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Networking

Goals

Today we're going to...

- ... talk about HTTP (the lingua franca of the Internet)
- ... examine JSON (one of the data lingos of the Internet)
- ... examine XML (the other data lingo of the Internet)
- ... show how to use them from iOS

HTTP

Who, what, why...?

HTTP

- Part of the World Wide Web experiments
- Designed to be:
 - simple
 - content-agnostic
 - platform-agnostic
 - referral (to another server) capability
 - minimal to zero administrative overhead
 - format negotiation
 - operate over standard infrastructure (TCP/IP)

HTTP has seen few revisions

- HTTP 0.9: Original proposal (1991) by TBL
- HTTP 1.0: 1991 - 1995 saw rapid growth/adoption
- HTTP 1.1: Internet standard status (95 - 99)
- numerous proposals to enhance 1.1 since
nothing officially adopted (or even taking root)

HTTP is now the de facto standard protocol of the Internet

- for better or for worse
- to the point of supplanting other more specific protocols
 - **FTP replaced by file transfer over HTTP**
 - **email protocols replaced by web clients and transfer**
 - **bidirectional sockets replaced by WebSockets (!)**

HTTP is the protocol part of a REST system

- designed by Roy Fielding as his Doctoral dissertation
- explicit architectural goals
- attempts to shoehorn additional features into HTTP meet with mixed success
and with Fielding's frustration and disdain

For more on HTTP concepts

- see Fielding's dissertation
<http://www.ics.uci.edu/~fielding/pubs/dissertation/top.htm>
- see Architecture of the World Wide Web
<http://www.w3.org/TR/webarch/>
- both are highly recommended reads

HTTP/1.1 Protocol Details

Jumping into the Web pool

HTTP Protocol

HTTP/1.1: RFC 2616

- "application-level protocol for distributed, collaborative, hypermedia information systems"
- generic, stateless protocol
- allows for very easy extension
- typing and negotiation of data representation

HTTP Protocol

Dependencies

- TCP/IP, DNS
underlying communication infrastructure
- URL and URI (RFCs 1738, 1630, 1808, 2396)
target server, port and resource to request
- MIME (RFCs 2045, 2046, 2047)
description of content formats
- TLS (SSL)
secure transmission

HTTP Protocol

Basic details

- server listens on well-known port (80)
- client initiates communication
- client sends request packet, server sends response packet
- connection is closed after each send/receive cycle
no state retained across cycles

HTTP Protocol

Quick note: stateless

- HTTP explicitly holds no server fidelity
 - any server can answer any request**
- this is what allows HTTP to scale so well
 - the ubiquitous "web farm"**
- browser cookies are NOT(!) part of the HTTP spec
 - in fact, HTTP authors disdain the use of cookies**
- making HTTP stateful in some way usually fails miserably

HTTP Protocol

Basic protocol notes

- all text is in "7-bit ASCII clean" format
 - in other words, nothing above ASCII value 127**
- all text uses CRLF pairs to denote EOL
- client/server request/resonse protocol
 - **client always initiates**
 - **client blocks until server responds**
- packets are always single-line plus header/value pairs
 - and optional content body**

HTTP Protocol

Request packet

```
GET / HTTP/1.1  
Host: www.newardassociates.com  
Accept: */*
```


HTTP Protocol

Response packet

```
200 OK HTTP/1.1  
Content-Type: text/html  
Content-Length: 32  
  
<html><body>Howdy!</body></html>
```

HTTP Protocol

Request packet

- Request-Line: Method Request-URI HTTP-Version CRLF
 - **Method: the "verb"**
 - **Request-URI: the resource**
 - **HTTP-Version: "HTTP/1.1" or "HTTP/1.0"**
 - other versions possible, never used
- (Optional) Header: Value CRLF
- CRLF
- (Optional) Content body

HTTP Protocol

Request methods

- GET: retrieve resource idempotently
should have no side effects (cacheable results)
- POST: accept this sent relevant data
- PUT: store this data as the resource
- DELETE: remove the resources

HTTP Protocol

Request methods

- OPTIONS: describe verbs supported for the resource
- HEAD: GET without content body
- TRACE: diagnostic trace
- CONNECT: for use with a tunneling proxy

