Multiplayer Games and Networking
Overview

- Multiplayer Modes
- Networking Fundamentals
- Networking for Games
- Networking for Unity
Early forms of Multiplayer: Turn Based

- Easier to implement
- Puzzle / board game
- Non-real time connection
  - Floppy Disks, Email
  - Database (Door Games)
Early forms of Multiplayer: Real Time

- Shared I/O
  - Input Devices
    - Shared Keyboard layout
    - Multiple Device Mapping
  - Display
    - Full Screen vs Split Screen
Multiplayer Modes: Connectivity

- Non Real-Time
  - (turn based)
- Direct Link
  - Serial, USB, IrD, ... (no hops)
- Circuit Switched (phones)
  - Dedicated line with consistent latency
- Packet Switched
  - Internet
  - Shared Pipe
Multiplayer Modes: now with Networking!

- Difficulty based on Event Timing
  - Turn-Based
    - Any connection type
  - Real-Time
    - More data to sync
    - Latency sensitive
Networking: When do we need it?

- Single Player Games?
  - Leaderboards and trophies
  - Online data stores
    - (PS+, Steam Cloud)
  - Downloadable content
  - DRM

- Multiplayer
  - Most AAA titles moving toward multiplayer
  - * or at least, single player +

“Portal 2 will probably be Valve's last game with an isolated single-player experience” *
Networking
At a glance

- Connection between multiple computers
- Transmission of data
- How do we design a system that can do....
  - Packet Length Conveyance
  - Acknowledgement Methodology
  - Error Checking / Correcting
  - Compression
  - Encryption
  - Packet Control
Protocol Stack: Open System Interconnect

Sender
- Application
- Presentation
- Session
- Transport
- Network
- Data Link
- Physical

Router
- Network
- Data Link
- Physical

Receiver
- Application
- Presentation
- Session
- Transport
- Network
- Data Link
- Physical

Connection & Data Exchange
- Game Events
- Game Packetization
- Input Updates
- State Updates
- Serialization
- Buffering
- Sockets
- TCP
- UDP
- IP
- Ethernet (MAC)
- Wired (C5, Cable)
- Fiber Optics
- Wireless
Physical Layer

- **Bandwidth**
  - Width of data pipe
  - Measured in bps = bits per second

- **Latency**
  - Travel time from point A to B
  - Measured in Milliseconds

- **The Medium**
  - Fiber, FireWire, IrD, CDMA & other cell

Table: Max Bandwidth Specifications

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Speed (bps)</th>
<th>Serial</th>
<th>USB 1&amp;2</th>
<th>ISDN</th>
<th>DSL</th>
<th>Cable</th>
<th>Wireless 802.11</th>
<th>Power Line</th>
<th>T1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>20K</td>
<td>12M</td>
<td>128k</td>
<td>1.5M down 896K up</td>
<td>3M down 256K up</td>
<td>10M 100M 1G b=11M a,g=54M</td>
<td>14M</td>
<td>1.5M</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Data Link Layer

- Serializes data to/from physical layer
- Network Interface Card
  - Ethernet
  - MAC Address
Network Layer

- Packet Routing
  - Hops
    - No connection
    - Guarantees sending
    - Doesn’t guarantee receiving
    - Non-deterministic path
  - Routers, Hubs, Switches
- Internet Protocol (IP)
  - Contains Source & Destination IP Address
  - IPv4 vs IPv6
- Unicast, Broadcast, Loop back
Network Layer: Domain Name Service

- Domain Name Service
  - Converts text name to IP address
  - Must contact one or more DNS servers to resolve
  - Local cache resolution possible

- Game Tips
  - Store local game cache to use when DNS out of order.
  - DNS resolution often slow, use cache for same day resolution.
Transport Layer

- Manage data deliver between endpoints
  - Error recovery
  - Data flow

- TCP and UDP used with IP
  - Contains Source and Destination Port

- Port + IP = Net Address
  - Port Range = 0-64k
  - Well known Ports 0-1k
    - http, ftp, ssh, ...
Transport Layer: Transmission Control Protocol

- Connection based
  - Keep Alive
  - Handles breaking up data into correct size
  - Packet window
  - Packet Coalescense
- Guaranteed, in order delivery
  - ack, nack, resend
- Flow Control
- Easy to use
  - Reading and writing, just like a file
- Requires more header data
Transport Layer: User Datagram Protocol

