Mote-PC serial communication and SerialForwarder (TOS 2.1.1 and later)

From TinyOS Wiki

(Redirected from Mote-PC serial communication and SerialForwarder)

The goal of this lesson is to show you how to communicate with a mote from a PC. This will allow you to collect data from the network, send commands to motes, and monitor network traffic.

This tutorial presents the Java-based infrastructure for communicating with motes. There is also a C-based infrastructure, found in support/sdk/c. Please see the documentation found there, and the mig and ncg man pages for more details.

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Packet sources and TestSerial

The first step is to check that you are able to get your PC to communicate with a mote. Most motes have a serial port or similar interface. For example, the mica family can directly control a serial port: programming boards basically connect the mote's serial port pins to the actual serial port on the board. Telos motes also have a serial interface, but it talks to their USB hardware, which is similar in functionality but very different in terms of cables and connectors.

The basic abstraction for mote-PC communication is a **packet source**. A packet source is exactly that: a communication medium over which an application can receive packets from and send packets to a mote. Examples of packet sources include serial ports, TCP sockets, and the SerialForwarder tool. Most TinyOS communication tools take an optional -comm parameter, which allows you to specify the packet source as a string. For example:

; java net.tinyos.tools.Listen -comm serial@COM1:telos

tells the Listen tool to use the COM1 serial port (on a Windows machine) at the correct speed for a telos mote, while

```
$ java net.tinyos.tools.Listen -comm serial@/dev/ttyS0:micaz
```

tells Listen to use the serial port /dev/ttyS0 (on a UNIX machine) at the correct speed for a micaz mote.

The first step to testing your serial port is to install the apps/tests/TestSerial application on a mote. This application sends a packet to the serial port every second, and when it receives a packet over the serial port it displays the packet's sequence number on the LEDs.

Once you have installed TestSerial, you need to run the corresponding Java application that communicates with it over the serial port. This is built when you build the TinyOS application. From in the application directory, type:

```
$ java TestSerial
```

If you get a message like

```
The java class is not found: TestSerial
```

it means that you either haven't compiled the Java code (try running make <code>platform</code> again) or you don't have . (the current directory) in your Java CLASSPATH.

Because you haven't specified a packet source, TestSerial will fall back to a default, which is a SerialForwarder. Since you don't have a SerialForwarder running, TestSerial will exit, complaining that it can't connect to one. So let's specify the serial port as the source, using the -comm parameter as described above. The syntax for a serial port source is as follows:

```
serial@<PORT>:<SPEED>
```

PORT depends on your platform and where you have plugged the mote in. For Windows/Cygwin platforms, it is COMN, where N is the port number. For Linux/UNIX machines, it is /dev/ttySN for a built-in serial port, or one of /dev/ttyUSBN or /dev/usb/tts/N for a serial-over-USB port. Additionally as we saw in lesson 1, on Linux you will typically need to make this serial port world writeable. As superuser, execute the following command:

```
chmod 666 serialport
```

The SPEED can either be a numeric value, or the name of a platform. Specifying a platform name tells the serial packet source to use the default speed for the platform. Valid platforms are:

Platform	Speed (baud)		
telos	115200		
telosb	115200		
tmote	115200		
micaz	57600		
mica2	57600		
iris	57600		

mica2dot 19200 eyes 115200 intelmote2 115200

The Java file support/sdk/java/net/tinyos/packet/BaudRate.java determines these mappings. Unlike in TinyOS 1.x, all platforms have a common serial packet format. Following the table, these two serial specifications are identical:

```
serial@COM1:micaz
serial@COM1:57600
```

If you run TestSerial with the proper PORT and SPEED settings, you should see output like this:

```
Sending packet 1
Received packet sequence number 4
Sending packet 2
Received packet sequence number 5
Sending packet 3
Received packet sequence number 6
Sending packet 4
Received packet sequence number 7
Received packet sequence number 8
Sending packet 5
Received packet sequence number 9
Sending packet 6
```

and the mote LEDs will blink.

