



Original Article

Heat Dissipation Strategies for High-Performance Computing: A Review of Air and Liquid Cooling Efficiency

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Abstract - Heat dissipation and energy efficiency management have become more important concerns due to the growing computational demands of HPC systems. The drawbacks of conventional air-cooling systems that rely on heat sinks, fans, and ducts include poor heat conductivity, uneven airflow, and rising power demands as heat densities increase. As a result of this, liquid cooling technologies, including direct to chip, immersion, and microchannel cold plate, have become the better choice with better heat transfer coefficient, temperature uniformity, and Power Usage Effectiveness (PUE). Literature shows that liquid cooling may reduce the temperature of the components in a system by a significant margin; reduce the thermal resistance in the system and increase the long-term reliability of the system and provide the benefit of saving energy and making the system sustainable by reusing heat. With comparative analysis, it is noted that liquid cooling is up to 30-50% more efficient and stable to extreme workloads compared to the air-based approaches. Measures such as PUE, CUE and WUE further measure the enhanced energy, carbon and water efficiency. The given review summarizes the progress that has been made in both air and liquid cooling methods, focusing on the shift towards high-density cooling systems that are environmentally friendly. It also highlights the significance of optimized thermal designs in guaranteeing performance as well as reliability, and cost effectiveness of next generation infrastructures of HPC and data centres.

Keywords - High-Performance Computing, Heat Dissipation, Air Cooling, Liquid Cooling, Energy Efficiency, Thermal Management.

1. Introduction

The primary concerns include high energy usage (operational cost) and environmental impact, and all of them take excessive attention. They are forced to be cooled artificially because the IT equipment generates heat during use and thus they need to be made available and reliable [1]. Those workloads are executed on dozens of GPUs, each with thousands of cores which require to be fed by power. Hot and cold air mixing is one of the main factors that are not to be allowed in the data centre to cool air effectively. Hot aisle containment and cold aisle containment are some of the strategies used to improve the density and efficiency of power. Another possible solution is the liquid immersion cooling that has gained interest over the past ten years. The part is completely submerged into a conductor less dielectric fluid which is heat conducting [2]. The small percentage of improvement of the big data centre efficiency would have significant effect on the overall energy demand.

The overheating has complicated high-performance computing (HPC) system design to a critical bottleneck. The higher the densities of the transistors, the lower the operating temperatures can be sustained to allow an acceptable clock speed and throughput of the processors [3]. This causes thermal throttling, where the frequencies of CPU and GPU are automatically lowered to avoid overheating, which causes increased latency and lower computational efficiency [4]. The inefficient dissipation of heat doesn't only increase the operating expense but also the carbon footprint since the adoption of highly developed, energy-efficient cooling technology is necessary.

The traditional air-based cooling of electronics is based on use of expanded plate-fin based heat sinks (usually with forced airflow) that direct air over the array of fins (usually in a cross-flow configuration). The benefits of this solution are that it is simple, inexpensive, can be extended globally and integrated with existing designs. The limits of it are increasing, however: thermal [5] conductivity of air and convective coefficient are intrinsically low, and inter-fin spacing must be reduced to achieve high heat flux but this raises pressure drop, airflow is frequently laminar in closely packed systems and therefore thermal resistance is a bottleneck. In high-performance computing (HPC) dense server environments today the airflow restrictions, space restrictions, and thermal loads are forcing [6] traditional air-cooling to its practical limits.

The availability of liquid cooling systems like cold plate, immersion, and direct-to-chip systems have become effective alternatives to the conventional air-based cooling. These systems employ high-conductivity fluids in the movement of heat to electronic or thermal sources to external heat exchangers. Relative to air cooling that is restricted by low thermal conductivity liquid systems such as trans critical CO₂ or sorption cooling exhibit high heat transfer efficiency, which promotes compact hardware design [7], and sustainable energy utilization. As already emphasized in the paper, the motivation toward energy efficient and low-GWP systems strengthens the industrial transition of the traditional vapor compression to more all-liquid or hybrid thermal management systems.

