0.1 ROS

The Robot Operating System (ROS) is a set of software libraries and tools that help you build robot applications. From drivers to state-of-the-art algorithms, and with powerful developer tools, [**?**] To effectively approach ROS programming, it's essential to first understand the foundational concepts of ROS and its package management system. We will explore key ROS components, including the ROS master, nodes, parameter server, messages, and services. Along the way, we will also discuss the necessary steps for installing ROS and initiating work with the ROS master.

In the subsequent sections, we will explore the following topics:

- Why ROS?

- the ROS filesystem level.

- ROS computation graph level.

- ROS community level.

TECHNICAL REQUIREMENTS

To follow this chapter, the only thing you need is a standard computer running Ubuntu 20.04 LTS or a Debian 10 GNU/Linux distribution.

Figure 1: Ubuntu 20.04

0.2 WHY ROS?

[**?**] *Robot Operating System (ROS)* is a flexible framework that provides various tools and libraries for writing robotic software. It offers several powerful features to help developers in tasks such as message passing, distributed computing, code reusing, and implementing state-of-the-art algorithms for robotic applications. The ROS project was started in 2007 by Morgan Quigley and its development continued at Willow Garage, a robotics research lab for developing hardware and open source software for robots. The goal of ROS was to establish a standard way to program robots while offering off-the-shelf software components that can be easily integrated with custom robotic applications. There are many reasons to choose ROS as a programming framework, and some of them are as follows:

0.2.1 High-end capabilities:

ROS comes with ready-to-use functionalities. For example, the *Simultaneous Localization and Mapping (SLAM)* and *Adaptive Monte Carlo Localization (AMCL)* packages in ROS can be used for having autonomous navigation in mobile robots, while the MoveIt package can be used for motion planning for robot manipulators. These capabilities can directly be used in our robot software without any hassle. In several cases, these packages are enough for having core robotics tasks on different platforms. Also, these capabilities are highly configurable; we can fine-tune each one using various parameters.

0.2.2 Tons of tools:

The ROS ecosystem is packed with tons of tools for debugging, visualizing, and having a simulation. The tools, such as *rqt_gui, RViz*, and *Gazebo*, are some of the strongest open source tools for debugging, visualization, and simulation. A software framework that has this many tools is very rare.

0.2.3 Support for high-end sensors and actuators:

ROS allows us to use different device drivers and the interface packages of various sensors and actuators in robotics. Such high-end sensors include 3D LIDAR, laser scanners, depth sensors, actuators, and more. We can interface these components with ROS without any hassle.

0.2.4 Inter-platform operability:

The ROS message-passing middleware allows communication between different programs. In ROS, this middleware is known as nodes. These nodes can be programmed in any

language that has ROS client libraries. We can write high-haveance nodes in C++ or C and other nodes in Python or Java.

0.2.5 Modularity:

One of the issues that can occur in most standalone robotic applications is that if any of the threads of the main code crash, the entire robot application can stop. In ROS, the situation is different; we are writing different nodes for each process, and if one node crashes, the system can still work.

0.2.6 Concurrent resource handling:

Handling a hardware resource via more than two processes is always a headache. Imagine that we want to process an image from a camera for face detection and motion detection; we can either write the code as a single entity that can do both, or we can write a single-threaded piece of code for concurrency. If we want to add more than two features to threads, the application behavior will become complex and difficult to debug. But in ROS, we can access devices using ROS topics from the ROS drivers. Any number of ROS nodes can subscribe to the image message from the ROS camera driver, and each node can have different functionalities. This can reduce the complexity in computation and also increase the debugging ability of the entire system.

Most high-end robotics companies are now porting their software to ROS. This trend is also visible in industrial robotics, in which companies are switching from proprietary robotic applications to ROS. Now that we know why it is convenient to study ROS, we can start introducing its core concepts. There are mainly three levels in ROS: the filesystem level, the computation graph level, and the community level. We will briefly have a look at each level.

0.3 THE ROS FILESYSTEM LEVEL

ROS is more than a development framework. We can refer to ROS as a meta-OS, since it offers not only tools and libraries but even OS-like functions, such as hardware abstraction, package management, and a developer toolchain. Like a real operating system, ROS files are organized on the hard disk in a particular manner, as depicted in the following diagram: Here are the explanations for each block in the filesystem:
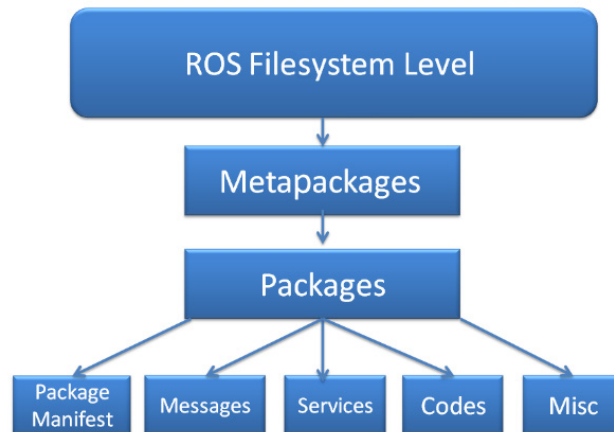

Figure 2: ROS filesystem level

- *Packages:* The ROS packages are a central element of the ROS software. They contain one or more ROS programs (nodes), libraries, configuration files, and so on, which are organized together as a single unit. Packages are the atomic build and release items in the ROS software.

