

Intra and Interdomain Circuit Provisioning Using the OSCARS Reservation System

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Abstract—With the advent of service sensitive applications such as remote controlled experiments, time constrained massive data transfers, and video-conferencing, it has become apparent that there is a need for the setup of dynamically provisioned, quality of service enabled virtual circuits. The ESnet On-Demand Secure Circuits and Advance Reservation System (OSCARS) is a prototype service enabling advance reservation of guaranteed bandwidth secure virtual circuits.

OSCARS operates within the Energy Sciences Network (ESnet), and has provisions for interoperation with other network domains. ESnet is a high-speed network serving thousands of Department of Energy scientists and collaborators worldwide.

OSCARS utilizes the Web services model and standards to implement communication with the system and between domains, and for authentication, authorization, and auditing (AAA). The management and operation of end-to-end virtual circuits within the network is done at the layer 3 network level. Multi-Protocol Label Switching (MPLS) and the Resource Reservation Protocol (RSVP) are used to create the virtual circuits or Label Switched Paths (LSP's). Quality of Service (QoS) is used to provide bandwidth guarantees.

This paper describes our experience in implementing OSCARS, collaborations with other bandwidth-reservation projects (including interdomain testing) and future work to be done.

I. INTRODUCTION

Large-scale science is increasingly important as attention turns to the study of the most complex, subtle, and elusive natural phenomena. Such study is completely dependent on world-wide collaborations of scientists and widely dispersed resources such as computing, data, and instruments.

Over the past several years significant improvements have been made in the computing and communications infrastructure necessary for support of these collaborations. Network bandwidths have increased, data transport protocols have improved, and security issues have become better understood. However, for the network to fully enable such distributed science, network communication must be delivered as a manageable service to the distributed applications just as computing is.

The goal of OSCARS is to manage and schedule high-impact network services associated with these collaborations. These services, which move multi-terabyte to multi-petabyte datasets from experiments and simulations, and may include high-end remote visualizations, cannot be provided cost-effectively by best-effort service on a production network.

There are significant challenges to allowing users to schedule high-performance network services on a production network. Some of these challenges are: allowing only authorized users to create and manage high-performance services; providing an easy-to-use interface for scheduling and managing network resources; limiting the impact of high-performance traffic on other network traffic; coordinating quality of service end-to-end across more than one autonomous network domain; and handling changes in network paths between the time a reservation is scheduled and when it is claimed. OSCARS currently addresses all but the last item, where work is still in progress.

Due to the highly distributed nature of large scale science, the service framework for OSCARS is being developed in coordination with other community network provisioning efforts. The closest coordination is with the Internet2 BRUW [23] system. A version of BRUW was used as the starting point for OSCARS, and now the two projects share a common code base. Interoperability testing is on-going with Internet2 sites.

OSCARS has been deployed within ESnet, which is a nation-wide network that serves approximately 42 directly connected sites around the country. Internally, ESnet manages about 270 routers and systems throughout the network and its operations centers. The current ESnet architecture is that of a high-bandwidth (10/2.5 Gb/s) backbone ring around the country, with hubs at strategic locations. The sites, which are mainly large Office of Science laboratories, are connected to the hubs via metro rings at 2 x 10Gb/s speeds. OSCARS faces the constraint of operation within this production network, where 99.9+% reliability is critical.

Having the ability to dynamically allocate capacity in the network exclusively to a scheduled service, to the exclusion of normal priority traffic, introduces risks. Throughout the design and implementation of OSCARS, security aspects were paramount. The impact of an abuse could be very large. A denial of service attack could prevent reservations from being processed. If the service is compromised, an attacker could disable the wide area network.

