

The Busy Coder's Guide to Advanced Android ™ Development

Mark L. Murphy

CommonsWare

The Busy Coder's Guide to Advanced Android Development

by Mark L. Murphy



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Welcome to the Warescription!

We hope you enjoy this ebook and its updates – subscribe to the Warescription newsletter on the Warescription site to learn when new editions of this book, or other books, are available.

All editions of CommonsWare titles, print and ebook, follow a softwarestyle numbering system. Major releases (1.0, 2.0, etc.) are available in both print and ebook; minor releases (0.1, 0.9, etc.) are available in ebook form for Warescription subscribers only. Releases ending in .9 are "release candidates" for the next major release, lacking perhaps an index but otherwise being complete.

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Remember that the CommonsWare Web site has errata and resources (e.g., source code) for each of our titles. Just visit the Web page for the book you are interested in and follow the links, or follow the links contained in the book's preface.

You can search through the PDF using most PDF readers (e.g., Adobe Reader). If you wish to search all of the CommonsWare books at once, and your operating system does not support that directly, you can always combine the PDFs into one, using tools like PDF Split-And-Merge or the Linux command pdftk *.pdf cat output combined.pdf.

Preface

Welcome to the Book!

If you come to this book after having read its companion volume, *The Busy Coder's Guide to Android Development*, thanks for sticking with the series! CommonsWare aims to have the most comprehensive set of Android development resources (outside of the Open Handset Alliance itself), and we appreciate your interest.

If you come to this book having learned about Android from other sources, thanks for joining the CommonsWare community! Android, while aimed at small devices, is a surprisingly vast platform, making it difficult for any given book, training, wiki, or other source to completely cover everything one needs to know. This book will hopefully augment your knowledge of the ins and outs of Android-dom and make it easier for you to create "killer apps" that use the Android platform.

And, most of all, thanks for your interest in this book! I sincerely hope you find it useful and at least occasionally entertaining.

Prerequisites

This book assumes you have experience in Android development, whether from a CommonsWare resource or someplace else. In other words, you should have:

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- A working Android development environment, whether it is based on Eclipse, another IDE, or just the command-line tools that accompany the Android SDK
- A strong understanding of how to create activities and the various stock widgets available in Android
- A working knowledge of the Intent system, how it serves as a message bus, and how to use it to launch other activities
- Experience in creating, or at least using, content providers and services

If you picked this book up expecting to learn those topics, you really need another source first, since this book focuses on other topics. While we are fans of *The Busy Coder's Guide to Android Development*, there are plenty of other books available covering the Android basics, blog posts, wikis, and, of course, the main Android site itself. A list of currently-available Android books can be found on the Android Programming knol.

Some chapters may reference material in previous chapters, though usually with a link back to the preceding section of relevance. Many chapters will reference material in *The Busy Coder's Guide to Android Development*, sometimes via the shorthand *BCG to Android* moniker.

In order to make effective use of this book, you will want to download the source code for it off of the book's page on the CommonsWare site.

You can find out when new releases of this book are available via:

- The cw-android Google Group, which is also a great place to ask questions about the book and its examples
- The commonsguy Twitter feed
- The CommonsBlog
- The Warescription newsletter, which you can subscribe to off of your Warescription page

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Warescription

This book will be published both in print and in digital form. The digital versions of all CommonsWare titles are available via an annual subscription – the Warescription.

The Warescription entitles you, for the duration of your subscription, to digital forms of *all* CommonsWare titles, not just the one you are reading. Presently, CommonsWare offers PDF and Kindle; other digital formats will be added based on interest and the openness of the format.

Each subscriber gets personalized editions of all editions of each title: both those mirroring printed editions and in-between updates that are only available in digital form. That way, your digital books are never out of date for long, and you can take advantage of new material as it is made available instead of having to wait for a whole new print edition. For example, when new releases of the Android SDK are made available, this book will be quickly updated to be accurate with changes in the APIs.

From time to time, subscribers will also receive access to subscriber-only online material, including not-yet-published new titles.

Also, if you own a print copy of a CommonsWare book, and it is in good clean condition with no marks or stickers, you can exchange that copy for a free four-month Warescription.

If you are interested in a Warescription, visit the Warescription section of the CommonsWare Web site.

Errata and the Book Bug Bounty

Books updated as frequently as CommonsWare's inevitably have bugs. Flaws. Errors. Even the occasional gaffe, just to keep things interesting. You will find a list of the known bugs on the errata page on the CommonsWare Web site.

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But, there are probably even more problems. If you find one, please let us know!

Be the first to report a unique concrete problem in the current digital edition, and we'll give you a coupon for a six-month Warescription as a bounty for helping us deliver a better product. You can use that coupon to get a new Warescription, renew an existing Warescription, or give the coupon to a friend, colleague, or some random person you meet on the subway.

By "concrete" problem, we mean things like:

- Typographical errors
- Sample applications that do not work as advertised, in the environment described in the book
- Factual errors that cannot be open to interpretation

By "unique", we mean ones not yet reported. Each book has an errata page on the CommonsWare Web site; most known problems will be listed there. One coupon is given per email containing valid bug reports.

NOTE: Books with version numbers lower than 0.9 are ineligible for the bounty program, as they are in various stages of completion. We appreciate bug reports, though, if you choose to share them with us.

We appreciate hearing about "softer" issues as well, such as:

- Places where you think we are in error, but where we feel our interpretation is reasonable
- Places where you think we could add sample applications, or expand upon the existing material
- Samples that do not work due to "shifting sands" of the underlying environment (e.g., changed APIs with new releases of an SDK)

However, those "softer" issues do not qualify for the formal bounty program.

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Questions about the bug bounty, or problems you wish to report for bounty consideration, should be sent to bounty@commonsware.com.

Source Code

The source code samples shown in this book are available for download from the book's GitHub repository. All of the Android projects are licensed under the Apache 2.0 License, in case you have the desire to reuse any of it.

If you wish to use the source code from the CommonsWare Web site, bear in mind a few things:

- 1. The projects are set up to be built by Ant, not by Eclipse. If you wish to use the code with Eclipse, you will need to create a suitable Android Eclipse project and import the code and other assets.
- You should delete build.xml, then run android update project -p ... (where ... is the path to a project of interest) on those projects you wish to use, so the build files are updated for your Android SDK version.

The book sometimes shows entire source files, and occasionally shows only fragments of source files that are relevant to the current discussion. The book rarely shows each and every file for the sample projects. Please refer to the source code repository for the full source to any of the book samples.

Some samples will be from other Android projects, such as the CommonsWare Android Components. Those chapters will include links to their respective source code repositories.

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and the broader community. For the purposes of this guarantee, new Warescriptions and renewals will be counted as sales of this edition, starting from the time the edition is published.

This edition of this book will be available under the aforementioned Creative Commons license on March 1, 2015. Of course, watch the CommonsWare Web site, as this edition might be relicensed sooner based on sales.

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Note that future editions of this book will become free on later dates, each four years from the publication of that edition or based on sales of that specific edition. Releasing one edition under the Creative Commons license does not automatically release *all* editions under that license.

Lifecycle of a CommonsWare Book

CommonsWare books generally go through a series of stages.

First are the pre-release editions. These will have version numbers below 0.9 (e.g., 0.2). These editions are incomplete, often times having but a few chapters to go along with outlines and notes. However, we make them available to those on the Warescription so they can get early access to the material.

Release candidates are editions with version numbers ending in ".9" (0.9, 1.9, etc.). These editions should be complete. Once again, they are made available to those on the Warescription so they get early access to the material and can file bug reports (and receive bounties in return!).

Major editions are those with version numbers ending in ".o" (1.0, 2.0, etc.). These will be first published digitally for the Warescription members, but will shortly thereafter be available in print from booksellers worldwide.

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Versions between a major edition and the next release candidate (e.g., 1.1, 1.2) will contain bug fixes plus new material. Each of these editions should also be complete, in that you will not see any "TBD" (to be done) markers or the like. However, these editions may have bugs, and so bug reports are eligible for the bounty program, as with release candidates and major releases.

A book usually will progress fairly rapidly through the pre-release editions to the first release candidate and Version 1.0 – often times, only a few months. Depending on the book's scope, it may go through another cycle of significant improvement (versions 1.1 through 2.0), though this may take several months to a year or more. Eventually, though, the book will go into more of a "maintenance mode", only getting updates to fix bugs and deal with major ecosystem events – for example, a new release of the Android SDK will necessitate an update to all Android books.

PART I – Advanced UI

WebView, Inside and Out

Android uses the WebKit browser engine as the foundation for both its Browser application and the WebView embeddable browsing widget. The Browser application, of course, is something Android users can interact with directly; the WebView widget is something you can integrate into your own applications for places where an HTML interface might be useful.

In *BCG to Android*, we saw a simple integration of a WebView into an Android activity, with the activity dictating what the browsing widget displayed and how it responded to links.

Here, we will expand on this theme, and show how to more tightly integrate the Java environment of an Android application with the Javascript environment of WebKit.

Friends with Benefits

When you integrate a WebView into your activity, you can control what Web pages are displayed, whether they are from a local provider or come from over the Internet, what should happen when a link is clicked, and so forth. And between WebView, WebViewClient, and WebSettings, you can control a fair bit about how the embedded browser behaves. Yet, by default, the browser itself is just a browser, capable of showing Web pages and interacting with Web sites, but otherwise gaining nothing from being hosted by an Android application.

Except for one thing: addJavascriptInterface().

The addJavascriptInterface() method on WebView allows you to inject a Java object into the WebView, exposing its methods, so they can be called by Javascript loaded by the Web content in the WebView itself.

Now you have the power to provide access to a wide range of Android features and capabilities to your WebView-hosted content. If you can access it from your activity, and if you can wrap it in something convenient for use by Javascript, your Web pages can access it as well.

For example, Google's Gears project offers a Geolocation API, so Web pages loaded in a Gears-enabled browser can find out where the browser is located. This information could be used for everything from fine-tuning a search to emphasize local content to serving up locale-tailored advertising.

We can do much of the same thing with Android and addJavascriptInterface().

In the WebView/GeoWeb1 project, you will find a fairly simple layout (main.xml):

```
<?xml version="1.0" encoding="utf-8"?>
<LinearLayout xmlns:android="http://schemas.android.com/apk/res/android"
android:orientation="vertical"
android:layout_width="match_parent"
android:layout_height="match_parent"
>
<WebView android:id="@+id/webkit"
android:layout_width="match_parent"
</mre>
```

All this does is host a full-screen WebView widget.

Next, take a look at the GeoWebOne activity class:

package com.commonsware.android.geoweb;

```
import android.app.Activity;
import android.content.Context;
import android.os.Bundle;
import android.location.Location;
import android.location.LocationListener;
import android.location.LocationManager;
import android.webkit.WebView;
import org.json.JSONException;
import org.json.JSONObject;
public class GeoWebOne extends Activity {
 private static String PROVIDER=LocationManager.GPS_PROVIDER;
 private WebView browser;
 private LocationManager myLocationManager=null;
 @Override
 public void onCreate(Bundle icicle) {
   super.onCreate(icicle);
   setContentView(R.layout.main);
   browser=(WebView)findViewById(R.id.webkit);
   myLocationManager=(LocationManager)getSystemService(Context.LOCATION SERVICE
);
   browser.getSettings().setJavaScriptEnabled(true);
   browser.addJavascriptInterface(new Locater(), "locater");
   browser.loadUrl("file:///android_asset/geoweb1.html");
  }
 @Override
 public void onResume() {
   super.onResume();
   myLocationManager.requestLocationUpdates(PROVIDER, 10000,
                                            100.0f,
                                            onLocation);
  }
 @Override
 public void onPause() {
    super.onPause();
   myLocationManager.removeUpdates(onLocation);
 }
 LocationListener onLocation=new LocationListener() {
   public void onLocationChanged(Location location) {
     // ignore...for now
    }
    public void onProviderDisabled(String provider) {
     // required for interface, not used
    }
   public void onProviderEnabled(String provider) {
```
```
// required for interface, not used
  }
 public void onStatusChanged(String provider, int status,
                               Bundle extras) {
    // required for interface, not used
  }
};
public class Locater {
 public String getLocation() throws JSONException {
    Location loc=myLocationManager.getLastKnownLocation(PROVIDER);
    if (loc==null) {
      return(null);
    JSONObject json=new JSONObject();
    json.put("lat", loc.getLatitude());
    json.put("lon", loc.getLongitude());
    return(json.toString());
  }
}
```

This looks a bit like some of the WebView examples in *The Busy Coder's Guide* to *Android Development's* chapter on integrating WebKit. However, it adds three key bits of code:

- It sets up the LocationManager to provide updates when the device position changes, routing those updates to a do-nothing LocationListener callback object
- 2. It has a Locater inner class that provides a convenient API for accessing the current location, in the form of latitude and longitude values encoded in JSON
- 3. It uses addJavascriptInterface() to expose a Locater instance under the name locater to the Web content loaded in the WebView

The Locater API uses JSON to return both a latitude and a longitude at the same time. We are limited to using data types that are in common between Javascript and Java, so we cannot pass back the Location object we get from the LocationManager. Hence, we convert the key Location data into a simple JSON structure that the Javascript on the Web page can parse.

The Web page itself is referenced in the source code as file:///android_asset/geoweb1.html, so the GeoWeb1 project has a corresponding assets/ directory containing geoweb1.html:

```
<html>
<head>
<title>Android GeoWebOne Demo</title>
<script language="javascript">
 function whereami() {
   var location=JSON.parse(locater.getLocation());
   document.getElementById("lat").innerHTML=location.lat;
   document.getElementById("lon").innerHTML=location.lon;
 }
</script>
</head>
<body>
You are at: <br/> <span id="lat">(unknown)</span> latitude and <br/>
<span id="lon">(unknown)</span> longitude.
<a onClick="whereami()">Update Location</a>
</body>
</html>
```

When you click the "Update Location" link, the page calls a whereami() Javascript function, which in turn uses the locater object to update the latitude and longitude, initially shown as "(unknown)" on the page.

If you run the application, initially, the page is pretty boring:



Figure 1. The GeoWebOne sample application, as initially launched

However, if you wait a bit for a GPS fix, and click the "Update Location" link...the page is still pretty boring, but it at least knows where you are:



Figure 2. The GeoWebOne sample application, after clicking the Update Location link

Turnabout is Fair Play

Now that we have seen how Javascript can call into Java, it would be nice if Java could somehow call out to Javascript. In our example, it would be helpful if we could expose automatic location updates to the Web page, so it could proactively update the position as the user moves, rather than wait for a click on the "Update Location" link.

Well, as luck would have it, we can do that too. This is a good thing, otherwise, this would be a really weak section of the book.

What is unusual is how you call out to Javascript. One might imagine there would be an executeJavascript() counterpart to addJavascriptInterface(), where you could supply some Javascript source and have it executed within the context of the currently-loaded Web page.

Oddly enough, that is not how this is accomplished.

Instead, given your snippet of Javascript source to execute, you call loadUrl() on your WebView, as if you were going to load a Web page, but you put javascript: in front of your code and use that as the "address" to load.

If you have ever created a "bookmarklet" for a desktop Web browser, you will recognize this technique as being the Android analogue – the javascript: prefix tells the browser to treat the rest of the address as Javascript source, injected into the currently-viewed Web page.

So, armed with this capability, let us modify the previous example to continuously update our position on the Web page.

The layout for this new project (WebView/GeoWeb2) is the same as before. The Java source for our activity changes a bit:

```
package com.commonsware.android.geoweb;
import android.app.Activity;
import android.content.Context;
import android.os.Bundle;
import android.location.Location:
import android.location.LocationListener;
import android.location.LocationManager;
import android.webkit.WebView;
import org.json.JSONException;
import org.json.JSONObject;
public class GeoWebTwo extends Activity {
  private static String PROVIDER="gps";
  private WebView browser;
  private LocationManager myLocationManager=null;
  @Override
  public void onCreate(Bundle icicle) {
    super.onCreate(icicle);
    setContentView(R.layout.main);
    browser=(WebView)findViewById(R.id.webkit);
    myLocationManager=(LocationManager)getSystemService(Context.LOCATION SERVICE
);
    browser.getSettings().setJavaScriptEnabled(true);
    browser.addJavascriptInterface(new Locater(), "locater");
```

```
browser.loadUrl("file:///android asset/geoweb2.html");
}
@Override
public void onResume() {
  super.onResume();
 myLocationManager.requestLocationUpdates(PROVIDER, 0,
                                          0.
                                          onLocation);
}
@Override
public void onPause() {
 super.onPause();
 myLocationManager.removeUpdates(onLocation);
}
LocationListener onLocation=new LocationListener() {
 public void onLocationChanged(Location location) {
   StringBuilder buf=new StringBuilder("javascript:whereami(");
    buf.append(String.valueOf(location.getLatitude()));
    buf.append(",");
    buf.append(String.valueOf(location.getLongitude()));
    buf.append(")");
   browser.loadUrl(buf.toString());
  }
 public void onProviderDisabled(String provider) {
   // required for interface, not used
  }
 public void onProviderEnabled(String provider) {
    // required for interface, not used
  }
 public void onStatusChanged(String provider, int status,
                               Bundle extras) {
    // required for interface, not used
  }
};
public class Locater {
  public String getLocation() throws JSONException {
    Location loc=myLocationManager.getLastKnownLocation(PROVIDER);
    if (loc==null) {
     return(null);
    }
    JSONObject json=new JSONObject();
    json.put("lat", loc.getLatitude());
```

```
json.put("lon", loc.getLongitude());
return(json.toString());
}
```

Before, the onLocationChanged() method of our LocationListener callback did nothing. Now, it builds up a call to a whereami() Javascript function, providing the latitude and longitude as parameters to that call. So, for example, if our location were 40 degrees latitude and -75 degrees longitude, the call would be whereami(40,-75). Then, it puts javascript: in front of it and calls loadUrl() on the WebView. The result is that a whereami() function in the Web page gets called with the new location.

That Web page, of course, also needed a slight revision, to accommodate the option of having the position be passed in:

```
<html>
<head>
<title>Android GeoWebTwo Demo</title>
<script language="javascript">
 function whereami(lat, lon) {
   document.getElementById("lat").innerHTML=lat;
   document.getElementById("lon").innerHTML=lon;
 }
 function pull() {
   var location=JSON.parse(locater.getLocation());
   whereami(location.lat, location.lon);
 }
</script>
</head>
<body>
You are at: <br/> <span id="lat">(unknown)</span> latitude and <br/>
<span id="lon">(unknown)</span> longitude.
<a onClick="pull()">Update Location</a>
</body>
</html>
```

The basics are the same, and we can even keep our "Update Location" link, albeit with a slightly different onClick attribute.

If you build, install, and run this revised sample on a GPS-equipped Android device, the page will initially display with "(unknown)" for the current position. After a fix is ready, though, the page will automatically update to reflect your actual position. And, as before, you can always click "Update Location" if you wish.

Crafting Your Own Views

One of the classic forms of code reuse is the GUI widget. Since the advent of Microsoft Windows – and, to some extent, even earlier – developers have been creating their own widgets to extend an existing widget set. These range from 16-bit Windows "custom controls" to 32-bit Windows OCX components to the innumerable widgets available for Java Swing and SWT, and beyond. Android lets you craft your own widgets as well, such as extending an existing widget with a new UI or new behaviors.

This chapter starts with a discussion of the various ways you can go about creating custom View classes. It then moves into an examination of ColorMixer, a composite widget, made up of several other widgets within a layout.

Note that the material in this chapter is focused on creating custom View classes for use within a single Android project. If your goal is to truly create reusable custom widgets, you will also need to learn how to package them so they can be reused – that is covered in a later chapter.

Pick Your Poison

You have five major options for creating a custom View class.

First, your "custom View class" might really only be custom Drawable resources. Many widgets can adopt a radically different look and feel just

with replacement graphics. For example, you might think that these toggle buttons from the Android 2.1 Google Maps application are some fancy custom widget:



In reality, those are just radio buttons with replacement images.

Second, your custom View class might be a simple subclass of an existing widget, where you override some behaviors or otherwise inject your own logic. Unfortunately, most of the built-in Android widgets are not really designed for this sort of simple subclassing, so you may be disappointed in how well this particular technique works.

Third, your custom View class might be a composite widget – akin to an activity's contents, complete with layout and such, but encapsulated in its own class. This allows you to create something more elaborate than you will just by tweaking resources. We will see this later in the chapter with ColorMixer.

Fourth, you might want to implement your own layout manager, if your GUI rules do not fit well with RelativeLayout, TableLayout, or other built-in containers. For example, you might want to create a layout manager that more closely mirrors the "box model" approach taken by XUL and Flex, or you might want to create one that mirrors Swing's FlowLayout (laying widgets out horizontally until there is no more room on the current row, then start a new row).

Finally, you might want to do something totally different, where you need to draw the widget yourself. For example, the ColorMixer widget uses SeekBar widgets to control the mix of red, blue, and green. But, you might create a ColorWheel widget that draws a spectrum gradient, detects touch events, and lets the user pick a color that way.

Some of these techniques are fairly simple; others are fairly complex. All share some common traits, such as widget-defined attributes, that we will see throughout the remainder of this chapter.

Colors, Mixed How You Like Them

The classic way for a user to pick a color in a GUI is to use a color wheel like this one:



Figure 4. A color wheel from the API samples

There is even code to make one in the API samples.

However, a color wheel like that is difficult to manipulate on a touch screen, particularly a capacitive touchscreen designed for finger input. Fingers are great for gross touch events and lousy for selecting a particular color pixel.

Another approach is to use a mixer, with sliders to control the red, green, and blue values:

Crafting Your Own Views



Figure 5. The ColorMixer widget, inside an activity

That is the custom widget you will see in this section, based on the code in the Views/ColorMixer project.

The Layout

ColorMixer is a composite widget, meaning that its contents are created from other widgets and containers. Hence, we can use a layout file to describe what the widget should look like.

The layout to be used for the widget is not that much: three SeekBar widgets (to control the colors), three TextView widgets (to label the colors), and one plain View (the "swatch" on the left that shows what the currently selected color is). Here is the file, found in res/layout/mixer.xml in the Views/ColorMixer project:

```
<?xml version="1.0" encoding="utf-8"?>
<merge xmlns:android="http://schemas.android.com/apk/res/android">
<View android:id="@+id/swatch"
```

```
android:layout width="40dip"
  android:layout_height="40dip"
  android:layout_alignParentLeft="true"
  android:layout centerVertical="true"
  android:layout_marginLeft="4dip"
/>
<TextView android:id="@+id/redLabel"
  android:layout_width="wrap_content"
  android:layout_height="wrap_content"
  android:layout_alignTop="@id/swatch"
  android:layout_toRightOf="@id/swatch"
  android:layout marginLeft="4dip"
  android:text="@string/red"
  android:textSize="10pt"
/>
<SeekBar android:id="@+id/red"
  android:layout_width="match_parent"
  android:layout_height="wrap_content"
  android:layout_alignTop="@id/redLabel"
  android:layout_toRightOf="@id/redLabel"
  android:layout_marginLeft="4dip"
  android:layout_marginRight="8dip"
/>
<TextView android:id="@+id/greenLabel"
  android:layout_width="wrap_content"
  android:layout_height="wrap_content"
  android:layout below="@id/redLabel"
  android:layout_toRightOf="@id/swatch"
  android:layout_marginLeft="4dip"
  android:layout_marginTop="4dip"
  android:text="@string/green"
  android:textSize="10pt"
/>
<SeekBar android:id="@+id/green"
  android:layout_width="match_parent"
  android:layout_height="wrap_content"
  android:layout_alignTop="@id/greenLabel"
  android:layout_toRightOf="@id/greenLabel"
  android:layout_marginLeft="4dip"
  android:layout marginRight="8dip"
/>
<TextView android:id="@+id/blueLabel"
  android:layout_width="wrap_content"
  android:layout_height="wrap_content"
  android:layout_below="@id/greenLabel"
  android:layout toRightOf="@id/swatch"
  android:layout_marginLeft="4dip"
  android:layout_marginTop="4dip"
  android:text="@string/blue"
  android:textSize="10pt"
/>
<SeekBar android:id="@+id/blue"
  android:layout width="match parent"
  android:layout_height="wrap_content"
```

```
android:layout_alignTop="@id/blueLabel"
android:layout_toRightOf="@id/blueLabel"
android:layout_marginLeft="4dip"
android:layout_marginRight="8dip"
/>
</merge>
```

One thing that is a bit interesting about this layout, though, is the root element: <merge>. A <merge> layout is a bag of widgets that can be poured into some other container. The layout rules on the children of <merge> are then used in conjunction with whatever container they are added to. As we will see shortly, ColorMixer itself inherits from RelativeLayout, and the children of the <merge> element will become children of ColorMixer in Java. Basically, the <merge> element is only there because XML files need a single root – otherwise, the <merge> element itself is ignored in the layout.

The Attributes

Widgets usually have attributes that you can set in the XML file, such as the android:src attribute you can specify on an ImageButton widget. You can create your own custom attributes that can be used in your custom widget, by creating a res/values/attrs.xml file containing declare-styleable resources to specify them.

For example, here is the attributes file for ColorMixer:

```
<resources>
<declare-styleable name="ColorMixer">
<attr name="initialColor" format="color" />
</declare-styleable>
</resources>
```

The declare-styleable element describes what attributes are available on the widget class specified in the name attribute – in our case, ColorMixer. Inside declare-styleable you can have one or more attr elements, each indicating the name of an attribute (e.g., initialColor) and what data format the attribute has (e.g., color). The data type will help with compile-time validation and in getting any supplied values for this attribute parsed into the appropriate type at runtime. Here, we indicate there are only one attribute: initialColor, which will hold the initial color we want the mixer set to when it first appears.

There are many possible values for the format attribute in an attr element, including:

- boolean
- color
- dimension
- float
- fraction
- integer
- reference (which means a reference to another resource, such as a Drawable)
- string

You can even support multiple formats for an attribute, by separating the values with a pipe (e.g., reference|color).

The Class

Our ColorMixer class, a subclass of RelativeLayout, will take those attributes and provide the actual custom widget implementation, for use in activities.

Constructor Flavors

A View has three possible constructors:

- One takes just a Context, which usually will be an Activity
- One takes a Context and an AttributeSet, the latter of which represents the attributes supplied via layout XML
- One takes a Context, an AttributeSet, and the default style to apply to the attributes

If you are expecting to use your custom widget in layout XML files, you will need to implement the second constructor and chain to the superclass. If you want to use styles with your custom widget when declared in layout XML files, you will need to implement the third constructor and chain to the superclass. If you want developers to create instances of your View class in Java code directly, you probably should implement the first constructor and, again, chain to the superclass.

In the case of ColorMixer, all three constructors are implemented, eventually routing to the three-parameter edition, which initializes our widget. Below, you will see the first two of those constructors, with the third coming up in the next section:

```
public ColorMixer(Context context) {
   this(context, null);
}
public ColorMixer(Context context, AttributeSet attrs) {
   this(context, attrs, 0);
}
```

Using the Attributes

The ColorMixer has a starting color – after all, the SeekBar widgets and swatch View have to show something. Developers can, if they wish, set that color via a setColor() method:

```
public void setColor(int color) {
  red.setProgress(Color.red(color));
  green.setProgress(Color.green(color));
  blue.setProgress(Color.blue(color));
  swatch.setBackgroundColor(color);
}
```

If, however, we want developers to be able to use layout XML, we need to get the value of initialColor out of the supplied AttributeSet. In ColorMixer, this is handled in the three-parameter constructor:

```
public ColorMixer(Context context, AttributeSet attrs, int defStyle) {
    super(context, attrs, defStyle);
```

((Activity)getContext())

```
.getLavoutInflater()
    .inflate(R.layout.mixer, this, true);
swatch=findViewById(R.id.swatch);
red=(SeekBar)findViewById(R.id.red);
red.setMax(0xFF);
red.setOnSeekBarChangeListener(onMix);
green=(SeekBar)findViewById(R.id.green);
green.setMax(0xFF);
green.setOnSeekBarChangeListener(onMix);
blue=(SeekBar)findViewById(R.id.blue);
blue.setMax(0xFF);
blue.setOnSeekBarChangeListener(onMix);
if (attrs!=null) {
  TypedArray a=getContext()
                  .obtainStyledAttributes(attrs,
                                          R.styleable.ColorMixer,
                                          0, 0);
  setColor(a.getInt(R.styleable.ColorMixer_initialColor,
                   0xFFA4C639));
  a.recycle();
```

There are three steps for getting attribute values:

- Get a TypedArray conversion of the AttributeSet by calling obtainStyledAttributes() on our Context, supplying it the AttributeSet and the ID of our styleable resource (in this case, R.styleable.ColorMixer, since we set the name of the declarestyleable element to be ColorMixer)
- Use the TypedArray to access specific attributes of interest, by calling an appropriate getter (e.g., getColor()) with the ID of the specific attribute to fetch (R.styleable.ColorMixer_initialColor)
- 3. Recycle the TypedArray when done, via a call to recycle(), to make the object available to Android for use with other widgets via an object pool (versus creating new instances every time)

Note that the name of any given attribute, from the standpoint of TypedArray, is the name of the styleable resource (R.styleable.ColorMixer)

concatenated with an underscore and the name of the attribute itself (_initialColor).

In ColorMixer, we get the attribute and pass it to setColor(). Since getColor() on AttributeSet takes a default value, we supply some stock color that will be used if the developer declined to supply an initialColor attribute.

Also note that our ColorMixer constructor inflates the widget's layout. In particular, it supplies true as the third parameter to inflate(), meaning that the contents of the layout should be added as children to the ColorMixer itself. When the layout is inflated, the <merge> element is ignored, and the <merge> element's children are added as children to the ColorMixer.

Saving the State

Similar to activities, a custom View overrides onSaveInstanceState() and onRestoreInstanceState() to persist data as needed, such as to handle a screen orientation change. The biggest difference is that rather than receive a Bundle as a parameter, onSaveInstanceState() must return a Parcelable with its state...including whatever state comes from the parent View.

The simplest way to do that is to return a Bundle, in which we have filled in our state (the chosen color) and the parent class' state (whatever that may be).

So, for example, here are implementations of onSaveInstanceState() and onRestoreInstanceState() from ColorMixer:

```
@Override
public Parcelable onSaveInstanceState() {
   Bundle state=new Bundle();
   state.putParcelable(SUPERSTATE, super.onSaveInstanceState());
   state.putInt(COLOR, getColor());
   return(state);
}
```

```
@Override
public void onRestoreInstanceState(Parcelable ss) {
   Bundle state=(Bundle)ss;
   super.onRestoreInstanceState(state.getParcelable(SUPERSTATE));
   setColor(state.getInt(COLOR));
}
```

The Rest of the Functionality

ColorMixer defines a callback interface, named OnColorChangedListener:

```
public interface OnColorChangedListener {
   public void onColorChange(int argb);
```

ColorMixer also provides getters and setters for an OnColorChangedListener object:

```
public OnColorChangedListener getOnColorChangedListener() {
   return(listener);
}
public void setOnColorChangedListener(OnColorChangedListener listener) {
   this.listener=listener;
```

The rest of the logic is mostly tied up in the SeekBar handler, which will adjust the swatch based on the new color and invoke the OnColorChangedListener object, if there is one:

```
// unused
}
public void onStopTrackingTouch(SeekBar seekBar) {
    // unused
};
```

Seeing It In Use

The project contains a sample activity, ColorMixerDemo, that shows the use of the ColorMixer widget.

The layout for that activity, shown below, can be found in res/layout/main.xml of the Views/ColorMixer project:

```
<?xml version="1.0" encoding="utf-8"?>
<LinearLayout xmlns:android="http://schemas.android.com/apk/res/android"</pre>
 xmlns:mixer="http://schemas.android.com/apk/res/com.commonsware.android.colorm
ixer"
  android:layout_width="match_parent"
  android:layout_height="wrap_content"
  android:orientation="vertical"
 <TextView android:id="@+id/color"
   android:layout_width="wrap_content"
    android:layout height="wrap content"
 />
 <com.commonsware.android.colormixer.ColorMixer
    android:id="@+id/mixer"
    android:layout_width="wrap_content"
    android:layout_height="wrap_content"
    mixer:initialColor="#FFA4C639"
 />
</LinearLayout>
```

Notice that the root LinearLayout element defines two namespaces, the standard android namespace, and a separate one named mixer. The URL associated with that namespace indicates that we are looking to reference styleable attributes from the com.commonsware.android.colormixer package.

Our ColorMixer widget is in the layout, with a fully-qualified class name (com.commonsware.android.colormixer.ColorMixer), since ColorMixer is not in

the android.widget package. Notice that we can treat our custom widget like any other, giving it a width and height and so on.

The one attribute of our ColorMixer widget that is unusual is mixer:initialColor. initialColor, you may recall, was the name of the attribute we declared in res/values/attrs.xml and retrieve in Java code, to represent the color to start with. The mixer namespace is needed to identify where Android should be pulling the rules for what sort of values an initialColor attribute can hold. Since our <attr> element indicated that the format of initialColor was color, Android will expect to see a color value here, rather than a string or dimension.

The ColorMixerDemo activity is not very elaborate:

```
package com.commonsware.android.colormixer;
import android.app.Activity;
import android.os.Bundle;
import android.widget.TextView;
public class ColorMixerDemo extends Activity {
 private TextView color=null;
 @Override
 public void onCreate(Bundle icicle) {
    super.onCreate(icicle);
   setContentView(R.layout.main);
   color=(TextView)findViewById(R.id.color);
   ColorMixer mixer=(ColorMixer)findViewById(R.id.mixer);
   mixer.setOnColorChangedListener(onColorChange);
 }
 private ColorMixer.OnColorChangedListener onColorChange=
   new ColorMixer.OnColorChangedListener() {
   public void onColorChange(int argb) {
     color.setText(Integer.toHexString(argb));
 };
```

It gets access to both the ColorMixer and the TextView in the main layout, then registers an OnColorChangedListener with the ColorMixer. That listener,

in turn, puts the value of the color in the TextView, so the user can see the hex value of the color along with the shade itself in the swatch.

More Fun With ListViews

One of the most important widgets in your tool belt is the ListView. Some activities are purely a ListView, to allow the user to sift through a few choices...or perhaps a few thousand. We already saw in *The Busy Coder's Guide to Android Development* how to create "fancy ListViews", where you have complete control over the list rows themselves. In this chapter, we will cover some additional techniques you can use to make your ListView widgets be pleasant for your users to work with.

We start with a look at how to have a ListView with more than one distinct type of row, section headers in this case. We then move ahead to look at how to have header and footer rows that are in the ListView but are not part of your actual adapter. We then spend a pair of sections discussing the list selector – that orange bar that appears as you navigate a ListView with the D-pad or trackball – and how to control its behavior.

Giant Economy-Size Dividers

You may have noticed that the preference UI has what behaves a lot like a ListView, but with a curious characteristic: not everything is selectable:



Figure 6. A PreferenceScreen UI

You may have thought that this required some custom widget, or some fancy on-the-fly View handling, to achieve this effect.

If so, you would have been wrong.

It turns out that any ListView can exhibit this behavior. In this section, we will see how this is achieved and a reusable framework for creating such a ListView.

Choosing What Is Selectable

There are two methods in the Adapter hierarchy that let you control what is and is not selectable in a ListView:

- areAllItemsSelectable() should return true for ordinary ListView widgets and false for ListView widgets where some items in the Adapter are selectable and others are not
- isEnabled(), given a position, should return true if the item at that position should be selectable and false otherwise

Given these two, it is "merely" a matter of overriding your chosen Adapter class and implementing these two methods as appropriate to get the visual effect you desire.

As one might expect, this is not quite as easy as it may sound.

For example, suppose you have a database of books, and you want to present a list of book titles for the user to choose from. Furthermore, suppose you have arranged for the books to be in alphabetical order within each major book style (Fiction, Non-Fiction, etc.), courtesy of a well-crafted ORDER BY clause on your query. And suppose you want to have headings, like on the preferences screen, for those book styles.

If you simply take the Cursor from that query and hand it to a SimpleCursorAdapter, the two methods cited above will be implemented as the default, saying every row is selectable. And, since every row is a book, that is what you want...for the books.

To get the headings in place, your Adapter needs to mix the headings in with the books (so they all appear in the proper sequence), return a custom View for each (so headings look different than the books), and implement the two methods that control whether the headings or books are selectable. There is no easy way to do this from a simple query.

Instead, you need to be a bit more creative, and wrap your SimpleCursorAdapter in something that can intelligently inject the section headings.

Introducing MergeAdapter

CommonsWare – the publishers of this book – have released a number of open source reusable Android libraries, collectively called the CommonsWare Android Components (CWAC, pronounced "quack"). Several of these will come into play for adding headings to a list, primarily MergeAdapter. You can get the source code to MergeAdapter from its GitHub repository.

MergeAdapter takes a collection of ListAdapter objects and other View widgets and consolidates them into a single master ListAdapter that can be poured into a ListView. You supply the contents – MergeAdapter handles the ListAdapter interface to make them all appear to be a single contiguous list.

In the case of ListView with section headings, we can use MergeAdapter to alternate between headings (each a View) and the rows inside each heading (e.g., a CursorAdapter wrapping content culled from a database).

Lists via Merges

The pattern to use MergeAdapter for sectioned lists is fairly simple:

- Create one Adapter for each section. For example, in the book scenario described above, you might have one SimpleCursorAdapter for each book style (one for Fiction, one for Non-Fiction, etc.).
- Create heading Views for each heading (e.g., a custom-styled TextView)
- Create a MergeAdapter and sequentially add each heading and content Adapter in turn
- Put the container Adapter in the ListView, and everything flows from there

You will see this implemented in the MergeAdapter sample project, which is another riff on the "list of *lorem ipsum* words" sample you see scattered throughout the *Busy Coder* books.

The layout for the screen is just a ListView, because the activity – MergeAdapterDemo – is just a ListActivity:

```
<?xml version="1.0" encoding="utf-8"?>
<ListView
xmlns:android="http://schemas.android.com/apk/res/android"
android:id="@android:id/list"
android:layout_width="fill_parent"
android:layout_height="fill_parent"
android:drawSelectorOnTop="false"
/>
```

Our activity's onCreate() method wraps our list of nonsense words in an ArrayAdapter three times, first with the original list and twice on randomly shuffled editions of the list. It pops each of those into the MergeAdapter with heading views in between (one a Button, one a TextView):

```
package com.commonsware.cwac.merge.demo;
import android.app.ListActivity;
import android.content.Context;
import android.os.Bundle;
import android.util.Log;
import android.view.View;
import android.view.ViewGroup;
import android.widget.AdapterView;
import android.widget.ArrayAdapter;
import android.widget.Button;
import android.widget.ListAdapter;
import android.widget.ListView;
import android.widget.TextView;
import java.util.ArrayList;
import java.util.Arrays;
import java.util.Collections;
import com.commonsware.cwac.merge.MergeAdapter;
public class MergeAdapterDemo extends ListActivity {
  private static final String[] items={"lorem", "ipsum", "dolor",
                                        "sit", "amet", "consectetuer",
"adipiscing", "elit", "morbi",
                                        "vel", "ligula", "vitae",
"arcu", "aliquet", "mollis",
"etiam", "vel", "erat",
                                         "placerat", "ante",
"porttitor", "sodales"
                                         "pellentesque", "augue",
                                         "purus"};
  private MergeAdapter adapter=null;
  private ArrayAdapter<String> arrayAdapter=null;
  @Override
  public void onCreate(Bundle icicle) {
    super.onCreate(icicle);
    setContentView(R.layout.main);
    adapter=new MergeAdapter();
    arrayAdapter=buildFirstList();
    adapter.addAdapter(arrayAdapter);
    adapter.addView(buildButton(), true);
    adapter.addAdapter(buildSecondList());
    adapter.addView(buildLabel());
    adapter.addAdapter(buildSecondList());
    setListAdapter(adapter);
```

```
}
 @Override
 public void onListItemClick(ListView parent, View v,
                             int position, long id) {
  Log.d("MergeAdapterDemo", String.valueOf(position));
 }
 private ArrayAdapter<String> buildFirstList() {
   return(new ArrayAdapter<String>(this,
                                   android.R.layout.simple_list_item_1,
                                   new
ArrayList<String>(Arrays.asList(items))));
 }
 private View buildButton() {
   Button result=new Button(this);
   result.setText("Add Capitalized Words");
   result.setOnClickListener(new View.OnClickListener() {
      public void onClick(View v) {
       for (String item : items) {
          arrayAdapter.add(item.toUpperCase());
       }
     }
   });
   return(result);
  }
 private View buildLabel() {
   TextView result=new TextView(this);
   result.setText("Hello, world!");
   return(result);
 }
 private ListAdapter buildSecondList() {
   ArrayList<String> list=new ArrayList<String>(Arrays.asList(items));
   Collections.shuffle(list);
   return(new ArrayAdapter<String>(this,
                                   android.R.layout.simple_list_item_1,
                                   list));
  }
```

The result is much as you might expect:

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EG 📊 🕝 11:5 CWAC: MergeAdapter	Зам
sodales	
pellentesque	
augue	
purus	
Add Capitalized Words	
ante	
ipsum	
placerat	

Figure 7. A ListView using a MergeAdapter, showing two lists and an intervening header

Here, the headers are simple bits of text with an appropriate style applied. Your section headers, of course, can be as complex as you like.

How MergeAdapter Does It

MergeAdapter is a surprisingly lengthy class, given its simple premise: stitch together several ListAdapter objects to appear to the outside world as a single contiguous ListAdapter. This section will not cover all aspects of MergeAdapter, but here are some of the highlights.

Managing Adapters

MergeAdapter maintains an ArrayList of ListAdapter objects that represent the contents, and there is an addAdapter() method that adds a ListAdapter to that ArrayList.

MergeAdapter also supports adding an individual View, via a few flavors of addView() and addViews() methods. It does this via the simple expedient of creating a ListAdapter out of those widget(s) and adding that ListAdapter to the ArrayList. Specifically, MergeAdapter uses another CWAC component, SackOfViewsAdapter, to handle that chore. SackOfViewsAdapter is a ListAdapter that holds onto an ArrayList of View objects, one per row. This allows MergeAdapter to deal with everything in terms of ListAdapter objects.

You can take a look at SackOfViewsAdapter through its GitHub repository.

Supporting the Adapter Interface

MergeAdapter supports the ListAdapter interface, by extending BaseAdapter. That being said, there are still about a dozen methods that MergeAdapter needs to implement to supply its custom ListAdapter logic.

Most of those are a simple matter of iteration. For example, here is the implementation of getViewTypeCount():

```
@Override
public int getViewTypeCount() {
    int total=0;
    for (ListAdapter piece : pieces) {
        total+=piece.getViewTypeCount();
    }
    return(Math.max(total, 1)); // needed for setListAdapter() before content
add'
}
```

The number of View types from the MergeAdapter is the sum of the number of View types from each of its member ListAdapter objects, or 1, whichever is higher.

Some of these require a bit more smarts in the iteration, such as getItemViewType():

```
@Override
public int getItemViewType(int position) {
```

```
int typeOffset=0;
int result=-1;
for (ListAdapter piece : pieces) {
    int size=piece.getCount();
    if (position<size) {
        result=typeOffset+piece.getItemViewType(position);
        break;
    }
    position-=size;
    typeOffset+=piece.getViewTypeCount();
}
return(result);
```

Here, we need to walk through the ListAdapter objects in sequence until we come to the one that has the desired position. Along the way, we add up how many View type "slots" were used by previous adapters. The View type slot for our desired position is the View type of that row within its ListAdapter, offset by the number of slots already consumed by previous adapters. This keeps us in the range of o to getViewTypeCount().

To deal with things being disabled, such as some headers, MergeAdapter returns false from areAllItemsEnabled(). It then delegates isItemEnabled() to its adapter:

```
@Override
public boolean isEnabled(int position) {
  for (ListAdapter piece : pieces) {
    int size=piece.getCount();
    if (position<size) {
       return(piece.isEnabled(position));
    }
    position-=size;
    }
    return(false);
}</pre>
```

The rest of the methods on ListAdapter are implemented in similar fashion.

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From Head To Toe

Perhaps you do not need section headers scattered throughout your list. If you only need extra "fake rows" at the beginning or end of your list, you can use header and footer views.

ListView supports addHeaderView() and addFooterView() methods that allow you to add View objects to the beginning and end of the list, respectively. These View objects otherwise behave like regular rows, in that they are part of the scrolled area and will scroll off the screen if the list is long enough. If you want fixed headers or footers, rather than put them in the ListView itself, put them outside the ListView, perhaps using a LinearLayout.

To demonstrate header and footer views, take a peek at ListView/HeaderFooter, particularly the HeaderFooterDemo class:

```
package com.commonsware.android.listview;
import android.app.ListActivity;
import android.content.Context;
import android.os.Bundle;
import android.os.Handler;
import android.os.SystemClock;
import android.view.View;
import android.view.ViewGroup;
import android.widget.AdapterView;
import android.widget.ArrayAdapter;
import android.widget.Button;
import android.widget.ListView;
import android.widget.TextView;
import java.util.Arrays;
import java.util.Collections;
import java.util.List;
import java.util.concurrent.atomic.AtomicBoolean;
public class HeaderFooterDemo extends ListActivity {
  private static String[] items={"lorem", "ipsum", "dolor",
                                      "sit", "amet", "consectetuer",
"adipiscing", "elit", "morbi",
                                      "vel", "ligula", "vitae",
"arcu", "aliquet", "mollis",
"etiam", "vel", "erat",
                                      "placerat", "ante",
"porttitor", "sodales"
                                      "pellentesque", "augue",
                                      "purus"};
```

```
private long startTime=SystemClock.uptimeMillis();
private AtomicBoolean areWeDeadYet=new AtomicBoolean(false);
@Override
public void onCreate(Bundle icicle) {
  super.onCreate(icicle);
  setContentView(R.layout.main);
  getListView().addHeaderView(buildHeader());
  getListView().addFooterView(buildFooter());
  setListAdapter(new ArrayAdapter<String>(this,
                     android.R.layout.simple_list_item_1,
                     items));
}
@Override
public void onDestroy() {
  super.onDestroy();
 areWeDeadYet.set(true);
}
private View buildHeader() {
 Button btn=new Button(this);
 btn.setText("Randomize!");
  btn.setOnClickListener(new View.OnClickListener() {
    public void onClick(View v) {
      List<String> list=Arrays.asList(items);
      Collections.shuffle(list);
      setListAdapter(new ArrayAdapter<String>(HeaderFooterDemo.this,
                         android.R.layout.simple_list_item_1,
                         list));
   }
  });
 return(btn);
}
private View buildFooter() {
 TextView txt=new TextView(this);
 updateFooter(txt);
 return(txt);
}
private void updateFooter(final TextView txt) {
  long runtime=(SystemClock.uptimeMillis()-startTime)/1000;
 txt.setText(String.valueOf(runtime)+" seconds since activity launched");
  if (!areWeDeadYet.get()) {
```

```
getListView().postDelayed(new Runnable() {
    public void run() {
        updateFooter(txt);
        }
    }, 1000);
    }
}
```

Here, we add a header View built via buildHeader(), returning a Button that, when clicked, will shuffle the contents of the list. We also add a footer View built via buildFooter(), returning a TextView that shows how long the activity has been running, updated every second. The list itself is the ever-popular list of *lorem ipsum* words.

