AWStream: Adaptive Wide-Area Streaming Analytics

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Abstract
The emerging class of wide-area streaming analytics faces the challenge of scarce and variable WAN bandwidth. Non-adaptive applications built with TCP or UDP suffer from increased latency or degraded accuracy. State-of-the-art approaches that adapt to network changes require developer writing sub-optimal manual policies or are limited to application-specific optimizations.

We present AWStream, a stream processing system that simultaneously achieves low latency and high accuracy in the wide area, requiring minimal developer efforts. To realize this, AWStream uses three ideas: (i) it integrates application adaptation as a first-class programming abstraction in the stream processing model; (ii) with a combination of offline and online profiling, it automatically learns an accurate profile that models accuracy and bandwidth trade-off; and (iii) at runtime, it carefully adjusts the application data rate to match the available bandwidth while maximizing the achievable accuracy.

We evaluate AWStream with three real-world applications: augmented reality, pedestrian detection, and monitoring log analysis. Our experiments show that AWStream achieves sub-second latency with only nominal accuracy drop (2-6%).

ACM Reference format:
https://doi.org/10.475/123_4

1 Introduction
Wide-area streaming analytics are becoming pervasive, especially with emerging Internet of Things (IoT) applications.

Large cities such as London and Beijing have deployed millions of cameras for surveillance and traffic control [42, 79]. Buildings are increasingly equipped with a wide variety of sensors to improve energy efficiency and occupant comfort [40]. Geo-distributed infrastructure, such as content delivery networks (CDNs), analyze requests from machine logs across the globe [50]. These applications all transport, distill, and process streams of data across the wide area, in real time.

A key challenge that the above applications face is dealing with the scarce and variable bandwidth in the wide area [35, 85]. As many have observed, WAN bandwidth growth has been decelerating for many years while traffic demands are growing at a staggering rate [52, 53, 78]. In addition, scarcity in last-mile bandwidth remains a problem across wireless [13], cellular [54], and even broadband [33, 76] networks. Finally, as we elaborate on in §2, not only is WAN bandwidth scarce, it is also relatively expensive, and highly variable.

For all of the above reasons, it is important that streaming applications be adaptive, incorporating the ability to optimally trade-off accuracy for bandwidth consumption and hence a key system challenge is to design the programming abstractions and tools that simplify the development of such adaptive applications.

Recent research on WAN-aware systems promote pushing computation to the network edge [61, 68]. However, even with edge computing, the need for adaptation remains because end-devices such as cameras and mobile phones still suffer from limited bandwidth in the last-hop infrastructure [3, 91]. In addition, edge computing is not a panacea as wide-area communication is often not entirely avoidable: e.g., some analytical jobs require joining or aggregating data from multiple geo-distributed sites [60, 83], while in some cases processing benefits substantially from specialized computing resources such as GPUs and TPUs [2] in the cloud.

The core difficulty with adaptive streaming analytics is that, when bandwidth is scarce, developers are faced with the decision of how to reconcile data fidelity (i.e., not losing
any data) with data freshness (i.e., sending data as quickly as possible). A deterioration in either fidelity or freshness can impact application accuracy but the exact impact varies depending on the application.\(^1\) Fig. 1 illustrates this trade-off with a few sample points in the design space.

Applications that simply use existing protocols without any attempt at adaptation can result in extreme design points. E.g., streaming over TCP ensures reliable delivery (hence high fidelity) but backlogged data delays the delivery of data (hence freshness suffers). On the other hand, streaming over UDP minimizes latency by sending packets as fast as possible, but uncontrolled packet loss can devastate data fidelity.

Manual policies, such as sampling, allow developers to trade data fidelity for freshness [61]. However, it’s difficult to write accurate policies without extensive domain expertise or considerable effort. In practice, developers write manual policies based on heuristics rather than quantitative measurements and, as we show in §5, such policies can lead to sub-optimal performance in terms of both freshness and fidelity.

Furthermore, application-specific optimizations often do not generalize. A fine-tuned adaptation algorithm for one application works poorly for a different application, if performance metrics or data distributions change. For example, video streaming focuses on quality of experience (QoE) [48, 58, 88]. Because humans favor smoothness over image quality, these systems maintain a high frame rate, e.g., 25 FPS, and reduce the resolution under bandwidth limitation. However, low resolution images can lead to poor accuracy for video analytics that rely on the image details, e.g., face detection [82].

In this paper, we present AWStream, a framework for building adaptive stream processing applications that simultaneously simplifies development and improves application accuracy in the face of limited or varying wide-area bandwidth. AWStream achieves this through the combination of three novel contributions:

1. AWStream introduces new programming abstractions by which a developer expresses what degradation functions can be used by the framework. Importantly, developers do not have to specify exactly when and how different degradation functions are to be used which is instead left to the AWStream framework.