1.1. Structure of this Paper

The paper has been organized in the following way: Section II deals with thermal management in HPC, Section III deals with the air-cooling methods whereas, Section IV deals with liquid cooling methods, Section V makes a comparison of air and liquid cooling, Section VI is a literature review, and Section VII comes to a conclusion with future work.

2. Thermal Management in High-Performance Computing

HPC Thermal management allows the system to stabilize the operation of high-power components. High temperatures lower the reliability and performance and efficient cooling is crucial. PUE, CUE and WUE measure the efficiency of these systems in terms of energy, carbon and water usage.

2.1. Heat Generation Mechanisms in HPC Components

The analysis of the heat generation during the electrochemical process is the key of maintaining thermal stability and safety of the operation of the high-performance computing (HPC) and the overconsuming energy systems. Similarly, lithium-ion batteries HPC devices are made up of coupled electrochemical, charge transfer and heat transfer processes which eventually dictate their temperature dynamics and efficiency. Under normal operating conditions the negative component (the same component as the NE) is not as hot as the positive component (a PE counterpart). The positive side emits less heat due to the greater reversible heat propagated there despite the fact polarization heat could be a little greater on the negative side. The negative component's transient heat generation [8] increases with the load or discharge process and may surpass that of the positive component at the conclusion of the operation cycle.

2.2. Impact of Temperature on System Performance and Reliability

Heat is one of the most crucial factors that ultimately determine the effectiveness and the programs of the electronic system basically their reliability. By the nature of the integrated sources of the power, the heating matter that is excess is bound to become the source of ultimate control over the lifetime and device operating stability to the extend the heat is always the most dominant factor. High temperature accelerates the frequency of chemical and diffusion-based failure and repeated thermal cyclic creates thermo-mechanical stress which undermines interconnections and solder joints. Various models, e.g., Eyring and thermo-mechanical stress models, quantitatively discuss this temperature failure connection, indicating that a component reliability decrease in an exponential manner can be reached by only moderate temperature increases. Thus, it is very important to put an effective thermal management system in place through proper material selection, packaging, [9] and coolings to keep the performances at a consistent level and to avoid the premature failures in the electronic systems of high performing and even harsh environments.

2.3. Metrics for Evaluating Cooling Efficiency

Queries of data center and HPC system cooling performance are conducted on standardized measures of sustainability that convey energy, carbon and water effects.

- Power Usage Effectiveness (PUE): The PUE is calculated by dividing the facility's overall energy consumption by the usage of its IT equipment. The reason why the lower PUE (approaching 1.0) demonstrates the better performance is that more energy is consumed in computing than in cooling or other auxiliary systems. With this, energy losses in HVAC, lighting, and power [10] distribution systems can be identified, as shown in the Figure 1.

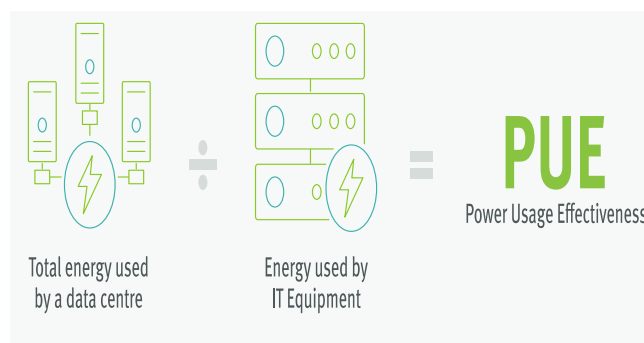


Figure 1. Shows the Power Usage Effectiveness

- Carbon Usage Effectiveness (CUE): The data centre’s environmental impact can be seen using CUE, which is the ratio of carbon emissions to IT energy usage. It is caused by both the carbon intensity of the power source and the efficiency of operations of the data centre.
- Water Usage Effectiveness (WUE): WUE is a measure of the total water consumption in liters for every kilowatt-hour of IT energy use. It assesses the sustainability of liquid and evaporative [11] cooling systems, thereby promoting water-saving design in the regions with low water supply.