When initially displayed, the header is visible but the footer is not, because the list is too long:

Header Footer Den	🚯 📊 💶 10:56 ам
R	andomize!
lorem	
ipsum	
dolor	
sit	
amet	
consectetuer	
adipiscing	

Figure 8. A ListView with a header view shown

If you scroll downward, the header will slide off the top, and eventually the footer will scroll into view:

Header Footer Demo	🚯 📶 🕼 10:56 ам
placerat	
ante	
porttitor	
sodales	
pellentesque	
augue	
purus	
18 seconds since activity la	unched

Figure 9. A ListView with a footer view shown

Note that the same effect can be achieved with a MergeAdapter. MergeAdapter offers somewhat greater flexibility, at the cost of requiring an external library.

Control Your Selection

The stock Android UI for a selected ListView row is fairly simplistic: it highlights the row in orange...and nothing more. You can control the Drawable used for selection via the android:listSelector and android:drawSelectorOnTop attributes on the ListView element in your layout. However, even those simply apply some generic look to the selected row.
It may be you want to do something more elaborate for a selected row, such as changing the row around to expose more information. Maybe you have thumbnail photos but only display the photo on the selected row. Or perhaps you want to show some sort of secondary line of text, like a person's instant messenger status, only on the selected row. Or, there may be times you want a more subtle indication of the selected item than having the whole row show up in some neon color. The stock Android UI for highlighting a selection will not do any of this for you.

That just means you have to do it yourself. The good news is, it is not very difficult.

Create a Unified Row View

The simplest way to accomplish this is for each row View to have all of the widgets you want for the selected-row perspective, but with the "extra stuff" flagged as invisible at the outset. That way, rows initially look "normal" when put into the list – all you need to do is toggle the invisible widgets to visible when a row gets selected and toggle them back to invisible when a row is de-selected.

For example, in the ListView/Selector project, you will find a row.xml layout representing a row in a list:

```
<?xml version="1.0" encoding="utf-8"?>
<LinearLayout
 xmlns:android="http://schemas.android.com/apk/res/android"
 android:orientation="horizontal"
 android:layout width="match parent"
 android:layout_height="match_parent" >
 <View
   android:id="@+id/bar"
   android:background="#FFFFF00"
   android:layout_width="5px"
   android:layout height="match parent"
   android:visibility="invisible"
 />
 <TextView
   android:id="@+id/label"
   android:layout_width="match_parent"
   android:layout_height="match_parent"
    android:textSize="10pt"
```

```
android:paddingTop="2px"
android:paddingBottom="2px"
android:paddingLeft="5px"
/>
</LinearLayout>
```

There is a TextView representing the bulk of the row. Before it, though, on the left, is a plain View named bar. The background of the View is set to yellow (android:background = "#FFFFF00") and the width to 5px. More importantly, it is set to be invisible (android:visibility = "invisible"). Hence, when the row is put into a ListView, the yellow bar is not seen...until we make the bar visible.

Configure the List, Get Control on Selection

Next, we need to set up a ListView and arrange to be notified when rows are selected and de-selected. That is merely a matter of calling setOnItemSelectedListener() for the ListView, providing a listener to be notified on a selection change. You can see that in the context of a ListActivity in our SelectorDemo class:

```
package com.commonsware.android.listview;
import android.app.ListActivity;
import android.content.Context;
import android.os.Bundle;
import android.content.res.ColorStateList;
import android.view.View;
import android.view.ViewGroup;
import android.widget.AdapterView;
import android.widget.ArrayAdapter;
import android.widget.ListView;
import android.widget.TextView;
public class SelectorDemo extends ListActivity {
        private static ColorStateList allWhite=ColorStateList.valueOf(0xFFFFFFF);
       private static ColorStateList allumite=colorStateList allumite=colorState
                                                                                                                                            "vel", "ligula", "vitae",
"arcu", "aliquet", "mollis",
"etiam", "vel", "erat",
                                                                                                                                             "placerat", "ante",
"porttitor", "sodales",
                                                                                                                                             "pellentesque", "augue",
                                                                                                                                             "purus"};
```

```
@Override
public void onCreate(Bundle icicle) {
  super.onCreate(icicle);
  setContentView(R.layout.main);
  setListAdapter(new SelectorAdapter(this));
  getListView().setOnItemSelectedListener(listener);
}
class SelectorAdapter extends ArrayAdapter {
 SelectorAdapter(Context ctxt) {
    super(ctxt, R.layout.row, items);
  }
  @Override
 public View getView(int position, View convertView,
                       ViewGroup parent) {
    SelectorWrapper wrapper=null;
    if (convertView==null) {
      convertView=getLayoutInflater().inflate(R.layout.row,
                                            parent, false);
     wrapper=new SelectorWrapper(convertView);
      wrapper.getLabel().setTextColor(allWhite);
      convertView.setTag(wrapper);
    }
    else {
     wrapper=(SelectorWrapper)convertView.getTag();
    }
    wrapper.getLabel().setText(items[position]);
    return(convertView);
 }
}
class SelectorWrapper {
 View row=null:
 TextView label=null;
 View bar=null;
 SelectorWrapper(View row) {
    this.row=row;
  }
 TextView getLabel() {
    if (label==null) {
      label=(TextView)row.findViewById(R.id.label);
    }
   return(label);
  }
 View getBar() {
```

```
if (bar==null) {
       bar=row.findViewById(R.id.bar);
     }
     return(bar);
    }
 }
 AdapterView.OnItemSelectedListener listener=new
AdapterView.OnItemSelectedListener() {
   View lastRow=null;
   public void onItemSelected(AdapterView<?> parent,
                             View view, int position,
                             long id) {
     if (lastRow!=null) {
        SelectorWrapper wrapper=(SelectorWrapper)lastRow.getTag();
       wrapper.getBar().setVisibility(View.INVISIBLE);
     }
     SelectorWrapper wrapper=(SelectorWrapper)view.getTag();
     wrapper.getBar().setVisibility(View.VISIBLE);
     lastRow=view;
    }
   public void onNothingSelected(AdapterView<?> parent) {
     if (lastRow!=null) {
        SelectorWrapper wrapper=(SelectorWrapper)lastRow.getTag();
        wrapper.getBar().setVisibility(View.INVISIBLE);
        lastRow=null;
     }
    }
 };
```

SelectorDemo sets up a SelectorAdapter, which follow the view-wrapper pattern established in *The Busy Coder's Guide to Android Development*. Each row is created from the layout shown earlier, with a SelectorWrapper providing access to both the TextView (for setting the text in a row) and the bar View.

Change the Row

Our AdapterView.OnItemSelectedListener instance keeps track of the last selected row (lastRow). When the selection changes to another row in

onItemSelected(), we make the bar from the last selected row invisible, before we make the bar visible on the newly-selected row. In onNothingSelected(), we make the bar invisible and make our last selected row be null.

The net effect is that as the selection changes, we toggle the bar off and on as needed to indicate which is the selected row.

In the layout for the activity's ListView, we turn off the regular highlighting:

```
<?xml version="1.0" encoding="utf-8"?>
<ListView
  xmlns:android="http://schemas.android.com/apk/res/android"
  android:id="@android:id/list"
  android:layout_width="match_parent"
  android:layout_height="match_parent"
  android:listSelector="#00000000"
/>
```

The result is we are controlling the highlight, in the form of the yellow bar:

	🚯 🔳 💶 10:57 ам
Selector Demo	
lorem	
ipsum	
dolor	
sit	
amet	
consectetuer	
adipiscing	
elit	
morbi	
vel	
ligula	
vitae	
arcu	
aliquet	
mollis	

Figure 10. A ListView with a custom-drawn selector icon

Obviously, what we do to highlight a row could be much more elaborate than what is demonstrated here. At the same time, it needs to be fairly quick to execute, lest the list appear to be too sluggish.

Stating Your Selection

In the previous section, we removed the default ListView selection bar and implemented our own in Java code. That works, but there is another option: defining a custom selection bar Drawable resource.

In the chapter on custom Drawable resources, we introduced the StateListDrawable. This is an XML-defined resource that declares different Drawable resources to use when the StateListDrawable is in different states.

The standard ListView selector is, itself, a StateListDrawable, one that looks like this:

```
<?xml version="1.0" encoding="utf-8"?>
<!-- Copyright (C) 2008 The Android Open Source Project
Licensed under the Apache License, Version 2.0 (the "License");
you may not use this file except in compliance with the License.
You may obtain a copy of the License at
http://www.apache.org/licenses/LICENSE-2.0
Unless required by applicable law or agreed to in writing, software
distributed under the License is distributed on an "AS IS" BASIS,
WITHOUT WARRANTIES OR CONDITIONS OF ANY KIND, either express or implied.
See the License for the specific language governing permissions and
limitations under the License.
- - >
<selector xmlns:android="http://schemas.android.com/apk/res/android">
<item android:state_window_focused="false"
android:drawable="@color/transparent" />
<!-- Even though these two point to the same resource, have two states so the
drawable will invalidate itself when coming out of pressed state. -->
<item android:state_focused="true" android:state_enabled="false"
android:state_pressed="true"
android:drawable="@drawable/list selector background disabled" />
<item android:state_focused="true" android:state_enabled="false"</pre>
android:drawable="@drawable/list_selector_background_disabled" />
```

```
<item android:state_focused="true" android:state_pressed="true"
android:drawable="@drawable/list_selector_background_transition" />
<item android:state_focused="false" android:state_pressed="true"
android:drawable="@drawable/list_selector_background_transition" />
<item android:state_focused="true"
android:drawable="@drawable/list_selector_background_focus" />
</selector>
```

Now, the most common reason people seem to want to change the selector is that they hate the orange bar. Perhaps it clashes with their application's color scheme, or they are allergic to citrus fruits, or something.

The android:state_focused="true" rule at the bottom of that XML is the one that defines the actual selection bar, in terms of what is seen when the user navigates with the D-pad or trackball. It points to a nine-patch PNG file, with different copies for different screen densities (one in res/drawable-hdpi/, etc.).

Hence, another approach to changing the selection bar is to:

- Copy the above XML (found in res/drawable/list_selector_background.xml in your SDK) into your project
- 2. Copy the various other Drawable resources pointed to by that XML into your project
- 3. Modify the nine-patch images as needed to change the colors
- 4. Reference the local copy of the StateListDrawable in the android:listSelector attribute

Creating Drawables

Drawable resources come in all shapes and sizes, and not just in terms of pixel dimensions. While many Drawable resources will be PNG or JPEG files, you can easily create other resources that supply other sorts of Drawable objects to your application. In this chapter, we will examine a few of these that may prove useful as you try to make your application look its best.

First, we look at using shape XML files to create gradient effects that can be resized to accommodate different contents. We then examine StateListDrawable and how it can be used for button backgrounds, tab icons, map icons, and the like. We wrap by looking at nine-patch bitmaps, for places where a shape file will not work but that the image still needs to be resized, such as a Button background.

Traversing Along a Gradient

Gradients have long been used to add "something a little extra" to a user interface, whether it is Microsoft adding them to Office's title bars in the late 1990's or the seemingly endless number of gradient buttons adorning "Web 2.0" sites.

And now, you can have gradients in your Android applications as well.

The easiest way to create a gradient is to use an XML file to describe the gradient. By placing the file in res/drawable/, it can be referenced as a

Drawable resource, no different than any other such resource, like a PNG file.

For example, here is a gradient Drawable resource, active_row.xml, from the Drawable/Gradient sample project:

```
<shape xmlns:android="http://schemas.android.com/apk/res/android"
android:shape="rectangle">
    <gradient
        android:startColor="#44FFFF00"
        android:endColor="#FFFFF00"
        android:angle="270"
    />
    <padding
        android:top="2px"
        android:bottom="2px"
        />
        <corners android:radius="6px" />
    </shape>
```

A gradient is applied to the more general-purpose <shape> element, in this case, a rectangle. The gradient is defined as having a start and end color – in this case, the gradient is an increasing amount of yellow, with only the alpha channel varying to control how much the background blends in. The color is applied in a direction determined by the number of degrees specified by the android:angle attribute, with 270 representing "down" (start color at the top, end color at the bottom).

As with any other XML-defined shape, you can control various aspects of the way the shape is drawn. In this case, we put some padding around the drawable and round off the corners of the rectangle.

To use this Drawable in Java code, you can reference it as R.drawable.active_row. One possible use of a gradient is in custom ListView row selection, as shown in Drawable/GradientDemo:

```
package com.commonsware.android.drawable;
import android.app.ListActivity;
import android.content.Context;
import android.os.Bundle;
import android.content.res.ColorStateList;
import android.view.View;
```

```
import android.view.ViewGroup;
import android.widget.AdapterView;
import android.widget.ArrayAdapter;
import android.widget.ListView;
import android.widget.TextView;
public class GradientDemo extends ListActivity {
 private static ColorStateList allWhite=ColorStateList.valueOf(0xFFFFFFF);
 "vel", "ligula", "vitae",
                                "arcu", "aliquet", "mollis",
                                "etiam", "vel", "erat",
                                "placerat", "ante",
"porttitor", "sodales",
                                "pellentesque", "augue",
                                "purus"};
 @Override
 public void onCreate(Bundle icicle) {
    super.onCreate(icicle);
    setContentView(R.layout.main);
   setListAdapter(new GradientAdapter(this));
   getListView().setOnItemSelectedListener(listener);
 }
 class GradientAdapter extends ArrayAdapter {
   GradientAdapter(Context ctxt) {
     super(ctxt, R.layout.row, items);
    }
   @Override
   public View getView(int position, View convertView,
                        ViewGroup parent) {
     GradientWrapper wrapper=null;
     if (convertView==null) {
       convertView=getLayoutInflater().inflate(R.layout.row,
                                             parent, false);
       wrapper=new GradientWrapper(convertView);
       convertView.setTag(wrapper);
     }
     else {
       wrapper=(GradientWrapper)convertView.getTag();
     wrapper.getLabel().setText(items[position]);
     return(convertView);
   }
  }
  class GradientWrapper {
```

```
View row=null:
   TextView label=null;
   GradientWrapper(View row) {
     this.row=row;
    }
   TextView getLabel() {
     if (label==null) {
       label=(TextView)row.findViewById(R.id.label);
     }
     return(label);
   }
 }
 AdapterView.OnItemSelectedListener listener=new
AdapterView.OnItemSelectedListener() {
   View lastRow=null;
   public void onItemSelected(AdapterView<?> parent,
                             View view, int position,
                             long id) {
     if (lastRow!=null) {
       lastRow.setBackgroundColor(0x0000000);
     }
     view.setBackgroundResource(R.drawable.active_row);
     lastRow=view;
    }
   public void onNothingSelected(AdapterView<?> parent) {
     if (lastRow!=null) {
       lastRow.setBackgroundColor(0x0000000);
       lastRow=null;
     }
   }
 };
```

In an earlier chapter, we showed how you can get control and customize how a selected row appears in a ListView. This time, we apply the gradient rounded rectangle as the background of the row. We could have accomplished this via appropriate choices for android:listSelector and android:drawSelectorOnTop as well.

The result is a selection bar implementing the gradient:

50



Figure 11. The GradientDemo sample application

Note that because the list background is black, the yellow is mixed with black on the top end of the gradient. If the list background were white, the top end of the gradient would be yellow mixed with white, as determined by the alpha channel specified on the gradient's top color.

State Law

Gradients and other shapes are not the only types of Drawable resource you can define using XML. One, the StateListDrawable, is key if you want to have different images when widgets are in different states.

Take for example the humble Button. Somewhere along the line, you have probably tried setting the background of the Button to a different color, perhaps via the android:background attribute in layout XML. If you have not tried this before, give it a shot now.

When you replace the Button background with a color, the Button becomes...well...flat. There is no defined border. There is no visual response when you click the Button. There is no orange highlight if you select the Button with the D-pad or trackball.

This is because what makes a Button visually be a Button is its background. Your new background is a flat color, which will be used no matter what is going on with the Button itself. The original background, however, was a StateListDrawable, one that looks something like this:

```
<?xml version="1.0" encoding="utf-8"?>
<!-- Copyright (C) 2008 The Android Open Source Project
Licensed under the Apache License, Version 2.0 (the "License");
you may not use this file except in compliance with the License.
You may obtain a copy of the License at
http://www.apache.org/licenses/LICENSE-2.0
Unless required by applicable law or agreed to in writing, software
distributed under the License is distributed on an "AS IS" BASIS,
WITHOUT WARRANTIES OR CONDITIONS OF ANY KIND, either express or implied.
See the License for the specific language governing permissions and
limitations under the License.
-->
<selector xmlns:android="http://schemas.android.com/apk/res/android">
<item android:state window focused="false" android:state enabled="true"</pre>
android:drawable="@drawable/btn_default_normal" />
<item android:state_window_focused="false" android:state_enabled="false"</pre>
android:drawable="@drawable/btn default normal disable" />
<item android:state_pressed="true"
android:drawable="@drawable/btn default pressed" />
<item android:state_focused="true" android:state_enabled="true"
android:drawable="@drawable/btn default selected" />
<item android:state_enabled="true"
android:drawable="@drawable/btn default normal" />
<item android:state focused="true"
android:drawable="@drawable/btn_default_normal_disable_focused" />
<item
android:drawable="@drawable/btn_default_normal_disable" />
</selector>
```

The XML has a <selector> root element, indicating this is a StateListDrawable. The <item> elements inside the root describe what Drawable resource should be used if the StateListDrawable is being used in some state. For example, if the "window" (think activity or dialog) does not

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have the focus (android:state_window_focused="false") and the Button is enabled (android:state_enabled="true"), then we use the @drawable/btn_default_normal Drawable resource. That resource, as it turns out, is a nine-patch PNG file, described later in this chapter.

Android applies each rule in turn, top-down, to find the Drawable to use for a given state of the StateListDrawable. The last rule has no android:state_* attributes, meaning it is the overall default image to use if none of the other rules match.

So, if you want to change the background of a Button, you need to:

- Copy the above resource, found in your Android SDK as res/drawable/btn_default.xml, into your project
- 2. Copy each of the Button state nine-patch images into your project
- 3. Modify whichever of those nine-patch images you want, to affect the visual change you seek
- 4. If need be, tweak the states and images defined in the StateListDrawable XML you copied
- 5. Reference the local ${\tt StateListDrawable}$ as the background for your ${\tt Button}$

You can also use this technique for tab icons – the currently-selected tab will use the image defined as android:state_selected="true", while the other tabs will use images with android:state_selected="false".

We will see StateListDrawable used later in this book, in the chapter on maps, showing you how you can have different icons in an overlay for normal and selected states of an overlay item.

A Stitch In Time Saves Nine

As you read through the Android documentation, you no doubt ran into references to "nine-patch" or "9-patch" and wondered what Android had to

do with quilting. Rest assured, you will not need to take up needlework to be an effective Android developer.

If, however, you are looking to create backgrounds for resizable widgets, like a Button, you will probably need to work with nine-patch images.

As the Android documentation states, a nine-patch is "a PNG image in which you define stretchable sections that Android will resize to fit the object at display time to accommodate variable sized sections, such as text strings". By using a specially-created PNG file, Android can avoid trying to use vector-based formats (e.g., SVG) and their associated overhead when trying to create a background at runtime. Yet, at the same time, Android can still resize the background to handle whatever you want to put inside of it, such as the text of a Button.

In this section, we will cover some of the basics of nine-patch graphics, including how to customize and apply them to your own Android layouts.

The Name and the Border

Nine-patch graphics are PNG files whose names end in .9.png. This means they can be edited using normal graphics tools, but Android knows to apply nine-patch rules to their use.

What makes a nine-patch graphic different than an ordinary PNG is a onepixel-wide border surrounding the image. When drawn, Android will remove that border, showing only the stretched rendition of what lies inside the border. The border is used as a control channel, providing instructions to Android for how to deal with stretching the image to fit its contents.

Padding and the Box

Along the right and bottom sides, you can draw one-pixel-wide black lines to indicate the "padding box". Android will stretch the image such that the contents of the widget will fit inside that padding box.

For example, suppose we are using a nine-patch as the background of a Button. When you set the text to appear in the button (e.g., "Hello, world!"), Android will compute the size of that text, in terms of width and height in pixels. Then, it will stretch the nine-patch image such that the text will reside inside the padding box. What lies outside the padding box forms the border of the button, typically a rounded rectangle of some form.



Figure 12. The padding box, as shown by a set of control lines to the right and bottom of the stretchable image

Stretch Zones

To tell Android where on the image to actually do the stretching, draw onepixel-wide black lines on the top and left sides of the image. Android will scale the graphic only in those areas – areas outside the stretch zones are not stretched. Perhaps the most common pattern is the center-stretch, where the middle portions of the image on both axes are considered stretchable, but the edges are not:



Figure 13. The stretch zones, as shown by a set of control lines to the right and bottom of the stretchable image

Here, the stretch zones will be stretched just enough for the contents to fit in the padding box. The edges of the graphic are left unstretched.

Some additional rules to bear in mind:

- If you have multiple discrete stretch zones along an axis (e.g., two zones separated by whitespace), Android will stretch both of them but keep them in their current proportions. So, if the first zone is twice as wide as the second zone in the original graphic, the first zone will be twice as wide as the second zone in the stretched graphic.
- If you leave out the control lines for the padding box, it is assumed that the padding box and the stretch zones are one and the same.

Tooling

To experiment with nine-patch images, you may wish to use the draw9patch program, found in the tools/ directory of your SDK installation:



Figure 14. The draw9patch tool

While a regular graphics editor would allow you to draw any color on any pixel, draw9patch limits you to drawing or erasing pixels in the control area. If you attempt to draw inside the main image area itself, you will be blocked.

On the right, you will see samples of the image in various stretched sizes, so you can see the impact as you change the stretchable zones and padding box.

While this is convenient for working with the nine-patch nature of the image, you will still need some other graphics editor to create or modify the body of the image itself. For example, the image shown above, from the Drawable/NinePatch project, is a modified version of a nine-patch graphic

from the SDK's ApiDemos, where the GIMP was used to add the neon green stripe across the bottom portion of the image.

Using Nine-Patch Images

Nine-patch images are most commonly used as backgrounds, as illustrated by the following layout:

```
<?xml version="1.0" encoding="utf-8"?>
<LinearLayout xmlns:android="http://schemas.android.com/apk/res/android"
  android:orientation="vertical"
  android:layout_width="match_parent"
  android:layout_height="match_parent"
  >
  <TableLayout
    android:layout_width="match_parent"
    android:layout height="wrap content"
    android:stretchColumns="1"
 >
    <TableRow
      android:layout_width="match_parent"
      android:layout height="wrap content"
    >
      <TextView
        android:layout_width="wrap_content"
        android:layout_height="wrap_content"
        android:layout_gravity="center_vertical"
        android:text="Horizontal:"
      />
      <SeekBar android:id="@+id/horizontal"
        android:layout_width="match_parent"
        android:layout height="wrap content"
      />
    </TableRow>
    <TableRow
      android:layout_width="match_parent"
      android:layout_height="wrap_content"
    >
      <TextView
        android:layout_width="wrap_content"
        android:layout_height="wrap_content"
        android:layout_gravity="center_vertical"
        android:text="Vertical:"
      />
      <SeekBar android:id="@+id/vertical"
        android:layout width="match parent"
        android:layout_height="wrap_content"
      />
    </TableRow>
  </TableLayout>
```

```
<LinearLayout
android:orientation="vertical"
android:layout_width="match_parent"
android:layout_height="match_parent"
>
<Button android:id="@+id/resize"
android:layout_width="64px"
android:layout_height="64px"
android:text="Hi!"
android:textSize="5pt"
android:background="@drawable/button"
/>
</LinearLayout>
</LinearLayout>
```

Here, we have two SeekBar widgets, labeled for the horizontal and vertical axes, plus a Button set up with our nine-patch graphic as its background (android:background = "@drawable/button").

The NinePatchDemo activity then uses the two SeekBar widgets to let the user control how large the button should be drawn on-screen, starting from an initial size of 64px square:

```
package com.commonsware.android.drawable;
import android.app.Activity;
import android.os.Bundle;
import android.view.View;
import android.view.ViewGroup;
import android.widget.LinearLayout;
import android.widget.SeekBar;
public class NinePatchDemo extends Activity {
 SeekBar horizontal=null;
  SeekBar vertical=null;
 View thingToResize=null;
 @Override
 public void onCreate(Bundle savedInstanceState) {
    super.onCreate(savedInstanceState);
    setContentView(R.layout.main);
   thingToResize=findViewById(R.id.resize);
   horizontal=(SeekBar)findViewById(R.id.horizontal);
   vertical=(SeekBar)findViewById(R.id.vertical);
   horizontal.setMax(176); // 240 less 64 starting size
    vertical.setMax(176); // keep it square @ max
```

```
horizontal.setOnSeekBarChangeListener(h);
 vertical.setOnSeekBarChangeListener(v);
}
SeekBar.OnSeekBarChangeListener h=new SeekBar.OnSeekBarChangeListener() {
  public void onProgressChanged(SeekBar seekBar,
                               int progress,
                               boolean fromTouch) {
    ViewGroup.LayoutParams old=thingToResize.getLayoutParams();
    ViewGroup.LayoutParams current=new LinearLayout.LayoutParams(64+progress,
                                                              old.height);
    thingToResize.setLayoutParams(current);
  }
  public void onStartTrackingTouch(SeekBar seekBar) {
   // unused
  }
 public void onStopTrackingTouch(SeekBar seekBar) {
   // unused
  }
};
SeekBar.OnSeekBarChangeListener v=new SeekBar.OnSeekBarChangeListener() {
  public void onProgressChanged(SeekBar seekBar,
                               int progress,
                               boolean fromTouch) {
    ViewGroup.LayoutParams old=thingToResize.getLayoutParams();
   ViewGroup.LayoutParams current=new LinearLayout.LayoutParams(old.width,
                                                             64+progress);
   thingToResize.setLayoutParams(current);
  }
  public void onStartTrackingTouch(SeekBar seekBar) {
    // unused
  }
  public void onStopTrackingTouch(SeekBar seekBar) {
   // unused
  }
};
```

The result is an application that can be used much like the right pane of draw9patch, to see how the nine-patch graphic looks on an actual device or emulator in various sizes:



Figure 15. The NinePatch sample project, in its initial state



Figure 16. The NinePatch sample project, after making it bigger horizontally



Creating Drawables

Figure 17. The NinePatch sample application, after making it bigger in both dimensions

Home Screen App Widgets

One of the oft-requested features added in Android 1.5 was the ability to add live elements to the home screen. Called "app widgets", these can be added by users via a long-tap on the home screen and choosing an appropriate widget from the available roster. Android ships with a few app widgets, such as a music player, but developers can add their own – in this chapter, we will see how this is done.

For the purposes of this book, "app widgets" will refer to these items that go on the home screen. Other uses of the term "widget" will be reserved for the UI widgets, subclasses of View, usually found in the android.widget Java package.

In this chapter, we briefly touch on the security ramifications of app widgets, before continuing on to discuss how Android offers a secure app widget framework. We then go through all the steps of creating a basic app widget. Next, we discuss how to deal with multiple instances of your app widget, the app widget lifecycle, alternative models for updating app widgets, and how to offer multiple layouts for your app widget (perhaps based on device characteristics). We wrap with some notes about hosting your own app widgets in your own home screen implementation.

East is East, and West is West...

Part of the reason it took as long as it did for app widgets to become available is security.

Android's security model is based heavily on Linux user, file, and process security. Each application is (normally) associated with a unique user ID. All of its files are owned by that user, and its process(es) run as that user. This prevents one application from modifying the files of another or otherwise injecting their own code into another running process.

In particular, the core Android team wanted to find a way that would allow app widgets to be displayed by the home screen application, yet have their content come from another application. It would be dangerous for the home screen to run arbitrary code itself or somehow allow its UI to be directly manipulated by another process.

The app widget architecture, therefore, is set up to keep the home screen application independent from any code that puts app widgets on that home screen, so bugs in one cannot harm the other.

The Big Picture for a Small App Widget

The way Android pulls off this bit of security is through the use of RemoteViews.

The application component that supplies the UI for an app widget is not an Activity, but rather a BroadcastReceiver (often in tandem with a Service). The BroadcastReceiver, in turn, does not inflate a normal View hierarchy, like an Activity would, but instead inflates a layout into a RemoteViews object.

RemoteViews encapsulates a limited edition of normal widgets, in such a fashion that the RemoteViews can be "easily" transported across process boundaries. You configure the RemoteViews via your BroadcastReceiver and make those RemoteViews available to Android. Android in turn delivers the

RemoteViews to the app widget host (usually the home screen), which renders them to the screen itself.

This architectural choice has many impacts:

- You do not have access to the full range of widgets and containers. You can use FrameLayout, LinearLayout, and RelativeLayout for containers, and AnalogClock, Button, Chronometer, ImageButton, ImageView, ProgressBar, and TextView for widgets.
- 2. The only user input you can get is clicks of the Button and ImageButton widgets. In particular, there is no EditText for text input.
- 3. Because the app widgets are rendered in another process, you cannot simply register an OnClickListener to get button clicks; rather, you tell RemoteViews a PendingIntent to invoke when a given button is clicked.
- 4. You do not hold onto the RemoteViews and reuse them yourself. Rather, the pattern appears to be that you create and send out a brand-new RemoteViews whenever you want to change the contents of the app widget. This, coupled with having to transport the RemoteViews across process boundaries, means that updating the app widget is rather expensive in terms of CPU time, memory, and battery life.
- 5. Because the component handling the updates is a BroadcastReceiver, you have to be quick (lest you take too long and Android consider you to have timed out), you cannot use background threads, and your component itself is lost once the request has been completed. Hence, if your update might take a while, you will probably want to have the BroadcastReceiver start a Service and have the Service do the long-running task and eventual app widget update.

Crafting App Widgets

This will become somewhat easier to understand in the context of some sample code. In the AppWidget/PairOfDice project, you will find an app

widget that displays a roll of a pair of dice. Clicking on the app widget rerolls, in case you want a better result.

The Manifest

First, we need to register our BroadcastReceiver implementation in our AndroidManifest.xml file, along with a few extra features:

```
<?xml version="1.0" encoding="utf-8"?>
<manifest android:versionCode="1"
          android:versionName="1.0"
          package="com.commonsware.android.appwidget.dice"
          xmlns:android="http://schemas.android.com/apk/res/android">
 <uses-sdk android:minSdkVersion="5"
           android:targetSdkVersion="8" />
  <supports-screens android:largeScreens="true"</pre>
                    android:normalScreens="true"
                    android:smallScreens="false" />
 <application android:icon="@drawable/cw"
             android:label="@string/app_name">
    <receiver android:icon="@drawable/cw"
              android:label="@string/app_name"
              android:name=".AppWidget">
     <intent-filter>
        <action android:name="android.appwidget.action.APPWIDGET_UPDATE" />
     </intent-filter>
     <meta-data android:name="android.appwidget.provider"
                android:resource="@xml/widget_provider" />
    </receiver>
  </application>
</manifest>
```

Here we have just a <receiver>. Of note:

- Our <receiver> has android:label and android:icon attributes, which are not normally needed on BroadcastReceiver declarations. However, in this case, those are used for the entry that goes in the menu of available widgets to add to the home screen. Hence, you will probably want to supply values for both of those, and use appropriate resources in case you want translations for other languages.
- Our <receiver> has an <intent-filter> for the android.appwidget.action.APPWIDGET_UPDATE action. This means we

will get control whenever Android wants us to update the content of our app widget. There may be other actions we want to monitor – more on this in a later section.

 Our <receiver> also has a <meta-data> element, indicating that its android.appwidget.provider details can be found in the res/xml/widget_provider.xml file. This metadata is described in the next section.

The Metadata

Next, we need to define the app widget provider metadata. This has to reside at the location indicated in the manifest – in this case, in res/xml/widget_provider.xml:

```
<appwidget-provider xmlns:android="http://schemas.android.com/apk/res/android"
android:minWidth="144dip"
android:minHeight="72dip"
android:updatePeriodMillis="900000"
android:initialLayout="@layout/widget"
/>
```

Here, we provide four pieces of information:

- The minimum width and height of the app widget (android:minWidth and android:minHeight). These are approximate – the app widget host (e.g., home screen) will tend to convert these values into "cells" based upon the overall layout of the UI where the app widgets will reside. However, they should be no smaller than the minimums cited here. Also, ideally, you use dip instead of px for the dimensions, so the number of cells will remain constant regardless of screen density.
- The frequency in which Android should request an update of the widget's contents (android:updatePeriodMillis). This is expressed in terms of milliseconds, so a value of 3600000 is a 60-minute update cycle. Note that the minimum value for this attribute is 30 minutes values less than that will be "rounded up" to 30 minutes. Hence our 15-minute (900000 millisecond) request will actually result in an update every 30 minutes.

• The initial layout to use for the app widget, for the time between when the user requests the app widget and when onUpdate() of our AppWidgetProvider gets control.

The Layout

Eventually, you are going to need a layout that describes what the app widget looks like. So long as you stick to the widget and container classes noted above, this layout can otherwise look like any other layout in your project.

For example, here is the layout for the PairOfDice app widget:

```
<?xml version="1.0" encoding="utf-8"?>
<RelativeLayout xmlns:android="http://schemas.android.com/apk/res/android"
    android:id="@+id/background"
    android:orientation="horizontal"
    android:layout_width="match_parent"
    android:layout height="match parent"
    android:background="@drawable/widget frame"
    >
 <ImageView android:id="@+id/left die"
    android:layout_centerVertical="true"
    android:layout_alignParentLeft="true"
    android:src="@drawable/die_5"
    android:layout_width="wrap_content"
    android:layout_height="wrap_content"
   android:layout marginLeft="7dip"
 />
 <ImageView android:id="@+id/right_die"
    android:layout_centerVertical="true"
   android:layout_alignParentRight="true"
    android:src="@drawable/die 2"
    android:layout_width="wrap_content"
    android:layout_height="wrap_content"
   android:layout_marginRight="7dip"
 1>
</RelativeLayout>
```

All we have is a pair of ImageView widgets (one for each die), inside of a RelativeLayout. The RelativeLayout has a background, specified as a nine-patch PNG file. This allows the RelativeLayout to have guaranteed contrast with whatever wallpaper is behind it, so the user can tell the actual app widget bounds.

The BroadcastReceiver

Next, we need a BroadcastReceiver that can get control when Android wants us to update our RemoteViews for our app widget. To simplify this, Android supplies an AppWidgetProvider class we can extend, instead of the normal BroadcastReceiver. This simply looks at the received Intent and calls out to an appropriate lifecycle method based on the requested action.

The one method that invariably needs to be implemented on the provider is onUpdate(). Other lifecycle methods may be of interest and are discussed later in this chapter.

For example, here is the onUpdate() implementation of the AppWidgetProvider for PairOfDice:

```
package com.commonsware.android.appwidget.dice;
import android.app.PendingIntent;
import android.appwidget.AppWidgetManager;
import android.appwidget.AppWidgetProvider;
import android.content.ComponentName;
import android.content.Context;
import android.content.Intent;
import android.widget.RemoteViews;
public class AppWidget extends AppWidgetProvider {
 private static final int[] IMAGES={R.drawable.die_1,R.drawable.die_2,
                                     R.drawable.die_3, R.drawable.die_4,
                                     R.drawable.die_5,R.drawable.die_6};
 @Override
 public void onUpdate(Context ctxt, AppWidgetManager mgr,
                       int[] appWidgetIds) {
   ComponentName me=new ComponentName(ctxt, AppWidget.class);
   mgr.updateAppWidget(me, buildUpdate(ctxt, appWidgetIds));
  }
  private RemoteViews buildUpdate(Context ctxt, int[] appWidgetIds) {
   RemoteViews updateViews=new RemoteViews(ctxt.getPackageName(),
                                          R.layout.widget);
   Intent i=new Intent(ctxt, AppWidget.class);
    i.setAction(AppWidgetManager.ACTION APPWIDGET UPDATE);
    i.putExtra(AppWidgetManager.EXTRA_APPWIDGET_IDS, appWidgetIds);
```

To update the RemoteViews for our app widget, we need to build those RemoteViews (delegated to a buildUpdate() helper method) and tell an AppWidgetManager to update the widget via updateAppWidget(). In this case, we use a version of updateAppWidget() that takes a ComponentName as the identifier of the widget to be updated. Note that this means that we will update all instances of this app widget presently in use – the concept of multiple app widget instances is covered in greater detail later in this chapter.

Working with RemoteViews is a bit like trying to tie your shoes while wearing mittens – it may be possible, but it is a bit clumsy. In this case, rather than using methods like findViewById() and then calling methods on individual widgets, we need to call methods on RemoteViews itself, providing the identifier of the widget we wish to modify. This is so our requests for changes can be serialized for transport to the home screen process. It does, however, mean that our view-updating code looks a fair bit different than it would if this were the main View of an activity or row of a ListView.

To create the RemoteViews, we use a constructor that takes our package name and the identifier of our layout. This gives us a RemoteViews that contains all of the widgets we declared in that layout, just as if we inflated the layout using a LayoutInflater. The difference, of course, is that we have a RemoteViews object, not a View, as the result.

We then use methods like:

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- setImageViewResource() to set the image for each of our ImageView widgets, in this case a randomly chosen die face (using graphics created from a set of SVG files from the OpenClipArt site)
- setOnClickPendingIntent() to provide a PendingIntent that should get fired off when a die, or the overall app widget background, is clicked

We then supply that RemoteViews to the AppWidgetManager, which pushes the RemoteViews structure to the home screen, which renders our new app widget UI.

The Result

If you compile and install all of this, you will have a new widget entry available when you long-tap on the home screen background:



Figure 18. The roster of available widgets

When you choose Pair of Dice, the app widget will appear on the home screen:



Figure 19. The Pair of Dice app widget, in action

To re-roll, just tap anywhere on the app widget.

Another and Another

As indicated above, you can have multiple instances of the same app widget outstanding at any one time. For example, one might have multiple picture frames, or multiple "show-me-the-latest-RSS-entry" app widgets, one per feed. You will distinguish between these in your code via the identifier supplied in the relevant AppWidgetProvider callbacks (e.g., onUpdate()).

If you want to support separate app widget instances, you will need to store your state on a per-app-widget-identifier basis. You will also need to use an appropriate version of updateAppWidget() on AppWidgetManager when you update the app widgets, one that takes app widget identifiers as the first parameter, so you update the proper app widget instances.

Conversely, there is nothing requiring you to support multiple instances as independent entities. For example, if you add more than one PairOfDice app widget to your home screen, nothing blows up – they just show the same roll. That is because PairOfDice uses a version of updateAppWidget() that does not take any app widget IDs, and therefore updates all app widgets simultaneously.

App Widgets: Their Life and Times

There are three other lifecycle methods that AppWidgetProvider offers that you may be interested in:

- onEnabled() will be called when the first widget instance is created for this particular widget provider, so if there is anything you need to do once for all supported widgets, you can implement that logic here
- onDeleted() will be called when a widget instance is removed from the home screen, in case there is any data you need to clean up specific to that instance
- onDisabled() will be called when the last widget instance for this provider is removed from the home screen, so you can clean up anything related to all such widgets

Note, however, that there is a bug in Android 1.5, where onDeleted() will not be properly called. You will need to implement onReceive() and watch for the ACTION_APPWIDGET_DELETED action in the received Intent and call onDeleted() yourself. This has since been fixed, and if you are not supporting Android 1.5, you will not need to worry about this problem.

Controlling Your (App Widget's) Destiny

As PairOfDice illustrates, you are not limited to updating your app widget only based on the timetable specified in your metadata. That timetable is useful if you can get by with a fixed schedule. However, there are cases in which that will not work very well:

- If you want the user to be able to configure the polling period (the metadata is baked into your APK and therefore cannot be modified at runtime)
- If you want the app widget to be updated based on external factors, such as a change in location

The recipe shown in PairOfDice will let you use AlarmManager (described in another chapter) or proximity alerts or whatever to trigger updates. All you need to do is:

- Arrange for something to broadcast an Intent that will be picked up by the BroadcastReceiver you are using for your app widget provider
- Have the provider process that Intent directly or pass it along to a Service (such as an IntentService)

Also, note that the updatePeriodMillis setting not only tells the app widget to update every so often, it will even *wake up the phone* if it is asleep so the widget can perform its update. On the plus side, this means you can easily keep your widgets up to date regardless of the state of the device. On the minus side, this will tend to drain the battery, particularly if the period is too fast. If you want to avoid this wakeup behavior, set updatePeriodMillis to 0 and use AlarmManager to control the timing and behavior of your widget updates.

Note that if there are multiple instances of your app widget on the user's home screen, they will all update approximately simultaneously if you are using updatePeriodMillis. If you elect to set up your own update schedule, you can control which app widgets get updated when, if you choose.

Change Your Look

If you have been doing most of your development via the Android emulator, you are used to all "devices" having a common look and feel, in

terms of the home screen, lock screen, and so forth. This is the so-called "Google Experience" look, and many actual Android devices have it.

However, some devices have their own presentation layers. HTC has "Sense", seen on the HTC Hero and HTC Tattoo, among other devices. Motorola has MOTOBLUR, seen on the Motorola CLIQ and DEXT. Other device manufacturers, like Sony Ericsson, Samsung, and LG, have followed suit, as will others in the future. These presentation layers replace the home screen and lock screen, among other things. Moreover, they usually come with their own suite of app widgets with their own look and feel. Your app widget may look fine on a Google Experience home screen, but the look might clash when viewed on a Sense or MOTOBLUR device.

Fortunately, there are ways around this. You can set your app widget's look on the fly at runtime, to choose the layout that will look the best on that particular device.

The first step is to create an app widget layout that is initially invisible (res/layout/invisible.xml):

```
<?xml version="1.0" encoding="utf-8"?>
<RelativeLayout xmlns:android="http://schemas.android.com/apk/res/android"
    android:orientation="horizontal"
    android:layout_width="match_parent"
    android:layout_height="match_parent"
    android:visibility="invisible"
    >
    </RelativeLayout>
```

This layout is then the one you would reference from your app widget metadata, to be used when the app widget is first created:

```
<appwidget-provider xmlns:android="http://schemas.android.com/apk/res/android"
android:minWidth="292dip"
android:minHeight="72dip"
android:updatePeriodMillis="900000"
android:configure="com.commonsware.android.appwidget.TWPrefs"
android:initialLayout="@layout/invisible"
/>
```
This ensures that when your app widget is initially added, you do not get the "Problem loading widget" placeholder, yet you also do not choose one layout versus another – it is simply invisible for a brief moment.

Then, in your AppWidgetProvider (or attached IntentService), you can make the choice of what layout to inflate as part of your RemoteViews. Rather than using the invisible one, you can choose one based on the device or other characteristics. The biggest challenge is that there is no good way to determine what presentation layer, if any, is in use on a device. For the time being, you will need to use the various fields in the android.os.Build class to "sniff" on the device model and make a decision that way.

One Size May Not Fit All

It may be that you want to offer multiple app widget sizes to your users. Some might only want a small app widget. Some might really like what you have to offer and want to give you more home screen space to work in.

The good news: this is easy to do.

The bad news: it requires you, in effect, to have one app widget per size.

The size of an app widget is determined by the app widget metadata XML file. That XML file is tied to a <receiver> element in the manifest representing one app widget. Hence, to have multiple sizes, you need multiple metadata files and multiple <receiver> elements.

This also means your app widgets will show up multiple times in the app widget selection list, when the user goes to add an app widget to their home screen. Hence, supporting many sizes will become annoying to the user, if they perceive you are "spamming" the app widget list. Try to keep the number of app widget sizes to a reasonable number (say, one or two sizes).

Advanced App Widgets on Android 3.x

Android 3.0 introduced a few new capabilities for app widgets, to make them more interactive and more powerful than before. The documentation lags a bit, though, so determining how to use these features takes a bit of exploring. Fortunately for you, the author did some of that exploring on your behalf, to save you some trouble.

New Widgets for App Widgets

In addition to the classic widgets available for use in app widgets and RemoteViews, five more were added for Android 3.0:

- GridView
- ListView
- StackView
- ViewFlipper
- AdapterViewFlipper

Three of these (GridView, ListView, ViewFlipper) are widgets that existed in Android since the outset. StackView is a new widget to provide a "stack of cards" UI:



Figure 20. The Google Books app widget, showing a StackView

AdapterViewFlipper works like a ViewFlipper, allowing you to toggle between various children with only one visible at a time. However, whereas with ViewFlipper all children are fully-instantiated View objects held by the ViewFlipper parent, AdapterViewFlipper uses the Adapter model, so only a small number of actual View objects are held in memory, no matter how many potential children there are.

With the exception of ViewFlipper, the other four all require the use of an Adapter. This might seem odd, as there is no way to provide an Adapter to a RemoteViews. That is true, but Android 3.0 added new ways for Adapter-like communication between the app widget host (e.g., home screen) and your application. We will take an in-depth look at that in an upcoming section.

Preview Images

App widgets can now have preview images attached. Preview images are drawable resources representing a preview of what the app widget might look like on the screen. On tablets, this will be used as part of an app widget gallery, replacing the simple context menu presentation you see on Android 1.x and 2.x phones:

				CP -	
Widgets	App shortcuts	Wallpapers	More		
lorem ipsum clotor	Coogle maps	e e e e e e e e e e e e e e e e e e e	н 🕨 эн		
Lorem Ipsum 2 x 2	Market 3 × 3	Music 4 x 1		Picture frame 3 x 3	
					12:24 📲

Figure 21. The XOOM tablet's app widget gallery

To create the preview image itself, the Android 3.0 emulator contains a Widget Preview application that lets you run an app widget in its own container, outside of the home screen:



Figure 22. The Widget Preview application, showing a preview of the Analog Clock app widget

From here, you can take a snapshot and save it to external storage, copy it to your project's res/drawable-nodpi/ directory (indicating that there is no intrinsic density assumed for this image), and reference it in your app widget metadata via an android:previewImage attribute. We will see an example of such an attribute in the next section.

Adapter-Based App Widgets

In an activity, if you put a ListView or GridView into your layout, you will also need to hand it an Adapter, providing the actual row or cell View objects that make up the contents of those selection widgets.

In an app widget, this becomes a bit more complicated. The host of the app widget does not have any Adapter class of yours. Hence, just as we have to send the contents of the app widget's UI via a RemoteViews, we will need to provide the rows or cells via RemoteViews as well. Android, starting with API Level 11, has a RemoteViewsService and RemoteViewsFactory that you can use for this purpose. Let's take a look, in the form of the AppWidget/LoremWidget sample project, which will put a ListView of 25 nonsense words into an app widget.

