RPC-over-RDMA Extension to Manage Transport Characteristics

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Abstract

It is expected that the RPC-over-RDMA transport will, at some point, allow protocol extensions to be defined. This would provide for the specification of OPTIONAL features, allowing participants who implement the OPTIONAL features, to cooperate as specified by that extension, while still interoperating with participants who do not support that extension.

A particular extension is described herein, whose purpose is to allow RPC/RDMA Endpoints to specify and manage their transport characteristics in order to allow the other participant to optimize message transfer in light of the characteristics communicated by the initial sender.

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1. Preliminaries
1.1. Requirements Language

The key words "MUST", "MUST NOT", "REQUIRED", "SHALL", "SHALL NOT", "SHOULD", "SHOULD NOT", "RECOMMENDED", "MAY", and "OPTIONAL" in this document are to be interpreted as described in [RFC2119].

1.2. Introduction

This document describes a potential extension to the RPC-over-RDMA protocol, which would allow participating implementations to communicate the transport characteristics of their implementation, to request changes in those of the other participant, and to effect changes and notify the other participant of the changes.

Although this document specifies the new OPTIONAL message header types to implement these functions, the precise means by which the presence of support for these OPTIONAL functions will be ascertained is not described here, as would be done more appropriately by the RFC defining a version of RPC-over-RDMA which supports protocol extension.

This document is currently written to conform to the extension model for RPC-over-RDMA Version Two as described in [rpcrdmav2].

1.3. Role Terminology

A number of different terms are used regarding the roles of the two participants in an RPC-over-RMA connection. Some of these roles last for the duration of a connection while others vary from request to request or from message to message.

The roles of the client and server are fixed for the lifetime of the connection, with the client defined as the endpoint which initiated the connection.

The roles of requester and responder often parallel those of client and server, although this is not always the case. Most requests are made in the forward direction, in which the client is the requester and the server is the responder. However, backward-direction requests are possible, in which case the server is the requester and the client is the responder. As a result, clients and servers may both act as requesters and responders.

The roles of sender and receiver vary from message. With regard to the messages described in this document, both the client and the server can act as sender and receiver. With regard to messages used to transfer RPC requests and replies, the requester sends requests
and receives replies while the responder receives requests and sends replies.

2. Transport Characteristics

2.1. Characteristics Model

Receiver and sender characteristics are specified using an extensible approach, that allows new characteristics to be defined, in addition to the small set of initial transport characteristics specified herein.

Such characteristics are specified using:

- A code identifying the particular transport characteristic being specified.
- A nominally opaque array which contains within it the XDR encoding of the specific characteristic indicated by the associated code.

The following XDR types are used by operations that deal with transport characteristics:

```c
typedef xcharid         uint32;
struct xcharval {
    xcharid         xchv_which;
    opaque          xchv_data<>>;
};
typedef xcharspec       xcharval<>>;
typedef uint32          xcharsubset<>>;
```

An xcharid specifies a particular transport characteristic. In order to allow easier XDR extension of the set of characteristics by concatenating XDR files, specific characteristics are defined as const values rather than as elements in an enum.

An xcharval specifies a value of a particular transport characteristic with the particular characteristic identified by xchv_which, while the associated value of that characteristic is contained within xchv_data.
While xchv_data is defined as opaque within the XDR, the contents are interpreted using the XDR typedef associated with the characteristic specified by xchv_which. The receiver of a message containing an xcharval needs to report an XDR error if the length of xchv_data is such that it extends beyond the bounds of the message transferred.

In cases in which the xcharid specified by xchv_which is understood by the receiver, the receiver also needs to report an XDR error if either of the following occur:

- The nominally opaque data within xchv_data is not valid when interpreted using the characteristic-associated typedef.
- The length of xchv_data is insufficient to contain the data represented by the characteristic-associated typedef.

Note that no error is to be reported if xchv_which is unknown to the receiver. In that case, that xcharval is not processed and processing continues using the next xcharval, if any.

An xcharspec specifies a set of transport characteristics. No particular ordering of the xcharvals within it is imposed.

