

Middleware Architectures 2

Lecture 5: Browser Networking

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Overview

- **Browser Networking**
 - *XHR*
- Security Mechanisms
- JSON and JSONP

Browser Networking

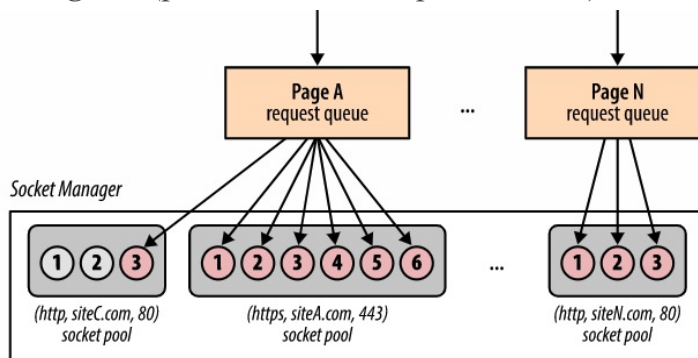
- Browser

- Platform for fast, efficient and secure delivery of Web apps
- Many components
 - parsing, layout, style calculation of HTML and CSS, JavaScript execution speed, rendering pipelines, and **networking stack**
- When network is slow, e.g. waiting for a resource to arrive
 - all other steps are blocked



Connection Management

- Network socket management and optimization
 - Socket reuse
 - Request prioritization
 - Protocol negotiation
 - Enforcing connection limits
- Socket manager
 - Sockets organized in pools (connection limits and security constraints)
 - origin = (protocol, domain, port number)



Network Security

- No raw socket access for app code
 - Prevents apps from initiating any connection to host
 - For example port scan, connect to mail server, etc.
- Network security
 - **Connection limits**
 - protect both client and server from resource exhaustion
 - **Request formatting and response processing**
 - Enforcing well-formed protocol semantics of outgoing requests
 - Response decoding to protect user from malicious servers
 - **TLS negotiation**
 - TLS handshake and verification checks on certificates
 - User is warned when verification fails, e.g. self-signed cert is used
 - **Same-origin policy**
 - Constraints on requests to be initiated and to which origin

Mashups

- Web application hybrid
 - App uses APIs of two or more applications
- Types
 - Data mashup – integration/aggregation of data (read only)
 - Service mashup – more sophisticated workflows (read, write)
 - Visualization – involves UI
 - For example, third-party data displayed on the Google map
- Client-Server View
 - client-side mashups (in a browser)
 - JavaScript, Dynamic HTML, AJAX, JSON/JSONP
 - server-side mashups
 - server-side integration of services and data
 - Any language

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XMLHttpRequest (XHR)

- Interface to utilize HTTP protocol in JavaScript
 - *standardized by Web Applications WG [🔗](#) at W3C*
 - *basis for AJAX*
 - *Asynchronous JavaScript and XML*
- Typical usage
 1. *Browser loads a page that includes a script*
 2. *User clicks on a HTML element*
 - *it triggers a JavaScript function*
 3. *The function invokes a service through XHR*
 - *same origin policy, cross-origin resource sharing*
 4. *The function receives data and modifies HTML in the page*

XHR Interface – Key Methods and Properties

- Method and properties of XHR object
 - **open**, *opens the request, parameters:*
 - method** – method to be used (e.g. GET, PUT, POST),
 - url** – url of the resource,
 - asynch** – true to make asynchronous call,
 - user, pass** – credentials for authentication.
 - **onReadyStateChange** – JavaScript function object, it is called when **readyState** changes (uninitialized, loading, loaded, interactive, completed).
 - **send, abort** – sends or aborts the request (for asynchronous calls)
 - **status, statusText** – HTTP status code and a corresponding text.
 - **responseText, responseXML** – response as text or as a DOM document (if possible).
 - **onload** – event listener to support server push.
- See XMLHttpRequest (W3C) [🔗](#), or XMLHttpRequest (Mozilla reference) [🔗](#) for a complete reference.