3. Air Cooling Techniques

The simple, economical thermal control, air cooling employs heat sinks, fans, and ducts to dissipate amount of heat by convective and radiative transfer. The innovative methods such as Hot Aisle/Cold Aisle Containment are more productive and use less energy. In high-density, however, it is limited by lumpy air flow and poor heat conductivity.

3.1. Principles of Air Cooling

Air cooling is fundamentally a process where the heat from parts or components that are at high temperatures is removed by convective and radiative heat transfer in order to maintain the overall cooling effect at the same level. In such systems as turbine guide vanes that require very high performance, air cooling is done by simply passing a high-velocity airflow over the surface or through it to carry the heat away. Thermal radiation is the primary factor affecting the surface temperature and the convective heat transfer with the increase of turbine inlet temperature to 2200-2400 K. In order to adequately model this strongly correlated mechanism, dimensionless ratios such as the Burger number (Bu) and Boltzmann number (Bo) are used in order to establish the same radiation convection conditions in the lab and in the actual operating setting. The analogy principle here is an effective [12] way of heat transfer under different temperature and momentum ratios taking into account gas composition and flow conditions. Thermostatic and convective heat transfer concepts should be used into air cooling design to effectively shield high-temperature structures from heat.

3.2. Traditional Methods

Conventional air-cooling systems combine heat sinks, fans, and ducts in an effort to eliminate heat in electronic components. The air-cooled heat sinks are popular due to their simplicity and low cost as well as light weight; in comparison, the axial fans were used to increase the airflow to promote better cooling. Nevertheless, such mixed passive and active components can hardly cope with high heat fluxes in contemporary systems. They also produce noise as well as performance constraints especially in small electronic spaces.

3.2.1. Heat Sinks

The most appropriate heat sinks are air-cooled heat sinks in the perspective of construction and cost of production. Passive heat sinks cannot effectively dissipate a high amount of heat. Porous or corrugated fin structures make the fin structures have more thermal exchange surface and, consequently, the heat transfer rate, as indicated in the Figure 2.

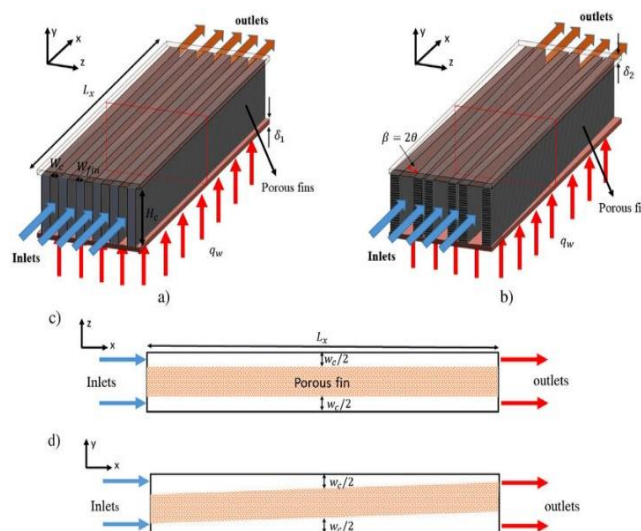
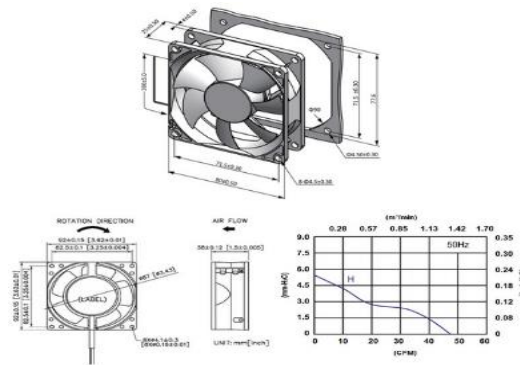


Figure 2. Heat Sinks Shows the Traditional Method

3.2.2. Fans

Axial fans help in the generation of airflow that leads to the cooling of the operations. On the other hand, when running at full speed, they are the sources of noise and vibration. Their efficiency is influenced by the parameter of size, speed, and the place where they are installed, as shown in Figure 3.