2. Rather than rely on manual policies, AWStream automatically learns a Pareto-optimal policy or strategy for when and how to invoke different degradation functions. For this, we design a methodology that uses a combination of offline and online training to build an accurate model of the relationship between an application’s accuracy and its bandwidth consumption under different combinations of degradation functions. Our solution exploits parallelism and sampling to efficiently explore the configuration space and learn an optimal strategy.

3. AWStream’s final contribution is the design and implementation of a runtime system that continually measures and adapts to network conditions. AWStream matches the streaming data rate to the measured available bandwidth, and achieves high accuracy by using the learned Pareto-optimal configurations. Upon encountering network congestion, our adaptation algorithm increases the degradation level to reduce the data rate, such that no persistent queue builds up. To recover, it progressively decreases the degradation level after probing for more available bandwidth.

We implement AWStream and use it to prototype three streaming applications: augmented reality (AR), pedestrian detection (PD), and distributed Top-K (TK). We use real-world data to profile these applications and evaluate their runtime performance on a geo-distributed public cloud. We show that AWStream’s data-driven approach generates accurate profiles and that our parallelism and sampling techniques can speed up profiling by up to 29× and 8.7× respectively.

We show that AWStream significantly outperforms non-adaptive applications: e.g., achieving a 40–100× reduction in packet delivery times relative to applications built over TCP, or an over 45–88% improvement in data fidelity (application accuracy) relative to applications built over UDP. We also compare AWStream to JetStream [61], a state-of-the-art system for building adaptive streaming analytics that is based on manual policies: our results show that besides the benefit of generating optimal policies automatically, AWStream achieves a 15–20× reduction in latency and 1–5% improvement in accuracy relative to JetStream. We show that these gains come from the combination of AWStream’s ability to learn better policies and its well-designed runtime. Hence, the ease of development that AWStream provides comes with significantly improved application performance compared to typical manually crafted policies.

2 Motivation

In this section, we first examine the gap between high application demands and limited WAN bandwidth. We then show that neither manual policies nor application-specific optimizations solve the problem.

\[\text{2018-05-23 18:03 page 2 (pp. 1-16)}\]
Similar scarcity and variations exist in wireless networks [13], broadband access networks [33, 76] and cellular networks [54].

2.3 Motivation for A WStream

To address bandwidth limits, existing solutions use manual policies or application-specific solutions. We discuss their drawbacks to motivate A WStream (design in §3).

Manual polices are sub-optimal. JetStream [61] is the first to use degradation to address bandwidth limits in wide area. While effective in comparison to non-adaptive systems, JetStream requires developers to write manual policies, e.g. “if bandwidth is insufficient, switch to sending images at 75% fidelity, then 50% if there still isn’t enough bandwidth. Beyond that point, reduce the frame rate, but keep the image fidelity.”\(^2\) We discuss the problems with manual policies below and present quantitative evaluations in §5.3.

First, this policy is not accurate. Developers write such rules based on heuristics and do not back them up with measurements. Images with 75% fidelity do not necessarily lead to 75% application accuracy. In terms of bandwidth, naively one would think that reducing the frame rate by half will also reduce the data rate. But if video encoding such as H.264 [65] is used, a reduction in frame rate increases the inter-frame difference and creates P-frames with larger sizes. Fig. 3c shows that when reducing the frame rate to 33% (from 30 FPS to 10 FPS), the bandwidth use can still be more than 50%.

Second, it is not scalable to specify rules one by one. A fine-grain control requires many rules in the policy. Besides, applications can degrade in multiple dimensions and each dimension has different impacts (compare Fig. 3a with Fig. 3b). Specifying rules in detail and across dimensions manually is a tedious and error-prone process.

Lastly, this abstraction is too low-level. It forces developers to study and measure the impact of individual operations, prohibiting its wide adoption in practice.

Application-specific optimizations do not generalize. Because each application has different performance metrics and relies on different features, a fine-tuned policy for one application will often work poorly for another. For example, DASH [74] optimizes QoE for video streaming; it keeps a high frame rate and reduces resolutions for adaptation. Its policy that lowers the resolution works poorly for video analytics that relies on image details [45, 82]. In Fig. 3b, we show that pedestrian detection accuracy drops fast when reducing resolutions as pedestrian are small in the scenes.

Similar applications face different data distributions, as shown in Fig. 3 between stationary cameras detecting pedestrians (up) and mobile cameras recognizing objects (bottom). For stationary cameras, when we consider the slow walking speed of pedestrians, a high frame rate is not necessary. But high-resolution images are crucial because these surveillance cameras can be used in high-speed traffic scenarios where pedestrian detection is essential.

\(^2\)Excerpt from JetStream §4.3 [61].
AWStream Design

To address the issues with manual policies or application-specific optimizations, AWStream structures adaptation as a set of approximate, modular, and extensible specifications (§3.1). The well-defined structure allows us to build a generic profiling tool that learns an accurate relationship—we call it the profile—between bandwidth consumption and application accuracy (§3.2). The profile then guides the runtime to react with precision: achieving low latency and high accuracy when facing insufficient bandwidth (§3.3). Fig. 4 shows the high-level overview of AWStream.

