

Working with Web Services

Consuming and Configuring Web Services in Xamarin's Mobile Platform

BRIEF

This tutorial introduces how to integrate REST, WCF and SOAP web service technologies with Xamarin mobile applications. It examines various service implementations, evaluates available tools and libraries to integrate them, and provides sample patterns for consuming service data. Finally, it provides a basic overview of creating a RESTful web service for consumption with a Xamarin mobile application.

Sample Code:

[sample code download link]

Related Microsoft Documentation:

[Using SLSvcUtil.exe to access a service](#)

[BasicHttpBinding](#)

Related Apple Documentation:

[NSURLRequest](#) / [NSMutableURLRequest](#)

[NSURLConnection](#)

Overview

As more and more mobile applications are dependent on the cloud in order to function properly (e.g. Twitter, Facebook, news apps etc.), integrating web services into mobile applications is an increasingly common scenario.

The Xamarin mobile frameworks have a wide array of support for web service integration, including, built-in and third-party APIs for integrating with RESTful, SOAP and WCF services.

In this article we examine how to utilize the Xamarin mobile framework including built-in and third-party APIs, as well as the associated tools to integrate various web service technologies, including:

- ➔ **REST Services** – REST (or RESTful) Services are an increasingly common paradigm for creating web services because of their simplicity and inherent platform agnostic approach. Many of the major service providers use REST, such as Twitter, Flickr, Facebook, etc. REST allows for stateless, cacheable, and simple to consume client-server architecture over HTTP. This article examines a number of third-party options for consuming REST services, including; RestSharp, ServiceStack, Json.NET, etc.
- ➔ **WCF Services** – WCF is a Microsoft specific web service technology that aims at abstracting implementation from transport and data technology. Xamarin mobile applications support the consumption of WCF services that are exposed via the *BasicHttpBinding* protocol, by using the Microsoft Silverlight SLSvcUtil.exe utility for client proxy generation.

- ➔ **SOAP Services** – SOAP is a standards-based web services technology that allows providers to abstract data and transport implementations over the web. Xamarin mobile applications support standard SOAP 1.1 implementations over HTTP. Additionally, we support the Microsoft specific SOAP implementation, ASP.NET Web Services (ASMX), which allows for implementation of standard SOAP, XML and JSON responses.

Additionally, this article gives a basic overview of creating REST services for applications from the server perspective using the Microsoft ASP.NET MVC framework.

REST Services

With MonoTouch and Mono for Android consuming RESTful services is an architecturally simple and performance conscious option. This section examines several mechanisms to interact with REST services from client applications, and introduce the various tools and patterns used to parse the common message formats.

Invoking the REST HTTP Request

The simplicity of standards-based RESTful architecture has helped make it the primary option for mobile applications, since client interaction requires basic access to HTTP in lieu of a complete SOAP runtime. In this section we introduce the following tools to help us interact with HTTP using it's inherent request-response pattern:

- ➔ [HttpWebRequest](#) / [WebClient](#) – `HttpWebRequest` is one of the most common low-level mechanisms for grabbing data from a REST service and is at the core of many of the convenience libraries mentioned below. *WebClient* is another convenience class included in the `System.Net` namespace.
- ➔ [RestSharp](#) – Is a library that includes support for HTTP requests ranging from simple to complex. This includes support for file download, complex authentication (including OAuth), async workflow, message serialization, chunking, etc.
- ➔ [Hammock](#) – Is another library that employs the philosophy of: “REST, made easy” throughout it's API. It follows a similar pattern to RestSharp and is used throughout the popular Twitter Client for .NET: [TweetSharp](#).
- ➔ [NSURLConnection](#) – `NSURLConnection` is a common mechanism for performing an HTTP request in Objective-C. It uses the *NSURLRequest* parameter to define the endpoint and has mechanisms for asynchronous invocation using *Grand Central Dispatch* queues
- ➔ [ServiceStack](#) – ServiceStack is a performant model-oriented web services framework with a client designed to make it easy to issue and serialize requests against REST services.

USING HTTPWEBREQUEST

Calling web services with `HttpWebRequest` involves:

- ➔ Creating the request instance for a particular URI.
- ➔ Setting various HTTP properties on the request instance.
- ➔ Retrieving an `HttpWebResponse` from the request.
- ➔ Reading data out of the response.

