RESTful web services

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Wintersemester 16/17
Representational State Transfer (REST)

• A lightweight alternative to the SOAP/WSDL universe

• Defined by Roy T. Fielding
  – main author of HTTP/1.0 and HTTP/1.1
  – co-founder of the Apache HTTP server project (httpd)

• REST is an architectural style (and HTTP can be regarded as one incarnation of it)

• REST relies on some important architectural principles:
  – Everything is a resource
  – Communicate statelessly
  – Use a common interface for all resources
  – Resources can have multiple representations
REST principles I: Everything is a resource

- from a REST point of view, every data element of an application a designer deems worthy of having its own URI is a resource
  - entities, attributes, collections, etc.
- each resource has a unique ID
  - REST makes use of a resource’s URI
    - global standard namespace, globally unique
- a resource is not an actual object or service itself, but rather an abstract interface for using it
- using human-readable URIs is common (yet not obligatory)

http://example.com/customers/1234
http://example.com/orders/2013/1/12345
http://example.com/orders/2013/1
http://example.com/products/4554
http://example.com/products?color=green
http://example.com/processes/salary-increase
REST principles II: Communicate statelessly

- REST includes the concept of **statelessness** on behalf of the server
  - but, of course, there is some state...

- All application state should either
  - be **turned into resource state**
  - or be **managed at the client**

- All **requests should be independent** from earlier requests
  - messages are **self-contained**, including all necessary information

- Advantages:
  - **scalability**
  - **isolation of the client** against changes on the server
REST principles III: Use standard methods

- REST demands the usage of **simple, uniform interfaces** for all resources

- When making a HTTP request on a resource, we expect the application to actually **do something meaningful**
  - this is achieved with every resource providing the same interface (i.e., the same set of methods)

- REST is making usage of the **HTTP verbs** (as in the HTTP specification)
- With REST, these verbs are mapped to resource-specific semantics

```java
class Resource {
    // analogy to oo-programming
    Resource(URI u); // URI
    Response get(); // HTTP GET
    Response post(Request r); // HTTP POST
    Response put(Request r); // HTTP PUT
    Response delete(); // HTTP DELETE
}
```
REST principles IV: Different representations

- Resources can (and actually should) have **multiple representations**
  - provide multiple representations of resources for different needs
  - ideally, at least one standard format should be provided

- Selection of data formats is done **using HTTP content negotiation**
  - clients can ask for a representation in a particular format

```
GET /customers/1234 HTTP/1.1
Host: example.com
Accept: application/xml
```
```
GET /customers/1234 HTTP/1.1
Host: example.com
Accept: text/x-vcard
```

- Advantages:
  - Having several representations of a resource (e.g., text, XML, HTML, JSON...), they are consumable by standard web browsers
  - An application’s Web UI can actually be regarded as its Web API, providing a better Web interface for both humans and applications
REST-conformant usage of HTTP methods

- **HTTP GET**
  - Used for accessing the requested resource without any side-effects. A resource must never be changed via a GET request (read-only)!

- **HTTP PUT**
  - Used for creating or updating a resource at a known URI.

- **HTTP DELETE**
  - Used for removing a resource.

- **GET, PUT and DELETE** must be implemented as idempotent methods
  - can be called repeatedly without leading to different results

- **HTTP POST**
  - Update an existing resource or create a new one (not idempotent)
A simple example of a RESTful web service

- Mapping of “normal” method names to RESTful resource interfaces
  - combination of resource URIs and the standard HTTP methods

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Normal method name</th>
<th>URI (RESTful resource)</th>
<th>HTTP method</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>listOrders</td>
<td>/orders</td>
<td>GET</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>addNewOrder</td>
<td>/orders</td>
<td>POST</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>addNewOrder</td>
<td>/orders/12344</td>
<td>PUT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>getOrder</td>
<td>/orders/12344</td>
<td>GET</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>deleteOrder</td>
<td>/orders/12344</td>
<td>DELETE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>listCustomers</td>
<td>/customers</td>
<td>GET</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>getCustomer</td>
<td>/customers/beck</td>
<td>GET</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>addCustomer</td>
<td>/customers</td>
<td>POST</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>addCustomer</td>
<td>/customers/beck</td>
<td>PUT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>updateCustomer</td>
<td>/customers/ebert</td>
<td>PUT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>...</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Advantages of the RESTful approach

• **Simplicity**
  – well known interfaces (URIs, HTTP methods), no new XML specification

• **Lightweightness**
  – short messages, little overhead

• **Multiple representations**

• **Security**
  – authentication and authorization can be done by the web server

• **Scalability** (e.g., multi-device usage / multiple servers)

• **Reliability** (e.g., on restoring state / recovering)

• **Caching**

• **Easy service orchestration** (via hyperlinks)
  – URIs define global namespace, no application boundaries
REST vs. SOAP (1)