- *Package manifest:* The package manifest file is inside a package and contains information about the package, author, license, dependencies, compilation flags, and so on. The package.xml file inside the ROS package is the manifest file of that package.

- *Metapackages:* The term metapackage refers to one or more related packages that can be loosely grouped. In principle, metapackages are virtual packages that don't contain any source code or typical files usually found in packages.

- *Metapackages manifest:* The metapackage manifest is similar to the package manifest, with the difference being that it might include packages inside it as runtime dependencies and declare an export tag.

- *Messages (.msg):* We can define a custom message inside the msg folder inside a package (my_package/msg/MyMessageType.msg). The extension of the message file is .msg.

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- *Services (.srv):* The reply and request data types can be defined inside the srv folder inside the package (my_package/srv/MyServiceType.srv).

- *Repositories:* Most of the ROS packages are maintained using a Version Control System (VCS) such as Git, Subversion (SVN), or Mercurial (hg). A set of files placed on a VCS represents a repository.

The following screenshot gives you an idea of the files and folders of a package that we are going to create in the upcoming sections:

```
ros_pkg
├── action
│   └── demo.action
├── CMakeLists.txt
├── include
│   └── ros_pkg
│       └── demo.h
├── msg
│   └── message.msg
├── src
│   └── demo.cpp
└── srv
    └── service.srv
```

Figure 3: List of files inside the package

0.4   ROS PACKAGES

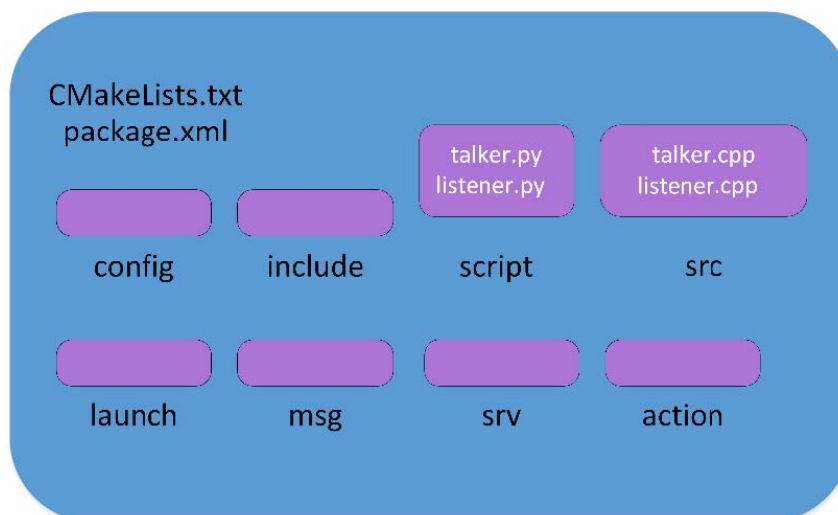The typical structure of a ROS package is shown here:

Figure 4: Structure of a typical C++ ROS package

- *config:* All configuration files that are used in this ROS package are kept in this folder. This folder is created by the user and it is a common practice to name the folder config as this is where we keep the configuration files.

- *include/package_name:* This folder consists of headers and libraries that we need to use inside the package. script: This folder contains executable Python scripts. In the block diagram, we can see two example scripts.

- *src:* This folder stores the C++ source codes.

- *launch:* This folder contains the launch files that are used to launch one or more ROS nodes.

- *msg:* This folder contains custom message definitions.

- *srv:* This folder contains the services definitions.

- *action:* This folder contains the action files.

- *package.xml:* This is the package manifest file of this package.

- *CMakeLists.txt:* This file contains the directives to compile the package.

We need to know some commands for creating, modifying, and working with ROS packages. Here are some of the commands we can use to work with ROS packages:

- *catkin_create_pkg:* This command is used to create a new package.

- *rospack:* This command is used to get information about the package in the filesystem.

- *catkin_make:* This command is used to build the packages in the workspace.

- *rosdep:* This command will install the system dependencies required for this package.

To work with packages, ROS provides a bash-like command called rosbash (http://wiki.ros.org/rosbash), which can be used to navigate and manipulate the ROS package. Here are some of the rosbash commands:

- *roscd:* This command is used to change the current directory using a package name, stack name, or a special location. If we give the argument a package name, it will switch to that package folder.

- *roscp:* This command is used to copy a file from a package.

- *rosed:* This command is used to edit a file using the vim editor.

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- *rosrun:* This command is used to run an executable inside a package.