The AppWidgetProvider

At its core, our AppWidgetProvider (named WidgetProvider, in a stunning display of creativity) still needs to create and configure a RemoteViews object with the app widget UI, then use updateAppWidget() to push that RemoteViews to the host via the AppWidgetManager. However, for an app widget that involves an AdapterView, like ListView, there are two more key steps:

- 1. You have to tell the RemoteViews the identity of a RemoteViewsService that will help fill the role that the Adapter would in an activity
- 2. You have to provide the RemoteViews with a "template" PendingIntent to be used when the user taps on a row or cell in the AdapterView, to replace the onListItemClick() or similar method you might have used in an activity

For example, here is WidgetProvider for our nonsense-word app widget:

```
package com.commonsware.android.appwidget.lorem;
import android.app.PendingIntent;
import android.appwidget.AppWidgetManager;
import android.appwidget.AppWidgetProvider;
import android.content.Context;
import android.content.Intent;
import android.content.ComponentName;
import android.net.Uri;
import android.widget.RemoteViews;
public class WidgetProvider extends AppWidgetProvider {
  public static String EXTRA_WORD=
    "com.commonsware.android.appwidget.lorem.WORD";
 @Override
 public void onUpdate(Context ctxt, AppWidgetManager appWidgetManager,
                       int[] appWidgetIds) {
   for (int i=0; i<appWidgetIds.length; i++) {</pre>
     Intent svcIntent=new Intent(ctxt, WidgetService.class);
      svcIntent.putExtra(AppWidgetManager.EXTRA_APPWIDGET_ID, appWidgetIds[i]);
      svcIntent.setData(Uri.parse(svcIntent.toUri(Intent.URI INTENT SCHEME)));
      RemoteViews widget=new RemoteViews(ctxt.getPackageName(),
                                        R.layout.widget);
      widget.setRemoteAdapter(appWidgetIds[i], R.id.words,
                             svcIntent);
      Intent clickIntent=new Intent(ctxt, LoremActivity.class);
      PendingIntent clickPI=PendingIntent
                             .getActivity(ctxt, 0,
                                          clickIntent,
                                          PendingIntent.FLAG_UPDATE_CURRENT);
      widget.setPendingIntentTemplate(R.id.words, clickPI);
      appWidgetManager.updateAppWidget(appWidgetIds[i], widget);
    }
    super.onUpdate(ctxt, appWidgetManager, appWidgetIds);
  }
```

The call to setRemoteAdapter() is where we point the RemoteViews to our RemoteViewsService for our AdapterView widget. The main rules for the Intent used to identify the RemoteViewsService are:

- The service must be identified by its data (Uri), so even if you create the Intent via the Context-and-Class constructor, you will need to convert that into a Uri via toUri(Intent.URI_INTENT_SCHEME) and set that as the Uri for the Intent. Why? While your application has access to your RemoteViewService Class object, the app widget host will not, and so we need something that will work across process boundaries. You could elect to add your own <intent-filter> to the RemoteViewService and use an Intent based on that, but that would make your service more publicly visible than you might want.
- Any extras that you package on the Intent such as the app widget ID in this case will be on the Intent that is delivered to the RemoteViewsService when it is invoked by the app widget host.

The call to setPendingIntentTemplate() is where we provide a PendingIntent that will be used as the template for all row or cell clicks. As we will see in a bit, the underlying Intent in the PendingIntent will have more data added to it by our RemoteViewsFactory.

In all other respects, our WidgetProvider is unremarkable compared to other app widgets. It will need to be registered in the manifest as a <provider>, as with any other app widget.

The RemoteViewsService

Android supplies a RemoteViewsService class that you will need to extend, and this class is the one you must register with the RemoteViews for an AdapterView widget. For example, here is WidgetService (once again, a highly creative name) from the LoremWidget project:

<u>}</u>

As you can see, this service is practically trivial. You have to override one method, onGetViewFactory(), which will return the RemoteViewsFactory to use for supplying rows or cells for the AdapterView. You are passed in an Intent, the one used in the setRemoteAdapter() call. Hence, if you have more than one AdapterView widget in your app widget, you could elect to have two RemoteViewsService implementations, or one that discriminates between the two widgets via something in the Intent (e.g., custom action string). In our case, we only have one AdapterView, so we create an instance of a LoremViewFactory and return it. Google demonstrates using getApplicationContext() here to supply the Context object to RemoteViewsFactory, instead of using the Service as a Context – it is unclear at this time why this is.

Another thing different about the RemoteViewsService is how it is registered in the manifest:

```
<?xml version="1.0" encoding="utf-8"?>
<manifest android:versionCode="1"
         android:versionName="1.0"
         package="com.commonsware.android.appwidget.lorem"
         xmlns:android="http://schemas.android.com/apk/res/android">
 <application android:icon="@drawable/icon"
             android:label="@string/app_name">
    <activity android:label="@string/app_name"
              android:name="LoremActivity"
              android:theme="@android:style/Theme.NoDisplay" />
    <receiver android:icon="@drawable/cw"
              android:label="@string/app_name"
              android:name="WidgetProvider">
     <intent-filter>
       <action android:name="android.appwidget.action.APPWIDGET UPDATE" />
     </intent-filter>
     <meta-data android:name="android.appwidget.provider"
                android:resource="@xml/widget_provider" />
    </receiver>
    <service android:name="WidgetService"</pre>
            android:permission="android.permission.BIND_REMOTEVIEWS" />
  </application>
/manifest>
```

Note the use of android:permission, specifying that whoever sends an Intent to WidgetService must hold the BIND_REMOTEVIEWS permission. This can only be held by the operating system. This is a security measure, so arbitrary applications cannot find out about your service and attempt to spoof being the OS and cause you to supply them with RemoteViews for the rows, as this might leak private data.

The RemoteViewsFactory

A RemoteViewsFactory interface implementation looks and feels a lot like an Adapter. In fact, one could imagine that the Android developer community might create CursorRemoteViewsFactory and ArrayRemoteViewsFactory and such to further simplify writing these classes.

For example, here is LoremViewsFactory, the one used by the LoremWidget project:

```
package com.commonsware.android.appwidget.lorem;
import android.appwidget.AppWidgetManager;
import android.content.Context;
import android.content.Intent;
import android.os.Bundle;
import android.widget.RemoteViews;
import android.widget.RemoteViewsService;
public class LoremViewsFactory implements RemoteViewsService.RemoteViewsFactory
  private static final String[] items={"lorem", "ipsum", "dolor",
                                            "sit", "amet", "consectetuer",
"adipiscing", "elit", "morbi",
                                            "vel", "ligula", "vitae",
"arcu", "aliquet", "mollis"
"etiam", "vel", "erat",
                                            "placerat", "ante",
"porttitor", "sodales",
                                             "pellentesque", "augue",
                                            "purus"};
  private Context ctxt=null;
  private int appWidgetId;
  public LoremViewsFactory(Context ctxt, Intent intent) {
      this.ctxt=ctxt;
      appWidgetId=intent.getIntExtra(AppWidgetManager.EXTRA_APPWIDGET_ID,
                                          AppWidgetManager.INVALID_APPWIDGET_ID);
```

```
@Override
public void onCreate() {
 // no-op
}
@Override
public void onDestroy() {
 // no-op
}
@Override
public int getCount() {
 return(items.length);
}
@Override
public RemoteViews getViewAt(int position) {
 RemoteViews row=new RemoteViews(ctxt.getPackageName(),
                                 R.layout.row);
 row.setTextViewText(android.R.id.text1, items[position]);
 Intent i=new Intent();
 Bundle extras=new Bundle();
 extras.putString(WidgetProvider.EXTRA WORD, items[position]);
 i.putExtras(extras);
 row.setOnClickFillInIntent(android.R.id.text1, i);
 return(row);
}
@Override
public RemoteViews getLoadingView() {
 return(null);
}
@Override
public int getViewTypeCount() {
 return(1);
}
@Override
public long getItemId(int position) {
 return(position);
}
@Override
public boolean hasStableIds() {
 return(true);
}
@Override
```

```
public void onDataSetChanged() {
    // no-op
}
```

You need to implement a handful of methods that have the same roles in a RemoteViewsFactory as they do in an Adapter, including:

- getCount()
- getViewTypeCount()
- getItemId()
- hasStableIds()

In addition, you have onCreate() and onDestroy() methods that you must implement, even if they do nothing, to satisfy the interface.

You will need to implement getLoadingView(), which will return a RemoteViews to use as a placeholder while the app widget host is getting the real contents for the app widget. If you return null, Android will use a default placeholder.

The bulk of your work will go in getViewAt(). This serves the same role as getView() does for an Adapter, in that it returns the row or cell View for a given position in your data set. However:

- You have to return a RemoteViews, instead of a View, just as you have to use RemoteViews for the main content of the app widget in your AppWidgetProvider
- There is no recycling, so you do not get a View (or RemoteViews) back to somehow repopulate, meaning you will create a new RemoteViews every time

The impact of the latter is that you do not want to put large data sets into an app widget, as scrolling may get sluggish, just as you do not want to implement an Adapter without recycling unused View objects.

In LoremViewsFactory, the getViewAt() implementation creates a RemoteViews for a custom row layout, cribbed from one in the Android SDK:

```
<TextView xmlns:android="http://schemas.android.com/apk/res/android"
android:id="@android:id/text1"
android:layout_width="match_parent"
android:layout_height="wrap_content"
android:textAppearance="?android:attr/textAppearanceLarge"
android:gravity="center_vertical"
android:paddingLeft="6dip"
android:minHeight="?android:attr/listPreferredItemHeight"
/>
```

Then, getViewAt() pours in a word from the static String[] of nonsense words into that RemoteViews for the TextView inside it. It also creates an Intent and puts the nonsense word in as an EXTRA_WORD extra, then provides that Intent to setOnClickFillInIntent(). The contents of the "fill-in" Intent are merged into the "template" PendingIntent from setPendingIntentTemplate(), and the resulting PendingIntent is what is invoked when the user taps on an item in the AdapterView. The fullyconfigured RemoteViews is then returned.

The Rest of the Story

The app widget metadata needs no changes related to Adapter-based app widget contents. However, LoremWidget does add the android:previewImage attribute:

```
<appwidget-provider xmlns:android="http://schemas.android.com/apk/res/android"
android:minWidth="146dip"
android:minHeight="146dip"
android:updatePeriodMillis="0"
android:initialLayout="@layout/widget"
android:autoAdvanceViewId="@+id/words"
android:previewImage="@drawable/preview"
/>
```

This points to the res/drawable-nodpi/preview.png file that represents a "widgetshot" of the app widget in isolation, obtained from the Widget Preview application:



Figure 23. The preview of LoremWidget

When the user taps on an item in the list, our PendingIntent is set to bring up LoremActivity. This activity has android:theme="@android:style/Theme.NoDisplay" set in the manifest, meaning that it will not have its own user interface. Rather, it will extra our EXTRA_WORD out of the Intent used to launch the activity and display it in a Toast before finishing:

```
package com.commonsware.android.appwidget.lorem;
import android.app.Activity;
import android.os.Bundle;
import android.widget.Toast;
public class LoremActivity extends Activity {
  @Override
  public void onCreate(Bundle state) {
    super.onCreate(state);
    String word=getIntent().getStringExtra(WidgetProvider.EXTRA_WORD);
    if (word==null) {
        word="We did not get a word!";
     }
     Toast.makeText(this, word, Toast.LENGTH_LONG).show();
     finish();
    }
}
```

The Results

When you compile and install the application, nothing new shows up in the home screen launcher, because we have no activity defined to respond to ACTION_MAIN and CATEGORY_HOME. This would be unusual for an application distributed through the Android Market, as users often get confused if they install something and then do not know how to start it. However, for the purposes of this example, we should be fine, as readers of programming books never get confused about such things.

However, if you bring up the app widget gallery (e.g., long-tap on the home screen of a Motorola XOOM), you will see LoremWidget there, complete with preview image. You can drag it into one of the home screen panes and position it. When done, the app widget appears as expected:



Figure 24. A XOOM home screen, showing the LoremWidget on the left

The ListView is live and can be scrolled. Tapping an entry brings up the corresponding Toast:



Figure 25. A XOOM home screen, showing the LoremWidget on the left

The above image illustrates that a Toast is not a great UI choice on a tablet, given the relative size of the Toast compared to the screen. Users will be far more likely to miss the Toast than ever before.

Being a Good Host

In addition to creating your own app widgets, it is possible to host app widgets. This is mostly aimed for those creating alternative home screen applications, so they can take advantage of the same app widget framework and all the app widgets being built for it.

This is not very well documented at this juncture, but it apparently involves the AppWidgetHost and AppWidgetHostView classes. The latter is a View and so should be able to reside in an app widget host's UI like any other ordinary widget.

Interactive Maps

You probably have learned about basic operations with Google Maps elsewhere, perhaps in *The Busy Coder's Guide to Android Development*. As you may recall, after going through a fair amount of hassle to obtain and manage an API key, you need to put a MapView in a layout used by a MapActivity. Then, between the MapView and its MapController, you can manage what gets displayed on the map and, to a lesser extent, get user input from the map. Notably, you can add overlays that display things on top of the map that are tied to geographic coordinates (GeoPoint objects), so Android can keep the overlays in sync with the map contents as the user pans and zooms.

This chapter will get into some more involved topics in the use of MapView, such as displaying pop-up panels when the user taps on overlay items.

The examples in this chapter are based on the original Maps/NooYawk example from *The Busy Coder's Guide to Android Development*. That example does two things: it displays overlay items for four New York City landmarks, and it makes a mockery of Brooklyn accents (via the unusual spelling of the project name). If you have access to *The Busy Coder's Guide to Android Development*, you may wish to review that chapter and the original example before reading further here.

We start by demonstrating how you can convert from latitude and longitude to screen coordinates on the current map. We then investigate what it takes to layer things on top of the map, such as a persistent pop-up panel instead of using a transient Toast to display something in response to a tap. Next, we look at how to have custom icons per item in an ItemizedOverlay, rather than having everything the overlay look the same. We wrap up with coverage of how to load up the contents of an ItemizedOverlay asynchronously, in case that might take a while and should not be done on the main application thread.

Get to the Point

By default, it appears that, when the user taps on one of your OverlayItem icons in an ItemizedOverlay, all you find out is which OverlayItem it is, courtesy of an index into your collection of items. However, Android does provide means to find out where that item is, both in real space and on the screen.

Getting the Latitude and Longitude

You supplied the latitude and longitude – in the form of a GeoPoint – when you created the OverlayItem in the first place. Not surprisingly, you can get that back via a getPoint() method on OverlayItem. So, in an onTap() method, you can do this to get the GeoPoint:

```
@Override
protected boolean onTap(int i) {
    OverlayItem item=getItem(i);
    GeoPoint geo=item.getPoint();
    // other good stuff here
    return(true);
}
```

Getting the Screen Position

If you wanted to find the screen coordinates for that GeoPoint, you might be tempted to find out where the map is centered (via getCenter() on MapView) and how big the map is in terms of screen size (getWidth(), getHeight() on

MapView) and geographic area (getLatitudeSpan(), getLongitudeSpan() on MapView), and do all sorts of calculations.

Good news! You do not have to do any of that.

Instead, you can get a Projection object from the MapView via getProjection(). This object can do the conversions for you, such as toPixels() to convert a GeoPoint into a screen Point for the X/Y position.

For example, take a look at the onTap() implementation from the NooYawk class in the Maps/NooYawkRedux sample project:

Here, we get the GeoPoint (as in the previous section), get the Point (via toPixels()), and use those to customize a message for use with our Toast.

Note that our Toast message has an embedded newline (n), so it is split over two lines:



Figure 26. The NooYawkRedux application, showing the Toast with GeoPoint and Point data

Not-So-Tiny Bubbles

Of course, just because somebody taps on an item in your ItemizedOverlay, nothing really happens, other than letting you know of the tap. If you want something visual to occur – like the Toast displayed in the Maps/NooYawkRedux project – you have to do it yourself. And while a Toast is easy to implement, it tends not to be terribly useful in many cases.

A more likely reaction is to pop up some sort of bubble or panel on the screen, providing more details about the item that was tapped upon. That bubble might be display-only or fully interactive, perhaps leading to another activity for information beyond what the panel can hold.

While the techniques in this section will be couched in terms of pop-up panels over a MapView, the same basic concepts can be used just about anywhere in Android.

Options for Pop-up Panels

A pop-up panel is simply a View (typically a ViewGroup with contents, like a RelativeLayout containing widgets) that appears over the MapView on demand. To make one View appear over another, you need to use a common container that supports that sort of "Z-axis" ordering. The best one for that is RelativeLayout: children later in the roster of children of the RelativeLayout will appear over top of children that are earlier in the roster. So, if you have a RelativeLayout parent, with a full-screen MapView child followed by another ViewGroup child, that latter ViewGroup will appear to float over the MapView. In fact, with the use of a translucent background, you can even see the map peeking through the ViewGroup.

Given that, here are two main strategies for implementing pop-up panels.

One approach is to have the panel be part of the activity's layout from the beginning, but use a visibility of GONE to have it not be visible. In this case, you would define the panel in the main layout XML file, set android:visibility="gone", and use setVisibility() on that panel at runtime to hide and show it. This works well, particularly if the panel itself is not changing much, just becoming visible and gone.

The other approach is to inflate the panel at runtime and dynamically add and remove it as a child of the RelativeLayout. This works well if there are many possible panels, perhaps dependent on the type of thing represented by an OverlayItem (e.g., restaurant versus hotel versus used car dealership).

In this section, we will examine the latter approach, as shown in the Maps/EvenNooerYawk sample project.

Defining a Panel Layout

The new version of NooYawk is designed to display panels when the user taps on items in the map, replacing the original Toast.

To do this, first, we need the actual content of a panel, as found in res/layout/popup.xml:

```
<?xml version="1.0" encoding="utf-8"?>
<TableLayout xmlns:android="http://schemas.android.com/apk/res/android"
  android:layout_width="match_parent"
  android:layout_height="match parent"
  android:stretchColumns="1,3"
  android:background="@drawable/popup_frame">
  <TableRow>
    <TextView
      android:text="Lat:"
      android:layout marginRight="10dip"
    />
    <TextView android:id="@+id/latitude" />
    <TextView
     android:text="Lon:"
     android:layout_marginRight="10dip"
    />
    <TextView android:id="@+id/longitude" />
  </TableRow>
  <TableRow>
    <TextView
     android:text="X:"
     android:layout_marginRight="10dip"
   />
    <TextView android:id="@+id/x" />
    <TextView
      android:text="Y:"
      android:layout_marginRight="10dip"
    />
    <TextView android:id="@+id/y"/>
  </TableRow>
</TableLayout>
```

Here, we have a TableLayout containing our four pieces of data (latitude, longitude, X, and Y), with a translucent gray background (courtesy of a nine-patch graphic image).

The intent is that we will inflate instances of this class when needed. And, as we will see, we will only need one in this example, though it is possible that other applications might need more.

Creating a PopupPanel Class

To manage our panel, NooYawk has an inner class named PopupPanel. It takes the resource ID of the layout as a parameter, so it could be used to manage several different types of panels, not just the one we are using here.

Its constructor inflates the layout file (using the map's parent – the RelativeLayout – as the basis for inflation rules) and also hooks up a click listener to a hide() method (described below):

```
PopupPanel(int layout) {
    ViewGroup parent=(ViewGroup)map.getParent();
    popup=getLayoutInflater().inflate(layout, parent, false);
    popup.setOnClickListener(new View.OnClickListener() {
        public void onClick(View v) {
            hide();
        }
    });
}
```

PopupPanel also tracks an isVisible data member, reflecting whether or not the panel is presently on the screen.

Showing and Hiding the Panel

When it comes time to show the panel, either it is already being shown, or it is not. The former would occur if the user tapped on one item in the overlay, then tapped another right away. The latter would occur, for example, for the first tap.

In either case, we need to determine where to position the panel. Having the panel obscure what was tapped upon would be poor form. So, PopupPanel will put the panel either towards the top or bottom of the map, depending on where the user tapped – if they tapped in the top half of the map, the panel will go on the bottom. Rather than have the panel abut the edges of the map directly, PopupPanel also adds some margins – this is also important for making sure the panel and the Google logo on the map do not interfere. If the panel is visible, PopupPanel calls hide() to remove it, then adds the panel's View as a child of the RelativeLayout with a RelativeLayout.LayoutParams that incorporates the aforementioned rules:

```
void show(boolean alignTop) {
 RelativeLayout.LayoutParams lp=new RelativeLayout.LayoutParams(
        RelativeLayout.LayoutParams.WRAP CONTENT,
        RelativeLayout.LayoutParams.WRAP_CONTENT
  );
 if (alignTop) {
    lp.addRule(RelativeLayout.ALIGN_PARENT_TOP);
   lp.setMargins(0, 20, 0, 0);
  }
 else {
   lp.addRule(RelativeLayout.ALIGN_PARENT_BOTTOM);
   lp.setMargins(0, 0, 0, 60);
  }
 hide();
  ((ViewGroup)map.getParent()).addView(popup, lp);
  isVisible=true;
void hide() {
```

The hide() method, in turn, removes the panel from the RelativeLayout:

```
void hide() {
    if (isVisible) {
        isVisible=false;
        ((ViewGroup)popup.getParent()).removeView(popup);
    }
}
```

PopupPanel also has a getView() method, so the overlay can get at the panel View in order to fill in the pieces of data at runtime:

```
View getView() {
    return(popup);
}
```

Tying It Into the Overlay

To use the panel, NooYawk creates an instance of one as a data member of the ItemizedOverlay class:

private PopupPanel panel=new PopupPanel(R.layout.popup);

Then, in the new onTap() method, the overlay gets the View, populates it, and shows it, indicating whether it should appear towards the top or bottom of the screen:

```
@Override
protected boolean onTap(int i) {
 OverlayItem item=getItem(i);
 GeoPoint geo=item.getPoint();
 Point pt=map.getProjection().toPixels(geo, null);
 View view=panel.getView();
  ((TextView)view.findViewById(R.id.latitude))
    .setText(String.valueOf(geo.getLatitudeE6()/1000000.0));
  ((TextView)view.findViewById(R.id.longitude))
    .setText(String.valueOf(geo.getLongitudeE6()/1000000.0));
  ((TextView)view.findViewById(R.id.x))
                         .setText(String.valueOf(pt.x));
  ((TextView)view.findViewById(R.id.y))
                         .setText(String.valueOf(pt.y));
  panel.show(pt.y*2>map.getHeight());
  return(true);
```

Here is the complete implementation of NooYawk from Maps/EvenNooerYawk, including the revised overlay class and the new PopupPanel class:

```
package com.commonsware.android.maps;
import android.app.Activity;
import android.graphics.Canvas;
import android.graphics.Point;
import android.graphics.drawable.Drawable;
import android.os.Bundle;
import android.view.KeyEvent;
import android.view.View;
import android.view.ViewGroup;
import android.widget.LinearLayout;
```

```
import android.widget.RelativeLayout;
import android.widget.TextView;
import android.widget.Toast;
import com.google.android.maps.GeoPoint;
import com.google.android.maps.ItemizedOverlay;
import com.google.android.maps.MapActivity;
import com.google.android.maps.MapController;
import com.google.android.maps.MapView;
import com.google.android.maps.MapView.LayoutParams;
import com.google.android.maps.MyLocationOverlay;
import com.google.android.maps.OverlayItem;
import java.util.ArrayList;
import java.util.List;
public class NooYawk extends MapActivity {
 private MapView map=null;
 private MyLocationOverlay me=null;
 @Override
 public void onCreate(Bundle savedInstanceState) {
    super.onCreate(savedInstanceState);
   setContentView(R.layout.main);
   map=(MapView)findViewById(R.id.map);
   map.getController().setCenter(getPoint(40.76793169992044,
                                          -73.98180484771729));
   map.getController().setZoom(17);
   map.setBuiltInZoomControls(true);
   Drawable marker=getResources().getDrawable(R.drawable.marker);
   marker.setBounds(0, 0, marker.getIntrinsicWidth(),
                           marker.getIntrinsicHeight());
   map.getOverlays().add(new SitesOverlay(marker));
   me=new MyLocationOverlay(this, map);
   map.getOverlays().add(me);
  }
 @Override
 public void onResume() {
    super.onResume();
   me.enableCompass();
  }
 @Override
 public void onPause() {
   super.onPause();
   me.disableCompass();
  }
```

```
@Override
protected boolean isRouteDisplayed() {
  return(false);
}
@Override
public boolean onKeyDown(int keyCode, KeyEvent event) {
  if (keyCode == KeyEvent.KEYCODE S) {
   map.setSatellite(!map.isSatellite());
   return(true);
  }
 else if (keyCode == KeyEvent.KEYCODE_Z) {
   map.displayZoomControls(true);
   return(true);
  }
 return(super.onKeyDown(keyCode, event));
}
private GeoPoint getPoint(double lat, double lon) {
  return(new GeoPoint((int)(lat*1000000.0),
                       (int)(lon*1000000.0)));
}
private class SitesOverlay extends ItemizedOverlay<OverlayItem> {
  private List<OverlayItem> items=new ArrayList<OverlayItem>();
  private Drawable marker=null;
 private PopupPanel panel=new PopupPanel(R.layout.popup);
  public SitesOverlay(Drawable marker) {
    super(marker);
    this.marker=marker;
    items.add(new OverlayItem(getPoint(40.748963847316034,
                                      -73.96807193756104),
                             "UN", "United Nations"));
    items.add(new OverlayItem(getPoint(40.76866299974387,
                                      -73.98268461227417),
                             "Lincoln Center",
                             "Home of Jazz at Lincoln Center"));
    items.add(new OverlayItem(getPoint(40.765136435316755,
                                      -73.97989511489868),
                             "Carnegie Hall",
            "Where you go with practice, practice, practice"));
    items.add(new OverlayItem(getPoint(40.70686417491799,
                                      -74.01572942733765),
                             "The Downtown Club",
                     "Original home of the Heisman Trophy"));
   populate();
  }
  @Override
```

```
protected OverlayItem createItem(int i) {
    return(items.get(i));
  }
  @Override
 public void draw(Canvas canvas, MapView mapView,
                   boolean shadow) {
    super.draw(canvas, mapView, shadow);
    boundCenterBottom(marker);
  }
  @Override
 protected boolean onTap(int i) {
    OverlayItem item=getItem(i);
    GeoPoint geo=item.getPoint();
    Point pt=map.getProjection().toPixels(geo, null);
    View view=panel.getView();
    ((TextView)view.findViewById(R.id.latitude))
      .setText(String.valueOf(geo.getLatitudeE6()/1000000.0));
    ((TextView)view.findViewById(R.id.longitude))
      .setText(String.valueOf(geo.getLongitudeE6()/1000000.0));
    ((TextView)view.findViewById(R.id.x))
                           .setText(String.valueOf(pt.x));
    ((TextView)view.findViewById(R.id.y))
                           .setText(String.valueOf(pt.y));
    panel.show(pt.y*2>map.getHeight());
   return(true);
  }
  @Override
 public int size() {
    return(items.size());
  }
}
class PopupPanel {
 View popup;
  boolean isVisible=false;
 PopupPanel(int layout) {
    ViewGroup parent=(ViewGroup)map.getParent();
    popup=getLayoutInflater().inflate(layout, parent, false);
    popup.setOnClickListener(new View.OnClickListener() {
      public void onClick(View v) {
        hide();
      }
    });
```

```
}
 View getView() {
    return(popup);
  }
 void show(boolean alignTop) {
    RelativeLayout.LayoutParams lp=new RelativeLayout.LayoutParams(
          RelativeLayout.LayoutParams.WRAP_CONTENT,
          RelativeLayout.LayoutParams.WRAP_CONTENT
    );
    if (alignTop) {
      lp.addRule(RelativeLayout.ALIGN_PARENT_TOP);
      lp.setMargins(0, 20, 0, 0);
    }
    else {
      lp.addRule(RelativeLayout.ALIGN_PARENT_BOTTOM);
      lp.setMargins(0, 0, 0, 60);
    }
    hide();
    ((ViewGroup)map.getParent()).addView(popup, lp);
    isVisible=true;
  }
 void hide() {
    if (isVisible) {
      isVisible=false;
      ((ViewGroup)popup.getParent()).removeView(popup);
    }
  }
}
```

The resulting panel looks like this when it is towards the bottom of the screen:

Interactive Maps



Figure 27. The EvenNooerYawk application, showing the PopupPanel towards the bottom

...and like this when it is towards the top:



Figure 28. The EvenNooerYawk application, showing the PopupPanel towards the top

Sign, Sign, Everywhere a Sign

Our examples for Manhattan have treated each of the four locations as being the same – they are all represented by the same sort of marker. That is the natural approach to creating an ItemizedOverlay, since it takes the marker Drawable as a constructor parameter.

It is not the only option, though.

Selected States

One flaw in our current one-Drawable-for-everyone approach is that you cannot tell which item was selected by the user, either by tapping on it or by using the D-pad (or trackball or whatever). A simple PNG icon will look the same as it will in every other state.

However, back in the chapter on Drawable techniques, we saw the StateListDrawable and its accompanying XML resource format. We can use one of those here, to specify a separate icon for selected and regular states.

In the Maps/ILuvNooYawk sample, we change up the icons used for our four OverlayItem objects. Specifically, in the next section, we will see how to associate a distinct Drawable for each item. Those Drawable resources will actually be StateListDrawable objects, using XML such as:

```
<selector xmlns:android="http://schemas.android.com/apk/res/android">
    <item
        android:state_selected="true"
        android:drawable="@drawable/blue_sel_marker"
        />
        <item
        android:drawable="@drawable/blue_marker"
        />
        <selector>
```

This indicates that we should use one PNG in the default state and a different PNG (one with a yellow highlight) when the OverlayItem is selected.

Per-Item Drawables

To use a different Drawable per OverlayItem, we need to create a custom OverlayItem class. Normally, you can skip this, and just use OverlayItem directly. But, OverlayItem has no means to change its Drawable used for the marker, so we have to extend it and override getMarker() to handle a custom Drawable.

Here is one possible implementation of a CustomItem class:

```
@Override
public Drawable getMarker(int stateBitset) {
   setState(marker, stateBitset);
   return(marker);
  }
}
```

This class takes the Drawable to use as a constructor parameter, holds onto it, and returns it in the getMarker() method. However, in getMarker(), we also need to call setState() – if we are using StateListDrawable resources, the call to setState() will cause the Drawable to adopt the appropriate state (e.g., selected).

Of course, we need to prep and feed a Drawable to each of the CustomItem objects. In the case of ILuvNooYawk, when our SitesOverlay creates its items, it uses a getMarker() method to access each item's Drawable:

Here, we get the Drawable resources, set its bounds (for use with hit testing on taps), and use boundCenter() to control the way the shadow falls. For icons like the original push pin used by NooYawk, boundCenterBottom() will cause the icon and its shadow to make it seem like the icon is rising up off the face of the map. For icons like ILuvNooYawk uses, boundCenter() will cause the icon and shadow to make it seem like the icon is hovering flat over top of the map.

Changing Drawables Dynamically

It is also possible to change the Drawable used by a item at runtime, beyond simply changing it from normal to selected state. For example, ILuvNooYawk

allows you to press the H key and toggle the selected item from its normal icon to a heart:

```
@Override
public boolean onKeyDown(int keyCode, KeyEvent event) {
    if (keyCode == KeyEvent.KEYCODE_S) {
        map.setSatellite(!map.isSatellite());
        return(true);
    }
    else if (keyCode == KeyEvent.KEYCODE_Z) {
        map.displayZoomControls(true);
        return(true);
    }
    else if (keyCode == KeyEvent.KEYCODE_H) {
        sites.toggleHeart();
        return(true);
    }
    return(super.onKeyDown(keyCode, event));
}
```

To make this work, our SitesOverlay needs to implement toggleHeart():

```
void toggleHeart() {
  CustomItem focus=getFocus();
  if (focus!=null) {
    focus.toggleHeart();
  }
  map.invalidate();
}
```

Here, we just find the selected item and delegate toggleHeart() to it. This, of course, assumes both that CustomItem has a toggleHeart() implementation and knows what heart to use.

So, rather than the simple CustomItem shown above, we need a more elaborate implementation:

```
class CustomItem extends OverlayItem {
   Drawable marker=null;
   boolean isHeart=false;
   Drawable heart=null;
   CustomItem(GeoPoint pt, String name, String snippet,
```

```
Drawable marker, Drawable heart) {
   super(pt, name, snippet);
   this.marker=marker;
   this.heart=heart;
   }
   @Override
   public Drawable getMarker(int stateBitset) {
      Drawable result=(isHeart ? heart : marker);
      setState(result, stateBitset);
      return(result);
   }
   void toggleHeart() {
      isHeart=!isHeart;
   }
}
```

Here, the CustomItem gets its own icon and the heart icon in the constructor, and toggleHeart() just toggles between them. The key is that we invalidate() the MapView in the SitesOverlay implementation of toggleHeart() - that causes the map, and its overlay items, to be redrawn, causing the icon Drawable to change on the screen.

This means that while we start with custom icons per item:



Figure 29. The ILuvNooYawk application, showing custom icons per item

...we can change those by clicking on an item and pressing the H key:



Figure 30. The ILuvNooYawk application, showing one item's icon toggled to a heart (and selected)

Note that getMarker() on an OverlayItem gets called very frequently – every time the map is panned or zoomed, the markers are re-requested. As such, it is important that getMarker() be as efficient as possible, particularly if you have a lot of items in your overlay.

In A New York Minute. Or Hopefully a Bit Faster.

In the case of NooYawk, we have all our data points for the overlay items up front – they are hard-wired into the code. This is not going to be the case in most applications. Instead, the application will need to load the items out of a database or a Web service.

In the case of a database, assuming a modest number of items, the difference between having the items hard-wired in code or in the database is slight. Yes, the actual implementation will be substantially different, but
you can query the database and build up your ItemizedOverlay all in one shot, when the map is slated to appear on-screen.

Where things get interesting is when you need to use a Web service or similar slow operation to get the data.

Where things get even more interesting is when you want that data to change after it was already loaded – on a timer, on user input, etc. For example, it may be that you have hundreds of thousands of data points, only a tiny fraction of which will be visible on the map at any time. If the user elects to visit a different portion of the map, you need to dump the old overlay items and grab a new set.

In either case, you can use an AsyncTask to populate your ItemizedOverlay and add it to the map once the data is ready. You can see this in Maps/NooYawkAsync, where we kick off an OverlayTask in the NooYawk implementation of onCreate():

...and then use that to load the data in the background, in this case using a sleep() call to simulate real work:

```
class OverlayTask extends AsyncTask<Void, Void, Void> {
  @Override
  public void onPreExecute() {
    if (sites!=null) {
```

```
map.getOverlays().remove(sites);
   map.invalidate();
    sites=null;
 }
}
@Override
public Void doInBackground(Void... unused) {
                             // simulated work
 SystemClock.sleep(5000);
  sites=new SitesOverlay();
  return(null);
}
@Override
public void onPostExecute(Void unused) {
 map.getOverlays().add(sites);
 map.invalidate();
}
```

As with changing an item's Drawable on the fly, you need to invalidate() the map to make sure it draws the overlay and its items.

In this case, we also hook up the R key to simulate a manual refresh of the data. This just invokes another OverlayTask, which removes the old overlay and creates a fresh one:

```
@Override
public boolean onKeyDown(int keyCode, KeyEvent event) {
   if (keyCode == KeyEvent.KEYCODE_S) {
    map.setSatellite(!map.isSatellite());
    return(true);
   }
  else if (keyCode == KeyEvent.KEYCODE Z) {
    map.displayZoomControls(true);
    return(true);
   }
  else if (keyCode == KeyEvent.KEYCODE H) {
     sites.toggleHeart();
    return(true);
  }
  else if (keyCode == KeyEvent.KEYCODE_R) {
     new OverlayTask().execute();
     return(true);
   }
```

```
return(super.onKeyDown(keyCode, event));
```

A Little Touch of Noo Yawk

As all of these examples have demonstrated, users can tap on maps, particularly on OverlayItem icons, to indicate something of interest.

Sometimes, though, what they really want to do is move one of those items.

For example:

- They might want to reposition an endpoint for a route for which you are providing turn-by-turn directions
- They might want to fine-tune a waypoint on a set of walking or cycling tour stops they are designing using your app, adjusting its location by a bit
- They might want to change the corner points on a polygon they are creating on your map, to designate postal zones or township boundaries or whatever

Courtesy of an assist from Greg Milette, we can show you how this is done, via the Maps/NooYawkTouch project.

Touch Events

Simple touch events are...well...fairly simple.

In an ItemizedOverlay, you can override the onTouchEvent() method, to be notified of touch operations. Any event you pass to the superclass will be handled as normal, such as item taps or pan-and-zoom operations. However, you can intercept events that you would prefer to handle yourself. Your onTouchEvent() method will be passed a MotionEvent object (the actual event) and the MapView. There are three touch events of relevance for repositioning items on a map, distinguished by their action (getAction() on the MotionEvent):

- 1. MotionEvent.ACTION_DOWN, when a finger is placed onto the touchscreen
- 2. MotionEvent.ACTION_MOVE, when the finger is slid across the touchscreen
- 3. MotionEvent.ACTION_UP, when the finger is lifted off of the touchscreen

The MotionEvent also gives you the screen coordinates of where the touch event occurred, via getX() and getY().

To manage a drag operation, therefore, we need to:

- Watch for an ACTION_DOWN event, identify the item that was touched, and kick off the drag
- Watch for ACTION_MOVE events while we are in "drag mode" and move the item to the new position
- Watch for an ACTION_UP event and stop the drag operation, positioning the item in its final resting place

Here is the implementation of onTouchEvent() for the NooYawkTouch version of SitesOverlay:

```
@Override
```

```
public boolean onTouchEvent(MotionEvent event, MapView mapView) {
  final int action=event.getAction();
  final int x=(int)event.getX();
  final int y=(int)event.getY();
  boolean result=false;

  if (action==MotionEvent.ACTION_DOWN) {
    for (OverlayItem item : items) {
      Point p=new Point(0,0);
      map.getProjection().toPixels(item.getPoint(), p);
      if (hitTest(item, marker, x-p.x, y-p.y)) {
        result=true;
        inDrag=item;
    }
}
```

```
items.remove(inDrag);
      populate();
      xDragTouchOffset=0;
      yDragTouchOffset=0;
      setDragImagePosition(p.x, p.y);
      dragImage.setVisibility(View.VISIBLE);
      xDragTouchOffset=x-p.x;
      yDragTouchOffset=y-p.y;
      break;
    }
  }
}
else if (action==MotionEvent.ACTION_MOVE && inDrag!=null) {
 setDragImagePosition(x, y);
 result=true;
}
else if (action==MotionEvent.ACTION_UP && inDrag!=null) {
 dragImage.setVisibility(View.GONE);
 GeoPoint pt=map.getProjection().fromPixels(x-xDragTouchOffset,
                                          y-yDragTouchOffset);
 OverlayItem toDrop=new OverlayItem(pt, inDrag.getTitle(),
                                   inDrag.getSnippet());
  items.add(toDrop);
 populate();
  inDrag=null;
  result=true;
}
return(result || super.onTouchEvent(event, mapView));
```

We will look at the three major branches of this code in the sections that follow.

Finding an Item

ItemizedOverlay offers a convenient hitTest() method, to determine if a touch event (or anything else with a screen coordinate) is "close" to a specific OverlayItem. The hitTest() method returns a simple boolean indicating if the touch event was a hit on the item. Hence, to find out if a given ACTION_DOWN event was on an item, we can simply iterate over all

items, passing each to hitTest(), and breaking out of the loop if we get a hit. If we make it through the whole loop with hitTest() returning false each time, the user tapped someplace away from any items.

The only catch is that hitTest() works in the item's frame of reference. Rather than passing a screen coordinate relative to the corner of the screen (as is returned by getX() and getY() on MotionEvent), we have to pass a coordinate relative to the item's on-screen location. Fortunately, Android provides some utility methods to assist with this as well.

So, let's take a closer look at our ACTION_DOWN handling in onTouchEvent():

```
if (action==MotionEvent.ACTION DOWN) {
 for (OverlayItem item : items) {
   Point p=new Point(0,0);
   map.getProjection().toPixels(item.getPoint(), p);
   if (hitTest(item, marker, x-p.x, y-p.y)) {
     result=true;
     inDrag=item;
     items.remove(inDrag);
     populate();
     xDragTouchOffset=0;
     vDragTouchOffset=0;
     setDragImagePosition(p.x, p.y);
     dragImage.setVisibility(View.VISIBLE);
     xDragTouchOffset=x-p.x;
     yDragTouchOffset=y-p.y;
     break;
    }
 }
```

When we get an ACTION_DOWN event, we iterate over the items in our ItemizedOverlay. For each, we determine the item's screen coordinates using the toPixels() method on a Projection, converting the latitude and longitude of the item.

To convert our touch event (x, y) coordinates to be relative to the item, we simply have to subtract the coordinates of the item from our event's

coordinates. That can then be fed into the hitTest() method, which will return true or false depending on whether this item is near the touch location.

Of course, identifying the item the user chose to drag is only the first step.

Dragging the Item

A drag-and-drop operation usually involves whatever the user is dragging to appear to move across the screen in concert with the user's finger, mouse, or other pointing device. In the case of our ItemizedOverlay, this means we want to show the steady progression of the item across the screen, so long as the user has their finger continuously sliding on the screen.

To do that, we will:

- Hide the item in the overlay when the user touches it (ACTION_DOWN)
- Draw the icon for the item above the map while the user is dragging it (ACTION_MOVE)
- Put the item back in the overlay at the right geographic coordinates when the user lifts their finger (ACTION_UP)

Hiding an overlay item is simply a matter of removing it from the ItemizedOverlay and calling populate() again:

```
result=true;
inDrag=item;
items.remove(inDrag);
populate();
```

To render our icon during the drag operation, we can add an ImageView to our layout, as a later child of the RelativeLayout holding the MapView, so the image appears to float over the map:

```
<?xml version="1.0" encoding="utf-8"?>
<RelativeLayout xmlns:android="http://schemas.android.com/apk/res/android"
android:layout_width="match_parent"
```

```
android:layout_height="match_parent">
  <com.google.android.maps.MapView android:id="@+id/map"
    android:layout_width="match_parent"
    android:layout_height="match_parent"
    android:apiKey="00yHj0k7_7vxbuQ9zwyXI4bNMJrAjYrJ9KKHgbQ"
    android:clickable="true"
    />
    <ImageView android:id="@+id/drag"
    android:layout_width="wrap_content"
    android:layout_height="wrap_content"
    android:src="@drawable/marker"
    android:visibility="gone"
    />
    </RelativeLayout>
```

Then, after we remove the item from the overlay, we take the formerlyhidden ImageView, make it visible, and position it based on where the item had been a moment ago on the screen. This requires a pair of offset values:

- We need to know where in the image the point of our push-pin is (xDragImageOffset, yDragImageOffset)
- We need to know where, relative to the image, the user put their finger (xDragTouchOffset, yDragTouchOffset)

The values for xDragImageOffset and yDragImageOffset do not change, so long as we are using the same icon. Hence, we can calculate these once, up in our SitesOverlay constructor:

```
xDragImageOffset=dragImage.getDrawable().getIntrinsicWidth()/2;
yDragImageOffset=dragImage.getDrawable().getIntrinsicHeight();
```

The values for xDragTouchOffset and yDragTouchOffset are based on where the item is and where the finger touched the screen. We wind up with:

```
xDragTouchOffset=0;
yDragTouchOffset=0;
setDragImagePosition(p.x, p.y);
dragImage.setVisibility(View.VISIBLE);
xDragTouchOffset=x-p.x;
yDragTouchOffset=y-p.y;
```

This relies on some calculations in a setDragImagePosition() method on SitesOverlay:

Whenever we receive an ACTION_MOVE while we are dragging an item, we simply reposition our ImageView to the new location, using the precomputed offsets:

```
else if (action==MotionEvent.ACTION_MOVE && inDrag!=null) {
   setDragImagePosition(x, y);
   result=true;
}
```

Finally, when the user lifts their finger and we get an ACTION_UP (while we are dragging an item), we can hide the ImageView, convert the final screen coordinate back into latitude and longitude, and put our item back in the ItemizedOverlay at that position:

Note that this sample only supports dragging via a single finger – in other words, it does not support multi-touch operations.

Creating Custom Dialogs and Preferences

Android ships with a number of dialog classes for specific circumstances, like DatePickerDialog and ProgressDialog. Similarly, Android comes with a smattering of Preference classes for your PreferenceActivity, to accept text or selections from lists and so on.

However, there is plenty of room for improvement in both areas. As such, you may find the need to create your own custom dialog or preference class. This chapter will show you how that is done.

We start off by looking at creating a custom AlertDialog, not by using AlertDialog.Builder (as shown in *The Busy Coder's Guide to Android Development*), but via a custom subclass. Then, we show how to create your own dialog-style Preference, where tapping on the preference pops up a dialog to allow the user to customize the preference value.

Your Dialog, Chocolate-Covered

For your own application, the simplest way to create a custom AlertDialog is to use AlertDialog.Builder. You do not need to create any special subclass – just call methods on the Builder, then show() the resulting dialog.

However, if you want to create a reusable AlertDialog, this may become problematic. For example, where would this code to create the custom AlertDialog reside?

So, in some cases, you may wish to extend AlertDialog and supply the dialog's contents that way, which is how TimePickerDialog and others are implemented. Unfortunately, this technique is not well documented. This section will illustrate how to create such an AlertDialog subclass, as determined by looking at how the core Android team did it for their own dialogs.

The sample code is ColorMixerDialog, a dialog wrapping around the ColorMixer widget shown in a previous chapter. The implementation of ColorMixerDialog can be found in the CWAC-ColorMixer GitHub repository, as it is part of the CommonsWare Android Components.

Using this dialog works much like using DatePickerDialog or TimePickerDialog. You create an instance of ColorMixerDialog, supplying the initial color to show and a listener object to be notified of color changes. Then, call show() on the dialog. If the user makes a change and accepts the dialog, your listener will be informed.