This paper describes how OSCARS addresses the above constraints and risks while implementing a scheduling system. Section II covers the OSCARS architecture, and Section III describes the details of path setup and reservation handling. Section IV outlines some issues with cross-domain interop-

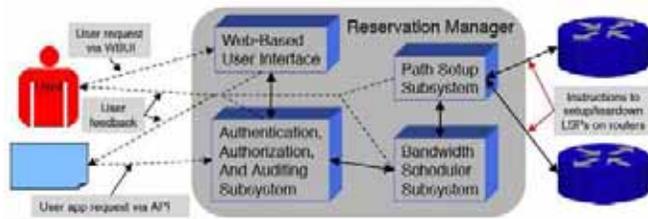


Fig. 1. OSCARS Architecture.

ability, and covers other reservation systems and collaborative efforts, as well as an example of an interoperability test between OSCARS and BRUW. Section V covers security, including system, interdomain, and authentication, authorization and auditing issues. The final section touches briefly on the future work that needs to be performed to handle a dynamically changing network (which may invalidate existing reservations), and to set up end-to-end circuits between domains in a secure, standards-based fashion.

II. ARCHITECTURE

The intent of OSCARS is to create a service for dynamic QoS path establishment that is simple for users to use, and easy to administer. The only task required of a user is to make a bandwidth reservation. Reservation can be made either for immediate use or in advance for either one-time use or persistent use, e.g. for the same time everyday. The user does not have to configure an alternate routing path, nor mark the packets in any way. All necessary mechanisms needed to provide the user with a guaranteed bandwidth path are coordinated by a Reservation Manager (RM) and managed by the routers in the network.

A. Components

The RM is comprised of three components: the Authentication, Authorization, and Auditing Subsystem (AAAS), the Bandwidth Scheduler Subsystem (BSS), and the Path Setup Subsystem (PSS) (Figure 1). All persistent information is stored in a database. The RM provides simple Web forms for creating and managing reservations, setting authorization policy and other administrative tasks (the Web-based user interface in the figure). It also supports an API using the W3C **SOAP**¹ messaging protocol to support programmable reservation management and requests from other network service providers.

The AAAS is responsible for authenticating and authorizing all external requests, for logging request information, and sending notifications to users and administrators of the results of calls made to the RM. It also handles a number of internal requests related to management of users and resources.

The BSS is responsible for scheduling reservations. It handles requests to schedule bandwidth reservations, list reser-

¹Bold-faced text indicates a specification that is only available online (see <http://www.w3.org> for W3C and <http://oasis-open.org> for OASIS).

vation details, modify and/or cancel one or more existing reservations, and provide a summary of all current reservations.

To perform these functions, the BSS keeps information about past, pending, and current reservations, and tracks the current topology and state of the network. As part of scheduling a reservation request, the BSS must determine whether the requested bandwidth will over-subscribe any of the links in the path to be set up within the network.

The PSS is responsible for setting up and tearing down the on-demand bandwidth paths. This is accomplished by making the necessary configuration changes in the routers to create or destroy a Label Switched Path (LSP) at the time indicated by the BSS. The authentication and authorization method for the PSS is internal to the ESnet network and is specific to the router platform (currently Juniper or Cisco) being configured. It is therefore distinct from the AAAS used by the BSS.

B. Implementation

Web services standards are used wherever possible. SOAP messages are used for communications between clients and the RM, and the W3C Web Services Definition Language (**WSDL**) is used for the service description.

The resource manager is implemented as an Apache Web server configured for mod_perl, a SOAP server, two databases within a MySQL server, and a set of Perl packages that implement the AAAS, BSS, and PSS. A mod_perl script on the Web server is used to accept browser requests sent via Asynchronous Javascript + XML [13] techniques. Parameters from the Ajax request are then placed into a SOAP request, and forwarded to the SOAP server. URL's indicating an explicit SOAP request conforming to the service description are proxied by the Web server directly to the SOAP server. Note that these latter requests require that the SOAP message be signed. Security issues are discussed in more detail in the section on security below.

The SOAP server makes database requests as necessary, depending on the method called. One database contains persistent information related to methods handling reservations and AAA, and the other contains a representation of the local network topology. The latter is used primarily during reservation setup.

III. PATHS AND RESERVATIONS

A. Path Setup

The procedure of a typical path setup is as follows:

- 1) A user submits a request to the RM (using either an API or an optional Web front-end) to schedule an end-to-end path (e.g. between an experiment and computing cluster) specifying start and end times, bandwidth requirements, the source host that will be used to provide an application access to the path, and the destination host.
- 2) User parameters are validated by the RM, to ensure that they have the correct format, and to prevent SQL injection attacks.
- 3) Using the source and destination host information submitted by the user, a traceroute is executed to determine

the path within ESnet that the MPLS LSP will traverse, as well as the ingress and egress border routers that will originate and terminate the LSP.