An xcharsubset identifies a subset of the characteristics in a previously specified xcharspec. Each bit in the mask denotes a particular element in a previously specified xcharspec. If a particular xcharval is at position N in the array, then bit number N mod 32 in word N div 32 specifies whether that particular xcharval is included in the defined subset. Words beyond the last one specified are treated as containing zero.

2.2. Transport Characteristics Groups

Transport characteristics are divided into a number of groups:

- An initial set of transport characteristics defined in this document. See Section 3 for the complete list.
- Additional transport characteristics defined in future standards track documents as specified in Section 6.2.
- Experimental transport characteristics being explored preparatory to being considered for standards track definition. See the description in Section 6.3.
### 3. Initial Transport Characteristics

Although the set of transport characteristics is subject to later extension, an initial set of transport characteristics is defined below in Table 1.

In that table, the columns contain the following information:

- The column labeled "characteristic" identifies the transport characteristic described by the current row.
- The column labeled "code" specifies the xcharid value used to identify this characteristic.
- The column labeled "XDR type" gives the XDR type of the data used to communicate the value of this characteristic. This data type overlays the nominally opaque field xchv_data in an xcharval.
- The column labeled "default" gives the default value for the characteristic which is to be assumed by those who do not receive, or are unable to interpret, information about the actual value of the characteristic.
- The column labeled "section" indicates the section (within this document) that explains the semantics and use of this transport characteristic.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>characteristic</th>
<th>code</th>
<th>XDR type</th>
<th>default</th>
<th>section</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Receive Buffer Size</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>uint32</td>
<td>4096</td>
<td>3.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Requester Remote</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>bool</td>
<td>false</td>
<td>3.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Invalidation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Backward Request Support</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>enum</td>
<td>BKRQSUP_UNKNOWN</td>
<td>3.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1

Note that there is no explicit indication regarding whether a particular characteristic can change or whether a change in the value may be requested (see Section 4.2). Such matters are not addressed by the protocol definition. A partner implementation can always request a change but implementations are always free to reject such requests if they cannot or do not wish to effect the requested change. With regard to unrequested changes in transport characteristics, it is the responsibility of the implementation...
making the change to do so in a fashion that does not interfere with the other partner’s continued correct operation (see Section 3.1).

3.1. Receive Buffer Size

The receive buffer size specifies the minimum size of pre-posted receive buffers. It is the responsibility of the participant sending this value to ensure that its pre-posted receives are at least the size specified, allowing the participant receiving this value to send messages that are of this size.

<CODE BEGINS>

const uint32 XCHAR_RBSIZ = 1;
typedef uint32 xchrbsiz;

<CODE ENDS>

The sender may use his knowledge of the receiver’s buffer size to determine when the message to be sent will fit in the preposted receive buffers that the receiver has set up. In particular,

- Requesters may use the value to determine when it is necessary to provide a position-zero read chunk when sending a request.
- Requesters may use the value to determine when it is necessary to provide a reply chunk when sending a request, based on the maximum possible size of the reply.
- Responders may use the value to determine when it is necessary, given the actual size of the reply, to actually use a reply chunk provided by the requester.

Because there may be pre-posted receives with buffer sizes that reflect earlier values of the buffer size characteristic, changing this characteristics poses special difficulties:

- When the size is being raised, the partner should not be informed of the change until all pending receives using the older value have been eliminated.
- The size should not be reduced until the partner is aware of the need to reduce the size of future sends to conform to this reduced value. To ensure this, such a change should only occur in response to an explicit request by the other endpoint (See Section 4.2). The participant making the request should use that lower size as the send size limit until the request is rejected.
(See Section 4.3) or an update to a size larger than the requested value becomes effective and the requested change is no longer pending (See Section 4.4).

3.2. Requester Remote Invalidation

The requester remote invalidation characteristic indicates that the requester is prepared for the responder to issue remote invalidation requests, in order to unregister memory regions established to support RDMA Read and Write operations done by the responder into or out of the requester’s memory.

As RPC-over-RDMA is currently used, memory registration is not done on the server and explicit RDMA operations are not done to satisfy backward-direction requests. This makes it unlikely that servers will present non-default values of the XCHAR_RQREMINV characteristic or that clients will take note of the value presented by servers.

```cpp
const uint32    XCHAR_RQREMINV = 2;
typedef bool    xchrrqrem;
```

A responder can use his knowledge that a requestor has a true value for this characteristic to remotely invalidate memory regions associated with an RPC request. It can do this by sending the RPC reply using Send with Invalidate specifying an R_key for which the corresponding registration is to be invalidated. This is instead of using an ordinary send and depending on the requester to do the memory invalidation on its own.

