Week 2: Part 1

Point-to-point communication: Remote Procedure Calls
**Network Communications**

- **Transport Layer (4)**: TCP, UDP
- **Network Layer (3)**: Internet Protocol: IPv4, IPv6
- **Data Link Layer (2)**: Ethernet, Wi-Fi, DOCSIS, ATM, Frame Relay, …

- TCP: Reliable, in-order **byte** stream
- UDP: Unreliable, **message** stream (order not guaranteed)
TCP Upsides & Downsides

• Upsides – huge!
  – In-order, reliable byte streams
  – Congestion control, flow control (avoids queue overflow)

• Downsides
  – Storing & managing state
    • Sequence numbers, Buffering out-of-order data, Acknowledgments
    • Significant kernel memory use when lots of connections
  – Congestion control slows down transmission but doesn’t always reflect network congestion
  – Recovery
    • All state is lost if a system goes down – connections will need to be re-established
  – Increased latency
    • Session setup
    • Data may not be immediately transmitted or presented to the receiving app
      – TCP uses Nagle’s algorithm to avoid sending lots of small packets
UDP Upsides & Downsides

• Downsides
  – Delivery & message order not guaranteed

• Upsides
  – Fewer kernel resources
  – No setup overhead
  – Received data immediately sent & delivered to the application
    • No delay in sending messages
  – No state recovery – traffic can be easily redirected to a standby system
All traffic goes to a socket that reads from a host address & port

Packets sent from different processes and/or systems all arrive on the same socket on the server
Identifying Sessions: TCP

Unique channels identified by
- Remote host, Remote port, Local host, Local port
- One socket for **listening** for new connections on a *local host, port*
- Separate communication socket for each “connection”

Each connection results in a new socket at the server
Software interaction model

• Socket API: all we get from the OS to access the network
• Socket = distinct end-to-end communication channels

read/write interface

• Line-oriented, text-based protocols common
  – Not efficient but easy to debug & use
Protocols

• Set of rules (& customs) for communicating
• Exist at different levels

Humans:
- Body language
- Voice frequency, phonemes, language
- Phrases & responses

Computers:
- Exist at each layer of the network stack
- Meaning of bytes
- Sequence of request & response messages
Sample SMTP Interaction

$ telnet porthos.rutgers.edu 25
Trying 128.6.25.90...
Connected to porthos.rutgers.edu.
Escape character is '^[].'
220 porthos.cs.rutgers.edu ESMTP Postfix (Ubuntu)
HELO poopybrain.com
250 porthos.cs.rutgers.edu
MAIL FROM: <paul@poopybrain.com>
250 2.1.0 Ok
RCPT TO: <pxk@cs.rutgers.edu>
250 2.1.5 Ok
DATA
354 End data with <CR><LF>.<CR><LF>
From: Paul Krzyzanowski <myname@somewhere.edu>
Subject: test message
Date: Mon, 18 Sep 2022 17:00:16 -0500
To: Whomever <testuser@pk.org>

Hi,
This is a test
.
250 2.0.0 Ok: queued as 82D315F7C5
quit
221 2.0.0 Bye
Connection closed by foreign host.

This is the message body.
Headers may define the structure of the message but are ignored for delivery.
$ telnet www.google.com 80
Trying 172.217.12.196...
Connected to www.google.com.
Escape character is '^]'.
GET /index.html HTTP/1.1
HOST: www.google.com
Accept: image/gif, image/jpeg, */*
Accept-Language: en-us
User-Agent: Mozilla/4.0

HTTP/1.1 200 OK
Date: Sun, 18 Sep 2022 22:58:25 GMT
Expires: -1
Cache-Control: private, max-age=0
Content-Type: text/html; charset=ISO-8859-1
Transfer-Encoding: chunked

5584
<!doctype html><html itemscope="" itemtype="http://schema.org/WebPage" lang="en"><head>
  ...
  ...

