Object Serialization Explanation + Example of file + network

25-Oct-05

Serialization

- You want to send an object to a stream
- Motivation
  - A lot of code involves boring conversion from a file to memory
    - AddressBook program reads data from file and then parses it to construct objects
  - This is a common problem!

ali, defence, 9201342
usman, gulberg, 5162346

address.txt

Serialization

- Java's answer:
  - Serialization
    - Object know how to read/write themselves to streams
- Problem- Objects have state in memory
- Serialization is also called
  - Flattening, Streaming, Dehydrate (rehydrate = read), Archiving

Java: Automatic Serialization

- Serializable Interface
  - By implementing this interface a class declares that it is willing to be read/written by automatic serialization machinery
  - Found in java.io package
  - Tagging interface – has no methods and serves only to identify the semantics of being serializable
- Automatic Writing
  - System knows how to recursively write out the state of an object to stream
  - Recursively follows references and writes out those objects too!
- Automatic Reading
  - System knows how to read the data from Stream and re-create object in memory
  - Downcasting is required

How it works?

- To write out an object of PersonInfo
  - PersonInfo p = new PersonInfo();
  - ObjectOutputStream out;
  - out.writeObject(p)
- To read that object back in
  - ObjectInputStream in;
  - PersonInfo obj = (PersonInfo) in.readObject();
- Must be of the same type
  - class and version issue

Example Code: Serialization

Reading/Writing PersonInfo objects

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Example Code: Serialization

```
import javax.swing.*;
import java.io.*;

public class PersonInfo implements Serializable{

    String name;
    String address;
    String phoneNum;

    public void printPersonInfo( ){

        JOptionPane.showMessageDialog( “name: ” + name + “address:” + address +
                                                “phoneNum: ” + phoneNum);
    }

}
```


Example Code: Serialization (cont.)

```
import java.io*;
public class WriteEx{
  public static void main(String args[ ]){
    PersonInfo pWrite = new PersonInfo("ali", "defence", "9201211");
    try {
       FileOutputStream fos   = new FileOutputStream("ali.dat");
       ObjectOutputStream out = new ObjectOutputStream(fos);

       //serialization
       out.writeObject(pWrite);

       out.close();
       fos.close();
    } catch (Exception ex){
      System.out.println(ex)
    }
}
```


Example Code: Serialization (cont.)

```
import java.io*;
public class ReadEx{
  public static void main(String args[ ]){

    try {
       FileInputStream fis   = new FileInputStream("ali.dat");
       ObjectInputStream in = new ObjectInputStream(fis);

       //de - serialization
       PersonInfo pRead = (PersonInfo) in.readObject( );

       pRead.printPersonInfo();

       in.close();
       fis.close();
    } catch (Exception ex){
       System.out.println(ex)
    }
}
```


Object Serialization and Network

- You can read/write objects to network using sockets
- The class version should be same on both sides (client & Server) of the network

Sending Objects over Network

……..

- PersonInfo p = new PersonInfo (“ali”, “defence”, “9201211”);
- Socket s = new Socket(“localhost”, 4444);
- OutputStream os = s.getOutputStream();
- ObjectOutputStream oos = new ObjectOutputStream(os);
- oos.write(p);

……

Reading Objects from Network

……..

- Socket s = ss.accept();
- InputStream in = s.getInputStream();
- ObjectInputStream ois = new ObjectInputStream(is);
- PersonInfo p = (PersonInfo) ois.read( );

……

Preventing Serailization

- transient keyword is used to mark a field that should not be serialized
- Often there is no need to serialize sockets, streams & DB connections etc (they do not represent the state of object, rather connections to external resources)
- So, we can mark them as
  - public transient Socket s;
  - public transient OutputStream os;
  - public transient Connection con;
- Transient fields are returned as null on reading

Example Code: transient

```
import javax.swing.*;
import java.io.*;

public class PersonInfo implements Serializable{

        String name;
        String address;
    transient String phoneNum;

   public void printPersonInfo( ){

      JOptionPane.showMessageDialog( "name: " + name + "address:" + address +
                                     "phoneNum: " + phoneNum);
   }

}
```


Circularity: not an issue

- Serialization machinery will take circular references into account and do the right thing!