Note that when this characteristic is set to true, the responder is allowed to perform remote invalidation, but is not required to do so. The requester needs to be prepared to do its own invalidation in cases in which the responder has not effected it remotely.

To make sure that remote invalidation can be done, the requester reporting a true value for this characteristic needs to make sure that the following issues are addressed:

- The requester’s RNIC needs to support remote invalidation.
- The requester is not, for example, using a global or shared R_key, making remote invalidation problematic.
The requester is prepared for situations in which all of the memory registrations are not subsumed under a single R_key. For example, a read chunk and a reply chunk might both be used as part of a single request. In this situation, because of the difference in memory access rights for the two chunks multiple R_keys might be present, meaning that invalidation of a single R_key will leave some memory for the requester itself to deregister. Because of this situation, requesters (in this case clients) must be prepared to receive RPC replies where one R_key has been invalidated but others have not.

The requester implementation must not allow it to be possible for the server to invalidate an R_key that the requester has recycled and is still actively using.

This value is unlikely to change from the value established at connection establishment (see Section 4.1).

3.3. Backward Request Support

The value of this characteristic is used to indicate an implementation’s readiness to accept and process messages that are part of backward-direction RPC requests. The server uses this characteristic to indicate support for backward-direction requests, while the client may use it to indicate readiness to process various forms of backward-direction replies.

```c
enum bkrqsup {
    BKRQSUP_UNKNOWN = 0,
    BKRQSUP_NONE    = 1,
    BKRQSUP_SZLIM   = 2,
    BKRQSUP_GENL    = 3
};

const uint32    XCHAR_BRS = 3;
typedef bkrqsup xchrbrs;
```

Multiple levels of support are distinguished:

- The value BKRQSUP_UNKNOWN, typically in effect as a default, indicates that the support level is to be determined as specified below.
o The value BKRQSUP_NONE indicates that receipt of backward-direction requests and replies is not supported.

o The value BKRQSUP_SZLIM indicates that receipt of backward-direction requests or replies is only supported within the limited framework described in [bidir].

o The value BKRQSUP_GENL that receipt of backward-direction requests or replies is supported in the same ways that forward-direction requests or replies typically are.

In the case of a server, values of BKRQSUP_UNKNOWN can be interpreted as indicating that support for backward-direction requests is not present. However, in some cases, the ULP is such that support must be presumed. For example, in the case in which a connection is established for use by NFSv4.1, support for size-limited callback support can be tested for by issuing a CB_NULL request.

The support level of clients can be inferred from the backward-direction requests that they issue, assuming that issuing a request implicitly indicates support for receiving the corresponding reply. On this basis, support for receiving size-limited replies can be assumed when requests without read chunks, write chunks, or reply chunks are issued, while requests with any of these elements allow the server to assume that general support for backward-direction replies is present on the client.

4. New Operations

The proposed new operation are set forth in Table 2 below. In that table, the columns contain the following information:

- The column labeled "operation" specifies the particular operation.
- The column labeled "code" specifies the value of opttype for this operation.
- The column labeled "XDR type" gives the XDR type of the data structure used to describe the information in this new message type. This data overlays the nominally opaque field optinfo in an RDMA_OPTIONAL message.
- The column labeled "msg" indicates whether this operation is followed (or not) by an RPC message payload.
- The column labeled "section" indicates the section (within this document) that explains the semantics and use of this optional operation.
Support for all of the operations above is OPTIONAL. RPC-over-RDMA Version Two implementations that receive an operation that is not supported MUST respond with RDMA_ERROR message with an error code of RDMA_ERR_INVAL_OPTION as specified in [rpcrdmav2]

The only operation support requirements are as follows:

- Implementations which send REQ_XCHAR messages must support RESP_XCHAR and UPD_XCHAR messages.
- Implementations which support RESP_XCHAR or UPD_XCHAR messages must also support INIT_XCHAR messages.