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Figure 31. The ColorMixerDialog

Basic AlertDialog Setup

The ColorMixerDialog class is actually delightfully short, since all of the actual color mixing is handled by the ColorMixer widget:

```
ColorMixer.OnColorChangedListener onSet) {
   super(ctxt);
   this.initialColor=initialColor;
   this.onSet=onSet;
  ParcelHelper parcel=new ParcelHelper("cwac-colormixer", ctxt);
  mixer=new ColorMixer(ctxt);
  mixer.setColor(initialColor);
  setView(mixer);
  setButton(ctxt.getText(parcel.getIdentifier("set", "string")),
             this):
  setButton2(ctxt.getText(parcel.getIdentifier("cancel", "string")),
             (DialogInterface.OnClickListener)null);
}
@Override
public void onClick(DialogInterface dialog, int which) {
  if (initialColor!=mixer.getColor()) {
     onSet.onColorChange(mixer.getColor());
   }
 }
@Override
public Bundle onSaveInstanceState() {
  Bundle state=super.onSaveInstanceState();
  state.putInt(COLOR, mixer.getColor());
  return(state);
 }
@Override
public void onRestoreInstanceState(Bundle state) {
   super.onRestoreInstanceState(state);
  mixer.setColor(state.getInt(COLOR));
}
```

We simply extend the AlertDialog class and implement a constructor of our own design. In this case, we take in three parameters:

- A Context (typically an Activity), needed for the superclass
- The initial color to use for the dialog, such as if the user is editing a color they chose before
- A ColorMixer.OnColorChangedListener object, just like ColorMixer uses, to notify the dialog creator when the color is changed

We then create a ColorMixer and call setView() to make that be the main content of the dialog. We also call setButton() and setButton2() to specify a "Set" and "Cancel" button for the dialog. The latter just dismisses the dialog, so we need no event handler. The former we route back to the ColorMixerDialog itself, which implements the DialogInterface.OnClickListener interface.

This class is part of a parcel, designed to be reused by many projects. Hence, we cannot simply reference standard resources via the R. syntax – rather, we use a ParcelHelper to find out the right resource IDs on the fly at runtime. More information on why this is needed can be found in the chapter on reusable components.

Handling Color Changes

When the user clicks the "Set" button, we want to notify the application about the color change...if the color actually changed. This is akin to DatePickerDialog and TimePickerDialog only notifying you of date or times if the user clicks Set and actually changed the values.

The ColorMixerDialog tracks the initial color via the initialColor data the method reauired member. In onClick() _ bv DialogInterface.OnClickListener – we see if the mixer has a different color and if so, we than the initialColor. call the supplied ColorMixer.OnColorChangedListener callback object:

```
@Override
public void onClick(DialogInterface dialog, int which) {
    if (initialColor!=mixer.getColor()) {
        onSet.onColorChange(mixer.getColor());
    }
}
```

State Management

Dialogs use onSaveInstanceState() and onRestoreInstanceState(), just like activities do. That way, if the screen is rotated, or if the hosting activity is

being evicted from RAM when it is not in the foreground, the dialog can save its state, then get it back later as needed.

The biggest difference with onSaveInstanceState() for a dialog is that the Bundle of state data is not passed into the method. Rather, you get the Bundle by chaining to the superclass, then adding your data to the Bundle it returned, before returning it yourself:

```
@Override
public Bundle onSaveInstanceState() {
   Bundle state=super.onSaveInstanceState();
   state.putInt(COLOR, mixer.getColor());
   return(state);
}
```

The onRestoreInstanceState() pattern is much closer to the implementation you would find in an Activity, where the Bundle with the state data to restore is passed in as a parameter:

```
@Override
public void onRestoreInstanceState(Bundle state) {
    super.onRestoreInstanceState(state);
    mixer.setColor(state.getInt(COLOR));
}
```

Preferring Your Own Preferences, Preferably

The Android Settings application, built using the Preference system, has lots of custom Preference classes. You too can create your own Preference classes, to collect things like dates, numbers, or colors. Once again, though, the process of creating such classes is not well documented. This section reviews one recipe for making a Preference – specifically, a subclass of DialogPreference – based on the implementation of other Preference classes in Android.

The result is ColorPreference, a Preference that uses the ColorMixer widget. As with the ColorMixerDialog from the previous section, the ColorPreference

is from the CommonsWare Android Components, and its source code can be found in the CWAC-ColorMixer GitHub repository.

One might think that ColorPreference, as a subclass of DialogPreference, might use ColorMixerDialog. However, that is not the way it works, as you will see.

The Constructor

A Preference is much like a custom View, in that there are a variety of constructors, some taking an AttributeSet (for the preference properties), and some taking a default style. In the case of ColorPreference, we need to get the string resources to use for the names of the buttons in the dialog box, providing them to DialogPreference via setPositiveButtonText() and setNegativeButtonText(). Since ColorPreference is part of a parcel, it uses the parcel system to look up the string resource – a custom Preference that would be just part of a project could just use getString() directly.

Here, we just implement the standard two-parameter constructor, since that is the one that is used when this preference is inflated from a preference XML file:

```
public ColorPreference(Context ctxt, AttributeSet attrs) {
    super(ctxt, attrs);
    ParcelHelper parcel=new ParcelHelper("cwac-colormixer", ctxt);
    setPositiveButtonText(ctxt.getText(parcel.getIdentifier("set", "string")));
setNegativeButtonText(ctxt.getText(parcel.getIdentifier("cancel", "string")));
}
```

Creating the View

The DialogPreference class handles the pop-up dialog that appears when the preference is clicked upon by the user. Subclasses get to provide the View that goes inside the dialog. This is handled a bit reminiscent of a CursorAdapter, in that there are two separate methods to be overridden:

- onCreateDialogView() works like newView() of CursorAdapter, returning a View that should go in the dialog
- onBindDialogView() works like bindView() of CursorAdapter, where the custom Preference is supposed to configure the View for the current preference value

In the case of ColorPreference, we use a ColorMixer for the View:

```
@Override
protected View onCreateDialogView() {
    mixer=new ColorMixer(getContext());
    return(mixer);
}
```

Then, in onBindDialogView(), we set the mixer's color to be lastColor, a private data member:

```
@Override
protected void onBindDialogView(View v) {
    super.onBindDialogView(v);
    mixer.setColor(lastColor);
}
```

We will see later in this section where lastColor comes from – for the moment, take it on faith that it holds the user's chosen color, or a default value.

Dealing with Preference Values

Of course, the whole point behind a Preference is to allow the user to set some value that the application will then use later on. Dealing with values is a bit tricky with DialogPreference, but not too bad.

Getting the Default Value

The preference XML format has an android:defaultValue attribute, which holds the default value to be used by the preference. Of course, the actual

data type of the value will differ widely – an EditTextPreference might expect a String, while ColorPreference needs a color value.

Hence, you need to implement onGetDefaultValue(). This is passed a TypedArray – similar to how a custom View uses a TypedArray for getting at its custom attributes in an XML layout file. It is also passed an index number into the array representing android:defaultValue. The custom Preference needs to return an Object representing its interpretation of the default value.

In the case of ColorPreference, we simply get an integer out of the TypedArray, representing the color value, with an overall default value of 0xFFA4C639 (a.k.a., Android green):

```
@Override
protected Object onGetDefaultValue(TypedArray a, int index) {
   return(a.getInt(index, 0xFFA4C639));
```

Setting the Initial Value

When the user clicks on the preference, the DialogPreference supplies the last-known preference value to its subclass, or the default value if this preference has not been set by the user to date.

The way this works is that the custom Preference needs to override onSetInitialValue(). This is passed in a boolean flag (restoreValue) indicating whether or not the user set the value of the preference before. It is also passed the Object returned by onGetDefaultValue(). Typically, a custom Preference will look at the flag and choose to either use the default value or load the already-set preference value.

To get the existing value, Preference defines a set of type-specific getter methods – getPersistedInt(), getPersistedString(), etc. So, ColorPreference uses getPersistedInt() to get the saved color value:

@Override

protected void onSetInitialValue(boolean restoreValue, Object defaultValue) {

```
lastColor=(restoreValue ? getPersistedInt(lastColor) : (Integer)defaultValue);
```

Here, onSetInitialValue() stores that value in lastColor – which then winds up being used by onBindDialogView() to tell the ColorMixer what color to show.

Closing the Dialog

When the user closes the dialog, it is time to persist the chosen color from the ColorMixer. This is handled by the onDialogClosed() callback method on your custom Preference:

```
@Override
protected void onDialogClosed(boolean positiveResult) {
    super.onDialogClosed(positiveResult);
    if (positiveResult) {
        if (callChangeListener(mixer.getColor())) {
            lastColor=mixer.getColor();
            persistInt(lastColor);
        }
    }
}
```

The passed-in boolean indicates if the user accepted or dismissed the dialog, so you can elect to skip saving anything if the user dismissed the dialog. The other DialogPreference implementations also call callChangeListener(), which is somewhat ill-documented. Assuming both the flag and callChangeListener() are true, the Preference should save its value to the persistent store via persistInt(), persistString(), or kin.

Using the Preference

Given all of that, using the custom Preference class in an application is almost anti-climactic. You simply add it to your preference XML, with a fully-qualified class name:

```
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```

```
android:key="favoriteColor"
android:defaultValue="0xFFA4C639"
android:title="Your Favorite Color"
android:summary="Blue. No yel-- Auuuuuuuugh!" />
</PreferenceScreen>
```

At this point, it behaves no differently than does any other Preference type. Since ColorPreference stores the value as an integer, your code would use getInt() on the SharedPreferences to retrieve the value when needed.

The user sees an ordinary preference entry in the PreferenceActivity:



Figure 32. A PreferenceActivity, showing the ColorPreference

When tapped, it brings up the mixer:

CWAC: C	🐺 📶 🕝 3:16 рм CWAC: ColorMixer			
Your Blue. N	Favorite Collo yel Auuuuuuuu	lor ^{gh!}		
\odot	Your Favori	ite Color		
	R G B			

Figure 33. The ColorMixer in a custom DialogPreference

Choosing a color and pressing the BACK button persists the color value as a preference.

Advanced Fragments and the Action Bar

The Android UI framework introduced in the "Honeycomb" release (Android 3.0) is a significant departure from the programming practices we used with Android 1.x and 2.x devices. While those apps still work, and in many cases need no changes, other apps will benefit from using the action bar and fragments, particularly with an eye towards supporting multiple screen sizes.

The assumption is that you know the basics of how the action bar and fragments work, perhaps from reading *The Busy Coder's Guide to Android Development*. This chapter, therefore, examines more interesting uses of these technologies, particularly using the Android Compatibility Library (ACL) to allow for backwards compatibility to Android 1.x and 2.x devices.

About the Sample App

The sample application – found in the Honeycomb/FeedFragments project – is somewhat more elaborate than are most samples found in this book. Hence, it is probably a good idea to get a feeling for what this application does before diving into how it leverages fragments and the action bar to achieve its ends.

Note that the explanation of the code that forms the bulk of this chapter does not go into all of the details, such as how the RSS feeds are parsed. The focus is on fragments and the action bar, less on the actual "business logic", as it were.

What the User Sees

On a Honeycomb tablet, such as a Motorola XOOM, the user is first greeted with an activity showing a list of RSS feeds down the left side of the screen, underneath a Honeycomb action bar:



Figure 34. FeedFragments initial state on a XOOM

Tapping a feed brings up another list, showing the items in that feed, with a persistent highlight on the tapped-upon feed:



Tapping on an item displays the associated Web page on the right:



Figure 36. FeedFragments showing the page for an item

Pressing the BACK button closes each added bit of UI in reverse order. So, if you press BACK from the state shown in the above screenshot, the Web

content vanishes; pressing BACK a second time gets rid of the list of items. Pressing BACK from just the list of feeds will close up the application.

In portrait mode, the same device shows the two lists side-by-side at the top and the Web content beneath it:



Figure 37. FeedFragments in portrait mode

The "Add a Feed" button on the action bar pops up a dialog for the user to enter a new feed name and URL:

💜 Feeds		Add a Feed
EFF	Add a Feed	TRONIC FRONTIER FOUNDATION
Google News	Name:	OUR WORK DEEPLINKS BLOG PRESS ROOM TAK
Slashdot		April, 2011 APRIL 12TH, 2011
Wikipedia New Pages	Add Cancel	Humble Frozenbyte Bundle: Dor in the cold Announcement by kellie
!	Do the Companies that Hold Your Provide the Companies that Hold Your ' , " ' : () ; - /	e lex 14 days you can get the newy-teleas
Tab Q W	E R T Y U	(O P 🖘
?123 A S	D F G H J	K L 🔶
<u>↑</u> Z 2	C V B N M	1 2 • •
© :-)	/	•
\sim \Box		ŧ 9:40 ₹i

Figure 38. Adding a feed to FeedFragments

The newly-added feed shows up then in the list on the left:

💜 Feeds		÷	Add
EFF	Jason Statham Is Donald Westlake's PARKER!		
Google News	TrekMovie.com Source: Frakes Was Mistaken!! Bryan Singer Never Bitchad & STAP TREK Series To		
Slashdot	Paramount!!		
	Capone's commercial-free interview		
Wikipedia New Pages	THE GREATEST MOVIE EVER SOLD's writer-director-star Morgan Spurlock!!!		
Ain't It Cool News	If I ever saw a man holdin' a bull by the tail, the Behind the Scenes Pic of		
	The Things I Do For Love!!' Hercules Says HBO's GAME OF THRONES Rules		
	All Television!! Ask The Behind the Scenes Pic of the		
	Day how come he's so good at killing people.		
	Massa Shrugs!		
	The Big Four Announce Their Fall Schedules In About 30 Days!! How's Your Fave Show Doing??		
	The Behind the Scenes Pic of the Day		

Figure 39. FeedFragments with a new feed

Tapping on the menu button in the upper-right corner shows a handful of other options:



Choosing "Switch to Nav" brings up a new activity, one where the roster of feeds appears in a Spinner in the action bar, with the default selection's items loaded on the left:



Tapping on any given feed item brings up the Web content on the right, as before, just a bit larger since we do not have the other list taking up its space.

Pressing the BACK button, or tapping on the logo in the upper-left corner, returns control to the original activity.

Choosing "Switch to Tabs" from the main activity's options menu brings up yet another activity, this time with the feeds shown in tabs in the action bar:

*	Ain't It Cool News	EFF	Google News	Slashdot	Wikipedia New Pages		0	Add a Feed	
FC Sha	khtyor Tashkömüı								
Sidney	Webster								
Gary H	ateley								
Kathar	ina Müller-Elmau								
FC Uch	kun Kara-Suu								
Fire Ul	tras 98								
David	Musil								
Brenda	an Bugler								
Vic Lav	vrence								
Cayce	Clayton								
Suprur	nenko, Vyacheslav	Ivano	vich						
$\langle \Box$:	9:48	3 🔻

Figure 42. FeedFragments in "tabs" mode

Clicking on a tab switches the list on the left, and clicking on a feed item once again brings up the Web content on the right.

From any of the activities, choosing the "Lights Out" menu item hides the action bar and dims the system bar:

FC Shakhtyor Tashkömür	
Sidney Webster	
Gary Hateley	
Katharina Müller-Elmau	
FC Uchkun Kara-Suu	
Fire Ultras 98	
David Musil	
Brendan Bugler	
Vic Lawrence	
Cayce Clayton	
Suprunenko, Vyacheslav Ivanovich	
Hane Warnar Mavar	

Figure 43. FeedFragments in lights-out mode

Five seconds later, they return to normal.

On a non-Honeycomb large-screen device, like the Samsung Galaxy Tab, we get the same basic three-pane UI as before:

.		() (🖳 📊 💶 9:50 AM	
Feeds				
EFF	Tornado Aftermath: Midwest, South Cleans Up After Series of Twisters -	VolNev	VS.COM Voi ENGLISH A Tr 1942	
Google News	Cables reveal covert US	April 18, 2011	Latest News:	
5	support for Syria's	News Progra	ms Video Learning	
	Science Monitor		News Africa North Africa	
Slashdot	LIN Collo for Coopo Eiro in	News	North Africa	
	Libva - Voice of America	USA	LINI Colle for	
Wikipadia Now Dagaa		Africa	UN Calls for	
wikipedia New Pages	Weekly Standard: Obama	East Africa	in Libya	
	Punts, But GOP Can Catch - NPR	West Africa Southern Africa	April 18, 2011	
	Japan to put on hold plans to build new nuclear plants: PM Naoto Kan -	Central Africa - North Africa Pan Africa		

Figure 44. FeedFragments on a Galaxy Tab

However:

- There is no persistent highlight in the lists
- The options menu just has an "Add Feed" item, without the ability to switch to other versions of the activity or to go into "lights out" mode

On a normal or small-screen device, the UI breaks those three panes into three separate screens, with the Web content being brought up in the default browser:



Figure 45. FeedFragments' list of feeds, on a phone

₽	* 🤝 📶 💈 09:55
Feed: EFF	
YouTube Sen	ids Users To
Copyright Sc	hool: Will Content
Owners Have	e to Go, Too?
Well-Meanin Rights" Woul Tracking	g "Privacy Bill of dn't Stop Online
Reader Priva	cy Bill Passed
Through Cali	fornia Senate
Judiciary Cor	nmittee
Sony v. Hotz	Ends With a
Whimper, I N	⁄Iean a Gag Order
Do the Comp	oanies that Hold
Your Data St	and with Users?
Humble Froz	enbyte Bundle:
Don't be left	out in the cold
EFF to San Fr	ancisco

Figure 46. FeedFragments' list of items, on a phone

Only the list-of-feeds screen has the "Add a Feed" options menu item, and you cannot switch to list or tabs mode.

The Data Model (Such As It Is and What There Is Of It)

The FeedFragments project has a Feed class that represents the data model, consisting of a display name and a URL per feed:

```
addFeed("EFF", "http://www.eff.org/rss/updates.xml");
    addFeed("Google News", "http://news.google.com/news?
pz=1&cf=all&ned=us&hl=en&output=rss");
 }
 private String name;
 private String url;
 public static Feed addFeed(String name, String url) {
   Feed result=new Feed(name, url);
   addFeed(result);
   return(result);
 }
 private static void addFeed(Feed feed) {
   FEEDS.put(feed.getKey(), feed);
  }
 public static ArrayList<Feed> getFeeds() {
   ArrayList<Feed> result=new ArrayList<Feed>(FEEDS.values());
   Collections.sort(result);
   return(result);
  }
 public static Feed getFeed(String key) {
   return(FEEDS.get(key));
  }
 private Feed(String name, String url) {
   this.name=name;
   this.url=url;
 }
 public String getKey() {
   return(toString());
  }
 public String toString() {
   return(name);
  }
 public String getUrl() {
   return(url);
  }
 public int compareTo(Feed another) {
   return(toString().compareTo(another.toString()));
  }
```

Feed holds onto a static HashMap of defined feeds, initializing a handful of them when the class is loaded. Other feeds can be defined at runtime, though since these are only stored in the HashMap, they will evaporate when the process is terminated. A more sophisticated application would use a database – or some other persistence approach – for storing the feeds. The implementation of this is left as an exercise for the reader.

Dynamic Fragments

The common theme among most of these interactions is having fragments that come and go based on user input. We go from one pane to two panes to three panes in the original activity. Also, we switch out fragments based upon the selection of tabs or action bar list items in the other two main activities. This provides a nice feel to the app – stuff comes and goes based upon context – but is clearly a bit more involved than simply having one or two of fragments always around, based solely on screen size.

Let's first focus on the original activity, where we have a list of feeds, possibly a list of items in a selected feed, and possibly the Web content for a selected item.

Fragments and Panes

Fragments can be "wired into" a layout by using the <fragment> element. These fragments will remain in the activity's UI until the activity is destroyed. So, for example, the ListFragment implementing the list of feeds can be a permanent fixture of its activity, as it is always present.

However, for fragments that come and go, your layout still needs to provide space for them. For example, you can use a FrameLayout as the container, providing a "pane" into which a fragment can appear as needed.

For example, the layout used for the original activity – FeedsActivity – can be found as the main.xml layout resource. However, there are three versions of that resource, one for large screens in landscape (res/layout-large-land/main.xml), one for large screens not in landscape (res/layout-

large/main.xml), and one for everything else (res/layout/main.xml). Only the first two contain the panes for the dynamic fragments – the latter layout is used for smaller screens where only one fragment will be visible.

The large-and-landscape version of the layout looks like this:

```
<?xml version="1.0" encoding="utf-8"?>
<LinearLayout xmlns:android="http://schemas.android.com/apk/res/android"</pre>
  android:layout width="match parent"
  android:layout_height="match_parent"
  android:orientation="horizontal"
  android:weightSum="100"
 <fragment
   class="com.commonsware.android.feedfrags.FeedsFragment"
    android:id="@+id/feeds"
    android:layout_width="0dip"
   android:layout_height="match_parent"
   android:layout_weight="30"
 />
  <FrameLayout
    android:id="@+id/second pane"
    android:layout_width="0dip"
    android:layout height="match parent"
    android:layout_weight="30"
  />
  <FrameLayout
    android:id="@+id/third_pane"
    android:layout width="0dip"
    android:layout_height="match_parent"
   android:layout_weight="40"
  />
</LinearLayout>
```

Here, we have a horizontal LinearLayout holding our original fragment (FeedsFragment), plus two FrameLayout containers for our other two fragments. The sizes are dictated on a percentage basis by using android:layout_weight, so the right-most fragment will get 40% of the screen, while the other two fragments will get 30% apiece.

For large screens not in landscape mode, we have a related layout:

```
<?xml version="1.0" encoding="utf-8"?>
<LinearLayout xmlns:android="http://schemas.android.com/apk/res/android"
android:layout_width="match_parent"
android:layout_height="match_parent"
android:orientation="vertical"
```

```
android:weightSum="100"
 <LinearLayout
   android:layout_width="match_parent"
   android:layout_height="0dip"
   android:layout weight="40"
   android:orientation="horizontal"
   android:weightSum="100"
 >
   <fragment
     class="com.commonsware.android.feedfrags.FeedsFragment"
     android:id="@+id/feeds"
     android:layout_width="0dip"
     android:layout height="match parent"
     android:layout_weight="50"
   />
   <FrameLayout
     android:id="@+id/second pane"
     android:layout width="0dip"
     android:layout_height="match_parent"
     android:layout_weight="50"
   />
 </LinearLayout>
 <FrameLayout
   android:id="@+id/third_pane"
   android:layout_width="match_parent"
   android:layout height="0dip"
   android:layout_weight="60"
 1>
</LinearLayout>
```

In this case, a vertical LinearLayout splits the screen between the lists (themselves laid out horizontally) and the content below.

Fragments and Activities

FeedsActivity is the entry point of our app, the activity that will be shown in the launcher. It will either support dynamic fragments or not, depending on whether we are loading in a layout that has panes for new fragments. If it does not, we must be on a smaller-screen device, and FeedsActivity will just show the list of feeds.

To accomplish this, we need a total of three fragments:

1. FeedsFragment, which is a ListFragment holding the list of feeds – this is the one hard-wired into our layouts used by FeedsActivity

- 2. ItemsFragment, which is a ListFragment holding the list of items in a feed
- 3. ContentFragment, which is a Fragment holding a WebView that displays the Web page associated with a feed item

ContentFragment could be a WebViewFragment, but that is only available in API Level 11, not in the ACL, at least as of the time of this writing.

However, we have a pair of base classes involved as well:

- AbstractFeedsActivity holds common behaviors between FeedsActivity (the three-pane model), FeedsNavActivity (the listbased navigation model), and FeedsTabActivity (the tabs model). We will examine those latter two activities later in this chapter.
- 2. PersistentListFragment is a base class for FeedsFragment and ItemsFragment, implementing the logic to show an "activated" highlight on tapped items by marking the list row as being checked. The notion of "activated" for a persistent highlight is covered in greater depth in *The Busy Coder's Guide to Android Development*, though we will review it briefly later in this chapter.

Running a FragmentTransaction

FeedsActivity loads its layout in onCreate(), much like any other Android activity:
<u>}</u>

Also, in onCreate(), we register FeedsActivity as being the OnFeedListener with the FeedsFragment. This listener is held onto by the FeedsFragment in a listener data member:

```
package com.commonsware.android.feedfrags;
import android.os.Bundle;
import android.view.View;
import android.widget.ArrayAdapter;
import android.widget.ListView;
public class FeedsFragment extends PersistentListFragment {
 private OnFeedListener listener=null;
 private ArrayAdapter<Feed> adapter=null;
 private Bundle state=null;
 @Override
 public void onActivityCreated(Bundle state) {
    super.onActivityCreated(state);
   this.state=state;
 }
 @Override
 public void onResume() {
    super.onResume();
   loadFeeds();
   restoreState(state);
  }
 @Override
 public void onListItemClick(ListView 1, View v, int position,
                             long id) {
    super.onListItemClick(1, v, position, id);
   if (listener!=null) {
     listener.onFeedSelected(adapter.getItem(position));
    }
  }
 public void addNewFeed(Feed feed) {
   adapter.add(feed);
  }
 private void loadFeeds() {
    adapter=new ArrayAdapter<Feed>(getActivity(), R.layout.row,
                                   Feed.getFeeds());
    setListAdapter(adapter);
```

```
public void setOnFeedListener(OnFeedListener listener) {
   this.listener=listener;
}
public interface OnFeedListener {
   void onFeedSelected(Feed feed);
}
```

}

FeedsFragment then uses this listener to let FeedsActivity know what Feed was clicked upon in the list, in onListItemClick().

FeedsActivity implements onFeedSelected(), to honor the OnFeedListener interface. There, we need to decide what to do:

```
public void onFeedSelected(Feed feed) {
    if (isThreePane) {
        addItemsFragment(feed);
    }
    else {
        Intent i=new Intent(this, ItemsActivity.class);
        i.putExtra(ItemsActivity.EXTRA_FEED_KEY, feed.getKey());
        startActivity(i);
    }
}
```

If we do not have the three-pane layout, we have no choice but to pass control to another activity – ItemsActivity – that will display the feed's items. We will look at ItemsActivity later in this chapter.

However, if we do have the three-pane layout, we pass control to an addItemsFragment(), which will invoke a FragmentTransaction:

```
public void addItemsFragment(Feed feed) {
   FragmentManager fragMgr=getSupportFragmentManager();
   ItemsFragment items=(ItemsFragment)fragMgr.findFragmentById(R.id.second_pane);
   FragmentTransaction xaction=fragMgr.beginTransaction();
   if (items==null) {
      items=new ItemsFragment(true);
      items.setOnItemListener(this);
   }
}
```

```
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```

```
xaction
.add(R.id.second_pane, items)
.setTransition(FragmentTransaction.TRANSIT_FRAGMENT_OPEN)
.addToBackStack(null)
.commit();
}
else {
ContentFragment content=
(ContentFragment)fragMgr.findFragmentById(R.id.third_pane);
if (content!=null) {
xaction.remove(content).commit();
fragMgr.popBackStack();
}
}
items.loadUrl(feed.getUrl());
}
```

And this is where the questions begin...

What is a FragmentManager Again?

The first thing we do in addItemsFragment() is get a FragmentManager.

The FragmentManager is our gateway to the fragments system. It knows about all the active fragments in our activity, plus has the ability to process FragmentTransaction requests to change the dynamic fragments in the activity.

So, for example, after getting the FragmentManager, we immediately query it via findFragmentById() to see if an ItemsFragment has already been added:

```
FragmentManager fragMgr=getSupportFragmentManager();
ItemsFragment items=(ItemsFragment)fragMgr.findFragmentById(R.id.second_pane);
```

Here, findFragmentById() is a bit of a misnomer. However, a method named findFragmentByTheIdOfTheContainerInWhichTheFragmentShouldReside() would be a trifle long. We are supplying an ID of the container in which our dynamic fragment will reside – in this case, the second_pane FrameLayout from our large-screen layouts shown in the previous section.

In a pure API Level 11 environment, any activity can call getFragmentManager(). For applications using the ACL, though, you have to inherit from a FragmentActivity class (handled for us by AbstractFeedsActivity, the parent of FeedsActivity) and you have to call getSupportFragmentManager() instead of getFragmentManager().

What is a FragmentTransaction?

A FragmentTransaction is the means by which we modify the mix of dynamic fragments in our activity. Here, "modify the mix" means:

- Add a new dynamic fragment
- Remove an existing dynamic fragment
- Replace an existing dynamic fragment with a different one
- Hide a dynamic fragment, such that is is no longer seen but is still in the FragmentManager
- Show a previously hidden fragment

FragmentTransaction follows the builder pattern: most of the methods return the FragmentTransaction itself, so you can chain a bunch of operations into one long Java statement. When the transaction is fully described, a call to commit() will cause the results to be processed by the main application thread at the next available opportunity.

For example, if our check for an ItemsFragment determines that one is not already on the screen, we need to add one. So, we create an ItemsFragment, then create a FragmentTransaction and perform a series of operations upon it:

- Add the ItemsFragment to the second_pane container
- Indicate that we want the standard "open" transition animation to be applied
- Add this transaction to the back stack (more on this below)
- Commit the transaction

```
if (items==null) {
    items=new ItemsFragment(true);
    items.setOnItemListener(this);
    xaction
        .add(R.id.second_pane, items)
        .setTransition(FragmentTransaction.TRANSIT_FRAGMENT_OPEN)
        .addToBackStack(null)
        .commit();
}
```

What Happens If An ItemsFragment Is Already Shown?

When the user fires up FeedsFragments and taps on a feed for the first time, there is no ItemsFragment, so we add one via a FragmentTransaction, as shown above.

If there already is an ItemsFragment on the screen, though, we do not need to add a second one. Nor do we need to replace the ItemsFragment with a near-identical duplicate. Instead, we can simply tell it to load the new feed via a call to loadUr1(), supplying it the URL to the feed in question. We need to call loadUr1() on a new ItemsFragment anyway, so no matter what we do in addItemsFragment(), we call loadUr1() towards the end of that method.

What's With This "Back Stack" Stuff?

When you add a dynamic fragment to the activity, you have two choices:

- Pressing the BACK button should remove that fragment
- Pressing the BACK button should not have anything to do with the fragment (and, if applied to all your dynamic fragments, means the BACK button would exit the activity)

Whether you want to have the BACK button remove dynamic fragments or not is up to you and is a UI design decision. For illustration purposes, FeedFragments has the BACK button remove dynamic fragments.

FragmentManager and your FragmentTransaction objects manage this "back stack" of fragments for you. When you invoke a FragmentTransaction, you

can specifically add it to the the back stack via addToBackStack(). Then, when the user presses BACK, if there is a dynamic fragment set up added via a FragmentTransaction that is on the back stack, the BACK button press will remove that fragment. Once the fragment back stack is depleted, the next BACK button press will perform the normal behavior for an activity, in the form of finishing it.

Where Does Our Web Content Come Into Play?

Somewhere along the line, when the user taps on an item in the ItemsFragment, we are supposed to display the Web page associated with this item.

When we create our ItemsFragment, we register the FeedsActivity as being the OnItemSelected listener via a call to setOnItemListener(). ItemsFragment holds onto that listener and later calls onItemSelected() on it when the user taps on a feed item in the list.

The implementation of onItemSelected() is on the AbstractFeedsActivity class, since all three AbstractFeedsActivity subclasses have the same behavior:

```
public void onItemSelected(RSSItem item) {
 FragmentManager fragMgr=getSupportFragmentManager();
 ContentFragment content=
   (ContentFragment)fragMgr.findFragmentById(R.id.third_pane);
 FragmentTransaction xaction=fragMgr.beginTransaction();
 if (content==null || content.isRemoving()) {
   content=new ContentFragment(item.getLink().toString());
   xaction
     .add(R.id.third pane, content)
     .setTransition(FragmentTransaction.TRANSIT FRAGMENT OPEN)
     .addToBackStack(null)
     .commit();
 }
 else {
   content.loadUrl(item.getLink().toString());
 }
```

The recipe is similar to the one where we add the ItemsFragment:

- Get a FragmentManager
- Ask the FragmentManager to find our ContentFragment in third_pane
- Create a FragmentTransaction
- If there is no ContentFragment, create one and add it to the third_pane container, plus put it on the back stack
- If there is an existing ContentFragment (i.e., the user tapped on a second item in the same ItemsFragment), load the new URL into the ContentFragment

The details of ContentFragment itself are covered later in this chapter.

The one thing that is a bit unusual is that we are not only checking to see if we have a ContentFragment, but also whether that ContentFragment is in the process of being removed. If it is being removed as part of a previous FragmentTransaction, there is no point trying to load the URL into it, as it will not be visible for long, if at all. Instead, in that case as well, we add a new ContentFragment.

What Happens If A ContentFragment Is Already Shown?

Ah, but what happens if the user had previously tapped on a feed, then tapped on a item, bringing up the ContentFragment?

In this case, when the user taps on another feed, we need to get rid of the ContentFragment. After all, that is showing the content of some item from some other feed.

To do that, we:

- Call findFragmentById() again on the FragmentManager, this time seeking the ContentFragment that may be in third_pane.
- If that fragment exists, we create a new FragmentTransaction, ask to remove it, and commit the transaction

```
ContentFragment content=
  (ContentFragment)fragMgr.findFragmentById(R.id.third_pane);
if (content!=null) {
  xaction.remove(content).commit();
  fragMgr.popBackStack();
```

Now, you might think that removing a fragment via a FragmentTransaction will also remove the transaction that created it from the back stack.

You would be mistaken.

Instead, we have to handle that ourselves, via a call to popBackStack() on FragmentManager. As the method name suggests, this pops the last transaction off of the back stack. If we have a ContentFragment live in the activity, the last transaction should have been one to put that fragment there in the first place, so we pop that transaction off the back stack, so the BACK button behaves as the user might expect.

Action Bar Navigation Options

In the FeedsActivity described above, all navigation is handled by the activity and its fragments. More specifically, our roster of feeds is shown in a ListFragment.

This is not the only option.

The Honeycomb action bar is capable of providing navigation as well, in an effort to save screen space for other things. There are two built-in navigation options in the action bar: tabs and the so-called "list" mode.

Tabs Mode

In Android 1.x and 2.x, if you wanted tabs, you usually trotted out TabHost and TabWidget.

On Android 3.x, that is being replaced by tabs managed in the action bar.

Setting up tabs is fairly straightforward, once you know the recipe:

- Call setNavigationMode(ActionBar.NAVIGATION_MODE_TABS) on the ActionBar, which you get via getActionBar()
- Call addTab() On ActionBar for each tab you want
- Probably get rid of the title to make room for more tabs via a call to setDisplayOptions() on the ActionBar

For example, FeedsTabActivity is an AbstractFeedsActivity that uses two panes in its layout instead of the original three:



Rather than hard-wire in a FeedsFragment, the feeds will be represented as individual tabs. The basics are set up in onCreate():

```
@Override
public void onCreate(Bundle savedInstanceState) {
   super.onCreate(savedInstanceState);
   setContentView(R.layout.main_nav);
   for (final Feed feed : Feed.getFeeds()) {
      addNewFeed(feed);
   }
}
```

```
ActionBar bar=getActionBar();
bar.setNavigationMode(ActionBar.NAVIGATION_MODE_TABS);
bar.setDisplayOptions(0, ActionBar.DISPLAY_SHOW_TITLE);
bar.setDisplayHomeAsUpEnabled(true);
```

The call to setDisplayHomeAsUpEnabled() will be discussed later in this chapter.

The tabs themselves are added via the addNewFeed() method:

Here, addNewFeed() calls newTab() on the ActionBar, which gives us an ActionBar.Tab object. As with FragmentTransaction, ActionBar.Tab uses the builder pattern, where the setters all return the ActionBar.Tab itself, facilitating chained method calls. Here, we are setting a text caption on the tab (though you have options for an icon or a custom View, as with TabHost), plus attaching an ActionBar.TabListener object to the tab. The listener will get control on the lifecycle of the tab:

- onTabSelected() is called when the tab is selected by the user
- onTabUnselected() is called when some other tab is selected by the user
- onTabReselected() is called, presumably, when the user taps on an already-selected tab (e.g., to refresh the tab's contents)

Our implementation ignores the latter and focuses on the first two:

```
private class TabListener implements ActionBar.TabListener {
   Feed feed=null;
```

```
TabListener(Feed feed) {
```

```
this.feed=feed:
}
public void onTabSelected(ActionBar.Tab tab,
                         android.app.FragmentTransaction unused) {
  FragmentManager fragMgr=getSupportFragmentManager();
  FragmentTransaction xaction=fragMgr.beginTransaction();
  addItems(xaction, feed);
 xaction.commit();
}
public void onTabUnselected(ActionBar.Tab tab,
                           android.app.FragmentTransaction unused) {
  FragmentManager fragMgr=getSupportFragmentManager();
  FragmentTransaction xaction=fragMgr.beginTransaction();
  removeFragments(fragMgr, xaction);
  xaction.commit();
}
public void onTabReselected(ActionBar.Tab tab,
                           android.app.FragmentTransaction xaction) {
  // NO-OP
}
```

You will notice that the declarations of these methods supply an android.app.FragmentTransaction object. The vast majority of code samples in the CommonsWare books use import statements for packages, rather than attaching the package as part of the class name. Here, though, the full android.app.FragmentTransaction name is used in these methods to highlight a very important point:

These are not the FragmentTransaction objects you are looking for.

FeedFragments is implemented using the ACL. The FragmentTransaction being used by the ACL is android.support.v4.app.FragmentTransaction, not android.app.FragmentTransaction. The problem is that the ACL cannot replace the standard Honeycomb action bar, nor its TabListener interface. Hence, Honeycomb will happily pass us an android.app.FragmentTransaction object, but we cannot use it with our ACL-based fragments.

Instead, we ignore it.

Our listener creates its own FragmentTransaction, using the ACL implementation, and adds and removes the ItemsFragment. The addItems() method is from AbstractFeedActivity:

```
protected void addItems(FragmentTransaction xaction, Feed feed) {
   ItemsFragment items=new ItemsFragment(true);
   items.setOnItemListener(this);
   items.loadUrl(feed.getUrl());
   xaction.add(R.id.second_pane, items, "items");
}
```

Conversely, removeFragments() is implemented on FeedsTabActivity itself:

Here, we see if the ItemsFragment already exists. If it does, we remove it via our FragmentTransaction, plus we check to see if the ContentFragment is already here. If it exists, we remove it too, also popping it off the back stack. This way, when the user switches tabs, they see only the new list of items, and the content – if any – is removed.

If we were using the supplied android.app.FragmentTransaction object, we would not need to commit() the transaction ourselves – the ActionBar handles that for us. Since we are creating our own ACL-style FragmentTransaction, we need to make the commit() call.

"List" Mode

Android's action bar also supports a "list navigation" option. Despite the name, the "list" is really a Spinner, hosted in the action bar. Just as you can flip between fragments using tabs when in tab navigation mode, list navigation mode has you flip between fragments based upon the selection in the Spinner.

To set this up:

- Call setNavigationMode(ActionBar.NAVIGATION_MODE_LIST) on the ActionBar to enable the list navigation mode
- Call setListNavigationCallbacks() on the ActionBar, simultaneously supplying the SpinnerAdapter to use to populate the Spinner and an ActionBar.OnNavigationListener object to be notified when there is a selection change in the Spinner

In FeedsNavActivity, these things are done as part of the onCreate() method:

The ActionBar.OnNavigationListener object needs to implement onNavigationItemSelected(), which in turn needs to update the UI to reflect the new selection:

```
private class NavListener implements ActionBar.OnNavigationListener {
    public boolean onNavigationItemSelected(int itemPosition, long itemId) {
        FragmentManager fragMgr=getSupportFragmentManager();
        FragmentTransaction xaction=fragMgr.beginTransaction();
        addItems(xaction, Feed.getFeeds().get(itemPosition));
        removeFragments(fragMgr, xaction);
        xaction.commit();
        return(true);
    }
}
```

In our case, we create a FragmentTransaction, use addItems() and removeFragments() to switch around our existing fragment mix as needed, and commit() the transaction.

Dialog Fragments

Traditional fragments go in the layout of the activity, either statically (<fragment> elements) or dynamically (FragmentTransaction).

A DialogFragment, as you might expect, is designed to display something over top of the layout of the activity, operating as a modal UI, taking over foreground input.

There are two basic approaches for implementing your own subclass of DialogFragment:

- Override onCreateView() and provide the contents to go in a plain Dialog UI
- Override onCreateDialog() and return your own instance of a Dialog, such as the results of using AlertDialog.Builder

The key is that you are not the one showing the dialog – that is managed by the system, much along the lines of "managed dialogs" in Android 1.x and 2.x.

One advantage of the former approach is that you can implement a fragment that works either as a dialog or as a regular fragment. Calling

setShowAsDialog() with a false parameter would mean that the results of onCreateView() should be shown in the DialogFragment object's container.

In this case, FeedFragments uses the latter approach, overriding onCreateDialog().

Each of our AbstractFeedActivity subclasses offers an "Add a Feed" options menu, whether as a toolbar button in the action bar or as a classic options menu item. That options menu item (R.id.add) is processed by the onOptionsItemSelected() method in AbstractFeedsActivity:

```
@Override
public boolean onOptionsItemSelected(MenuItem item) {
   switch (item.getItemId()) {
     case R.id.add:
        new AddFeedDialogFragment()
        .show(getSupportFragmentManager(), "add_feed");
     return(true);
   case R.id.lights_out:
     lightsOut();
     return(true);
   }
   return(super.onOptionsItemSelected(item));
}
```

Here, we create a new AddFeedDialogFragment and show it. You can either show it as part of a FragmentTransaction or in its own transaction automatically created by a FragmentManager – in this case, we opt for the latter. The second parameter is the tag that will be associated with this fragment, for later retrieval via findFragmentByTag() On FragmentManager.

The AddFeedDialogFragment itself is fairly simple:

```
package com.commonsware.android.feedfrags;
import android.app.AlertDialog;
import android.app.Dialog;
import android.content.DialogInterface;
import android.os.Bundle;
import android.view.LayoutInflater;
```

```
import android.view.View;
import android.widget.EditText;
import android.support.v4.app.DialogFragment;
public class AddFeedDialogFragment extends DialogFragment {
 @Override
 public Dialog onCreateDialog(Bundle savedInstanceState) {
    final View form=getActivity()
                     .getLayoutInflater()
                     .inflate(R.layout.add_feed, null);
    return(new AlertDialog.Builder(getActivity())
            .setTitle(R.string.add_feed)
            .setView(form)
            .setPositiveButton(R.string.add,
              new DialogInterface.OnClickListener() {
                public void onClick(DialogInterface dialog, int whichButton) {
                  processAdd(form);
                }
              }
            )
            .setNegativeButton(R.string.cancel, null)
            .create());
 }
 private void processAdd(View form) {
    EditText name=(EditText)form.findViewById(R.id.name);
    EditText url=(EditText)form.findViewById(R.id.url);
    Feed feed=Feed.addFeed(name.getText().toString(),
                         url.getText().toString());
    ((AbstractFeedsActivity)getActivity()).addNewFeed(feed);
 }
```

In onCreateDialog(), we inflate our layout for the dialog contents (res/layout/add_feed.xml):

```
<?xml version="1.0" encoding="utf-8"?>
<TableLayout xmlns:android="http://schemas.android.com/apk/res/android"
    android:layout_width="match_parent"
    android:layout_height="wrap_content"
    android:stretchColumns="1"
    `
    <TableRow>
        <TableRow>
        <TableRow>
        <TextView
            android:layout_marginRight="4dip"
        />
        <EditText
        android:id="@+id/name"
        android:inputType="text|textCapWords"
</pre>
```

Then, we use AlertDialog.Builder to define the dialog itself, complete with Add and Cancel buttons. Note that we do not actually show the dialog with a call to show(), but rather simply create the AlertDialog with a call to create(). It is this AlertDialog that is returned from onCreateDialog().

If the user presses the Add button, that invokes a processAdd() method which gets the values out of the EditText widgets, add a Feed object to the data model, and calls an addNewFeed() method on AbstractFeedsActivity. Another approach would be to have the activity register a listener, as we did with click events from our two ListFragment implementations.

The addNewFeed() method is abstract on AbstractFeedsActivity. The implementation in FeedsActivity delegates the event to the FeedsFragment, which simply adds the new Feed to its ArrayAdapter. The implementation in FeedsTabActivity is the addNewFeed() method we saw in an earlier section, which adds another tab to the action bar. Finally, FeedsNavActivity behaves like FeedsFragment, adding the new Feed to its ArrayAdapter for the action bar navigation Spinner.

"Lights Out"

In Android 1.x and 2.x, you could go into "full screen mode" via a theme (android:theme="@android:style/Theme.NoTitleBar.Fullscreen"). This would hide the title bar and the status bar, giving you access to everything.

That is no longer strictly possible. The reason: the system bar needs to remain visible at all times, because it is where the HOME and BACK buttons reside.

What you can do is:

- Hide the action bar
- Dim the system bar, in so-called "lights out" mode, where the icons for buttons like HOME and BACK are replaced by small dots, to be less visually distracting

For example, here is the lightsOut() method from AbstractFeedsActivity that is called whenever the "Lights Out" menu item is chosen from any of the activities:

```
private void lightsOut() {
  final View view=findViewById(R.id.second_pane);
  view.setSystemUiVisibility(View.STATUS_BAR_HIDDEN);
  getActionBar().hide();
  view.postDelayed(new Runnable() {
    public void run() {
        view.setSystemUiVisibility(View.STATUS_BAR_VISIBLE);
        getActionBar().show();
    }
    }, 5000);
}
```

We call setSystemUiVisibility() – available on any View – to "hide" the status bar, which on API Level 11 and higher will simply dim it. We also call hide() on the ActionBar. Finally, we queue up a Runnable to be executed in five seconds to reverse our actions.

Now, you may be wondering why it is safe to have this code here. The getActionBar() and setSystemUiVisibility() methods were only introduced in API Level 11, so you might think that this will crash when the AbstractFeedsActivity class is loaded on older versions of Android.

Certainly, the author was wondering why this was working, upon realizing the potential problem.

By Android 2.1 (API Level 7), the Dalvik VM became more lenient about loading in classes that might refer to non-existent methods. So long as the lightsOut() method is not invoked, we are safe. However, on Android 1.6, the application will crash when started, because AbstractFeedsActivity cannot be loaded – we get a VerifyError.

Tactically, this project sets the minSdkVersion to be 7, to restrict us to devices on which this code will work. If you really wanted to support back to Android 1.6, you could move lightsOut() to a static method on a separate class (e.g., HoneycombHelper). Then, so long as we do not attempt to reference HoneycombHelper except on API Level 11, we are safe. This technique is also demonstrated elsewhere in this book, as well as in *The Busy Coder's Guide to Android Development*.

Leveraging the Home Icon

By default, the icon in the upper left corner of the action bar will be whatever icon you specify for your activity in the manifest (via the android:icon attribute), or the icon for your application if your activity does not supply one. However, you have some options:

- You can specify a separate drawable called the logo on your <application> element via the android:logo attribute. You can then switch to using this drawable in the action bar via a call to setDisplayUseLogoEnabled() on your ActionBar.
- You can disable the icon entirely via a call to setDisplayShowHomeEnabled() on your ActionBar. Similarly, you can get rid of the title via setDisplayShowTitleEnabled().
- If the icon, when tapped, will lead the user "up" your navigation tree, you can add a northwest-pointing arrowhead via a call to setDisplayHomeAsUpEnabled() on the ActionBar. Here, "up" typically means a parent activity, if this activity is a "drill-down" into some subset of your application's functionality.