- 4) This information is stored by the BSS in a database, and a script periodically checks to see if the PSS needs to be contacted, either to create or tear down the circuit.
- 5) At the requested start time, the PSS configures the ESnet provider edge (PE) router (at the start end of the path) to create an LSP with the specified bandwidth.
- 6) Each router along the route receives the path setup request via the Reservation Resource Protocol (RSVP) [6] and commits bandwidth (if available) creating an end-to-end LSP. The RM is notified by RSVP if the end-to-end path cannot be established.
- 7) Packets from the source (e.g. experiment) are routed through the site's LAN production path to ESnet's PE router. On entering the PE router, these packets are identified and filtered using flow specification parameters (e.g. source/destination IP address/port numbers) and policed at the specified bandwidth. The packets are then injected into the LSP and switched (using MPLS) through the network to its destination (e.g. computing cluster).
- 8) A notification of the success or failure of LSP setup is passed back to the RM so that the user can be notified and the event logged for auditing purposes.
- 9) At the requested end time, the PSS tears down the LSP.

B. Path Discovery

There are two scenarios for creating a path in OSCARS. One is where the reservation request does not contain any connectivity information outside of the source and destination (IP addresses). The other is where a request contains additional routing information such as the ingress and/or egress PE routers within the OSCARS administrative domain.

In the scenario where an ingress PE router is not explicitly communicated, OSCARS does a traceroute (from the core of the network) towards the source IP address of the traffic. As the traceroute progresses, each router in the trace is checked to verify if it is within the administrative control of OSCARS. As soon as OSCARS encounters a router that is outside of its administrative domain, OSCARS marks the last router (within its administrative control) as the ingress PE router.

In the scenario where the egress PE router is not contained in the reservation request, the destination IP address is used as the target of the traceroute (sourced from the ingress PE router). Using the same method outlined in the previous paragraph, the egress PE router can be determined.

With the ingress and egress PE routers identified, the path (or route) between the two can be trivially determined.

The need for OSCARS to support reservations with explicit ingress and egress PE routers is to facilitate traffic engineering for sites or networks that have more than one peering connection with ESnet.

In the event that the virtual circuit extends beyond OSCARS' administrative domain, routing information har-

vested from the Border Gateway Protocol (BGP) on the egress PE router is used to determine the next Autonomous System (AS) that the request should be forwarded to. The AS number is checked against a list of known administrative domains that have reservation systems that are cooperating with OSCARS. If a match is found, the request is forwarded to the downstream AS.

C. Advanced Reservations

To support advanced reservations, RSVP-TE [26] information on the network's current provisioned bandwidth, if available, must be supplemented with a mechanism that will permit a view of the network's provisioned bandwidth in a slice of time in the future. In OSCARS, advance reservations are handled in a slot based manner. This equates to "first come first served" for bandwidth across any particular link at any moment.

As each reservation is requested in OSCARS, the end-to-end path is computed for that reservation. Once the entire path through all the routers controlled by OSCARS has been computed, each link in the path is checked for available bandwidth. To check the bandwidth of a link, all outstanding reservations for that link during the time of the proposed reservation are queried from the data base. Then all the reserved bandwidth amounts are calculated and compared to the actual capacity of the link. If the requested amount of bandwidth plus all outstanding reservations is more than the allocated amount of bandwidth available for reservations on that link (in this case 50%), then the reservation fails. Only if there is enough bandwidth available on all links is the reservation committed into the reservation system.

In the future, in the case where the capacity of a link changes (e.g. a link upgrade or failure), all outstanding reservations that involve the use of that link will be queried from the system and recomputed. This will be done to ensure that there is adequate bandwidth available on the link when it comes time to provision the reservation.

D. Provisioning and Policing

With reservations (current and advanced) managed by the OSCARS database, provisioning and policing are the next steps in permitting the reservation to be claimed. These steps are necessary in order to facilitate bandwidth guarantees to enforce reservation and usage limits. In OSCARS, RSVP is used as the provisioning mechanism to instantiate and manage active reservations. However, RSVP does not police the usage limits of the reservations. To ensure that bandwidth resources are not over-subscribed, QoS is carefully configured to provision queues within the network core.

