Supporting NATO C2-Simulation Experimentation with Scripted Web Services

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Presentation Overview

• Scripted BML background
• Scripted BML in NATO MSG-048
• Architecture of SBMLServer
• Publish/Subscribe for BML
• Recent improvements to SBML
• Conclusions
Scripted BML Background
BML Purpose and Operation

• Facilitates C2-Simulation interoperation
  – Exchange of Orders and reports in standard format

• Current architecture uses a repository service to hold state submitted by client C2 and Simulation systems
  – Web service with XML input – Network Centric
  – Data stored in JC3IEMD and can be replicated
BML Architecture

Command and Control Systems

BML Messages (Orders, Reports, etc.)

Simulation Systems

BML Web Services

JC3IEDM and other databases
Original BML WS Architecture

- Domain Knowledge
  - fully defines domain language
- BML Domain-Configured Service
- BML Base Service
- BML Common Data Access Software
- JC3IEDM Database
- Non-JC3IEDM Databases/Sources

Reference Implementation middleware common to all BML domains

NOTE: Interface 5 (push) and Interface 8 (push & pull) are provided for future use (they are not used in JBML Phase 1)

= 8 Defined Interfaces
all layers include validation
Why Scripted WS

• Middleware functions don’t change
  – Mapping BML to JC3IEDM and push/pull to database
  – Program these once and get them right

• Interpreted WS offers flexibility
  – Rapid implementation of new BML constructs
  – Easy to modify underlying data model
    • MIP standard also continues to change
  – Reduces time and cost for prototyping
  – Scripting language provides a concise definition of BML-to-data model mappings
  – Although bugs still happen, the number of possible mistakes is far smaller

• Scripted operation may, however, be slower
  – Multithreading helps this
  – But a hard-coded implementation is likely to perform better
The Old Way: IDEF1x Mapping Definition

JBML mapping to JC3IEDM

Schema field <What>

Schema Reference:
<xsd:complexType name="CommandType">
  <xsd:sequence>
    <xsd:element name="What" type="GroundBMLWhatType"/>
  </xsd:sequence>
</xsd:complexType>

The category-code value will be set to ‘ORDER’ (‘ORD’)

The category-code value will be set to ‘Is directed by’ (‘ISDOR’)

The category-code value will be set to ‘ACTION-TASK’ (‘ACTTA’)

Not machine readable though highly structured

Script is a concise XML coding of this
Scripted BML WS Design

• Basic operations: *push* and *pull*
  – Currently, servers for SQL and RI databases
  – Scripts implement BML Orders and Reports

• Script defines implementation of Business Objects (constituents of the higher-level BML grammar) over the JC3IEDM data model
  – BO is an XML subtree rooted at a defined node in the XML file – can invoke other BO

• Interpreter uses two files plus WS input
  – Mapping file contains script
  – BML schema file provides necessary context
  – XML namespace capable
Scripted BML WS Configuration

Two implementations: MySQL and SIMCI RI
Polling vs Publish/Subscribe

• “Pure” Web Service is always accessed by push or pull transaction from client
  – No provision for server to initiate action
• For clients to stay up to date they must pull latest status from server at rate determined by their need for up-to-date information (called polling)
  – Result: MSG-048 server in 2008 spent most of its time responding to status pulls
• Publish/subscribe gets around this by letting clients identify the categories of information they need – they subscribe to Topics
  – Server sends them a copy of every update associated with each subscribe Topic
  – More timely updates and a dramatic reduction in overhead
Publish/Subscribe Architecture
Advantages of Publish/Subscribe

• Avoids inefficiencies:
  – Server must re-read information written to database
  – Redundant polling
  – Separate server cycle needed for each client

• Implements effective distribution
  – Create a Topic for each interest category
  – Clients subscribe by Topic
  – Server automatically forwards transactions matching the Topics

• However, our implementation of publish/subscribe used by MSG-048 has static topics
Publish/Subscribe Dynamic Topics

- Topic assignment
  - MSG-048 experimentation was the largest BML coalition to date, so we kept it simple
  - Topics were chosen in advance and coded in server
- Dynamic topics
  - More powerful approach allows Topics to be assigned at runtime
  - Implemented using JMS Message Selectors working through a single static Topic
  - Client defines interest using XPath
Message Selectors for Dynamic Topics
Sample msgSelectors XML

<?xml version="1.0" encoding="UTF-8"?>
<Message>
  <Selector>
    <name>allGSR</name>
    <search>//TypeOfReport[. = 'GeneralStatusReport']</search>
  </Selector>
  