As an example of the latter, here again is onCreate() from FeedsNavActivity:

The setDisplayHomeAsUpEnabled() call is what adds the arrowhead to the icon.

When the user taps this icon, your onOptionsItemSelected() method will be called, with a MenuItem whose ID is android.R.id.home. If you chose to add the arrowhead, then your mission – should you choose to accept it – will be to send the user to the appropriate activity. This might be via a call to startActivity() on an Intent identifying the right activity and using FLAG_ACTIVITY_REORDER_TO_FRONT to bring the existing instance back to the foreground. In the case of FeedsNavActivity and FeedsTabActivity, they simply call finish(), since the "up" and the "back" activity both happen to be the same thing:

```
@Override
public boolean onOptionsItemSelected(MenuItem item) {
   switch (item.getItemId()) {
    case android.R.id.home:
      finish();
      return(true);
   }
   return(super.onOptionsItemSelected(item));
}
```

And All The Rest

Most of the FeedFragments classes were covered in the preceding sections. In this section, we will quickly examine the remainder, which provide needed functionality for the application but do not really demonstrate much in the way of new fragment/action bar techniques.

PersistentListFragment

The way we get the blue background on the list items that were tapped is via a combination of the ListView in the ListFragment being CHOICE_MODE_SINGLE and using an "activated" style. PersistentListFragment wraps up:

- Toggling the ListView into CHOICE_MODE_SINGLE when needed (i.e., we are in a multi-fragment feeds activity, as opposed only having one fragment per activity)
- Setting the clicked-upon list item as being checked
- Persisting the checked state via onSaveInstanceState(), so the state can be restored (by a restoreState() method) after a configuration change, etc.

Here is the complete implementation of PersistentListFragment:

```
@Override
public void onSaveInstanceState(Bundle state) {
  state.putInt(STATE_CHECKED,
                getListView().getCheckedItemPosition());
}
protected void restoreState(Bundle state) {
  if (state!=null) {
    int position=state.getInt(STATE_CHECKED, -1);
    if (position>-1) {
      getListView().setItemChecked(position, true);
    }
  }
}
public void enablePersistentSelection() {
 getListView().setChoiceMode(ListView.CHOICE_MODE_SINGLE);
}
```

FeedsActivity calls enablePersistentSelection() from onCreate(), if and only if it is hosting multiple fragments:

FeedsFragment and ItemsFragment inherit from PersistentListFragment, so they adopt these behaviors automatically. They also need to use a row layout that supports the "activated" style:

```
<?xml version="1.0" encoding="utf-8"?>
<TextView xmlns:android="http://schemas.android.com/apk/res/android"
android:id="@android:id/text1"
android:layout_width="match_parent"
```

```
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```

```
android:layout_height="wrap_content"
android:textAppearance="?android:attr/textAppearanceLarge"
android:gravity="center_vertical"
android:layout_marginLeft="4dip"
android:minHeight="?android:attr/listPreferredItemHeight"
style="@style/activated"
```

The activated style is defined separately for API Level 11 (res/values-v11/styles.xml):

...and for older versions (res/values/styles.xml):

```
<?xml version="1.0" encoding="utf-8"?>
<resources>
<style name="activated">
</style>
</resources>
```

FeedsFragment and ItemsFragment also need to call restoreState(). In theory, you would do this from a fragment lifecycle method like onActivityCreated(). In fact, that is precisely how this is handled in ItemsFragment, since that fragment is retained and so its ListView contents should remain intact:

```
@Override
public void onActivityCreated(Bundle state) {
   super.onActivityCreated(state);
   registerForContextMenu(getListView());
   restoreState(state);
   if (persistentSelection) {
      enablePersistentSelection();
   }
}
```

However, FeedsFragment is not loading the contents of the feeds into the ListView until onResume(), and so we cannot set the checked row item until that has been accomplished. Hence, we need to cache the instance state Bundle from onActivityCreated() and apply it in onResume():

```
private Bundle state=null;
@Override
public void onActivityCreated(Bundle state) {
    super.onActivityCreated(state);
    this.state=state;
}
@Override
public void onResume() {
    super.onResume();
    loadFeeds();
    restoreState(state);
}
```

ContentFragment

For displaying the feed's Web content in a FragmentActivity, we need a Fragment. Ideally, we would use a WebViewFragment, but that is not available in the ACL, so we need to create our own, named ContentFragment:

```
package com.commonsware.android.feedfrags;
import android.os.Bundle;
import android.view.LayoutInflater;
import android.view.View;
import android.view.ViewGroup;
import android.webkit.WebView;
import android.webkit.WebViewClient;
import android.support.v4.app.Fragment;
public class ContentFragment extends Fragment {
    private String urlToLoad=null;
    public ContentFragment() {
      this(null);
    }
    public ContentFragment(String url) {
      super();
    }
}
```

```
urlToLoad=url;
}
@Override
public View onCreateView(LayoutInflater inflater, ViewGroup container,
                         Bundle savedInstanceState) {
  return(inflater.inflate(R.layout.content_fragment, container, false));
}
@Override
public void onActivityCreated(Bundle savedInstanceState) {
  super.onActivityCreated(savedInstanceState);
 WebView browser=getBrowser();
 browser.setWebViewClient(new RedirectFixer());
  browser.getSettings().setJavaScriptEnabled(true);
 if (savedInstanceState!=null) {
   browser.restoreState(savedInstanceState);
  }
 else if (urlToLoad!=null) {
   loadUrl(urlToLoad);
  }
}
@Override
public void onSaveInstanceState(Bundle state) {
  super.onSaveInstanceState(state);
 WebView browser=getBrowser();
 if (browser!=null) {
   browser.saveState(state);
  }
}
public void loadUrl(String url) {
 getBrowser().loadUrl(url);
}
private WebView getBrowser() {
  return((WebView)(getView().findViewById(R.id.browser)));
}
private class RedirectFixer extends WebViewClient {
 public boolean shouldOverrideUrlLoading(WebView view, String url) {
   view.loadUrl(url);
    return(true);
  }
}
```

The only UI is a WebView, inflated in onCreateView() from a content_fragment layout resource:

```
<?xml version="1.0" encoding="utf-8"?>
<WebView
xmlns:android="http://schemas.android.com/apk/res/android"
android:id="@+id/browser"
android:layout_width="match_parent"
android:layout_height="match_parent"
```

There are a few curiosities of note in ContentFragment:

- Obviously, we need to tell the fragment what URL to load into the WebView. We do that in two places: a constructor parameter (for a newly-created fragment) and a loadUrl() method (to re-populate an existing fragment with new content). The constructor parameter cannot be applied immediately, as we do not have a WebView yet. And, we also have to deal with the case of a rotation or other configuration change. So, onSaveInstanceState() persists the WebView widget's state, which is restored in onActivityCreated(). If, in onActivityCreated(), we have no state but we do have a URL from the constructor, we apply it.
- The onActivityCreated() method is also where we configure the inflated WebView, enabling JavaScript and connecting it to a RedirectFixer implementation of WebViewClient, so redirects (and, unfortunately, link clicks) route back to the WebView instead of popping up a full browser activity.

ItemsActivity

If FeedFragments runs on a phone, we are not loading all the fragments into one activity. Rather, FeedsActivity will display the FeedsFragment, and an ItemsActivity will display the ItemsFragment:

```
package com.commonsware.android.feedfrags;
import android.content.Intent;
import android.os.Bundle;
import android.support.v4.app.Fragment;
import android.support.v4.app.FragmentActivity;
```

```
import org.mcsoxford.rss.RSSItem;
public class ItemsActivity extends FragmentActivity
   implements ItemsFragment.OnItemListener {
 public static final String EXTRA_FEED_KEY=
    "com.commonsware.android.feedfrags.EXTRA_FEED_KEY";
 @Override
 public void onCreate(Bundle savedInstanceState) {
   super.onCreate(savedInstanceState);
   setContentView(R.layout.items);
   ItemsFragment items
     =(ItemsFragment)getSupportFragmentManager()
                           .findFragmentById(R.id.items);
   items.setOnItemListener(this);
   String key=getIntent().getStringExtra(EXTRA FEED KEY);
   if (key!=null) {
     Feed feed=Feed.getFeed(key);
     setTitle(String.format(getString(R.string.feed_title),
                           feed.toString()));
     items.loadUrl(feed.getUrl());
   }
 }
 public void onItemSelected(RSSItem item) {
   startActivity(new Intent(Intent.ACTION_VIEW, item.getLink()));
  }
```

This loads an ItemsFragment-only layout resource named items:

```
<?xml version="1.0" encoding="utf-8"?>
<fragment xmlns:android="http://schemas.android.com/apk/res/android"
    class="com.commonsware.android.feedfrags.ItemsFragment"
    android:id="@+id/items"
    android:layout_width="match_parent"
    android:layout_height="match_parent"
/>
```

In ItemsActivity, we:

• Get the inflated ItemsFragment and register the ItemsActivity as the OnItemListener

- If we were supplied a feed's key via an Intent extra, we get the corresponding Feed object and use that to customize our title bar plus load the items into the fragment
- In onItemSelected(), we fire up the default browser on whatever URL is associated with the clicked-upon feed item

Other Bits of Goodness

There are many more things that you can accomplish using fragments and the action bar. Besides the main techniques outlined in the rest of this chapter, this section outlines a few other features that you may find useful.

Custom Navigation Mode

FeedFragments demonstrated "list" and tabs as the two built-in navigation modes implemented in the action bar via fragments. However, you can roll your own. For example, a Web browser might put the browser bar (for URLs, searching, etc.) in the action bar, while an instant messenger might go with an AutoCompleteTextView of contacts.

To do this, call setCustomView() on the ActionBar to supply a layout resource ID or a View to be added to the action bar. Also, call setOptions() on the ActionBar, OR-ing in (via the | operator) the DISPLAY_SHOW_CUSTOM flag. This combination should put your desired view between the title on the left and the toolbar buttons on the right.

It is up to you to attach listeners or whatever to respond to user input on that custom View. You can retrieve the inflated layout via getCustomView() for this purpose.

Dynamic Menus

One thing that may not be obvious when implementing the Honeycomb UI is that onCreateOptionsMenu() and onPrepareOptionsMenu() – normally only called when the MENU button is pressed – get called right away. If you

think about it, this makes sense. The action bar contents are largely populated by the options menu system, and so Android needs to invoke those methods to define the options menu before presenting the action bar to the user.

This may cause some additional complexity for you, however.

First, onPrepareOptionsMenu() is called once up front in addition to being called on every MENU press. Hopefully, your implementation of this method will work in either case. Otherwise, you may have to manage your own flag to indicate whether a particular onPrepareOptionsMenu() call is the first time (to define the action bar) or later (on a MENU press).

Also, if you decide that you need to more substantively modify the menu – beyond what you would ordinarily handle in onPrepareOptionsMenu() – there is a new invalidateOptionsMenu() method in API Level 11 on Activity that forces the menu to be recreated from scratch on the next invocation.

PART II – Advanced Media

Animating Widgets

Android is full of things that move. You can swipe left and right on the home screen to view other panels of the desktop. You can drag icons around on the home screen. You can drag down the notifications area or drag up the applications drawer. And that is just on one screen!

Of course, it would be nice to employ such animations in your own application. While this chapter will not cover full-fledged drag-and-drop, we will cover some of the basic animations and how to apply them to your existing widgets.

After an overview of the role of the animation framework, we go in-depth to animate the movement of a widget across the screen. We then look at alpha animations, for fading widgets in and out. We then see how you can get control during the lifecycle of an animation, how to control the acceleration of animations, and how to group animations together for parallel execution. Finally, we see how the same framework can now be used to control the animation for the switching of activities.

It's Not Just For Toons Anymore

Android has a package of classes (android.view.animation) dedicated to animating the movement and behavior of widgets.

They center around an Animation base class that describes what is to be done. Built-in animations exist to move a widget (TranslateAnimation), change the transparency of a widget (AlphaAnimation), revolving a widget (RotateAnimation), and resizing a widget (ScaleAnimation). There is even a way to aggregate animations together into a composite Animation called an AnimationSet. Later sections in this chapter will examine the use of several of these animations.

Given that you have an animation, to apply it, you have two main options:

- You may be using a container that supports animating its contents, such as a ViewFlipper or TextSwitcher. These are typically subclasses of ViewAnimator and let you define the "in" and "out" animations to apply. For example, with a ViewFlipper, you can specify how it flips between Views in terms of what animation is used to animate "out" the currently-visible View and what animation is used to animate "in" the replacement View. Examples of this sort of animation can be found in *The Busy Coder's Guide to Android Development*.
- You can simply tell any View to startAnimation(), given the Animation to apply to itself. This is the technique we will be seeing used in the examples in this chapter.

A Quirky Translation

Animation takes some getting used to. Frequently, it takes a fair bit of experimentation to get it all working as you wish. This is particularly true of TranslateAnimation, as not everything about it is intuitive, even to authors of Android books.

Mechanics of Translation

The simple constructor for TranslateAnimation takes four parameters describing how the widget should move: the before and after X offsets from the current position, and the before and after Y offsets from the current position. The Android documentation refers to these as fromXDelta, toXDelta, fromYDelta, and toYDelta.

In Android's pixel-space, an (X,Y) coordinate of (0,0) represents the upperleft corner of the screen. Hence, if toXDelta is greater than fromXDelta, the widget will move to the right, if toYDelta is greater than fromYDelta, the widget will move down, and so on.

Imagining a Sliding Panel

Some Android applications employ a sliding panel, one that is off-screen most of the time but can be called up by the user (e.g., via a menu) when desired. When anchored at the bottom of the screen, the effect is akin to the Android menu system, with a container that slides up from the bottom and slides down and out when being removed. However, while menus are limited to menu choices, Android's animation framework lets one create a sliding panel containing whatever widgets you might want.

One way to implement such a panel is to have a container (e.g., a LinearLayout) whose contents are absent (GONE) when the panel is closed and is present (VISIBLE) when the drawer is open. If we simply toggled setVisibility() using the aforementioned values, though, the panel would wink open and closed immediately, without any sort of animation. So, instead, we want to:

- Make the panel visible and animate it up from the bottom of the screen when we open the panel
- Animate it down to the bottom of the screen and make the panel gone when we close the panel

The Aftermath

This brings up a key point with respect to TranslateAnimation: the animation temporarily moves the widget, but if you want the widget to stay where it is when the animation is over, you have to handle that yourself. Otherwise, the widget will snap back to its original position when the animation completes.

In the case of the panel opening, we handle that via the transition from GONE to VISIBLE. Technically speaking, the panel is always "open", in that we are not, in the end, changing its position. But when the body of the panel is GONE, it takes up no space on the screen; when we make it VISIBLE, it takes up whatever space it is supposed to.

Later in this chapter, we will cover how to use animation listeners to accomplish this end for closing the panel.

Introducing SlidingPanel

With all that said, turn your attention to the Animation/SlidingPanel project and, in particular, the SlidingPanel class.

This class implements a layout that works as a panel, anchored to the bottom of the screen. A toggle() method can be called by the activity to hide or show the panel. The panel itself is a LinearLayout, so you can put whatever contents you want in there.

We use two flavors of TranslateAnimation, one for opening the panel and one for closing it.

Here is the opening animation:

Our fromXDelta and toXDelta are both 0, since we are not shifting the panel's position along the horizontal axis. Our fromYDelta is the panel's height according to its layout parameters (representing how big we want the panel to be), because we want the panel to start the animation at the bottom of the screen; our toYDelta is 0 because we want the panel to be at its "natural" open position at the end of the animation.

Conversely, here is the closing animation:

It has the same basic structure, except the Y values are reversed, since we want the panel to start open and animate to a closed position.

The result is a container that can be closed:



Figure 47. The SlidingPanel sample application, with the panel closed

...or open, in this case toggled via a menu choice in the SlidingPanelDemo activity:


Figure 48. The SlidingPanel sample application, with the panel open

Using the Animation

When setting up an animation, you also need to indicate how long the animation should take. This is done by calling setDuration() on the animation, providing the desired length of time in milliseconds.

When we are ready with the animation, we simply call startAnimation() on the SlidingPanel itself, causing it to move as specified by the TranslateAnimation instance.

Fading To Black. Or Some Other Color.

AlphaAnimation allows you to fade a widget in or out by making it less or more transparent. The greater the transparency, the more the widget appears to be "fading".

Alpha Numbers

You may be used to alpha channels, when used in #AARRGGBB color notation, or perhaps when working with alpha-capable image formats like PNG.

Similarly, AlphaAnimation allows you to change the alpha channel for an entire widget, from fully-solid to fully-transparent.

In Android, a float value of 1.0 indicates a fully-solid widget, while a value of 0.0 indicates a fully-transparent widget. Values in between, of course, represent various amounts of transparency.

Hence, it is common for an AlphaAnimation to either start at 1.0 and smoothly change the alpha to 0.0 (a fade) or vice versa.

Animations in XML

With TranslateAnimation, we showed how to construct the animation in Java source code. One can also create animation resources, which define the animations using XML. This is similar to the process for defining layouts, albeit much simpler.

For example, there is a second animation project, Animation/SlidingPanelEx, which demonstrates a panel that fades out as it is closed. In there, you will find a res/anim/ directory, which is where animation resources should reside. In there, you will find fade.xml:

```
<?xml version="1.0" encoding="utf-8"?>
<alpha xmlns:android="http://schemas.android.com/apk/res/android"
android:fromAlpha="1.0"
android:toAlpha="0.0" />
```

The name of the root element indicates the type of animation (in this case, alpha for an AlphaAnimation). The attributes specify the characteristics of the animation, in this case a fade from 1.0 to 0.0 on the alpha channel.

This XML is the same as calling new AlphaAnimation(1.0f,0.0f) in Java.

Using XML Animations

To make use of XML-defined animations, you need to inflate them, much as you might inflate a View or Menu resource. This is accomplished by using the loadAnimation() static method on the AnimationUtils class, seen here in our SlidingPanel constructor:

Here, we are loading our fade animation, given a Context. This is being put into an Animation variable, so we neither know nor care that this particular XML that we are loading defines an AlphaAnimation instead of, say, a RotateAnimation.

When It's All Said And Done

Sometimes, you need to take action when an animation completes.

For example, when we close the panel, we want to use a TranslationAnimation to slide it down from the open position to closed...then *keep* it closed. With the system used in SlidingPanel, keeping the panel closed is a matter of calling setVisibility() on the contents with GONE.

However, you cannot do that when the animation begins; otherwise, the panel is gone by the time you try to animate its motion.

Instead, you need to arrange to have it be gone when the animation ends. To do that, you use a animation listener.

An animation listener is simply an instance of the AnimationListener interface, provided to an animation via setAnimationListener(). The listener will be invoked when the animation starts, ends, or repeats (the latter courtesy of CycleInterpolator, discussed later in this chapter). You can put logic in the onAnimationEnd() callback in the listener to take action when the animation finishes.

For example, here is the AnimationListener for SlidingPanel:

```
Animation.AnimationListener collapseListener=new Animation.AnimationListener() {
    public void onAnimationEnd(Animation animation) {
        setVisibility(View.GONE);
    }
    public void onAnimationRepeat(Animation animation) {
        // not needed
    }
    public void onAnimationStart(Animation animation) {
        // not needed
    }
};
```

All we do is set the ImageButton's image to be the upward-pointing arrow and setting our content's visibility to be GONE, thereby closing the panel.

Loose Fill

You will see attributes, available on Animation, named android:fillEnabled and android:fillAfter. Reading those, you may think that you can dispense with the AnimationListener and just use those to arrange to have your widget wind up being "permanently" in the state represented by the end of the animation. All you would have to do is set each of those to true in your animation XML (or the equivalent in Java), and you would be set.

At least for TranslateAnimation, you would be mistaken.

It actually will look like it works – the animated widgets will be drawn in their new location. However, if those widgets are clickable, the will not be clicked in their new location, but rather in their old one. This, of course, is not terribly useful.

Hence, even though it is annoying, you will want to use the AnimationListener techniques described in this chapter.

Hit The Accelerator

In addition to the Animation classes themselves, Android also provides a set of Interpolator classes. These provide instructions for how an animation is supposed to behave during its operating period.

For example, the AccelerateInterpolator indicates that, during the duration of an animation, the rate of change of the animation should begin slowly and accelerate until the end. When applied to a TranslateAnimation, for example, the sliding movement will start out slowly and pick up speed until the movement is complete.

There are several implementations of the Interpolator interface besides AccelerateInterpolator, including:

- AccelerateDecelerateInterpolator, which starts slowly, picks up speed in the middle, and slows down again at the end
- DecelerateInterpolator, which starts quickly and slows down towards the end
- LinearInterpolator, the default, which indicates the animation should proceed smoothly from start to finish
- CycleInterpolator, which repeats an animation for a number of cycles, following the AccelerateDecelerateInterpolator pattern (slow, then fast, then slow)

To apply an interpolator to an animation, simply call setInterpolator() on the animation with the Interpolator instance, such as the following line from SlidingPanel:

anim.setInterpolator(new AccelerateInterpolator(1.0f));

You can also specify one of the stock interpolators via the android:interpolator attribute in your animation XML file.

Android 1.6 added some new interpolators. Notable are BounceInterpolator (which gives a bouncing effect as the animation nears the end) and OvershootInterpolator (which goes beyond the end of the animation range, then returns to the endpoint).

Animate. Set. Match.

For the Animation/SlidingPanelEx project, though, we want the panel to slide open, but also fade when it slides closed. This implies two animations working at the same time (a fade and a slide). Android supports this via the AnimationSet class.

An AnimationSet is itself an Animation implementation. Following the composite design pattern, it simply cascades the major Animation events to each of the animations in the set.

To create a set, just create an AnimationSet instance, add the animations, and configure the set. For example, here is the logic from the SlidingPanel implementation in Animation/SlidingPanelEx:

```
public void toggle() {
  TranslateAnimation anim=null;
  AnimationSet set=new AnimationSet(true);
  isOpen=!isOpen;
  if (isOpen) {
    setVisibility(View.VISIBLE);
    anim=new TranslateAnimation(0.0f, 0.0f,
    getHeight(),
```

```
0.0f);
}
else {
    anim=new TranslateAnimation(0.0f, 0.0f, 0.0f,
        getHeight());
    anim.setAnimationListener(collapseListener);
    set.addAnimation(fadeOut);
}
set.setDuration(speed);
set.setInterpolator(new AccelerateInterpolator(1.0f));
startAnimation(set);
```

If the panel is to be opened, we make the contents visible (so we can animate the motion upwards), and create a TranslateAnimation for the upward movement. If the panel is to be closed, we create a TranslateAnimation for the downward movement, but also add a pre-defined AlphaAnimation (fadeOut) to an AnimationSet. In either case, we add the TranslateAnimation to the set, give the set a duration and interpolator, and run the animation.

Active Animations

Starting with Android 1.5, users could indicate if they wanted to have interactivity animations: a slide-in/slide-out effect as they switched from activity to activity. However, at that time, they could merely toggle this setting on or off, and applications had no control over these animations whatsoever.

Starting in Android 2.0, though, developers have a bit more control. Specifically:

 Developers can call overridePendingTransition() on an Activity, typically after calling startActivity() to launch another activity or finish() to close up the current activity. The overridePendingTransition() indicates an in/out animation pair that should be applied as control passes from this activity to the next one, whether that one is being started (startActivity()) or is the one previous on the stack (finish()).

• Developers can start an activity via an Intent containing the FLAG_ACTIVITY_NO_ANIMATION flag. As the name suggests, this flag requests that animations on the transitions involving this activity be suppressed.

These are prioritized as follows:

- 1. Any call to overridePendingTransition() is always taken into account
- 2. Lacking that, FLAG_ACTIVITY_NO_ANIMATION will be taken into account
- 3. In the normal case, where neither of the two are used, whatever the user's preference, via the Settings application, is applied

Using the Camera

Most Android devices will have a camera, since they are fairly commonplace on mobile devices these days. You, as an Android developer, can take advantage of the camera, for everything from snapping tourist photos to scanning barcodes. For simple operations, the APIs needed to use the camera are fairly straight-forward, requiring a bit of boilerplate code plus your own unique application logic.

What is a problem is using the camera with the emulator. The emulator does not emulate a camera, nor is there a convenient way to pretend there are pictures via DDMS or similar tools. For the purposes of this chapter, it is assumed you have access to an actual Android-powered hardware device and can use it for development purposes.

First, we examine how to set up an activity showing a preview of the camera's output, much like the LCD viewfinder on a dedicated digital camera. We then extend that example to actually take and store a picture. After a brief discussion of auto-focus, we wrap with material on other parameters you may be able to set to control the actual picture being taken.

Sneaking a Peek

First, it is fairly common for a camera-using application to support a preview mode, to show the user what the camera sees. This will help make

sure the camera is lined up on the subject properly, whether there is sufficient lighting, etc.

So, let us take a look at how to create an application that shows such a live preview. The code snippets shown in this section are pulled from the Camera/Preview sample project.

The Permission and the Feature

First, you need permission to use the camera. That way, when end users install your application off of the Internet, they will be notified that you intend to use the camera, so they can determine if they deem that appropriate for your application.

You simply need the CAMERA permission in your AndroidManifest.xml file, along with whatever other permissions your application logic might require. Here is the manifest from the Camera/Preview sample project:

```
<?xml version="1.0" encoding="utf-8"?>
<manifest android:versionCode="1"
         android:versionName="1.0"
         package="com.commonsware.android.camera"
         xmlns:android="http://schemas.android.com/apk/res/android">
 <uses-sdk android:minSdkVersion="5"
           android:targetSdkVersion="6" />
  <supports-screens android:largeScreens="false"
                    android:normalScreens="true"
                    android:smallScreens="false" />
 <uses-feature android:name="android.hardware.camera" />
 <uses-permission android:name="android.permission.CAMERA" />
 <application android:icon="@drawable/cw"
              android:label="@string/app name">
    <activity android:configChanges="keyboardHidden|orientation"</pre>
              android:label="@string/app_name"
              android:name=".PreviewDemo'
              android:screenOrientation="landscape"
              android:theme="@android:style/Theme.NoTitleBar.Fullscreen">
     <intent-filter>
        <action android:name="android.intent.action.MAIN" />
        <category android:name="android.intent.category.LAUNCHER" />
     </intent-filter>
    </activity>
```

The manifest also contains a <uses-feature> element, declaring that we need a camera on the device. This will not block installation of this application on a camera-less device, but it will cause the Android Market to filter out this app when viewed on camera-less devices. Other markets could conceivably do the same thing.

Also note a few other things about our PreviewDemo activity as registered in this manifest:

- We use android:configChanges = "keyboardHidden|orientation" to ensure we control what happens when the keyboard is hidden or exposed, rather than have Android rotate the screen for us
- We use android:screenOrientation = "landscape" to tell Android we are always in landscape mode. This is necessary because of a bit of a bug in the camera preview logic, such that it works best in landscape mode.
- We use android:theme = "@android:style/Theme.NoTitleBar.Fullscreen" to get rid of the title bar and status bar, so the preview is truly full-screen (e.g., 480x320 on an HVGA device).

The SurfaceView

Next, you need a layout supporting a SurfaceView. SurfaceView is used as a raw canvas for displaying all sorts of graphics outside of the realm of your ordinary widgets. In this case, Android knows how to display a live look at what the camera sees on a SurfaceView, to serve as a preview pane.

For example, here is a full-screen SurfaceView layout as used by the PreviewDemo activity:

```
<?xml version="1.0" encoding="utf-8"?>
<android.view.SurfaceView
xmlns:android="http://schemas.android.com/apk/res/android"
android:id="@+id/preview"
```

```
android:layout_width="match_parent"
android:layout_height="match_parent"
```

```
</android.view.SurfaceView>
```

The Camera

The biggest step, of course, is telling Android to use the camera service and tie a camera to the SurfaceView to show the actual preview. We will also eventually need the camera service to take real pictures, as will be described in the next section.

There are three major components to getting picture preview working:

- 1. The SurfaceView, as defined in our layout
- 2. A SurfaceHolder, which is a means of controlling behavior of the SurfaceView, such as its size, or being notified when the surface changes, such as when the preview is started
- 3. A Camera, obtained from the open() static method on the Camera class

To wire these together, we first need to:

- Get the SurfaceHolder for our SurfaceView via getHolder()
- Register a SurfaceHolder.Callback with the SurfaceHolder, so we are notified when the SurfaceView is ready or changes
- Tell the SurfaceView (via the SurfaceHolder) that it has the SURFACE_TYPE_PUSH_BUFFERS type (setType()) - this indicates something in the system will be updating the SurfaceView and providing the bitmap data to display

This gives us a configured SurfaceView (shown below), but we still need to tie in the Camera.

```
@Override
public void onCreate(Bundle savedInstanceState) {
   super.onCreate(savedInstanceState);
   setContentView(R.layout.main);
```

```
preview=(SurfaceView)findViewById(R.id.preview);
previewHolder=preview.getHolder();
previewHolder.addCallback(surfaceCallback);
previewHolder.setType(SurfaceHolder.SURFACE_TYPE_PUSH_BUFFERS);
```

We get our Camera in onResume(), using the original Camera open() method to retrieve the default camera for the device:

```
@Override
public void onResume() {
    super.onResume();
    camera=Camera.open();
}
```

A Camera object has a setPreviewDisplay() method that takes a SurfaceHolder and, as you might expect, arranges for the camera preview to be displayed on the associated SurfaceView. However, the SurfaceView may not be ready immediately after being changed into SURFACE_TYPE_PUSH_BUFFERS mode. So, while the SurfaceView setup work could be done in onCreate(), you should wait until the SurfaceHolder.Callback has its surfaceCreated() method called, then register the Camera:

```
public void surfaceCreated(SurfaceHolder holder) {
  try {
    camera.setPreviewDisplay(previewHolder);
    }
    catch (Throwable t) {
    Log.e("PreviewDemo-surfaceCallback",
        "Exception in setPreviewDisplay()", t);
    Toast
    .makeText(PreviewDemo.this, t.getMessage(), Toast.LENGTH_LONG)
    .show();
    }
```

Next, once the SurfaceView is set up and sized by Android, we need to pass configuration data to the Camera, so it knows how big to draw the preview. Since the preview pane is not a fixed size – it might vary based on hardware – we cannot safely pre-determine the size. It is simplest to wait for our SurfaceHolder.Callback to have its surfaceChanged() method called, when we are told the size of the surface.

At this point, though, we have a problem. The SurfaceView may be of an arbitrary size, depending on the device. However, not all devices support arbitrary-sized previews. Hence, we need to do the following:

- 1. Get a Camera.Parameters object, by calling getParameters() on the Camera
- Call getSupportedPreviewSizes() to determine what preview sizes are available
- 3. Choose one of those sizes...somehow...

In our case, the determination of which preview size to use is implemented in a getBestPreviewSize() method:

```
private Camera.Size getBestPreviewSize(int width, int height,
                                      Camera.Parameters parameters) {
 Camera.Size result=null;
 for (Camera.Size size : parameters.getSupportedPreviewSizes()) {
    if (size.width<=width && size.height<=height) {</pre>
      if (result==null) {
        result=size;
      }
      else {
        int resultArea=result.width*result.height;
        int newArea=size.width*size.height;
        if (newArea>resultArea) {
          result=size;
        }
      }
    }
  }
  return(result);
```

Here, we use a fairly crude algorithm: we choose the largest preview size that is smaller than our actual SurfaceView, where "largest" is the one that has the largest area.

Then, we can pour that information into a Camera.Parameters object, update the Camera with those parameters, and have the Camera show the preview images via startPreview():

Eventually, the preview needs to stop. More importantly, we need to let go of the Camera in onPause(), so while our activity is not in the foreground, we do not tie up the camera, preventing other applications from using it. So, we keep track of whether preview is turned on yet via the inPreview flag, and in onPause() we stop the preview (if needed), release() the Camera, set the data member to null (to incrementally increase the speed of garbage collection), and reset the inPreview flag to false:

```
@Override
public void onPause() {
    if (inPreview) {
        camera.stopPreview();
    }
    camera.release();
    camera=null;
    inPreview=false;
    super.onPause();
}
```

If you compile and run the Camera/Preview sample application, you will see, on-screen, what the camera sees.

Image Is Everything

Showing the preview imagery is nice and all, but it is probably more important to actually take a picture now and again. The previews show the user what the camera sees, but we still need to let our application know what the camera sees at particular points in time.

In principle, this is easy. Where things get a bit complicated comes with ensuring the application (and device as a whole) has decent performance, not slowing down to process the pictures. Also, to make this even more fun, we will use the front-facing camera if one is available; otherwise, we will use the device's default camera.

The code snippets shown in this section are pulled from the Camera/Picture sample project, which builds upon the Camera/Preview sample shown in the previous section.

Asking for a Camera. Maybe.

We can include a second <uses-feature> element in our manifest, asking not only for a camera, but specifically for a front-facing camera:

```
<?xml version="1.0" encoding="utf-8"?>
<manifest android:versionCode="1"
          android:versionName="1.0"
          package="com.commonsware.android.camera"
          xmlns:android="http://schemas.android.com/apk/res/android">
 <uses-sdk android:minSdkVersion="5"
           android:targetSdkVersion="6" />
  <supports-screens android:largeScreens="false"
                    android:normalScreens="true"
                    android:smallScreens="false" />
 <uses-feature android:name="android.hardware.camera" />
  <uses-feature android:name="android.hardware.camera.front"</pre>
                android:required="false" />
 <uses-permission android:name="android.permission.CAMERA" />
 <uses-permission android:name="android.permission.WRITE EXTERNAL STORAGE" />
 <application android:icon="@drawable/cw"
              android:label="@string/app_name">
    <activity android:configChanges="keyboardHidden|orientation"</pre>
              android:label="@string/app name"
              android:name=".PictureDemo"
              android:screenOrientation="landscape"
              android:theme="@android:style/Theme.NoTitleBar.Fullscreen">
     <intent-filter>
        <action android:name="android.intent.action.MAIN" />
        <category android:name="android.intent.category.LAUNCHER" />
     </intent-filter>
    </activity>
 </application>
 /manifest>
```

However, since we do not absolutely need a front-facing camera, we use android:required="false". Again, <uses-feature> is mostly a hint for the Android Market and related tools.

Getting the Camera

If we want to use the front-facing camera, we have three possible scenarios:

- 1. We are on an Android 2.3+ device that has a front-facing camera
- 2. We are on an Android 2.3+ device that does not have a front-facing camera
- 3. We are on a device running Android 2.2 or older, before Android had standardized ways to access the front-facing camera

While in principle we could use some manufacturer-specific techniques to get to the front-facing camera on Android 2.1 or 2.2, that is beyond the scope of this chapter, and should be a moot point by the end of 2011 as those older Android versions start to fade into the distance.

Since we are writing version-specific code, we need to take steps to make sure our Android 2.3 logic is not run on, say, an Android 2.2 device. Hence, we are going to use the version-specific wrapper pattern.

The CameraFinder

We need an abstraction around finding a suitable camera, given hardware characteristics and OS version. The version-specific wrapper pattern calls for an abstract class, for which we will create concrete subclasses for each OS version we need to support. The abstract class should also provide access to an appropriate instance of the version-specific concrete subclass, so our main code can work purely with the abstraction.

With that in mind, take a peek at CameraFinder:

package com.commonsware.android.camera;

```
import android.hardware.Camera;
import android.os.Build;
abstract class CameraFinder {
   abstract Camera open();
   static CameraFinder INSTANCE=buildFinder();
   private static CameraFinder buildFinder() {
     if (Build.VERSION.SDK_INT>=Build.VERSION_CODES.GINGERBREAD) {
       return(new FFCFinder());
     }
     return(new ClassicFinder());
   }
}
```

The public interface to CameraFinder is pretty simple: a single open() method, that should return a suitable Camera object. To get the right finder, though, we use an INSTANCE singleton, initialized when CameraFinder is loaded into the virtual machine. At that point, we see if we are on GINGERBREAD or higher versions of Android, and use that to choose an appropriate subclass.

Now, our onResume() method can use CameraFinder instead of directly opening a Camera:

```
@Override
public void onResume() {
   super.onResume();
   camera=CameraFinder.INSTANCE.open();
}
```

The rest of our application code can be blissfully ignorant about where this Camera comes from, courtesy of Android's abstracted camera interface.

Of course, we need to implement those two concrete subclasses, FFCFinder (for finding a front-facing camera on Android 2.3 or higher) and ClassicFinder (for older versions of Android).

The ClassicFinder

Since older versions of Android had no standard support for front-facing cameras, we can simply have ClassicFinder delegate the open() method to the Camera class:

```
package com.commonsware.android.camera;
import android.hardware.Camera;
class ClassicFinder extends CameraFinder {
   Camera open() {
    return(Camera.open());
   }
}
```

If we wanted to support manufacturer-specific ways to access a front-facing camera, and if those mechanisms would create a Camera object, we could implement that logic here as well, in all likelihood.

The FFCFinder

One would have hoped that Android 2.3 would have a convenience method on Camera, such as openFrontFacing(), to get a Camera object on the frontfacing camera if it exists on the device.

Alas, such a method was not supplied.

Instead, we have to iterate over all cameras on the device (getNumberOfCameras()), get the Camera.CameraInfo for each (getCameraInfo()), and see if the camera index in question points to a front-facing camera:

```
package com.commonsware.android.camera;
import android.hardware.Camera;
class FFCFinder extends CameraFinder {
   Camera open() {
    Camera.CameraInfo info=new Camera.CameraInfo();
    for (int i=0;i<Camera.getNumberOfCameras();i++) {</pre>
```

```
Camera.getCameraInfo(i, info);
if (info.facing==Camera.CameraInfo.CAMERA_FACING_FRONT) {
    return(Camera.open(i));
    }
}
return(Camera.open());
}
```

If it does, we open that specific camera via the open() method taking a camera index as a parameter. If we make it through the full list without finding a front-facing camera, we shrug our virtual shoulders and default to the default camera via open().

Asking for a Format

We need to tell the Camera what sort of picture to take when we decide to take a picture. That is merely a matter of calling setPictureFormat() on the Camera.Parameters object when we configure our Camera, using the value JPEG to indicate that we want a simple JPEG image:

Taking a Picture

Somehow, your application will need to indicate when a picture should be taken. That could be via widgets on the UI, though in our samples here, the preview is full-screen.

An alternative is to use the camera hardware button. Like every hardware button other than the HOME button, we can find out when the camera button is clicked via onKeyDown():

```
@Override
public boolean onKeyDown(int keyCode, KeyEvent event) {
    if (keyCode==KeyEvent.KEYCODE_CAMERA ||
        keyCode==KeyEvent.KEYCODE_SEARCH) {
        if (inPreview) {
            camera.takePicture(null, null, photoCallback);
            inPreview=false;
        }
        return(true);
    }
```

Since many devices do not have a hardware camera button, we also watch for KEYCODE_SEARCH for the dedicated search key, which is available on all compatible Android phones (but not tablets) as of the time of this writing. You could similarly watch for a D-pad center button click or whatever you wish. Given that tablets will not necessarily have hardware buttons, an onscreen button is a better choice.

Once it is time to take a picture, all you need to do is tell the Camera to takePicture(). The takePicture() method takes three parameters, all callback-style objects:

- 1. A "shutter" callback (Camera.ShutterCallback), which is notified when the picture has been captured by the hardware but the data is not yet available – you might use this to play a "camera click" sound
- 2. Callbacks to receive the image data, either in raw format or JPEG format

Since we requested JPEG output, and because we do not want to fuss with a shutter click, PictureDemo only passes in the third parameter to takePicture(), as is shown in the above listing.

The Camera.PictureCallback (photoCallback) needs to implement onPictureTaken(), which provides the picture data as a byte[], plus the Camera object that took the picture. At this point, it is safe to start up the preview again.

Plus, of course, it would be nice to do something with that byte array.

The catch is that the byte array is going to be large. Writing that to flash, or sending it over the network, or doing just about anything with the data, will be slow. Slow is fine...so long as it is not on the UI thread.

That means we need to do a little more work.

Using AsyncTask

In theory, we could just fork a background thread to save off the image data or do whatever it is we wanted done with it. However, we could wind up with several such threads, particularly if we are sending the image over the Internet and do not have a fast connection to our destination server.

Android 1.5 offers a work queue model, in the form of AsyncTask. AsyncTask manages a thread pool and work queue – all we need to do is hand it the work to be done.

So, we can create an AsyncTask implementation, called SavePhotoTask, as follows:

```
if (photo.exists()) {
    photo.delete();
}

try {
    FileOutputStream fos=new FileOutputStream(photo.getPath());
    fos.write(jpeg[0]);
    fos.close();
    catch (java.io.IOException e) {
        Log.e("PictureDemo", "Exception in photoCallback", e);
    }
    return(null);
}
```

Our doInBackground() implementation gets the byte array we received from Android. The byte array is simply the JPEG itself, so the data could be written to a file, transformed, sent to a Web service, converted into a BitmapDrawable for display on the screen or whatever.

In the case of PictureDemo, we take the simple approach of writing the JPEG file as photo.jpg in the root of the SD card. The byte array itself will be garbage collected once we are done saving it, so there is no explicit "free" operation we need to do to release that memory.

Finally, we arrange for our PhotoCallback to execute our SavePhotoTask:

```
Camera.PictureCallback photoCallback=new Camera.PictureCallback() {
  public void onPictureTaken(byte[] data, Camera camera) {
    new SavePhotoTask().execute(data);
    camera.startPreview();
    inPreview=true;
  }
}
```

Maintaining Your Focus

Android devices may support auto-focus. As with the camera itself, autofocus is a device-specific capability and may not be available on all devices.

If you *need* auto-focus in your application, you will first need to add another <uses-feature> element to your manifest, to declare your interest in auto-focus:

<uses-feature android:name="android.hardware.camera.autofocus" />

Next, you need to determine when to apply auto-focus. For devices with a dedicated camera hardware button, that button might support a "half-press" that raises a KEYCODE_FOCUS KeyEvent. The T-Mobile G1 offers this, for example.

Then, to trigger auto-focus itself in your code, call autoFocus() on the Camera object. You will need to supply a callback object that will be notified when the focus operation is complete, so you know it is safe to take a picture, for example. If a device does not support auto-focus, the callback object will be notified anyway, so you can always rely upon the callback being notified when the camera is as focused as it will ever be.

Note that if you can take advantage of auto-focus but do not absolutely need it, there is an android:required attribute you can add to your <usesfeature> element - setting that to false means your application can use auto-focus methods but will still install on devices that lack an auto-focus camera (e.g., HTC Tattoo). Note that android:required is not presently documented, though that appears to be a documentation bug. To find out if auto-focus is available on a given device, call getFocusMode() on your Camera.Parameters object to see if it returns FOCUS_MODE_FIXED, in which case auto-focus is unavailable.

All the Bells and Whistles

Starting with Android 2.0, the Camera.Parameters object offers a wide range of settings that you can control over how a picture gets taken, much more than merely the size and file type. Settings you can manage include:

- Anti-banding effects
- Color effects (e.g., "negative" or inverse image, sepia-tone image)

- Flash settings (on? off? always on? anti-red-eye mode?)
- Focus mode (fixed? macro? infinity?)
- JPEG quality levels, for both the image and the thumbnail representation of the image
- White balance levels

For all of these, and others, not only can you get the current setting and change it, but you can also obtain a list of the available settings, perhaps to populate a ListView or selection dialog for the user.

You can now also supply GPS data to the camera, which will encode that information into the EXIF data of the JPEG image.

Playing Media

Pretty much every phone claiming to be a "smartphone" has the ability to at least play back music, if not video. Even many more ordinary phones are full-fledged MP₃ players, in addition to offering ringtones and whatnot.

Not surprisingly, Android has multimedia support for you, as a developer, to build your own games, media players, and so on.

We start with basic coverage of where you can obtain the media that you want to play back. Then, we cover how to use MediaPlayer for playing back audio files, such as an Ogg Vorbis clip. We then look at the use of VideoView for playing back video files, and MediaPlayer and SurfaceView for playing back streaming video. We wrap with brief coverage of other audio playback APIs in Android.

Get Your Media On

In Android, you have five different places you can pull media clips from – one of these will hopefully fit your needs:

1. You can package audio clips as raw resources (res/raw in your project), so they are bundled with your application. The benefit is that you're guaranteed the clips will be there; the downside is that they cannot be replaced without upgrading the application.

- 2. You can package audio clips as assets (assets/ in your project) and reference them via file:///android_asset/ URLs in a Uri. The benefit over raw resources is that this location works with APIs that expect Uri parameters instead of resource IDs. The downside – assets are only replaceable when the application is upgraded – remains.
- 3. You can store media in an application-local directory, such as content you download off the Internet. Your media may or may not be there, and your storage space isn't infinite, but you can replace the media as needed.
- 4. You can store media or make use of media that the user has stored herself that is on an SD card. There is likely more storage space on the card than there is on the device, and you can replace the media as needed, but other applications have access to the SD card as well.
- 5. You can, in some cases, stream media off the Internet, bypassing any local storage, as with the StreamFurious application

For the T-Mobile G₁, the recommended approach for anything of significant size is to put it on the SD card, as there is very little on-board flash memory for file storage.

Making Noise

If you want to play back music, particularly material in MP3 format, you will want to use the MediaPlayer class. With it, you can feed it an audio clip, start/stop/pause playback, and get notified on key events, such as when the clip is ready to be played or is done playing.

You have three ways to set up a MediaPlayer and tell it what audio clip to play:

- 1. If the clip is a raw resource, use MediaPlayer.create() and provide the resource ID of the clip
- If you have a Uri to the clip, use the Uri-flavored version of MediaPlayer.create()

3. If you have a string path to the clip, just create a MediaPlayer using the default constructor, then call setDataSource() with the path to the clip

Next, you need to call prepare() or prepareAsync(). Both will set up the clip to be ready to play, such as fetching the first few seconds off the file or stream. The prepare() method is synchronous; as soon as it returns, the clip is ready to play. The prepareAsync() method is asynchronous – more on how to use this version later.

Once the clip is prepared, start() begins playback, pause() pauses playback (with start() picking up playback where pause() paused), and stop() ends playback. One caveat: you cannot simply call start() again on the MediaPlayer once you have called stop() – we'll cover a workaround a bit later in this section.

To see this in action, take a look at the Media/Audio sample project. The layout is pretty trivial, with three buttons and labels for play, pause, and stop:

