

Now let's examine how a host on Subnet 1 would send a datagram to a host on Subnet 2. Specifically, suppose that host 111.111.111.111 wants to send an IP datagram to a host 222.222.222.222. The sending host passes the datagram to its adapter, as usual. But the sending host must also indicate to its adapter an appropriate destination MAC address. What MAC address should the adapter use? One might be tempted to guess that the appropriate MAC address is that of the adapter for host 222.222.222.222, namely, 49-BD-D2-C7-56-2A. This guess, however, would be wrong! If the sending adapter were to use that MAC address, then none of the adapters on Subnet 1 would bother to pass the IP datagram up to its network layer, since the frame's destination address would not match the MAC address of any adapter on Subnet 1. The datagram would just die and go to datagram heaven.

If we look carefully at Figure 5.19, we see that in order for a datagram to go from 111.111.111.111 to a host on Subnet 2, the datagram must first be sent to the router interface 111.111.111.110, which is the IP address of the first-hop router on the path to the final destination. Thus, the appropriate MAC address for the frame is the address of the adapter for router interface 111.111.111.110, namely, E6-E9-00-17-BB-4B. How does the sending host acquire the MAC address for 111.111.111.110? By using ARP, of course! Once the sending adapter has this MAC address, it creates a frame (containing the datagram addressed to 222.222.222.222) and sends the frame into Subnet 1. The router adapter on Subnet 1 sees that the link-layer frame is addressed to it, and therefore passes the frame to the network layer of the router. Hooray—the IP datagram has successfully been moved from source host to the router! But we are not finished. We still have to move the datagram from the router to the destination. The router now has to determine the correct interface on which the datagram is to be forwarded. As discussed in Chapter 4, this is done by consulting a forwarding table in the router. The forwarding table tells the router that the datagram is to be forwarded via router interface 222.222.222.220. This interface then passes the datagram to its adapter, which encapsulates the datagram in a new frame and sends the frame into Subnet 2. This time, the destination MAC address of the frame is indeed the MAC address of the ultimate destination. And how does the router obtain this destination MAC address? From ARP, of course!

ARP for Ethernet is defined in RFC 826. A nice introduction to ARP is given in the TCP/IP tutorial, RFC 1180. We'll explore ARP in more detail in the homework problems.

### 5.4.2 Ethernet

Ethernet has pretty much taken over the wired LAN market. In the 1980s and the early 1990s, Ethernet faced many challenges from other LAN technologies, including token ring, FDDI, and ATM. Some of these other technologies succeeded in capturing a part of the LAN market for a few years. But since its invention in the



**VideoNote**  
Sending a datagram  
between subnets:  
link-layer and  
network-layer  
addressing

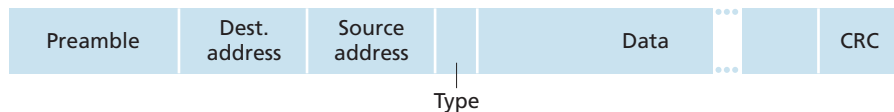
mid-1970s, Ethernet has continued to evolve and grow and has held on to its dominant position. Today, Ethernet is by far the most prevalent wired LAN technology, and it is likely to remain so for the foreseeable future. One might say that Ethernet has been to local area networking what the Internet has been to global networking.

There are many reasons for Ethernet's success. First, Ethernet was the first widely deployed high-speed LAN. Because it was deployed early, network administrators became intimately familiar with Ethernet—its wonders and its quirks—and were reluctant to switch over to other LAN technologies when they came on the scene. Second, token ring, FDDI, and ATM were more complex and expensive than Ethernet, which further discouraged network administrators from switching over. Third, the most compelling reason to switch to another LAN technology (such as FDDI or ATM) was usually the higher data rate of the new technology; however, Ethernet always fought back, producing versions that operated at equal data rates or higher. Switched Ethernet was also introduced in the early 1990s, which further increased its effective data rates. Finally, because Ethernet has been so popular, Ethernet hardware (in particular, adapters and switches) has become a commodity and is remarkably cheap.

The original Ethernet LAN was invented in the mid-1970s by Bob Metcalfe and David Boggs. The original Ethernet LAN used a coaxial bus to interconnect the nodes. Bus topologies for Ethernet actually persisted throughout the 1980s and into the mid-1990s. Ethernet with a bus topology is a broadcast LAN—all transmitted frames travel to and are processed by *all* adapters connected to the bus. Recall that we covered Ethernet's CSMA/CD multiple access protocol with binary exponential backoff in Section 5.3.2.

