

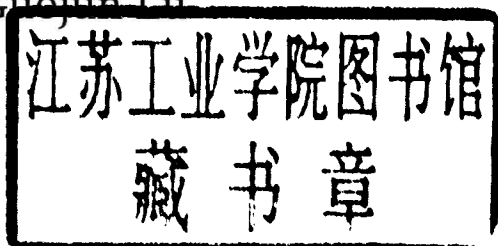
COMMUNICATION AND COMPUTING FOR DISTRIBUTED MULTIMEDIA SYSTEMS

GUOJUN LU



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Guojun Lu



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Preface

There have been many research and development activities in multimedia computing and communications in recent years. Multimedia computing and communications are becoming a specialized area encompassing many technology fields such as digital signal processing, computing, and telecommunication. In the last few years, publications, including conference papers, journal papers, and books (mostly edited), on multimedia applications and technology have flourished. But sources that provide systematic treatment to distributed multimedia technology are hard to find. This book is an attempt to fill this gap and to contribute to formalizing multimedia computing and communications into a formal discipline.

This book deals with the technical aspects of multimedia computing and communications. The main differences in system requirements between multimedia computing and communications systems and conventional computing and data communications systems stem from the differences between characteristics of multimedia data and alphanumeric data. Due to these requirement differences, multimedia computing and communications need special support from all components and subsystems of a computing and communications system, including capturing, processing, storage, transmission, and presentation subsystems. To organize the book along this line of thinking, the book first describes the characteristics of various types of information media, then explains the main differences of systems requirements between multimedia computing and communications and traditional computing and data communications, describes issues and problems arising from these differences, and finally describes current techniques and systems to overcome these problems.

To capture and guarantee the requirements of multimedia data and applications, the quality of service (QOS) paradigm is used throughout the book. Simply stated, the QOS paradigm is like a contract: applications specify QOS requirements and the system should meet these requirements if the applications are accepted. So the important issues are how to specify these requirements, how to transfer these application requirements into system resource requirements, and how to guarantee these requirements efficiently and effectively. This QOS framework applies to all levels or subsystems of a distributed multimedia system. If all subsystems can provide QOS guarantees, the overall system will be able to meet the overall application QOS requirements, and distributed multimedia applications can be developed systematically.

To provide QOS guarantees to applications is just one aspect of the central issue of multimedia technology; the other aspect is to use system resources efficiently by taking advantage of the characteristics of multimedia data and applications. The latter aspect makes distributed multimedia systems more challenging and different from conventional

dedicated real-time systems and communications systems using dedicated circuits or channels. In distributed multimedia systems, most resources, such as CPU time, memory, secondary storage, and communication channels are shared among many applications, so the central issue is how to provide QOS guarantees to applications while system resources are used efficiently.

This book is intended for the following groups of readers:

- University students at senior levels and postgraduate students. Many universities around the world have started or will start to offer subjects related to multimedia technology. This book serves as a text for such subjects.
- Researchers. This book describes the issues and current technology of distributed multimedia computing. It also provides direction in many research issues.
- Other professionals who want to know technical issues and current status of distributed multimedia computing.

I would like to thank my colleagues and friends in Gippsland School of Computing and Information Technology of Monash University and the School of Computing and Mathematics of Deaking University for their support during the writing of this book. I sincerely thank Catherine Lang and Albert Goodman who read chapters of the draft of this book and corrected many mistakes for me.

Professor Gordon Blair of Lancaster University reviewed the book and provided many helpful comments and suggestions, for which I am most grateful.

I dedicate this book to my wife Fengxia, sons James and Colin, parents, and parents-in-law, without whose support and understanding the writing of this book would not be possible.

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Contents

Preface	xi
Chapter 1 Introduction	1
1.1 What are Multimedia Computing and Communications	1
1.1.1 Definitions	1
1.1.2 Why Digital Representations?	2
1.2 Motivations and Applications of Using Multimedia Data in Computer Systems	4
1.2.1 Video/Movie on Demand	5
1.2.2 Information on Demand	5
1.2.3 Education	6
1.2.4 Telemedicine	6
1.2.5 Videophone and Videoconference	7
1.2.6 Cooperative Work	7
1.3 Classes of Multimedia Systems	7
1.4 Challenges of Multimedia Computing and Communications	8
1.5 Scope and Approach of This Book	9
1.6 Organization of the Following Chapters	9
Problems	11
References	11
Chapter 2 Characteristics and Requirements of Multimedia Data	13
2.1 Introduction	13
2.2 Digital Representation of Audio	14
2.2.1 Basic Characteristics of Audio Signal	14
2.2.2 Digital Representation of Audio	15
2.3 Analog Video Systems	20
2.3.1 Capture and Reproduction of Images and Video	20
2.3.2 Frame Rates	21
2.3.3 Aspect Ratio	23
2.3.4 Resolution	23
2.3.5 Color Video/Television	24
2.3.6 Existing Color Television Standards	25
2.3.7 Viewing Ratio	25
2.3.8 High-Definition Television Systems	26
2.3.9 Bandwidth Requirements of Analog Video	27
2.3.10 Analog Video Storage and Transmission	27

