CS4099 - Nintendo Wii Over IP

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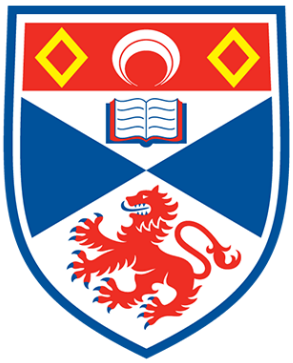
19th March 2025



University of
St Andrews

Abstract

The Nintendo Wii is well-known for its innovative, motion-based controls and engaging, family-friendly games such as Mario Kart Wii. Despite its hardware limitations compared to modern consoles, its local multiplayer experiences have cultivated a devoted following. However, with the rapid shift toward online gaming, recreating the Wii's in-person, split-screen experiences has become increasingly challenging. This project proposes a solution that vitalises the Wii's input and output interfaces, enabling remote players to enjoy an experience that mirrors local multiplayer gaming.

The approach centres on two key components. First, video and audio streaming techniques capture the Wii's outputs and deliver them to remote devices using low-latency protocols. This ensures fluid gameplay and preserves the authenticity of the original experience. Second, a novel controller input relay system transmits Wiimote signals, including motion and button inputs, over a network. This system addresses challenges such as Bluetooth communication, network variability, and precise synchronisation between audiovisual and control data, ensuring real-time responsiveness.

By bridging the gap between traditional local multiplayer and modern online connectivity, this project extends the life of a beloved console while revitalising classic gaming experiences. Furthermore, it establishes a framework for adapting retro systems to contemporary, distributed gaming environments. The work not only preserves the social and communal essence of local play but also offers broader implications for making nostalgic gaming experiences accessible to players across geographically separated locations.

Declaration

I declare that the material submitted for assessment is my own work except where credit is explicitly given to others by citation or acknowledgement. This work was performed during the current academic year except where otherwise stated.

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Acknowledgements

I would like to thank my supervisor Dr Tom Spink for his encouragement, support and counsel throughout my Senior Honours project. I would also like to thank my girlfriend, family and friends for their support and encouragement throughout my time at the University of St Andrews. Finally, I would like to thank the School of Computer Science's Systems Team for their continuous help.

Contents

Introduction

Context Survey

This section surveys the broader context of the project by reviewing the historical background, key technologies, and recent initiatives that align with the aim of vitalising local multiplayer experiences. In particular, it examines the Nintendo Wii's ecosystem, the evolution of its input devices, and the supporting technologies that have enabled both commercial and experimental adaptations.

2.1. The Nintendo Wii and Its Ecosystem

Released by Nintendo in 2006, the Wii quickly became renowned for its innovative motion-based controls and engaging titles. Central to its appeal was the Wii Remote (Wiimote), a wireless controller equipped with accelerometers, infrared sensors, and traditional button inputs. These features enabled intuitive, physical interactions, helping to bridge the gap between digital gameplay and physical movement. Over time, the Wii's local multiplayer format—often characterised by split-screen or shared-screen experiences—cemented its legacy as a console that prioritised communal play.

2.2. Relevant Hardware and Software Technologies

Modern adaptations of the Wii experience leverage a range of hardware and software tools:

- **WiimoteEmulator[1]:** This publicly available project on GitHub allows for the emulation of Wii Remote signals, enabling a real Wii console to interface with a computer acting as an external controller. By emulating the communication protocol of the Wiimote, the project provides a basis for further experimentation with input methods. In the context of this dissertation, a fork of the `WiimoteEmulator` has been extended to accept IR and accelerometer data from across a network. This extension is key to bridging remote inputs with local emulation.

- **xwiimote Library[2]:** To capture real Wiimote input, the `xwiimote` library has been employed. Running on a Raspberry Pi, this library facilitates the interfacing of physical Wiimote hardware with software, thereby enabling the capture and processing of motion and button data. This data is then routed through a custom Python script that integrates with the extended emulation system, ensuring that remote control signals are correctly interpreted.
- **Raspberry Pi:** The Raspberry Pi serves as a versatile, low-cost computing platform that supports the integration of various peripherals and communication protocols. In this project, the Raspberry Pi is used to capture Wiimote data from a client machine and relay it to the emulation system on the host machine which interfaces with the Nintendo Wii console.

2.3. Recent Work and Similar Endeavours

The landscape of remote gaming and controller emulation is relatively niche, with few projects addressing the dual challenge of low-latency audiovisual streaming and precise controller input relay. Beyond the core WiimoteEmulator project, the following points are noteworthy:

- **Controller Emulation for Legacy Consoles:** Prior research has largely focused on the emulation of input devices for legacy consoles in order to preserve or extend their operational lifespan. Such projects have typically emphasised local connectivity and hardware replication. The extension to network-based control—wherein sensor data such as IR and accelerometer signals are transmitted remotely—is less common and represents a novel contribution of this work.
- **Remote Gaming Frameworks:** In recent years, there has been increased interest in remote gaming solutions, driven by advancements in streaming protocols and low-latency communication. While many contemporary projects target high-end gaming platforms, the retro gaming sphere has seen fewer contributions that successfully bridge the gap between traditional, hardware-based control schemes and modern, networked gameplay.
- **Tool and Technology Integration:** The use of open-source libraries such as `xwiimote` alongside custom software modifications to existing projects (e.g., the `WiimoteEmulator` fork) illustrates a growing trend in leveraging community-driven tools to solve complex emulation challenges. Although

a comprehensive body of literature specific to this integration is still emerging, the available work provides a solid foundation for exploring how retro systems can be adapted for contemporary, distributed gaming environments.