HTTP Protocol

Request-URI

- URL minus TCP/IP-related parts
 - no scheme (**http://**)
 - no server (**www.google.com**)
 - no port (**:80**)
- used to identify resource requested
- absolute resource path
 - not always a filesystem resource
 - ... though early and simple web servers do map URL paths to filesystem paths
 - doing so is dangerous: beware relative paths ("**../../../etc/passwd**")

HTTP Protocol

HTTP-Version

- this is the version the client wishes to use
- server will respond with its version in response
- client can either upgrade or downgrade as necessary
- in practice, this is almost always "HTTP/1.1"
 - ten years ago, negotiation between 1.0 and 1.1 was common
 - if we ever see an HTTP/2.0, negotiation will become important

HTTP Protocol

Header: Value lines

- more on headers later
- each header line must be ended with CRLF
- each header describes one annotation/extension/adaptation to the request
- request and response use same sets of headers
 - a few are client- or server-specific, but not many**

HTTP Protocol

CRLF (empty line)

- empty line is mandatory
- server will block until it receives this second CRLF!
- separates Request-Line/Headers from Content body
- must be present, even with no headers or content body

HTTP Protocol

Content body

- entirely opaque to HTTP protocol
- we use headers to describe the content body
 - Content-Type, Content-Length most common**
- recipient then to read exactly that many bytes (no more, no less)
 - failure to do this is a security hole!**

HTTP Protocol

Response packet

- Response-Line: Status-Code Reason-Phrase HTTP-Version CRLF
- (Optional) Header: Value CRLF
- CRLF
- (Optional) Content body

HTTP Protocol

Status-Code

- quick integer description of server's results
- 1xx: Informational
- 2xx: Success
- 3xx: Redirect
- 4xx: Client error
- 5xx: Server error

HTTP Protocol

Reason-Phrase

- textual description of status-code
 - usually purely for human consumption**
- these are not standardized except de facto in a few cases
- 200: OK
- 404: Resource not found
- 401: Requires authorization
- 500: Internal server error

HTTP Protocol

HTTP-Version

- this is the version the client wishes to use
- server will respond with its version in response
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HTTP Protocol

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HTTP Protocol

Common headers

- Host: the host (and optional port) requested
 - required by 1.1 for multitenant server scenarios**
- User-Agent: description field describing the client
 - not required, but almost always included**
 - this is how we determine client capabilities**

HTTP Protocol

Common headers

- Content-Type: MIME type of content being sent
 - Content-Length: size (in octets/bytes) of content
- these two are required if content body is present**

HTTP Protocol

Common headers

- Accept: specify certain media types to be acceptable
comma-delimited list of MIME types
- Accept-Encoding: describes content encodings
used to allow for request/response gzip compression
- Authorization: client sends to authenticate to server
 - **"Authorization: {credentials}"**
 - **credentials: scheme credential-data**
 - **where scheme is Basic, Digest, or others**

HTTP Protocol

Common headers

- Connection: state of the connection
 - server most often sends "close" in 1.1 exchanges**
- WWW-Authenticate: required in all 401 responses
 - contains a challenge that indicates the authentication scheme**
 - "WWW-Authenticate: {challenge}"**
 - challenge is typically either Basic or Digest**

HTTP Protocol

For more information

- Consult RFC 2616 for any remaining details
 official: <https://www.ietf.org/rfc/rfc2616.txt>
- Consult RFC 2324 for details on how to extend HTTP
 - **Hyper Text Coffee Pot Control Protocol**
 - **official: <https://www.ietf.org/rfc/rfc2324.txt>**

Additional, useful information

- Fielding's dissertation
 <http://www.ics.uci.edu/~fielding/pubs/dissertation/top.htm>
- Architecture of the World Wide Web
 <http://www.w3.org/TR/webarch/>

Networking in iOS

How to reach out and ping somebody

iOS Networking

"It's just TCP/IP"

- true at most levels
- but there are a few caveats to consider
 - power requirements
 - cellular network unreliability
 - data plan limitations

iOS Networking

There's a couple of ways to approach this

- High-level: NSURLSession (preferred) or NSURLDownload
 - high-level, URL-based
 - the workhorse of the lot
- Low-level: Sockets/streaming
 - choice between streaming (TCP) and packets (UDP)
 - each has their uses
 - both require a lot more work implementing the protocol