MOTECOM

If you do not pass a -comm parameter, then tools will check the MOTECOM environment variable for a packet source, and if there is no MOTECOM, they default to a SerialForwarder. This means that if you're always communicating with a mote over your serial port, you can just set MOTECOM and no longer have to specify the -comm parameter. For example:

```
export MOTECOM=serial@COM1:19200 # mica baud rate
export MOTECOM=serial@COM1:mica # mica baud rate, again
export MOTECOM=serial@COM2:mica2 # the mica2 baud rate, on a different serial port
export MOTECOM=serial@COM3:57600 # explicit mica2 baud rate
```

Try setting your MOTECOM variable and running TestSerial without a -comm parameter.

BaseStation and net.tinyos.tools.Listen

BaseStation is a basic TinyOS utility application. It acts as a bridge between the serial port and radio network. When it receives a packet from the serial port, it transmits it on the radio; when it receives a packets over the radio, it transmits it to the serial port. Because TinyOS has a toolchain for generating and sending packets to a mote over a serial port, using a BaseStation allows PC tools to communicate directly with mote networks.

Take one of the two nodes that had BlinkToRadio (from lesson 3) installed and install BaseStation on it. If you turn on the node that still has BlinkToRadio installed, you should see LED 1 on the BaseStation blinking. BaseStation toggles LED 0 whenever it sends a packet to the radio and LED 1 whenever it sends a packet to the serial port. It toggles LED 2 whenever it has to drop a packet: this can happen when one of the two receives packets faster than the other can send them (e.g., receiving micaZ radio packets at 256kbps but sending serial packets at 57.6kbps).

BaseStation is receiving your BlinkToRadio packets and sending them to the serial port, so if it is plugged into a PC we can view these packets. The Java tool Listen is a basic packet sniffer: it prints out the binary contents of any packet it hears. Run Listen, using either MOTECOM or a -comm parameter:

```
$ java net.tinyos.tools.Listen
```

Listen creates a packet source and just prints out every packet it sees. Your output should look something like this:

```
00 FF FF 00 00 04 22 06 00 02 00 01
00 FF FF 00 00 04 22 06 00 02 00 02
00 FF FF 00 00 04 22 06 00 02 00 03
00 FF FF 00 00 04 22 06 00 02 00 04
00 FF FF 00 00 04 22 06 00 02 00 04
00 FF FF 00 00 04 22 06 00 02 00 05
00 FF FF 00 00 04 22 06 00 02 00 06
00 FF FF 00 00 04 22 06 00 02 00 07
00 FF FF 00 00 04 22 06 00 02 00 08
00 FF FF 00 00 04 22 06 00 02 00 08
00 FF FF 00 00 04 22 06 00 02 00 08
00 FF FF 00 00 04 22 06 00 02 00 08
00 FF FF 00 00 04 22 06 00 02 00 08
```

Listen is simply printing out the packets that are coming from the mote. Each data packet that comes out of the mote contains several fields of data. The first byte (00) indicates that this is packet is an AM packet. The next fields are the generic Active Message fields, defined in tinyos-2.x/tos/lib/serial/Serial.h. Finally, the remaining fields are the data payload of the message, which was defined in BlinkToRadio.h as:

```
typedef nx_struct BlinkToRadioMsg {
    nx_uint16_t nodeid;
    nx_uint16_t counter;
} BlinkToRadioMsg;
```

The overall message format for the BlinkToRadioC application is therefore (ignoring the first 00 byte):

- **Destination address** (2 bytes)
- Link source address (2 bytes)
- **Message length** (1 byte)
- **Group ID** (1 byte)
- Active Message handler type (1 byte)
- Payload (up to 28 bytes):
 - **source mote ID** (2 bytes)
 - **sample counter** (2 bytes)

So we can interpret the data packet as follows:

dest addr	link source addr	msg len	groupID	handlerID	source addr	counter
ff ff	00 00	04	22	06	00 02	00 0B

The link source address and source address field differ in who sets them. The serial stack does not set the link source address; for Blink, it should always be **00 00**. Blink sets the source address to be the node's ID, which depends on what mote ID you installed your BlinkToRadio application with. The default (if you do not specify and ID) is 00 01. Note that the data is sent by the mote in *big-endian* format; for example, 01 02 means 258 (256*1 + 2). This format is independent of the endian-ness of the processor, because the packet format is an nx_struct, which is a network format, that is, big-endian and byte-aligned. Using nx_struct (rather than a standard C struct) for a message payload ensures that it will work across platforms.