The definition of package.xml in a typical package is shown in the following code:

```
Code Block 0.4.1:  Typical ROS Package.xml

<?xml version="1.0"?>
<package>
<name>hello world</name>
<vrsion>0.0.1</version>
<description>The hello world package</description>
<maintainer email="example@gmail.com">example</maintainer>
<buildtool_depend>catkin</buildtool_depend>
<buildtool_depend>roscpp</build_depend>
<build_depend>rospy</build_depend>
<build_depend>std_msgs</build_depend>
<run_depend>roscpp</run_depend>
<run_depend>rospy</run_depend>
<run_depend>std_msgs</run_depend>
<export>
</export> </package>
```

The package.xml file also contains information about the compilation.
The `<build_ depend></build_depend>` tag includes the packages that are necessary for building the source code of the package. The packages inside the `<run_depend></run_ depend>` tags are necessary for running the package node at runtime.

0.5   ROS METAPACKAGES

Metapackages are specialized packages that require only one file; that is, a package.xml file. Metapackages simply group a set of multiple packages as a single logical package. In the package.xml file, the metapackage contains an export tag, as shown here:

```
Code Block 0.5.1: Defining a ROS Metapackage with the package.xml File

<export>
<metapackage/>
</export>
```

Also, in metapackages, there are no `<buildtool_depend>` dependencies for catkin; there are only `<run_depend>` dependencies, which are the packages that are grouped inside the metapackage.

The ROS navigation stack is a good example of somewhere that contains metapackages. If ROS and its navigation package are installed, we can try using the following command by switching to the navigation metapackage folder:

Code Block 0.5.2: Navigating to the ROS Navigation Metapackage with roscd

```
roscd navigation
```

Open package.xml using your text editor (gedit, in the following case):

Code Block 0.5.3: Opening the package.xml File Using a Text Editor

```
gedit package.xml
```

This is a lengthy file; here is a stripped-down version of it:

Code Block 0.5.4: Structure of the package.xml metapackage

```xml
<?xml version="1.0"?>
<package>
<name>navigation</name>
<version>l. 14. O</version>
<description>
A 2D navigation stack that takes in information from
↪  odometry, sensor
streams, and a goal pose and outputs safe velocity
↪  commands that are sent
to a mobile base.
</description>
<url>http : //wiki.ros.org/navigation</url>
<buildtool_depend>catkin</buildtool_depend>
<run_depend>amcl</run_depend>
...
<export>
<metapackage/>
</export>
</package>
```

This file contains several pieces of information about the package, such as a brief description, its dependencies, and the package version.

0.6 ROS MESSAGES

ROS nodes can write or read data of various types. These different types of data are described using a simplified message description language, also called ROS messages. These data type descriptions can be used to generate source code for the appropriate message type in different target languages. Even though the ROS framework provides a large set of robotic-specific messages that have already been implemented, developers can define their own message type inside their nodes. The message definition can consist of two types: `fields` and `constants`. The field is split into field types and field names. The field type is the data type of the transmitting message, while the field name is the name of it.

Here is an example of message definitions:

Code Block 0.6.1: Example of ROS Message Definitions: Fields and Data Types

```
int32 number

string name

float32 speed
```

Here, the first part is the field type and the second is the field name. The field type is the data type, and the field name can be used to access the value from the message. For example, we can use msg.number to access the value of the number from the message.

Here is a table showing some of the built-in field types that we can use in our message:

Built-in Field Types for Message Definition			
Primitive type	**Serialization**	**C++**	**Python**
bool (1)	Unsigned 8-bit int	uint8_t (2)	bool
int8	Signed 8-bit int	int8_t	int
uint8	Unsigned 8-bit int	uint8_t	int (3)
int16	Signed 16-bit int	int16_t	int
uint16	Unsigned 16-bit int	uint16_t	int
int32	Signed 32-bit int	int32_t	int
uint32	Unsigned 32-bit int	uint32_t	int
int64	Signed 64-bit int	int64_t	long
uint64	Unsigned 64-bit int	uint64_t	long
float32	32-bit IEEE float	float	float
float64	64-bit IEEE float	double	float
string	ascii string (4)	std::string	string
time	secs/nsecs unsigned 32-bit ints	ros::Time	rospy.Time
duration	secs/nsecs signed 32-bit ints	ros::Duration	rospy.Duration

Table 1: Primitive types and their serialization in C++ and Python.

ROS provides a set of complex and more structured message files that are designed to cover a specific application's necessity, such as exchanging common geometrical (geometry_msgs) or sensor (sensor_msgs) information. These messages are composed of different primitive types. A special type of ROS message is called a message header. This header can carry information, such as time, frame of reference or frame_id, and sequence number. Using the header, we will get numbered messages and more clarity about which component is sending the current message. The header information is mainly used to send data such as robot joint transforms. Here is the definition of the header:

Code Block 0.6.2: ROS Message Header: Sequence, Timestamp, and Frame ID

```
uint32 seq

time stamp

string frame_id
```

The rosmsg command tool can be used to inspect the message header and the field types. The following command helps view the message header of a particular message:

```
rosmsg show std_msgs/Header
```

This will give you an output like the preceding example's message header. We will look at the `rosmsg` command and how to work with custom message definitions later in this chapter(section 0.10).