How XHR works

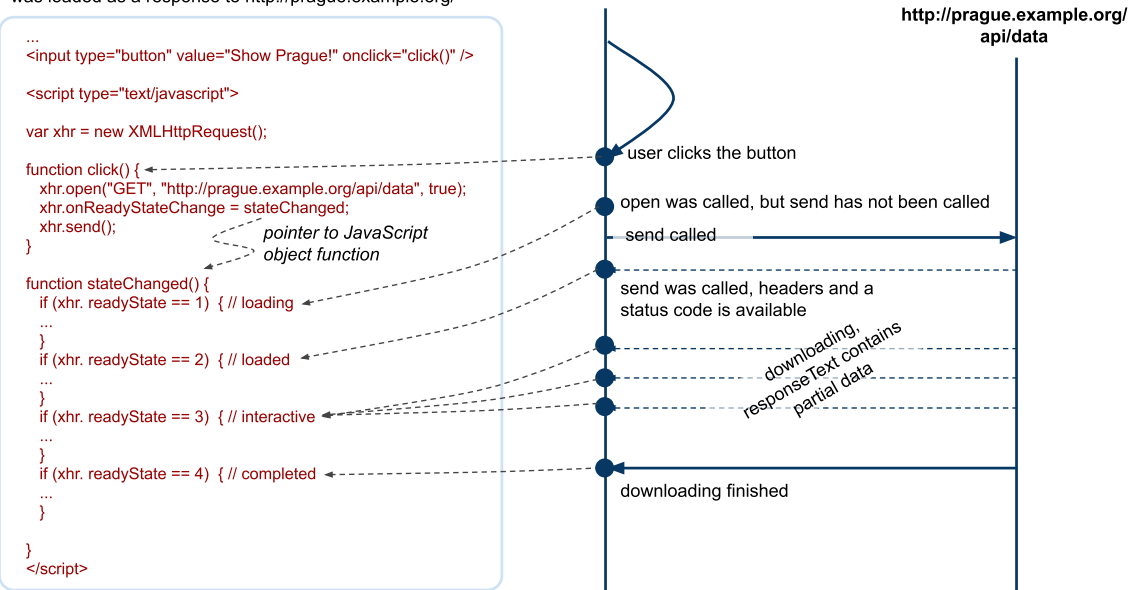
HTML with JavaScript code

was loaded as a response to <http://prague.example.org/>

```
...  
<input type="button" value="Show Prague!" onclick="click()" />  
<script type="text/javascript">  
var xhr = new XMLHttpRequest();  
  
function click() {  
  xhr.open("GET", "http://prague.example.org/api/data", true);  
  xhr.onreadystatechange = stateChanged;  
  xhr.send();  
}  
  
function stateChanged() {  
  if (xhr.readyState == 1) { // loading  
    ...  
  }  
  if (xhr.readyState == 2) { // loaded  
    ...  
  }  
  if (xhr.readyState == 3) { // interactive  
    ...  
  }  
  if (xhr.readyState == 4) { // completed  
    ...  
  }  
}  
}</script>
```

Browser

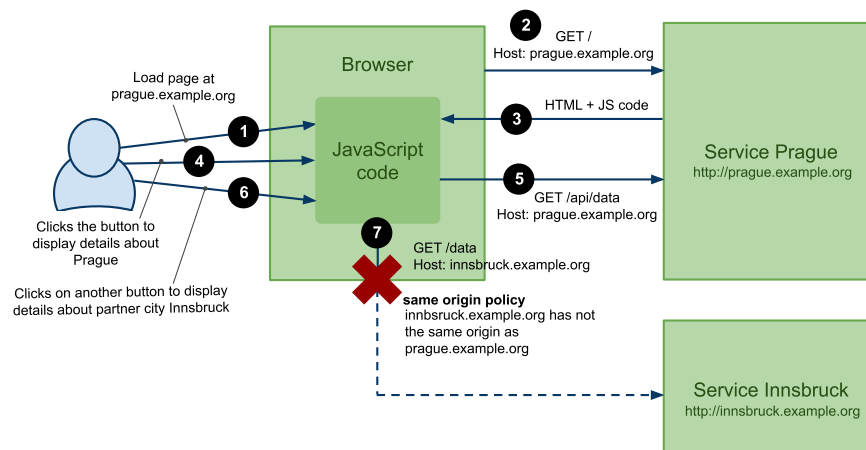
Resource at
<http://prague.example.org/api/data>