```
<?xml version="1.0" encoding="utf-8"?>
<LinearLayout xmlns:android="http://schemas.android.com/apk/res/android"
    android:orientation="vertical"
    android:layout_width="match_parent"
    android:layout_height="match_parent"
    >
  <LinearLayout
    android:orientation="horizontal"
    android:layout width="match parent"
    android:layout_height="wrap_content"
   android:padding="4px"
 >
    <ImageButton android:id="@+id/play"
      android:src="@drawable/play'
      android:layout_height="wrap_content"
      android:layout_width="wrap_content"
      android:paddingRight="4px"
      android:enabled="false"
    />
    <TextView
      android:text="Play"
      android:layout width="match parent"
      android:layout height="match parent"
      android:gravity="center_vertical"
      android:layout_gravity="center_vertical"
```

android:textAppearance="?android:attr/textAppearanceLarge"
<linearlayout< td=""></linearlayout<>
android:orientation="horizontal"
android:layout_width="match_parent"
android:layout_height="wrap_content"
android:padding="4px"
<lmagebutton <="" android:id="@+id/pause" td=""></lmagebutton>
android:src="@drawable/pause"
android:layout_height="wrap_content"
android:layout_width="wrap_content"
android:paddingRight="4px"
<textview< td=""></textview<>
android:text="Pause"
android:layout_width="match_parent"
android:layout_height="match_parent"
android:gravity="center_vertical"
android:layout_gravity="center_vertical"
android:textAppearance="?android:attr/textAppearanceLarge"
<linearlayout< td=""></linearlayout<>
android:orientation="horizontal"
android:layout_width="match_parent"
android:layout_height="wrap_content"
android:padding="4px"
<imagebutton <="" android:id="@+id/stop" td=""></imagebutton>
android:src="@drawable/stop"
android:layout_neight="wrap_content"
android:layout_width="wrap_content"
android:paddingRight="4px"
/>
android:text="Stop"
android:layout_width="match_parent"
android:layout_neight="match_parent"
android:gravity="center_vertical"
android:iayout_gravity="center_vertical"
android:textAppearance="?android:attr/textAppearanceLarge"
(/LinearLayout>

The Java, of course, is where things get interesting:

```
public class AudioDemo extends Activity
  implements MediaPlayer.OnCompletionListener {
```

private ImageButton play;

```
private ImageButton pause;
private ImageButton stop;
private MediaPlayer mp;
@Override
public void onCreate(Bundle icicle) {
  super.onCreate(icicle);
  setContentView(R.layout.main);
 play=(ImageButton)findViewById(R.id.play);
  pause=(ImageButton)findViewById(R.id.pause);
  stop=(ImageButton)findViewById(R.id.stop);
 play.setOnClickListener(new View.OnClickListener() {
    public void onClick(View view) {
      play();
    }
  });
 pause.setOnClickListener(new View.OnClickListener() {
    public void onClick(View view) {
      pause();
    }
 });
  stop.setOnClickListener(new View.OnClickListener() {
    public void onClick(View view) {
      stop();
    }
 });
 setup();
}
@Override
public void onDestroy() {
  super.onDestroy();
 if (stop.isEnabled()) {
    stop();
  }
}
public void onCompletion(MediaPlayer mp) {
 stop();
}
private void play() {
 mp.start();
 play.setEnabled(false);
 pause.setEnabled(true);
  stop.setEnabled(true);
}
```

```
private void stop() {
 mp.stop();
 pause.setEnabled(false);
  stop.setEnabled(false);
 try {
    mp.prepare();
    mp.seekTo(0);
    play.setEnabled(true);
  }
 catch (Throwable t) {
    goBlooey(t);
  }
}
private void pause() {
 mp.pause();
 play.setEnabled(true);
 pause.setEnabled(false);
  stop.setEnabled(true);
}
private void loadClip() {
 try {
    mp=MediaPlayer.create(this, R.raw.clip);
    mp.setOnCompletionListener(this);
  }
 catch (Throwable t) {
    goBlooey(t);
  }
}
private void setup() {
 loadClip();
 play.setEnabled(true);
 pause.setEnabled(false);
 stop.setEnabled(false);
}
private void goBlooey(Throwable t) {
 AlertDialog.Builder builder=new AlertDialog.Builder(this);
 builder
    .setTitle("Exception!")
    .setMessage(t.toString())
    .setPositiveButton("OK", null)
    .show();
}
```

In onCreate(), we wire up the three buttons to appropriate callbacks, then call setup(). In setup(), we create our MediaPlayer, set to play a clip we package in the project as a raw resource. We also configure the activity itself as the completion listener, so we find out when the clip is over. Note that, since we use the static create() method on MediaPlayer, we have already implicitly called prepare(), so we do not need to call that separately ourselves.

The buttons simply work the MediaPlayer and toggle each others' states, via appropriately-named callbacks. So, play() starts MediaPlayer playback, pause() pauses playback, and stop() stops playback and resets our MediaPlayer to play again. The stop() callback is also used for when the audio clip completes of its own accord.

To reset the MediaPlayer, the stop() callback calls prepare() on the existing MediaPlayer to enable it to be played again and seekTo() to move the playback point to the beginning. If we were using an external file as our media source, it would be better to call prepareAsync().

The UI is nothing special, but we are more interested in the audio in this sample, anyway:



Figure 49. The AudioDemo sample application

Streaming Limitations

You can use the same basic code for streaming media, using an http:// or rtsp:// URL. However, bear in mind that Android does not support streaming MP3 over RTSP, as that exceeds the relevant RTSP specifications. That being said, there *are* MP3-over-RTSP streams in the world, and clients and servers that have negotiated an ad-hoc extension to the specification to accommodate this. Android cannot play these streams.

Moving Pictures

In addition to perhaps using MediaPlayer, video clips get their own widget, the VideoView. Put it in a layout, feed it an MP4 video clip, and you get playback! We will see using MediaPlayer for video in the next section.

For example, take a look at this layout, from the Media/Video sample project:

The layout is simply a full-screen video player. Whether it will use the full screen will be dependent on the video clip, its aspect ratio, and whether you have the device (or emulator) in portrait or landscape mode.

Wiring up the Java is almost as simple:

```
public class VideoDemo extends Activity {
 private VideoView video;
 private MediaController ctlr;
 @Override
 public void onCreate(Bundle icicle) {
    super.onCreate(icicle);
   getWindow().setFormat(PixelFormat.TRANSLUCENT);
   setContentView(R.layout.main);
    File clip=new File(Environment.getExternalStorageDirectory(),
                     "test.mp4");
    if (clip.exists()) {
     video=(VideoView)findViewById(R.id.video);
     video.setVideoPath(clip.getAbsolutePath());
     ctlr=new MediaController(this);
     ctlr.setMediaPlayer(video);
     video.setMediaController(ctlr);
     video.requestFocus();
     video.start();
    }
  }
```

Here, we:

• Confirm that our video file exists on external storage
- Tell the VideoView which file to play
- Create a MediaController pop-up panel and cross-connect it to the VideoView
- Give the VideoView the focus and start playback

The biggest trick with VideoView is getting a video clip onto the device. While VideoView does support some streaming video, the requirements on the MP4 file are fairly stringent. If you want to be able to play a wider array of video clips, you need to have them on the device, preferably on an SD card.

The crude VideoDemo class assumes there is an MP4 file named test.mp4 in the root of external storage on your device or emulator. Once there, the Java code shown above will give you a working video player:



Figure 50. The VideoDemo sample application, showing a Creative Commonslicensed video clip

Tapping on the video will pop up the playback controls:



Figure 51. The VideoDemo sample application, with the media controls displayed

The video will scale based on space, as shown in this rotated view of the emulator (<Ctrl>-<F12>):



Figure 52. The VideoDemo sample application, in landscape mode, with the video clip scaled to fit

NOTE: playing video on the Android emulator may work for you, but it is not terribly likely. Video playback requires graphic acceleration to work well, and the emulator does not have graphics acceleration – regardless of

the capabilities of the actual machine the emulator runs on. Hence, if you try playing back video in the emulator, expect problems. If you are serious about doing Android development with video playback, you definitely need to acquire a piece of Android hardware.

Pictures in the Stream

VideoView is nice, but you get a bit more control if you use MediaPlayer. It is somewhat more involved to set up, though, in part because it involves a SurfaceView, introduced in the chapter on the camera.

The sample code for this project is released as a separate open source project, called vidtry, as it allows you to try video clips, with an emphasis on streaming video. You can find the complete source code to vidtry out on Github. You may want to have the full source code with you when reviewing this section, as it is a bit more extensive than most.

At its core, vidtry simply plays back video, much like the example of VideoView in the preceding section:



Figure 53. The vidtry sample application, showing a video from the 2009 Google I/O Conference

However, vidtry also supports streaming video and custom pop-up control panels:



Figure 54. The vidtry sample application, showing pop-up panels overlaying the video

Rules for Streaming

Streaming video with Android is a dicey proposition. If you are in control of the media being streamed, getting it to work is eminently possible. If you are trying to stream existing media not designed for use with Android, as they say in the United States, "your mileage may vary".

This section focuses on HTTP streaming, as that is what most people would be in position to serve up. RTSP streaming should also be available, but there are far fewer RTSP servers than Web servers.

Here are some guidelines for serving HTTP streaming video to Android:

1. The media in question needs to be "safe for streaming". For MP4 files, for example, the rule is "the moov atom must appear before the first mdat atom". That may happen as a result of how you create the MP4 files. If not, you may need to use tools to add "hints" to the MP4 file to achieve this atom ordering. For example, on Linux, you can use MP4Box -hint to accomplish this, where MP4Box can be found in the gpac package for Ubuntu. Note that this requirement was a limitation of early versions of Android – Android 2.2 and newer are more flexible in this regard.

- 2. There used to be a rule that the height and width each had to be divisible by 16. It is unclear if that is still a rule or merely an optimization at this point.
- 3. If you have the space to store multiple editions of the video for serving, consider creating ones for commonplace sizes, such as one designed to work on a 480x320 landscape screen. The less work the device has to do to scale the image, the better battery life will be.

Establishing the Surface

Setting up a SurfaceView for video playback works much the same way as setting up a SurfaceView for the camera preview. You create the SurfaceView and get its corresponding SurfaceHolder, then start using the surface once the surface has been prepared.

For example, here is where we set up a SurfaceView in vidtry, in the Player activity's onCreate() method:

```
surface=(TappableSurfaceView)findViewById(R.id.surface);
surface.addTapListener(onTap);
holder=surface.getHolder();
holder.addCallback(this);
holder.setType(SurfaceHolder.SURFACE_TYPE_PUSH_BUFFERS);
```

Note that we are using a TappableSurfaceView. This is a custom subclass of SurfaceView that supports touch events – more on this in a later section. Outside of touch behavior, though, TappableSurfaceView works identically to a regular SurfaceView.

So, we get the surface out of our layout, add a listener for touch events, get its SurfaceHolder, tell the SurfaceHolder to keep the Player informed of the surface's own lifecycle, and set the type of the surface to be SURFACE_TYPE_PUSH_BUFFERS (meaning lower level code gets to write directly to the surface). That, plus the regular view creation process, will trigger the SurfaceView to be constructed and made available for use.

Floating Panels

The SurfaceView is set up to take up whatever space it needs to play back the video. Typically, this will involve filling one of the two axes, depending on the aspect ratio of the video and the device's display.

Full-screen video playback is fairly normal for an application like this. However, what may not be obvious is how to handle pop-up control panels, where controls for pausing playback and such appear to float over top of the video.

There are three components of the technique for making that work:

- 1. In layouts, anything later in the container (e.g., later in the XML listing of the layout file) appears higher in the Z-axis. That means if you define the SurfaceView first, and other widgets later, those other widgets will appear to float over top of the video.
- 2. Since you control the visibility of any widget, you can arrange to have those floating widgets be invisible (or gone) normally, and only show up when the user requests, perhaps as a result of a screen tap.
- 3. If you have several controls that you want grouped in a translucent panel, just put them in one container (e.g., RelativeLayout) and set the background color of that container to be a translucent value (e.g., #40808080 for a translucent light gray).

For example, here is the layout that drives the Player activity (res/layout/main.xml):

```
android:layout width="fill parent"
   android:layout_height="fill_parent"
 >
   <LinearLayout
     android:id="@+id/top_panel"
     android:layout width="fill parent"
     android:layout_height="wrap_content"
     android:orientation="horizontal"
     android:background="#40808080"
     android:visibility="visible"
     android:layout_alignParentTop="true"
   >
     <AutoCompleteTextView android:id="@+id/address"
       android:layout_width="0px"
       android:layout_weight="1"
       android:layout height="wrap content"
       android:completionThreshold="1"
     />
     <Button android:id="@+id/go"
       android:layout_width="wrap_content"
       android:layout_height="wrap_content"
       android:text="@string/go"
       android:enabled="false"
     />
   </LinearLayout>
   <LinearLayout
     android:id="@+id/bottom panel"
     android:layout_height="wrap_content"
     android:layout width="fill parent"
     android:orientation="horizontal"
     android:background="#40808080"
     android:visibility="gone"
     android:layout_alignParentBottom="true"
   >
     <ProgressBar android:id="@+id/timeline"
       style="?android:attr/progressBarStyleHorizontal"
       android:layout_width="0px"
       android:layout_weight="1"
       android:layout_height="wrap_content"
       android:layout gravity="center"
       android:paddingLeft="2px"
     />
     <ImageButton android:id="@+id/media"
       style="@style/MediaButton"
       android:layout_height="wrap_content"
       android:layout width="wrap content"
       android:src="@drawable/ic_media_pause"
       android:enabled="false"
     />
   </LinearLayout>
 </RelativeLayout>
</FrameLayout>
```

You will see that, in addition to our TappableSurfaceView, the layout has a pair of LinearLayout widgets with the aforementioned background color. One, on the top, contains an AutoCompleteTextView to be used for entering URLs of videos to watch, plus a button to trigger playback of that video. The other contains a ProgressBar that will serve as the video playback timeline, plus a button to pause or resume playback. The bottom panel is set to have android:visibility = "gone", so only the top panel will be visible when you first run the application.

Playing Video

When the user types in a URL and clicks the "go" button, we call playVideo() on our Player:

```
private void playVideo(String url) {
   try {
    media.setEnabled(false);
     if (player==null) {
       player=new MediaPlayer();
       player.setScreenOnWhilePlaying(true);
     }
     else {
       player.stop();
       player.reset();
     player.setDataSource(url);
     player.setDisplay(holder);
     player.setAudioStreamType(AudioManager.STREAM_MUSIC);
     player.setOnPreparedListener(this);
     player.prepareAsync();
       player.setOnBufferingUpdateListener(this);
     player.setOnCompletionListener(this);
   catch (Throwable t) {
     Log.e(TAG, "Exception in media prep", t);
     goBlooey(t);
   }
 }
```

Here, we do several things of significance:

• We either create a new MediaPlayer (if this is the first video we have played) or stop() and reset() the existing player

- We tell the MediaPlayer to load the user-supplied URL into our SurfaceView (via its SurfaceHolder)
- We tell the MediaPlayer to let us know when the video is prepared and has finished playback
- We tell the MediaPlayer to prepareAsync(), which will begin streaming down the initial portion of the video file

Note that we also call setScreenOnWhilePlaying() – this will keep the screen lock from taking over while video is actually playing back.

After a few moments, MediaPlayer should have downloaded enough information to begin actually playing the video. At that point, it will call us back via the onPrepared() in the Player, as is required by the MediaPlayer.OnPreparedListener interface we are implementing and used in setOnPreparedListener().

```
public void onPrepared(MediaPlayer mediaplayer) {
  width=player.getVideoWidth();
  height=player.getVideoHeight();
  if (width!=0 && height!=0) {
    holder.setFixedSize(width, height);
    timeline.setProgress(0);
    timeline.setMax(player.getDuration());
    player.start();
  }
  media.setEnabled(true);
}
```

Here, we:

- Get the height and width of the video file from the MediaPlayer
- Tell the SurfaceView to use the same height and width it will automatically determine appropriate scaling if the video is larger than the screen size
- Reset the timeline ProgressBar to 0 and set its maximum to be the duration of the video clip, as reported by the MediaPlayer
- Start actual playback of the video

Note that Android is very finicky about its streaming video. A video that might work fine on one device will not work well on another. If you are going to be developing applications that rely upon streaming video, it is best if you obtain 2-3 devices, with different screen sizes and from different manufacturers, and test your videos on those devices to ensure they will work.

Touchable Controls

We still have not done much about those two panels. One, containing the URL field and button, is still visible. The other, containing the timeline and play/pause button, is gone. It would be nice if both would be gone while the video is playing, yet still be retrievable when the user wants them.

The panels are set to "automatically" hide after a period of inactivity. That is accomplished by:

- Tracking the lastActionTime on any user input event (lastActionTime
 = SystemClock.elapsedRealtime()), so we know when the user last did something
- Use postDelayed() to set up a one-per-second check to see if enough time has elapsed since lastActionTime, at which point bottom panel is hidden
- The back button is used to close the top panel, when it is displayed

Bringing the panels up again is handled via touch events on our SurfaceView, implemented in a TappableSurfaceView class:

```
package com.commonsware.android.vidtry;
import android.content.Context;
import android.view.GestureDetector;
import android.view.GestureDetector.SimpleOnGestureListener;
import android.view.MotionEvent;
import android.view.SurfaceView;
import android.util.AttributeSet;
import java.util.ArrayList;
public class TappableSurfaceView extends SurfaceView {
    private ArrayList<TapListener> listeners=new ArrayList<TapListener>();
```

```
private GestureDetector gesture=null;
public TappableSurfaceView(Context context,
                           AttributeSet attrs) {
  super(context, attrs);
}
public boolean onTouchEvent(MotionEvent event) {
 if (event.getAction()==MotionEvent.ACTION UP) {
    gestureListener.onSingleTapUp(event);
  }
 return(true);
}
public void addTapListener(TapListener 1) {
 listeners.add(1);
}
public void removeTapListener(TapListener 1) {
 listeners.remove(1);
}
private GestureDetector.SimpleOnGestureListener gestureListener=
  new GestureDetector.SimpleOnGestureListener() {
 @Override
 public boolean onSingleTapUp(MotionEvent e) {
    for (TapListener 1 : listeners) {
      l.onTap(e);
    }
    return(true);
  }
};
public interface TapListener {
 void onTap(MotionEvent event);
}
```

This crude touch interface watches for single taps on the screen, relaying those to a roster of supplied "tap listeners", which will do something on those taps.

The Player activity registers an onTap listener that displays either the top or bottom panel depending on which half of the screen the user tapped upon:

```
private TappableSurfaceView.TapListener onTap=
    new TappableSurfaceView.TapListener() {
    public void onTap(MotionEvent event) {
```

```
lastActionTime=SystemClock.elapsedRealtime();
if (event.getY()<surface.getHeight()/2) {
   topPanel.setVisibility(View.VISIBLE);
}
else {
   bottomPanel.setVisibility(View.VISIBLE);
}
}</pre>
```

More coverage of touch interfaces will be added in another chapter in a future edition of this book.

The same once-a-second postDelayed() loop also updates our timeline, reflecting how much of the video has been played back:

```
private Runnable onEverySecond=new Runnable() {
    public void run() {
        if (lastActionTime>0 &&
            SystemClock.elapsedRealtime()-lastActionTime>3000) {
            clearPanels(false);
        }
        if (player!=null) {
            timeline.setProgress(player.getCurrentPosition());
        }
        if (!isPaused) {
            surface.postDelayed(onEverySecond, 1000);
        }
    }
}
```

Other Ways to Make Noise

While MediaPlayer is the primary audio playback option, particularly for content along the lines of MP3 files, there are other alternatives if you are looking to build other sorts of applications, notably games and custom forms of streaming audio.

SoundPool

The SoundPool class's claim to fame is the ability to overlay multiple sounds, and do so in a prioritized fashion, so your application can just ask for sounds to be played and SoundPool deals with each sound starting, stopping, and blending while playing.

This may make more sense with an example.

Suppose you are creating a first-person shooter. Such a game may have several sounds going on at any one time:

- The sound of the wind whistling amongst the trees on the battlefield
- The sound of the surf crashing against the beach in the landing zone
- The sound of booted feet crunching on the sand
- The sound of the character's own panting as the character runs on the beach
- The sound of orders being barked by a sergeant positioned behind the character
- The sound of machine gun fire aimed at the character and the character's squad mates
- The sound of explosions from the gun batteries of the battleship providing suppression fire

And so on.

In principle, SoundPool can blend all of those together into a single audio stream for output. Your game might set up the wind and surf as constant background sounds, toggle the feet and panting on and off based on the character's movement, randomly add the barked orders, and tie the gunfire based on actual game play.

In reality, your average smartphone will lack the CPU power to handle all of that audio without harming the frame rate of the game. So, to keep the frame rate up, you tell SoundPool to play at most two streams at once. This means that when nothing else is happening in the game, you will hear the wind and surf, but during the actual battle, those sounds get dropped out – the user might never even miss them – so the game speed remains good.

AudioTrack

The lowest-level Java API for playing back audio is AudioTrack. It has two main roles:

- Its primary role is to support streaming audio, where the streams come in some format other than what MediaPlayer handles. While MediaPlayer can handle RTSP, for example, it does not offer SIP. If you want to create a SIP client (perhaps for a VOIP or Web conferencing application), you will need to convert the incoming data stream to PCM format, then hand the stream off to an AudioTrack instance for playback.
- It can also be used for "static" (versus streamed) bits of sound that you have pre-decoded to PCM format and want to play back with as little latency as possible. For example, you might use this for a game for in-game sounds (beeps, bullets, or "boing"s). By pre-decoding the data to PCM and caching that result, then using AudioTrack for playback, you will use the least amount of overhead, minimizing CPU impact on game play and on battery life.

ToneGenerator

If you want your phone to sound like...well...a phone, you can use ToneGenerator to have it play back dual-tone multi-frequency (DTMF) tones. In other words, you can simulate the sounds played by a regular "touch-tone" phone in response to button presses. This is used by the Android dialer, for example, to play back the tones when users dial the phone using the on-screen keypad, as an audio reinforcement.

Note that these will play through the phone's earpiece, speaker, or attached headset. They do not play through the outbound call stream. In principle, you might be able to get ToneGenerator to play tones through the speaker loud enough to be picked up by the microphone, but this probably is not a recommended practice.

PART III – Advanced System

Handling System Events

If you have ever looked at the list of available Intent actions in the SDK documentation for the Intent class, you will see that there are lots of possible actions.

There are even actions that are not listed in that spot in the documentation, but are scattered throughout the rest of the SDK documentation.

The vast majority of these you will never raise yourself. Instead, they are broadcast by Android, to signify certain system events that have occurred and that you might want to take note of, if they affect the operation of your application.

This chapter examines a few of these, to give you the sense of what is possible and how to make use of these sorts of events.

Get Moving, First Thing

A popular request is to have a service get control when the device is powered on.

This is doable but somewhat dangerous, in that too many on-boot requests slow down the device startup and may make things sluggish for the user. Moreover, the more services that are running all the time, the worse the device performance will be.

A better pattern is to get control on boot to arrange for a service to do something periodically using the AlarmManager or via other system events. In this section, we will examine the on-boot portion of the problem – in the next chapter, we will investigate AlarmManager and how it can keep services active yet not necessarily resident in memory all the time.

The Permission

In order to be notified when the device has completed is system boot process, you will need to request the RECEIVE_BOOT_COMPLETED permission. Without this, even if you arrange to receive the boot broadcast Intent, it will not be dispatched to your receiver.

As the Android documentation describes it:

Though holding this permission does not have any security implications, it can have a negative impact on the user experience by increasing the amount of time it takes the system to start and allowing applications to have themselves running without the user being aware of them. As such, you must explicitly declare your use of this facility to make that visible to the user.

The Receiver Element

There are two ways you can receive a broadcast Intent. One is to use registerReceiver() from an existing Activity, Service, Or ContentProvider. The other is to register your interest in the Intent in the manifest in the form of a <receiver> element:

```
<?xml version="1.0" encoding="utf-8"?>
<manifest android:versionCode="1"
android:versionName="1.0"
package="com.commonsware.android.sysevents.boot"
xmlns:android="http://schemas.android.com/apk/res/android">
```

```
<uses-sdk android:minSdkVersion="3"</pre>
```

The above AndroidManifest.xml, from the SystemEvents/OnBoot sample project, shows that we have registered a broadcast receiver named OnBootReceiver, set to be given control when the android.intent.action.BOOT_COMPLETED Intent is broadcast.

In this case, we have no choice but to implement our receiver this way – by the time any of our other components (e.g., an Activity) were to get control and be able to call registerReceiver(), the BOOT_COMPLETED Intent will be long gone.

The Receiver Implementation

Now that we have told Android that we would like to be notified when the boot has completed, and given that we have been granted permission to do so by the user, we now need to actually do something to receive the Intent. This is a simple matter of creating a BroadcastReceiver, such as seen in the OnBootCompleted implementation shown below:

```
package com.commonsware.android.sysevents.boot;
import android.content.BroadcastReceiver;
import android.content.Context;
import android.content.Intent;
import android.util.Log;
public class OnBootReceiver extends BroadcastReceiver {
  @Override
  public void onReceive(Context context, Intent intent) {
    Log.d("OnBootReceiver", "Hi, Mom!");
```

```
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```

_ } ۲

A BroadcastReceiver is not a Context, and so it gets passed a suitable Context object in onReceive() to use for accessing resources and the like. The onReceive() method also is passed the Intent that caused our BroadcastReceiver to be created, in case there are "extras" we need to pull out (none in this case).

In onReceive(), we can do whatever we want, subject to some limitations:

- 1. We are not a Context, like an Activity, so we cannot modify a UI or anything such as that
- 2. If we want to do anything significant, it is better to delegate that logic to a service that we start from here (e.g., calling startService() on the supplied Context) rather than actually doing it here, since BroadcastReceiver implementations need to be fast
- We cannot start any background threads, directly or indirectly, since the BroadcastReceiver gets discarded as soon as onReceive() returns

In this case, we simply log the fact that we got control. In the next chapter, we will see what else we can do at boot time, to ensure one of our services gets control later on as needed.

To test this, install it on an emulator (or device), shut down the emulator, then restart it.

I Sense a Connection Between Us...

Generally speaking, Android applications do not care what sort of Internet connection is being used – 3G, GPRS, WiFi, lots of trained carrier pigeons, or whatever. So long as there is an Internet connection, the application is happy.

Sometimes, though, you may specifically want WiFi. This would be true if your application is bandwidth-intensive and you want to ensure that, should WiFi stop being available, you cut back on your work so as not to consume too much 3G/GPRS bandwidth, which is usually subject to some sort of cap or metering.

There is an android.net.wifi.WIFI_STATE_CHANGED Intent that will be broadcast, as the name suggests, whenever the state of the WiFi connection changes. You can arrange to receive this broadcast and take appropriate steps within your application.

This Intent requires no special permission, unlike the BOOT_COMPLETED Intent from the previous section. Hence, all you need to do is register a BroadcastReceiver for android.net.wifi.WIFI_STATE_CHANGED, either via registerReceiver(), or via the <receiver> element in AndroidManifest.xml, such as the one shown below, from the SystemEvents/OnWiFiChange sample project:

All we do in the manifest is tell Android to create an OnWiFiChangeReceiver object when a android.net.wifi.WIFI_STATE_CHANGED Intent is broadcast, so the receiver can do something useful.

In the case of OnWiFiChangeReceiver, it examines the value of the EXTRA_WIFI_STATE "extra" in the supplied Intent and logs an appropriate message:

```
package com.commonsware.android.sysevents.wifi;
import android.content.BroadcastReceiver;
import android.content.Context;
import android.content.Intent;
import android.net.wifi.WifiManager;
import android.util.Log;
public class OnWiFiChangeReceiver extends BroadcastReceiver {
 @Override
 public void onReceive(Context context, Intent intent) {
    int state=intent.getIntExtra(WifiManager.EXTRA_WIFI_STATE, -1);
   String msg=null;
    switch (state) {
      case WifiManager.WIFI_STATE_DISABLED:
       msg="is disabled";
        break;
      case WifiManager.WIFI_STATE_DISABLING:
       msg="is disabling";
        break;
      case WifiManager.WIFI_STATE_ENABLED:
       msg="is enabled";
        break;
      case WifiManager.WIFI_STATE_ENABLING:
        msg="is enabling";
        break;
      case WifiManager.WIFI_STATE_UNKNOWN :
        msg="has an error";
        break;
      default:
        msg="is acting strangely";
        break;
    }
    if (msg!=null) {
      Log.d("OnWiFiChanged", "WiFi "+msg);
    }
  }
```

The EXTRA_WIFI_STATE "extra" tells you what the state has become (e.g., we are now disabling or are now disabled), so you can take appropriate steps in your application.

Note that, to test this, you will need an actual Android device, as the emulator does not specifically support simulating WiFi connections.

Feeling Drained

One theme with system events is to use them to help make your users happier by reducing your impacts on the device while the device is not in a great state. In the preceding section, we saw how you could find out when WiFi was disabled, so you might not use as much bandwidth when on 3G/GPRS. However, not every application uses so much bandwidth as to make this optimization worthwhile.

However, most applications are impacted by battery life. Dead batteries run no apps.

So whether you are implementing a battery monitor or simply want to discontinue background operations when the battery gets low, you may wish to find out how the battery is doing.

There is an ACTION_BATTERY_CHANGED Intent that gets broadcast as the battery status changes, both in terms of charge (e.g., 80% charged) and charging (e.g., the device is now plugged into AC power). You simply need to register to receive this Intent when it is broadcast, then take appropriate steps.

One of the limitations of ACTION_BATTERY_CHANGED is that you have to use registerReceiver() to set up a BroadcastReceiver to get this Intent when broadcast. You cannot use a manifest-declared receiver as shown in the preceding two sections.

In SystemEvents/OnBattery, you will find a layout containing a ProgressBar, a TextView, and an ImageView, to serve as a battery monitor:

```
<?xml version="1.0" encoding="utf-8"?>
<LinearLayout xmlns:android="http://schemas.android.com/apk/res/android"
android:orientation="vertical"
android:layout_width="match_parent"
android:layout_height="match_parent"
```

```
<ProgressBar android:id="@+id/bar"
   style="?android:attr/progressBarStyleHorizontal"
   android:layout width="match parent"
   android:layout_height="wrap_content" />
 <LinearLayout
   android:orientation="horizontal"
   android:layout width="match parent"
   android:layout_height="wrap_content"
   >
   <TextView android:id="@+id/level"
     android:layout width="0px"
     android:layout_height="wrap_content"
     android:layout weight="1"
     android:textSize="16pt"
   />
   <ImageView android:id="@+id/status"
     android:layout width="0px"
     android:layout_height="wrap_content"
     android:layout_weight="1"
   />
 </LinearLayout>
</LinearLayout>
```

This layout is used by a BatteryMonitor activity, which registers to receive the ACTION_BATTERY_CHANGED Intent in onResume() and unregisters in onPause():

```
package com.commonsware.android.sysevents.battery;
import android.app.Activity;
import android.content.BroadcastReceiver;
import android.content.Context;
import android.content.Intent;
import android.content.IntentFilter;
import android.os.Bundle;
import android.os.BatteryManager;
import android.widget.ProgressBar;
import android.widget.ImageView;
import android.widget.TextView;
public class BatteryMonitor extends Activity {
 private ProgressBar bar=null;
 private ImageView status=null;
 private TextView level=null;
 @Override
 public void onCreate(Bundle savedInstanceState) {
    super.onCreate(savedInstanceState);
    setContentView(R.layout.main);
    bar=(ProgressBar)findViewById(R.id.bar);
```

```
status=(ImageView)findViewById(R.id.status);
  level=(TextView)findViewById(R.id.level);
}
@Override
public void onResume() {
  super.onResume();
 registerReceiver(onBatteryChanged,
                   new IntentFilter(Intent.ACTION_BATTERY_CHANGED));
}
@Override
public void onPause() {
  super.onPause();
 unregisterReceiver(onBatteryChanged);
}
BroadcastReceiver onBatteryChanged=new BroadcastReceiver() {
 public void onReceive(Context context, Intent intent) {
    int pct=100*intent.getIntExtra("level", 1)/intent.getIntExtra("scale", 1);
    bar.setProgress(pct);
    level.setText(String.valueOf(pct));
    switch(intent.getIntExtra("status", -1)) {
      case BatteryManager.BATTERY_STATUS_CHARGING:
        status.setImageResource(R.drawable.charging);
        break;
      case BatteryManager.BATTERY STATUS FULL:
        int plugged=intent.getIntExtra("plugged", -1);
        if (plugged==BatteryManager.BATTERY_PLUGGED_AC ||
            plugged==BatteryManager.BATTERY_PLUGGED_USB) {
          status.setImageResource(R.drawable.full);
        }
        else {
         status.setImageResource(R.drawable.unplugged);
        }
        break;
      default:
        status.setImageResource(R.drawable.unplugged);
        break;
    }
  }
};
```

The key to ACTION_BATTERY_CHANGED is in the "extras". Many "extras" are packaged in the Intent, to describe the current state of the battery, such as the following constants defined on the BatteryManager class:

- EXTRA_HEALTH, which should generally be BATTERY_HEALTH_GOOD
- EXTRA_LEVEL, which is the proportion of battery life remaining as an integer, specified on the scale described by the scale "extra"
- EXTRA_PLUGGED, which will indicate if the device is plugged into AC power (BATTERY_PLUGGED_AC) or USB power (BATTERY_PLUGGED_USB)
- EXTRA_SCALE, which indicates the maximum possible value of level (e.g., 100, indicating that level is a percentage of charge remaining)
- EXTRA_STATUS, which will tell you if the battery is charging (BATTERY_STATUS_CHARGING), full (BATTERY_STATUS_FULL), or discharging (BATTERY_STATUS_DISCHARGING)
- EXTRA_TECHNOLOGY, which indicates what sort of battery is installed (e.g., "Li-Ion")
- EXTRA_TEMPERATURE, which tells you how warm the battery is, in tenths of a degree Celsius (e.g., 213 is 21.3 degrees Celsius)
- EXTRA_VOLTAGE, indicating the current voltage being delivered by the battery, in millivolts

In the case of BatteryMonitor, when we receive an ACTION_BATTERY_CHANGED Intent, we do three things:

- 1. We compute the percentage of battery life remaining, by dividing the level by the scale
- 2. We update the ProgressBar and TextView to display the battery life as a percentage
- 3. We display an icon, with the icon selection depending on whether we are charging (status is BATTERY_STATUS_CHARGING), full but on the charger (status is BATTERY_STATUS_FULL and plugged is BATTERY_PLUGGED_AC or BATTERY_PLUGGED_USB), or are not plugged in

This only really works on a device, where you can plug and unplug it, plus get a varying charge level:



Figure 55. The BatteryMonitor application

Sticky Intents and the Battery

Android has a notion of "sticky broadcast Intents". Normally, a broadcast Intent will be delivered to interested parties and then discarded. A sticky broadcast Intent is delivered to interested parties and retained until the next matching Intent is broadcast. Applications can call registerReceiver() with an IntentFilter that matches the sticky broadcast, but with a null BroadcastReceiver, and get the sticky Intent back as a result of the registerReceiver() call.

This may sound confusing. Let's look at this in the context of the battery.

Earlier in this section, you saw how to register for ACTION_BATTERY_CHANGED to get information about the battery delivered to you. You can also, though, get the latest battery information without registering a receiver. Just create an IntentFilter to match ACTION_BATTERY_CHANGED (as shown above) and call registerReceiver() with that filter and a null BroadcastReceiver. The Intent

you get back from registerReceiver() is the last ACTION_BATTERY_CHANGED Intent that was broadcast, with the same extras. Hence, you can use this to get the current (or near-current) battery status, rather than having to bother registering an actual BroadcastReceiver.

Other Power Triggers

If you are only interested in knowing when the device has been attached to, or detached from, a source of external power, there are different broadcast Intent actions you can monitor: ACTION_POWER_CONNECTED and ACTION_POWER_DISCONNECTED. These are only broadcast when the power source changes, not just every time the battery changes charge level. Hence, these will be more efficient, as your code will be invoked less frequently. Better still, you can use manifest-registered broadcast receivers for these, bypassing the limits the system puts on ACTION_BATTERY_CHANGED.

Advanced Service Patterns

In *The Busy Coder's Guide to Android Development*, we covered how to create and consume services and covered some basic service patterns. However, services can certainly do more than what is covered in those introductory patterns. In this chapter, we will examine some more powerful options for services, including remote services and using services in the role of "cron jobs" or "scheduled tasks".

Remote Services

By default, services are used within the application that publishes them. However, it is possible to expose services for other applications to take advantage of. These are basically inter-process editions of the binding pattern and command patterns outlined in *The Busy Coder's Guide to Android Development*.

We start with an explanation of the inter-process communication (IPC) mechanism offered in Android for allowing services to work with clients in other applications. Then, we move onto the steps to allow a client to connect to a remote service, before describing how to turn an ordinary service into a remote one. We then look at how one can implement a callback system to allow services, through IPC, to pass information back to clients. After noting the possibility of binder errors, we wrap by examining other ways to get results from remote services, back to clients, without going through binding.

When IPC Attacks!

Services will tend to offer IPC as a means of interacting with activities or other Android components. Each service declares what methods it is making available over IPC; those methods are then available for other components to call, with Android handling all the messy details involved with making method calls across component or process boundaries.

The guts of this, from the standpoint of the developer, is expressed in AIDL: the Android Interface Description Language. If you have used IPC mechanisms like COM, CORBA, or the like, you will recognize the notion of IDL. AIDL describes the public IPC interface, and Android supplies tools to build the client and server side of that interface.

With that in mind, let's take a look at AIDL and IPC.

Write the AIDL

IDLs are frequently written in a "language-neutral" syntax. AIDL, on the other hand, looks a lot like a Java interface. For example, here is some AIDL:

```
package com.commonsware.android.advservice;
// Declare the interface.
interface IScript {
  void executeScript(String script);
}
```

As with a Java interface, you declare a package at the top. As with a Java interface, the methods are wrapped in an interface declaration (interface IScript { ... }). And, as with a Java interface, you list the methods you are making available.

The differences, though, are critical.

First, not every Java type can be used as a parameter. Your choices are:

- Primitive values (int, float, double, boolean, etc.)
- String and CharSequence
- List and Map (from java.util)
- Any other AIDL-defined interfaces
- Any Java classes that implement the Parcelable interface, which is Android's flavor of serialization

In the case of the latter two categories, you need to include import statements referencing the names of the classes or interfaces that you are using (e.g., import com.commonsware.android.ISomething). This is true even if these classes are in your own package – you have to import them anyway.

Next, parameters can be classified as in, out, or inout. Values that are out or inout can be changed by the service and those changes will be propagated back to the client. Primitives (e.g., int) can only be in; we included in for the AIDL for enable() just for illustration purposes.

Also, you cannot throw any exceptions. You will need to catch all exceptions in your code, deal with them, and return failure indications some other way (e.g., error code return values).

Name your AIDL files with the .aidl extension and place them in the proper directory based on the package name.

When you build your project, either via an IDE or via Ant, the aid1 utility from the Android SDK will translate your AIDL into a server stub and a client proxy.

Implement the Interface

Given the AIDL-created server stub, now you need to implement the service, either directly in the stub, or by routing the stub implementation to other methods you have already written.

The mechanics of this are fairly straightforward:

- Create a private instance of the AIDL-generated .Stub class (e.g., IScript.Stub)
- Implement methods matching up with each of the methods you placed in the AIDL
- Return this private instance from your onBind() method in the Service subclass

Note that AIDL IPC calls are synchronous, and so the caller is blocked until the IPC method returns. Hence, your services need to be quick about their work.

We will see examples of service stubs later in this chapter.

A Consumer Economy

Of course, we need to have a client for AIDL-defined services, lest these services feel lonely.

Bound for Success

To use an AIDL-defined service, you first need to create an instance of your own ServiceConnection class. ServiceConnection, as the name suggests, represents your connection to the service for the purposes of making IPC calls.

Your ServiceConnection subclass needs to implement two methods:

- onServiceConnected(), which is called once your activity is bound to the service
- 2. onServiceDisconnected(), which is called if your connection ends normally, such as you unbinding your activity from the service

Each of those methods receives a ComponentName, which simply identifies the service you connected to. More importantly, onServiceConnected() receives an IBinder instance, which is your gateway to the IPC interface. You will want to convert the IBinder into an instance of your AIDL interface class, so you can use IPC as if you were calling regular methods on a regular Java class (IScript.Stub.asInterface(binder)).

To actually hook your activity to the service, call bindService() on the activity:

The bindService() method takes three parameters:

- 1. An Intent representing the service you wish to invoke
- 2. Your ServiceConnection instance
- 3. A set of flags most times, you will want to pass in BIND_AUTO_CREATE, which will start up the service if it is not already running

After your bindService() call, your onServiceConnected() callback in the ServiceConnection will eventually be invoked, at which time your connection is ready for use.

Request for Service

Once your service interface object is ready (IScript.Stub.asInterface(binder)), you can start calling methods on it as you need to. In fact, if you disabled some widgets awaiting the connection, now is a fine time to re-enable them.

However, you will want to trap two exceptions. One is DeadObjectException – if this is raised, your service connection terminated unexpectedly. In this case, you should unwind your use of the service, perhaps by calling onServiceDisconnected() manually, as shown above. The other is RemoteException, which is a more general-purpose exception indicating a

cross-process communications problem. Again, you should probably cease your use of the service.

Getting Unbound

When you are done with the IPC interface, call unbindService(), passing in the ServiceConnection. Eventually, your connection's onServiceDisconnected() callback will be invoked, at which point you should null out your interface object, disable relevant widgets, or otherwise flag yourself as no longer being able to use the service.

You can always reconnect to the service, via bindService(), if you need to use it again.

Service From Afar

Everything from the preceding two sections could be used by local services. In fact, that prose originally appeared in *The Busy Coder's Guide to Android Development* specifically in the context of local services. However, AIDL adds a fair bit of overhead, which is not necessary with local services. After all, AIDL is designed to marshal its parameters and transport them across process boundaries, which is why there are so many quirky rules about what you can and cannot pass as parameters to your AIDL-defined APIs.

So, given our AIDL description, let us examine some implementations, specifically for remote services.

Our sample applications – shown in the AdvServices/RemoteService and AdvServices/RemoteClient sample projects – convert our Beanshell demo from *The Busy Coder's Guide to Android Development* into a remote service. If you actually wanted to use scripting in an Android application, with scripts loaded off of the Internet, isolating their execution into a service might not be a bad idea. In the service, those scripts are sandboxed, only able to access files and APIs available to that service. The script-executing access your own application's databases, for example. If the script-executing

service is kept tightly controlled, it minimizes the mischief a rogue script could possibly do.

Service Names

To bind to a service's AIDL-defined API, you need to craft an Intent that can identify the service in question. In the case of a local service, that Intent can use the local approach of directly referencing the service class.

Obviously, that is not possible in a remote service case, where the service class is not in the same process, and may not even be known by name to the client.

When you define a service to be used by remote, you need to add an intentfilter element to your service declaration in the manifest, indicating how you want that service to be referred to by clients. The manifest for RemoteService is shown below:

```
<?xml version="1.0" encoding="utf-8"?>
<manifest android:versionCode="1"
         android:versionName="1.0"
         package="com.commonsware.android.advservice"
         xmlns:android="http://schemas.android.com/apk/res/android">
 <uses-sdk android:minSdkVersion="3"
           android:targetSdkVersion="6" />
 <supports-screens android:largeScreens="false"
                   android:normalScreens="true"
                   android:smallScreens="false" />
 <application android:icon="@drawable/cw"
             android:label="@string/app name">
   <service android:name=".BshService">
     <intent-filter>
       <action android:name="com.commonsware.android.advservice.IScript" />
     </intent-filter>
   </service>
  </application>
</manifest>
```

Here, we say that the service can be identified by the name com.commonsware.android.advservice.IScript. So long as the client uses this name to identify the service, it can bind to that service's API.
In this case, the name is not an implementation, but the AIDL API, as you will see below. In effect, this means that so long as some service exists on the device that implements this API, the client will be able to bind to something.

The Service

Beyond the manifest, the service implementation is not too unusual. There is the AIDL interface, IScript:

```
package com.commonsware.android.advservice;
// Declare the interface.
interface IScript {
  void executeScript(String script);
}
```

And there is the actual service class itself, BshService:

```
package com.commonsware.android.advservice;
import android.app.Service;
import android.content.Intent;
import android.os.IBinder;
import android.util.Log;
import bsh.Interpreter;
public class BshService extends Service {
  private final IScript.Stub binder=new IScript.Stub() {
    public void executeScript(String script) {
     executeScriptImpl(script);
    }
  };
  private Interpreter i=new Interpreter();
  @Override
  public void onCreate() {
    super.onCreate();
    try {
     i.set("context", this);
    }
    catch (bsh.EvalError e) {
      Log.e("BshService", "Error executing script", e);
    }
  }
```

```
@Override
public IBinder onBind(Intent intent) {
   return(binder);
}
@Override
public void onDestroy() {
   super.onDestroy();
}
private void executeScriptImpl(String script) {
   try {
     i.eval(script);
   }
   catch (bsh.EvalError e) {
     Log.e("BshService", "Error executing script", e);
   }
}
```

If you have seen the service and Beanshell samples in *The Busy Coder's Guide to Android Development* then this implementation will seem familiar. The biggest thing to note is that the service returns no result and handles any errors locally. Hence, the client will not get any response back from the script – the script will just run. In a real implementation, this would be silly, and we will work to rectify this later in this chapter.

Also note that, in this implementation, the script is executed directly by the service on the calling thread. One might think this is not a problem, since the service is in its own process and, therefore, cannot possibly be using the client's UI thread. However, AIDL IPC calls are synchronous, so the client will still block waiting for the script to be executed. This too will be corrected later in this chapter.

The Client

The client - BshServiceDemo out of AdvServices/RemoteClient - is a fairly straight-forward mashup of the service and Beanshell clients, with two twists:

```
package com.commonsware.android.advservice.client;
```

```
import android.app.Activity;
```

```
import android.app.AlertDialog;
import android.content.ComponentName;
import android.content.Context;
import android.content.Intent;
import android.content.ServiceConnection;
import android.os.Bundle;
import android.os.IBinder;
import android.view.View;
import android.widget.Button;
import android.widget.EditText;
import com.commonsware.android.advservice.IScript;
public class BshServiceDemo extends Activity {
 private IScript service=null;
 private ServiceConnection svcConn=new ServiceConnection() {
    public void onServiceConnected(ComponentName className,
                                   IBinder binder) {
     service=IScript.Stub.asInterface(binder);
    }
    public void onServiceDisconnected(ComponentName className) {
     service=null;
    }
 };
 @Override
 public void onCreate(Bundle icicle) {
    super.onCreate(icicle);
    setContentView(R.layout.main);
    Button btn=(Button)findViewById(R.id.eval);
    final EditText script=(EditText)findViewById(R.id.script);
    btn.setOnClickListener(new View.OnClickListener() {
      public void onClick(View view) {
        String src=script.getText().toString();
        try {
          service.executeScript(src);
        }
        catch (android.os.RemoteException e) {
          AlertDialog.Builder builder=
                    new AlertDialog.Builder(BshServiceDemo.this);
          builder
            .setTitle("Exception!")
            .setMessage(e.toString())
            .setPositiveButton("OK", null)
            .show();
        }
      }
    });
    bindService(new Intent("com.commonsware.android.advservice.IScript"),
```

```
svcConn, Context.BIND_AUTO_CREATE);
}
@Override
public void onDestroy() {
   super.onDestroy();
   unbindService(svcConn);
}
```

One twist is that the client needs its own copy of IScript.aidl. After all, it is a totally separate application, and therefore does not share source code with the service. In a production environment, we might craft and distribute a JAR file that contains the IScript classes, so both client and service can work off the same definition (see the upcoming chapter on reusable components). For now, we will just have a copy of the AIDL.

