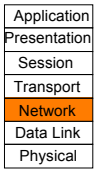
CSE/EE 461 – Lecture 19

Naming and the DNS

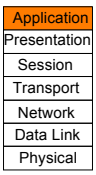
Last Time

- HTTP and the Web
- Focus
  - Protocol, performance implications
- Topics
  - HTTP request and response structure
  - Persistent HTTP
  - Caching

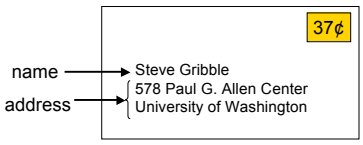


This Lecture

- Naming
- Focus
  - How do we name hosts etc.?
- Topics
  - Domain Name System (DNS)
  - Email/URLs



Names and Addresses



- Names are identifiers for objects/services (high level)
- Addresses are locators for objects/services (low level)
- Binding is the process of associating a name with an address
- Resolution is the process of looking up an address given a name
- But, addresses are really lower-level names; many levels used

Naming in Systems

- Ubiquitous
  - Files in filesystem, processes in OS, pages on the web, …
- Decouple identifier for object/service from location
  - Hostnames provide a level of indirection for IP addresses
- Naming greatly impacts system capabilities and performance
  - Ethernet addresses are a flat 48 bits
    - flat → any address anywhere but large forwarding tables
  - IP addresses are hierarchical 32/128 bits
    - hierarchy → smaller routing tables but constrained locations

Internet Hostnames

- Hostnames are human-readable identifiers for end-systems based on an administrative hierarchy
  - futureproof.cs.washington.edu is my desktop machine
- IP addresses are a fixed-length binary encoding for end-systems based on their position in the network
  - 128.95.2.112 is futureproof's IP address
- Original name resolution: HOSTS.TXT
- Current name resolution: Domain Name System
- Future name resolution: ?

Original Hostname System

- When the Internet was really young …
- Flat namespace
  - Simple (host, address) pairs
- Centralized management
  - Updates via a single master file called HOSTS.TXT
  - Manually coordinated by the Network Information Center (NIC)
- Resolution process
  - Look up hostname in the HOSTS.TXT file

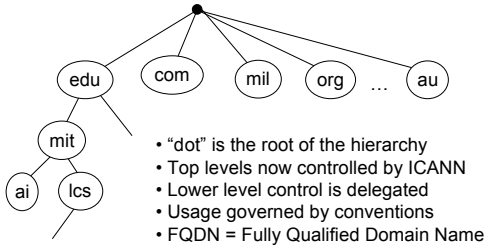
Scaling Problems

- Coordination
  - Between all users to avoid conflicts
- Inconsistencies
  - Between update and distribution of new version
- Reliability
  - Single point of failure
- Performance
  - Competition for centralized resources

Domain Name System (DNS)

- Designed by Mockapetris and Dunlap in the mid 80s
- Namespace is hierarchical
  - Allows much better scaling of data structures
  - e.g., futureproof.cs.washington.edu
- Namespace is distributed
  - Decentralized administration and access
  - e.g., *.cs.washington.edu managed by CSE
- Resolution is by query/response
  - With replicated servers for redundancy
  - With heavy use of caching for performance

DNS Hierarchy



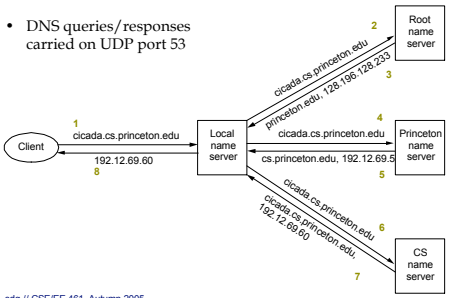
- "dot" is the root of the hierarchy
- Top levels now controlled by ICANN
- Lower level control is delegated
- Usage governed by conventions
- FQDN = Fully Qualified Domain Name

DNS Distribution

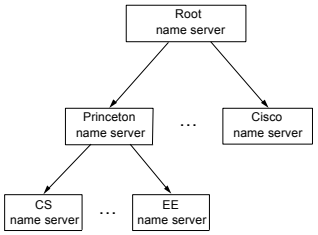
- Data managed by zones that contain resource records
  - Zone is a complete description of a portion of the namespace
  - e.g., all hosts and addresses for machines in washington.edu with pointers to subdomains like cs.washington.edu
- One or more nameservers manage each zone
  - Zone transfers performed between nameservers for consistency
  - Multiple nameservers provide redundancy
- Client resolvers query nameservers for specified records
  - Multiple messages may be exchanged per DNS lookup to navigate the name hierarchy (coming soon)

DNS Lookups/Resolution

- DNS queries/responses carried on UDP port 53



Hierarchy of Nameservers



Caching

- Servers and clients cache results of DNS lookups
  - Cache partial results too (e.g., server for princeton.edu)
  - Greatly improves system performance; lookups the rare case
- Cache using time-to-live (TTL) value from provider
  - higher TTL means less traffic, lower TTL means less stale info
- Negative caching is used too!
  - errors can cause repeated queries for non-existent data

DNS Bootstrapping

- Need to know IP addresses of root servers before we can make any queries
- Addresses for 13 root servers ([a-m].root-servers.net) handled via initial configuration (named.ca file)

Building on the DNS

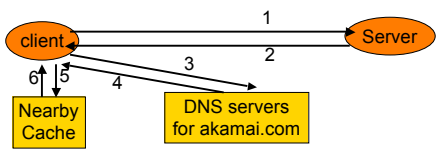
- Other naming designs leverage the DNS
- Email:
  - e.g., gribble @cs.washington.edu is gribble in the domain cs.washington.edu
- Uniform Resource Locators (URLs) name for Web pages
  - e.g., www.cs.washington.edu/homes/gribble
  - Use domain name to identify a Web server
  - Use "/" separated string to name path to page (like files)

Future Evolution of the DNS

- Design constrains us in two major ways that are increasingly less appropriate
- Static host to IP mapping
  - What about mobility (Mobile IP) and dynamic address assignment (DHCP)
- Location-insensitive queries
  - What if I don't care what server a Web page comes from, as long as it's the right page?
  - e.g., a yahoo page might be replicated

Akamai

- Use the DNS to effect selection of a nearby Web cache



- Leverage separation of static/dynamic content
- Beware DNS caching

Key Concepts

- The design of names, addresses and resolution has a significant impact on system capabilities
- Hierarchy, decentralization and caching allow the DNS to scale
  - These are general techniques!