By the late 1990s, most companies and universities had replaced their LANs with Ethernet installations using a hub-based star topology. In such an installation the hosts (and routers) are directly connected to a hub with twisted-pair copper wire. A **hub** is a physical-layer device that acts on individual bits rather than frames. When a bit, representing a zero or a one, arrives from one interface, the hub simply re-creates the bit, boosts its energy strength, and transmits the bit onto all the other interfaces. Thus, Ethernet with a hub-based star topology is also a broadcast LAN—whenever a hub receives a bit from one of its interfaces, it sends a copy out on all of its other interfaces. In particular, if a hub receives frames from two different interfaces at the same time, a collision occurs and the nodes that created the frames must retransmit.

In the early 2000s Ethernet experienced yet another major evolutionary change. Ethernet installations continued to use a star topology, but the hub at the center was replaced with a **switch**. We'll be examining switched Ethernet in depth later in this chapter. For now, we only mention that a switch is not only "collision-less" but is also a bona-fide store-and-forward packet switch; but unlike routers, which operate up through layer 3, a switch operates only up through layer 2.



**Figure 5.20** ♦ Ethernet frame structure

## Ethernet Frame Structure

We can learn a lot about Ethernet by examining the Ethernet frame, which is shown in Figure 5.20. To give this discussion about Ethernet frames a tangible context, let's consider sending an IP datagram from one host to another host, with both hosts on the same Ethernet LAN (for example, the Ethernet LAN in Figure 5.17.) (Although the payload of our Ethernet frame is an IP datagram, we note that an Ethernet frame can carry other network-layer packets as well.) Let the sending adapter, adapter A, have the MAC address AA-AA-AA-AA-AA-AA and the receiving adapter, adapter B, have the MAC address BB-BB-BB-BB-BB-BB. The sending adapter encapsulates the IP datagram within an Ethernet frame and passes the frame to the physical layer. The receiving adapter receives the frame from the physical layer, extracts the IP datagram, and passes the IP datagram to the network layer. In this context, let's now examine the six fields of the Ethernet frame, as shown in Figure 5.20.

- *Data field (46 to 1,500 bytes).* This field carries the IP datagram. The maximum transmission unit (MTU) of Ethernet is 1,500 bytes. This means that if the IP datagram exceeds 1,500 bytes, then the host has to fragment the datagram, as discussed in Section 4.4.1. The minimum size of the data field is 46 bytes. This means that if the IP datagram is less than 46 bytes, the data field has to be “stuffed” to fill it out to 46 bytes. When stuffing is used, the data passed to the network layer contains the stuffing as well as an IP datagram. The network layer uses the length field in the IP datagram header to remove the stuffing.
- *Destination address (6 bytes).* This field contains the MAC address of the destination adapter, BB-BB-BB-BB-BB-BB. When adapter B receives an Ethernet frame whose destination address is either BB-BB-BB-BB-BB-BB or the MAC broadcast address, it passes the contents of the frame's data field to the network layer; if it receives a frame with any other MAC address, it discards the frame.
- *Source address (6 bytes).* This field contains the MAC address of the adapter that transmits the frame onto the LAN, in this example, AA-AA-AA-AA-AA-AA.
- *Type field (2 bytes).* The type field permits Ethernet to multiplex network-layer protocols. To understand this, we need to keep in mind that hosts can use other network-layer protocols besides IP. In fact, a given host may support multiple

network-layer protocols using different protocols for different applications. For this reason, when the Ethernet frame arrives at adapter B, adapter B needs to know to which network-layer protocol it should pass (that is, demultiplex) the contents of the data field. IP and other network-layer protocols (for example, Novell IPX or AppleTalk) each have their own, standardized type number. Furthermore, the ARP protocol (discussed in the previous section) has its own type number, and if the arriving frame contains an ARP packet (i.e., has a type field of 0806 hexadecimal), the ARP packet will be demultiplexed up to the ARP protocol. Note that the type field is analogous to the protocol field in the network-layer datagram and the port-number fields in the transport-layer segment; all of these fields serve to glue a protocol at one layer to a protocol at the layer above.

- *Cyclic redundancy check (CRC) (4 bytes)*. As discussed in Section 5.2.3, the purpose of the CRC field is to allow the receiving adapter, adapter B, to detect bit errors in the frame.
- *Preamble (8 bytes)*. The Ethernet frame begins with an 8-byte preamble field. Each of the first 7 bytes of the preamble has a value of 10101010; the last byte is 10101011. The first 7 bytes of the preamble serve to “wake up” the receiving adapters and to synchronize their clocks to that of the sender’s clock. Why should the clocks be out of synchronization? Keep in mind that adapter A aims to transmit the frame at 10 Mbps, 100 Mbps, or 1 Gbps, depending on the type of Ethernet LAN. However, because nothing is absolutely perfect, adapter A will not transmit the frame at exactly the target rate; there will always be some *drift* from the target rate, a drift which is not known *a priori* by the other adapters on the LAN. A receiving adapter can lock onto adapter A’s clock simply by locking onto the bits in the first 7 bytes of the preamble. The last 2 bits of the eighth byte of the preamble (the first two consecutive 1s) alert adapter B that the “important stuff” is about to come.