As you watch the packets scroll by, you should see the counter field increase as the BlinkToRadio app increments its counter.

MIG: generating packet objects

The Listen program is the most basic way of communicating with the mote; it just prints binary packets to the screen. Obviously it is not easy to visualize the sensor data using this program. What we'd really like is a better way of retrieving and observing data coming from the sensor network. Of course, exactly what data to display and how to visualize it can be very application specific. For this reason, TinyOS only has a few applications for visualizing simple sensor data (in the next lesson, you'll use the Oscilloscope application), but it provides support for building new visualization or logging systems.

One problem with Listen is that it just dumps binary data: a user has to be able to read the bytes and parse them into a given packet format. The TinyOS toolchain makes this process easier by providing tools for automatically generating message objects from packet descriptions. Rather than parse packet formats manually, you can use the mig (Message Interface Generator) tool to build a Java, Python, or C interface to the message structure. Given a sequence of bytes, the MIG-generated code will automatically parse each of the fields in the packet, and it provides a set of standard accessors and mutators for printing out received packets or generating new ones.

The mig tool takes three basic arguments: what programming language to generate code for (Java, Python, or C), which file in which to find the structure, and the name of the structure. The tool also takes standard C options, such as -I for includes and -D for defines. The TestSerial application, for example, uses mig so that it can easily create and parse the packets over the serial port. If you go back to TestSerial and type make clean; make, you should see this:

Before building the TinyOS application, the Makefile has a rule for generating TestSerialMsg.java. It then compiles TestSerialMsg.java as well as TestSerial.java, and finally compiles the TinyOS application. Looking at the Makefile, we can see that it has a few more rules than the one for BlinkToRadio:

The BUILD_EXTRA_DEPS line tells the TinyOS make system that the TinyOS application has additional dependencies that must be satisfied before it can be built. The Makefile tells the make system that TestSerial.class, the Java application that we ran to test serial communication. The CLEAN_EXTRA line tells the make system extra things that need to be done when a user types make clean to clean up.

The BUILD_EXTRA_DEPS line tells make to compile TestSerial.class before the application; the line

```
TestSerial.class: $(wildcard *.java) TestSerialMsg.java
javac *.java
```

tells it that TestSerial.class depends on all of the .java files in the directory as well as TestSerialMsg.java. Once all of these dependencies are resolved, the make system will call javac *.java, which creates TestSerial.class. The final line,

```
TestSerialMsg.java:
mig java -target=null -java-classname=TestSerialMsg TestSerial.h TestSerialMsg -o $@
```

tells the make system how to create TestSerialMsg.java, the Java class representing the packet sent between the mote and PC. Because TestSerialMsg.java is a dependency for TestSerial.class, make will create it if it is needed. To create TestSerialMsg.java, the Makefile invokes the mig tool. Let's step through the parameters one by one:

mig Invoke mig

java Build a Java class
-target=null For the nullplatform

-java-classname=TestSerialMsg Name the Java class TestSerialMsg TestSerial.h The structure is in TestSerial.h

TestSerialMsg The structure is named TestSerialMsg

-o \$@ Write the file to \$@, which is TestSerialMsg.java

The null platform is a special platform which is convenient to use as the target when using mig. It includes all the standard system components, but with dummy do-nothing implementations. Building an application for the null platform is useless, but it allows mig to extract the layout of packets.