• requesting a user’s details using SOAP (via a POST request)

```xml
<?xml version="1.0"?>
<soap:Envelope
xmlns:soap="http://www.w3.org/2001/12/soap-envelope"
soap:encodingStyle="http://www.w3.org/2001/12/soap-encoding">
  <soap:body pb="http://www.example.com/phonebook">
    <pb:GetUserDetails>
      <pb:UserID>12345</pb:UserID>
    </pb:GetUserDetails>
  </soap:Body>
</soap:Envelope>
```

• requesting a user’s details using REST (via a GET request)

```
http://www.example.com/phonebook/UserDetails/12345
```

• REST resources are usually defined as nouns, not as verbs
  – GetUserDetails (SOAP) vs. UserDetails (REST)
REST vs. SOAP (2)

- In contrast to Service oriented architectures (such as SOAP), REST can be considered a Resource Oriented Architecture (ROA)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>RESTful Web services</th>
<th>SOAP Web services</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Architectural style</td>
<td>REST/ROA</td>
<td>SOA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Server state</td>
<td>Stateless</td>
<td>Stateless or stateful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data format</td>
<td>Text, HTML, XML, JSON, binary, ...</td>
<td>XML</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Application Protocol</td>
<td>REST</td>
<td>SOAP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level of formality of interface definitions</td>
<td>Rather low (XSD, WADL) - not specified -</td>
<td>High (WSDL)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Typing</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>Strong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support for asynchronous communication</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes (WebService-Notification)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caching of results</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scalability</td>
<td>high</td>
<td>medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Performance</td>
<td>high</td>
<td>lower</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACID transactions</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>Yes (WS-AtomicTransaction)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Access control</td>
<td>Webserver (easy)</td>
<td>WS-Security (more complex, yet more powerful)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fields of application</td>
<td>Data-oriented, short term services</td>
<td>Both data-oriented and long-term process-oriented services</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
REST vs. SOAP (3)

- **REST**
  - is easy to understand
  - offers maximum **performance and scalability**
  - makes use of **existing standards** only (i.e., URI and HTTP)
  - is perfectly fit for handling **CRUD operations** on data using a single common interface

- **SOAP**
  - brings its own **protocol**
  - focuses on **exposing application logic** (not resources) as a service using different interfaces
  - is supported by a plethora of existing **software tools**
  - allows for **ACID transactions** (WS-AtomicTransactions), mature **security mechanisms** (WS-Security) and **guaranteed message delivery** (WS-ReliableMessaging) → enterprise security features
Using REST with Java: Jersey (JAX-RS)

• Jersey is “the open source, production quality, JAX-RS (JSR 311) Reference Implementation for building RESTful Web services”

• can be downloaded from jersey.java.net

• works with any Servlet Container (e.g., Apache Tomcat or Grizzly)

• contains both server and client APIs

• Jersey supports the automatic creation (marshalling) of XML and JSON representations of resources (based on JAXB)

• as a key feature, JRS 311 makes use of Java annotations to define the REST relevance of Java classes (Media-Type, HTTP-Method, URI, ...
Getting started with Jersey and Apache Tomcat

• Create a new Dynamic Web Project, then download and copy the Jersey JAR-files to WEB-INF/lib

• After installing and configuring Tomcat, applications can be deployed...
  – by copying the application’s WEB-INF/ and META-INF/ folders to a subfolder of Tomcat’s webapps directory
  – by creating a WAR (Web ARchive)-file of the application and storing it in the webapps folder

• Every web application should include a deployment descriptor (according to the Servlet 2.4 specification)
  – this file (web.xml) must always be placed in the WEB-INF/ folder
  – can be generated using Eclipse (but has to be modified)

• Deployed Webapps can be managed (start, stop, reload, etc.) using Tomcat’s Application Manager, accessible at http://host:port/manager
Example web.xml file

- In order to correctly dispatch incoming requests to the Jersey servlet, the RESTful application’s `web.xml` should look similar to this:

```xml
<?xml version="1.0" encoding="UTF-8"?>
<web-app xmlns:xsi="...">
  <display-name>DISPLAY_NAME</display-name>
  <servlet>
    <servlet-name>SERVLET_NAME</servlet-name>
    <servlet-class>
      com.sun.jersey.spi.container.servlet.ServletContainer
    </servlet-class>
    <init-param>
      <param-name>com.sun.jersey.config.property.packages</param-name>
      <param-value>your.package.name</param-value>
    </init-param>
  </servlet>
  <servlet-mapping>
    <servlet-name>SERVLET_NAME</servlet-name>
    <url-pattern>/whatever/you/want/*</url-pattern>
  </servlet-mapping>
</web-app>
```
Using POJOs for building RESTful Web services

• with Jersey, RESTful web services can be realized by simply annotating POJOs in order to define allowed HTTP-methods, content-types, parameters, etc.