0.7   THE ROS SERVICES

ROS services are a type of request/response communication between ROS nodes. One node will send a request and wait until it gets a response from the other. Similar to the message definitions when using the .msg file, we must define the service definition in another file called .srv, which must be kept inside the `srv` subdirectory of the package.

An example service description format is as follows:

```
Code Block 0.7.1: ROS Services: Request and Response

        #Request message type
        string req
        ---
        #Response message type
        string res
```

The first section is the message type of the request, which is separated by —, while the next section contains the message type of the response. In these examples, both Request and Response are strings.

0.8   THE ROS COMPUTATION GRAPH LEVEL

Computation in ROS is done using a network of ROS nodes. This computation network is called the computation graph. The main concepts in the computation graph are ROS **nodes**, **master**, **parameter server**, **messages**, **topics**, **services**, and **bags**. Each concept in the graph is contributed to this graph in different ways.

The ROS communication-related packages, including core client libraries, such as roscpp and rospython, and the implementation of concepts, such as topics, nodes, parameters, and services, are included in a stack called ros_comm (http://wiki.ros.org/ros_comm).
This stack also consists of tools such as rostopic, rosparam, rosservice, and rosnode to introspect the preceding concepts.
The ros_comm stack contains the ROS communication middleware packages, and these packages are collectively called the **ROS graph layer**.
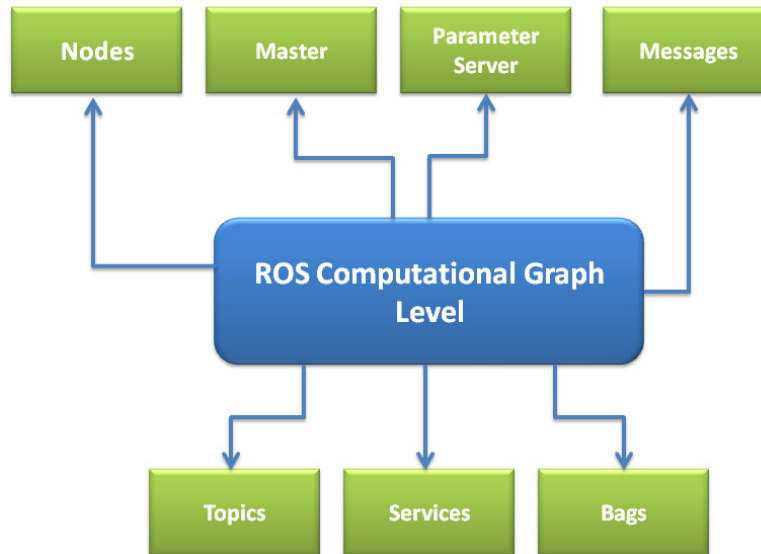
Figure 5: Structure of the ROS graph layer

0.8.1 Nodes

Nodes are the processes that have computation. Each ROS node is written using ROS client libraries. Using client library APIs, we can implement different ROS functionalities, such as the communication methods between nodes, which is particularly useful when the different nodes of our robot must exchange information between them. One of the aims of ROS nodes is to build simple processes rather than a large process with all the desired functionalities. Being simple structures, ROS nodes are easy to debug.

0.8.2 Master

The ROS master provides the name registration and lookup processes for the rest of the nodes. Nodes will not be able to find each other, exchange messages, or invoke services without a ROS master. In a distributed system, we should run the master on one computer; then, the other remote nodes can find each other by communicating with this master.

0.8.3 Parameter server

The parameter server allows you to store data in a central location. All the nodes can access and modify these values. The parameter server is part of the ROS master.

0.8.4 Topics

Each message in ROS is transported using named buses called topics. When a node sends a message through a topic, then we can say the node is publishing a topic. When a node receives a message through a topic, then we can say that the node is subscribing to a

topic. The publishing node and subscribing node are not aware of each other's existence. We can even subscribe to a topic that might not have any publisher. In short, the production of information and its consumption are decoupled. Each topic has a unique name, and any node can access this topic and send data through it so long as they have the right message type.

0.8.5 Logging

ROS provides a logging system for storing data, such as sensor data, which can be difficult to collect but is necessary for developing and testing robot algorithms. These are known as bagfiles. Bagfiles are very useful features when we're working with complex robot mechanisms.

The following graph shows how the nodes communicate with each other using topics:
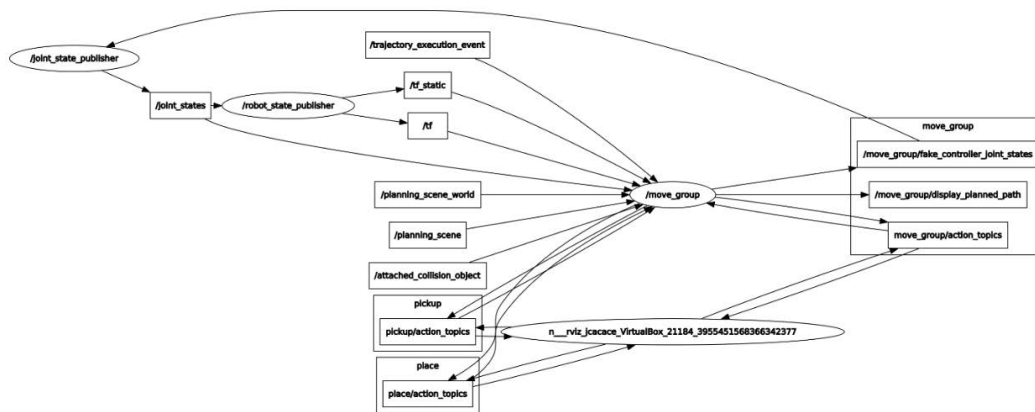
Figure 6: Graph of communication between nodes using topics