Let's build a Java packet object for BlinkToRadio. Open the Makefile for BlinkToRadio and add a dependency:

```
BUILD_EXTRA_DEPS=BlinkToRadioMsg.class
```

Then add a step which explains how to compile a .java to a .class:

```
BlinkToRadioMsg.class: BlinkToRadioMsg.java
javac BlinkToRadioMsg.java
```

Note that there must be a tab before javac, and not just spaces. Finally, add the line which explains how to create BlinkToRadioMsg.java:

```
BlinkToRadioMsg.java:
mig java -target=null -java-classname=BlinkToRadioMsg BlinkToRadio.h BlinkToRadioMsg -o $@
```

As with javac, there must be a tab (not spaces) before mig. Now, when you type make in BlinkToRadio/, the make system will compile BlinkToRadioMsg.class, a Java class that parses a binary packet into message fields that can be accessed through methods.

There is one more step, however. When you compiled, you probably saw this warning:

```
warning: Cannot determine AM type for BlinkToRadioMsg
(Looking for definition of AM_BLINKTORADIOMSG)
```

One part of the TinyOS communication toolchain requires being able to figure out which AM types correspond to what kinds of packets. To determine this, for a packet type named X, mig looks for a constant of the form AM_X. The warning is because we defined our AM type as AM_BLINKTORADIO, but mig wants AM_BLINKTORADIOMSG. Modify BlinkToRadio.h so that it defines the latter. You'll also need to update BlinkToRadioAppC.nc so that the arguments to AMSenderC and AMReceiverC use it. Recompile the application, and you should see no warning. Install it on a mote.

Now that we have a Java message class, we can use it to print out the messages we see from the BaseStation. With BaseStation plugged into the serial port and BlinkToRadio running on another mote, from the BlinkToRadio directory type

```
java net.tinyos.tools.MsgReader BlinkToRadioMsg
```

Now, when the BaseStation sends a packet to the serial port, MsgReader reads it, looks at its AM type, and if it matches the AM type of one of the Java message classes passed at the command line, it prints out the packet. You should see output like this:

SerialForwarder and other packet sources

One problem with directly using the serial port is that only one PC program can interact with the mote. Additionally, it requires you to run the application on the PC which is physically connected to the mote. The SerialForwarder tool is a simple way to remove both of these limitations.

Most generally, the SerialForwarder program opens a packet source and lets many applications connect to it over a TCP/IP stream in order to use that source. For example, you can run a SerialForwarder whose packet source is the serial port; instead of connecting to the serial port directly, applications connect to the SerialForwarder, which acts as a proxy to read and write packets. Since applications connect to SerialForwarder over TCP/IP, applications can connect over the Internet.

SerialForwarder is the second kind of packet source. A SerialForwarder source has this syntax:

```
sf@HOST:PORT
```

HOST and PORT are optional: they default to localhost (the local machine) and 9002. For example,

```
sf@dark.cs.berkeley.edu:1948
```

will connect to a SerialForwarder running on the computer dark.cs.berkeley.edu and port 1948.

The first step is to run a SerialForwarder; since it takes one packet source and exports it as an sf source, it takes a packet source parameter just like the other tools we've used so far: you can pass a -comm parameter, use MOTECOM, or just rely on the default. Close your MsgReader application so that it no longer uses the serial port, and run a SerialForwarder:

```
java net.tinyos.sf.SerialForwarder
```

You should see a window like this pop up:

```
SerialForwarder.gif
```

Since SerialForwarder takes any packet source as its source, you can even string SerialForwaders along:

```
java net.tinyos.sf.SerialForwarder -port 9003 -comm sf@localhost:9002
```

This command opens a second SerialForwarder, whose source is the first SerialForwarder. You'll see that the client count of the first one has increased to one. It's rare that you'd ever want to do this, but it demonstrates that in the message support libraries you can use a variety of packet sources.

Close the second SerialForwarder (the one listening on port 9003). Run MsgReader again, but this time tell it to connect to your SerialForwarder:

```
java net.tinyos.tools.MsgReader -comm sf@localhost:9002 BlinkToRadioMsg
```

You will see the client count increment, and MsgReader will start printing out packets.

