Lecture 23
Inside Java RMI
Recall

- Java RMI applications consist of three entities
  - **Remote object servers**
    - Host remote objects
    - Handle communications coming into / going out from these objects
  - **Clients**
    - Issue calls to methods in remote objects
    - Handle communications going out to / coming in from these objects
  - **Object registries**
    - Maintain bindings between names, remote objects
    - Have a “bootstrapping” function
      - Provide initial access point for clients needing remote objects
      - Once a client has stub for such an object, no need to consult registry!

- We’ve seen how some of this works
  - Marshaling / unmarshaling via serialization
  - Registration of remote objects in registries
  - Stubs
RMI in More Detail

• “Remote-izing” (aka *exporting*) an object
  – Server for a remote object must set up infrastructure for unmarshaling arguments to remote object, marshaling results
  – Server must also invoke method in remote object
• Registering a remote object
  – Server must provide name, stub for remote object
  – Name / object binding must be made available to potential clients
• Accessing a remote object
  – Client must be able to access remote object
  – Client must be able to marshal arguments to remote object method, unmarshal results
Exporting an Object

- Recall: “exportable” objects must come from a class that implements the `Remote` interface.
- What does an exported object need?
  - Incoming method-invocation requests need to be listened for.
  - Arguments need to be unmarshaled.
  - Methods in the actual object need to be invoked.
  - Results need to be marshaled, returned to calling side.
- `java.rmi.server.UnicastRemoteObject` provides support for this.
  - A class of remote objects.
  - Constructor sets up infrastructure for listening for incoming method-invocations, marshaling / unmarshaling, actual method invocation.
  - Class also includes `static RemoteStub exportObject(Remote obj)`.
  - This method exports any object matching the `Remote` interface, returning a stub.
    - Stub matches same (sub)interface of `Remote` that original object does.
    - Stub is used on client side.
- So: two ways to export an object.
  - Make a class that extends `UnicastRemoteObject`; objects created in such a class are automatically exported.
  - Make a class that implements `Remote`, then export using `UnicastRemoteObject.exportObject`
Behind the Scenes with `exportObject()`

- **What does `exportObject()` do?**
  - A new connection (*server socket*) to a port on the host is created
  - A thread is created to listen for connections on the socket
  - Infrastructure is also created to allocate other threads to handle incoming calls (this enables first thread to continue listening)
  - A stub is created for use on the client side
    - Contains information about which socket the remote object listens on
    - Implements argument marshaling, result unmarshaling
  - A *skeleton* is created for use on the host side
    Handles argument unmarshaling, result marshaling of results, actual call of method
- **Note:** multiple threads can access a remote object!
  - If there are multiple method invocations in progress, more than one thread on the host will be accessing the object
  - You must ensure remote objects are thread-safe!
Stubs and Skeletons

• Both are objects in classes that are (as of Java 5) created automatically from the class of the object being exported
  – If the class of the remote object is Foo ...
  – … then the class for stubs is Foo_Stub and the class for skeletons is Foo_Skel
  – Before Java 5 the programmer had to create these using a command rmic

• Both objects handle marshaling, unmarshaling

• Stub class also implements same Remote (sub)interface that original class does
Object Registration

• Purpose of registration is to make it easier for clients to use remote objects
• RMI uses object registries to handle this task
  – Object registry is a separate thread from server
  – Often, it even runs in a different JVM from the server, but it must run on the same host as server
  – This last fact implies that there can be several different registries running in a given application
• The registry binds names (strings) to stubs for remote objects
• Clients looking for remote objects must first locate a registry
Creating Object Registries

• **Approach 1: rmiregistry**
  – A command distributed with Java that can be run at the OS command line to start a registry
  – Takes an option argument: the port on which to listen for requests (default is 1099)
  – The registry created in this fashion continues to run even if the server JVM terminates
    • Such a registry can be used by several servers
    • If a server terminates, any references to remote objects on the server in such a registry will continue to exist
    • If a client tries to access such a nonexistent remote object, an exception is thrown

• **Approach 2: LocateRegistry.createRegistry()**
  – LocateRegistry is a class in java.rmi.registry
  – static Registry createRegistry (int port)
    • (From Java 7 documentation): “Creates and exports a Registry instance on the local host that accepts requests on the specified port”
    • “Exports” here means “makes the object remote”
    • What is returned is a stub for the remote Registry instance!
Other Useful Methods in java.rmi.registry.LocateRegistry