For example, the following code retrieves data from the *U.S. National Library of Medicine*:

```
var rxcui = "198440";
var request =
    HttpWebRequest.Create(string.Format(@"http://rxnav.nlm.nih.gov/REST/RxTerms/rxcui/{0}/allinfo", rxcui));
request.ContentType = "application/json";
request.Method = "GET";

using (HttpWebResponse response = request.GetResponse() as
    HttpWebResponse)
{
    if (response.StatusCode != HttpStatusCode.OK)
        Console.WriteLine("Error fetching data. Server returned status
code: {0}", response.StatusCode);
    using (StreamReader reader = new
        StreamReader(response.GetResponseStream()))
    {
        var content = reader.ReadToEnd();
        if (string.IsNullOrEmpty(content)) {
            Console.WriteLine("Response contained empty
body...");
        }
        else {
            Console.WriteLine("Response Body: \r\n {0}",
content);
        }

        Assert.NotNull(content);
    }
}
```

The above example creates an `HttpWebRequest` that will return data formatted as JSON. The data is returned in an `HttpWebResponse`, from which a `StreamReader` can be obtained to read the data.

USING RESTSHARP

Another way to consume REST services is using the [RestSharp](#) library. RestSharp includes encapsulates http requests, including support for retrieving results either as raw string content or as a deserialized C# object. For example, the following code makes a request to the same *RXTerm* service used earlier, and retrieves the results as a JSON formatted string.

```
var request = new RestRequest(string.Format("{0}/allinfo",
    rxcui));
```

```

request.RequestFormat = DataFormat.Json;
var response = Client.Execute(request);
if(string.IsNullOrEmpty(response.Content) ||
response.StatusCode != System.Net.HttpStatusCode.OK) {
    return null;
}
rxTerm = DeserializeRxTerm(response.Content);

```

The `DeserializeRxTerm` is some method that will take the raw JSON string from the `RestSharp.RestResponse.Content` property and convert it into a C# object. Deserializing data returned from web services is discussed later in this article.

USING NSURLConnection

In addition to classes available in the Mono base class library (*BCL*), such as `HttpWebRequest`, and third party C# libraries, such as `RestSharp`, native platform libraries are also available for consuming web services. For example, in iOS `NSURLConnection` and `NSMutableURLRequest` can be used.

The following code snippet shows how to call the same `RxTerm` service using the native iOS classes, exposed to C# through their `MonoTouch` bindings:

```

var rxcui = "198440";
var request = new NSMutableURLRequest(new
    NSURL(string.Format("http://rxnav.nlm.nih.gov/REST/RxTerms/rxcui/{
0}/allinfo", rxcui)),
    NSURLRequestCachePolicy.ReloadRevalidatingCacheData, 20);
request["Accept"] = "application/json";

var connectionDelegate = new RxTermNSURLConnectionDelegate();
var connection = new NSURLConnection(request, connectionDelegate);
connection.Start();

public class RxTermNSURLConnectionDelegate :
    NSURLConnectionDelegate
{
    StringBuilder _ResponseBuilder;
    public bool IsFinishedLoading { get; set; }
    public string ResponseContent { get; set; }

    public RxTermNSURLConnectionDelegate()
        : base()
    {
        _ResponseBuilder = new StringBuilder();
    }

    public override void ReceivedData(NSURLConnection
        connection, NSData data)
    {
        if(data != null) {
            _ResponseBuilder.Append(data.ToString());
        }
    }
}

```

```

        public override void FinishedLoading(NSURLConnection
connection)
        {
            IsFinishedLoading = true;
            ResponseContent = _ResponseBuilder.ToString();
        }
    }
}

```

Although they are available, native classes for calling web services should typically be limited to scenarios where some native code is being ported to C#. If possible, the pure managed libraries should be used, since they are platform agnostic and will make the code portable.

USING SERVICESTACK CLIENT

Another option for calling web services is the [Service Stack](#) library. Although Service Stack includes support for creating services, the focus here is on consuming services.