Electronic Cooling Fan Structure & Air Flow Static Pressure Characteristics
Figure 3. Fans Show the Traditional Method

3.2.3. Ducts

Ducts assist in the guidance as well as the division of airflow whereby the air is evenly distributed over the areas to be cooled. Plane-wave ducts are considered as the main devices in experimental measurements of [13] heat and acoustic performance. The right design of the duct not only leads to the improvement of the cooling process but also to the noise abatement, as shown in Figure 4.

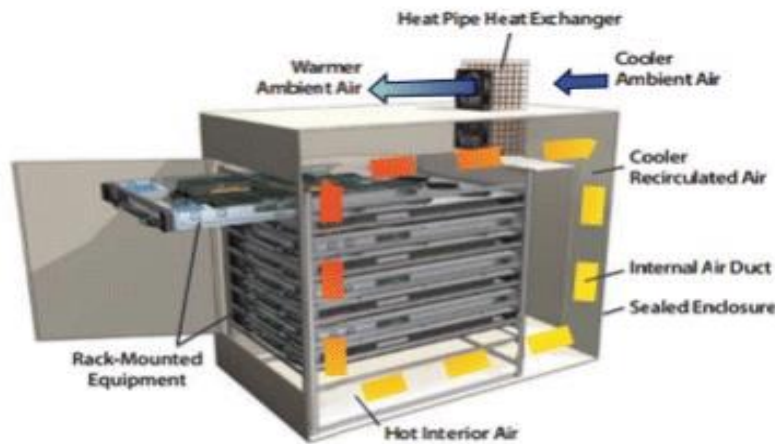


Figure 4. Ducts Show the Traditional Method

3.3. Advanced Airflow Management

Data centre water cooling is one of the most prevalent uses of sophisticated airflow management, which involves dividing the data centre's air into cold and hot streams. Servers are arranged in rows using a Hot Aisle/Cold Aisle Containment system, with the fronts of the racks facing the cold aisles and the backs of the rear facing the hot lanes. Cold air coming from the cooling units is bored into the cold aisles only where it can be sucked into the server intakes, while hot exhaust air is trapped in the hot aisles and is fed back directly to the cooling system. The different air streams are prevented from mixing by such containment that leads to stabilization of temperatures, reduces energy used, and makes cooling units to operate at higher, and hence more efficient temperatures. Consequently, data centres are able to lower their Power Usage Effectiveness (PUE) and, in addition, increase system [14] reliability as a result of fewer thermal hotspots.

3.4. Advantages and Limitations of Air Cooling

One of the typical examples of thermals in data centres is air cooling, which has been acknowledged in the article "Cooling, Placement, and Virtualization for Sustainability". This approach makes use of HVAC systems for computer rooms and hot/cold aisle confinement to bring in cool air and maintain the servers at the appropriate temperature.

3.4.1. Advantages

Air cooling is a cost-saving measure, a straightforward kind of installation, and a maintenance-friendly process; thus, it qualifies small to medium data centres as the most suitable ones for it. The method is safe and dependable, thus, no risk of fluid leaks is involved, and if the airflow is controlled, then a further increase in energy efficiency and temperature regulation is achieved.

3.4.2. Limitations

Low thermal conductivity of air, on the other hand, limits the efficiency of air-cooling methods used with high-density racks. The method needs to be performed at a high energy level if fans and CRAC units are to be used, which in turn causes the PUE to be negatively influenced. At the same time, uneven airflow results in the formation of hot spots, and a large space is required in order to effectively separate.