4.1. INIT_XCHAR: Specify Initial Characteristics

The INIT_XCHAR message type allows an RPC-over-RDMA participant, whether client or server, to indicate to its partner relevant transport characteristics that the partner might need to be aware of.

The message definition for this operation is as follows:

```
<CODE BEGINS>
const uint32 ROPT_INITXCH = 1;

struct optinfo_initxch {
    xcharspec optixc_start;
    xcharsubset optixc_nochg;
};

<CODE ENDS>
```
All relevant transport characteristics that the sender is aware of should be included in optixc_start. Since support of this request is OPTIONAL, and since each of the characteristics is OPTIONAL as well, the sender cannot assume that the receiver will necessarily take note of these characteristics and so the sender should be prepared for cases in which the partner continues to assume that the default value for a particular characteristic is still in effect.

The subset of transport characteristic specified by optixc_nochg is not expected to change during the lifetime of the connection.

Generally, a participant will send an INIT_XCHAR message as the first message after a connection is established. Given that fact, the sender should make sure that the message can be received by partners who use the default minimum receive buffer size.

Those receiving an INIT_XCHAR may encounter characteristics that they do not support or are unaware of. In such cases, these characteristics are simply ignored without any error response being generated.

4.2. REQ_XCHAR: Request Modification of Characteristics

The REQ_XCHAR message type allows an RPC-over-RDMA participant, whether client or server, to request of its partner, that relevant transport characteristics be changed.

The partner need not change the characteristics as requested by the sender but if it does support the message type, it will generate a RESP_XCHAR message, indicating the disposition of the request.

The message definition for this operation is as follows:

<CODE BEGINS>
const uint32 ROPT_REQXCH = 2;

struct optinfo_reqxch {
    xcharspec optrqxc_want;
};

<CODE ENDS>

The xcharspec optrqxc_want is a set of transport characteristics together with the desired values requested by the sender.
4.3. RESP_XCHAR: Respond to Request to Modify Transport Characteristics

The RESP_XCHAR message type allows an RPC-over-RDMA participant to respond to a request to change characteristics by its partner, indicating how the request was dealt with.

The message definition for this operation is as follows:

```c
const uint32     ROPT_RESPXCH = 3;

struct optinfo_respxch {
    xcharsubset     optrsxc_done;
    xcharsubset     optrsxc_rej;
    xcharsubset     optrsxc_pend;
};
```

The xid field of this message must match that used in the REQ_XCHAR message to which this message is responding.

The optrsxc_done field indicates which of the requested transport characteristic changes have been immediately effected. For each such characteristic, the receiver is entitled to conclude that the requested change has been made and that future transmissions may be made based on that assumption.

The optrsxc_rej field indicates which of the requested transport characteristic changes have been rejected by the sender. This may be because of any of the following reasons:

- The particular characteristic specified is not known or supported by the receiver of the ROPT_REQXCH message.
- The implementation receiving the ROPT_REQXCH message does not support modification of this characteristic.
- The implementation receiving the ROPT_REQXCHG message has rejected the modification for another reason.

The optrsxc_pend field indicates which of the requested transport characteristic modifications remain pending, since they were neither rejected nor effected immediately. The receiver can expect the modification to be effected by a later ROPT_UPDXCH message, although there is no way to determine when this will happen.
The subsets of characteristics specified by optrsxc_done, optrsxc_rej, optrsxc_pend should not overlap and, when ored together, should cover the entire set of characteristics specified by optrqxc_want in the corresponding request.

4.4. UPD_XCHAR: Update Transport Characteristics

The UPD_XCHAR message type allows an RPC-over-RDMA participant, to notify the other participant that a change to the transport characteristics has occurred.

This may be because:

- A change requested by a REQ_XCHAR message, has, after some delay, been effected.

- The sender has decided, independently, to modify the transport characteristic and is notifying the receiver of this change.

Note that there no way to tie a request changed to the specific request which asked for it. In particular, the xid associated with this message is independent of that for an earlier REQ_XCHAR message.