For example, the following code shows how to use Service Stack's `IServiceClient.GetAsync` method to issue a service request:

```

client.GetAsync<CustomersResponse>("",
    (response) => {
        foreach (var c in response.Customers) {
            Console.WriteLine(c.CompanyName);
        }
    },
    (response, ex) => {
        Console.WriteLine(ex.Message);
    });

```

Note: While tools like ServiceStack and RestSharp make it easy to call and consume REST services, it is sometimes non-trivial to consume XML or JSON that does not conform to the standard *DataContract* serialization conventions. If necessary, invoke the request and handle the appropriate serialization explicitly using the ServiceStack.Text library discussed below.

CALLING SERVICES ASYNCHRONOUSLY

When a web service is called synchronously, it blocks the main user interface thread, preventing the user from interacting the application. In order to alleviate this, use async operations to initiate the request on a background thread and callback to the main thread to display the data when the results are returned.

The following code from the sample application that accompanies this article illustrates how to call a service asynchronously:

```

public override void ViewDidAppear(bool animated)
{
    base.ViewDidAppear(animated);
    //Make Call to web service async here
    RxTermRestClient.GetRxTermAsync(_Concept.RXCUI,
    FinishedGettingDrugConcept);
}

```

```

private void FinishedGettingDrugConcept(RxTerm term)
{
    var section = new Section();
    section.Add(new StringElement("Brand Name: ", term.BrandName));
    //...create and add additional elements from response here

    using(var pool = new NSAutoreleasePool()) {
        pool.BeginInvokeOnMainThread(()=>{
            this.Root.Clear();
            this.Root.Add(section);
            this.TableView.ReloadData();
        });
    }
}

```

In the above code, the request is made from the *ViewDidAppear* method in the *UIViewController*. Once the results are returned from the service, the [BeginInvokeOnMainThread](#) method is called synchronize to the main thread in order to update the user interface. For more information on background tasks please see the guidance for [MonoTouch](#) and [Mono for Android](#), respectively.

Options for consuming RESTful data

After returning the response from an HTTP request, we may be interested in consuming the data in a structured format. This can be accomplished by deserializing the response into defined model objects. Of course, one of the benefits associated with using the Xamarin mobile frameworks is potential re-use of ubiquitous model objects employed throughout the overall application architecture. In this section we will look at the available mechanisms to consume RESTful responses in Plain-Old-XML (POX) and JSON and map these responses to objects:

- ➔ [System.Xml](#) / [System.Json](#) – included in the BCL are the standard classes provided in the System.Xml and System.Json namespaces included in the Silverlight profile. “X.Linq” or “Linq-to-XML” is also available in the [System.Xml.Linq](#) namespace.
- ➔ [NewtonSoft Json.NET](#) – Is a popular open source library for consuming JSON with support for converting between JSON and XML and [DataContract](#) attributes on model objects.
- ➔ [ServiceStack.Text](#) – Is an extremely [fast and compact](#) mechanism for serializing JSON and XML and also includes an elegant fluent interface for custom object mapping.

USING SYSTEM.XML.LINQ

Xamarin has support for using LINQ, including Linq to XML within mobile applications. The following example shows how to parse XML and populate a C# object inline:

```

var doc = XDocument.Parse(xml);
var result = doc.Root.Descendants("rxtermsProperties")
    .Select(x=> new RxTerm())

```

```

{
    BrandName = x.Element("brandName").Value,
    DisplayName = x.Element("displayName").Value,
    Synonym = x.Element("synonym").Value,
    FullName = x.Element("fullName").Value,
    FullGenericName = x.Element("fullGenericName").Value,
    //bind more here...
    RxCUI = x.Element("rxcai").Value,
});

```

USING SYSTEM.JSON

Xamarin mobile products also ship with support for JSON out of the box. By using a `JsonObject`, results can be retrieved as shown below:

```

var term = new RxTerm();
var obj = JsonObject.Parse(json);
var properties = obj["rxtermsProperties"];
term.BrandName = properties["brandName"];
term.DisplayName = properties["displayName"];
term.Synonym = properties["synonym"];
term.FullName = properties["fullName"];
term.FullGenericName = properties["fullGenericName"];
term.Strength = properties["strength"];

```

This is the familiar *key-value coding* style. However, it's important to be aware that the `System.Json` tools load the entirety of the data into memory. Additionally, Linq can also be used with JSON as well.

USING SERVICESTACK.TEXT

In addition to `System.Json`, various third party libraries from parsing JSON can be used. One such library is `ServiceStack.Text`, which is a high performance JSON serialization library.