The topics are represented by rectangles, while the nodes are represented by ellipses. The messages and parameters are not included in this graph. These kinds of graphs can be generated using a tool called **rqt_graph** (http://wiki.ros.org/rqt_graph).

0.9   ROS NODES

ROS nodes have computations using ROS client libraries such as `roscpp` and `rospy`. A robot might contain many nodes; for example, one node processes camera images, one node handles serial data from the robot, one node can be used to compute odometry, and so on.

Using nodes can make the system fault-tolerant. Even if a node crashes, an entire robot system can still work. Nodes also reduce complexity and increase debug-ability compared to monolithic code because each node is handling only a single function.

All running nodes should have a name assigned to help us identify them. For example, /camera_node could be the name of a node that is broadcasting camera images.

There is a rosbash tool for introspecting ROS nodes. The `rosnode` command can be used to gather information about an ROS node. Here are the usages of **rosnode**:

- `rosnode info [node_name]`: This will print out information about the node.

- `rosnode kill [node_name]`: This will kill a running node.

- `rosnode list`: This will list the running nodes.

- `rosnode machine [machine_name]`: This will list the nodes that are running on a particular machine or a list of machines.

- `rosnode ping`: This will check the connectivity of a node.

- `rosnode cleanup`: This will purge the registration of unreachable nodes.

some example nodes that use the roscpp client and discuss how ROS nodes that use functionalities such ROS topics, service, messages, and actionlib work.

0.10 ROS MESSAGES

messages are simple data structures that contain field types. ROS messages support standard primitive data types and arrays of primitive types.

We can access a message definition using the following method. For example, to access std_msgs/msg/String.msg when we are using the roscpp client, we must include std_msgs/String.h for the string message definition.

In addition to the message data type, ROS uses an MD5 checksum comparison to confirm whether the publisher and subscriber exchange the same message data types.

ROS has a built-in tool called `rosmmsg` for gathering information about ROS messages. Here are some parameters that are used along with `rosmmsg`:

- `rosmmsg show [message_type]`: This shows the message's description.

- `rosmmsg list`: This lists all messages.

- `rosmmsg md5 [message_type]`: This displays md5sum of a message.

- `rosmmsg package [package_name]`: This lists messages in a package.

- `rosmmsg packages [package_1] [package_2]`: This lists all packages that contain messages.

0.11   ROS TOPICS

Using topics, the ROS communication is unidirectional. Differently, if we want a direct request/response communication, we need to implement ROS services. The ROS nodes communicate with topics using a TCP/IP-based transport known as **TCPROS**. This method is the default transport method used in ROS. Another type of communication is **UDPROS**, which has low latency and loose transport and is only suited for teleoperations. The ROS topic tool can be used to gather information about ROS topics. Here is the syntax of this command:

- **rostopic bw /topic**: This command will display the bandwidth being used by the given topic.

- **rostopic echo /topic**: This command will print the content of the given topic in a human-readable format. Users can use the -p option to print data in CSV format.

- **rostopic find /message_type**: This command will find topics using the given message type.

- **rostopic hz /topic**: This command will display the publishing rate of the given topic.

- **rostopic info /topic**: This command will print information about an active topic.

- **rostopic list**: This command will list all the active topics in the ROS system.

- **rostopic pub /topic message_type args**: This command can be used to publish a value to a topic with a message type.

- **rostopic type /topic**: This will display the message type of the given topic.

0.12   ROS SERVICES

In ROS services, one node acts as a ROS server in which the service client can request the service from the server. If the server completes the service routine, it will send the results to the service client. For example, consider a node that can provide the sum of two numbers that has been received as input while implementing this functionality through an ROS service. The other nodes of our system might request the sum of two numbers via this service. In this situation, topics are used to stream continuous data flows.

The ROS service definition can be accessed by the following method. For example, `my_package/srv/Image.srv` can be accessed by `my_package/Image`.

In ROS services, there is an MD5 checksum that checks in the nodes. If the sum is equal, then only the server responds to the client.

There are two ROS tools for gathering information about the ROS service. The first tool is **rossrv**, which is similar to **rosmmsg**, and is used to get information about service types. The next command is **rosservice**, which is used to list and query the running ROS services.

Let's explain how to use the rosservice tool to gather information about the running services:

- **rosservice call /service args**: This tool will call the service using the given arguments.

