8.5: Networking

Java supports network programming at two distinct levels. On one level, there are a wealth of classes and methods you can use to interact with the World Wide Web (WWW). Using this part of the API, you can download sound, image, and data files from the Web; submit Web forms; and from an applet, instruct the Web browser to display a particular Web page. The Java WWW API lets you write network code even if you don't know anything about networks. For many network-savvy applets, especially, this part of the API may be sufficient.

Java also supports socket-level programming, from both the server side and the client side. Using the socket interface, you can write Java networking code that accesses any Internet service: FTP, Telnet, IRC, etc. (not just the WWW). The socket interface is obviously much more flexible than the Web interface, but because of that flexibility it is harder to use.