Then, the bindService() call uses a slightly different Intent, one that references the name the service is registered under, and that is the glue that allows the client to find the matching service.

If you compile both applications and upload them to the device, then start up the client, you can enter in Beanshell code and have it be executed by the service. Note, though, that you cannot perform UI operations (e.g., raise a Toast) from the service. If you choose some script that is long-running, you will see that the Go! button is blocked until the script is complete:



Figure 56. The BshServiceDemo application, running a long script

Servicing the Service

The preceding section outlined two flaws in the implementation of the Beanshell remote service:

- 1. The client received no results from the script execution
- 2. The client blocked waiting for the script to complete

If we were not worried about the blocking-call issue, we could simply have the executeScript() exported API return some sort of result (e.g., toString() on the result of the Beanshell eval() call). However, that would not solve the fact that calls to service APIs are synchronous even for remote services.

Another approach would be to pass some sort of callback object with executeScript(), such that the server could run the script asynchronously and invoke the callback on success or failure. This, though, implies that there is some way to have the activity export an API to the service.

Fortunately, this is eminently doable, as you will see in this section, and the accompanying samples (AdvServices/RemoteServiceEx and AdvServices/RemoteClientEx).

Callbacks via AIDL

AIDL does not have any concept of direction. It just knows interfaces and stub implementations. In the preceding example, we used AIDL to have the service flesh out the stub implementation and have the client access the service via the AIDL-defined interface. However, there is nothing magic about services implementing and clients accessing – it is equally possible to reverse matters and have the client implement something the service uses via an interface.

So, for example, we could create an IScriptResult.aidl file:

```
package com.commonsware.android.advservice;
// Declare the interface.
interface IScriptResult {
  void success(String result);
  void failure(String error);
}
```

Then, we can augment IScript itself, to pass an IScriptResult with executeScript():

```
package com.commonsware.android.advservice;
import com.commonsware.android.advservice.IScriptResult;
// Declare the interface.
interface IScript {
   void executeScript(String script, IScriptResult cb);
}
```

Notice that we need to specifically import IScriptResult, just like we might import some "regular" Java interface. And, as before, we need to make sure the client and the server are working off of the same AIDL definitions, so these two AIDL files need to be replicated across each project.

But other than that one little twist, this is all that is required, at the AIDL level, to have the client pass a callback object to the service: define the AIDL for the callback and add it as a parameter to some service API call.

Of course, there is a little more work to do on the client and server side to make use of this callback object.

Revising the Client

On the client, we need to implement an IScriptResult. On success(), we can do something like raise a Toast; on failure(), we can perhaps show an AlertDialog.

The catch is that we cannot be certain we are being called on the UI thread in our callback object.

So, the safest way to do that is to make the callback object use something like runOnUiThread() to ensure the results are displayed on the UI thread:

```
private final IScriptResult.Stub callback=new IScriptResult.Stub() {
 public void success(final String result) {
    runOnUiThread(new Runnable() {
     public void run() {
        successImpl(result);
      }
   });
  }
 public void failure(final String error) {
   runOnUiThread(new Runnable() {
      public void run() {
        failureImpl(error);
      }
   });
 }
};
private void successImpl(String result) {
 Toast
    .makeText(BshServiceDemo.this, result, Toast.LENGTH_LONG)
    .show();
private void failureImpl(String error) {
```

And, of course, we need to update our call to executeScript() to pass the callback object to the remote service:

```
@Override
public void onCreate(Bundle icicle) {
  super.onCreate(icicle);
  setContentView(R.layout.main);
  Button btn=(Button)findViewById(R.id.eval);
 final EditText script=(EditText)findViewById(R.id.script);
 btn.setOnClickListener(new View.OnClickListener() {
    public void onClick(View view) {
     String src=script.getText().toString();
      try {
        service.executeScript(src, callback);
      }
      catch (android.os.RemoteException e) {
        failureImpl(e.toString());
      }
    }
  });
 bindService(new Intent("com.commonsware.android.advservice.IScript"),
              svcConn, Context.BIND_AUTO_CREATE);
```

Revising the Service

The service also needs changing, to both execute the scripts asynchronously and use the supplied callback object for the end results of the script's execution.

BshService from AdvServices/RemoteServiceEx uses the LinkedBlockingQueue pattern to manage a background thread. An ExecuteScriptJob wraps up the script and callback; when the job is eventually processed, it uses the

callback to supply the results of the eval() (on success) or the message of the Exception (on failure):

```
package com.commonsware.android.advservice;
import android.app.Service;
import android.content.Intent;
import android.os.IBinder;
import android.util.Log;
import java.util.concurrent.LinkedBlockingQueue;
import bsh.Interpreter;
public class BshService extends Service {
 private final IScript.Stub binder=new IScript.Stub() {
   public void executeScript(String script, IScriptResult cb) {
     executeScriptImpl(script, cb);
    }
 };
 private Interpreter i=new Interpreter();
 private LinkedBlockingQueue<Job> q=new LinkedBlockingQueue<Job>();
 @Override
 public void onCreate() {
    super.onCreate();
   new Thread(qProcessor).start();
    try {
     i.set("context", this);
    }
   catch (bsh.EvalError e) {
     Log.e("BshService", "Error executing script", e);
    }
  }
 @Override
 public IBinder onBind(Intent intent) {
   return(binder);
  }
 @Override
 public void onDestroy() {
    super.onDestroy();
   q.add(new KillJob());
 }
 private void executeScriptImpl(String script,
                                 IScriptResult cb) {
   q.add(new ExecuteScriptJob(script, cb));
  }
 Runnable qProcessor=new Runnable() {
```

```
public void run() {
    while (true) {
     try {
        Job j=q.take();
        if (j.stopThread()) {
         break;
        }
        else {
         j.process();
        }
      }
      catch (InterruptedException e) {
        break;
      }
    }
 }
};
class Job {
 boolean stopThread() {
   return(false);
  }
 void process() {
   // no-op
  }
}
class KillJob extends Job {
 @Override
 boolean stopThread() {
   return(true);
  }
}
class ExecuteScriptJob extends Job {
 IScriptResult cb;
 String script;
  ExecuteScriptJob(String script, IScriptResult cb) {
    this.script=script;
    this.cb=cb;
  }
 void process() {
    try {
      cb.success(i.eval(script).toString());
    }
    catch (Throwable e) {
      Log.e("BshService", "Error executing script", e);
      try {
        cb.failure(e.getMessage());
```

```
}
catch (Throwable t) {
    Log.e("BshService",
        "Error returning exception to client",
        t);
    }
  }
}
```

Notice that the service's own API just needs the IScriptResult parameter, which can be passed around and used like any other Java object. The fact that it happens to cause calls to be made synchronously back to the remote client is invisible to the service.

The net result is that the client can call the service and get its results without tying up the client's UI thread.

You may be wondering why we do not simply use an AsyncTask. The reason is that remote service methods exposed by AIDL are not invoked on the main application thread – one of the few places in Android where Android calls your code from a background thread. An AsyncTask expects to be created on the main application thread.

The Bind That Fails

Sometimes, a call to bindService() will fail for some reason. The most common cause will be an invalid Intent – for example, you might be trying to bind to a Service that you failed to register in the manifest. The bindService() method returns a boolean value indicating whether or not there was an immediate problem, so you can take appropriate steps.

For local services, this is usually just a coding problem. For remote services, though, it could be that the service you are trying to work with has not been installed on the device. You have two approaches for dealing with this:

1. You can watch for bindService() to return false and assume that means the service is not installed

2. You can use introspection to see if the service is indeed installed before you even try calling bindService()

We will look at introspection techniques later in this book.

If the Binding Is Too Tight

Sometimes, binding is more than you really need.

Sending data to a remote service is easy, even without binding. Just package some data in Intent extras and use that Intent in a startService() call. The remote service can grab those extras and operate on that data. This works best with an IntentService, which does three things to assist with this pattern:

- It passes the Intents, with their extras, to your code in onHandleIntent() on a background thread, so you can take as long as you want to process them
- 2. It queues up Intents, so if another one arrives while you are working on a previous one, there is no problem
- 3. It automatically shuts down the service when there is no more work to be done

The biggest issue is getting results back to the client. There is no possibility of a callback if there is no binding.

Fortunately, Android offers some alternatives that work nicely with this approach.

Private Broadcasts

The concept of a "private broadcast" may seem like an oxymoron, but it is something available to you in Android.

Sending a broadcast Intent is fairly easy – create the Intent and call sendBroadcast(). However, by default, any application could field a BroadcastReceiver to watch for your broadcast. This may or may not concern you.

If you feel that "spies" could be troublesome, you can call setPackage() on your Intent, to limit the distribution of the broadcast. With setPackage(), only components in the named application will be able to receive the broadcast. You can even arrange to send the name of the package via an extra to the remote service, so the service does not need to know the name of the package in advance.

Pending Results

Another way for a remote service to send data back to your activity is via createPendingResult(). This is a method on Activity that gives you a PendingIntent set up to trigger onActivityResult() in your activity. In essence, this is the underpinnings behind startActivityForResult() and setResult(). You create the PendingIntent with createPendingResult() and pass it in an Intent extra to the remote service. The remote service can call send() on the PendingIntent, supplying an Intent with return data, just like setResult() would do in an activity started via startActivityForResult(). In your activity's onActivityResult(), you would get and inspect the returned Intent.

This works nicely for activities, but this mechanism does not work for other components. Hence, you cannot use this technique for one service calling another remote service, for example.

BshService, Revisited

Let us take a closer look at those two techniques, as implemented in AdvServices/RemoteClientUnbound and AdvServices/RemoteServiceUnbound. These versions of the Beanshell sample are designed to demonstrate both private broadcasts and pending results.

AlarmManager: Making the Services Run On Time

A common question when doing Android development is "where do I set up cron jobs?"

The cron utility – popular in Linux – is a way of scheduling work to be done periodically. You teach cron what to run and when to run it (e.g., weekdays at noon), and cron takes care of the rest. Since Android has a Linux kernel at its heart, one might think that cron might literally be available.

While cron itself is not, Android does have a system service named AlarmManager which fills a similar role. You give it a PendingIntent and a time (and optionally a period for repeating) and it will fire off the Intent as needed. By this mechanism, you can get a similar effect to cron.

There is one small catch, though: Android is designed to run on mobile devices, particularly ones powered by all-too-tiny batteries. If you want your periodic tasks to be run even if the device is "asleep", you will need to take a fair number of extra steps, mostly stemming around the concept of the WakeLock.

The WakefulIntentService Pattern

Most times, if you are bothering to get control on a periodic basis, you will want to do so even when the device is asleep. For example, if you are writing an email client, you will want to go get new emails even if the device is asleep, so the user has all of the emails immediately upon the next time the device wakes up. You might even want to raise a Notification based upon the arrived emails.

Alarms that wake up the device are possible, but tricky, so we will examine AlarmManager in the context of this scenario. And, to make that work, we are going to use the WakefulIntentService – another of the CommonsWare Android Components, available as open source for you to use. In particular, we will be looking at the demo project from the WakefulIntentService

GitHub project, in addition to the implementation of WakefulIntentService itself.

Note that to use WakefulIntentService you will need the WAKE_LOCK permission in your application.

Step #1: Register Your Alarms

AlarmManager has one big difference between it and cron – AlarmManager resets itself on a reboot. While cron just starts up the previously-arranged jobs, AlarmManager starts with a clean slate, forcing all applications to reregister their alarms.

Hence, the first step to creating a cron workalike is to arrange to get control when the device boots. After all, the cron daemon starts on boot as well, and we have no other way of ensuring that our background tasks start firing after a phone is reset.

We saw how to do that in a previous chapter – set up an RECEIVE_BOOT_COMPLETED BroadcastReceiver, with appropriate permissions. Here, for example, is the AndroidManifest.xml from SystemServices/Alarm:

```
<?xml version="1.0" encoding="utf-8"?>
<manifest xmlns:android="http://schemas.android.com/apk/res/android"
package="com.commonsware.cwac.wakeful.demo" android:versionCode="1"
android:versionName="1.0">
 <uses-sdk android:minSdkVersion="3" android:targetSdkVersion="6"/>
  <supports-screens android:largeScreens="false" android:normalScreens="true"</pre>
android:smallScreens="false"/>
  <uses-permission android:name="android.permission.RECEIVE_BOOT_COMPLETED"/>
  <uses-permission android:name="android.permission.WAKE_LOCK"/>
  <uses-permission android:name="android.permission.WRITE_EXTERNAL_STORAGE"/>
  <application android:label="@string/app_name">
      <receiver android:name=".OnBootReceiver">
          <intent-filter>
              <action android:name="android.intent.action.BOOT COMPLETED"/>
          </intent-filter>
      </receiver>
      <receiver android:name=".OnAlarmReceiver">
      </receiver>
      <service android:name=".AppService">
      </service>
```

```
</application> </manifest>
```

We ask for an OnBootReceiver to get control when the device starts up, and it is in OnBootReceiver that we schedule our recurring alarm:

```
package com.commonsware.cwac.wakeful.demo;
import android.app.AlarmManager;
import android.app.PendingIntent;
import android.content.BroadcastReceiver;
import android.content.Context;
import android.content.Intent;
import android.os.SystemClock;
import android.util.Log;
public class OnBootReceiver extends BroadcastReceiver {
 private static final int PERIOD=300000; // 5 minutes
 @Override
 public void onReceive(Context context, Intent intent) {
   AlarmManager
mgr=(AlarmManager)context.getSystemService(Context.ALARM SERVICE);
    Intent i=new Intent(context, OnAlarmReceiver.class);
   PendingIntent pi=PendingIntent.getBroadcast(context, 0,
                                            i, 0);
   mgr.setRepeating(AlarmManager.ELAPSED_REALTIME_WAKEUP,
                     SystemClock.elapsedRealtime()+60000,
                     PERIOD,
                     pi);
  }
```

We get the AlarmManager via getSystemService(), create an Intent referencing another BroadcastReceiver (OnAlarmReceiver), wrap that Intent in a PendingIntent, and tell the AlarmManager to set up a repeating alarm via setRepeating(). By saying we want a ELAPSED REALTIME WAKEUP alarm, we indicate that we want the alarm to wake up the device (even if it is asleep) using the time and express all times base used bv to SystemClock.elapsedRealtime(). In this case, our alarm is set to go off every five minutes.

This will cause the AlarmManager to raise our Intent after one minute (60000 milliseconds), and every five minutes thereafter.

Step #2: Get Control and Pass Control

Since we used a getBroadcast() PendingIntent, OUR OnAlarmReceiver will get control periodically. All that class does is pass control to our service (AppService) by way of the sendWakefulWork() static method on the WakefulIntentService class:

```
package com.commonsware.cwac.wakeful.demo;
import android.content.BroadcastReceiver;
import android.content.Context;
import android.util.Log;
import com.commonsware.cwac.wakeful.WakefulIntentService;
public class OnAlarmReceiver extends BroadcastReceiver {
  @Override
  public void onReceive(Context context, Intent intent) {
    WakefulIntentService.sendWakefulWork(context, AppService.class);
  }
}
```

If we needed to pass more data along, there is another flavor of sendWakefulWork() that takes an Intent, instead of just a class object.

AlarmManager guarantees that the device will stay awake long enough for onReceive() of OnAlarmReceiver to execute. After that, AlarmManager guarantees nothing. It is up to WakefulIntentService to keep the device awake, and we will see how later in this chapter.

Step #3: Do Your Wakeful Work

Our AppService will get control in a method named doWakefulWork(). The doWakefulWork() method has similar semantics to the onHandleIntent() of a regular IntentService – we get control in a background thread, and the service will shut down once the method returns if there is no other outstanding work. The difference is that WakefulIntentService will keep the device awake while doWakefulWork() is doing its work.

In this case, AppService just logs a line to a file on external storage, proving that we woke up:

```
package com.commonsware.cwac.wakeful.demo;
import android.content.Intent;
import android.os.Environment;
import android.util.Log;
import java.io.BufferedWriter;
import java.io.File;
import java.io.FileWriter;
import java.io.IOException;
import java.util.Date;
import com.commonsware.cwac.wakeful.WakefulIntentService;
public class AppService extends WakefulIntentService {
 public AppService() {
   super("AppService");
  }
 @Override
 protected void doWakefulWork(Intent intent) {
    File log=new File(Environment.getExternalStorageDirectory(),
                     "AlarmLog.txt");
    try {
      BufferedWriter out=new BufferedWriter(new
FileWriter(log.getAbsolutePath(),
                                                        log.exists()));
      out.write(new Date().toString());
     out.write("\n");
     out.close();
    }
   catch (IOException e) {
     Log.e("AppService", "Exception appending to log file", e);
  }
```

And that's it. Those three steps – plus WakefulIntentService – is all you need to get control on a periodic basis to do work, waking up the phone as needed.

If you do not need to wake up the phone, you can use an alarm type that leaves off the _WAKEUP part, and you can skip the WakefulIntentService, using a regular IntentService instead. Otherwise, the recipe is the same.

The How and Why of WakefulIntentService

Now, let us take a look "under the covers" to see how WakefulIntentService does its thing and understand a bit more why it is needed.

Concept of WakeLocks

Most of the time in Android, you are developing code that will run while the user is actually using the device. Activities, for example, only really make sense when the device is fully awake and the user is tapping on the screen or keyboard.

Particularly with scheduled background tasks, though, you need to bear in mind that the device will eventually "go to sleep". In full sleep mode, the display, main CPU, and keyboard are all powered off, to maximize battery life. Only on a low-level system event, like an incoming phone call, will anything wake up.

Another thing that will partially wake up the phone is an Intent raised by the AlarmManager. So long as broadcast receivers are processing that Intent, the AlarmManager ensures the CPU will be running (though the screen and keyboard are still off). Once the broadcast receivers are done, the AlarmManager lets the device go back to sleep.

You can achieve the same effect in your code via a WakeLock, obtained via the PowerManager system service. When you acquire a "partial WakeLock" (PARTIAL_WAKE_LOCK), you prevent the CPU from going back to sleep until you release said WakeLock. By proper use of a partial WakeLock, you can ensure the CPU will not get shut off while you are trying to do background work, while still allowing the device to sleep most of the time, in between alarm events.

However, using a WakeLock is a bit tricky, particularly when responding to an alarm Intent, as we will see in the next few sections.

The WakeLock Problem

For a _WAKEUP alarm, the AlarmManager will arrange for the device to stay awake, via a WakeLock, for as long as the BroadcastReceiver's onReceive() method is executing. For some situations, that may be all that is needed. However, onReceive() is called on the main application thread, and Android will kill off the receiver if it takes too long.

Your natural inclination in this case is to have the BroadcastReceiver arrange for a Service to do the long-running work on a background thread, since BroadcastReceiver objects should not be starting their own threads. Perhaps you would use an IntentService, which packages up this "start a Service to do some work in the background" pattern. And, given the preceding section, you might try acquiring a partial WakeLock at the beginning of the work and release it at the end of the work, so the CPU will keep running while your IntentService does its thing.

This strategy will work...some of the time.

The problem is that there is a gap in WakeLock coverage, as depicted in the following diagram:



Figure 57. The WakeLock gap

The BroadcastReceiver will call startService() to send work to the IntentService, but that service will not start up until after onReceive() ends. As a result, there is a window of time between the end of onReceive() and when your IntentService can acquire its own WakeLock. During that window, the device might fall back asleep. Sometimes it will, sometimes it will not.

What you need to do, instead, is arrange for overlapping WakeLock instances. You need to acquire a WakeLock in your BroadcastReceiver, during the onReceive() execution, and hold onto that WakeLock until the work is completed by the IntentService:



Figure 58. The WakeLock overlap

Then you are assured that the device will stay awake as long as the work remains to be done.

WakefulIntentService and WakeLocks

By now, you have noticed that the WakefulIntentService recipe does not have you manage your own WakeLock. That is because WakefulIntentService handles it for you. The reason why WakefulIntentService exists is to manage that WakeLock, because WakeLocks suffer from one major problem: they are not Parcelable, and therefore cannot be passed in an Intent extra. Hence, for our BroadcastReceiver and our WakefulIntentService to use the same WakeLock, they have to be shared via a static data member...which is icky.

WakefulIntentService is designed to hide this icky part from you, so you do not have to worry about it.

But, to understand how WakefulIntentService works, we need to look at the icky part.

Either flavor of sendWakefulWork() on WakefulIntentService eventually routes to a getLock() method:

```
private static final String
LOCK_NAME_STATIC="com.commonsware.cwac.wakeful.WakefulIntentService";
private static volatile PowerManager.WakeLock lockStatic=null;
synchronized private static PowerManager.WakeLock getLock(Context context) {
 if (lockStatic==null) {
   PowerManager
mgr=(PowerManager)context.getSystemService(Context.POWER SERVICE);
    lockStatic=mgr.newWakeLock(PowerManager.PARTIAL WAKE LOCK,
                         LOCK_NAME_STATIC);
   lockStatic.setReferenceCounted(true);
 }
 return(lockStatic);
public static void sendWakefulWork(Context ctxt, Intent i) {
  getLock(ctxt.getApplicationContext()).acquire();
 ctxt.startService(i);
public static void sendWakefulWork(Context ctxt, Class clsService) {
  sendWakefulWork(ctxt, new Intent(ctxt, clsService));
```

The getLock() implementation lazy-creates our WakeLock by getting the PowerManager, creating a new partial WakeLock, and setting it to be reference counted (meaning if it is acquired several times, it takes a corresponding number of release() calls to truly release the lock). If we have already retrieved the WakeLock in a previous invocation, we reuse the same lock.

Back in OnAlarmReceiver, up until this point, the CPU was running because AlarmManager held a partial WakeLock. Now, the CPU is running because both AlarmManager *and* WakefulIntentService hold a partial WakeLock.

Then, sendWakefulWork() starts up our service and exits. Since this is the only thing onReceive() was doing in OnAlarmReceiver, onReceive() exits. Notably, OnAlarmReceiver does not release the WakeLock it acquired. This is important, as we need to ensure that the service can get its work done while the CPU is running. Had we released the WakeLock before returning, it is possible that the device would fall back asleep before our service had a chance to acquire a fresh WakeLock. This is one of the keys of using WakeLock successfully – as needed, use overlapping WakeLock instances to ensure constant coverage as you pass from component to component.

Now, our service will start up and be able to do something, while the CPU is running due to our acquired WakeLock.

So, WakefulIntentService will now get control, under an active WakeLock. Since it is an IntentService subclass, onHandleIntent() is called. Here, we just route control to the subclass' implementation of an abstract doWakefulWork() method, ensuring that we release the WakeLock when the work is done, even if a RuntimeException is raised:

```
@Override
final protected void onHandleIntent(Intent intent) {
   try {
     doWakefulWork(intent);
   }
   finally {
     getLock(this).release();
   }
}
```

As a result, each piece of work that gets sent to the WakefulIntentService will acquire a WakeLock via sendWakefulWork() and will release that WakeLock when doWakefulWork() ends. Once that WakeLock is fully released, the device can fall back asleep.

Background Data Setting

Users can check or uncheck a checkbox in the Settings application that indicates if they want applications to use the Internet in the background. Services employing AlarmManager should honor this setting.

To find out whether background data is allowed, use the ConnectivityManager system service and call getBackgroundDataSetting(). For example, your alarm-triggered BroadcastReceiver could check this before bothering to arrange for the IntentService (or WakefulIntentService) to do work.

You also register watch for the can а BroadcastReceiver to broadcast, also defined ACTION BACKGROUND DATA SETTING CHANGED on ConnectivityManager. For example, you could elect to completely cancel your alarm if the background data setting is flipped to false.

The "Everlasting Service" Anti-Pattern

One anti-pattern that is all too prevalent in Android is the "everlasting service". Such a service is started via startService() and never stops – the component starting it does not stop it and it does not stop itself via stopSelf().

Why is this an anti-pattern?

- The service takes up memory all of the time. This is bad in its own right if the service is not continuously delivering sufficient value to be worth the memory.
- Users, fearing services that sap their device's CPU or RAM, may attack the service with so-called "task killer" applications or may terminate the service via the Settings app, thereby defeating your original goal.
- Android itself, due to user frustration with sloppy developers, will terminate services it deems ill-used, particularly ones that have run for quite some time.

Occasionally, an everlasting service is the right solution. Take a VOIP client, for example. A VOIP client usually needs to hold an open socket with the VOIP server to know about incoming calls. The only way to continuously watch for incoming calls is to continuously hold open the socket. The only

component capable of doing that would be a service, so the service would have to continuously run.

However, in the case of a VOIP client, or a music player, the user is the one specifically requesting the service to run forever. By using startForeground(), a service can ensure it will not be stopped due to old age for cases like this.

As a counter-example, imagine an email client. The client wishes to check for new email messages periodically. The right solution for this is the AlarmManager pattern described earlier in this chapter. The anti-pattern would have a service running constantly, spending most of its time waiting for the polling period to elapse (e.g., via Thread.sleep()). There is no value to the user in taking up RAM to watch the clock tick. Such services should be rewritten to use AlarmManager.

Most of the time, though, it appears that services are simply leaked. That is one advantage of using AlarmManager and an IntentService – it is difficult to leak the service, causing it to run indefinitely. In fact, IntentService in general is a great implementation to use whenever you use the command pattern, as it ensures that the service will shut down eventually. If you use a regular service, be sure to shut it down when it is no longer actively delivering value to the user.

Using System Settings and Services

Android offers a number of system services, usually obtained by getSystemService() from your Activity, Service, or other Context. These are your gateway to all sorts of capabilities, from settings to volume to WiFi. Throughout the course of this book and its companion, we have seen several of these system services. In this chapter, we will take a look at others that may be of value to you in building compelling Android applications.

Setting Expectations

If you have an Android device, you probably have spent some time in the Settings application, tweaking your device to work how you want – ringtones, WiFi settings, USB debugging, etc. Many of those settings are also available via Settings class (in the android.provider package), and particularly the Settings.System and Settings.Secure public inner classes.

Basic Settings

Settings.System allows you to get and, with the WRITE_SETTINGS permission, alter these settings. As one might expect, there are a series of typed getter and setter methods on Settings.System, each taking a key as a parameter. The keys are class constants, such as:

- INSTALL_NON_MARKET_APPS to control whether you can install applications on a device from outside of the Android Market
- HAPTIC_MODE_ENABLED to control whether the user receives "haptic feedback" (vibrations) from things like the MENU button
- ACCELEROMETER_ROTATION to control whether the screen orientation will change based on the position of the device

The SystemServices/Settings project has a SettingsSetter sample application that displays a checklist:

```
<?xml version="1.0" encoding="utf-8"?>
<ListView xmlns:android="http://schemas.android.com/apk/res/android"
android:id="@android:id/list"
android:layout_width="match_parent"
android:layout_height="match_parent"
/>
```



Figure 59. The SettingsSetter application

The checklist itself is filled with a few BooleanSetting objects, which map a display name with a Settings.System key:

```
static class BooleanSetting {
 String key;
 String displayName;
 boolean isSecure=false;
 BooleanSetting(String key, String displayName) {
   this(key, displayName, false);
 }
 BooleanSetting(String key, String displayName,
                boolean isSecure) {
   this.key=key;
   this.displayName=displayName;
   this.isSecure=isSecure;
 }
 @Override
 public String toString() {
   return(displayName);
 }
 boolean isChecked(ContentResolver cr) {
   try {
     int value=0;
     if (isSecure) {
       value=Settings.Secure.getInt(cr, key);
     }
     else {
       value=Settings.System.getInt(cr, key);
     }
     return(value!=0);
   }
   catch (Settings.SettingNotFoundException e) {
     Log.e("SettingsSetter", e.getMessage());
    }
   return(false);
 }
 void setChecked(ContentResolver cr, boolean value) {
   try {
     if (isSecure) {
       Settings.Secure.putInt(cr, key, (value ? 1 : 0));
     }
     else {
       Settings.System.putInt(cr, key, (value ? 1 : 0));
     }
    }
   catch (Throwable t) {
     Log.e("SettingsSetter", "Exception in setChecked()", t);
```

_ } ۲

Three such settings are put in the list, and as the checkboxes are checked and unchecked, the values are passed along to the settings themselves:

```
@Override
public void onCreate(Bundle savedInstanceState) {
  super.onCreate(savedInstanceState);
  setContentView(R.layout.main);
 getListView().setChoiceMode(ListView.CHOICE MODE MULTIPLE);
  setListAdapter(new ArrayAdapter(this,
                                 android.R.layout.simple_list_item_multiple_choi
ce,
                                 settings));
 ContentResolver cr=getContentResolver();
 for (int i=0;i<settings.size();i++) {</pre>
   BooleanSetting s=settings.get(i);
    getListView().setItemChecked(i, s.isChecked(cr));
  }
@Override
protected void onListItemClick(ListView 1, View v,
                             int position, long id) {
 super.onListItemClick(1, v, position, id);
 BooleanSetting s=settings.get(position);
  s.setChecked(getContentResolver(),
              l.isItemChecked(position));
```

The SettingsSetter activity also has an option menu containing four items:

```
<?xml version="1.0" encoding="utf-8"?>
<menu xmlns:android="http://schemas.android.com/apk/res/android">
    <item android:id="@+id/app"
        android:title="Application"
        android:icon="@drawable/ic_menu_manage" />
        <item android:id="@+id/security"
        android:title="Security"
        android:title="Geraide levic_menu_close_clear_cancel" />
        <item android:id="@+id/wireless"
        android:title="Wireless"
        android:icon="@drawable/ic_menu_set_as" />
        <item android:id="@+id/all"</pre>
```

```
android:title="All Settings"
android:icon="@drawable/ic_menu_preferences" />
</menu>
```

These items correspond to four activity Intent values identified by the Settings class:

When an option menu is chosen, the corresponding activity is launched:

```
@Override
public boolean onOptionsItemSelected(MenuItem item) {
   String activity=menuActivities.get(item.getItemId());
   if (activity!=null) {
     startActivity(new Intent(activity));
     return(true);
   }
   return(super.onOptionsItemSelected(item));
}
```

This way, you have your choice of either directly manipulating the settings or merely making it easier for users to get to the Android-supplied activity for manipulating those settings.

Secure Settings

You will notice that if you use the above code and try changing the Android Market setting, it does not seem to take effect. And, if you look at the LogCat output, you will see complaints.

Once upon a time, you could modify this setting, and others like it.

Now, though, these settings are ones that Android deems "secure". The constants have been moved from Settings.System to Settings.Secure, though the old constants are still there, flagged as deprecated.

These so-called "secure" settings are ones that Android does not allow applications to change. While theoretically the WRITE_SECURE_SETTINGS permission resolves this problem, ordinary SDK applications cannot hold that permission. The only option is to display the official Settings activity and let the user change the setting.

Can You Hear Me Now? OK, How About Now?

The fancier the device, the more complicated controlling sound volume becomes.

On a simple MP₃ player, there is usually only one volume control. That is because there is only one source of sound: the music itself, played through speakers or headphones.

In Android, though, there are several sources of sounds:

- Ringing, to signify an incoming call
- Voice calls
- Alarms, such as those raised by the Alarm Clock application
- System sounds (error beeps, USB connection signal, etc.)
- Music, as might come from the MP3 player

Android allows the user to configure each of these volume levels separately. Usually, the user does this via the volume rocker buttons on the device, in the context of whatever sound is being played (e.g., when on a call, the volume buttons change the voice call volume). Also, there is a screen in the Android Settings application that allows you to configure various volume levels.

The AudioService in Android allows you, the developer, to also control these volume levels, for all five "streams" (i.e., sources of sound). In the SystemServices/Volume project, we create a Volumizer application that displays and modifies all five volume levels.

Attaching SeekBars to Volume Streams

The standard widget for allowing choice along a range of integer values is the SeekBar, a close cousin of the ProgressBar. SeekBar has a thumb that the user can slide to choose a value between 0 and some maximum that you set. So, we will use a set of five SeekBar widgets to control our five volume levels.

First, we need to create a layout with a SeekBar per stream:

```
<?xml version="1.0" encoding="utf-8"?>
<TableLayout xmlns:android="http://schemas.android.com/apk/res/android"
 xmlns:app="http://schemas.android.com/apk/res/com.commonsware.android.syssvc.v
olume"
  android:stretchColumns="1"
  android:layout width="match parent"
  android:layout_height="match_parent"
  <TableRow
    android:paddingTop="10px"
    android:paddingBottom="20px">
    <TextView android:text="Alarm:" />
    <SeekBar
      android:id="@+id/alarm"
      android:layout width="match parent"
      android:layout_height="wrap_content"
    />
  </TableRow>
  <TableRow
    android:paddingBottom="20px">
    <TextView android:text="Music:" />
    <SeekBar
      android:id="@+id/music"
      android:layout_width="match_parent"
      android:layout height="wrap content"
    1>
  </TableRow>
  <TableRow
    android:paddingBottom="20px">
    <TextView android:text="Ring:" />
    <SeekBar
      android:id="@+id/ring"
      android:layout width="match parent"
```

```
android:layout height="wrap content"
   1>
 </TableRow>
 <TableRow
   android:paddingBottom="20px">
   <TextView android:text="System:" />
   <SeekBar
     android:id="@+id/system"
     android:layout_width="match_parent"
     android:layout_height="wrap_content"
   1>
 </TableRow>
 <TableRow>
   <TextView android:text="Voice:" />
   <SeekBar
     android:id="@+id/voice"
     android:layout_width="match_parent"
     android:layout_height="wrap_content"
   />
 </TableRow>
</TableLayout>
```

Then, we need to wire up each of those bars in the onCreate() for Volumizer, calling an initBar() method for each of the five bars:

```
public class Volumizer extends Activity {
 SeekBar alarm=null;
 SeekBar music=null;
 SeekBar ring=null;
 SeekBar system=null;
 SeekBar voice=null;
 AudioManager mgr=null;
 @Override
  public void onCreate(Bundle savedInstanceState) {
    super.onCreate(savedInstanceState);
    setContentView(R.layout.main);
   mgr=(AudioManager)getSystemService(Context.AUDIO_SERVICE);
    alarm=(SeekBar)findViewById(R.id.alarm);
    music=(SeekBar)findViewById(R.id.music);
    ring=(SeekBar)findViewById(R.id.ring);
    system=(SeekBar)findViewById(R.id.system);
    voice=(SeekBar)findViewById(R.id.voice);
    initBar(alarm, AudioManager.STREAM_ALARM);
    initBar(music, AudioManager.STREAM_MUSIC);
    initBar(ring, AudioManager.STREAM_RING);
    initBar(system, AudioManager.STREAM SYSTEM);
    initBar(voice, AudioManager.STREAM_VOICE_CALL);
```

```
private void initBar(SeekBar bar, final int stream) {
 bar.setMax(mgr.getStreamMaxVolume(stream));
 bar.setProgress(mgr.getStreamVolume(stream));
 bar.setOnSeekBarChangeListener(new SeekBar.OnSeekBarChangeListener() {
    public void onProgressChanged(SeekBar bar, int progress,
                                 boolean fromUser) {
      mgr.setStreamVolume(stream, progress,
                         AudioManager.FLAG_PLAY_SOUND);
    }
    public void onStartTrackingTouch(SeekBar bar) {
      // no-op
    3
    public void onStopTrackingTouch(SeekBar bar) {
      // no-op
    }
 });
}
```

In initBar(), we set the appropriate size for the SeekBar bar via setMax(), set the initial value via setProgress(), and hook up an OnSeekBarChangeListener to find out when the user slides the bar, so we can set the volume on the stream via the VolumeManager.

The net result is that when the user slides a SeekBar, it adjusts the stream to match:



Figure 60. The Volumizer application

Putting Stuff on the Clipboard

Being able to copy and paste is something that mobile device users seem to want almost as much as their desktop brethren. Most of the time, we think of this as copying and pasting text, and for a long time that was all that was possible on Android. Android 3.0 added in new clipboard capabilities for more rich content, which application developers can choose to support as well. This section will cover both of these techniques.

Using the Clipboard on Android 1.x/2.x

Android has a ClipboardManager that allows you to interact with the clipboard manually, in addition to built-in clipboard facilities for users (e.g., copy/paste context menus on EditText). ClipboardManager, like AudioManager, is obtained via a call to getSystemService():

ClipboardManager cm=(ClipboardManager)getSystemService(CLIPBOARD_SERVICE);

From there, you have three simple methods:

- getText() to retrieve the current clipboard contents
- hasText(), to determine if there are any clipboard contents, so you can react accordingly (e.g., disable "paste" menus when there is nothing to paste)
- setText(), to put text on the clipboard

For example, SystemServices/ClipIP is a little application that puts your current IP address on the clipboard, for pasting into some EditText of an application. The UI is simply an EditText that you can use to test out the paste operation:

```
<?xml version="1.0" encoding="utf-8"?>
<LinearLayout xmlns:android="http://schemas.android.com/apk/res/android"
    android:orientation="vertical"
    android:layout_width="match_parent"
    android:layout_height="match_parent"
    `
    </EditText
    android:layout_width="match_parent"
    android:layout_height="wrap_content"
    android:layout_height="wrap_content"
    android:hint="Long-tap me to paste!"
    />
</LinearLayout>
```

The IPClipper activity's onCreate() does the work of putting text onto the clipboard via setText() and notifying the user via a Toast:
```
cm.setText(addr);
Toast.makeText(this, "IP Address clipped!", Toast.LENGTH_SHORT)
.show();
}
catch (Exception e) {
Log.e("IPClipper", "Exception getting IP address", e);
Toast.makeText(this,
"Could not obtain IP address", e);
Toast.LENGTH_LONG)
.show();
}
```

The work of figuring out what the IP address is can be found in the getLocalIPAddress() method:

```
public String getLocalIPAddress() throws SocketException {
   Enumeration<NetworkInterface> nics=NetworkInterface.getNetworkInterfaces();
   while (nics.hasMoreElements()) {
    NetworkInterface intf=nics.nextElement();
    Enumeration<InetAddress> addrs=intf.getInetAddresses();
    while (addrs.hasMoreElements()) {
        InetAddress addr=addrs.nextElement();
        if (!addr.isLoopbackAddress()) {
            return(addr.getHostAddress().toString());
        }
    }
    return(null);
}
```

This uses the NetworkInterface and InetAddress classes from the java.net package to loop through all network interfaces and find the first one that has a non-localhost (loopback) IP address. The emulator will return 10.0.2.15 all of the time; your device will return whatever IP address it has from WiFi, 3G, etc. If no such address is available, it returns null.

After starting the activity, the user will hopefully see the "successful" Toast:

ាំំ IPClipper	nli 🖻	9:51
Long-tap me to paste!		
IP Address clipped!		

Figure 61. The IPClipper, shortly after launching

Then, if the user long-taps on the EditText and chooses Paste, the IP address is added to the EditText contents:



Figure 62. The IPClipper, after the user pastes the IP address into the EditText

Note that the clipboard is system-wide, not merely application-wide. You can test this by pasting the IP address into the EditText of some other application.

Advanced Clipboard on Android 3.x

Android 3.0 added in new ways of working with ClipboardManager to clip things that transcend simple text. In part, this is expected to be used for advanced copy and paste features between applications. However, this also forms the foundation for a rich drag-and-drop model within an application.

Note that they also moved ClipboardManager to the android.content package. You can still refer to it via the android.text package, for backwards compatibility. However, if your project will be on API Level 11 or higher only, you might consider using the new android.content package edition of the class.

Copying Rich Data to the Clipboard

In addition to methods like setText() to put a piece of plain text on the clipboard, ClipboardManager (as of API Level 11) offers setPrimaryClip(), which allows you to put a ClipData object on the clipboard.

What's a ClipData? In some respects, it is whatever you want. It can hold:

- plain text
- a Uri (e.g., to a piece of music)
- an Intent

The Uri means that you can put anything on the clipboard that can be referenced by a Uri... and if there is nothing in Android that lets you reference some data via a Uri, you can invent your own content provider to handle that chore for you. Furthermore, a single ClipData can actually hold as many of these as you want, each represented as individual ClipData.Item objects. As such, the possibilities are endless.

There are static factory methods on ClipData, such as newUri(), that you can use to create your ClipData objects. In fact, that is what we use in the SystemServices/ClipMusic sample project and the MusicClipper activity.

MusicClipper has the classic two-big-button layout:

```
<?xml version="1.0" encoding="utf-8"?>
<LinearLayout xmlns:android="http://schemas.android.com/apk/res/android"</pre>
  android:orientation="vertical"
  android:layout_width="match_parent"
  android:layout height="match parent"
  >
 <Button android:id="@+id/pick"
    android:layout_width="match_parent"
    android:layout_height="match_parent"
    android:layout weight="1"
    android:text="Pick"
    android:onClick="pickMusic"
  />
  <Button android:id="@+id/view"
    android:layout_width="match_parent"
    android:layout_height="match_parent"
```

```
android:layout_weight="1"
android:text="Play"
android:onClick="playMusic"
/>
</LinearLayout>
```



Figure 63. The Music Clipper main screen

In onCreate(), we get our hands on our ClipboardManager system service:



Tapping the "Pick" button will let you pick a piece of music, courtesy of the pickMusic() method wired to that Button object:

```
public void pickMusic(View v) {
    Intent i=new Intent(Intent.ACTION_GET_CONTENT);
    i.setType("audio/*");
    startActivityForResult(i, PICK_REQUEST);
}
```

```
296
```

Here, we tell Android to let us pick a piece of music from any available audio MIME type (audio/*). Fortunately, Android has an activity that lets us do that:



Figure 64. The XOOM tablet's music track picker

We get the result in onActivityResult(), since we used startActivityForResult() to pick the music. There, we package up the content:// Uri to the music into a ClipData object and put it on the clipboard:

Pasting Rich Data from the Clipboard

The catch with rich data on the clipboard is that somebody has to know about the sort of information you are placing on the clipboard. Eventually, the Android development community will work out common practices in this area. Right now, though, you can certainly use it within your own application (e.g., clipping a note and pasting it into another folder).

Since putting ClipData onto the clipboard involves a call to setPrimaryClip(), it should not be surprising that the reverse operation – getting a ClipData from the clipboard – uses getPrimaryClip(). However, since you do not know where this clip came from, you need to validate that it has what you expect and to let the user know when the clipboard contents are not something you can leverage.

The "Play" button in our UI is wired to a playMusic() method. This will only work when we have pasted a Uri ClipData to the clipboard pointing to a piece of music. Since we cannot be sure that the user has done that, we have to sniff around:

```
public void playMusic(View v) {
   ClipData clip=clipboard.getPrimaryClip();
   if (clip==null) {
      Toast.makeText(this, "There is no clip!", Toast.LENGTH_LONG).show();
   }
   else {
      ClipData.Item item=clip.getItemAt(0);
      Uri song=item.getUri();
      if (song!=null &&
          getContentResolver().getType(song).startsWith("audio/")) {
          startActivity(new Intent(Intent.ACTION_VIEW, song));
      }
      else {
          Toast.makeText(this, "There is no song!", Toast.LENGTH_LONG).show();
      }
   }
}
```

First, there may be nothing on the clipboard, in which case the ClipData returned by getPrimaryClip() would be null. Or, there may be stuff on the clipboard, but it may not have a Uri associated with it (getUri() on

ClipData). Even then, the Uri may point to something other than music, so even if we get a Uri, we need to use a ContentResolver to check the MIME type (getContentResolver().getType()) and make sure it seems like it is music (e.g., starts with audio/). Then, and only then, does it make sense to try to start an ACTION_VIEW activity on that Uri and hope that something useful happens. Assuming you clipped a piece of music with the "Pick" button, "Play" will kick off playback of that song.

ClipData and Drag-and-Drop

Android 3.0 also introduced Android's first built-in drag-and-drop framework. One might expect that this would related entirely to View and ViewGroup objects and have nothing to do with the clipboard. In reality, the drag-and-drop framework leverages ClipData to say what it is that is being dragged and dropped. You call startDrag() on a View, supplying a ClipData object, along with some objects to help render the "shadow" that is the visual representation of this drag operation. A View that can receive objects "dropped" via drag-and-drop needs to register an OnDragListener to receive drag events as the user slides the shadow over top of the View in question. If the user lifts their finger, thereby dropping the shadow, the recipient View will get an ACTION_DROP drag event, and can get the ClipData out of the event.

The Rest of the Gang

There are quite a few system services you can get from getSystemService(). Beyond the ones profiled in this chapter, you have access to:

- AccessibilityManager, for being notified of key system events (e.g., activities starting) that might be relayed to users via haptic feedback, audio prompts, or other non-visual cues
- AccountManager, for working with Android's system of user accounts and synchronization
- ActivityManager, for getting more information about what processes and components are presently running on the device
- AlarmManager, for scheduled tasks (a.k.a., "cron jobs"), covered elsewhere in this book

- ConnectivityManager, for a high-level look as to what sort of network the device is connected to for data (e.g., WiFi, 3G)
- DevicePolicyManager, for accessing device administration capabilities, such as wiping the device
- DownloadManager, for downloading large files on behalf of the user, covered in *The Busy Coder's Guide to Android Development*
- DropBoxManager, for maintaining your own ring buffers of logging information akin to LogCat
- InputMethodManager, for working with input method editors
- KeyguardManager, for locking and unlocking the keyguard, where possible
- LayoutInflater, for inflating layout XML files into Views, covered in *The Busy Coder's Guide to Android Development*
- LocationManager, for determining the device's location (e.g., GPS), covered in *The Busy Coder's Guide to Android Development*
- NotificationManager, for putting icons in the status bar and otherwise alerting users to things that have occurred asynchronously, covered in *The Busy Coder's Guide to Android Development*
- PowerManager, for obtaining WakeLock objects and such, covered elsewhere in this book
- SearchManager, for interacting with the global search system search in general is covered elsewhere in this book
- SensorManager, for accessing data about sensors, such as the accelerometer
- TelephonyManager, for finding out about the state of the phone and related data (e.g., SIM card details)
- UiModeManager, for dealing with different "UI modes", such as being docked in a car or desk dock
- Vibrator, for shaking the phone (e.g., haptic feedback)

- WifiManager, for getting more details about the active or available WiFi networks
- WindowManager, mostly for accessing details about the default display for the device

Content Provider Theory

Android publishes data to you via an abstraction known as a "content provider". Access to contacts and the call log, for example, are given to you via a set of content providers. In a few places, Android expects you to supply a content provider, such as for integrating your own search suggestions with the Android Quick Search Box. And, content providers are one way for you to supply data to third party applications, or to consume information from third party applications. As such, content providers have the potential to be something you would encounter frequently, even if in practice they do not seem used much.