- **rosservice find service_type**: This command will find the services of the given service type.

- **rosservice info /services**: This will print information about the given service.

- **rosservice list**: This command will list the active services running on the system.

- **rosservice type /service**: This command will print the service type of a given service.

- **rosservice uri /service**: This tool will print the service's ROSRPC URI.

0.13 ROS BAGFILES

The **rosbag** command is used to work with rosbag files. A bag file in ROS is used for storing ROS message data that's streamed by topics. The .bag extension is used to represent a bag file.

Bag files are created using the **rosbag record** command, which will subscribe to one or more topics and store the message's data in a file as it's received. This file can play the same topics that they are recorded from, and it can remap the existing topics too.

Here are the commands for recording and playing back a bag file:

- **rosbag record [topic_1] [topic_2] -o [bag_name]**: This command will record the given topics into the bag file provided in the command. We can also record all topics using the -a argument.

- **rosbag play [bag_name]**: This will play back the existing bag file.

The full, detailed list of commands can be found by using the following command in a Terminal:

Code Block 0.13.1: ROS Bag Files: Recording and Playing Back Topic Data

```
rosbag play -h
```

There is a GUI tool that we can use to handle how bag files are recorded and played back called `rqt_bag`. To learn more about `rqt_bag`, go to `https://wiki.ros.org/rqt_bag`.

0.14   THE ROS MASTER

The ROS master is much like a DNS server, in that it associates unique names and IDs to the ROS elements that are active in our system. When any node starts in the ROS system, it will start looking for the ROS master and register the name of the node in it. So, the ROS master has the details of all the nodes currently running on the ROS system. When any of the node's details change, it will generate a callback and update the node with the latest details. These node details are useful for connecting each node.

When a node starts publishing to a topic, the node will give the details of the topic, such as its name and data type, to the ROS master. The ROS master will check whether any other nodes are subscribed to the same topic. If any nodes are subscribed to the same topic, the ROS master will share the node details of the publisher to the subscriber node. After getting the node details, these two nodes will be connected. After connecting to the two nodes, the ROS master has no role in controlling them. We might be able to stop either the publisher node or the subscriber node according to our requirements. If we stop any nodes, they will check in with the ROS master once again. This same method is used for the ROS services.

As we've already stated, the nodes are written using ROS client libraries, such as `roscpp` and `rospy`. These clients interact with the ROS master using **XML Remote Procedure Call (XMLRPC)**-based APIs, which act as the backend of the ROS system APIs.

The `ROS_MASTER_URI` environment variable contains the IP and port of the ROS master. Using this variable, ROS nodes can locate the ROS master. If this variable is wrong, communication between the nodes will not take place. When we use ROS in a single system, we can use the IP of a localhost or the name `localhost` itself. But in a distributed network, in which computation is done on different physical computers, we should define `ROS_MASTER_URI` properly; only then will the remote nodes be able to find each other and communicate with each other. We only need one master in a distributed system, and it should run on a computer in which all the other computers can ping it properly to ensure that remote ROS nodes can access the master.

The following diagram(fig. 7) shows how the ROS master interacts with publishing and subscribing nodes, with the publisher node publishing a string type topic with a `Hello World` message and the subscriber node subscribing to this topic: When the publisher node starts advertising the `Hello World` message in a particular topic, the ROS master gets the details of the topic and the node. It will check whether any node is subscribing to the same topic. If no nodes are subscribing to the same topic at that time, both nodes will remain un-
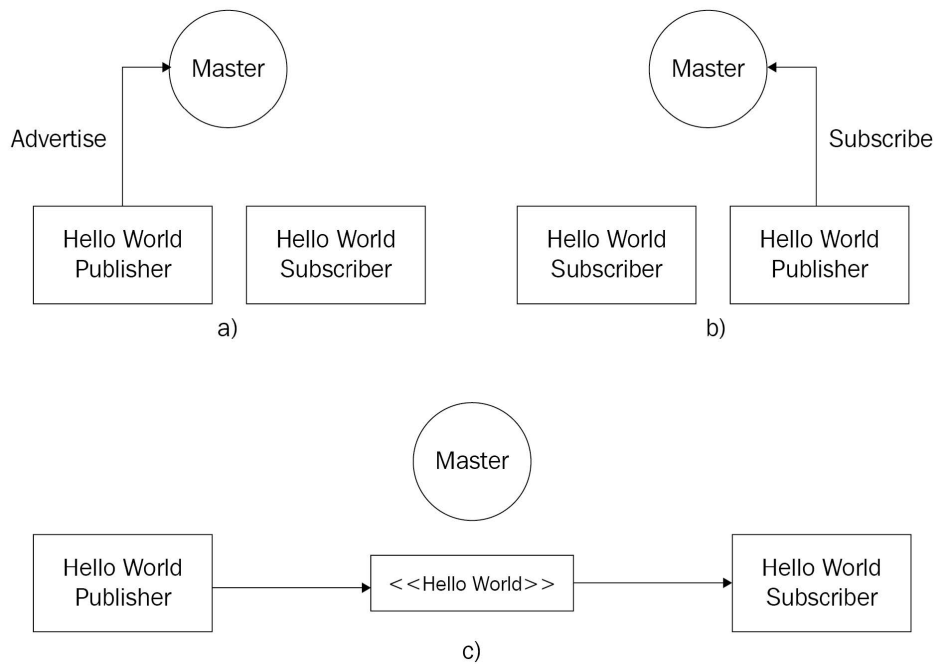
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Figure 7: Communication between the ROS master and Hello World publisher and subscriber

connected. If the publisher and subscriber nodes run at the same time, the ROS master will exchange the details of the publisher to the subscriber, and they will connect and exchange data through ROS topics.