Overview

- Browser Networking
- **Security Mechanisms**
 - *Scripting Attacks*
 - *Cross-origin Resource Sharing Protocol (CORS)*
- JSON and JSONP

Same Origin Policy



- JavaScript code can only access resources on the same domain
 - *XHR to GET, POST, PUT, UPDATE, DELETE*
 - *Browsers apply same origin policy*
- Solutions
 - *JSON and JSONP (GET only)*
 - *Cross-origin Resource Sharing Protocol (CORS)*

Why Same Origin Policy?

- Without the same origin policy, the following POST would be possible



Overview

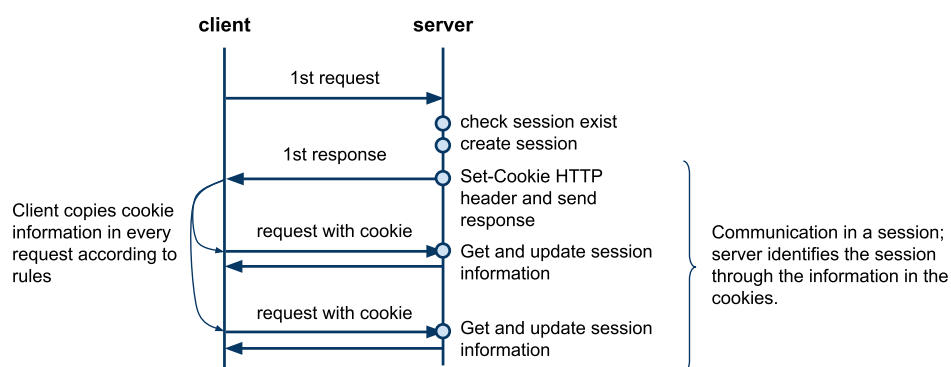
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Overview

- Scripting Attacks
 - Intruders make users perform action that has side effects on their resources
 - Intruders inject malicious code to Web pages
- Roles in Security Scenarios
 - Alice, Bob
 - Normal users, usually Alice wants to send a message to Bob or Alice accesses a Bob's site.
 - Eve
 - A user with bad intentions, usually a passive attacker.
 - Mallory
 - An active attacker, usually sends a link to a page with malicious code.

Recall: State management in HTTP

- Request-response interaction with cookies
 - Session is a logical channel maintained by the server



- Stateful Server
 - Server remembers the session information in a server memory
 - Server memory is a non-persistent storage, when server restarts the memory content is lost!

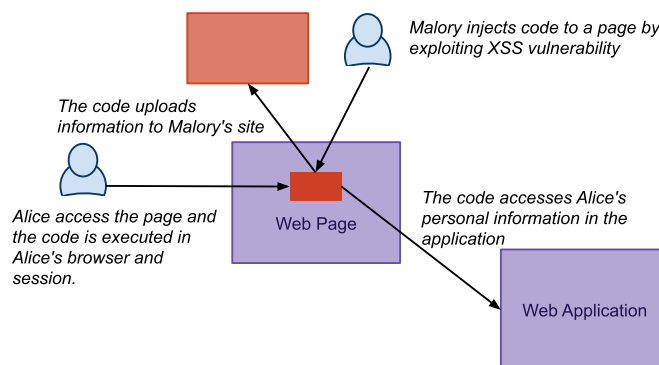
Cross-site Request Forgery (CSRF)