The following example shows how to parse JSON using a `ServiceStack.Text.JsonObject`:

```

var result = JsonObject.Parse(json).Object("rxtermsProperties")
    .ConvertTo(x => new RxTerm {
        BrandName = x.Get("brandName"),
        DisplayName = x.Get("displayName"),
        Synonym = x.Get("synonym"),
        FullName = x.Get("fullName"),
        FullGenericName = x.Get("fullGenericName"),
        Strength = x.Get("strength"),
        RxTermDoseForm = x.Get("rxtermsDoseForm"),
        Route = x.Get("route"),
        RxCUI = x.Get("rxcai"),
        RxNormDoseForm = x.Get("rxnormDoseForm"),
    });

```


USING JSON.NET

Another library that works with Xamarin is [JSON.NET](#). The following code shows how to parse JSON using JSON.NET to populate a C# object:

```
var term = new RxTerm();
var properties = JObject.Parse(json)["rxtermsProperties"];
term.BrandName = properties["brandName"].Value<string>();
term.DisplayName = properties["displayName"].Value<string>();
term.Synonym = properties["synonym"].Value<string>();
term.FullName = properties["fullName"].Value<string>();
term.FullGenericName =
properties["fullGenericName"].Value<string>();
term.Strength = properties["strength"].Value<string>();
term.RxCUI = properties["rxcul"].Value<string>();
```

Consuming SOAP Services

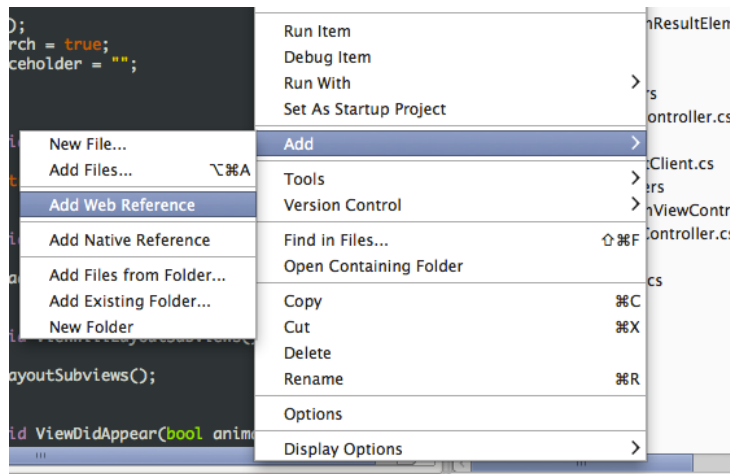
The Xamarin mobile frameworks support the ability to consume standard SOAP 1.1 services over the HTTP application layer transport protocol. SOAP services include support for standard SOAP 1.1 XML Messaging over HTTP and many of the standard *ASP.NET Web Services* (ASMX) service configurations.

Generating the Proxy

The first step in consuming SOAP services involves the generation of a *proxy*, which allows the client to connect to the service. A proxy is constructed by consuming service metadata that defines the methods and associated service configuration. This metadata is exposed in the form of a *Web Services Description Language* (WSDL) document.