Packet Sources

In addition to serial ports and SerialForwarders, the TinyOS messaging library supports a third packet source, motes which are connected to an ethernet port through a Crossbow MIB 600 ethernet board. This is the full set of packet sources:

Syntax	Source	
serial@PORT:SPEED	Serial ports	
sf@HOST:PORT	SerialForwarder, TMote Connect	
network@HOST:PORT MIB 600		

In the network packet source, the default MIB 600 port is 10002. The Moteiv TMote Connect appliance is a SerialForwarder packet source.

The tool side

Code for the Java messaging toolchain lives in two java packages: net.tinyos.message and net.tinyos.packet. The packet package contains all of the code for packet sources and their protocols: it is what reads and writes bytes. The message package is what turns streams of bytes into meaningful messages and provides packet source independent classes for communicating with motes.

The key class for sending and receiving packets is MoteIF. It has methods for registering packet listeners (callbacks when a packet arrives) and sending packets. The tools MsgReader, Listen, and Send are good places to start to learn how to get Java applications to communicate with motes.

There is also support for python and C.

Sending a packet to the serial port in TinyOS

Sending an AM packet to the serial port in TinyOS is very much like sending it to the radio. A component uses the AMSend interface, calls AMSend.send, and handles AMSend.sendDone. The serial stack will send it over the serial port regardless of the AM address specified.

The TinyOS serial stack follows the same programming model as the radio stack. There is a SerialActiveMessageC for turning the stack on and off (mote processors often cannot enter their lowest power state while the serial stack is on), and generic components for sending and receiving packets. As the serial stack is a dedicated link, however, it does not provide a snooping interface, and it does not filter based on the destination address of the packet. These are the serial communication components and their radio analogues:

Serial	Radio
Serial Active Message C	Active Message C
SerialAMSenderC	AMSenderC
SerialAMReceiverC	AMReceiverC

Because serial AM communication has the same interfaces as radio AM communication, you can in most situations use them interchangably. For example, to make BlinkToRadio send packets to the serial port rather than the radio, all you have to do is change the BlinkToRadioAppC configuration:

I	Radio	S	Serial	
	<pre>components ActiveMessageC; components new AMSenderC(AM_BLINKTORADIOMSG);</pre>		components SerialActiveMessageC; components new SerialAMSenderC(AM_BLINKTORADIOMSG)	;;
	BlinkToRadioC.AMSend -> AMSenderC; BlinkToRadioC.AMControl -> ActiveMessageC;		<pre>BlinkToRadioC.AMSend -> SerialAMSenderC; BlinkToRadioC.AMControl -> SerialActiveMessageC;</pre>	

Now, rather than have BlinkToRadio send packets which a BaseStation recieves and forwards to the serial port, the application will send them directly to a serial port. Connect a MsgReader to test that this is happening. Note that the binary code and data size has changed significantly, as nesC has included the serial stack rather than the radio stack.

Troubleshooting Serial Comm Issues

Connection refused error

If you get a single line that says "java.net.ConnectException: Connection refused", ensure that you are specifying a serial port either using the -comm commandline parameter or by setting the MOTECOM environment variable. For example:

```
java TestSerial -comm serial@/dev/ttyS0:telos
java TestSerial -comm serial@COM4:mica2
```

The first example above is for a UNIX machine, and the second for a Windows machine. Remember that in order for communication to work, both the port AND speed must be set correctly. Often the port for the programmer and for communication are different; read the documentation for your motes to figure out the correct port.

CLASSPATH and Java classes

Note that the CLASSPATH variable must point to tinyos.jar as well as the current directory, indicated by a single dot. If this is not set up correctly, make will fail because javac is unable to import the required TinyOS libraries. Because of how the native JDK reads the CLASSPATH variable, Windows+Cygwin users may need to use a Windows-style path instead of a POSIX path, for example C:\cygwin\opt\tinyos-2.x\support\sdk\java\tinyos.jar instead of one starting with /cygdrive/c/cygwin or /opt/tinyos-2.x.

When Java looks for classes to load, it will look in tinyos.jar first, and then the Java directories in support/sdk/java later. Therefore, if you modify the supporting base TinyOS Java classes, you will not see the changes, as Java will only look at the jar file and not the recompiled class files. To regenerate the jar from the Java code, go to support/sdk/java and type make tinyos.jar.

