Supporting Researchers with Containers:

Introduction to Containers

Eric Coulter, Jeremy Fischer, Peter Vaillancourt

UITS Research Technologies, Indiana University & Center for Advanced Computing, Cornell University

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Introduction

...or how I learned to stop worrying and love the bomb containers...
What are containers?

- Born from a simple idea (chroot)
- Evolved over time into various forms of container services (e.g. BSD Jails, Solaris Zones)
- LXC (LinuX Containers) was released in 2008
- Docker came on the scene in 2013
- Other technologies evolved – Shifter, CharlieCloud, Singularity
- Upping the ante – Docker Compose and container orchestration
...and why would I want to use one

- Consistency
- Portability
- Ability to package and run on HPC
- “Just in time” instantiation and updating on the fly
- Creating microservices
- Run legacy code/obsolete OSes
- Reproducible Science!
Why bother with containers?

- Consistency
- Reproducibility
- Easily integrate new applications (especially legacy applications)
- More easily manage many applications that may have complex requirements
- Portability of applications between gateways and individuals and HPC
Containers vs. Virtual Machines

VMs:
- VMs are fully contained – everything you need is there
- VMs are independent of the host operating system
- All OS resources and tools are available

Containers:
- Compact – minimal OS parts to run, rely on host
- Compact nature makes them more portable
- Robust ecosystem – many pre-made containers available
What is Docker

- Docker is a container technology tool to create, deploy, and run applications
- Low overhead, uses the running kernel
- Lets a creator package all of the software needed to run an application in a reasonably compact and run it on any other Docker-capable machine
- Uses a client (docker) to talk over a REST API to the docker daemon (dockerd) either locally or remotely
- Has a large public repository of objects (containers, images, etc) at DockerHub -- and other repos are available
- It allows users to develop applications, package (ship) them into containers which can then be deployed anywhere

** Even Windows and Mac!
Docker in action...the big picture:
How Docker is used?
What is Singularity?

- YACP (Yet another container platform)
- Why are we talking about Singularity at all?
- How is it different from Docker?
- How does this all come together?
- Singularity can use Singularity containers from the Singularity Hub or Docker containers, even pulling from a Docker registry like Docker Hub
XSEDE Cyberinfrastructure Resource Integration

• **Software toolkits, consulting services, provider coordination**
  • Cluster distribution, scientific software, XSEDE-like environment
  • Reproducible Container Template for science applications
  • Site visits to help implement campus clusters and clouds
  • Information and support for joining the XSEDE Service Providers

• **Impacts**
  • Growing number of campus clusters, more than 1000 TeraFLOPS of computing on CRI software
  • Virtual Cluster on Jetstream Cloud software
  • Container Tutorial at previous PEARC meetings, submissions for PEARC 21 and SC21 planned
Onward!
Supporting researchers with containers

Questions before moving on?