All of the Ethernet technologies provide connectionless service to the network layer. That is, when adapter A wants to send a datagram to adapter B, adapter A encapsulates the datagram in an Ethernet frame and sends the frame into the LAN, without first handshaking with adapter B. This layer-2 connectionless service is analogous to IP’s layer-3 datagram service and UDP’s layer-4 connectionless service.

Ethernet technologies provide an unreliable service to the network layer. Specifically, when adapter B receives a frame from adapter A, it runs the frame through a CRC check, but neither sends an acknowledgment when a frame passes the CRC check nor sends a negative acknowledgment when a frame fails the CRC check. When a frame fails the CRC check, adapter B simply discards the frame. Thus, adapter A has no idea whether its transmitted frame reached adapter B and passed the CRC check. This lack of reliable transport (at the link layer) helps to make Ethernet simple and cheap. But it also means that the stream of datagrams passed to the network layer can have gaps.



## CASE HISTORY

### BOB METCALFE AND ETHERNET

As a PhD student at Harvard University in the early 1970s, Bob Metcalfe worked on the ARPAnet at MIT. During his studies, he also became exposed to Abramson's work on ALOHA and random access protocols. After completing his PhD and just before beginning a job at Xerox Palo Alto Research Center (Xerox PARC), he visited Abramson and his University of Hawaii colleagues for three months, getting a first-hand look at ALOHAnet. At Xerox PARC, Metcalfe became exposed to Alto computers, which in many ways were the forerunners of the personal computers of the 1980s. Metcalfe saw the need to network these computers in an inexpensive manner. So armed with his knowledge about ARPAnet, ALOHAnet, and random access protocols, Metcalfe—along with colleague David Boggs—invented Ethernet.

Metcalfe and Boggs's original Ethernet ran at 2.94 Mbps and linked up to 256 hosts separated by up to one mile. Metcalfe and Boggs succeeded at getting most of the researchers at Xerox PARC to communicate through their Alto computers. Metcalfe then forged an alliance between Xerox, Digital, and Intel to establish Ethernet as a 10 Mbps Ethernet standard, ratified by the IEEE. Xerox did not show much interest in commercializing Ethernet. In 1979, Metcalfe formed his own company, 3Com, which developed and commercialized networking technology, including Ethernet technology. In particular, 3Com developed and marketed Ethernet cards in the early 1980s for the immensely popular IBM PCs. Metcalfe left 3Com in 1990, when it had 2,000 employees and \$400 million in revenue.

If there are gaps due to discarded Ethernet frames, does the application at Host B see gaps as well? As we learned in Chapter 3, this depends on whether the application is using UDP or TCP. If the application is using UDP, then the application in Host B will indeed see gaps in the data. On the other hand, if the application is using TCP, then TCP in Host B will not acknowledge the data contained in discarded frames, causing TCP in Host A to retransmit. Note that when TCP retransmits data, the data will eventually return to the Ethernet adapter at which it was discarded. Thus, in this sense, Ethernet does retransmit data, although Ethernet is unaware of whether it is transmitting a brand-new datagram with brand-new data, or a datagram that contains data that has already been transmitted at least once.

### Ethernet Technologies

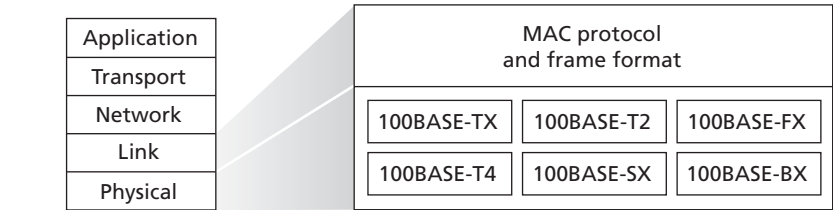
In our discussion above, we've referred to Ethernet as if it were a single protocol standard. But in fact, Ethernet comes in *many* different flavors, with somewhat bewildering acronyms such as 10BASE-T, 10BASE-2, 100BASE-T, 1000BASE-LX, and

10GBASE-T. These and many other Ethernet technologies have been standardized over the years by the IEEE 802.3 CSMA/CD (Ethernet) working group [IEEE 802.3 2012]. While these acronyms may appear bewildering, there is actually considerable order here. The first part of the acronym refers to the speed of the standard: 10, 100, 1000, or 10G, for 10 Megabit (per second), 100 Megabit, Gigabit, and 10 Gigabit Ethernet, respectively. “BASE” refers to baseband Ethernet, meaning that the physical media only carries Ethernet traffic; almost all of the 802.3 standards are for baseband Ethernet. The final part of the acronym refers to the physical media itself; Ethernet is both a link-layer *and* a physical-layer specification and is carried over a variety of physical media including coaxial cable, copper wire, and fiber. Generally, a “T” refers to twisted-pair copper wires.