NSURLSession

- natively supports several schemes
data, file, ftp, http and https
- transparent support for proxies/gateways
- leverages user preferences settings

NSURLSession workflow

- Create the NSURLSession
 - one of four different types of session**
- Create a "task"/request
 - requires an NSURL of some form**
- Execute the request

iOS Networking

Simple HTTP GET: Establishing the session

```
func httpGet(request: NSURLRequest!, callback: (String, String?) ->
Void) {
    let session = NSURLSession.sharedSession()
    let task = session.dataTaskWithRequest(request) {
        (data, response, error) -> Void in
        if error != nil {
            callback("", error!.localizedDescription)
        } else {
            let result = NSString(data: data!, encoding:
                                NSASCIIStringEncoding)!
            callback(result as String, nil)
        }
    }
    task.resume()
}
```

iOS Networking

Simple HTTP GET: Executing

```
let request = NSMutableURLRequest(URL: NSURL(string: "http://  
www.google.com")!)  
httpGet(request) {  
    (data, error) -> Void in  
    if error != nil {  
        print(error)  
    } else {  
        print(data)  
    }  
}
```

iOS Networking

HTTP POST w/authorization headers: Setup

```
let request = NSMutableURLRequest(URL: NSURL(string: "http://localhost:4567/login")!)
let session = NSURLSession.sharedSession()
request.HTTPMethod = "POST"

let params = ["username":"fred", "password":"password"] as Dictionary<String, String>

request.HTTPBody = try!
    NSDataWithJSONObject(params, options:
        NSJSONWritingOptions(rawValue: 0))
request.addValue("application/json", forHTTPHeaderField: "Content-Type")
request.addValue("application/json", forHTTPHeaderField: "Accept")
```

iOS Networking

HTTP POST w/authorization headers: Executing

```
let task = session.dataTaskWithRequest(request, completionHandler:
{data, response, error -> Void in
    var strData = NSString(data: data!, encoding:
NSUTF8StringEncoding)
    do {
        let json =
            try
NSJSONSerialization.JSONObjectWithData(data!,
options: .MutableLeaves)
        as? NSDictionary
```

iOS Networking

HTTP POST w/authorization headers: Validating

```
        // The JSONObjectWithData constructor didn't return
an error. But, we should still
        // check and make sure that json has a value using
optional binding.
        if let parseJSON = json {
            // Okay, the parsedJSON is here, let's get
the value for 'success' out of it
            var success = parseJSON["success"] as? Int
            print("Success: \(success)")
        }
        else {
            // Woa, okay the json object was nil,
something went wrong. Maybe the server isn't running?
            let jsonStr = NSString(data: data!,
encoding: NSUTF8StringEncoding)
            print("Error could not parse JSON: \(
(jsonStr)")
        }
    }
    // {{## BEGIN usage-2 ##}}

    // {{## BEGIN usage-3 ##}}
    }
    catch {
```

iOS Networking

HTTP POST w/authorization headers: Validating

```
        }
        catch {
            let jsonStr = NSString(data: data!, encoding:
NSUTF8StringEncoding)
            print("Error could not parse JSON: '\(jsonStr)'")
        }
    })
    // {{## BEGIN usage-3 ##}}

task.resume()
NSThread.sleepForTimeInterval(5.0)
print("End")
```


iOS Networking

Four NSURLSessionConfiguration options

- singleton shared session object
 - **basic requests**
 - **NSURLSessionConfiguration.sharedSession()**
- default sessions
 - **data obtained incrementally using delegate**
 - **NSURLSessionConfiguration.defaultSessionConfiguration()**
- ephemeral sessions
 - **do not write caches, cookies, or credentials to disk**
 - **NSURLSessionConfiguration.ephemeralSessionConfiguration()**
- background sessions
 - **uploads/downloads while app is not running**
 - **NSURLSessionConfiguration.backgroundSessionConfiguration()**

Three "task types":

- "data" tasks
 - short, often interactive tasks**
- upload tasks
 - support background uploads**
- download tasks
 - retrieve data in the form of a file**