2.4	Representation of Digital Images and Video	28
2.4.1	A Generic Digital Video System	28
2.4.2	Analog to Digital Conversion Process	29
2.4.3	Bitmap Representation of Digital Image and Video	33
2.4.4	Comparison of Analog and Digital Video Systems	34
2.4.5	Other Sources of Digital Images and Video	35
2.5	Color Specification	35
2.5.1	Color Properties	36
2.5.2	Color Specification Systems	36
2.5.3	Different Color Representations	42
2.5.4	Need for a Common Image and Video Exchange Format	47
2.5.5	Human Perception Properties and Image Compression Performance	48
2.6	Major Characteristics and Requirements of Multimedia Information	48
2.6.1	Storage and Bandwidth Requirements	49
2.6.2	Delay and Delay Jitter Requirements	50
2.6.3	Semantic Structure of Multimedia Information	51
2.6.4	Temporal and Spatial Relationships Among Related Media	51
2.6.5	Error and Loss Tolerance in Multimedia Data	52
2.7	Quality of Service	52
2.8	Summary	53
	Problems	54
	Further Reading	57
	References	57

Chapter 3	Digital Audio, Image and Video Compression Principles, Techniques and Standards	59
3.1	Introduction	59
3.2	Compression Principles	60
3.2.1	Data Redundancy	60
3.2.2	Human Perception Properties	61
3.2.3	Classifications of Compression Techniques	61
3.2.4	Measurement of Compression Performance	62
3.3	Lossless Compression Techniques	63
3.3.1	Entropy Coding	63
3.3.2	Run-Length Coding	66
3.3.3	Lempel-Ziv-Welch (LZW) Coding	67
3.4	Digital Audio Compression Techniques	68
3.4.1	Nonlinear Quantization	68
3.4.2	Predictive Coding	69
3.4.3	Compression Technique Making Use of Masking Property: MPEG-Audio	70
3.5	Digital Image and Video Compression Techniques	72
3.5.1	Spatial and Temporal Subsampling Coding	73
3.5.2	Predictive Coding	73
3.5.3	Conditional Replenishment	74
3.5.4	Motion Estimation and Compensation	74

3.5.5	Transform Coding	74
3.5.6	Hybrid Coding	78
3.5.7	Vector Quantization	78
3.5.8	Fractal Image Coding	80
3.5.9	Model- and Knowledge-Based Coding	81
3.5.10	Subband Coding	81
3.5.11	Contour-Texture-Oriented Techniques	82
3.5.12	Other Techniques	82
3.5.13	Summary of Compression Techniques	82
3.6	Multimedia Compression Standards	84
3.6.1	The JPEG Still Image Compression Standard	84
3.6.2	H.261	91
3.6.3	MPEG	92
	3.6.3.1 MPEG-1	94
	3.6.3.2 MPEG-2	102
	3.6.3.3 MPEG-4	106
3.6.4	ITU-T H.324 and H.263	106
3.6.5	JBIG	107
3.7	Summary	108
	Problems	110
	Further Reading	113
	References	113
Chapter 4	End-to-End Quality of Service Guarantee for Digital Audio and Video Communication	117
4.1	Introduction	117
4.2	Need for End-to-end Performance Guarantee	118
4.2.1	Jitter Removal	118
4.2.2	Bandwidth Requirement	120
4.2.3	Delay and Delay Jitter Requirements	122
4.2.4	Summary	122
4.3	Differences between Multimedia Systems and Critical Real-time Systems	123
4.4	Components (Subsystems) of Multimedia Communications Systems	124
4.4.1	Subsystems in Conversational Applications	125
4.4.2	Subsystems in Retrieval Applications	126
4.5	QOS Management	127
4.5.1	Definition	127
4.5.2	General QOS Framework	128
4.5.3	QOS Specification	128
4.5.4	QOS Negotiation and Renegotiation	131
4.5.5	Different Levels of Guarantee	132
4.5.6	Providing QOS Guarantees	133
4.5.7	An Example of QOS Handling	133
4.6	Advance Service Reservation	134
4.7	Design Goals of Multimedia Systems	135
4.8	Summary	136