- Exploits a trust of a website in a user's browser
- Scenario
 1. Mallory sends a link to Alice (in an email, in a chat, etc.)
 - The link points to a page that has HTML code with hrefs to Alice's private resources
 - For example, to perform an action on Alice's account, it is possible to use `img` like this:

```
1 | 
```
 2. Alice loads the page in her browser
 - Alice is authenticated to the bank's website, the browser sends Alice's authentication cookies with the request.
- Issues and Prevention
 - The bank site violates REST, i.e. overloading of GET for making actions
 - The bank should check HTTP `referer` header
 - It is a "blind" attack, Mallory does not see the result
 - To perform POST, current browsers today use *CORS protocol*

Cross-site Scripting Attack (XSS)

- Exploits a trust of a user in a website



- Example Scenario
 1. An attacker injects a code to a page
 2. A users executes the code in his/her browser's session
 3. The code provides information (cookies) to the attacker
 4. The attacker uses the cookies to access the user's data

XSS Examples

- Twitter in Sep 2010

- *Injection of JavaScript code to a page using a tweet*
- *You posted following tweet to Twitter*

```
1 | There is a great event happening at
2 | http://someurl.com/@"onmouseover="alert('test xss')"/
```

- *Twitter parses the link and wraps it with `<a>` element*

```
1 | There is a great event happening at
2 | <a href="http://someurl.com/@"onmouseover="alert('test xss')"
```

```
3 |   target="_blank">http://someurl.com/@"onmouseover="
4 |   "alert('test xss')"/</a>
```

- *See details at Twitter mouseover exploit [🔗](#)*

- Other example: Google Contacts

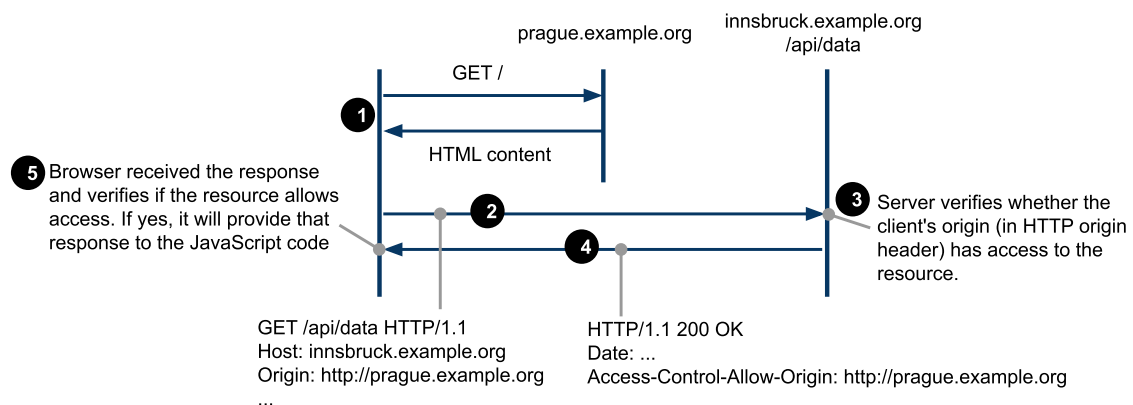
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Overview

- Increasing number of mashup applications
 - *client-side mashups involving multiple sites*
 - *mechanism to control an access to sites from within JavaScript*
- Allow for **cross-site HTTP requests**
 - *HTTP requests for resources from a different domain than the domain of the resource making the request.*
- W3C Recommendation
 - *see Cross-origin Resource Sharing [↗](#)*
 - *Browsers support it*
 - *see HTTP Access Control [↗](#) at Mozilla*

CORS Protocol – GET



- Read-only resource access via HTTP GET
- Headers:
 - **Origin** – *identifies the origin of the request*
 - **Access-Control-Allow-Origin** – *defines who can access the resource*
 - *either the full domain name or the wildcard (*) is allowed.*