NSURLSession

- works with your code one of two ways:
 - a completion handler invoked on end
 - delegate methods invoked as incidents occur

NSURLSessionDelegate

- URLSession:downloadTask:didResumeAtOffset:expectedTotalBytes:
- URLSession:downloadTask:didWriteData:totalBytesWritten:totalBytesExpectedToWrite:
- URLSession:downloadTask:didFinishDownloadingToURL:
required

NSURLSessionTaskDelegate

- URLSession:task:didCompleteWithError:
- URLSession:task:didReceiveChallenge:completionHandler:
- URLSession:task:didSendBodyData:totalBytesSent:totalBytesExpectedToSend:
- URLSession:task:needNewBodyStream:
- URLSession:task:willPerformHTTPRedirection:newRequest:completionHandler:

Particular case: NSURLDownload

- specifically for downloading a file to disk
- (since replaced by NSURLSession)
- does not wake the app up on download completion
- does not download in the background either

JavaScript Object Notation

Why, exactly...?

JSON Concepts

JSON: Data in JavaScript (RFC 4627)

- with the rise of JavaScript's acceptance came a desire to make it easy to send data to a JavaScript client
- JavaScript has an "object literal" notation, so we started making use of that
- this came to be known as "JSON"
- JSON has since become a format used in multiple contexts
 - including databases (CouchDB, MongoDB, RavenDB, and more)**

JSON Concepts

JSON benefits

- simple (for the most part)
- highly portable
- extensible
- (relatively) compact
compared to XML

JSON Concepts

JSON warnings

- data only!
 - JSON has no provision for including code**
- data is plain-text format
- data is limited to JavaScript types
 - **strings and numbers (and arrays of) for the most part**
 - **binary is not going to transmit well in particular**
- never use client-side eval() to parse a JSON document
 - injection attacks await those who do**
- does not follow object references/graphs well
 - becomes more of a hierarchical format than an object one**

JSON Format Details

What's legit JSON?

JSON file format

- always a plain-text format
- governed under ECMA 404 specification
- easily described

JSON Format

JSON Document

- a single object literal denoted by { and }

JSON Object

- object is a comma-delimited list of string : value pairs
 - string is "-quoted field name
 - ":" separates name from value
 - value is any JSON-acceptable value

JSON Format

JSON value

- acceptable JSON values:
 - strings
 - numbers
 - objects
 - arrays
 - true, false (boolean literals)
 - null

JSON Format

JSON strings

- always "-quoted
- any UNICODE character (except ", \ or control characters)
- \ escapes sensitive characters
", \\, \/, \b, \f, \n, \r, \t, or \uXXXX

JSON Format

JSON numbers

- decimal formats only
- floating-point, exponential formats allowed
 - 1
 - 1.0
 - 1.7e14
 - negative forms of the above

JSON Format

JSON arrays

- denoted by [and]
- contain comma-delimited list of values

JSON Format

For more information

- see RFC 4627

<http://www.ietf.org/rfc/rfc4627.txt>

- see JSON website (includes list of JSON parser libraries)

<http://json.org>

- see ECMA 404 specification

<http://www.ecma-international.org/publications/files/ECMA-ST/ECMA-404.pdf>

- see JSON Lint (JSON validator)

<http://jsonlint.com/>

JSON in iOS

Parsing and producing JSON on iOS

NSJSONSerialization

- convert Foundation objects to JSON
- convert JSON to Foundation objects
- ... assuming certain conventions
 - top-level object is NSArray or NSDictionary
 - all objects are one of NSString, NSNumber, NSArray, NSDictionary or NSNull
 - all dictionary keys are NSString
 - Numbers are not NaN or infinity

Parsing JSON

- `NSJSONSerialization.JSONObjectWithData()`
 - **options: `NSJSONReadingOptions`**
 - **(optional) error: (ObjC only)**
 - in Swift, throws an exception instead
 - **returns an `AnyObject` (or nil on error)**
- `NSJSONSerialization.JSONObjectFromStream()`
 - **stream: `NSInputStream` (for direct access)**
 - **other parameters identical to above**

Producing JSON

- `NSJSONSerialization.dataWithJSONObject()`
 - **options: `NSJSONWritingOptions`**
 - **(optional) error: error object**
 - in Swift, throws an exception instead
 - **returns an `NSData` (or nil on error)**
- `NSJSONSerialization.writeJSONObject()`
 - **toStream: `NSOutputStream` to which JSON is written**
 - **other parameters identical to above**

Avoiding errors

- NSJSONSerialization:isValidJSONObject
can object be converted to JSON

eXtensible Markup Language

Why, exactly...?

