

Building Embedded Operating System with IMGUI Demo for *Raspberry π - 4 - model B* with *Yocto*

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1 introduction

These instructions[4] follow the configuration and build of a Linux-based operating system for *Raspberry π - 4 - model B*[6] with *Yocto*[2]. Find project overview in [5].

The *operating system* (OS) build is done in several steps organized in corresponding sections as follows. Read in Section 2 how to fetch *metadata*. Section 3 shows how to configure the OS build. In Section 4 learn how to build the OS *image* and see how to copy *image* to *SD* card in Section 5. Section 6 is dedicated to post-install issues like the configuration of the WiFi interface from the command line.

2 metadata

Metadata is a set of instructions to build targets. It is organized in *recipe* files with the *.bb* suffix. Further there are *class* files with the suffix *.bbclass* with information shared between *recipes*. Finally, there are configuration files with the extension *.conf*. These define configuration variables to control the build process. *Metadata* is organized in *layers*. Layers logically separate information of a project. *OpenEmbedded*[1] defines the following layer types.

- base layers contain base *metadata* for the build
- machine aka *board support package* (BSP) layers include *hardware* (HW) support
- distribution layers hold the policy configuration
- *software* (SW) layers are used for additional SW
- miscellaneous layers do not fall in upper categories

The complete list of *github* SW *metadata* repositories used in this project includes *Yocto* layers, the *Raspberry π - 4 - model B* BSP layer, a SW layer with custom recipes, and the build configuration itself. Please refer [5] for details.

In short, users fetch *metadata* in contrast to the *real data* fetched by *bitbake* during OS build. See Section 4 for details. It is an user decision where to put fetched *metadata*. However, it is nice to have all layer sub-directories in one location. In these instructions this location is referred as <layer_directory>. The second directory to create is the <build_directory>. This is where the build and build configuration live. I suggest that this one is not inside the <layer_directory> to not mix *data* and *metadata*.

It is very likely that you will need to install *Yocto* requirements[3] to be able to run *bitbake*. Make sure to have the following command-line tools on your host machine: *chrpath*, *diffstat*, *lz4c*, *rpcgen*; Also have a look at your storage device. Fetched data requires 400 *Mb*, but for the build prepare at least 10 *Gb* of free space.

I have a shell script to fetch *metadata* from public *github* repositories. This modification may serve people to build their own OS for *Raspberry π - 4 - model B*. Reading the script may help advanced users to follow the fetch, initialisation and a check of installed layers.

```
#!/usr/bin/env sh
# metafetch.sh
# fetch rpi metadata

BRANCH=kirkstone

while getopts ":l:b:r:h" option; do
    case $option in
        h) echo usage: $0 -l layerdir -b buildir -r branch; exit 420;;
        \?) echo minimal usage: $0 -l layerdir -b buildir; exit 420;;
        l) LAYER=$OPTARG;;
        b) BUILD=$OPTARG;;
        r) BRANCH=$OPTARG;;
    esac
done

nodat() { echo $1; exit 111; }
nodir() {
    echo error: $1 is not a directory && mkdir $1 &&
    echo info: directory $1 created ||
    exit 111;
}

[ -n "$LAYER" ] || nodat 'specify layer directory'
[ -n "$BUILD" ] || nodat 'specify build directory'
[ -d $LAYER ] || nodir $LAYER
[ -d $BUILD ] || nodir $BUILD

LAYER=$(realpath $LAYER) && echo fetching $BRANCH in $LAYER
BUILD=$(realpath $BUILD) && echo fetching configuration in $BUILD

git clone -b $BRANCH git@github.com:yoctoproject/poky.git $LAYER/poky
git clone -b $BRANCH git@github.com:openembedded/meta-openembedded.git $LAYER/oe
git clone -b $BRANCH git@github.com:agherzan/meta-raspberrypi $LAYER/rpi/meta-raspberrypi
git clone git@github.com:kaloyanski/meta-thc.git $LAYER/thc/meta-thc
git clone git@github.com:TripleHelixConsulting/rpiconf.git $BUILD/conf

sed -i s#/home/yocto/layer/$LAYER#g $BUILD/conf/bblayers.conf
source $LAYER/poky/oe-init-build-env $BUILD
bitbake-layers show-layers
# bitbake core-image-x11

exit 0
```

Download *metafetch.sh* [here](#). It is designed in a way that after a succesful run you may start a build with *bitbake*. The script takes <layer_directory> and <build_directory> from the command-line.

You may use next commands to run *metafetch.sh*. The first one is a minimal example. The default *Yocto branch* is *kirkstone*. You may want to specify another *branch* with the second command.

```
./metafetch -l <layer_directory> -b <build_directory>  
./metafetch -l <layer_directory> -b <build_directory> -r <branch_name>
```

3 configuration

After the last command from the previous section there should be two files in `<build_directory>/conf`, namely *local.conf* and *bblayers.conf*.

The path to *Yocto* layers is specified in *bblayers.conf*. Layer locations are wrong because most probably your `<layer_directory>` is not */home/yocto/layer*. Change this to correspond layers system path.