- No connection
- No guarantees
  - May not arrive
    - TTL (time to live) – hop count limit
  - May not arrive in order
  - May arrive multiple times
  - Source not verified
- Datagram
  - Sent in packets exactly as user sends them
- Capable of broadcasting
Transport Layer: TCP vs UDP

- Which to use?
  - Depends on the game!
- TCP
  - Turn based games, leader boards
- UDP
  - More common, especially for time sensitive games
  - Add TCP features as needed
  - Unity uses UDP, with features for reliable, in order transmission
Session Layer

- Manages Connections between Apps
  - Connect
  - Terminate
  - Data Exchange
- Socket API live at this layer
  - Cross platform
  - Cross language
Session Layer: Sockets

- Based on File I/O
  - File Descriptors
  - Open/Close
  - Read/Write

- Modes
  - Blocking
    - Use in separate thread
  - Non-blocking
    - Poll the socket periodically
Presentation Layer

- Prepares App Data for Transmission
  - Compression
  - Encryption
  - Endian Order
    - 0b1000 vs 0b0001
  - Serialize
  - Buffering
    - Packet Coalescence
    - Increased Latency
    - Store local data and wait
Application Layer

- Interfaces with user
- Handles game logic
- Transmits the right data
- ... at the right time...
- ...to the right person
Protocol Stack: Open System Interconnect

Application Set

Sender
- Application
- Presentation
- Session
- Transport
  - Network
  - Data Link
  - Physical

Router

Receiver
- Application
- Presentation
- Session
- Transport
  - Network
  - Data Link
  - Physical

Your Game Logic

Game Engine
- Input Updates
- State Updates
- Serialization
- Buffering
- Sockets
- TCP
- UDP
- IP
- Ethernet (MAC)
- Wired (C5, Cable)
- Fiber Optics
- Wireless

Application Set: Game Events

Session: Game Packetization

Connection & Data Exchange

Game Engine

Your Game Logic

Application Set

Sender
- Application
- Presentation
- Session
- Transport
  - Network
  - Data Link
  - Physical

Router

Receiver
- Application
- Presentation
- Session
- Transport
  - Network
  - Data Link
  - Physical

Your Game Logic

Game Engine
- Input Updates
- State Updates
- Serialization
- Buffering
- Sockets
- TCP
- UDP
- IP
- Ethernet (MAC)
- Wired (C5, Cable)
- Fiber Optics
- Wireless
Networking for Games

- Who are we communicating with?
- What data needs to be sent?
- How often do we need to send it?
- How do we protect that data?
- How do we handle conflicts?

- (Looking at non-trivial real time applications)
Connection Models

- Broadcast
  - Good for player discovery on LANs
- Peer to Peer
  - Good for 2 player games
- Client / Server
  - Good for 2+ player games
  - Dedicated lobby server great for player discovery
Peer to Peer vs. Client/Server

\[ \sum_{x=1}^{N-1} x \]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Broadcast</th>
<th>Peer/Peer</th>
<th>Client/Server</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Connections | 0         | \[ \sum_{x=1}^{N-1} x \] | Client = 1  
              |            |               | Server = N   |
|        | Broadcast | Peer/Peer | Client/Server |
| Send   | 1         | N-1       | Client = 1  
              |            |               | Server = N   |
| Receive| N-1       | N-1       | Client = 1  
              |            |               | Server = N   |

N = Number of players
Client / Server Architecture

- Clients connect to Server
  - Server handles all communication between clients
  - “UDP Connection”
- Small high frequency packets (20-30 /sec)
- Packet based comm results in new challenges
  - Packet loss
    - Especially if client asks for higher rate then their connection can handle
  - Inherent latency
    - Bandwidth + Latency => Lag => Player frustration
    - Varies from client to client
Client / Server: Authoritative vs. Non-Authoritative

- **Authoritative**
  - Clients send inputs to server
  - Server does all input processing, world simulation, application of data rules
  - Server tells client what happened
  - Client only collects data and renders results!