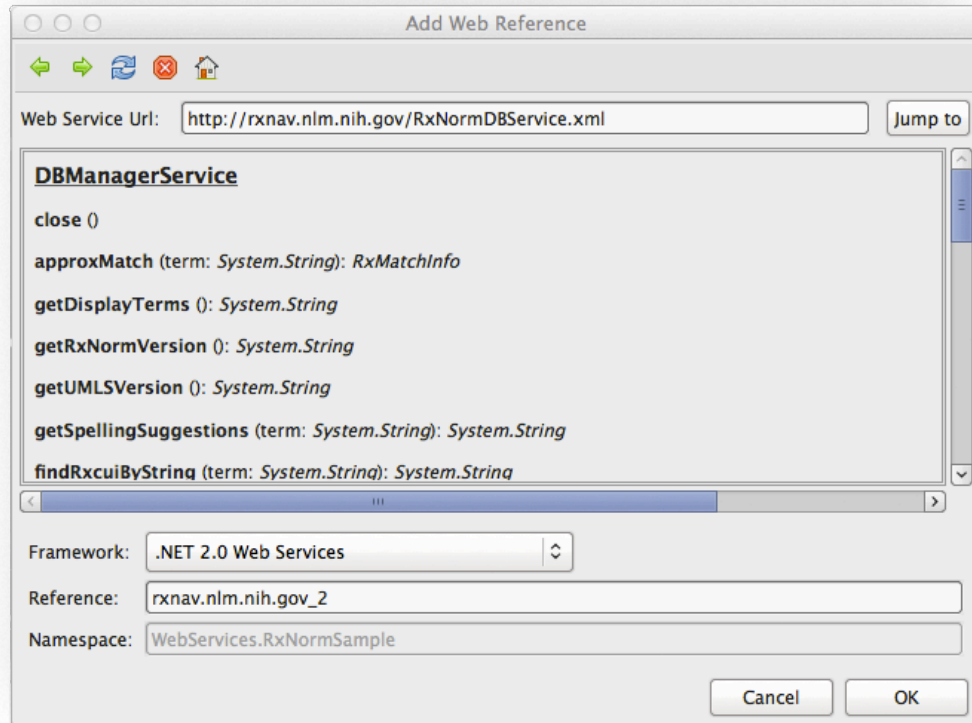
GENERATING A PROXY USING MONODEVELOP

MonoDevelop will take any compatible WSDL and generate a proxy against that definition document. As of MonoDevelop 2.8 you are not required to add a reference to *System.Web.Services* before adding the web reference, this will be handled automatically.



Web Service URL can either be a hosted remote resource or local file system resource accessible via the [file:///](#) path prefix, for example:

```
file:///Users/myUserName/projects/MyProjectName/service.wsdl
```



This adds an item in the Web or Services References folder of your project. Since a proxy is machine-readable generated code, it should not be modified.

MANUALLY ADDING A PROXY TO A PROJECT

If you have an existing proxy that has been generated using compatible tools, MonoDevelop can consume the output when included as part of your project. To include the proxy use the **Add files...** menu option in MonoDevelop. Manually including a generated proxy requires *System.Web.Services.dll* to be referenced explicitly using the **Add References...** dialog.

Invoking SOAP Services

Once we've configured the service to be compliant with the required transport binding and message format, calling these services is quite familiar:

```
var conceptGroup = _Service.getDrugs(text);  
PopulateResults(conceptGroup);
```

USING ASYNC METHODS WITH DELEGATES

Proxy generation creates a Completed- event and two asynchronous ("async") methods for each synchronous method generated in the proxy. These Begin- and

–Async methods both ship with *callback* and *userstate* parameters, which allows specification of the callback delegate and any state associated with the async invocation. Let's take a look at the workflow for this pattern using the sample code for this tutorial:

```
_Service.BegingetDrugs(text, (ar) => {
    var result = _Service.EndgetDrugs(ar);
    PopulateResults(result);
}, null);
```

USING ASYNC METHODS WITH COMPLETED EVENTHANDLERS

Proxy generation also creates an event to provide notifications related to the completion of an asynchronous method:

```
_Service = new DBManagerService();
_Service.getDrugsAsync(text);
_Service.getDrugsCompleted += Handle_ServicegetDrugsCompleted;

private void Handle_ServicegetDrugsCompleted(object sender,
getDrugsCompletedEventArgs args)
{
    if(args.Result == null)
        return;
    PopulateResults(args.Result);
}
```

UNSUBSCRIBING EVENTHANDLERS

As a general rule you should *unsubscribe* event handlers from the *publisher* after you are done with the callback. In this case the publisher is the `_Service` and removing the delegate is accomplished using the `-=` operation.

```
protected override void Dispose(bool disposing)
{
    base.Dispose(disposing);
    if(disposing) {
        _Service.getDrugsCompleted-= Handle_ServicegetDrugsCompleted;;
    }
}
```

Consuming WCF Services

MonoTouch enables us to consume the same *Windows Communication Foundation* (WCF) services as similar .NET clients. In general, MonoTouch supports the same client-side subset of WCF that ships with the Silverlight runtime. This includes the most common encoding and protocol implementations of WCF: text-encoded SOAP messages over the HTTP transport protocol using the [BasicHttpBinding](#).

Due to the size and complexity of the WCF framework, there may be current and future service implementations that will fall outside of the scope supported MonoTouch client-subset domain. In addition, WCF support requires the use of

tools only available in a Windows environment to generate the proxy. Therefore, WCF support should be considered “in preview.”