0.15 ROS PARAMETER

When programming a robot, we might have to define robot parameters to tune our control algorithm, such as the robot controller gains P, I, and D of a standard proportional integral derivative controller. When the number of parameters increases, we might need to store them as files. In some situations, these parameters must be shared between two or more programs. In this case, ROS provides a parameter server, which is a shared server in which all the ROS nodes can access parameters from this server. A node can read, write, modify, and delete parameter values from the parameter server.

We can store these parameters in a file and load them into the server. The server can store a wide variety of data types and even dictionaries. The programmer can also set the scope of the parameter; that is, whether it can be accessed by only this node or all the nodes.

The parameter server supports the following XMLRPC data types:

- 32-bit integers

- Booleans

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- Strings

- Doubles

- ISO8601 dates

- Lists

- Base64-encoded binary data

We can also store dictionaries on the parameter server. If the number of parameters is high, we can use a YAML file to save them. Here is an example of the YAML file parameter definitions:

```
/camera/name : 'nikon' #string_type
/camera/fps : 30 #integer
/camera/exposure : 1.2 #float
/camera/active : true #boolean
```

The `rosparam` tool is used to get and set the ROS parameter from the command line. The following are the commands for working with ROS parameters:

- `rosparam set [parameter_name] [value]`: This command will set a value in the given parameter.

- `rosparam get [parameter_name]`: This command will retrieve a value from the given parameter.

- `rosparam load [YAML_file]`: The ROS parameters can be saved into a YAML file. It can load them into the parameter server using this command.

- `rosparam dump [YAML_file]`: This command will dump the existing ROS parameters into a YAML file.

- `rosparam delete [parameter_name]`: This command will delete the given parameter.

- `rosparam list`: This command will list existing parameter names.

These parameters can be changed dynamically when you're executing a node that uses these parameters by using the **dynamic_reconfigure** package (`http://wiki.ros.org/dynamic_reconfigure`).

0.16 ROS DISTRIBUTIONS

ROS updates are released with new ROS distributions. A new distribution of ROS is composed of an updated version of its core software and a set of new/updated ROS packages. ROS follows the same release cycle as the Ubuntu Linux distribution: a new version of ROS is released every 6 months. Typically, for each Ubuntu LTS version, an **LTS** version of ROS is released. **Long Term Support (LTS)** and means that the released software will be maintained for a long time (5 years in the case of ROS and Ubuntu).

Built-in Field Types for Message Definition				
Distro	**Release date**	**Poster**	**Turtle**	**EOL date**
ROS Noetic Ninjemys (Recom-mended)	May 23rd, 2020			May, 2025 (Focal EOL)
ROS Melodic Morenia	May 23rd, 2018			June 27, 2023 (Bionic EOL)
ROS Lunar Loggerhead	May 23rd, 2017			May, 2019
ROS Kinetic Kame	May 23rd, 2016			April, 2021 (Xenial EOL)

Table 3: ROS Distributions Table

0.17 RUNNING THE ROS MASTER AND THE ROS PARAMETER SERVER

Before running any ROS nodes, we should start the ROS master and the ROS parameter server. We can start the ROS master and the ROS parameter server by using a single command called **roscore**, which will start the following programs:

