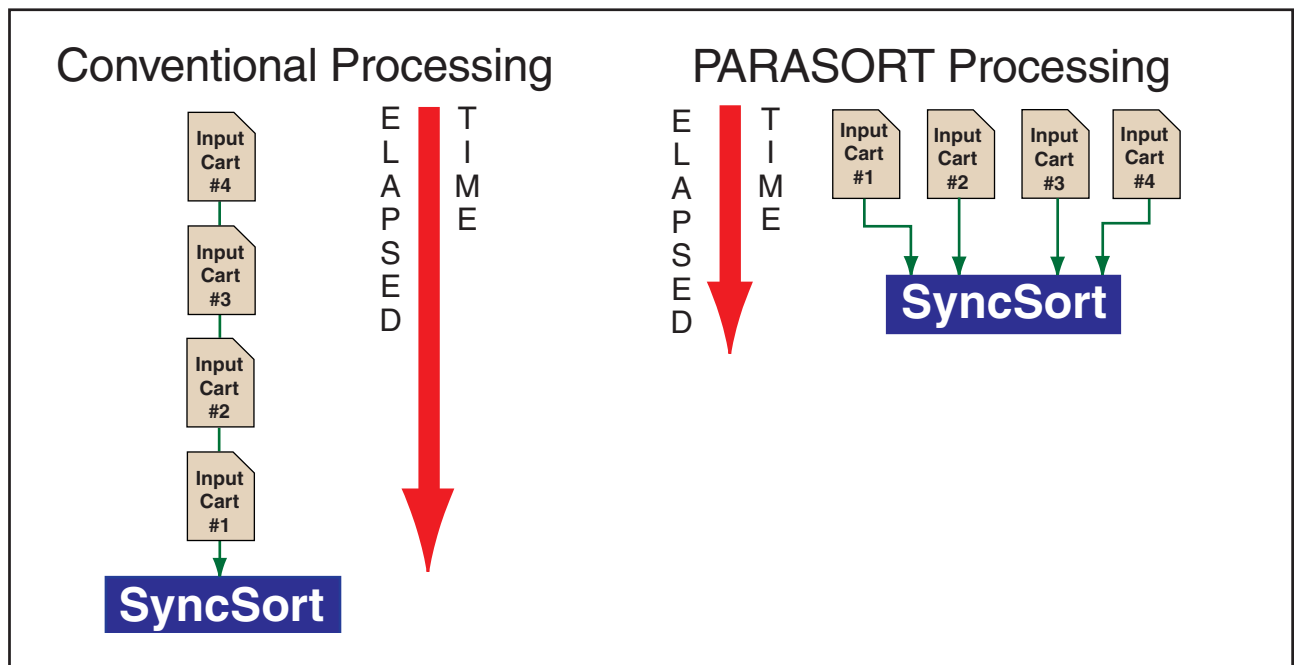


# NDCHealth Reduces Elapsed Time From 12 to 5 Hours With SyncSort's PARASORT Feature

There's a good chance you've seen more than one television commercial that reports what "four out of five hospitals recommend." Hospitals, physicians, pharmacies, pharmaceutical companies, and other healthcare businesses

For each of the last 24 months, an application group at NDCHealth amassed a large file of prescription data called the Analysis Transaction File. On average, each monthly file is about 250 GB in size and uses four high-density cartridges



depend on the collection and circulation of accurate statistical data to competitively market their products and services. So when they need this information, they demand an information service provider with a rich understanding of the market environment for which the data is intended. As a leader in healthcare information services, NDCHealth® Corporation provides solutions for virtually every area of the healthcare industry, helping their customers manage their businesses and provide the highest quality of care. Not surprisingly, the preparation of such information involves the management of massive amounts of data. The ongoing challenge faced by NDCHealth is to continue to process and deliver this growing amount of information quickly, without requiring growing expenditures of time and money.

for storage. Efficient sorting of each of these 24 months' worth of tape files posed quite a challenge. The standard processing method, which reads in one tape at a time, was taking twelve to eighteen hours of elapsed time to complete, depending on the size of the file. Project managers estimated it would take three weeks to complete all 24 files, assuming they would be able to run only two or three jobs at a time whenever resources were available. Charlie Jones, a Technology Manager at NDCHealth, knew they needed a way to reduce the elapsed time for the project. "I had been testing with PARASORT, and I thought about using it to process these huge monthly files," said Jones. "I converted the standard SyncSort process into a PARASORT process and then executed it. The standard process was taking about twelve hours to complete. With PARASORT it was only taking about five hours."