4. Liquid Cooling Technologies

Liquid cooling is a method of keeping components, such as CPUs or batteries, cooler by circulating a coolant that absorbs and transfers heat more effectively than air. Examples of these techniques for use in high-performance systems are immersion cooling, microchannel cold plates, and direct-to-chip cooling. These technologies enhance thermal management, use of less energy and reliability of systems in data centres and electric cars.

4.1. Fundamentals of Liquid Cooling

Liquid cooling is also effective in heat dissipation; the coolant is pumped through a series of channels that absorbs and conducts heat to parts of the vehicle such as EV batteries. It has a high-heat transfer rate and temperature control compared to air or PCM systems. liquid cooling performance is determined by the channel layout and fin structure affecting the heat transfer and flow resistance. In their research, they brought in a cooling plate with cavities and droplet shaped fins that added to the turbulence and cooling efficiency. The optimized design had a [15] 5.21% reduction in temperature and 38.7% reduction in pressure drop, which demonstrated that the integration of channel geometry and fin is an important factor in enhancing thermal performance and reliability of liquid-cooled batteries.

4.2. Direct-to-Chip Liquid Cooling Systems

A high-heat-density data centre's cooling efficiency and energy performance can be enhanced by the design and deployment of a direct-to-chip cold plate liquid cooling system. The experimental setup used in-row CDUs with a liquid-to-air heat exchanger (L2A HX) to mimic processor heat flux. The L2A HX supplied chilled liquid to cold plates that were linked to high heat-density heaters. A hot aisle enclosure received hot air venting. Thermal and hydraulic characterizations were made of three cooling loops (X, Y, and Z). Thermal resistance and pressure drop were lowest in Type Y. Using blanking panels minimized hot [16] air recirculation and stabilized the supply air temperature. At a total rack load of 128 kW, both CDUs achieved effectiveness values of 0.82 and 0.83, confirming efficient heat removal and strong applicability for future high-power data centres.

4.3. Immersion Cooling (Single-Phase and Two-Phase)

Immersion cooling, as suggested by Van Gils, would bring the dielectric liquid into close proximity to the battery. One way to categorise immersion cooling is by the presence or absence of a phase change; this is known as single-phase immersion cooling (SPIC) or two-phase immersion cooling (TPIC). Immersion cooling is highly effective at cooling because to its low thermal resistance and broad heat transfer area. Another benefit is that most immersion media are flame retardant, which reduces the likelihood of thermal runaway. The injection of dielectric fluid into the [17] battery module and the subsequent management of temperature through forced convective heat transfer constitute the standard procedure for forced convection cooling in SPIC. According to experts, the best strategy to avoid temperature rise and temperature differential is TPIC, which stands for immersion cooling with internal phase change processes. These processes include evaporation/boiling and condensation. As a whole, it can stabilize temperatures and boost power batteries' thermal conduction performance.

4.4. Cold Plate and Microchannel Cooling Designs

One of the most viable remedies to the high heat flux in the current CPU systems is cold plate and microchannel cooling technologies [18]. This allows the designs to have high heat removal efficiency with minimum thermal resistance by means of circulating liquid coolant through small microchannels. The geometry and manifold system are very vital in performance as amongst the typical types the I-type layout has better flow uniformity and reduced pressure drop than U-type or Z-type layouts. The more the microchannel layers, the better heat transfer is because more surface area is increased and the distribution of the coolant is improved. The stepped I-type-9L multi-layer structures are optimized structures with high heat flux capacity and thermal efficiency, which reduces pumping power [19]. High conductivity interface materials such as indium, also contribute to minimal thermal resistance and, therefore, cold plate systems can easily cope with extreme thermal loads and provides low chip temperatures with power-efficient CPU operation.

5. Comparative Analysis: Air Vs. Liquid Cooling

Liquid cooling is superior to air cooling in the sense that it has a high heat transfer rate, reduced CPU/GPU temperatures, and better performance stability [20]. It also uses less energy and operation expenses in the long run as compared to fan-based air systems. Furthermore, liquid cooling facilitating sustainability as it reduces carbon emissions and allow heat reuse in the data centres.