3.1 API for Structured Adaptation

Most stream processing systems construct applications as a directed graph of operators [80, 89]. Each operator transforms input streams into new streams. AWStream borrows the same computation model. Table 1 lists some example operators, such as map and skip.

To integrate adaptation as a first-class abstraction, AWStream introduces maybe operators that degrade data quality, yielding potential bandwidth savings. Our API design has three considerations. (i) To free developers from specifying exact rules, the API should allow specifications with options. (ii) To allow combining multiple dimensions, the API should be modular. (iii) To support flexible integration with arbitrary degradation functions, the API should take user-defined functions. Therefore, our API is,

\[
\text{maybe}(\text{knobs: Vec<T>, f: (T, I) => I})
\]

We illustrate the use of the maybe operator with an example that quantizes a stream of integers in Rust:

```rust
let quantized_stream = vec![1, 2, 3, 4].into_stream()
    .maybe(vec![2, 4], |k, val| val.wrapping_div(k))
    .collect();
```

The snippet creates a stream of integers, chains a degradation operation, and collects the execution result. In this example, the knob is [2, 4] and the degradation function performs a wrapping (modular) division where the divisor is the chosen knob. The knob value modifies the quantization level, affecting the output: \([1, 2, 3, 4]\) (no degradation), \([0, 1, 1, 2]\) \((k=2)\), or \([0, 0, 0, 1]\) \((k=4)\). If the stream is then encoded—for example, run-length encoding as in JPEG [86]—for transmission, the data size will depend on the level of degradation.

Based on the maybe primitive, one can implement additional degradation operators for common data types. For instance, maybe_head will optionally take the top values of a list; maybe_downsample can resize the image to a configured...
resolution. AWStream provides a number of such operations as a library to simplify application development (Table 1).

With our API, the example mentioned in §2.3 can now be implemented as follows:

```java
let app = Camera::new((1920, 1080), 30)
  .maybe_downsample(vec![1600, 900], (1280, 720))
  .maybe_skip(vec![2, 6])
  .map(move |frame| frame.show());
```

This snippet first instantiates a Camera source, which produces Stream<Image> with 1920x1080 resolution and 30 FPS. Two degradation operations follow the source: one that downsamples the image to 1600x900 or 1280x720 resolution, and the other that skips every 2 or 5 frames, resulting in 30/(2+1)=10 FPS or 30/(5+1)=6 FPS. This example then displays degraded images. In practice, operators for further processing, such as encoding and transmission, can be chained.

### 3.2 Automatic Profiling

After developers use `maybe` operators to specify potential degradation operations, AWStream automatically builds an accurate profile. The profile captures the relationship between application accuracy and bandwidth consumption under different combinations of data degradation operations. We describe the formalism, followed by techniques that efficiently perform offline and online profiling.

**Profiling formalism.** Suppose a stream processing application has `n` `maybe` operators. Each operator introduces a knob `k_i`. The combination of all knobs forms a configuration `c = [k_1, k_2, ..., k_n]`. The set of all possible configurations `C` is the space that the profiling explores. For each configuration `c`, there are two mappings that are of particular interest: a mapping from `c` to its bandwidth consumption `B(c)` and its accuracy measure `A(c)`. Table 2 summarizes these symbols.

The profiling looks for Pareto-optimal configurations; that is, for any configuration `c` in the Pareto-optimal set `P`, there is no alternative configuration `c'` that requires less bandwidth and offers a higher accuracy. Formally, `P` is defined as follows:

```latex
P = \{ c \in C : \forall c' \in C : B(c') < B(c), A(c') > A(c) \} = \emptyset
```

### Degradation Operators

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Symbol</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><code>n</code></td>
<td>number of degradation operations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><code>k_i</code></td>
<td>the <code>i</code>-th degradation knob</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><code>c</code></td>
<td>one specific configuration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><code>C</code></td>
<td>the set of all configurations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><code>B(c)</code></td>
<td>bandwidth requirement for <code>c</code></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><code>A(c)</code></td>
<td>accuracy measure for <code>c</code></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><code>P</code></td>
<td>Pareto-optimal set</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><code>R</code></td>
<td>network delivery rate (estimated bandwidth)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><code>Q_k</code>, <code>Q_C</code></td>
<td>messages when Queue is empty or congested</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><code>R_C</code></td>
<td>message when Receiver detects congestion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><code>AC Probe Done</code></td>
<td>message when AC requests probing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><code>S Probe Done</code></td>
<td>message when Socket finishes probing</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Because AWStream allows arbitrary functions as the degradation functions, it does not assume a closed-form relationship for `B(c)` and `A(c)`. Instead, AWStream takes a data-driven approach: profiling applications with developer-supplied training data. We measure `B(c)` at the point of transmission. The accuracy `A(c)` is measured either against the groundtruth, or the reference results when all degradation operations are off. We show examples of knobs, configurations, and accuracy functions when we present applications in §4.