- `ROS master`
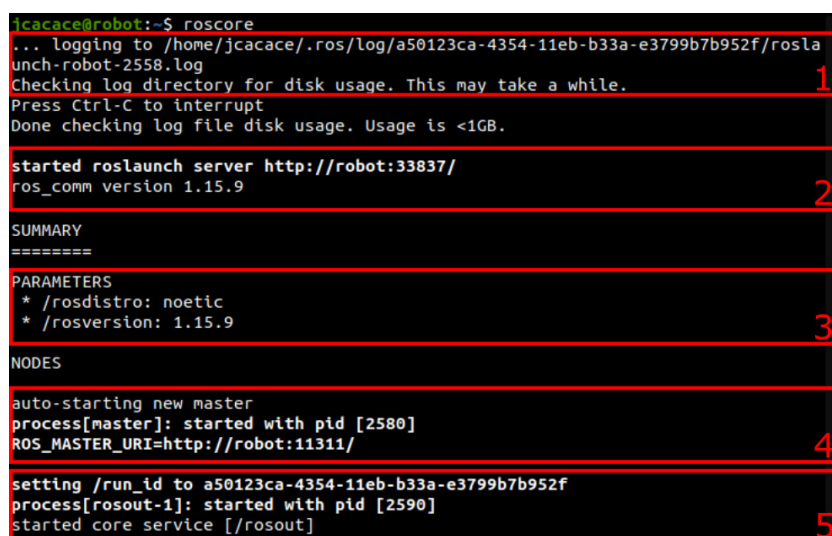
- `ROS parameter server`

- `rosout logging nodes`

The rosout node will collect log messages from other ROS nodes and store them in a log file, and will also re-broadcast the collected log message to another topic. The /rosout topic is published by ROS nodes using ROS client libraries such as roscpp and rospy, and this topic is subscribed by the rosout node, which rebroadcasts the message in another topic called /rosout_agg. This topic contains an aggregate stream of log messages. The roscore command should be run as a prerequisite to running any ROS nodes. The following screenshot shows the messages that are printed when we run the roscore command in a Terminal.

Use the following command to run `roscore` on a Linux Terminal:

Code Block 0.17.1: Starting the ROS Master

```
roscore
```

After running this command, we will see the following text in the Linux Terminal:

Figure 8: Terminal messages while running the roscore command

- In section 1, we can see that a log file is created inside the ˜/.ros/log folder for collecting logs from ROS nodes. This file can be used for debugging purposes.

- In section 2, the command starts a ROS launch file called `roscore.xml`. When a launch file starts, it automatically starts `rosmaster` and the ROS parameter server. The `roslaunch` command is a Python script, which can start `rosmaster` and the ROS parameter server whenever it tries to execute a launch file. This section shows the address of the ROS parameter server within the port.

- In section 3, we can see parameters such as `rosdistro` and `rosversion` being displayed in the Terminal. These parameters are displayed when it executes `roscore.xml`. We will look at `roscore.xml` in more detail in the next section.

- In section 4, we can see that the `rosmaster` node is being started with `ROS_MASTER_URI`, which we defined earlier as an environment variable.

- In section 5, we can see that the `rosout` node is being started, which will start subscribing to the `/rosout` topic and rebroadcasting it to `/rosout_agg`.

The following is the content of `roscore.xml`:

Code Block 0.17.2: Output of the roscore Command and the Structure of roscore.xml

```xml
<launch>
    <group ns="/">
        <param name="rosversion" command="rosversion roslaunch" />
        <param name="rosdistro" command="rosversion -d" />
        <node pkg="rosout" type="rosout" name="rosout"
         ↪   respawn="true"/>
    </group>
</launch>
```

When the `roscore` command is executed, initially, the command checks the command-line argument for a new port number for `rosmaster`. If it gets the port number, it will start listening to the new port number; otherwise, it will use the default port. This port number and the `roscore.xml` launch file will be passed to the `roslaunch` system. The `roslaunch` system is implemented in a Python module; it will parse the port number and launch the `roscore.xml` file.

In the `roscore.xml` file, we can see that the ROS parameters and nodes are encapsulated in a group XML tag with a / namespace. The group XML tag indicates that all the nodes inside this tag have the same settings.

The `rosversion` and `rosdistro` parameters store the output of the `rosversion roslaunch` and `rosversion -d` commands using the `command` tag, which is a part of the ROS param tag. The `command` tag will execute the command mentioned in it and store the output of the command in these two parameters.

`rosmaster` and the parameter server are executed inside `roslaunch` modules via the `ROS_MASTER_URI` address. This happens inside the `roslaunch` Python module. `ROS_MASTER_URI` is a combination of the IP address and port that `rosmaster` is going to listen to. The port number can be changed according to the given port number in the `roscore` command.

0.17.1   Checking the roscore command's output

Let's check out the ROS topics and ROS parameters that are created after running roscore. The following command will list the active topics in the Terminal:

Code Block 0.17.3: Listing Active Topics After Running the roscore Command

```
rostopic list
```

The list of topics is as follows, as per our discussion of the rosout node's subscribe /rosout topic. This contains all the log messages from the ROS nodes. /rosout_agg will rebroadcast the log messages:

Code Block 0.17.4: Active Topics After Running roscore: /rosout and /rosout_agg

```
/rosout
/rosout_agg
```

The following command lists the parameters that are available when running roscore. The following command is used to list the active ROS parameter:

Code Block 0.17.5: Listing Active ROS Parameters After Running roscore

```
rosparam list
```

These parameters are mentioned here; they provide the ROS distribution name, version, the address of the roslaunch server, and run_id, where run_id is a unique ID associated with a particular run of roscore:

Code Block 0.17.6: ROS Parameters Available After Running roscore

```
/rosdistro
/roslaunch/uris/host_robot_virtualbox_51189
/rosversion
/run_id
```

The list of ROS services that's generated when running roscore can be checked by using the following command:

Code Block 0.17.7: Listing ROS Services Generated by roscore

```
rosservice list
```

The list of services that are running is as follows:

Code Block 0.17.8: Active ROS Services After Running roscore

```
/rosout/get_loggers
/rosout/set_logger_level
```

These ROS services are generated for each ROS node, and they are used to set the logging levels.