

F.1 Overview

- Terminology
- COM Architecture
- Comparison to CORBA

F.2 References

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F.3 Terminology

1 OLE – Object Linking and Embedding

- Microsoft's standard for collaboration of software components
 - ◆ E.g., spreadsheet table cells in a text document
 - ◆ E.g., graphics in a spreadsheet table cell
- Defines object/component interfaces and protocols for
 - ◆ Linkage and notification for embedded components
 - ◆ "Drag and drop" of graphical objects
 - ◆ Clipboard
 - ◆ Structured storage (Compound files)
 - ◆ Scripting
- Microsoft Foundation Classes (MFC)
 - ◆ GUI programming and handling

2 COM – Component Object Model

- OLE's components belong to different processes/programs
 - ◆ Communication substrate needed
- COM as an object request broker and service provider
 - ◆ OLE components are COM objects
 - ◆ Single-machine environment
- Intra-address-space communication
 - ◆ Forwarding requests to other COM objects
 - ◆ Integration into the MFC event model
- Inter-address-space communication
 - ◆ Stubs
 - ◆ Light-weight RPC (LRPC)

3 DCOM – Distributed COM

- Extends COM to a distributed environment
 - ◆ DCE/RPC with at-most-once/exactly-once semantics

4 ActiveX

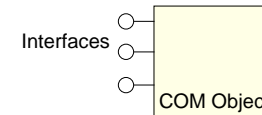
- COM enabled for the Internet (whatever that means)
 - ◆ *Just a marketing buzzword!*

5 COM+

- Improved programming environment for COM
 - ◆ Maps COM+ objects to COM objects
 - ◆ Handles reference counting and other standard procedures

2 Object Model

- Objects can have multiple interfaces
 - ◆ Multiple versions of one interfaces
 - ◆ Different interfaces for different purposes
 - ◆ Means to investigate the other interfaces
- Single inheritance on interfaces
 - ◆ Every interface inherits from `IUnknown`, which implements methods for finding other interfaces
 - ◆ Multiple inheritance must be emulated by multiple interfaces



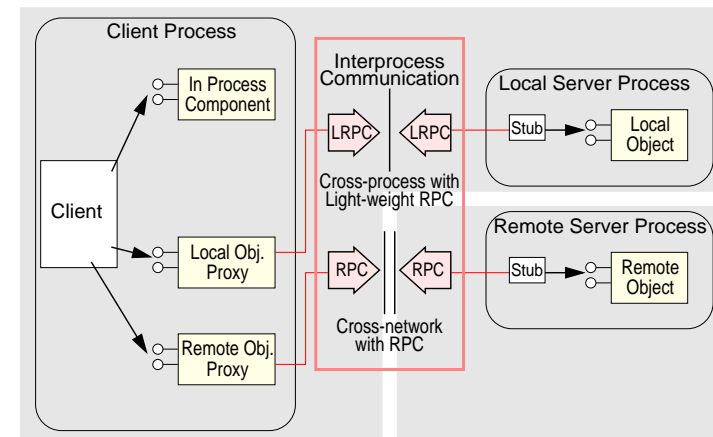
- Centralized object approach

F.4 COM Architecture

1 IDL – Interface Definition Language

- ▲ Not the same as CORBA IDL!
- Language for describing object interfaces
 - ◆ Independent from the target programming language
 - ◆ No mapping to language constructs
 - ◆ Definition of a binary object invocation interface (*vtables*)
- MIDL compiler = stub generator
 - ◆ Client stubs (proxies)
 - ◆ Server stubs

2 Object Model (2)



3 Process of Creation and Binding

- Creation of a server object
 - ◆ Description of the object interfaces in IDL
 - ◆ Programming server class and class factory in a target language
 - ◆ Registration of the class factory in the registry
 - ◆ On client demand an object is created
 - ◆ A transient object reference is marshalled and handed out to the client
- Binding to the server object at the client site
 - ◆ Retrieve class ID of factory object from the registry
 - ◆ Invoke `CoCreateInstance()` method, which returns a reference to the object
 - ◆ Proxy (client stub) is automatically installed (code needs to be registered in the registry)
 - ◆ Method invocations using the proxy

4 Monikers

- COM does not know persistent object references
 - ◆ If a server object is deactivated the object reference will be invalid.
- Monikers
 - ◆ COM object
 - ◆ Knows a name for a "persistent" object
 - ◆ Can (re-)create the object and
 - ◆ feed it with its former state
- "Names"
 - ◆ URLs
 - ◆ Filenames
 - ◆ e.g., `c:\windows\test.xls!a1-d4` for spreadsheet cells in a particular file

3 Process of Creation and Binding (2)

- Proxies are COM objects
 - ◆ Class of the proxy object must be known at the client site (registered at the registry)
- Custom Marshalling
 - ◆ User may create his own proxy objects
 - Intelligent proxies
 - Non-RPC communication
 - ◆ Custom marshalling is similar to the fragmented object approach

F.5 Comparison to CORBA

- IDL and language mapping
 - ◆ **CORBA**: IDL is mapped to language constructs
 - Mapping is easier
 - ◆ **DCOM**: IDL defines binary data layout, language constructs are mapped to this layout
 - Heterogeneous binary component can be hosted in one address space
- Persistent object references
 - ◆ **CORBA**: POA and implementation repository
 - Arbitrary and user-defined implementations
 - ◆ **DCOM**: Monikers as mediators

F.5 Comparison to CORBA (2)

- Communication
 - ◆ **CORBA**: RPC-based invocation (at-most-once/exactly-once)
 - ◆ **DCOM**: RPC-based invocation (at-most-once/exactly-once) plus Custom Marshalling
 - Arbitrary communication mechanisms can be used
- Binding
 - ◆ **CORBA**: Interface-dependent stub must be known at client site
 - ◆ **DCOM**: Class ID and code of proxy must be registered at the registry
- Dynamic invocation
 - ◆ **CORBA**: DII, interface repository
 - ◆ **DCOM**: `IDispatch` interface, type library

F.5 Comparison to CORBA (3)

- Availability
 - ◆ **CORBA**: Virtually all platforms
 - ◆ **DCOM**: Windows 95/98/NT/2000, MacOS, recently Solaris
- Bodies
 - ◆ **CORBA**: OMG and its several hundred members
 - ◆ **DCOM**: Microsoft and some supporters
- ★ CORBA defines gateways to the DCOM world
 - ◆ "Fully" interoperable