XML Concepts

XML

- domain-independent markup language
 - simplified form of SGML
 - inspired by HTML's success in the late 90s
 - intended to be generic data markup language
- since fallen a little out of favor
 - but expectations were a little overinflated, too

XML Concepts

XML has/had 10 design goals:

- XML shall be straightforwardly usable over the Internet.
- XML shall support a wide variety of applications.
- XML shall be compatible with SGML.
- It shall be easy to write programs which process XML documents.
- The number of optional features in XML is to be kept to the absolute minimum, ideally zero.

XML Concepts

XML has/had 10 design goals:

- XML documents should be human-legible and reasonably clear.
- The XML design should be prepared quickly.
- The design of XML shall be formal and concise.
- XML documents shall be easy to create.
- Terseness in XML markup is of minimal importance.

XML Concepts

XML is conceptually a multilayered concept

- the abstract data model is called the Infoset
governed by its own spec (XML Infoset Spec)
- the usual concrete representation is similar to HTML
governed by the XML Specification (1.0, 1.1)
- numerous attempts at a binary representation
BinaryXML, EXI, Fast Infoset, ...

XML Concepts

XML data model

- fundamentally, XML is a strictly hierarchical data model
 - data is in nodes called "elements"
 - one root node ("document element")
 - nodes can contain name/value pairs ("attributes")
 - nodes can contain child nodes
 - nodes can contain raw text (character data)

XML Concepts

XML levels of correctness

- an XML document that can be parsed correctly is called "well-formed"

basically, it obeys the formatting specification

- an XML document that cannot be parsed is "ill-formed"
- an XML document that can be validated is called "valid"

variety of different validation schemes; not baked in to XML itself

- documents can be well-formed but invalid
it can be syntactically parsed, but fails semantic validation

XML Concepts

Elements

- elements are named nodes in the XML document
 - names may be scoped using XML Namespaces**
- elements always have a parent element
 - exception: the root element, a.k.a. document element**
- elements have 0..many child elements
 - raw data will appear as child "text elements"**
- elements have 0..many attributes

Attributes

- attributes are name/value pairs
- attributes always apply to a given element
 - cannot have attributes without an element**
- attributes typically modify/annotate the element in some way

Comments

- comments are like comments in any language
they do not appear in the abstract data model

XML Concepts

For more information

- See the XML 1.0 Specification
<http://www.w3.org/TR/REC-xml/>
- See the XML 1.1 Draft Specification
<http://www.w3.org/TR/xml11/>
- See the XML Infoset Specification
<http://www.w3.org/TR/xml-infoset/>

XML 1.0 details

What makes an XML document legal?

XML documents

- XML data is always considered to be a "document"
even if it's never stored in a file or is never human-consumed
- uses text for canonical representation
alternative representations (binary) are possible, but not standardized
- default representation looks very similar to HTML
XML is a simplified SGML, and HTML is an SGML-defined markup language

XML basic rules

- markup start-tags and end-tags are angle-brackets ("**<**" and "**>**")
- certain characters are not legal except as markup characters
 - escape using "entity" syntax:**
 - < => <**
 - > => >**
 - & => &**

XML elements

- elements are named tags
 - <foobar> is a "foobar" element**
- names must be C-style identifiers
 - alphanumeric + underscore, no whitespace, etc**
- elements can either have explicit start and end tags...
 - <foobar> ... </foobar>**
- ... or use "shorthand" syntax if they are childless
 - <foobar />**

MXL elements

- can have any number of child elements
 - child elements started must also end nested inside this element
 - child elements are "owned" by this element
 - all elements have a parent element
- can have any amount of raw data embedded inside element declaration
 - technically these are "text elements" of no name and containing text values
 - whitespace may or may not be included, depending on parser details