Historically, an Ethernet was initially conceived of as a segment of coaxial cable. The early 10BASE-2 and 10BASE-5 standards specify 10 Mbps Ethernet over two types of coaxial cable, each limited in length to 500 meters. Longer runs could be obtained by using a **repeater**—a physical-layer device that receives a signal on the input side, and regenerates the signal on the output side. A coaxial cable, as in Figure 5.20, corresponds nicely to our view of Ethernet as a broadcast medium—all frames transmitted by one interface are received at other interfaces, and Ethernet’s CDMA/CD protocol nicely solves the multiple access problem. Nodes simply attach to the cable, and *voilà*, we have a local area network!

Ethernet has passed through a series of evolutionary steps over the years, and today’s Ethernet is very different from the original bus-topology designs using coaxial cable. In most installations today, nodes are connected to a switch via point-to-point segments made of twisted-pair copper wires or fiber-optic cables, as shown in Figures 5.15–5.17.

In the mid-1990s, Ethernet was standardized at 100 Mbps, 10 times faster than 10 Mbps Ethernet. The original Ethernet MAC protocol and frame format were preserved, but higher-speed physical layers were defined for copper wire (100BASE-T) and fiber (100BASE-FX, 100BASE-SX, 100BASE-BX). Figure 5.21 shows these different standards and the common Ethernet MAC protocol and frame format.



**Figure 5.21** ♦ 100 Mbps Ethernet standards: a common link layer, different physical layers

100 Mbps Ethernet is limited to a 100 meter distance over twisted pair, and to several kilometers over fiber, allowing Ethernet switches in different buildings to be connected.

Gigabit Ethernet is an extension to the highly successful 10 Mbps and 100 Mbps Ethernet standards. Offering a raw data rate of 1,000 Mbps, Gigabit Ethernet maintains full compatibility with the huge installed base of Ethernet equipment. The standard for Gigabit Ethernet, referred to as IEEE 802.3z, does the following:

- Uses the standard Ethernet frame format (Figure 5.20) and is backward compatible with 10BASE-T and 100BASE-T technologies. This allows for easy integration of Gigabit Ethernet with the existing installed base of Ethernet equipment.
- Allows for point-to-point links as well as shared broadcast channels. Point-to-point links use switches while broadcast channels use hubs, as described earlier. In Gigabit Ethernet jargon, hubs are called *buffered distributors*.
- Uses CSMA/CD for shared broadcast channels. In order to have acceptable efficiency, the maximum distance between nodes must be severely restricted.
- Allows for full-duplex operation at 1,000 Mbps in both directions for point-to-point channels.

Initially operating over optical fiber, Gigabit Ethernet is now able to run over category 5 UTP cabling. 10 Gbps Ethernet (10GBASE-T) was standardized in 2007, providing yet higher Ethernet LAN capacities.

Let's conclude our discussion of Ethernet technology by posing a question that may have begun troubling you. In the days of bus topologies and hub-based star topologies, Ethernet was clearly a broadcast link (as defined in Section 5.3) in which frame collisions occurred when nodes transmitted at the same time. To deal with these collisions, the Ethernet standard included the CSMA/CD protocol, which is particularly effective for a wired broadcast LAN spanning a small geographical region. But if the prevalent use of Ethernet today is a switch-based star topology, using store-and-forward packet switching, is there really a need anymore for an Ethernet MAC protocol? As we'll see shortly, a switch coordinates its transmissions and never forwards more than one frame onto the same interface at any time. Furthermore, modern switches are full-duplex, so that a switch and a node can each send frames to each other at the same time without interference. In other words, in a switch-based Ethernet LAN there are no collisions and, therefore, there is no need for a MAC protocol!

As we've seen, today's Ethernets are *very* different from the original Ethernet conceived by Metcalfe and Boggs more than 30 years ago—speeds have increased by three orders of magnitude, Ethernet frames are carried over a variety of media, switched-Ethernets have become dominant, and now even the MAC protocol is often unnecessary! Is all of this *really* still Ethernet? The answer, of course, is “yes,