Within ESnet, traffic utilizing the OSCARS service is classified into a Class-of-Service distinct from all other traffic and isolated into a separate queue by itself. The size and transmit rate of this queue is configured to match the RSVP bandwidth limits on each interface, e.g. if the RSVP bandwidth limit on an interface is 50%, the OSCARS queue depth and service rate is also set at 50%. This ensures that the RSVP provisioned

bandwidth will translate to available network bandwidth within the network core.

With all of OSCARS traffic using the same Class-of-Service queue within the network core, it is vital to ensure that the bandwidth usage of each individual RSVP reservation is strictly adhered to. This prevents the aggregate traffic from overrunning the queue dedicated to the OSCARS service. To do this, each flow utilizing the OSCARS service is policed individually according to the reservation bandwidth request. This policing is done at the ingress point to ESnet.

IV. INTERDOMAIN RESERVATIONS

Guaranteed bandwidth paths are most effective when the reservation spans end-to-end. This however, introduces the complexity of extending virtual circuits beyond the scope of a single administrative domain to multiple domains. To facilitate this, neighboring domains must agree on several levels, mainly, the management plane, control plane, and data plane:

- The management plane dictates policies and procedures for authentication, authorization, and usage. This essentially amounts to a Service Level Agreement (SLA) between peer networks. In almost all cases, the usage condition outlined within an SLA determines the maximum aggregate limit. This implies that individual bandwidth requests are managed by the reservation system of the originating AS and not propagated independently to the transit AS's (i.e. the transit AS will see the request as coming from the originating AS and not the individual making the request).
- The control plane dictates the way control messages, such as setup and teardown requests, are exchanged between the networks, e.g. RSVP signaling. At this point in time, interdomain interoperability efforts do not permit the end-to-end signaling of LSP's via the control plane (i.e. interdomain exchange of RSVP messages). This is because there is no vendor implementation that can enforce complex SLA requirements of the various administrative domains. As such, end-to-end virtual circuits are comprised of intradomain LSP's stitched together at agreed interconnection points.
- The data plane handles how user traffic is forwarded from one network to another network, e.g. IP packets, Ethernet VLAN packets, etc. [2]. This is one of the fundamental issues that must be resolved in order for an interdomain end-to-end virtual circuit to be successful. Complications arise when peering RM's provision virtual circuits at different network layers (e.g. GMPLS LSP, MPLS LSP). The solution to bridging the data planes is part of ongoing collaborative efforts.

A. Related Work

There are several implementations of network resource management and service provisioning systems in existence today. These include the DOE funded Lambda Station [4], TeraPaths [5] and UltraScience Net [22] projects, the NSF

funded CHEETAH [27] and DRAGON [30] projects, Internet2's BRUW [23] and HOPI [3] projects, CANARIE's UCLP [29] project, and GEANT's BoD (GN2-JRA3) [25] and AMPS (SA3) [21] activities.

With the exception of Lambda Station and TeraPaths, which address the local network last-mile issues, all the other projects mentioned above address issues in the wide-area network.

All of these projects, as well as OSCARS, are based on a Web services interface to reserve and configure a path across the network. However, they have slightly different ways of handling reservations and AAA issues.

Dragon uses OSPF-TE [19] for intradomain routing, and a component called the Network Aware Resource Broker (NARB) for interdomain routing. Dragon plans to use the Common Open Policy Service (COPS) [11] protocol for support of policy provisioning (COPS-PR) [9].

Canarie, Canada's advanced Internet development organization, has been working on a project called User Controlled LightPath (UCLP). UCLP allows end-users to create their own static independent IP network as a subset of a larger optical network and to have total control over their share of network.

The University of Amsterdam's Advanced Internet Research group has published a number of papers describing both the networking and the AAA issues for such a system, including [14] [15] [10]. They are using the IETF AAA Framework [28], and use the OASIS eXtensible Access Control Markup Language (**XACML**) Version 2 to describe policy. They have also defined a Network Description Language, which is a RDF-based method to describe networks, to facilitate interdomain interoperability [16].