- **Non-Authoritative**
  - Clients process user data, applies logic, updates the server
  - Clients have control of their specific objects
  - Server acts as a relay

- Can you trust clients?
Client / Server: Communication Methods

- Remote Procedure Calls
  - Invoke functions on another machine
    - Client to server
    - Server to a client
    - Server to a set (possibly all) clients
  - Used for infrequent actions and events
    - Loading levels
    - State of infrequently changed object
Update Models

Input Reflection

- Authoritative server mode
- Slightly process input data
- People notice delay of 0.1s
- Synchronous (wait for data from everyone)
- Asynchronous (predict input)
  - Not appropriate for input reflection
- Low and consistent latency
- Seed rand() with same seed on all computers
- Don’t use system time for calculations
Client / Server: Communication Methods

- Update Models
  - State Reflection
    - Both server modes
    - Update position, rotation, velocity....
    - Larger packets
      - Prioritize
    - Server Distributed Object System
Client / Server: Server Distributed Object System

- Relevance Sets
- Object Views
  - Objects consist of three major groups of data
    - Visual & Display
      - always
    - Game logic & AI
      - Seldom
    - Housekeeping
      - never
Client / Server: Server Distributed Object System

- Synchronization
  - The “art” of network programming
  - Dead Reckoning
    - Works fine until drastic change
  - AI Assist
    - Help transition between waypoints
    - Might cause slight synch problems
- Arbitration
  - Weighted decision to correct outcome
  - Server is dictator
  - Client might delay critical event while waiting
Client / Server: Sync Optimizations Techniques

- Solutions (Valve’s Source Engine)
  - Delta compression
  - Interpolation
  - Prediction
  - Lag compensation
Delta compression

- Only send newly updated information
- Approach used for other types of streaming data
- Acknowledgement numbers used to keep track of flow
- Client can request full snapshot when problems occur
Client / Server: Sync Optimizations Techniques

- Interpolation
  - Snapshot updating results in jerky jittery graphics
  - Interpolate between current snapshot and previous
    - Client runs 100 ms behind
    - Will work with one lost packet
    - Two lost packets will cause errors
Client / Server: Sync Optimizations Techniques

- Prediction
  - Player will notice 100 ms delay in own input
  - Client side input prediction
  - Client predicts where player should be using same logic as server
  - When snapshot comes they are compared
    - May be different since server has more information than client
  - Client must correct
    - Smoothing used to make correction less noticeable
Client / Server: Sync Optimizations Techniques

- Lag compensation
  - When my shot information arrives at server, enemy has moved
  - Server compensates
  - Maintains history of all player positions
  - Looks back in time for player position at time of shot
Cheating

- Why not client do hit detection?
  - Client can’t be trusted
  - Cheat proxy
    - “man in the middle”
- Valve’s Anti-Cheat
- Blizzard’s Warden
Cheating

- Material hacks (wallhacking)
- Aim and trigger bots
  - Color based. Old versions (Quake etc.) replace models with colored ones, used algorithm to scan screen.
    - Can end up aiming at other stuff in the scene
  - Client hook versions use information on the player positions
  - Graphics Driver versions. Get 3D values from renderer and convert to mouse coordinates
Security

- Console network stacks
  - provide additional security functions
- Intel Fair Online Gaming
  - Hardware, firmware, and game software on client
Security

- Encryption
  - Preserve integrity of network traffic
  - Efficiency vs Security
- Execution Cryptography
  - Prevent reverse engineering to edit game data
- Copy Protection
  - DRM
  - Code sheets
  - Active internet connection
Networking for Unity

- This is not a substitute for reading Unity’s documentation!

- UDP based
- Client / Server
  - No dedicated server software
  - Authoritative vs. Non-Authoritative
- Game Lobby
Networking for Unity

- **Network Views**
  - Required component for transmitting data
  - Not same as an “Object View”, but required to create them in code
- **RPC**
- **State Synchronization**
  - Reliable Delta Compressed
  - Unreliable
- **Tutorials for prediction, lag compensation, interpolation, etc.**
Networking for Unity: 3rd Party MMEs

- Massively Multiplayer Engines
  - Photo, SmartFox, Electroserver, ...
- Higher scalability
- API for Unity
- Re-implementing Object View structures
Networking in your game

- Read Unity’s documentation first!
  - Overview
  - API for networking classes
- Check out the tutorials
  - Unity’s networking tutorials
  - Other’s available online ( $$$? )
- Get *something* working
  - Then test the different options
References:

Networking Overview

- **Source Engine Overview**
  - Overview, Delta Compression, Interpolation, etc.

- **Relevance Sets / Object Views**
  - http://www.gamasutra.com/resource_guide/20020916/lambright_01.htm

- **Glenn Fiedler Overview**
  - http://gafferongames.com/networking-for-game-programmers/
  - Includes articles on cross-platforms low level implementation (stuff that Unity already does for you)
References:

Unity

- Documentation

- Example / Tutorials
  - http://www.palladiumgames.net/tutorials/unity-networking-tutorial/
References:
NAT Punch-through

- Overview

- Unity Master Server