Requirements Specification

3.1. Functional Requirements

- **Video and Audio Capture and Streaming:** The system shall capture the Wii's video and audio outputs and stream them to remote players with minimal latency. This functionality is critical to preserve the fluid, immersive experience typical of classic Wii titles.
- **Controller Input Relay:** The solution must reliably capture and transmit Wii Remote inputs—including motion data and button presses—over a low-latency network connection. This bi-directional communication is essential for maintaining the real-time responsiveness expected in interactive gameplay.
- **Synchronization:** To ensure a seamless gaming experience, audiovisual data and controller inputs must be synchronized. The system should adjust for network variability and maintain precise timing to replicate local multiplayer dynamics.

3.2. Non-Functional Requirements

- **Performance:** The system must operate under strict low-latency conditions to minimize delay and jitter. Efficient processing and optimized data streaming protocols are required.
- **Reliability and Robustness:** The solution should tolerate variations in network quality, ensuring continuous, stable operation even under less-than-ideal conditions.
- **Usability:** An intuitive interface and straightforward setup process should be provided, enabling users to connect and enjoy games with minimal technical intervention.
- **Evaluation:** Comprehensive testing in real-world environments is necessary. Both quantitative performance metrics and qualitative user feedback will be gathered to assess the overall experience.

Implementation

Evaluation

5.1. Challenges and Solutions

5.2. Limitations

5.3. Reflection and Future Work

Conclusion

References

[1] Ryan Conrad (rnconrad). *WiimoteEmulator*. https://github.com/rnconrad/WiimoteEmulator. (Visited on 19/03/2025).

[2] xwiimote. *xwiimote*. https://github.com/xwiimote/xwiimote. (Visited on 19/03/2025).

A. Ethics Approval Form

UNIVERSITY OF ST ANDREWS
TEACHING AND RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE (UTREC)
SCHOOL OF COMPUTER SCIENCE
PRELIMINARY ETHICS SELF-ASSESSMENT FORM

This Preliminary Ethics Self-Assessment Form is to be conducted by the researcher, and completed in conjunction with the Guidelines for Ethical Research Practice. All staff and students of the School of Computer Science must complete it prior to commencing research.

This Form will act as a formal record of your ethical considerations.
Tick one box

- ☐ **Staff Project**
- ☐ **Postgraduate Project**
- ☒ **Undergraduate Project**

Title of project

Nintendo Wii over IP

Name of researcher(s)

Kieran Fowlds

Name of supervisor (for student research)

Dr Tom Spink

OVERALL ASSESSMENT (to be signed after questions, overleaf, have been completed)

Self audit has been conducted **YES** ☒ **NO** ☐

There are no ethical issues raised by this project

Signature Student or Researcher

Print Name

Kieran Fowlds

Date

26/09/2024

Signature Lead Researcher or Supervisor

Print Name

Dr Tom Spink

Date

30/09/24

This form must be date stamped and held in the files of the Lead Researcher or Supervisor. If fieldwork is required, a copy must also be lodged with appropriate Risk Assessment forms. The School Ethics Committee will be responsible for monitoring assessments.

Computer Science Preliminary Ethics Self-Assessment Form

Research with secondary datasets

Please check UTREC guidance on secondary datasets (https://www.st-andrews.ac.uk/research/integrity-ethics/humans/ethical-guidance/secondary-data/ and https://www.st-andrews.ac.uk/research/integrity-ethics/humans/ethical-guidance/confidentiality-data-protection/). Based on the guidance, does your project need ethics approval?

YES ☐ **NO** ☒

** If your research involves secondary datasets, please list them with links in DOER.*

Research with human subjects

Does your research involve collecting personal data on human subjects?

YES ☐ **NO** ☒

If YES, full ethics review required

Does your research involve human subjects or have potential adverse consequences for human welfare and wellbeing?

YES ☐ **NO** ☒

If YES, full ethics review required
For example:
Will you be surveying, observing or interviewing human subjects?
Does your research have the potential to have a significant negative effect on people in the study area?

Potential physical or psychological harm, discomfort or stress

Are there any foreseeable risks to the researcher, or to any participants in this research?

YES ☐ **NO** ☒

If YES, full ethics review required
For example:
Is there any potential that there could be physical harm for anyone involved in the research?
Is there any potential for psychological harm, discomfort or stress for anyone involved in the research?

Conflicts of interest

Do any conflicts of interest arise?

YES ☐ **NO** ☒

If YES, full ethics review required
For example:
Might research objectivity be compromised by sponsorship?
Might any issues of intellectual property or roles in research be raised?

Funding

Is your research funded externally?

YES ☐ **NO** ☒

If YES, does the funder appear on the 'currently automatically approved' list on the UTREC website?

YES ☐ **NO** ☒

If NO, you will need to submit a Funding Approval Application as per instructions on

the UTREC website.

Research with animals

Does your research involve the use of living animals?

YES ☐ **NO** ☒

If YES, your proposal must be referred to the University's Animal Welfare and Ethics Committee (AWEC)

University Teaching and Research Ethics Committee (UTREC) pages
http://www.st-andrews.ac.uk/utrec/