Cannot find JNI error

If you try to run TestSerial and receive an error that Java cannot find TOSComm JNI support, this means the Java Native Interface (JNI) files that control the serial port haven't been correctly installed. Run the command tos-install-jni (on Linux, do this as the superuser, so if you have more then one Java version installed, verify if the same version is set for superuser and your user). If this command does not exist, then you have either not installed the tinyos-tools RPM or it was installed incorrectly. The tos-commands are typically installed in /usr/bin. If you still cannot find the script, or if the script doesn't work properly, email tinyos-help.

Cannot find Java error on x86_64 GNU/Linux

On the x86_64 architecture, when trying to run tos-install-jni, you may get an error saying "Java not found, not installing JNI code". This could be because the JNI files are stored in a directory called "amd64" instead of "x86_64". This can be remedied by editing the tos-locate-jre file (as the superuser). Look for a line that reads arch=`uname -m` and change it to arch="amd64". Save the changes and run tos-install-jni again.

Installing tos-install-jni from CVS sources

If you have not installed the tools RPM and are working directly from the TinyOS CVS repository, you can manually install the tos-locate-jre script. Go to tinyos-2.x/tools/tinyos/java. If the directory has a Makefile in it, type make and (again, on Linux, as superuser) make install. If the directory does not have a Makefile, go to tinyos-2.x/tools and type:

```
$ ./Bootstrap
$ ./configure
$ make
$ make install
```

Then type tos-install-jni. This should install serial support in your system.

If you encounter the following error:

i/usr/bin/ld: skipping incompatible /usr/lib/gcc/x86_64-linux-gnu/4.4.1/libstdc++.so when searching for -lstdc++ i/usr/bin/ld: skipping incompatible /usr/lib/gcc/x86_64-linux-gnu/4.4.1/libstdc++.a when searching for -lstdc++

install the package g++-multilib.

TOSThreads Example

For TOSThreads applications, the TOSThreads library provides both nesC and C APIs for serial communication. nesC APIs are in tos/lib/tosthreads/system/

(http://tinyos.cvs.sourceforge.net/viewvc/tinyos/tinyos-2.x/tos/lib/tosthreads/system/):

BlockingSerialActiveMessageC component provides the BlockingStdControl interface to turn ON/OFF serial communication. BlockingSerialAMReceiverC component provides the BlockingReceive interface to receive incoming serial packets from PC. BlockingSerialAMSenderC component provides the BlockingAMSend interface to send serial packets to PC. If you wish to use C APIs, the header file is tos/lib/tosthreads/csystem/tosthread_amserial.h (http://tinyos.cvs.sourceforge.net/viewvc/tinyos/tinyos-2.x/tos/lib/tosthreads/csystem/tosthread_amserial.h?view=markup) , and you need to include this file in the application.

TestSineSensor is an example that demonstrate how to use the TOSThreads library to perform serial communication. Implementation files that use nesC and C APIs are in apps/tosthreads/apps/TestSineSensor/ (http://tinyos.cvs.sourceforge.net/viewvc/tinyos/tinyos-2.x/apps/tosthreads/apps/TestSineSensor) and apps/tosthreads/capps/TestSineSensor/ (http://tinyos.cvs.sourceforge.net/viewvc/tinyos/tinyos-2.x/apps/tosthreads/capps/TestSineSensor) respectively. TestSineSensor samples a sensor and sends readings to the serial port. It shouldn't be surprising that since the TOSThreads library replaces split-phase system calls with blocking calls, application threads block on operations, such as sending packets.

Note that when using the TOSThreads's serial library, the baud rate 57600 must be used for telos-based motes. The TinyOS serial configuration file has been changed to work with this baud rate when compiled for tosthreads.

Related Documentation

- TEP 113: Serial Communication (http://www.tinyos.net/tinyos-2.x/doc/html/tep113.html)
- mig man page
- ncg man page
- javadoc documentation for the net.tinyos.packet and net.tinyos.message packages

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