In the OSCARS, BRUW, TeraPaths, and AMPS projects, IP connectivity (layer 3) is used as the data plane exchange. This facilitates interoperability trials with no additional network connection needed outside of the production peering exchange.

It should be noted that OSCARS and BRUW now share a common code base, but are configured differently due to differing methods of network administration and user authentication.

The other projects mentioned use the optical network layer (i.e. layer 1), creating lightpaths. The last section of this paper points out the necessity of future work to bridge projects using different layers.

B. Interdomain Path Setup

One of the more complex examples of using the OSCARS reservation system involves the setting up of a virtual circuit between two hosts that span several administrative domains. For example, imagine setting up a virtual circuit between Host A and Host B, where Host A is controlled by a remote reservation system RM A in ISP A, and Host B is part of the local OSCARS reservation system in ISP B (see Figure 2). The routed path from ISP B to ISP A transits ISP X, but the reverse path from ISP A to ISP B is via ISP Y. In order for an OSCARS' user to make an interdomain virtual circuit reservation request from Host A to Host B, the following must occur.

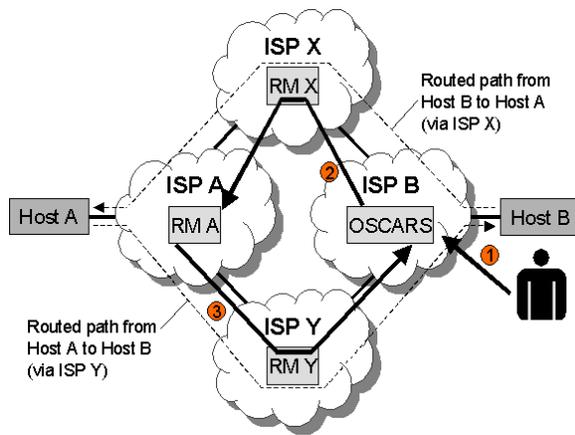


Fig. 2. Interdomain Path Setup.

- 1) On receiving the request from the user, OSCARS computes the virtual circuit path and determines the downstream AS (ISP X).
- 2) The request is then encapsulated in a message forwarded across the network (ISP X) towards Host A, crossing all intervening reservations systems (RM X), until it reaches the last reservation system (RM A) that has administrative control over the network (ISP A) that Host A is attached to.
- 3) The remote reservation system (RM A) then computes the path of the virtual circuit, and initiates the bandwidth reservation requests from Host A towards Host B (via ISP Y). This can be especially complex when the path back (from Host B to A) is asymmetric and traverses AS's (e.g. ISP Y) that were not traversed on the forward path, causing the local OSCARS to see the path originating from a different AS than it originally sent the request to.

To facilitate interdomain virtual circuit setup, a WSI-BP [1] compliant WSDL specification for the network-network interface has been written following the model of GEANT's Advance Multi-domain Provisioning System (AMPS) [21]. This interface is being tested with the TeraPaths [5] project. Having a WSDL specification allows reservation systems to communicate with one another in a well defined syntax. While the OSCARS interface is similar to the one specified by AMPS, these are both quite different from the TeraPaths interdomain WSDL. One of the next challenges in automating trans-domain circuit setup is to define a standard request for interdomain reservations. It would then be up to the individual reservation system to transform the standardized messages to internal calls to reserve and provision the virtual circuit.

C. Interoperability Tests

In April 2006, an interdomain guaranteed bandwidth path between Abilene and ESnet was dynamically negotiated and configured by the BRUW and OSCARS systems respectively. The unidirectional 25Mb/s guaranteed bandwidth path was configured between an Internet2 test host in Indianapolis, IN

Test Protocol	Test Parameters	Guaranteed Bandwidth	Throughput Achieved
UDP	Throughput Set: 30Mb/s	No	30Mb/s
		Yes (25Mb/s)	24.6Mb/s
TCP	TCP Window Size: 1MB Latency: 50 ms	No	158.0 Mb/s
		Yes (25Mb/s)	14.7Mb/s

TABLE I
IPERF RESULTS OF GUARANTEED BANDWIDTH PATHS.

and an ESnet Performance Center [12] host in Sunnyvale, CA. The path consisted of two unidirectional MPLS LSP's, one in Abilene, and the other in ESnet, *stitched* together at the Abilene-ESnet peering point in Chicago, IL.