The message definition for this operation is as follows:

```c
const uint32 ROPT_UPDXCH = 4;

struct optinfo_updxch {
    xcharval optuxc_now;
    bool optuxc_pendclr;
};
```

optuxc_now defines the new characteristic value to be used.

optuxc_pendclr, if true, indicates that a previous request to update the characteristic specified by optuxc_now.xchv which is no longer to be considered pending. This may be set true even if the characteristic value is not changed from the previous value.
5. XDR

This section contains an XDR [RFC4506] description of the proposed extension.

This description is provided in a way that makes it simple to extract into ready-to-use form. The reader can apply the following shell script to this document to produce a machine-readable XDR description of extension which can be combined with XDR for the base protocol to produce an XDR that combines the base protocol with the optional extensions.

<CODE BEGINS>
#!/bin/sh
grep '^ *////' | sed 's?^ /// ??' | sed 's?^ *////$??'
<CODE ENDS>

That is, if the above script is stored in a file called "extract.sh" and this document is in a file called "ext.txt" then the reader can do the following to extract an XDR description file for this extension:

<CODE BEGINS>
sh extract.sh < ext.txt > charext.x
<CODE ENDS>

5.1. Code Component License

Code components extracted from this document must include the following license text. When the extracted XDR code is combined with other complementary XDR code which itself has an identical license, only a single copy of the license text need be preserved.
<CODE BEGINS>

/// /*
/// * Copyright (c) 2010, 2016 IETF Trust and the persons
/// * identified as authors of the code. All rights reserved.
/// *
/// * The author of the code is: D. Noveck.
/// *
/// * Redistribution and use in source and binary forms, with
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/// * following conditions are met:
/// *
/// * - Redistributions of source code must retain the above
/// *   copyright notice, this list of conditions and the
/// *   following disclaimer.
/// *
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/// *   materials provided with the distribution.
/// *
/// * - Neither the name of Internet Society, IETF or IETF
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/// *   software without specific prior written permission.
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/// * AND CONTRIBUTORS "AS IS" AND ANY EXPRESS OR IMPLIED
/// * WARRANTIES, INCLUDING, BUT NOT LIMITED TO, THE
/// * IMPLIED WARRANTIES OF MERCHANTABILITY AND FITNESS
/// * FOR A PARTICULAR PURPOSE ARE DISCLAIMED. IN NO
/// * EVENT SHALL THE COPYRIGHT OWNER OR CONTRIBUTORS BE
/// * LIABLE FOR ANY DIRECT, INDIRECT, INCIDENTAL, SPECIAL,
/// * EXEMPLARY, OR CONSEQUENTIAL DAMAGES (INCLUDING, BUT
/// * NOT LIMITED TO, PROCUREMENT OF SUBSTITUTE GOODS OR
/// * SERVICES; LOSS OF USE, DATA, OR PROFITS; OR BUSINESS
/// * INTERRUPTION) HOWEVER CAUSED AND ON ANY THEORY OF
/// * LIABILITY, WHETHER IN CONTRACT, STRICT LIABILITY,
/// * OR TORT (INCLUDING NEGLIGENCE OR OTHERWISE) ARISING
/// * IN ANY WAY OUT OF THE USE OF THIS SOFTWARE, EVEN IF
/// * ADVISED OF THE POSSIBILITY OF SUCH DAMAGE.
/// */

<CODE ENDS>
5.2. XDR Proper for Extension

<CODE BEGINS>

    ///
    ////*
    /// * Basic transport characteristic types
    /// */
    ///typedef xcharid         uint32;
    ///
    ///struct xcharval {
    ///        xcharid         xchv_which;
    ///        opaque          xchv_data<>
    ///};
    ///
    ///typedef xcharspec       xcharval<>
    ///
    ///typedef xcharsubset     uint32<>
    ///
    ////*
    /// * Transport characteristic codes
    /// */
    ///const uint32    XCHAR_RBSIZ = 1;
    ///const uint32    XCHAR_RQREMINV = 2;
    ///const uint32    XCHAR_BRS = 3;
    ///
    ////*
    /// * Other transport characteristic types
    /// */
    ///enum bkrqsup {
    ///        BKRQSUP_UNKNOWN = 0,
    ///        BKRQSUP_NONE    = 1,
    ///        BKRQSUP_SZLIM   = 2,
    ///        BKRQSUP_GENL    = 3
    ///};
    ///
    ////*
    /// * Transport characteristic typedefs
    /// */
    ///typedef uint32  xchrbsiz;
    ///typedef bool    xchrrqrem;
    ///typedef bkrqsup xchrbrs;
    ///
    ////*
    /// * Optional operation codes
    /// */
    ///const uint32     ROPT_INITXCH = 1;