**Offline Profiling.** We first use an offline process to build a bootstrap profile (or defaul profile). AWStream makes no assumptions on the performance models, and thus evaluates all possible configurations. While all knobs form a combinatorial space, the offline profiling is only a one-time process. We exploit parallelism to reduce the profiling time. Without any a priori knowledge, all configurations are assigned randomly to available machines.

**Online Profiling:** AWStream supports online profiling to continuously refine the profile. The refinement handles model drift, a problem when the learned profile fails to predict the performance accurately. There are two challenges with online profiling. (i) There are no ground-truth labels or reference data to compute accuracy. Because labeling data is prohibitively labor intensive and time consuming [67], AWStream currently uses raw data (data without degradation) as the reference. At runtime, if the application streams raw data, it is used for online profiling. Otherwise, we allocate additional...
bandwidth to transmit raw data, but only do so when there is spare capacity. (ii) Exhaustive profiling is expensive. If the profiling takes too much time, the newly-learned profile may already be stale. AWStream uses a combination of parallelization and sampling to speed up profiling, as below:

- Parallelization with degradation-aware scheduling. Evaluating each configuration takes a different amount of time. Typically, an increase in the level of degradation leads to a decrease in computation; for example, a smaller FPS means fewer images to process. Therefore, we collect processing times for each configuration from offline profiling and schedule online profiling with largest first schedule (LFS) [37] during parallelization.

- Sampling-based profiling. Online profiling can speed up when we sample data or configurations. Sampling data reduces the amount of data to process, but at a cost of generating a less accurate profile. When sampling configuration, we can evaluate a subset of the Pareto-optimal configurations and compare their performances with an existing profile. A substantial difference, such as more than 1 Mbps of bandwidth estimation, triggers a full profiling over all configurations to update the current profile.

### 3.3 Runtime Adaptation

At runtime, AWStream matches data rate to available bandwidth to minimize latency and uses Pareto-optimal configurations to maximize accuracy. This section focuses on the details of our runtime design. We defer the evaluation and comparisons with existing systems (e.g. JetStream) to §5.3.

Fig. 5 shows our runtime system architecture. AWStream applications’ source contains a `Maybe` module derived from all `maybe` operators. This module allows the controller to update the level of degradation. Data generated by the source is then enqueued to `Queue` and subsequently dequeued by `Socket`, which sends data over the network using TCP. When the data generation rate exceeds `Socket`’s departure rate, the queue grows. In this case, the adaptation controller (AC) queries the estimated bandwidth from `Socket` and regulates the source stream by updating the configuration. After the data is sent through the network, `Receiver` delivers data to the application analytics. `Receiver` also performs congestion detection and extracts raw data, if it is present. It tracks the minimal latency (similar to how BBR tracks RTT [19]) and reports sudden application-level latency spikes to clients as congestion signals (Rc). If a new profile is learned by the online profiler, it is fed back to AC for subsequent adaptation.

Fig. 6a shows the adaptation algorithm with a state machine model and Fig. 6b shows the state transitions with an example. We first describe all symbols. AC loads the profile and sorts all configurations with an ascending order of bandwidth demand, resulting in a list $[c_1, \ldots, c_{\text{max}}]$. These configurations follow a total order, $c_i < c_j$ if $B(c_i) < B(c_j)$.

- **Startup:** rapid growth. AWStream starts with $c_1$ and grows the rate ($c_i \Rightarrow c_{i+1}$) upon each $Q_E$. The growth stops at $c_{\text{max}}$ (to Steady) or if it receives $Q_e$/$R_C$ (to Degrade).

- **Degrade:** reacting to congestion. Congestion is detected in two ways: (1) when `Queue` grows and exceeds a threshold, `AC` receives $Q_C$; (2) when `Receiver` detects latency spikes, `AC` receives $R_C$. During congestion, `AC` runs the `adapt()` procedure by updating `Maybe` with the maximum-allowed $c$ that satisfies $B(c) < \alpha R$, where $\alpha \in (0, 1)$ and $R$ is `Socket`’s current delivery rate. A smaller $\alpha$ allows a quicker draining of the queue. After the congestion is resolved ($Q_R$ received), AWStream changes to Steady.

- **Steady:** low latency delivery. AWStream achieves low latency by spending most of the time in Steady. It changes to Degrade when congestion occurs. If $c < c_{\text{max}}$ and it receives $Q_e$, `AC` starts `Probe` to check for more available bandwidth.

- **Probe:** more bandwidth for a higher accuracy. Advancing $c_i$ directly may cause congestion if $B(c_{i+1}) \gg B(c_i)$. To allow a smooth increase, `AC` requests `Socket` to probe by sending additional traffic controlled by `probe_gain`.