First part of the response – HTTP headers

Second part of the response – HTTP content
Network Protocols

- **Application**: Application-specific interactions
- **Presentation**: Data representation
- **Session**: Coordinating requests and responses
- **Transport**: Sequencing, retransmission, …
- **Network**: Packet format, routing, reassembly
- **Data Link**: Packet format, network access
- **Physical**: Define 0, 1, transmission
Problems with the sockets API

The **sockets** interface forces a read/write mechanism

Programming is often easier with a functional interface

To make distributed computing look more like centralized computing, I/O (read/write) is not the way to go
1984: Birrell & Nelson
- Mechanism to call procedures on other machines

Remote Procedure Call
Implementing RPC

No architectural support for remote procedure calls

*Simulate it* with tools we have (local procedure calls)

Simulation makes RPC a language-level construct instead of an operating system construct

- The OS gives us sockets
- The compiler creates code to send messages to invoke remote functions
Implementing RPC

The trick:

Create **stub functions**
to make it appear to the user that the call is local

On the client

The stub function *(proxy)* has the function’s interface

*Packages parameters and calls the server*

On the server

The stub function *(skeleton)* receives the request and calls the local function
1. Client calls stub (params on stack)
2. **Stub marshals** params to network message

Marshalling = **put parameters in a form suitable for transmission over a network (serialized)**
3. Network message sent to server

- **Client functions**
  - Client stub (proxy)
  - Network routines

- **Server functions**
  - Server stub (skeleton)
  - Network routines

OS
4. Receive message: send it to server stub
5. Unmarshal parameters, call server function
6. Return from server function
7. Marshal return value and send message
8. Transfer message over network
9. Receive message: client stub is receiver

- **Client functions**
  - Client stub (proxy)
  - Network routines

- **Server functions**
  - Server stub (skeleton)
  - Network routines

**OS**
10. **Unmarshal** return value(s), return to client code

![Diagram showing the process of marshaling and unmarshaling data between client and server functions through stubs and network routines.](image-url)
A client proxy looks like the remote function

- Client proxy (stub) has the same interface as the remote function
- Looks & feels like the remote function to the programmer
  - But its function is to
    - Marshal parameters
    - Send the message
    - Wait for a response from the server
    - Unmarshal the response & return the appropriate data
    - Generate exceptions if problems arise
• RPC gives us a procedure call interface

• Writing applications is simplified
  – RPC hides all network code into stub functions
  – Application programmers don’t have to worry about details
    • Sockets, port numbers, byte ordering
RPC has challenges
RPC Issues

• Parameter passing
  – *Pass by value* or *pass by reference*?
  – All data must be sent in a **pointerless** representation

• Service binding. How do we locate the server endpoint?
  – Central database listing all services and their corresponding host & port #?
  – Or a database of services running on each server?

• Transport protocol
  – TCP? UDP? Both?

• When things go wrong
  – Opportunities for failure
When things go wrong

• **Semantics of remote procedure calls**
  – Local procedure call: *exactly once*

• Most RPC systems will offer either
  – *at least once* semantics
  – or *at most once* semantics

• Decide which to use based on the application
  – **idempotent** functions: may be run any number of times without harm
  – **non-idempotent** functions: those with side-effects

• Ideally – design your application to be idempotent … and stateless
  – Not always easy!
  – Store transaction IDs, previous return data, etc.
More issues

**Performance**
- RPC is slower … a lot slower than a local procedure call (why?)

**Security**
- messages may be visible over network – do we need to hide them?
- Authenticate client?
- Authenticate server?
Programming with RPC

Language support

– Many programming languages have no language-level concept of remote procedure calls
  (C, C++, Java <J2SE 5.0, …)
  • These compilers will not automatically generate client and server stubs

– Some languages have support that enables RPC
  (Java, Python, Haskell, Go, Erlang)
  • But we may need to deal with heterogeneous environments
    (e.g., Java communicating with a Python service)

Common solution

– Interface Definition Language (IDL): describes remote procedures

– A separate compiler generates client & server stubs (pre-compiler)
  • There are other terms: gRPC calls this a **generator**;
Interface Definition Language (IDL)

• Allow programmer to specify remote procedure interfaces (names, parameters, return values)

• IDL compiler can use this to generate client and server stubs
  – Marshaling code
  – Unmarshaling code
  – Network transport routines
  – Conform to defined interface

• An IDL looks similar to function prototypes
RPC compiler

Sometimes called a protocol compiler or an RPC compiler or a generator
Writing the program

• Client code has to be modified
  – Initialize RPC-related options
    • Identify transport type
    • Locate server/service
  – Handle failure of remote procedure calls

• Server functions
  – Generally need little or no modification
The End