Bandwidth tests using IPerf [18] (see Table I) revealed predictable results except for the guaranteed bandwidth TCP transfer.

The guaranteed bandwidth (25Mb/s) TCP transfer should have yielded a throughput closer to 25Mb/s. On further investigation, it was determined that the discrepancy between the policing bandwidth and the achieved bandwidth was likely the result of two things, first, the lack of traffic shaping at the source end, and second, Juniper's policing function. Similar results have been documented by others [20].

V. SECURITY

Since OSCARS is being deployed on the ESnet production network, security was an absolute requirement from the beginning. Good security needs mechanisms that are easy to understand, install, use, and administer. It is very important that there are no unintended consequences of authorization policy decisions.

The following section details steps taken to secure the machines and servers running OSCARS, and the remaining security sections cover AAA.

A. System

An Apache2 Web server on an open ESnet machine is used to forward all requests to the RM Web server, which runs on a machine behind a firewall. This forwarding process is transparent to the end user, and hides the location of the internal server.

The internal Web server only accepts https connections from the open machine. The RM SOAP server only accepts requests from the Web server on the internal machine or digitally signed SOAP messages encapsulated in https messages forwarded from the open Web server. Database server processes run as an unprivileged user without a login shell. The database server only accepts requests from the SOAP server.

B. Authentication

OSCARS authenticates the sender of all requests that it receives. The Web based interface and the SOAP server API use the authentication mechanism that is most natural for them. The Web server requires a username and password for authentication on the first access during which it creates session information for the user and a 8-hour cookie referencing this

information. This cookie is used on subsequent connections. All communication with the Web server takes place over encrypted https in order to protect against the stealing of passwords or cookies. The SOAP API distinguishes between requests coming from the Web server on the local host, which it assumes have been authenticated as just described, and requests coming from the open Web server. The latter requests must be digitally signed messages signed by the originator of the message. The OASIS **WS-Security X509 profile** rules and syntax are used for the signing. The AAAS verifies the signature and the signing certificate to authenticate the user. It then uses the subject name from the signing certificate to identify the user. Because there is a Web server on the open network interposed between the requester and the SOAP server behind the firewall, digitally signed messages are needed to do end-to-end client authentication and to support proxy certificates as a single-signon mechanism. Both the username/password and certificate authentication methods use the database user table to determine if the request is coming from a legitimate user. This table contains a mapping of the OSCARS user name, password, subject name from the certificate and the certificate itself, as well as other information about the user.

Requests for or about interdomain reservations are authenticated in the originating domain on the basis of an individual user, and in the subsequent domains on the basis of the RM in the adjacent domain. This approach follows the AAA Authorization model defined by the IETF Networking Group. [28]. In this model users are authenticated and authorized for actions in their home domain and interdomain authorization depends on SLA's between domains (AS's) and the assurance that a request is coming from a trusted server in a trusted domain. Normally all requests forwarded between domains will be SOAP messages signed by the RM. The OSCARS RM has a list of the cooperating RM certificates as well as a list of permissions for those AS's. In effect a service level agreement gets implemented in the user and authorization tables in the database. The message forwarded adds the name of the originating user, in case other domains wish to use that information for authorization or auditing. Currently, at the time of provisioning no further authentication is done. Provisioning is triggered by the time of the reservation. Once the provisioning has been completed, any traffic coming from the specified ingress router is able to use the higher class of bandwidth.

C. Authorization

User's authorizations to operate on resources are stored as relations in database tables. After a user has been authenticated, their request is checked by the RM to see if the user's authorizations are sufficient.

This implementation is similar to the ROAM authorization service of the FusionGrid [7]. This approach allows the use of standard database commands to define resources and permissions and to manage and check authorizations. While there are many "policy languages" (e.g. S-expressions [24], the OASIS Security Assertion Markup Language (SAML), and XACML)

that facilitate the expression of complex access policy, they typically require the use of a parsing engine and interpreter to evaluate a request for action. When even moderately complex policies are used, it becomes difficult to tell at a glance exactly what access is allowed. With the simple database policy, it is easy to query exactly who has access to a resource and what resources a particular user or AS has. Thus an ESnet system administrator who is not directly part of the OSCARS implementation team can use familiar tools to check on (or modify) who has rights to make reservations or control routing on "his" network.