5.1. Performance Efficiency Comparison

Air cooling is accomplished with fans and heat sinks that are losing with increasing power density. Conversely, liquid [21] cooling is superior in heat transmission due to its greater specific heat capacity and thermal conductivity. Due to this, liquid systems are able to sustain heavier processing loads and better loads during stress due to lower CPU and GPU temperatures.

5.2. Energy Consumption and Cost Analysis

Air cooling systems require continuous fan operation and this adds to noise and energy use. Liquid cooling makes the cooling process more effective and reduces the operational costs of energy. In large-scale or high-density data centres, liquid cooling, including pumps, cold plates and plumbing, is more cost-efficient because it saves energy in the long-run and reduces the wear of the hardware.

5.3. Environmental Impact and Sustainability

Liquid cooling improves sustainability because it uses less power and the heat it generates may be reused for things like heating the entire facility. HVAC systems significantly contribute to air cooling that complicates carbon emissions and water use in indirect cooling towers. Liquid cooling is consequently more appropriate to the sustainable data centre operation and green computing goals.

6. Literature Review

In this review, the authors point to the latest advancements in the field of heat dissipation and thermal management, including novel approaches to heat dissipation, like microchannel cooling, sophisticated heat spreaders, and cooling design optimization. These are to improve cooling performance, thermal stability and reliability of high-power electronic systems.

Yoon et al. (2019) research has demonstrated that the upper-layer components of the DTRMs were partially cooled by air flowing outside the DTRMs. Layers higher up in the DTRMs saw very large thermal effects resulting from the concentrated distribution of heat sources, whereas layers lower down experienced almost no such effects owing to direct contact with cold plates. For tile-type DTRMs to be used in big antenna systems, it appears that ensuring a stable heat dissipation path of upper layers is a critical design consideration [22].

Silveira et al. (2019) utilising a straightforward heat transfer model to determine the rate of heat dissipation from an object placed on a flat surface as if it were an integrated circuit (IC) on a printed circuit board to the surrounding environment. Two pathways for heat transfer are accounted for in the model, and they are as follows: first, from the device surface to the ambient; second, via the solder into the printed circuit board; and finally, from the printed circuit board to the ambient. Use of a straightforward one-dimensional fin model in cylindrical coordinates is employed to represent the heat transmission through the printed circuit board [23].

Xu et al. (2019) The calculation includes the distribution of pressure in the cooling medium as well as the temperature of the radiator and chips at various input flow rates. In this study, examine the effects of varying input flow rates on the maximum surface temperature and pressure differential between the chip and its surroundings. After a certain point in the inlet flow rate range, further increases in flow rate primarily increase flow resistance rather than heat dissipation; the heat dissipation effect of a liquid-cooled radiator is not uniform, leading to lower chip temperatures near the inlet and higher chip temperatures near the outlet [24].

Wan et al. (2018) explored how the local deformation structure in a rectangular microchannel affected the heat dissipation performance, and suggested using thermal bimetal as a solution. Deformation of the thermal bimetal controls the flow rate of local cooling fluid in the microchannel, allowing for self-adapted heat dissipation management; this material was specifically engineered to come into contact with heat sources through thermal columns [25].

Klarmann et al. (2017) examined the thermal management of the p-n junction of LEDs embedded in a printed circuit board with an insulated metal-substrates structure. When heat is transferred from the junction to its environment, the structure's substance and surface area are utilised. For conductor layer thicknesses ranging from 50 μm to 200 μm and dielectric layer thicknesses from 50 μm to 150 μm , heat dissipation has been modelled [26].

Zhang, Zhong and Liu (2016) proven that the thermal energy dissipation flux at the building's exterior surfaces is more affected by the wind speed than the wind direction. Maximal cumulative heat dissipation occurs when the wall is in the state of being solved for the time-cumulative heat dissipation (including convective and radiative heat exchanges), the heat dissipation coefficient for the surfaces of the outer wall, wind speed, and wind direction [27].