Generating the Proxy

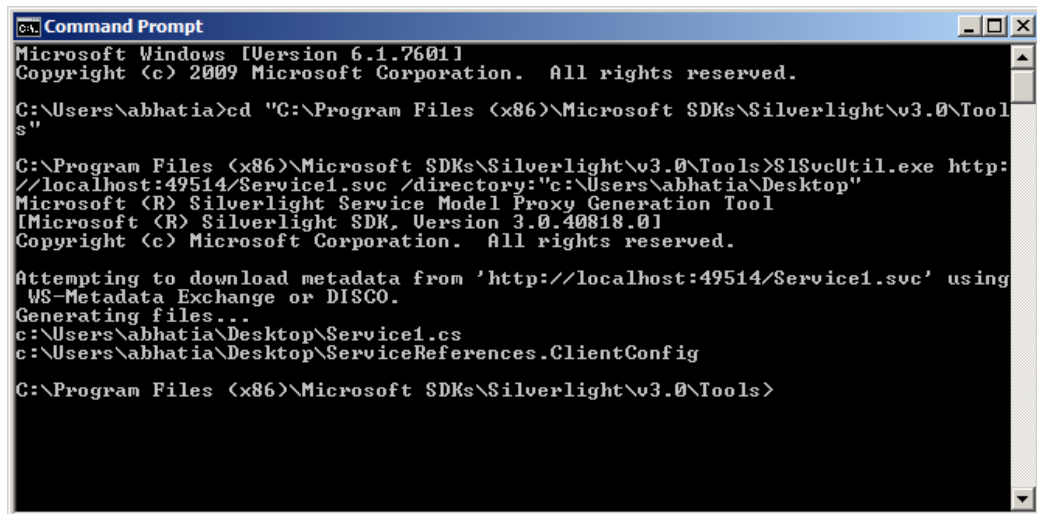
To generate a proxy to a WCF service for use in MonoTouch projects, use the Microsoft *Silverlight Service Model Proxy Generation Tool* (SLSvcUtil) that ships with the Silverlight SDK on Windows. This tool allows specifying additional arguments that may be required to maintain compliance with the service endpoint configuration.

To generate a proxy using SLSvcUtil, first launch the *Command Prompt* in Windows and navigate to the SDK tools directory via the following command:

```
cd C:\Program Files (x86)\Microsoft SDKs\Silverlight\v3.0\Tools
```

Then execute SLSvcUtil.exe using the WSDL endpoint address and a similar output directory as arguments:

```
SLSvcUtil.exe http://localhost:49514/Service1.svc  
directory:"c:\Users\abhatia\Desktop"
```



```
Microsoft Windows [Version 6.1.7601]  
Copyright (c) 2009 Microsoft Corporation. All rights reserved.  
  
C:\Users\abhatia>cd "C:\Program Files (x86)\Microsoft SDKs\Silverlight\v3.0\Tools"  
  
C:\Program Files (x86)\Microsoft SDKs\Silverlight\v3.0\Tools>SLSvcUtil.exe http://localhost:49514/Service1.svc /directory:"c:\Users\abhatia\Desktop"  
Microsoft (R) Silverlight Service Model Proxy Generation Tool  
[Microsoft (R) Silverlight SDK, Version 3.0.40818.01]  
Copyright (c) Microsoft Corporation. All rights reserved.  
  
Attempting to download metadata from 'http://localhost:49514/Service1.svc' using WS-Metadata Exchange or DISCO.  
Generating files...  
c:\Users\abhatia\Desktop\Service1.cs  
c:\Users\abhatia\Desktop\ServiceReferences.ClientConfig  
  
C:\Program Files (x86)\Microsoft SDKs\Silverlight\v3.0\Tools>
```

Finally, copy the output files onto the Mac OSX development environment and include them in the project using the **Add files...** dialog.

Configuring the Service Reference

Now that we’ve setup our service client proxy we have one final step before we are able to consume the service. This involves configuring the client against the service endpoint configuration. The client-side configuration generally varies depending on the service implementation. In this section we provide examples of common configuration options available to us when configuring our service client.