![Runtime adaptation system architecture](image)

![Rate adaptation as a state machine](image)

![An example illustrating the adaptation algorithm](image)
While our proposed API is general and not language specific, we have implemented AWStream prototype in Rust (~4000 lines of code). AWStream is open source on GitHub. Applications use AWStream as a library and configure the execution mode—profiling, runtime as client, or runtime as server—with command line arguments.

3.4 Resource Allocation & Fairness

In addition to rate adaptation, the profile is also useful for controlling a single application’s bandwidth usage or allocating resources among competing tasks.

For individual applications, developers can pin-point a configuration for a given bandwidth or accuracy goal. They can also specify a criterion to limit effective configurations. For example, AWStream can enforce an upper bound on the bandwidth consumption (e.g., do not exceed 1 Mbps) or a lower bound on application accuracy (e.g., do not fall below 75%).

For multiple applications, their profiles allow novel bandwidth allocation schemes such as utility fairness. Different from resource fairness with which applications get an equal share of bandwidth, utility fairness aims to maximize the minimal application accuracy. With the profiles, bandwidth allocation is equivalent to finding proper configuration \( c^i \) for application \( t \). We formulate utility fairness as follows:

\[
\max \min_{c^i} (A^i(c^i)) \text{ s.t. } \sum_{t} B^i(c^i) < R
\]

Solving this optimization is computationally hard. AWStream uses heuristics similar to VideoStorm [90]: it starts with \( c^i_0 \) and improves the application \( t \) with the worst accuracy; this process iterates until all bandwidth is allocated.

4 Implementation

While our proposed API is general and not language specific, we have implemented AWStream prototype in Rust (~4000 lines of code). AWStream is open source on GitHub. Applications use AWStream as a library and configure the execution mode—profiling, runtime as client, or runtime as server—with command line arguments.
Fig. 7 illustrates our processing pipeline with two degradation operations. First each source node summarizes the log using Window operator to reduce the data size, a pre-processing step. As many real-world access patterns follow a long tail distribution, there can be a large-but-irrelevant tail that contributes little to the final Top-K. Each source node then filters the tail: (1) head(N) takes the top N entries; (2) threshold(T) filters small entries whose count is smaller than T. These two operations affect the final result and the exact impact depends on data distribution. We implement these two operators by using AWStream’s maybe abstraction.

To measure the accuracy, we need to compare the correlation between two ranked list. Kendall’s τ [4] is a correlation measure of the concordance between two ranked list. The output ranges from −1 to 1, representing no agreement to complete agreement. To integrate with AWStream, we convert Kendall’s τ to [0, 1] with a linear transformation. For our evaluation, we set K as 50 and use Apache log files that record and store user access statistics for the SEC.gov website. The logs are split into four groups, simulating four geo-distributed nodes monitoring web accesses. To match the load of popular web servers, we compress one hour’s logs into one second.

5 Evaluation

In this section, we show the evaluations of AWStream, summarizing the results as follows.

§5.1 AWStream generates Pareto-optimal profiles across multiple dimensions with precision (Fig. 8).

§5.2 Our parallel and sampling techniques speeds up offline and online profiling (Fig. 9, Fig. 10).

§5.3 At runtime, AWStream achieves sub-second latency and nominal accuracy drop for all applications (Fig. 11, Fig. 12) and across various network conditions (Fig. 13).

§5.4 AWStream profiles allow different resource allocations: resource fairness and utility fairness (Fig. 14).

5.1 Application Profiles

We run offline profiling using the training dataset described in Table 3 and show the learned profiles in Fig. 8. In each figure, the cross dots represent the bandwidth demand and application accuracy for one configuration. We highlight the Pareto-optimal boundary \( P \) with blue dashed lines. To understand each dimension’s impact on the degradation, we highlight configurations from tuning only one dimension. From these profiles, we make the following observations:

Large bandwidth variation. For all three applications, the bandwidth requirements of all three applications have two to three orders of magnitude of difference (note the x-axis is in log scale). For AR and PD, the most expensive configuration transmits videos at 1920x1080, 30 FPS and 0 quantization; it consumes 230 Mbps. In contrast to the large bandwidth variation, there is a smaller variation in accuracy. In PD, for example, even after the bandwidth reduces to 1 Mbps (less than 1% of the maximum), the accuracy is still above 75%. The large variation allows AWStream to operate at a high accuracy configuration even under severe network deterioration.

Distinct effects by each dimension. Comparing dashed lines in each profile, we see that the Pareto-optimal configurations are only achievable when multiple knobs are in effect. Tuning only one dimension often leads to sub-optimal performance. Within a single profile, the difference between tuning individual dimensions is evident. For PD, tuning resolution (the red line) leads to a quicker accuracy drop than tuning frame rate (the yellow line). Comparing AR and PD, the same dimension has different impact. Tuning resolution is less harmful in AR than PD; while tuning frame rate hurts AR more than PD. This echoes our initial observation in §2.3 that application-specific optimizations do not generalize.