Table I provides a challenge of heat dissipation research in recent times, and the cooling performance of different methods has improved. In spite of such developments, such problems as non-uniform cooling and design complexity remain. The development of more efficient and flexible thermal management and refining cooling structures is the goal of future work.

Table 1. Summary of Recent Studies on Advanced Heat Dissipation Techniques

Reference	Study On	Approach	Key Findings	Challenges / Limitations	Future Directions
Yoon et al. (2019)	Heat dissipation behavior in multi-layer DTRMs	Analysis of external airflow contribution to component cooling	External airflow helps upper-layer cooling; lower layer cooling dominated by cold plates; upper layers need stable dissipation paths	Limited effect of external airflow on lower layers; design complexity for uniform dissipation	Improve airflow channel design; enhance cooling mechanisms for upper layers in large antenna systems
Silveira et al. (2019)	Heat transfer from device on PCB to ambient	Simple heat transfer model with dual paths (device, ambient, device, solder, PCB, ambient)	Validated dual-path heat dissipation; effective use of 1D fin model for PCB heat transfer	Simplified model may not capture complex 3D thermal interactions	Develop multi-dimensional models; integrate real PCB thermal behavior for higher accuracy
Xu et al. (2019)	Temperature and pressure distribution under varying flow rates	Simulation of chip/radiator temperature and medium pressure at different inlet flows	Higher flow improves cooling but raises resistance; beyond threshold, cooling no longer improves; temperature non-uniform along inlet to outlet	Non-uniform cooling; trade-off between flow rate and resistance; limited improvement at high flow	Design more uniform liquid cooling structures; optimize flow channel geometry
Wan et al. (2018)	Heat dissipation in microchannels using thermal bimetal	Use of deformable thermal bimetal for adaptive fluid regulation	Bimetal deformation adjusts cooling fluid velocity for self-adaptive cooling	Requires precise control of deformation; structural complexity	Improve bimetal material properties; enhance adaptability for real-time thermal management
Klarmann et al. (2017)	LED junction temperature management via insulated metal substrates	Simulation of heat transfer with varying conductor & dielectric thicknesses	Identified optimal thickness ranges for LED heat dissipation; substrate plays major role in thermal path	Limited to thickness variation; does not explore material or geometric changes	Explore new materials, multilayer structures, and enhanced substrate designs
Zhang, Zhong & Liu (2016)	Wind-driven thermal dissipation on building surfaces	Analysis of heat dissipation flux influenced by wind parameters	Wind speed influences thermal dissipation more than direction; derived equations for prediction	Outdoor conditions vary widely; model may not capture building-specific factors	Combine CFD with real-world validation; study more façade geometries and climatic scenarios

7. Conclusion and Future Work

The increase in computing capabilities of high-performance computing (HPC) systems has raised the concerns of heat dissipation, energy consumption, and system reliability. The paper has discussed the applicability of the air and liquid cooling strategies to thermal management in dense data centers. Although air cooling is more affordable and widely used, its efficiency decreases with the increase in the density of heat because of low thermal conductivity and disproportional distribution of the airflow. In terms of heat transmission, temperature homogeneity, and power consumption, liquid cooling methods like immersion, direct-to-chip, and microchannel cooling are tops. A comparative analysis reveals that liquid cooling helps in achieving sustainability objectives using lower Power Usage Effectiveness (PUE), lesser environmental impact, and maximum long-term performance. The liquid-based solutions also reduce thermal throttling, increase the life span of hardware, and enhance the stability of the system. On the whole, this review highlights the increasing industrial change towards energy efficient and environmentally conscious cooling schemes to future HPC and data center usage.

Future research ought to improve hybrid air-liquid cooling models to be employed in large-scale and cost-efficient usage. The adaptive cooling will be supported by research on nanofluids, phase-change materials, and AI-controlled thermal optimization through the use of the internet of things monitoring. Additional testing on high-performance computer systems and lifecycle analysis is needed to determine stable and efficient thermal management systems.

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