• such classes are known as root resource classes

```java
@Path("/hello") //the resource's URI
class Hello {

  @GET //HTTP method
  @Produces(MediaType.TEXT_PLAIN) //requested content-type
  public String sayHello() {
      return "Hello Jersey";
  }

  @GET //HTTP method
  @Produces(MediaType.TEXT_XML) //requested content-type
  public String sayXMLHello() {
      return "<?xml version="1.0"?>" + "<hi>Hello Jersey" + "</hi>";
  }
}
```
Annotation basics in JAX-RS (1)

- the @Path annotation's value is a relative URI path. The base URI is the application path as set in the web.xml (display-name + url-pattern).

- Resource method designator annotations
  - @GET can be used to read a resource without any side effects(!)
  - @POST creates a new resource (not idempotent)
  - @PUT creates or modifies an existing resource (idempotent)
  - @DELETE removes an existing resource (idempotent)
  - @HEAD returns the same as @GET, just without the body

- @Consumes specifies the MIME types of representations a resource can consume from a client

- @Produces specifies the MIME types of representations a resource can produce and send back to a client
Annotations in JAX-RS (2)

- **@Path** annotations might (or might not) have a leading or ending '/', it doesn’t make a difference:
  - a leading '/' in a path is ignored
  - base URIs are treated as if they ended in '/'

- A resource with relative **@Path** annotation can be found at
  http://host:port/<display-name>/<url-pattern>/</@Path>

- **@Consumes** and **@Produces** can be applied at class and method levels

- More than one media type may be declared in the same **@Produce** or **@Consumes** declaration

- Method level annotations can be used to **override** class level annotations
Useful features of JAX-RS (1)

• One thing that makes Jersey extremely useful is that you can embed variables in the URIs (so-called URI path templates):

```java
@Path("/login/{user}") // {user} will be substituted
public class UserResource {

    @GET //HTTP method
    @Produces("text/plain") //output format
    public String loginUser(@PathParam("user") String userName){
        return "hi, " + userName;
    }
}
```

• and also as query parameters:

```java
@Path("/foo") // simply another path...
@GET //HTTP method
public Response bar(@DefaultValue("1") @QueryParam("a") int a,
    @DefaultValue("true") @QueryParam("b") boolean b) {
    ...
}
```
Useful features of JAX-RS (2)

• If the HTTP request contains a body (PUT, POST requests), this data can easily be accessed as a method parameter:

```java
@POST //HTTP method
@Consumes("text/plain") //input format of request body
public String handlePlaintext(String message){
    //store the plaintext message somewhere
    ...
}
```

• If several methods exist for the same resource, Jersey will select the (most) appropriate one for handling a request (method, MIME types...)

```java
@POST //HTTP method
@Consumes(MediaType.TEXT_XML) //input format of request body
public String handleXML(String message){
    //store the xml string somewhere
    ...
}
```
Jersey and JAXB

- Jersey allows for the automatic mapping (marshalling) from POJOs to representations in XML (and also JSON!)
- Realized with the support of JAXB (*Java Architecture for XML Binding*):
  - Java standard defining how to convert Java objects from/to XML
  - provides a standard set of mappings
  - defines an API for reading and writing Java objects to and from XML
  - JAXB is making usage of Java annotations, too

```java
//Define the root element for a XML tree
@XmlElement(name = "namespace")
//Set the order of the fields in the XML representation
@XmlElementWrapper(name = "wrapper_element")
```

```java
//generate a XML wrapper element
@XmlElementWrapper(name = "wrapper_element")
```

```java
//set the name of the entities
@XmlElement(name = "element_one")
```
Example of Jersey using JAXB (1)

```java
package com.example;

import javax.ws.rs.GET;
import javax.ws.rs.Path;
import javax.ws.rs.Produces;

@Path(""")
public class TicketServer {

/**
 * Returns the server status.
 *
 * @return the server status
 */
@GET
@Path("ping")
@Produces(MediaType.APPLICATION_JSON)
public ServerStatus getPing() {
    return ServerStatus.getServerStatusInstance();
}
}
```
Example of Jersey using JAXB (2)

```java
import javax.xml.bind.annotation.XmlElement;
import javax.xml.bind.annotation.XmlRootElement;
import java.util.Date;

@XmlRootElement
public class ServerStatus {
    private final static ServerStatus instance = new ServerStatus();

    public static ServerStatus getServerStatusInstance() {
        return instance;
    }

    private boolean running; //Laufzeitstatus

    @XmlElement(name = "running")
    public boolean isRunning() { return running; }

    @XmlElement(name = "server_now")
    public Date getServerNow() { //Aktuelle Zeit
        return new Date();
    }
    ...
}
```
Example of Jersey using JAXB (3)

- Testing the web service in your browser
  - Request:

```
GET /ping HTTP/1.1
Host: example.com
Accept: application/json
```

- Response:

```
{ "running": "true",
  "server_now": "2013-01-10T16:31:56.843+01:00",
  ...
}
```