5.2 Profiling Efficiency & Online Profiling

This section focuses on the AR application as a case study; our profiling techniques—parallelism and sampling—do not make assumptions about the application; therefore, the evaluation results can be generalized to other applications.

In AR, there are 216 different configurations: 6 resolutions, 6 frame rates and 6 quantization levels. AR uses YOLO [63], a neural network model for object detection. It takes roughly 30 ms to process one frame on GeForce® GTX 970. But different configurations require different times for processing. For example, a 10 FPS video has 1/3 of the frames to process in comparison to a 30 FPS video. In our experiment, to evaluate all 216 configurations, it takes 52 seconds for 1 second worth of data. We denote such overhead as 52X. Section 3.2 discusses parallel and sampling techniques to improve the profiling efficiency; we present their evaluations as follows.

Parallelism reduces the profiling time (Fig. 9). Because evaluating each individual configuration is independent of other configurations, we parallelize the profiling task by assigning configurations to GPUs. (i) Our offline profiling assigns configurations randomly. With the increased number of GPUs, the overhead reduces from 52X to 4X with 30 GPUs. (ii) Our online profiling assigns configurations based on the processing times collected during offline. AWStream uses YOLO resizes images to fixed 416x416 resolutions as required by the neural network. Evaluating images with different resolutions takes similar time.
LFS [37] to minimize the makespan and reduces the overhead to 1.75X with 30 GPUs (29× gain).

**Sampling techniques speed up online profiling (Fig. 10).** Before we evaluate the speed up, we validate model drift with real-world data. When using the profile trained in an office environment, the application should use a configuration of 1280×720, 30 FPS and 20 quantization to meet an 11 Mbps goal. We test it against a home environment; but at about t=100s, the camera points out of the window to detect objects on the street. Because of the scene change, the configuration fails to predict bandwidth, as illustrated in Fig. 10a.

To correct the profile, if we continuously run the profiling online and update the profile, the application will choose the right configuration to meet the bandwidth limit. Fig. 10b shows the bandwidth prediction when we continuously profile with the past 30 seconds of video. At time t=120s, the new prediction corrects the drift. The downside of continuous profiling, as discussed earlier, is the cost: 52X overhead with 1 GPU. In addition to parallelism, AWStream uses sampling techniques for online profiling (improvements in Table 4):

(i) Partial data. Instead of using all the past data, we run profiling with only a fraction of the raw data. Fig. 10c shows the bandwidth consumption if the profiling uses only 10 seconds of data out of the past 30 seconds. In this way, although the profile may be less accurate (the mis-prediction at t=80-100s), and there is a delay in reacting to data change (the mis-prediction is corrected after t=125s), we save the online profiling by 3× (from 52X to 17X).

(ii) Partial configurations. If we use the past profile as a reference and only measure a subset of P, the savings can be substantial. A full profiling is only triggered if there is a significant difference. Fig. 10d shows the bandwidth prediction if we evaluate 5 configurations continuously and trigger a full profiling when the bandwidth estimation is off by 1 Mbps or the accuracy is off by 10%. For our test data, this scheme is enough to correct model drifts by predicting an accurate bandwidth usage (compare Fig. 10b and Fig. 10d). The overhead reduces to 6X because we run full profiling less often (only two full profiling). It is an 8.7× gain.

**Table 4.** Compared to the continuous profiling baseline (52X overhead), our sampling techniques speed up by 3× or 8.7×.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Online scheme</th>
<th>Overhead</th>
<th>Improvements</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Continuous</td>
<td>52X</td>
<td>Baseline</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partial data</td>
<td>17X</td>
<td>3×</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partial configurations</td>
<td>6X</td>
<td>8.7×</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note that these techniques—parallelization, sampling data, and sampling configurations—can be combined to further reduce the profiling overhead. For example, scheduling 5 GPUs running 5 configurations continuously to check for model drift will reduce the overhead to 1X.

AWStream currently requires developers to configure the application with proper online profiling techniques.
5.3 Runtime Adaptation

In this section, we evaluate the runtime performance by controlling bandwidth across geo-distributed sites and compare AWStream with baselines including streaming over TCP/UDP, JetStream, and video streaming. Due to limited space, we discuss AR in depth and only present the results of PD/TK.

Experiment setup. We conduct our experiments on four geo-distributed machines from Amazon EC2, spanning four different regions. Three (at N. Virginia, Ohio, Oregon) act as worker nodes and one (at N. California) acts as the analytics server. The average RTTs from the workers to the server are 65.2 ms, 22.2 ms, and 50.3 ms.