The build configuration is in *local.conf*. This should work as it is. Variables in this file control the build. I call them directives to avoid repetitions. Many directives are not covered in these instructions. Please refer *bitbake* documentation for details. It is not always easy to understand the meaning and the relations between different directives. What is more, *bitbake* syntax is pretty complicated. In short, your life can easily become unbearable if the build configuration is too long.

3.1 MACHINE

No doubt, this is the most important directive, set here to *raspberrypi4-64*. You may want to change this value if you build an [OS](#) for a different [HW](#). If you want to examine [OS](#) built for *Raspberry π - 4 - model B* on your host machine with *qemu*, set *MACHINE* to *qemuarm64*. I confirm that this works although I did not find this approach very useful to test a *graphical user interface* ([GUI](#)).

3.2 PACKAGE_INSTALL

This is where to specify additional [SW](#) packages. This is useful for packages not included in the *image* by default. In my experience, the default [OS](#) has all necessary programs or compact alternatives. However this is the directive used to append *imgui*.

3.3 IMAGE_FSTYPES

This is another important directive. Here I have removed archived *images* that I do not need to decrease the built time and added the *wic* format to have an *image* file ready to be copied to the *SD* card immediately after the build. See [Section 5](#) for details.

4 build

Yocto provides a list of image types. For obvious reasons, I have chosen *core-image-x11*^[2] - a very basic X11 image with a terminal.

The primary build tool of *OpenEmbedded* based projects, such as the *Yocto* project, *bitbake*, works in the `<build_directory>`. Here is a list of the most important sub-directory names by default. These are configurable but usually there is no need to change their default names.

- `<build_directory>/conf` - build (*local.conf*) and layer (*bblayers.conf*) configuration files
- `<build_directory>/downloads` - fetched source code archives
- `<build_directory>/tmp/work` - working directory where source code is extracted, configured, compiled and installed
- `<build_directory>/tmp/deploy/ipk` - final [SW](#) packages in *ipk* format
- `<build_directory>/tmp/deploy/images/raspberrypi4-64` - boot files, compiled kernels and [OS images](#).

First, you need to initialize build environment.

```
source <layer_directory>/poky/oe-init-build-env <build_directory>
```

This will change your system path to `<build_directory>`. You may run now next command to check the project layers.

```
bitbake-layers show-layers
```

If this is fine, the following command is going to build the [OS image](#).

```
bitbake core-image-x11
```

task	description
do_fetch	fetch the source code
do_unpack	unpack the source code
do_patch	apply patches to the source
do_configure	source configuration
do_compile	compile the source code
do_install	copy files to the holding area
do_package	analyse holding area
do_package_write_ipk	create <i>ipk</i> package
do_package_qa	quality checks on the package

Table 1: A list of *bitbake* tasks

Be patient because, unless your host machine is a supercomputer, this will take hours. Find a list of tasks performed by *bitbake* for a typical [SW](#) package in Table 1.

5 install

The [OS](#) includes a kernel *ARM*, 64 *bit* boot executable *image* of 23MB, a *Raspberry π - 4 - model B* configuration of Linux 5.15. The total size of kernel modules is 21MB. Happily this kernel release has a *long – term support* ([LTS](#)).

Yocto provides multiple package and *image* formats. Further, different ways exist to install *images* on *SD* card. The result is an [OS](#) with two partitions - */root* and */boot*. There are not *swap* and *home* partitions. I recommend the classic command-line tool *dd* to copy data. It works fine with different *image* formats like *rpi – sdimg*, *hddimg* and *wic*. The last format is recommended. Find the card device name, usually */dev/sda*, unmount it with *umount* if mounted, and do copy data with a simple command

```
dd if=core-image-x11-raspberrypi4-64.wic of=/dev/sda status=progress
```

note 1: run this command in `<build_directory>/tmp/deploy/images/raspberrypi4-64`

note 2: run this command with *root* privileges

note 3: be careful to not specify the device name of your hard drive (see note 2)

The transfer is going to take a while. Once it is over, put the card in you *Raspberry π - 4 - model B* and turn it on. That's it.

6 run

Connected embedded systems can communicate to one another and to cloud-based *platform-as-a-service* (PaaS) solutions. In addition, a remote control may be required. An *secure shell* (SSH) server is a standard solution for both problems.

Wireless connection is established via classic command-line tools like *ip*, *iw*, *dhcpcd*, and *wpa_supplicant*. Custom shell scripts are installed in */usr/bin*, as well as a running GUI example to demonstrate the usage of the *Dear ImGui* library. Once an *internet protocol* (IP) address is assigned, the SSH server by *Dropbear* allows for a secured remote login, remote control and file transfer.

7 outlook

This reports the progress in the development of a custom Linux-based OS for *Raspberry π - 4 - model B*[\[6\]](#). The kernel version of this embedded OS is Linux release 5.15. An example GUI application using the *Dear ImGui* library is built as a part of the OS image. In addition, an SSH server provides remote connection, data transfer and device control. As the OS is now functional, performance and real-time tests are ongoing.

acronyms

BSP *board support package*

SSH *secure shell*

GUI *graphical user interface*

SW *software*

HW *hardware*

OS *operating system*

IP *internet protocol*

PaaS *platform-as-a-service*

LTS *long – term support*

bibliography

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