Within OSCARS, access is controlled for the creation and management of reservations, users and domains. The permissions that can be granted are viewing or managing (modifying) a resource, creating reservations, and specifying routing.

As long as there are not too many resources, permissions, or users, this method provides an easily managed and understood access control scheme. For practical purposes, having to scale to larger numbers is not an issue. The maximum number of users who will be able to use the OSCARS system is small, consisting of users at ESnet sites responsible for moving large amounts of information. Users from other domains will be authorized by their own RM.

D. Auditing

At this point, the OSCARS server logs all significant activity such as creating or canceling reservations. In addition a list of all reservations is kept and can be read via a SOAP request. As was mentioned above, in interdomain requests, the name of the originating user is passed to the next domain where it can be used for either authorization or auditing.

VI. CONCLUSIONS AND FUTURE WORK

OSCARS is one example of a system that will become increasingly necessary as experiments such as the Large Hadron Collider become operational. It allows users to easily schedule in advance the network bandwidth necessary for their experiment or simulation. Since it provides the ability to change router configurations in a production network, maintaining security is an integral part of its operation.

A number of issues need to be addressed before such systems become production level in complex network environments where many autonomous domains may be involved, and where network topologies may be constantly changing.

A. Topology Changes

A key consideration, when running OSCARS as a production service, is the ability to recover from both scheduled and unscheduled network outages or changes. This is particularly complex when dealing with bandwidth reservations made for a future date. For example, in the event of an unscheduled network outage, future reservations committed on the affected links must be recalculated. This can be further complicated if the outage period is unknown. The converse is also true. If a new link were to be added or upgraded, increasing the bandwidth allocation for future reservations creates an

inconsistent view with the current state of the network. To deal with this in OSCARS, a polling mechanism is being developed that constantly compares the current state of the network to the state that is reflected in the OSCARS topology database. If there are differences that affect the characteristics of a link, the new topology is pushed into the OSCARS database and all outstanding reservations that use that link are queried from the database. This is possible since the complete path of all reservations is kept in the database along with the reservation. Then all the reservations are recomputed in the order they were placed into the OSCARS system, to ensure that the requested resources are still available. In the event that the necessary resources are unavailable for a reservation that has been entered into OSCARS, the reservation's state will be changed to *unavailable* and a notice will be sent to the administrators informing them of the problem.

B. Network-Network Interface

With the objective of interoperability between the different networks, comes the need for defining standard interfaces (i.e. Network-to-Network Interface). This is to facilitate the sharing of network state and request information in quantifiable characteristics that are common to collaborating networks. This could include properties such as connectivity (topology), bandwidth, latency, and jitter. There are several documents that have been published by the different projects as well as organizations related to this work (e.g.: GEANT [25], the University of Amsterdam [16], Canarie's UCLP project [8], and the IETF CCAMP Working Group [17]). However, due to the heterogeneity of network implementations and deployments, generating a single framework to quantify all networks is challenging.

C. Hybrid Data-Planes

With the emergence of numerous reservation systems, it is becoming evident that there is a need to bridge these systems which provision virtual circuits at different network layers. For example, OSCARS and BRUW provision MPLS LSP's over an IP (layer 3) shared network, whereas DRAGON and CHEETAH use GMPLS to set up lightpaths over a lambda switched (layer 1) network. The challenge here is to bridge the two systems such that an end-to-end connection appears to be seamless to the end-user.

In addition, numerous complications arise when reservation systems managing disparate data planes attempt to exchange connectivity information. First, there is a need to translate or map connectivity information such that it is usable by the reservation system receiving the information (e.g. layer 1 connectivity information is meaningless to a layer 3 reservation system unless it is associated with an IP address). This is the approach explored by DRAGON. Second, there needs to be a mechanism to redistribute multi-layer connectivity information. Within the IP layer, this is done via BGP. At lower network layers, no such comparable protocols exist.

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