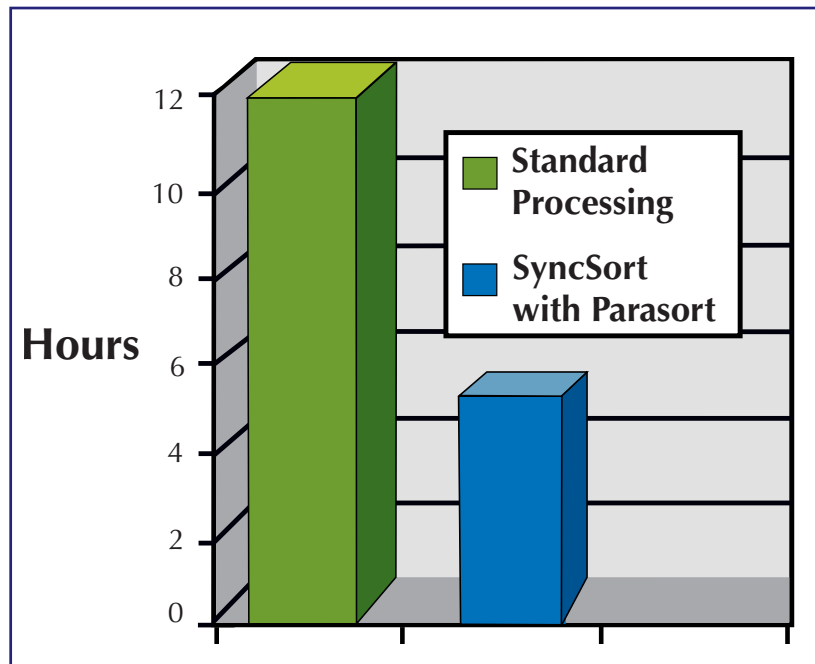
# NDCHealth Reduces Elapsed Time *(continued)*

PARASORT is a feature of SyncSort from Syncsort Incorporated that uses specially designed parallel techniques with large multi-volume or concatenated tape data set input. This breakthrough technology allows SyncSort to read data from multiple tape drives concurrently, significantly improving the elapsed time performance of sorts. PARASORT automatically manages tape units and minimizes the use of tape drive resources by de-allocating excess tape drives during initialization and releasing all extra units at the end of the sort input phase.

"We were able to execute two of these processes at a time around the clock each day," said Jones. "With PARASORT, we completed the job in about a week, even though we expected it to take three weeks with the standard process."

An additional project required the application group to generate subsets from these large files for focused analysis of specific data. PARASORT was implemented for this project as well, with similarly impressive results. "We've created some

resource reports, and not only do the PARASORT jobs run faster, but the CPU time doesn't significantly affect overall resources," said Jones. "When we used PARASORT, even though the jobs completed faster, they were taking about the same amount of CPU time."



*PARASORT reduced the elapsed time of an NDCHealth sort from 12 to 5 hours*

people about it. Since then, I've gotten calls from others asking me, 'How do I set this up? What do I do?'" By introducing PARASORT at no additional cost, NDCHealth has been able to achieve a level of sort processing performance that was previously not possible and is experiencing significant savings in time, resources, and money as a result.

PARASORT implementation required no additional financial investment from NDCHealth, since the feature is included in the SyncSort solution they were already using. "The PARASORT process has not only saved us time and resources, but it will save us money in the long run, too. It has actually put projects ahead of schedule, and the programming staff thinks it's a strong tool," said Jones. "Apparently, there has been some positive word of mouth spreading. I have only told a couple



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