During the experiment, each worker transmits test data (Table 3) for about 10 mins. If the duration of the test data is less than 10 mins, it loops. Because $B(c_{\text{max}})$ is prohibitively large (raw videos consume 230 Mbps), we use a reasonable configuration to limit the maximum rate. In our AR experiment, $c_{\text{max}}$ is 1600x900 resolution, 30 FPS and 20 quantization; it consumes about 14 Mbps.

Our bandwidth control scheme follows JetStream [61]. During the experiment, we use the Linux t c utility with HTB [24, 36] to control the clients’ outgoing bandwidth. Each experiment involves four phases: (i) before t=200s, there is no shaping; (ii) at t=200s, we limit the bandwidth to 7.5 Mbps for 3 minutes; (iii) at t=380s, we further decrease the bandwidth to 5 Mbps; (iv) at t=440s, we remove all traffic shaping.

For UDP, HTB doesn’t emulate the packet loss or out-of-order delivery; so we use netem and configure the loss probability according to the delivery rate. Because each pair-wise connection has a different capacity, we impose a background bandwidth limit—25 Mbps—to normalize the capacity.

We compare AWStream with the following baselines:

- Streaming over TCP/UDP (non-adaptive). For TCP, we reuse AWStream runtime that runs over TCP but disable the adaptation. For UDP, we use FFmpeg [12] to stream video: RTP/UDP [69] for media and RTSP for signaling [70]; as in typical video conferencing and IP cameras [26, 38].
- Adaptive video streaming. We use HTTP Live Streaming (HLS) to represent popular adaptive video streaming techniques. Our setup resembles personalized live streaming systems [87] but uses a smaller chunk for low latency (1 second instead of typical 2-10 seconds).
- JetStream with the manual policy described in §2.3.
- JetStream++, a modified version of JetStream that uses the profile learned by AWStream.

At runtime, AWStream differs from JetStream in both policy and adaptation. JetStream++ improves over JetStream by using our Pareto-optimal profile. AWStream improves the performance further with two major changes: (i) AWStream directly measures the delivery rate to select an appropriate configuration to match available bandwidth while JetStream employs a latency-based measure of capacity ratio; (ii) AWStream has an explicit probe phase while JetStream changes its policy immediately after capacity ratio changes.

Results. Fig. 11a shows the runtime behavior of AWStream and all baselines in time series. Fig. 11b summarizes the latency and accuracy with box plots during bandwidth shaping (between t=200s and t=440s).

The throughput figure (Fig. 11a) shows the effect of traffic shaping. During the shaping, TCP and UDP make full use of the available bandwidth; in comparison, AWStream, JetStream, JetStream++, and HLS are conservative because of adaptation (see their throughput drops). When we stop shaping at t=440s, TCP catches up by sending all queued items as fast as possible. JetStream also has queued items because the policy in use (with only three rules) cannot sustain 5 Mbps bandwidth. AWStream’s throughput increases gradually due to the explicit probing phase. HLS is the most conservative scheme; it does not recover from degradation until t=500s.

The latency figures (both Fig. 11a and Fig. 11b) show that AWStream is able to maintain sub-second latency. During the traffic shaping, TCP queues items at the sender side for...
up to hundreds of seconds. In contrast, UDP always transmits as fast as possible, leading to a consistent low latency. HLS’s latency fluctuates around 4-5 seconds due to chunking, buffering, and network variations, on par with recent literature [87]. Both JetStream and JetStream++ are able to adapt during traffic shaping. With a more precise and fine-grain policy, JetStream++ achieves a lower latency (median 539 ms) in comparison to JetStream (median 1732 ms). Because JetStream’s runtime reacts instantaneously when the congestion condition changes, both baselines oscillate among polices during the experiment. AWStream effectively addresses the oscillation with probing and achieves a much lower latency: median 118 ms, 15× improvement over JetStream and 5× improvement over JetStream++.

The accuracy figures (both Fig. 11a and Fig. 11b) show that other than UDP, most schemes are able to maintain high accuracy. streaming over TCP always sends data at high fidelity, achieving the highest accuracy (median 93%), but at a cost of high latency. JetStream uses a manual policy that are sub-optimal in comparison to our learned profile, so its accuracy is low (median 84%). Using Pareto-optimal configurations, JetStream++ is able to achieve a higher accuracy (median 89%); but because JetStream’s runtime oscillates the policy, the accuracy has a large variation (standard deviation 14%). In contrast, AWStream chooses configurations carefully to stay in a steady state as much as possible. It achieves a high accuracy of 89% with a small variation (standard deviation 7.6%). HLS also achieves reasonable accuracy (median 87%) because its adaptation of tuning resolution and encoding quality is effective in AR. However, HLS’s adaptation works poorly for PD (6% accuracy as in Fig. 12a).