XML document element

- one element is the root of the entire document
 - this is called the document element
 - only element that has no parent
 - only one document element per XML document
- in essence, this is a singly-rooted tree**

XML Details

Legal XML Document

```
<data />
```

Legal XML Document

```
<data><child1 /><child2>Mommy!</child2></data>
```

XML attributes

- attributes are name/value pairs attached to an element
- attribute names are case-sensitive identifiers
 - no whitespace in the name**
- attributes values are contained in quotes (single or double)
- attributes are not children of the element
- attribute names must be unique on the given element
- any number of attributes on a given element

XML Details

Legal XML Document

```
<data date="2/15/2015"><child1 /><child2>Mommy!</child2></data>
```

XML comments

- comment nodes begin with <!-- and end with -->
- comments are entirely ignored by XML processing agents
- comments cannot appear inside an element tag
- comments may not nest
- comments may not include "--" anywhere in their body

this is the most annoying restriction of all time

XML Details

Legal XML Document

```
<!-- Hello, XML data -->  
<data date="2/15/2015">  
  <!-- Ths is a child node -->  
  <child1 />  
  <!-- This is another child node -->  
  <child2>Mommy!</child2>  
</data>
```

XML Processing Instructions

- PIs are "special" nodes as hints to the XML processing agents
- PIs do not appear in the abstract data model
- most common PI is the "XML declaration" at the top of an XML file
 - declares XML version and character encoding, language, etc**
- different PIs may appear for particular processing scenarios
 - they will be entirely processing-agent-specific**

XML Details

Legal XML Document

```
<?xml version="1.0" ?>
<!-- Hello, XML data -->
<data date="2/15/2015">
  <!-- Ths is a child node -->
  <child1 />
  <!-- This is another child node -->
  <child2>Mommy!</child2>
</data>
```


XML CDATA sections

- escaping sensitive characters can get ugly in certain scenarios
 - example: including XML inside XML (such as example code)**
- the CDATA section begins with `<[CDATA[` and ends with `]]>`
 - anything contained inside here is treated as raw data and never markup**

XML Concepts

For more information

- See the XML 1.0 Specification
<http://www.w3.org/TR/REC-xml/>
- See the XML 1.1 Draft Specification
<http://www.w3.org/TR/xml11/>

XML in iOS

Producing and consuming XML on iOS

Parsing XML in iOS: NSXMLParser

- this is a SAX-style parser
- designate a delegate to receive event methods
- fast for simple parsing
- complicated for more detailed XML documents

Using NSXMLParser

- instantiate around the document to be parsed
- designate an NSXMLParserDelegate
- call parse()

NSXMLParserDelegate: four methods of interest

- parser:didStartElement:...
 an opening element tag was parsed
- parser:didEndElement:...
 a closing element tag was parsed
- parser:foundCharacters:...
 character data was parsed
- parser:parseErrorOccurred:...
 something wrong

iOS lacks a DOM-style parser

- several OSS options available

- SWXMLHash

 - <https://github.com/drmohundro/SWXMLHash>

- AEXML

 - <https://github.com/tadija/AEXML>

- GlimpseXML

 - <https://github.com/glimpseio/GlimpseXML>

iQuiz

Part 3

iQuiz: A Multiple-Choice Q-and-A application

- users can choose from a collection of quizzes
- each quiz has a number (1-to-many) of questions
- each question is a multiple-choice answer
- users progress through each question one at a time
- app will track their answers
- app could upload their scores
- quizzes are updated from a server

Part 3: Network and storage

- all quizzes/questions should come from online
- store the quizzes/questions to local storage
- if offline, use locally-stored data
- initial URL to use:
<http://tednewardsandbox.site44.com/questions.json>
- Settings should be a popover
 - include a URL field to use instead of the above
 - include a "check now" button to retrieve

Grading: 5 points

- download JSON from site: 1 pt
- store JSON to local storage: 1 pt
- use local storage offline: 2 pt
- refresh on Settings "check now": 1 pt

Extra credit:

- implement "pull to refresh": 1 pt
- central score storage:
 - **upload scores to central storage: 1 pt**
 - **add new toolbar button and popover for scores: 1 pt**
 - **change icon in quiz list to reflect score: 1 pt**

DUE: 1 week