<CODE ENDS>
///const uint32 ROPT_REQXCH = 2;
///const uint32 ROPT_RESPXCH = 3;
///const uint32 ROPT_UPDXCH = 4;
///
//===
//=== * Optional operation message structures
//=== *
//===struct optinfo_initxch {
//===     xcharspec optixc_start;
//===     xcharsubset optixc_nochg;
//===};
//===
//===struct optinfo_reqxch {
//===     xcharspec optrqxc_want;
//===};
//===
//===struct optinfo_respch {
//===     xcharsubset optrsxc_done;
//===     xcharsubset optrsxc_rej;
//===     xcharsubset optrsxc_pend;
//===};
//===
//===struct optinfo_updxch {
//===     xcharval optuxc_now;
//===     bool optuxc_pendclr;
//===};

6. Extensibility

6.1. Additional Operations

If, as expected, an extensibility model is adopted which allows new message types to be added to RPC-over-RDMA, such new operations will be able to use the XDR data structures defined in this document to represent transport characteristics, including newly defined ones, once these data structures are incorporated in a standards track document.

In addition, the specific transport characteristics introduced here would be available for use by other documents, once they are incorporated into a standards track document.
6.2. Additional Characteristics

The set of transport characteristics is designed to be extensible, so that once new characteristics are defined in standards track documents, the operations defined in this document as well as new operations including xcharids, xcharvals, and xcharspecs may include these new transport characteristics, as well as the ones described in this document.

A standards track document defining a new transport characteristic should include the following information paralleling that provided in this document for the transport characteristics defined herein.

- The xcharid value used to identify this characteristic.
- The XDR typedef specifying the form in which the characteristic value is communicated.
- A description of the transport characteristic that is communicated by the sender of ROPT_INITXCH and ROPT_UPDXCH and requested by the sender of ROP_REQXCH.
- An explanation of how this knowledge could be used by the participant receiving this information.
- Information giving rules governing possible changes of values of this characteristic.

The definition of transport characteristic structures is such as to make it easy to assign unique values. There is no requirement that a continuous set of values be used and implementations should not rely on all such values being small integers. A unique value should be selected when the defining document is first published as an internet draft. When the document becomes a standards track document working group should insure that:

- The xcharids specified in the document do not conflict with those currently assigned or in use by other pending working group documents defining transport characteristics.
- The xcharids specified in the document do not conflict with the range reserved for experimental use, as defined in Section 6.3.

Documents defining new characteristics fall into a number of categories.

- Those defining new characteristics and explaining (only) how they affect use of existing message types.
o Those defining new OPTIONAL message types and new characteristics applicable to the operation of those new message types.

o Those defining new OPTIONAL message types and new characteristics applicable both to new and existing message types.

6.3. Experimental Characteristics

Given the design of the transport characteristics data structure, it possible to use the operations to implement experimental, possibly unpublished, transport characteristics.

xcharids in the range from 4,294,967,040 to 4,294,967,295 are reserved for experimental use and these values should not be assigned to new characteristics in standards track documents.

7. Security Considerations

The information transferred in the transport characteristics described in this document do not raise any security issues.

If and when additional transport characteristics are proposed, the review of the associated standards track document should deal with possible security issues raised by those new transport characteristics

8. IANA Considerations

This document does not require any actions by IANA.

9. References

9.1. Normative References


Work in progress.

Works in progress.

9.2.  Informative References


Appendix A.  Acknowledgments

The author gratefully acknowledges the work of Brent Callaghan and Tom Talpey producing the original RPC-over-RDMA Version One specification [RFC5666] and also Tom’s work in helping to clarify that specification.

The author also wishes to thank Chuck Lever for his work resurrecting NFS support for RDMA in [rfc5666bis].

The extract.sh shell script and formatting conventions were first described by the authors of the NFSv4.1 XDR specification [RFC5662].
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