• LocateRegistry also includes methods for finding existing registries

• Samples:
  - public static Registry getRegistry() throws RemoteException
    (From the Java 7 documentation) “Returns a reference to the remote object Registry for the local host on the default registry port of 1099”
  - public static Registry getRegistry(int port) throws RemoteException
    Like above version, except that the given port is used
  - public static Registry getRegistry(String host, int port) throws RemoteException
    Live previous versions, except that given host name is used rather than local host
Useful Methods in `java.rmi.registry.Registry`

- **Registry is an interface that extends** `Remote`
- **Registry objects allow remote objects to be bound to / unbound from names, names to be looked up, etc.**
- **Useful methods (quoted from Java 7 documentation)**
  ```java
  void bind(String name, Remote obj)
  Binds a remote reference (i.e. stub) to the specified name in this registry
  String[] list()
  Returns an array of the names bound in this registry
  Remote lookup(String name)
  Returns the remote reference (i.e. stub) bound to the specified name in this registry
  void rebind(String name, Remote obj)
  Replaces the binding for the specified name in this registry with the supplied remote reference
  void unbind(String name)
  Removes the binding for the specified name in this registry
  ```
rmi.Naming

- Registry objects allow names to be looked up, bound, etc.
  - These are instance methods, so the registry object must first be retrieved, e.g.
    ```java
    Registry registry = LocateRegistry.getRegistry();
    registry.rebind(name, object);
    ```
  - Remote registries often accessed via URLs and port numbers, e.g.
    ```java
    Registry registry = LocateRegistry.getRegistry("www.cs.umd.edu", 1099);
    ```
- The class Naming includes "shortcuts" for these registry manipulations
  - The versions of bind / rebind / etc. assume the string argument is a URL including a host name, port and object name.
  - The appropriate registry is also obtained automatically.
  - So, instead of
    ```java
    Registry registry = LocateRegistry.getRegistry("www.cs.umd.edu", 1099);
    registry.rebind("foo", object);
    ```
    You can do this:
    ```java
    Naming.rebind("//www.cs.umd.edu:1099/foo", object);
    ```
  - If you leave off the "//www.cs.umd.edu:1099" part, Naming.rebind will look for the registry running on the local host on the default port (1099).
CLASSPATH Considerations

- Registries associate stubs to names
- Stubs are objects created from classes that are automatically constructed from the remote object’s class
- For a registry to store an object, it needs access to the object’s class!
  - Objects store fields
  - Classes store methods
- How to do this?
  - If the registry and the server are on the same host, make sure the CLASSPATH of the registry includes the directories used by the server
  - If the registry and server are on different hosts, use the java.rmi.server.codebase property of the JVM that is running the server
Properties are name/value pairs that define information about a JVM and its environment
- E.g. library paths, OS, etc.
- Inside Java, to get current properties, can execute `System.getProperties()`

Codebase property of JVM gives (space-separated) list of URLs from which class files published by JVM can be downloaded

Code base properties can be set in special profile files, inside Java program, or at command line
E.g.
- Following command-line entry specifies the given URL as a code base
  `java -Djava.rmi.server.codebase=http://webline/public/mystuff.jar foo`
- Following command in Java does the same:

How does this help?
- When a JVM publishes a stub to a registry, the codebase of the object’s class is also provided as an annotation
- To find the class of the stub object the registry JVM will first try to consult its own CLASSPATH
- If it cannot find the class in its CLASSPATH, it next looks in the object’s codepath annotation (provided by the server)!
Security

• Downloading remote code poses security risks
  – The code may be buggy
  – The code may be malicious

• Java enables the definition of security managers and policies to limit the access downloaded code has to system resources

• These can be defined in system properties like `java.security.manager` and `java.security.policy`

• Your JVM may have these set already, and they may interfere with remote downloading

• You can also set a security manager in your Java program using `System.setSecurityManager()`
Accessing Remote Objects

• To use a remote object, a client must:
  – Get a registry that has a name assigned to the object
  – Perform a lookup on the registry using the given object’s name
    • Note: registry.lookup() returns objects of type Remote
    • You must cast the object to the particular subclass of Remote that the object’s class implements
• If successful, the registry will return a stub to the given object
• To invoke the remote object’s method, invoke the method of the same name on the stub!
• E.g. (from TestStringClient.java; recall TestString extends Remote)
  Registry registry = LocateRegistry.getRegistry(host);
  TestString stub1 = (TestString) registry.lookup("Test1");
  ...
  String response = stub1.getTestString();
• Same CLASSPATH considerations as for registries apply. Also
  – If client uses local classes to create objects to pass (via marshaling / unmarshaling) to server …
  – … then client’s class files must be accessible to server (either via CLASSPATH or codepath property of client)