CONFIGURING SERVICE CLIENTS IN CODE

Configuring our generated proxy will generally take two configuration arguments (depending on SOAP 1.1/ASMX or WCF) during initialization: the `EndpointAddress` and/or the associated binding information, as shown in the example below:

```

var binding = new BasicHttpBinding () {
    Name= "basicHttpBinding",
    MaxReceivedMessageSize = 67108864,
};

binding.ReaderQuotas = new System.Xml.XmlDictionaryReaderQuotas() {
    MaxArrayLength = 2147483646,
    MaxStringContentLength = 5242880,
};

var timeout = new TimeSpan(0,1,0);
binding.SendTimeout= timeout;
binding.OpenTimeout = timeout;
binding.ReceiveTimeout = timeout;

client = new Service1Client (binding, new EndpointAddress
("http://192.168.1.100/Service1.svc"));

```

CALLING A WCF SERVICE WITH TRANSPORT SECURITY

WCF Services may employ transport level security in order to protect against interception of messages. Xamarin supports bindings that employ transport level security using SSL. However, there may be cases in which the stack may need to validate our certificate, which results in unanticipated behavior. We can override this validation step by placing our override step before any service invocations:

```

System.Net.ServicePointManager.ServerCertificateValidationCallback +=
(se, cert, chain, sslerror) => { return true; };

```

This will allow us to ignore the validation of the server-side certificate while maintaining transport encryption. However, this approach effectively disregards the trust concerns associated with the certificate and may not be appropriate. For more involved discussion and guidance please see, [Using Trusted Roots Respectfully](#).

CALLING A WCF SERVICE WITH CLIENT CREDENTIAL SECURITY

WCF Services may also require the service clients to authenticate using credentials. At this time MonoTouch does not support the WS-Security Protocol, which allows clients to send credentials inside the SOAP message envelope. However, MonoTouch does support the ability to send HTTP Basic Authentication credentials to the server by specifying the appropriate `ClientCredentialType`:

```

basicHttpBinding.Security.Transport.ClientCredentialType =
HttpClientCredentialType.Basic;

```

Then we can specify our basic authentication credentials:

```

client.ClientCredentials.UserName = new
System.ServiceModel.Security.UserNamePasswordClientCredential {
    UserName = @"foo",
    Password = @"mrsnuggles"
};

```

In the example above, if you get the message “Ran out of trampolines of type 0” in MonoTouch, you can increase the number of type 0 trampolines by adding the -aot “trampolines={number of trampolines}” argument to the build. See the [troubleshooting](#) doc for more information.

Sample Service

The code provided with this article includes a sample service implementation that demonstrates how to share models with a client.

SHARING SERVICE MODELS

The previous sections mentioned how MonoTouch allows us to use our server-side models in order to achieve more code reuse across our application infrastructure. To help illustrate this, the sample code that accompanies the article includes an ASP.NET MVC3 application that exposes a model class, along with a test client that reuses it.

Open the sample solution entitled *RestSample* in Visual Studio, navigate to `UserController.cs` class in the *Services* project and find the `GetUser` method, shown below:

```
public T GetUser<T>(int id)
{
    M.User user = new M.User()
    {
        FirstName = "FirstName" + Environment.TickCount,
        LastName = "LastName" + Environment.TickCount,
        EmailAddress = "EmailAddress" + Environment.TickCount,
    };

    return ControllerHelper.GetReturnObject<T>(user);
}
```

This is a mock method designed to return an *ActionResult* with the `User` model object serialized into the body of the HTTP response message.

In the associated *ConsoleTest* project, open the `Program.cs` file. In the `GetUser` method, we issue a request to the REST service, print the response to standard output, and finally deserialize the response to the `User` object:

```
HttpWebResponse response = GetWebResponse(url);

if(response != null) {
    using(StreamReader sr = new
    StreamReader(response.GetResponseStream())) {
        string result = sr.ReadToEnd();
        Console.WriteLine(result);

        user =
        Xamarin.Edu.ContentRepository.Web.Services.Helpers.Serializer.Deserialize<
        User>(result, type);
    }
}
```

As mentioned earlier, these requests are synchronous and will therefore block the main thread. For an optimal user experience, call REST services asynchronously as discussed in the section “Invoking the REST HTTP Request” earlier in this article.

Summary

This document covered various options for consuming web services seamlessly with MonoTouch. It also evaluated several tools and patterns for consuming SOAP, WCF, and REST services. Finally, it examined a basic sample application designed to help get started with creating web services.