CORS Protocol – other methods and "preflight"



- Preflight request queries the resource using **OPTIONS** method
 - requests other than **GET** (except **POST** w/o payload) or with custom headers
 - A browser should run preflight automatically for any XHR request meeting preflight conditions
 - The browser caches responses according to **Access-Control-Max-Age**

Overview

- Browser Networking
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- **JSON and JSONP**

Recall: JSON

- JSON = JavaScript Object Notation
 - *Serialization format for data representation*
 - *Very easy to use in JavaScript*
 - *no need to use a parser explicitly*
 - *Also great support in many programming environments*
- Key constructs
 - **object** is a collection of comma-separated key/value pairs:
`{"name" : "tomas", "age" : 18, "student" : false, "car" : null}`
 - **array** is an order list of values:
`["prague", "innsbruck", 45]`
 - can be nested: objects as values in an **array**:
`[{ "name" : "tomas", "age" : 18 },
 { "name" : "peter", "age" : 19 }]`
 - and the other way around: array as values in an **object**:
`{ "cities" : ["prague", "innsbruck",
 "states" : ["CZ", "AT"] }`
 - A complete grammar see *JavaScript Object Notation* [↗](#)

JSON in JavaScript

- Native data format

```
1 // data needs to be assigned
2 var data = { "people" : ["tomas", "peter", "alice", "jana"] };
3
4 // go through the list of people
5 for (var i = 0; i < data.people.length; i++) {
6   var man = data.people[i];
7   // ... do something with this man
8 }
```
- Responses of service calls in JSON
 - *Many support JSON, how can we load that data?*
- Example Request-Response

```
1 GET http://pipes.yahoo.com/pipes/pipe.run?_id=638c670c40c97b62&_render=json
2
3 {
4   "count":1,"value":
5   {
6     "title":"Web 2.0 announcements",
7     "description":"Pipes Output",
8     "link":"http://pipes.yahoo.com/pipes/pipe.info...",
9     "pubDate":"Mon, 07 Mar 2011 18:27:20 +0000",
10    "generator":"..."
11  }
12 }
```

JSONP

- Service that supports JSONP
 - allows to specify a query string parameter for a wrapper function to load the data in JavaScript code
 - otherwise the data cannot be used in JavaScript
 - they're loaded into the memory but assigned to nothing
- Example
 - if a resource at http://someurl.org/json_data returns

```
{ "people" : ["tomas", "peter", "alice", "jana"] }
```
 - then the resource at http://someurl.org/json_data?_callback=loadData returns

```
loadData({ "people" : ["tomas", "peter", "alice", "jana"] });
```
- A kind of workaround for the same origin policy
 - only **GET**, nothing else works obviously
 - no XHR, need to load the data through the dynamic **<script>** element

JSONP in JavaScript

- JSONP example
 - loads JSON data using JSONP by dynamically inserting **<script>** into the current document. This will download JSON data and triggers the script.

```
1  var TWITTER_URL = "http://api.twitter.com/1/statuses/user_timeline.json?" +
2    "&screen_name=web2e&count=100&callback=loadData";
3
4  // this needs to be loaded in window.onload
5  // after all document has finished loading...
6  function insertData() {
7    var se = document.createElement('script');
8    se.setAttribute("type", "text/javascript");
9    se.setAttribute("src", TWITTER_URL);
10   document.getElementsByTagName("head")[0].appendChild(se);
11   // And data will be loaded when loadDta callback fires...
12 }
13
14 // loads the data when they arrive
15 function loadData(data) {
16   // we need to know the the structure of JSON data that is returned
17   // and code it here accordingly
18   for (var i = 0; i < data.length; i++) {
19     data[i].created_at // contains date the tweet was created
20     data[i].text // contains the tweet
21   }
22 }
```