Problems	136
References	138
Chapter 5 Network Support for Multimedia Communications	141
5.1 Introduction	141
5.2 Network Characteristics Suitable for Multimedia Communications	142
5.2.1 Network Speed or Bandwidth	142
5.2.2 Efficient Sharing of Network Resources	143
5.2.3 Performance Guarantees	145
5.2.4 Network Scalability	146
5.2.5 Multicasting Capability	146
5.2.6 Networks Suitable for Multimedia Communications	148
5.3 Some Important Concepts of Data Communications	150
5.3.1 Asynchronous and Synchronous Data Transmission	150
5.3.2 Asynchronous and Synchronous Multiplexing	150
5.3.3 Isochronous Communications	151
5.3.4 Asynchronous, Synchronous and Isochronous Services in FDDI	151
5.3.5 Intramedia and Intermedia Synchronization	152
5.4 FDDI	152
5.4.1 An Overview of FDDI Operation	152
5.4.2 FDDI-II	153
5.4.3 Suitability of FDDI and FDDI-II for Multimedia Communications	154
5.5 Distributed Queue Dual Bus	156
5.6 Asynchronous Transfer Mode	157
5.6.1 What Is ATM?	157
5.6.2 How Is Cell Size Decided?	159
5.6.3 B-ISDN Protocol Reference Model	161
5.6.4 ATM Cell Formats	163
5.6.4.1 ATM Cell Header at the NNI	163
5.6.4.2 Cell Header At the UNI	165
5.6.5 Call Setup Procedure and Cell Routing	166
5.6.5.1 Call Setup Procedure	166
5.6.5.2 Cell Routing	168
5.6.6 ATM Adaptation layers	169
5.6.7 Why Is ATM Suitable for Multimedia Communications?	170
5.6.8 Current Status	172
5.7 Multimedia Networks and Performance Guarantee	172
5.8 Traffic Characterization	174
5.8.1 Multiparameter Characterizations	174
5.8.2 Traffic-Shaping Schemes	175
5.8.3 Traffic Reshaping	178
5.9 Admission Control, QOS Negotiation, and Traffic Policing	179
5.9.1 Admission Control	179
5.9.2 Traffic Policing	180
5.10 Queue-Scheduling Disciplines	181

5.10.1	Virtual Clock	181
5.10.2	Weighted Fair Queuing	182
5.10.3	Delay Earliest-Due-Date	182
5.10.4	Jitter Earliest-Due-Date	183
5.10.5	Stop-and-Go	183
5.10.6	Priority Schemes and Graceful Degradation	183
5.11	Summary	184
	Problems	184
	Further Reading	187
	References	187
Chapter 6	Transport Protocol Support for Multimedia Communications	189
6.1	Introduction	189
6.2	Requirements of Multimedia Transport Protocols	190
6.2.1	High Throughput	190
6.2.2	Multicast Capability	190
6.2.3	QOS Specification and Guarantee	191
6.3	Why Traditional Transport Protocols Are Not Suitable for Multimedia Communications	191
6.3.1	Data Copying	192
6.3.2	Layered Multiplexing	192
6.3.4	Flow Control	192
6.3.5	Error Control	193
6.3.6	Positioning and Handling of Control Information	194
6.3.7	Lack of QOS Support	194
6.4	The Xpress Transfer Protocol	195
6.4.1	Major Functional Features	195
6.4.2	Performance Improvement Features	197
6.4.3	Suitability for Multimedia Communications	198
6.5	Resource Reservation Protocols	198
6.5.1	ST-II	199
6.5.2	RSVP	202
6.5.3	Comparison of ST-II and RSVP	203
6.6	Real-time Transport Protocol (RTP)	204
6.6.1	RTP Data Transmission	205
6.6.2	RTP Control Functionality	206
6.6.3	Comments	206
6.7	Heidelberg Transport Protocol	207
6.8	Tenet Real-Time Protocol Suite	208
6.8.1	RCAP and Real-Time Channel	209
6.8.2	RTIP	210
6.8.3	RMTP	211
6.8.4	CMTP	211
6.8.5	RTCMP	212
6.8.6	Tenet Suite 2	212
6.8.7	Comments	212
6.9	Summary	212

