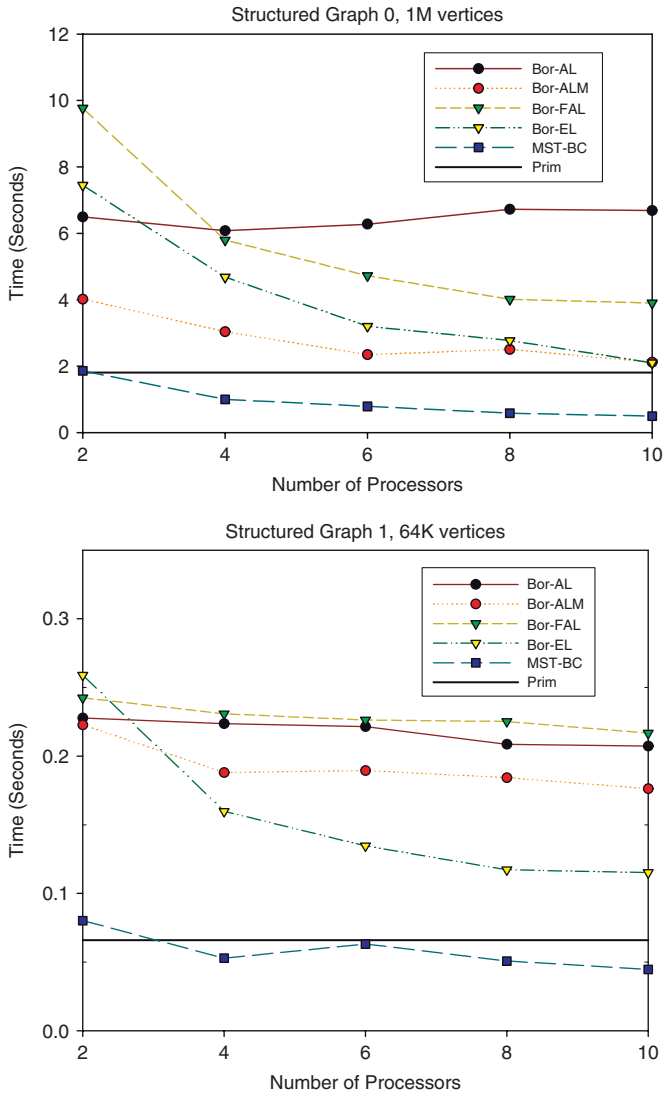

Fig. 8. Comparison of parallel MST algorithms for the structured graphs *str0* and *str1*. Note that *str1* requires 2^z vertices for z a power of two; and thus, we use 64K vertices here due to this size limitation.

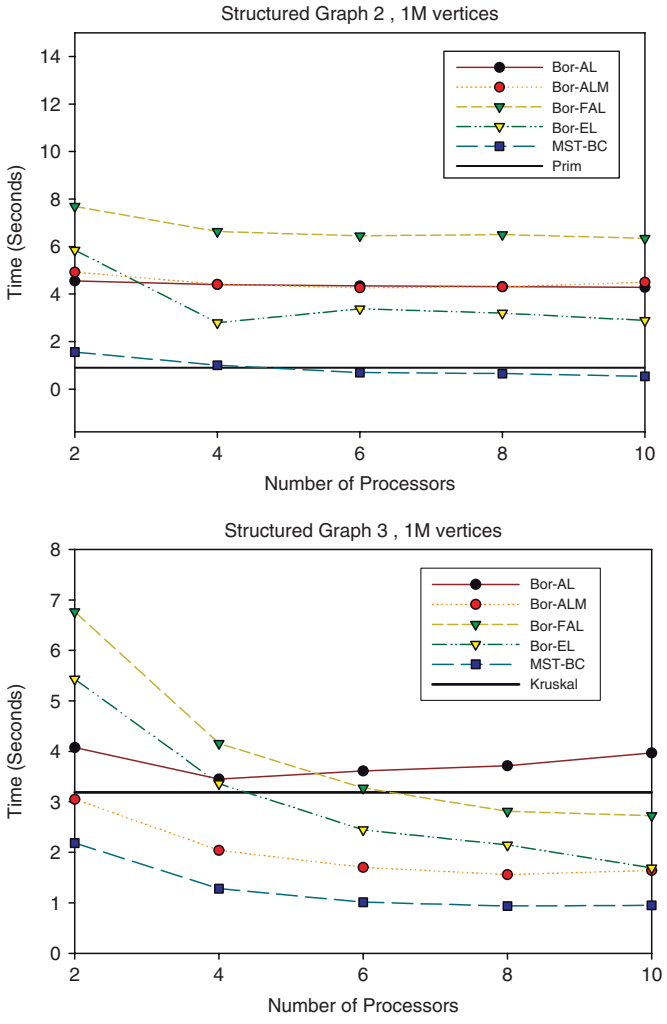

Fig. 9. Comparison of parallel MST algorithms for the structured graphs *str2* and *str3*.

tor of the empirical performance of the three sequential algorithms. Different assignment of edge weights is also important. Fig. 3 shows the performance rankings of the three sequential algorithms over a range of our input graphs.

In our performance results we specify which sequential algorithm achieves the best result for the input and use this algorithm when determining parallel speedup. In our experimental studies, *Bor-EL*, *Bor-AL*, *Bor-ALM*, and *Bor-FAL*, are the parallel Borůvka variants using edge lists, adjacency lists, adjacency lists and our memory management, and flexible adjacency lists, respectively. *MST-BC* is our new minimum spanning forest parallel algorithm.

The performance plots in Figs. 4–9 are for the random graphs, the regular and irregular meshes (mesh, *2D60*, and *3D40*) and a geometric graph with $k = 6$, and the structured graphs. In these plots, the thick horizontal line represents the time taken for the best sequential MST algorithm (named in each legend) to find a solution on the same input graph using a single processor on the Sun E4500.

For the random, sparse graphs, we find that our Borůvka variant with flexible adjacency lists often has superior performance, with a speedup of approximately 5 using eight processors over the best sequential algorithm (Prim's in this case). In the regular and irregular meshes, the adjacency list representation with our memory management (*Bor-ALM*) often is the best performing parallel approach with parallel speedups near 6 for eight processors. Finally, for the structured graphs that are worst-cases for Borůvka algorithms, our new MST algorithm often is the only approach that runs faster than the sequential algorithm, although speedups are more modest with at most 4 for eight processors in some instances.

6. Conclusions and future work

In summary, we present promising results that for the first time show that parallel MST algorithms run efficiently on parallel SMPs for graphs with irregular topologies. We present a new non-deterministic MST algorithm that uses a load-balancing

scheme based upon work stealing that, unlike Borůvka variants, gives reasonable speedup when compared with the best sequential algorithms on several structured inputs that are hard to achieve parallel speedup. Through comparison with the best sequential implementation, we see our implementations exhibiting parallel speedup, which is remarkable to note since the sequential algorithm has very low overhead. Further, these results provide optimistic evidence that complex graph problems that have efficient PRAM solutions, but often no known efficient parallel implementations, may scale gracefully on SMPs. Our future work includes validating these experiments on larger SMPs, and since the code is portable, on other vendors' platforms. We plan to apply the techniques discussed in this paper to other related graph problems, for instance, maximum flow, connected components, and planarity testing algorithms, for SMPs.

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