Adding Unusual Transports to The Serval Project

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The Serval Project

Serval is a telecommunications system comprised of at least two mobile phones that are able to work outside of regular mobile phone tower range due thanks to the Serval App and Serval Mesh.

Uses various communication technologies.

- WiFi (Client / AP / Ad-hoc)
- Bluetooth (Device discovery / Peering)
- UHF
- Always looking for more...
Wi-Fi Direct is a certification mark for devices that implements the Wi-Fi Peer-to-Peer (P2P) specification. Wi-Fi Peer-to-Peer is a technology that allows two or more devices to communicate directly without the need of an access point. The following list is components of the P2P architecture:

1. P2P Device
2. P2P Group Owner role
3. P2P Client role
Our Research Goals

1. How can Wi-Fi Direct be used to support the Serval Mesh network on the Android platform?
2. Can the discovery protocols supported by Wi-Fi Direct be used to transfer data in a mesh topology?
3. Which types of Serval traffic can be supported and what performance can be obtained using this technique?
Related Work

Bluetooth:

- Uses the name of the device to transfer broadcast data.
- It also forms connections to send unicast data.

Automatic Android-based Wireless Mesh Networks[1]:

- AP
- Client
- Relay
Device Discovery

- Social Channels
  - 1, 6, 11 (2.4 Ghz)

- Find Phase
  - Requires complementary device states
  - Listen State
    - Device listens on randomly chosen channel
    - Remains the same until P2P discovery completes
    - For random amount of time
    - Listens at least 500 ms every 5 seconds
  - Search State
    - Device sends probe requests on each of the social channels
    - Will not respond to probe requests
Service Discovery

This functionality of the Wi-Fi P2P technology allows devices to check what services an already discovered (not connected) device offers. This is done by exchanging frames between the discovered devices prior to group formation using the Generic Advertisement Service (GAS) protocol/frame exchange.

- Dependent on device discovery
- Done while device is in Search State
- Result may be up to 64 K of data
- Supports Fragmentation
- Initiated upon request, not continuously running
Service Discovery As A Transport

- Service discovery can be used as a poll based transport.
- One device asks the other devices if they have data for it.
- A device adds local services in order to send data to other users.
- The specification uses unicast to send data.
- No need for user interaction.
- Can be automated.
- It can communicate with everyone in range.
Our Method

- Source will make data available by encoding it in a service string.
- Destination will retrieve data by querying for a service with its own ID.
- TCP behavior (Window, ACK, SEQUENCE).
- Convert Serval messages to byte stream and back.
- Use of Universal Plug and Play (UPnP) Service Discovery protocol.
- UUID encodes:
  - Acknowledgment numbers
  - Fragment numbers, for multiple services in a single response
  - Sequence numbers
  - Destination ID

uuid:0000049f-0001-0576-4d3a-5108fcbb9a2f::XLTS9kJD...
API Limitations & Bugs

- Wifi framework fulfills requests without notifying the application
- API does not provide indication of service discovery state
- Response size limits significantly lower than 64 K allowed by specification
  - Large responses not delivered to application
  - Fragmentation not implemented on most devices
- Different versions of Android OS behave differently
  - Limits in service strings, response size, request size
- Malformed packets generated after 128 different service requests

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Length (2 Octets)</th>
<th>Protocol (1 Octet)</th>
<th>Transaction ID (1 Octet)</th>
<th>Query (Length - 2 Octets)</th>
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<td>0x7e (126)</td>
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<td>0x00 (0)</td>
<td>0xff 0xff 0xff 0x80 (-128?)</td>
<td>-</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Testing And Results

- **Service Response Size**
  - Different limits on different devices
  - Severely impacted by implementation issues

- **Service Discovery Interval**
  - Requires some randomization
  - 5 to 10 second interval, 11.65 - 69.9 B/s 60 second averages, 32.7 B/s overall
Testing And Results

- Throughput also of 32.7 Bytes/second with 18 to 20 second interval
Testing And Results

- Latency up to 43 seconds
  - Potentially as high as peer timeout
Testing And Results

- Non-reliable delivery performance slightly lower, 30.4 B/s at TTL of 17.1 s

Using previous latency data.

Throughput = (Frame Size × Loss) ÷ TTL
Conclusion

- Throughput too low for normal Serval traffic
- Can be used for simple messaging
- Significant potential if implementation issues are corrected
- Greater coordination could lead to higher throughput
  - Synchronize complementary states
  - Peers take turns issuing multiple service requests
  - Adaptive request intervals
- It can be used for configuration
  - Exchange data to connect through a different interface
Questions
References