In summary, Fig. 11 shows that AWStream achieves low latency and high accuracy simultaneously. We show the results during shaping in a different form in Fig. 1 to discuss the trade-off between fidelity and freshness.\footnote{FFmpeg discards packets that miss a deadline (33 ms for 30 FPS).}

\footnote{We obtain Fig. 1’s app-specific data by feeding PD’s profile to AR. We refer to JetStream as manual policies in Fig. 1.}

\footnote{We refer to JetStream as manual policies in Fig. 1.}
Fig. 13 shows the runtime behavior with various added network delays. While the latency increases with the added delay, AWStream mostly manages to achieve sub-second latency for all conditions. We see a higher variation in latency and more outliers as network delay increases, because the congestion detection is slow when the RTT is high. In terms of accuracy, because AWStream mostly stays in Steady state and accuracy only depends on the level of degradation, AWStream achieves similar accuracy for different network delays.

5.4 Resource Allocation and Fairness

We evaluate resource allocations with two applications. In this way, the result also covers the case of a single application, and can generalize to more applications.

We choose AR and PD as the example applications. The clients and servers of both applications are co-located so that they share the same bottleneck link. The experiment starts with sufficient bandwidth. At t=60s, we start traffic shaping to limit the total bandwidth to 6 Mbps. When we allocate resource equally between two applications (Fig. 14a), each application gets 3 Mbps. Under this condition, PD runs with a higher accuracy of 85% while AR only achieves 77%. In addition to resource fairness, AWStream supports utility fairness: it chooses configurations that maximize the minimal accuracy. In this experiment, PD receives 2 Mbps and AR receives 4 Mbps; and both achieve 80% accuracy (Fig. 14b).

6 Discussion and Future work

Reducing Developer Effort. While AWStream simplifies developing adaptive applications, there are still application-specific parts required for developers: wrapping appropriate maybe calls, providing training data, and implementing accuracy functions. Because AWStream’s API is extensible, we plan to build libraries for common degradation operations and accuracy functions, similar to machine learning libraries.

Fault-tolerance and Recovery. AWStream tolerates bandwidth variation but not network partition or host failure. Although servers within data centers can handle faults in existing systems, such as Spark Streaming [89], it is difficult to make edge clients failure-oblivious. We leave failure detection and recovery as a future work.

Profile Modeling. AWStream currently performs an exhaustive search when profiling, and only use parallelism and sampling to speed up. We plan to improve our profiler with statistical methods such as Bayesian Optimization [57, 73] that can model black box functions $B(c)$ and $A(c)$.

Predicting Bandwidth Changes. AWStream currently does not predict future bandwidth. While reacting to bandwidth changes is enough to achieve sub-second latency, we plan to improve our runtime further (e.g. removing latency spikes) with techniques that can predict future resources, such as model predictive control (MPC) [16, 88].

7 Related Work

JetStream. JetStream is the first to use degradation to reduce latency for wide-area streaming analytics. Compared to JetStream, AWStream makes five major contributions: (1) a novel API design to specify degradation in a simple and composable way; (2) automatic offline profiling to search for Pareto-optimal configurations; (3) online profiling to address model drift; (4) an improved runtime system achieving sub-second latency (comparison in §5.3); (5) support for different resource allocation policies for multiple applications.

Stream Processing Systems. Early streaming databases [1, 20] have explored the use of dataflow models with specialized operators for stream processing. Recent research projects and open-source systems [6, 18, 41, 80, 89] primarily focus on fault-tolerance in the context of a single cluster. When facing back pressure, Storm [80], Spark Streaming [89] and Heron [41] throttle data ingestion; Apache Flink [18] uses edge-by-edge back-pressure techniques similar to TCP flow control; Faucet [43] leaves the flow control logic up to developers. While our work has a large debt to prior streaming work, AWStream targets at the wide area and explicitly explores the trade-off between data fidelity and freshness.

Approximate Analytics. The idea of degrading computation fidelity for responsiveness is also explored elsewhere, such as SQL queries [5, 9, 34], real-time processing [29], and video processing within large clusters [90]. The trade-off between available resource and application accuracy is a common theme among all these systems. AWStream targets at wide-area streaming analytics, an emerging application domain especially with the advent of IoT.

WAN-Aware Systems. Geo-distributed systems need to cope with high latency and limited bandwidth. While some systems assume the network can prioritize a small amount of critical data under congestion [21], most systems reduce data sizes in the first place to avoid congestion, e.g. LBFS [51]. Over the past two years, we have seen a plethora of geo-distributed analytical frameworks [39, 60, 83–85] that incorporate heterogeneous wide-area bandwidth into query optimization to minimize data movement. While effective in speeding up
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8 Conclusion
This paper presents AWStream, a stream processing system for a wide variety of applications by enabling developers to customize degradation operations with `maybe` operators. Our automatic profiling tool generates an accurate profile that characterizes the trade-off between bandwidth consumption and application accuracy. The profile allows the runtime to react with precision. Evaluations with three applications show that AWStream achieves sub-second latency with nominal accuracy drop. AWStream enables resilient execution of wide-area streaming analytics with minimal developer effort.

References


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