

Nginx Notes

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What's Nginx

A definition



Apache is like Microsoft Word, it has a million options but you only need six.

Nginx does those six things, and it does five of them 50 times faster than Apache.

Chris Lea



What's Nginx

Another definition



Batman is fast. Nginx is fast.

Batman fights crime. Nginx fights wasted CPU cycles and memory leaks.

Batman performs well under pressure. Nginx, for its part, excels under heavy server loads.

But Batman would be almost nothing without the Batman utility belt. Instead of a utility belt, Nginx has a module chain.

Evan Miller



How it works

Modules

Module types:

handlers process a request and produce an output

filters manipulate the output produced by a handler

load-balancers forward a request choosing between multiple
backend servers



Components

1. configuration
2. directives
3. context
4. definition
5. installation



Module Configuration Struct(s)

- ▶ up to three
 - ▶ main
 - ▶ server
 - ▶ location
- ▶ elements in the structs are populated by module directives



Module Directives

- ▶ array of `ngx_command_t` structs
- ▶ used for module configuration



Module Context

- ▶ an `ngx_http_module_t` struct
- ▶ contains function references for creating and merging configurations



Module Definition

- ▶ an `ngx_module_t` struct named `ngx_<module name>_module`
- ▶ contains references to context, directives and other callbacks



Module installation

- ▶ depends on the module type
- ▶ see later ...



Handlers

Typically do four things:

1. get location configuration
2. generate appropriate response
3. send response header
4. send response body



Handlers

Upstream Handlers (Proxy)

- ▶ do little "real work"
- ▶ callbacks invoked when the upstream is ready



Handlers

Installation

- ▶ define the directive that enables the module
- ▶ get the "core" struct for the location
- ▶ assign a handler to it



Filters

Manipulate responses generated by handlers

- ▶ header filters
- ▶ body filters



Filters

Header filters

Three basic steps:

1. decide whether to operate on the response
2. operate on the response
3. call the next filter



Filters

Body filters

- ▶ operate only on one buffer (chain link) at a time
 - ▶ overwrite
 - ▶ replace
 - ▶ insert new buffer before/after
- ▶ support incomplete buffer chain
- ▶ no nice high-level API



Filters

Installation

- ▶ post-configuration step
- ▶ insert the filter on the top of filter chain (LIFO)



Load-Balancer

TODO



Writing Nginx Modules

- ▶ no or little documentation
 - ▶ mostly in Russian or Chinese
 - ▶ *self documented* source code
- ▶ learn by example



Writing Nginx Modules

- ▶ write you code
- ▶ write a config| file
- ▶ compile Nginx with your module



Writing Nginx Modules

- ▶ take a look at the hello-module
 - ▶ autotools adapted to CMake
 - ▶ C++ support¹
 - ▶ Test::Nginx Perl framework
- ▶ stick to the naming standards

¹Nginx is written in plain C



References



Nginx Wiki

<http://wiki.nginx.org/Main>



Evan Miller's *definitive* guide

<http://www.evanmiller.org/nginx-modules-guide.htm>