Problems	213
References	215
Chapter 7 End-System Support for Distributed Multimedia Applications	217
7.1 Introduction	217
7.2 Multimedia End-System Requirements	219
7.2.1 Hardware Architecture Requirements	219
7.2.2 Multimedia Operating System Requirements	219
7.2.3 Limitations of Dedicated Real-Time Systems	220
7.3 Basic Organization of End Systems	220
7.4 Bus Limitations	222
7.5 Dedicated Multimedia Network Interface Approach	223
7.5.1 Pandora's Box	223
7.5.2 Multimedia Network Interface of Lancaster University	224
7.6 Network- and Channel-Based Multimedia End System	225
7.6.1 Architecture Based on DAN	225
7.6.2 Micronet	227
7.6.3 Minicell-Based Networked Multimedia Workstations	228
7.6.4 Interconnection Based on Fiber Channel	229
7.7 Design Issues of Multimedia Operating System	230
7.8 Conventional Time-Sharing Operating Systems and Incorporation of Real-Time Features	231
7.9 Solutions to Data-Copying Problem	233
7.9.1 Data-Copying Problem	233
7.9.2 Two Data Movement Methods	235
7.9.3 Single-Copy and Zero-Copy Architecture	235
7.10 Solutions To Reduce Context And Domain Switch Overhead	235
7.11 QOS Support	236
7.11.1 QOS Specification	237
7.11.2 Admission Control	238
7.11.3 Resource Reservation and Policing	238
7.11.4 Process Scheduling Disciplines	239
7.11.5 QOS Graceful Degradation and Media Scaling	241
7.12 Experimental Multimedia Operating Systems	241
7.12.1 YARTOS	241
7.12.2 Hyden's Work	242
7.12.3 Lancaster SUMO Project	243
7.12.4 Real-Time Mach	244
7.13 Remaining Issues for End-System Support	245
7.14 Summary	246
Problems	246
References	248
Chapter 8 Multimedia Servers	251
8.1 Introduction	251
8.2 Multimedia Server Requirements	252
8.3 Storage Devices	253

8.3.1	Storage Capacity and Transfer Bandwidth Requirements	253
8.3.2	Comparison of Different Types of Storage Devices	254
8.3.3	Disk Arrays and RAID	255
8.3.4	Storage Hierarchies	257
8.4	Data Placement on Disks	258
8.4.1	Contiguous Data Placement	259
8.4.2	Scattered Data Placement	260
8.4.3	Log-Structured Data Placement	260
8.4.4	Data Placement in Disk Arrays	261
8.5	Disk Scheduling and Admission Control	262
8.5.1	Traditional Disk Scheduling Algorithms	262
8.5.2	Earliest Deadline First	263
8.5.3	Scan-Earliest Deadline First	263
8.5.4	Round-Robin	264
8.5.5	Group Sweeping Scheduling	265
8.6	Provision of User Interaction	265
8.6.1	Pause and Resume	266
8.6.2	Fast Forward and Backward	267
8.6.3	QOS Issue Related to User Interactions	268
8.7	Server Configuration and Network Connection	268
8.8	Other Issues	270
8.9	Summary	270
	Problems	271
	References	272

Chapter 9 Networked Multimedia Synchronization: Requirements and

	Mechanisms	275
9.1	Introduction	275
9.2	Synchronization Specification	277
9.2.1	Scripts	278
9.2.2	Time-Line-Based Temporal Specification	278
9.2.3	Petri Nets	279
9.2.4	Standardization	279
9.3	Synchronization Requirements	280
9.3.1	Multimedia Application Scenarios	280
9.3.2	Required Synchronization Accuracy	281
9.3.3	Analysis of Causes of Losing Multimedia Synchronization	283
9.4	Mechanisms to Achieve Multimedia Synchronization	286
9.4.1	Measures To Counter Network Delay Variations	286
9.4.2	Measures To Counter Media-Specific Processing Skew	289
9.4.3	Measures To Counter Clock Rate Difference	289
9.4.4	Measures To Counter Packet Out-of-Order Problems	290
9.4.5	Measures To Coordinate Multiple Sources for Synchronous Transmission	291
9.4.6	Workstation and Server Support for Continuous Media	291
9.4.7	Measures To Provide User Interaction Synchronization	292
9.4.8	Playout Techniques To Achieve Optimal Presentation Effects	292