  <Selector>
    <name>allOrder</name>
    <search>//OrderPush</search>
  </Selector>
  
  <Selector>
    <name>allSIMCI</name>
    <search>/*[contains(name(),'REP')]*/</search>
  </Selector>
</Message>
Recent Improvements to SBMLServer
Pushing a Complete Thought in JC3IEDM

• MIP provides recommended usage for JC3IEDM
  – “A database update or query must constitute a complete logical military thought.”
    • JC3IEDM 3.0.2 Annex O. 5/14/2009

• We understand this to mean all the data about a business object (composite) should be completed at the same time
  – Don’t push incomplete data to database

• We’ve added terms in scripting language to define a complete thought and an SBML mechanism to consolidate the push
  – ri_start and ri_end
BML Namespaces

• SBML must parse XML input
  – Both BML itself and script are XML
  – Should comply with W3C specifications

• This was hard to do, so deferred initially
  – Now we have completed it
  – Done by mapping BML to various schemas from which it is assembled
  – Allows validation of BML/XML with namespace

• Existing scripts have been modified to use namespaces correctly
Multithreaded Operation in SBML

• A known disadvantage of XML is its verbosity
• Results in a lot of network traffic and contributes to performance problems
  – Parsing and SOAP processing also take time
• When message volume is high, this can be offset somewhat by multithreading
  – SBML designed to support experiments not production
  – But even in experimental environment performance may be needed
  – So we’ve revised SBML code to work multithreaded
• Latest achievement:
  – About 10 Reports/second with 8 processors on lab server
  – Would expect this to scale to at least 16 processors
Logging/Replay in SBML

• Logging/replay is very useful in development and experimentation
  – Allows exact review and comparison of results
  – May be used to repeat input sequences for testing

• Initial SBML had only console log
  – Could capture transactions but they were difficult to extract

• We’ve added input/output logging to SBMLv2.4
  – And a replay client to regenerate traffic

• We expect this functionality will grow as users find ways it should be enhanced
Condensed Scripting Language

- Coding the script in XML makes parsing simple
- But XML is verbose and thus hard to read
- We’ve defined a condensed format which is isomorphic to the XML script and thus simple to translate
  - Intended to invoke business objects that produce a “complete thought” in JC3IEDM
  - The result is more modular as well as much more readable
  - So we needed a mechanism to make this work
Where CSL Fits in SBML
Condensed Scripting Language Example
part one

BOInput
{
    BOTransaction WhatWhenPush(...
    {
        //fragment from WhatWhenPush
        Call TaskeeWhoPush TaskeeWho (task_act_id) () ;
        ...
    }
}
Condensed Scripting Language Example

part two

BOTransaction TaskeeWhoPush (task_act_id) ()
{
    GET unit unit_id (formal_abbrd_name_txt EQ UnitID);
    PUT act_res (act_id EQ task_act_id,
                    act_res_index EQ act_res_index, cat_code EQ "RI",
                    authorising_org_id EQ unit_id);
    PUT act_res_item (act_id EQ task_act_id,
                        act_res_index EQ act_res_index,
                        obj_item_id EQ unit_id);
    BOReturn
    {
        BOReturnElement
        {
            Tag Result "OK";
        }
    }
}
OPORD Schemas for SBML

- Recent Army CIO/G6 project supported detailed BML architecture
  - See http://c4i.gmu.edu/BML
- This included a five-paragraph OPORD based on earlier work done for AGC
  - Significantly more detailed than MSG-048 schema
  - Also posted SBML script – see webpage
- Ongoing SIMCI converting this to NATO OPORD
  - We have provided SISO C-BML Light compliant script for NATO OPORD
  - Also SISO C-BML Full but without JC3IEDM support
RESTful Services

• Representational State Transfer (REST)
  – More efficient because it does not use SOAP
  – Our measurements indicate 15% improvement

• Client Language flexibility
  • Jboss supports both SOAP and RESTful messaging
  • RESTful supports any subscriber that has access to a HTTP client library
  • This will avoid need to use Java Native Interface intermediary on C++ clients
Conclusions

- Scripted BML WS served well as development tool for NATO MSG-048
  - Enables developing reliable services more rapidly
  - Open source http://netlab.gmu.edu/OpenBML
  - Offered Reference Implementation for SISO C-BML

- Many improvements, inspired by NATO experimentation needs, have made SBML Server more useful and robust

- We look forward to continued improvements supporting NATO MSG-085