Using a Content Provider

Any Uri in Android that begins with the content:// scheme represents a resource served up by a content provider. Content providers offer data encapsulation using Uri instances as handles – you neither know nor care where the data represented by the Uri comes from, so long as it is available to you when needed. The data could be stored in a SQLite database, or in flat files, or retrieved off a device, or be stored on some far-off server accessed over the Internet.

Given a Uri, you may be able to perform basic CRUD (create, read, update, delete) operations using a content provider. Uri instances can represent either collections or individual pieces of content. Given a collection Uri, you may be able to create new pieces of content via insert operations. Given an instance Uri, you may be able to read data represented by the Uri, update

that data, or delete the instance outright. Or, given an Uri, you may be able to open up a handle to what amounts to a file, that you can read and, possibly, write to.

These are all phrased as "may" because the content provider system is a facade. The actual implementation of a content provider dictates what you can and cannot do, and not all content providers will support all capabilities.

Pieces of Me

The simplified model of the construction of a content Uri is the scheme, the namespace of data, and, optionally, the instance identifier, all separated by slashes in URL-style notation. The scheme of a content Uri is always content://.

So, a content Uri of content://constants/5 represents the constants instance with an identifier of 5.

The combination of the scheme and the namespace is known as the "base Uri" of a content provider, or a set of data supported by a content provider. In the example above, content://constants is the base Uri for a content provider that serves up information about "constants" (in this case, physical constants).

The base Uri can be more complicated. For example, if the base Uri for contacts were content://contacts/people, the contacts content provider may serve up other data using other base Uri values.

The base Uri represents a collection of instances. The base Uri combined with an instance identifier (e.g., 5) represents a single instance.

Most of the Android APIs expect these to be Uri objects, though in common discussion, it is simpler to think of them as strings. The Uri.parse() static method creates a Uri out of the string representation.

Getting a Handle

So, where do these Uri instances come from?

The most popular starting point, if you know the type of data you want to work with, is to get the base Uri from the content provider itself in code. For example, CONTENT_URI is the base Uri for contacts represented as people – this maps to content://contacts/people. If you just need the collection, this Uri works as-is; if you need an instance and know its identifier, you can call addId() on the Uri to inject it, so you have a Uri for the instance.

You might also get Uri instances handed to you from other sources, such as getting Uri handles for contacts via sub-activities responding to ACTION_PICK intents. In this case, the Uri is truly an opaque handle...unless you decide to pick it apart using the various getters on the Uri class.

You can also hard-wire literal String objects (e.g., "content://contacts/people") and convert them into Uri instances via Uri.parse(). This is not an ideal solution, as the base Uri values could conceivably change over time. For example, the contacts content provider's base Uri is no longer content://contacts/people due to an overhaul of that subsystem. However, when you integrate with content providers from third parties, most likely you will not have a choice but to "hard-wire" in the content Uri based on a string.

The Database-Style API

Of the two flavors of API that a content provider may support, the database-style API is more prevalent. Using a ContentResolver, you can perform standard "CRUD" operations (create, read, update, delete) using what looks like a SQL interface.

Makin' Queries

Given a base Uri, you can run a query to return data out of the content provider related to that Uri. This has much of the feel of SQL: you specify

the "columns" to return, the constraints to determine which "rows" to return, a sort order, etc. The difference is that this request is being made of a content provider, not directly of some database (e.g., SQLite).

While you can conduct a query using a ContentResolver, another approach is the managedQuery() method available to your activity. This method takes five parameters:

- 1. The base Uri of the content provider to query, or the instance Uri of a specific object to query
- 2. An array of properties (think "columns") from that content provider that you want returned by the query
- 3. A constraint statement, functioning like a SQL WHERE clause
- 4. An optional set of parameters to bind into the constraint clause, replacing any ? that appear there
- 5. An optional sort statement, functioning like a SQL ORDER BY clause

This method returns a Cursor object, which you can use to retrieve the data returned by the query.

This will hopefully make more sense given an example.

Our content provider examples come from the ContentProvider/ConstantsPlus sample application, specifically the ConstantsBrowser class. Here, we make a call to our ContentProvider via managedQuery():

In the call to managedQuery(), we provide:

- The Uri passed into the activity by the caller (CONTENT_URI), in this case representing the collection of physical constants managed by the content provider
- A list of properties to retrieve (see code below)

• Three null values, indicating that we do not need a constraint clause (the Uri represents the instance we need), nor parameters for the constraint, nor a sort order (we should only get one entry back)

```
@Override
public void onCreate(Bundle savedInstanceState) {
    super.onCreate(savedInstanceState);
```

The biggest "magic" here is the list of properties. The lineup of what properties are possible for a given content provider should be provided by the documentation (or source code) for the content provider itself. In this case, we define logical values on the Provider content provider implementation class that represent the various properties (namely, the unique identifier, the display name or title, and the value of the constant).

Adapting to the Circumstances

Now that we have a Cursor via managedQuery(), we have access to the query results and can do whatever we want with them. You might, for example, manually extract data from the Cursor to populate widgets or other objects.

However, if the goal of the query was to return a list from which the user should choose an item, you probably should consider using SimpleCursorAdapter. This class bridges between the Cursor and a selection widget, such as a ListView or Spinner. Pour the Cursor into a SimpleCursorAdapter, hand the adapter off to the widget, and you are set – your widget will show the available options.

For example, here is the onCreate() method from ContentProvider/ConstantsBrowser, which gives the user a list of physical constants:

```
ListAdapter adapter=new SimpleCursorAdapter(this,
R.layout.row, constantsCursor,
new String[] {Provider.Constants.TITLE,
Provider.Constants.VALUE},
new int[] {R.id.title, R.id.value});
```

setListAdapter(adapter);

```
registerForContextMenu(getListView());
}
@Override
public boolean onCreateOptionsMenu(Menu menu) {
    menu.add(Menu.NONE, ADD_ID, Menu.NONE, "Add")
        .setIcon(R.drawable.add)
        .setAlphabeticShortcut('a');
```

After executing the managedQuery() and getting the Cursor, ConstantsBrowser creates a SimpleCursorAdapter with the following parameters:

- The activity (or other Context) creating the adapter; in this case, the ConstantsBrowser itself
- The identifier for a layout to be used for rendering the list entries (R.layout.row)
- The cursor (constantsCursor)
- The properties to pull out of the cursor and use for configuring the list entry View instances (TITLE and VALUE)
- The corresponding identifiers of TextView widgets in the list entry layout that those properties should go into (R.id.title and R.id.value)

If you need more control over the views than you can reasonably achieve with the stock view construction logic, subclass SimpleCursorAdapter and override getView() to create your own widgets to go into the list, as demonstrated earlier in this book.

And, of course, you can manually manipulate the Cursor (e.g., moveToFirst(), getString()), just like you can with a database Cursor.

Give and Take

Of course, content providers would be astonishingly weak if you couldn't add or remove data from them, only update what is there. Fortunately, content providers offer these abilities as well.

To insert data into a content provider, you have two options available on the ContentProvider interface (available through getContentProvider() to your activity):

- 1. Use insert() with a collection Uri and a ContentValues structure describing the initial set of data to put in the row
- 2. Use bulkInsert() with a collection Uri and an array of ContentValues structures to populate several rows at once

The insert() method returns a Uri for you to use for future operations on that new object. The bulkInsert() method returns the number of created rows; you would need to do a query to get back at the data you just inserted.

For example, here is a snippet of code from ConstantsBrowser to insert a new constant into the content provider, given a DialogWrapper that can provide access to the title and value of the constant:

```
getContentResolver().insert(Provider.Constants.CONTENT_URI,
                               values);
 constantsCursor.requery();
private void processDelete(long rowId) {
 Uri uri=ContentUris.withAppendedId(Provider.Constants.CONTENT URI,
                                   rowId);
 getContentResolver().delete(uri, null, null);
```

Since we already have an outstanding Cursor for the content provider's contents, we call requery() on that to update the Cursor's contents. This, in turn, will update any SimpleCursorAdapter you may have wrapping the Cursor – and that will update any selection widgets (e.g., ListView) you have using the adapter.

To delete one or more rows from the content provider, use the delete() method on ContentResolver. This works akin to a SQL DELETE statement and takes three parameters:

- 1. A Uri representing the collection (or instance) from which you wish to delete rows
- 2. A constraint statement, functioning like a SQL WHERE clause, to determine which rows should be deleted
- 3. An optional set of parameters to bind into the constraint clause, replacing any ? that appear there

The File System-Style API

Sometimes, what you are trying to retrieve does not look like a set of rows and columns, but rather looks like a file. For example, the MediaStore content provider manages the index of all music, video, and image files available on external storage, and you can use MediaStore to open up any such file you find.

Some content providers, like MediaStore, support both the database-style and file system-style APIs – you query to find media that matches your criteria, then can open some file that matches. Other content providers might only support the file system-style API.

Given a Uri that represents some file managed by the content provider, you can use openInputStream() and openOutputStream() on a ContentResolver to access an InputStream or OutputStream, respectively. Note, though, that not all content providers may support both modes. For example, a content provider that serves files stored inside the application (e.g., assets in the APK file), you will not be able to get an OutputStream to modify the content.

Building Content Providers

Building a content provider is probably the most complicated and tedious task in all of Android development. There are many requirements of a content provider, in terms of methods to implement and public data members to supply. And, until you try using it, you have no great way of telling if you did any of it correctly (versus, say, building an activity and getting validation errors from the resource compiler). That being said, building a content provider is of huge importance if your application wishes to make data available to other applications. If your application is keeping its data solely to itself, you may be able to avoid creating a content provider, just accessing the data directly from your activities. But, if you want your data to possibly be used by others – for example, you are building a feed reader and you want other programs to be able to access the feeds you are downloading and caching – then a content provider is right for you.

This chapter shows some sample bits of code from the ContentProvider/ConstantsPlus application. This is the same basic application as was first shown back in the chapter on database access in *The Busy Coder's Guide to Android Development*, but rewritten to pull the database logic into a content provider, which is then used by the activity.

First, Some Dissection

As was discussed in the previous chapter, the content Uri is the linchpin behind accessing data inside a content provider. When using a content provider, all you really need to know is the provider's base Uri; from there you can run queries as needed, or construct a Uri to a specific instance if you know the instance identifier.

When building a content provider, though, you need to know a bit more about the innards of the content Uri.

A content Uri has two to four pieces, depending on situation:

- It always has a scheme (content://), indicating it is a content Uri instead of a Uri to a Web resource (http://).
- It always has an authority, which is the first path segment after the scheme. The authority is a unique string identifying the content provider that handles the content associated with this Uri.
- It may have a data type path, which is the list of path segments after the authority and before the instance identifier (if any). The data type path can be empty, if the content provider only handles one

type of content. It can be a single path segment (foo) or a chain of path segments (foo/bar/goo) as needed to handle whatever data access scenarios the content provider requires.

• It may have an instance identifier, which is an integer identifying a specific piece of content. A content Uri without an instance identifier refers to the collection of content represented by the authority (and, where provided, the data path).

For example, a content Uri could be as simple as content://sekrits, which would refer to the collection of content held by whatever content provider was tied to the sekrits authority (e.g., SecretsProvider). Or, it could be as complex as content://sekrits/card/pin/17, which would refer to a piece of content (identified as 17) managed by the sekrits content provider that is of the data type card/pin.

Next, Some Typing

Next, you need to come up with some MIME types corresponding with the content your content provider will provide.

Android uses both the content Uri and the MIME type as ways to identify content on the device. A collection content Uri – or, more accurately, the combination authority and data type path – should map to a pair of MIME types. One MIME type will represent the collection; the other will represent an instance. These map to the Uri patterns above for no-identifier and identifier, respectively. As you saw earlier in this book, you can fill in a MIME type into an Intent to route the Intent to the proper activity (e.g., ACTION_PICK on a collection MIME type to call up a selection activity to pick an instance out of that collection).

The collection MIME type should be of the form vnd.X.cursor.dir/Y, where x is the name of your firm, organization, or project, and Y is a dot-delimited type name. So, for example, you might use vnd.tlagency.cursor.dir/sekrits.card.pin as the MIME type for your collection of secrets.

The instance MIME type should be of the form vnd.X.cursor.item/Y, usually for the same values of X and Y as you used for the collection MIME type (though that is not strictly required).

Implementing the Database-Style API

Just as an activity and receiver are both Java classes, so is a content provider. So, the big step in creating a content provider is crafting its Java class, with a base class of ContentProvider.

In your subclass of ContentProvider, you are responsible for implementing five methods that, when combined, perform the services that a content provider is supposed to offer to activities wishing to create, read, update, or delete content via the database-style API.

Implement onCreate()

As with an activity, the main entry point to a content provider is onCreate(). Here, you can do whatever initialization you want. In particular, here is where you should lazy-initialize your data store. For example, if you plan on storing your data in such-and-so directory on an SD card, with an XML file serving as a "table of contents", you should check and see if that directory and XML file are there and, if not, create them so the rest of your content provider knows they are out there and available for use.

Similarly, if you have rewritten your content provider sufficiently to cause the data store to shift structure, you should check to see what structure you have now and adjust it if what you have is out of date.

Implement query()

As one might expect, the query() method is where your content provider gets details on a query some activity wants to perform. It is up to you to actually process said query.

The query method gets, as parameters:

- A Uri representing the collection or instance being queried
- A String[] representing the list of properties that should be returned
- A String representing what amounts to a SQL WHERE clause, constraining which instances should be considered for the query results
- A String[] representing values to "pour into" the WHERE clause, replacing any ? found there
- A String representing what amounts to a SQL ORDER BY clause

You are responsible for interpreting these parameters however they make sense and returning a Cursor that can be used to iterate over and access the data.

As you can imagine, these parameters are aimed towards people using a SQLite database for storage. You are welcome to ignore some of these parameters (e.g., you elect not to try to roll your own SQL WHERE clause parser), but you need to document that fact so activities only attempt to query you by instance Uri and not using parameters you elect not to handle.

Implement insert()

Your insert() method will receive a Uri representing the collection and a ContentValues structure with the initial data for the new instance. You are responsible for creating the new instance, filling in the supplied data, and returning a Uri to the new instance.

Implement update()

Your update() method gets the Uri of the instance or collection to change, a ContentValues structure with the new values to apply, a String for a SQL WHERE clause, and a String[] with parameters to use to replace ? found in the

WHERE clause. Your responsibility is to identify the instance(s) to be modified (based on the Uri and WHERE clause), then replace those instances' current property values with the ones supplied.

This will be annoying, unless you are using SQLite for storage. Then, you can pretty much pass all the parameters you received to the update() call to the database, though the update() call will vary slightly depending on whether you are updating one instance or several.

Implement delete()

As with update(), delete() receives a Uri representing the instance or collection to work with and a WHERE clause and parameters. If the activity is deleting a single instance, the Uri should represent that instance and the WHERE clause may be null. But, the activity might be requesting to delete an open-ended set of instances, using the WHERE clause to constrain which ones to delete.

As with update(), though, this is simple if you are using SQLite for database storage (sense a theme?). You can let it handle the idiosyncrasies of parsing and applying the WHERE clause – all you have to do is call delete() on the database.

Implement getType()

The last method you need to implement is getType(). This takes a Uri and returns the MIME type associated with that Uri. The Uri could be a collection or an instance Uri; you need to determine which was provided and return the corresponding MIME type.

Update the Manifest

The glue tying the content provider implementation to the rest of your application resides in your AndroidManifest.xml file. Simply add a <provider> element as a child of the <application> element, such as:

```
<?xml version="1.0" encoding="utf-8"?>
<manifest package="com.commonsware.android.constants"
         xmlns:android="http://schemas.android.com/apk/res/android">
 <application android:icon="@drawable/cw"
              android:label="@string/app name">
    <provider android:authorities="com.commonsware.android.constants.Provider"</pre>
             android:name=".Provider" />
    <activity android:label="@string/app name"
              android:name=".ConstantsBrowser">
     <intent-filter>
       <action android:name="android.intent.action.MAIN" />
        <category android:name="android.intent.category.LAUNCHER" />
     </intent-filter>
    </activity>
 </application>
 <supports-screens android:anyDensity="true"
                   android:largeScreens="true"
                    android:normalScreens="true"
                    android:smallScreens="true" />
</manifest>
```

The android:name property is the name of the content provider class, with a leading dot to indicate it is in the stock namespace for this application's classes (just like you use with activities).

The android:authorities property should be a semicolon-delimited list of the authority values supported by the content provider. Recall, from earlier in this chapter, that each content Uri is made up of a scheme, authority, data type path, and instance identifier. Each authority from each CONTENT_URI value should be included in the android:authorities list.

Now, when Android encounters a content Uri, it can sift through the providers registered through manifests to find a matching authority. That tells Android which application and class implements the content provider, and from there Android can bridge between the calling activity and the content provider being called.

Add Notify-On-Change Support

A feature that your content provider can to its clients is notify-on-change support. This means that your content provider will let clients know if the data for a given content Uri changes.

For example, suppose you have created a content provider that retrieves RSS and Atom feeds from the Internet based on the user's feed subscriptions (via OPML, perhaps). The content provider offers read-only access to the contents of the feeds, with an eye towards several applications on the phone using those feeds versus everyone implementing their own feed poll-fetch-and-cache system. You have also implemented a service that will get updates to those feeds asynchronously, updating the underlying data store. Your content provider could alert applications using the feeds that such-and-so feed was updated, so applications using that specific feed can refresh and get the latest data.

On the content provider side, to do this, call notifyChange() on your ContentResolver instance (available in your content provider via getContext().getContentResolver()). This takes two parameters: the Uri of the piece of content that changed and the ContentObserver that initiated the change. In many cases, the latter will be null; a non-null value simply means that the observer that initiated the change will not be notified of its own changes.

On the content consumer side, an activity can call registerContentObserver() on its ContentResolver (via getContentResolver()). This ties a ContentObserver instance to a supplied Uri – the observer will be notified whenever notifyChange() is called for that specific Uri. When the consumer is done with the Uri, unregisterContentObserver() releases the connection.

Implementing the File System-Style API

If you want consumers of your ContentProvider to be able to call openInputStream() or openOutputStream() on a Uri, you will need to implement the openFile() method. This method is optional – if you are not supporting openInputStream() or openOutputStream(), you do not need to implement openFile() at all.

The openFile() method returns a curious object called a ParcelFileDescriptor. Given that, the ContentResolver can obtain the

InputStream or OutputStream that was requested. There are various static methods on ParcelFileDescriptor to create instances of it, such as an open() method that takes a File object as the first parameter. Note that this works for both files on external storage and files within your own project's applocal file storage (e.g., getFilesDir()).

Note that you are welcome to also implement onCreate(), if you wish to do some initialization when the content provider starts up. Also, you will have to provide do-nothing implementations of query(), insert(), update(), and delete(), as those methods are mandatory in ContentProvider subclasses, even if you do not plan to support them.

Issues with Content Providers

Content providers are not without their issues.

The biggest complaint seems to be the lack of an onDestroy() companion to the onCreate() method you can implement. Hence, if you open a database in onCreate(), you close it...never. Sometimes, you can alleviate this by initializing things on demand and releasing them immediately, such as opening a database as part of insert() and closing it within the same method. This does not always work, however – for example, you cannot close the database you query in query(), since the Cursor you return would become invalid.

The fact that ContentProvider is effectively a facade means that a consumer of a ContentProvider has no idea what to expect. It is up to documentation to explain what Uri values can be used, what columns can be returned, what query syntax is supported, and so on. And, the fact that it is a facade means that much of the richness of the SQLite interface is lost, such as GROUP BY. To top it off, the API supported by ContentProvider is rather limited – if what you want to share does not look like a database and does not look like a file, it may be difficult to force it into the ContentProvider API.

However, perhaps the biggest problem is that, by default, content providers are exported, meaning they can be accessed by other processes (third party

applications or the Android OS). Sometimes this is desired. Sometimes, it is not. You need to set android:exported to be false on your manifest entry for the content provider if you want to keep the provider private to your application. This is the inverse of all other components, which are private by default, unless they have an <intent-filter>.

Content Provider Implementation Patterns

The previous chapter focused on the concepts, classes, and methods behind content providers. This chapter more closely examines some implementations of content providers, organized into simple patterns.

The Single-Table Database-Backed Content Provider

The simplest database-backed content provider is one that only attempts to expose a single table's worth of data to consumers. The CallLog content provider works this way, for example.

Step #1: Create a Provider Class

We start off with a custom subclass of ContentProvider, named, cunningly enough, Provider. Here we need the database-style API methods: query(), insert(), update(), delete(), and getType().

onCreate()

Here is the onCreate() method for Provider, from the ContentProvider/ConstantsPlus sample application:

```
@Override
public boolean onCreate() {
    db=(new DatabaseHelper(getContext())).getWritableDatabase();
    return((db == null) ? false : true);
}
```

While that does not seem all that special, the "magic" is in the private DatabaseHelper object, a fairly conventional SQLiteOpenHelper implementation:

```
package com.commonsware.android.constants;
import android.content.ContentValues;
import android.content.Context;
import android.database.Cursor;
import android.database.sqlite.SQLiteOpenHelper;
import android.database.sqlite.SQLiteDatabase;
import android.hardware.SensorManager;
class DatabaseHelper extends SQLiteOpenHelper {
 private static final String DATABASE_NAME="constants.db";
 public DatabaseHelper(Context context) {
   super(context, DATABASE_NAME, null, 1);
  }
 @Override
 public void onCreate(SQLiteDatabase db) {
   Cursor c=db.rawQuery("SELECT name FROM sqlite_master WHERE type='table' AND
name='constants'", null);
   try {
      if (c.getCount()==0) {
       db.execSQL("CREATE TABLE constants (_id INTEGER PRIMARY KEY
AUTOINCREMENT, title TEXT, value REAL);");
        ContentValues cv=new ContentValues();
        cv.put(Provider.Constants.TITLE, "Gravity, Death Star I");
        cv.put(Provider.Constants.VALUE, SensorManager.GRAVITY DEATH STAR I);
        db.insert("constants", Provider.Constants.TITLE, cv);
        cv.put(Provider.Constants.TITLE, "Gravity, Earth");
        cv.put(Provider.Constants.VALUE, SensorManager.GRAVITY_EARTH);
        db.insert("constants", Provider.Constants.TITLE, cv);
        cv.put(Provider.Constants.TITLE, "Gravity, Jupiter");
        cv.put(Provider.Constants.VALUE, SensorManager.GRAVITY_JUPITER);
        db.insert("constants", Provider.Constants.TITLE, cv);
        cv.put(Provider.Constants.TITLE, "Gravity, Mars");
```

```
cv.put(Provider.Constants.VALUE, SensorManager.GRAVITY_MARS);
       db.insert("constants", Provider.Constants.TITLE, cv);
       cv.put(Provider.Constants.TITLE, "Gravity, Mercury");
       cv.put(Provider.Constants.VALUE, SensorManager.GRAVITY_MERCURY);
       db.insert("constants", Provider.Constants.TITLE, cv);
       cv.put(Provider.Constants.TITLE, "Gravity, Moon");
       cv.put(Provider.Constants.VALUE, SensorManager.GRAVITY_MOON);
       db.insert("constants", Provider.Constants.TITLE, cv);
       cv.put(Provider.Constants.TITLE, "Gravity, Neptune");
       cv.put(Provider.Constants.VALUE, SensorManager.GRAVITY_NEPTUNE);
       db.insert("constants", Provider.Constants.TITLE, cv);
       cv.put(Provider.Constants.TITLE, "Gravity, Pluto");
       cv.put(Provider.Constants.VALUE, SensorManager.GRAVITY_PLUTO);
       db.insert("constants", Provider.Constants.TITLE, cv);
       cv.put(Provider.Constants.TITLE, "Gravity, Saturn");
       cv.put(Provider.Constants.VALUE, SensorManager.GRAVITY_SATURN);
       db.insert("constants", Provider.Constants.TITLE, cv);
       cv.put(Provider.Constants.TITLE, "Gravity, Sun");
       cv.put(Provider.Constants.VALUE, SensorManager.GRAVITY_SUN);
       db.insert("constants", Provider.Constants.TITLE, cv);
       cv.put(Provider.Constants.TITLE, "Gravity, The Island");
       cv.put(Provider.Constants.VALUE, SensorManager.GRAVITY_THE_ISLAND);
       db.insert("constants", Provider.Constants.TITLE, cv);
       cv.put(Provider.Constants.TITLE, "Gravity, Uranus");
       cv.put(Provider.Constants.VALUE, SensorManager.GRAVITY_URANUS);
       db.insert("constants", Provider.Constants.TITLE, cv);
       cv.put(Provider.Constants.TITLE, "Gravity, Venus");
       cv.put(Provider.Constants.VALUE, SensorManager.GRAVITY_VENUS);
       db.insert("constants", Provider.Constants.TITLE, cv);
     }
   }
   finally {
     c.close();
   }
 }
 @Override
 public void onUpgrade(SQLiteDatabase db, int oldVersion, int newVersion) {
   android.util.Log.w("Constants", "Upgrading database, which will destroy all
old data");
   db.execSQL("DROP TABLE IF EXISTS constants");
   onCreate(db);
 }
```

Note that we are opening the database here and never closing it. That is because there is no onDestroy() (or equivalent) method in a ContentProvider. While we might be tempted to open and close the database on every operation, that will not work, as we cannot close the database and still hand back a live Cursor from the database. Hence, we leave it open and assume that the core Android team is somehow making sure our database is not corrupted when Android shuts down the ContentProvider.

query()

For SQLite-backed storage providers like this one, the query() method implementation should be largely boilerplate. Use a SQLiteQueryBuilder to convert the various parameters into a single SQL statement, then use query() on the builder to actually invoke the query and give you a Cursor back. The Cursor is what your query() method then returns.

For example, here is query() from Provider:

```
@Override
public Cursor query(Uri url, String[] projection, String selection,
                     String[] selectionArgs, String sort) {
  SQLiteQueryBuilder qb=new SQLiteQueryBuilder();
  qb.setTables(getTableName());
 String orderBy;
  if (TextUtils.isEmpty(sort)) {
   orderBy=getDefaultSortOrder();
  }
  else {
    orderBy=sort;
  }
 Cursor c=qb.query(db, projection, selection, selectionArgs,
                    null, null, orderBy);
  c.setNotificationUri(getContext().getContentResolver(), url);
  return(c);
```

We create a SQLiteQueryBuilder and pour the query details into the builder, notably the name of the table that we query against and the sort order

(substituting in a default sort if the caller did not request one). When done, we use the query() method on the builder to get a Cursor for the results.

The query() implementation, like many of the other methods on Provider, delegates much of the Provider-specific information to private methods, such as:

- the name of the table (getTableName())
- the default sort order (getDefaultSortOrder())

insert()

Since this is a SQLite-backed content provider, once again, the implementation is mostly boilerplate: validate that all required values were supplied by the activity, merge your own notion of default values with the supplied data, and call insert() on the database to actually create the instance.

For example, here is insert() from Provider:

```
@Override
public Uri insert(Uri url, ContentValues initialValues) {
    long rowID=db.insert(getTableName(), Constants.TITLE, initialValues);
    if (rowID>0) {
        Uri uri=ContentUris.withAppendedId(getContentUri(), rowID);
        getContext().getContentResolver().notifyChange(uri, null);
        return(uri);
    }
    throw new SQLException("Failed to insert row into " + url);
}
```

The pattern is the same as before: use the provider particulars plus the data to be inserted to actually do the insertion.

update()

Here is update() from Provider:

```
@Override
public int update(Uri url, ContentValues values,
                  String where, String[] whereArgs) {
  int count;
 if (isCollectionUri(url)) {
   count=db.update(getTableName(), values, where, whereArgs);
  }
 else {
   String segment=url.getPathSegments().get(1);
   count=db
        .update(getTableName(), values, getIdColumnName()+"="
           + segment
            + (!TextUtils.isEmpty(where) ? " AND (" + where
                + ')' : ""), whereArgs);
  }
 getContext().getContentResolver().notifyChange(url, null);
  return(count);
```

In this case, updates can either be to a specific instance or applied across the entire collection, so we check the Uri (isCollectionUri()) and, if it is an update for the collection, just perform the update. If we are updating a single instance, we need to add a constraint to the WHERE clause to only update for the requested row.

delete()

Similarly, here is delete() from Provider:

```
@Override
public int delete(Uri url, String where, String[] whereArgs) {
    int count;
    if (isCollectionUri(url)) {
        count=db.delete(getTableName(), where, whereArgs);
    }
    else {
        String segment=url.getPathSegments().get(1);
        count=db
        .delete(getTableName(), getIdColumnName()+"="
            + segment
            + (!TextUtils.isEmpty(where) ? " AND (" + where
            + ')' : ""), whereArgs);
    }
}
```

```
getContext().getContentResolver().notifyChange(url, null);
return(count);
```

This is almost a clone of the update() implementation described above – either delete a subset of the entire collection or delete a single instance (if it also satisfies the supplied WHERE clause).

getType()

The last method you need to implement is getType(). This takes a Uri and returns the MIME type associated with that Uri. The Uri could be a collection or an instance Uri; you need to determine which was provided and return the corresponding MIME type.

For example, here is getType() from Provider:

```
@Override
public String getType(Uri url) {
    if (isCollectionUri(url)) {
        return(getCollectionType());
    }
    return(getSingleType());
}
```

As you can see, most of the logic delegates to private getCollectionType() and getSingleType() methods:

```
private String getCollectionType() {
   return("vnd.commonsware.cursor.dir/constant");
}
private String getSingleType() {
   return("vnd.commonsware.cursor.item/constant");
}
```
Step #2: Supply a Uri

You may wish to add a public static member...somewhere, containing the Uri for each collection your content provider supports, for use by your own application code. Typically, this is a public static final Uri put on the content provider class itself:

```
public static final Uri CONTENT_URI
    =Uri.parse("content://com.commonsware.android.constants.Provider/constants");
```

You may wish to use the same namespace for the content Uri that you use for your Java classes, to reduce the chance of collision with others.

Bear in mind that if you intend for third parties to access your content provider, they will not have access to this public static data member, as your class is not in their project. Hence, you will need to publish the string representation of this Uri that they can hard-wire into their application.

Step #3: Declare the "Columns"

Remember those "columns" you referenced when you were using a content provider, in the previous chapter? Well, you may wish to publish public static values for those too for your own content provider.

Specifically, you may want a public static class implementing BaseColumns that contains your available column names, such as this example from Provider:

```
public static final class Constants implements BaseColumns {
   public static final Uri CONTENT_URI
        =Uri.parse("content://com.commonsware.android.constants.Provider/constants");
   public static final String DEFAULT_SORT_ORDER="title";
   public static final String TITLE="title";
   public static final String VALUE="value";
}
```

Since we are using SQLite as a data store, the values for the column name constants should be the corresponding column name in the table, so you can just pass the projection (array of columns) to SQLite on a query(), or pass the ContentValues on an insert() or update().

Note that nothing in here stipulates the types of the properties. They could be strings, integers, or whatever. The biggest limitation is what a Cursor can provide access to via its property getters. The fact that there is nothing in code that enforces type safety means you should document the property types well, so people attempting to use your content provider know what they can expect.

Step #4: Update the Manifest

Finally, we need to add the provider to the AndroidManifest.xml file, by adding a <provider> element as a child of the <application> element:

```
<?xml version="1.0" encoding="utf-8"?>
<manifest package="com.commonsware.android.constants"
          xmlns:android="http://schemas.android.com/apk/res/android">
  <application android:icon="@drawable/cw"
              android:label="@string/app_name">
    <provider android:authorities="com.commonsware.android.constants.Provider"</pre>
              android:name=".Provider" />
    <activity android:label="@string/app_name"
              android:name=".ConstantsBrowser">
      <intent-filter>
        <action android:name="android.intent.action.MAIN" />
        <category android:name="android.intent.category.LAUNCHER" />
      </intent-filter>
    </activity>
  </application>
  <supports-screens android:anyDensity="true"
                    android:largeScreens="true"
                    android:normalScreens="true"
                    android:smallScreens="true" />
</manifest>
```

The Local-File Content Provider

Implementing a content provider that supports serving up files based on Uri values is similar, and generally simpler, than creating a content provider

for the database-style API. In this section, we will examine the ContentProvider/Files sample project. This is a clone of the WebKit/GeoWeb2 project we saw in a previous chapter, but this one serves its files to the WebView from a ContentProvider, rather than straight out of the project's assets.

Step #1: Create the Provider Class

Once again, we create a subclass of ContentProvider. This time, though, the roster of methods we need to worry about is a bit different.

onCreate()

We have an onCreate() method. In many cases, this would not be needed for this sort of provider – after all, there is no database to open. In this case, we use onCreate() to copy the file(s) out of assets into the app-local file store. In principle, this would allow our application code to modify these files as the user uses the app (versus the unmodifiable editions in assets/).

```
@Override
public boolean onCreate() {
 File page=new File(getContext().getFilesDir(), "geoweb2.html");
  if (!page.exists()) {
   AssetManager assets=getContext().getResources().getAssets();
   try {
     copy(assets.open("geoweb2.html"), page);
      copy(assets.open("geoweb.js"),
          new File(getContext().getFilesDir(), "geoweb.js"));
    }
    catch (IOException e) {
     Log.e("FileProvider", "Exception copying from assets", e);
      return(false);
    }
  }
  return(true);
```

This uses a private copy() method that can copy an InputStream from an asset to a local File:

```
static private void copy(InputStream in, File dst) throws IOException {
  FileOutputStream out=new FileOutputStream(dst);
  byte[] buf=new byte[1024];
  int len;
  while((len=in.read(buf))>0) {
    out.write(buf, 0, len);
  }
  in.close();
 out.close();
}
```

openFile()

We need to implement openFile(), to return a ParcelFileDescriptor corresponding to the supplied Uri:

Here, we ignore the supplied mode parameter, treating this as a read-only file. That is safe in this case, since our only planned use of the provider is to serve read-only content to a WebView widget. If we wanted read-write access, we would need to convert the mode to something usable by the open() method on ParcelFileDescriptor.

getType()

We need to implement getType(), in this case using real MIME types, not made-up ones. To do that, we have a static HashMap mapping file extensions to MIME types:

```
private static final HashMap<String, String> MIME_TYPES=new HashMap<String,
String>();
static {
    MIME_TYPES.put(".html", "text/html");
    MIME_TYPES.put(".js", "application/javascript");
```

Then, getType() walks those to find a match and uses that particular MIME type:

```
@Override
public String getType(Uri uri) {
   String path=uri.toString();
   for (String extension : MIME_TYPES.keySet()) {
      if (path.endsWith(extension)) {
        return(MIME_TYPES.get(extension));
      }
   }
   return(null);
}
```

All Those Other Ones

In theory, that would be all we need. In practice, other methods are abstract on ContentProvider and need stub implementations:

```
throw new RuntimeException("Operation not supported");
```

Here, we throw a RuntimeException if any of those methods are called, indicating that our content provider does not support them.

Step #2: Update the Manifest

Finally, we need to add the provider to the AndroidManifest.xml file, by adding a <provider> element as a child of the <application> element, as with any other content provider:

```
<?xml version="1.0" encoding="utf-8"?>
<manifest android:versionCode="1"
          android:versionName="1.0"
          package="com.commonsware.android.cp.files"
          xmlns:android="http://schemas.android.com/apk/res/android">
 <uses-sdk android:minSdkVersion="3"
           android:targetSdkVersion="8" />
 <supports-screens android:largeScreens="true"</pre>
                    android:normalScreens="true"
                    android:smallScreens="false" />
 <uses-permission android:name="android.permission.INTERNET" />
 <uses-permission android:name="android.permission.ACCESS_FINE_LOCATION" />
 <application android:icon="@drawable/cw"
              android:label="@string/app_name">
   <activity android:label="@string/app name"
              android:name="FilesCPDemo">
     <intent-filter>
       <action android:name="android.intent.action.MAIN" />
        <category android:name="android.intent.category.LAUNCHER" />
     </intent-filter>
    </activity>
    <provider android:authorities="com.commonsware.android.cp.files"</pre>
              android:exported="false"
              android:name=".FileProvider" />
  </application>
</manifest>
```

Note, however, that we have android:exported="false" set in our <provider> element. This means that this content provider is considered local to our application and cannot be accessed from third-party apps.

Using this Provider

The only difference in the activity between the original asset-based implementation and the current one is the loadUrl() call on the WebView widget:

browser.loadUrl(FileProvider.CONTENT_URI+"geoweb2.html");

Here, we use a CONTENT_URI published by FileProvider as the basis for identifying the file:

public static final Uri CONTENT_URI=Uri.parse("content://com.commonsware.android.cp.files/");

The Contacts Content Provider

One of the more popular stores of data on your average Android device is the contact list. This is particularly true with Android 2.0 and newer versions, which track contacts across multiple different "accounts", or sources of contacts. Some may come from your Google account, while others might come from Exchange or other services.

This chapter will walk you through some of the basics for accessing the contacts on the device. Along the way, we will revisit and expand upon our knowledge of using a ContentProvider.

First, we will review the contacts APIs, past and present. We will then demonstrate how you can connect to the contacts engine to let users pick and view contacts...all without your application needing to know much of how contacts work. We will then show how you can query the contacts provider to obtain contacts and some of their details, like email addresses and phone numbers. We wrap by showing how you can invoke a built-in activity to let the user add a new contact, possibly including some data supplied by your application.

Introducing You to Your Contacts

Android makes contacts available to you via a complex ContentProvider framework, so you can access many facets of a contact's data – not just their name, but addresses, phone numbers, groups, etc. Working with the

contacts ContentProvider set is simple...only if you have an established pattern to work with. Otherwise, it may prove somewhat daunting.

ContentProvider Recap

As you may recall from a previous chapter, a ContentProvider is an abstraction around a data source. Consumers of a ContentProvider can use a ContentResolver to query, insert, update, or delete data, or use managedQuery() on an Activity to do a query. In the latter case, the resulting Cursor is managed, meaning that it will be deactivated when the activity is stopped, requeried when the activity is later restarted, and closed when the activity is destroyed.

Content providers use a "projection" to describe the columns to work with. One ContentProvider may expose many facets of data, which you can think of as being tables. However, bear in mind that content providers do not necessarily have to store their content in SQLite, so you will need to consult the documentation for the content provider to determine query language syntax, transaction support, and the like.

Organizational Structure

The contacts ContentProvider framework can be found as the set of ContactsContract classes and interfaces in the android.provider package. Unfortunately, there is a dizzying array of inner classes to ContactsContract.

Contacts can be broken down into two types: raw and aggregate. Raw contacts come from a sync provider or are hand-entered by a user. Aggregate contacts represent the sum of information about an individual culled from various raw contacts. For example, if your Exchange sync provider has a contact with an email address of jdoe@foo.com, and your Facebook sync provider has a contact with an email address of jdoe@foo.com, Android may recognize that those two raw contacts represent the same person and therefore combine those in the aggregate contact for the user. The classes relating to raw contacts usually have Raw somewhere in their name, and these normally would be used only by custom sync providers.

The ContactsContract.Contacts and ContactsContract.Data classes represent the "entry points" for the ContentProvider, allowing you to query and obtain information on a wide range of different pieces of information. What is retrievable from these can be found in the various ContactsContract.CommonDataKinds series of classes. We will see examples of these operations later in this chapter.

A Look Back at Android 1.6

Prior to Android 2.0, Android had no contact synchronization built in. As a result, all contacts were in one large pool, whether they were hand-entered by users or were added via third-party applications. The API used for this is the Contacts ContentProvider.

In principle, the Contacts ContentProvider should still work, as it is merely deprecated in Android 2.0.1, not removed. In practice, you may encounter some issues, since the emulator may not have the same roster of synchronization providers as does a device, and so there may be differences in behavior.

Pick a Peck of Pickled People

Let's start by finding a contact. After all, that's what the contacts system is for.

Contacts, like anything stored in a ContentProvider, is identified by a Uri. Hence, we need a Uri we can use in the short term, perhaps to read some data, or perhaps just to open up the contact detail activity for the user.

We could ask for a raw contact, or we could ask for an aggregate contact. Since most consumers of the contacts ContentProvider will want the aggregate contact, we will use that.

For example, take a look at Contacts/Pick in the sample applications, as this shows how to pick a contact from a collection of contacts, then display the

contact detail activity. This application gives you a really big "Gimme!" button, which when clicked will launch the contact-selection logic:

```
<?xml version="1.0" encoding="utf-8"?>
<Button xmlns:android="http://schemas.android.com/apk/res/android"
    android:id="@+id/pick"
    android:layout_width="match_parent"
    android:layout_height="match_parent"
    android:text="Gimme a contact!"
    android:layout_weight="1"
    />
```

Our first step is to determine the Uri to use to reference the collection of contacts we want to pick from. In the long term, there should be just one for answer aggregate contacts: android.provider.ContactsContract.Contacts.People.CONTENT URI. However, that only works for Android 2.0 (SDK level 5) and higher. On older versions of Android. need stick with the we to original android.provider.Contacts.CONTENT URI. To accomplish this, we will use a pinch of reflection to determine our Uri via a static initializer when our activity starts:

```
private static Uri CONTENT_URI=null;
static {
    int sdk=new Integer(Build.VERSION.SDK).intValue();
    if (sdk>=5) {
        try {
        Class clazz=Class.forName("android.provider.ContactsContract$Contacts");
        CONTENT_URI=(Uri)clazz.getField("CONTENT_URI").get(clazz);
        }
        catch (Throwable t) {
        Log.e("PickDemo", "Exception when determining CONTENT_URI", t);
        }
        else {
        CONTENT_URI=Contacts.People.CONTENT_URI;
        }
    }
}
```

Then, you need to create an Intent for the ACTION_PICK on the chosen Uri, then start a sub activity (via startActivityForResult()) to allow the user to pick a piece of content of the specified type:

```
@Override
public void onCreate(Bundle icicle) {
 super.onCreate(icicle);
 if (CONTENT_URI==null) {
   Toast
      .makeText(this, "We are experiencing technical difficulties...",
                Toast.LENGTH LONG)
      .show();
   finish();
    return;
  }
 setContentView(R.layout.main);
 Button btn=(Button)findViewById(R.id.pick);
 btn.setOnClickListener(new View.OnClickListener() {
   public void onClick(View view) {
      Intent i=new Intent(Intent.ACTION_PICK, CONTENT_URI);
      startActivityForResult(i, PICK_REQUEST);
    }
 });
```

When that sub-activity completes with RESULT_OK, the ACTION_VIEW is invoked on the resulting contact Uri, as obtained from the Intent returned by the pick activity:

The result: the user chooses a collection, picks a piece of content, and views it.

```
339
```



Figure 65. The PickDemo sample application, as initially launched



Figure 66. The same application, after clicking the "Gimme!" button, showing the list of available people

	骗 📶 🛃 5:10	6 PM
\sim	Jane Smith	⋧
Dial numbe	r	
Mobile		6
Send SMS/M	лмs	
Mobile	+1.202.555.1212	3
Send email		
Home	+1.703.555.1212	X

Figure 67. A view of a contact, launched by PickDemo after choosing one of the people from the pick list

Note that the Uri we get from picking the contact is valid in the short term, but should not be held onto in a persistent fashion (e.g., put in a database). If you need to try to store a reference to a contact for the long term, you will need to get a "lookup Uri" on it, to help deal with the fact that the aggregate contact may shift over time as raw contact information for that person comes and goes.

Spin Through Your Contacts

The preceding example allows you to work with contacts, yet not actually have any contact data other than a transient Uri. All else being equal, it is best to use the contacts system this way, as it means you do not need any extra permissions that might raise privacy issues.

Of course, all else is rarely equal.

Your alternative, therefore, is to execute queries against the contacts ContentProvider to get actual contact detail data back, such as names,

phone numbers, and email addresses. The Contacts/Spinners sample application will demonstrate this technique.

Contact Permissions

Since contacts are privileged data, you need certain permissions to work with them. Specifically, you need the READ_CONTACTS permission to query and examine the ContactsContract content and WRITE_CONTACTS to add, modify, or remove contacts from the system.

For example, here is the manifest for the Contacts/Spinners sample application:

```
<?xml version="1.0" encoding="utf-8"?>
<manifest android:versionCode="1"
         android:versionName="1.0"
         package="com.commonsware.android.contacts.spinners"
         xmlns:android="http://schemas.android.com/apk/res/android">
 <uses-permission android:name="android.permission.READ_CONTACTS" />
 <uses-sdk android:minSdkVersion="3"
            android:targetSdkVersion="6" />
 <supports-screens android:largeScreens="true"
                    android:normalScreens="true"
                    android:smallScreens="false" />
 <application android:icon="@drawable/cw"
             android:label="@string/app name">
   <activity android:label="@string/app_name"
             android:name=".ContactSpinners">
     <intent-filter>
        <action android:name="android.intent.action.MAIN" />
        <category android:name="android.intent.category.LAUNCHER" />
     </intent-filter>
    </activity>
 </application>
/manifest>
```

Pre-Joined Data

While the database underlying the ContactsContract content provider is private, one can imagine that it has several tables: one for people, one for their phone numbers, one for their email addresses, etc. These are tied together by typical database relations, most likely 1:N, so the phone number

and email address tables would have a foreign key pointing back to the table containing information about people.

To simplify accessing all of this through the content provider interface, Android pre-joins queries against some of the tables. For example, you can query for phone numbers and get the contact name and other data along with the number – you do not have to do this join operation yourself.

The Sample Activity

The ContactsDemo activity is simply a ListActivity, though it sports a Spinner to go along with the obligatory ListView:

```
<?xml version="1.0" encoding="utf-8"?>
<LinearLayout xmlns:android="http://schemas.android.com/apk/res/android"</pre>
    android:orientation="vertical"
    android:layout_width="match_parent"
    android:layout_height="match_parent"
    >
  <Spinner android:id="@+id/spinner"
    android:layout width="match parent"
    android:layout_height="wrap_content"
   android:drawSelectorOnTop="true"
 />
 <ListView
    android:id="@android:id/list"
    android:layout_width="match_parent"
    android:layout_height="match_parent"
    android:drawSelectorOnTop="false"
  />
</LinearLayout>
```

The activity itself sets up a listener on the Spinner and toggles the list of information shown in the ListView when the Spinner value changes:

```
package com.commonsware.android.contacts.spinners;
import android.app.ListActivity;
import android.os.Bundle;
import android.view.View;
import android.widget.AdapterView;
import android.widget.ArrayAdapter;
import android.widget.ListAdapter;
import android.widget.Spinner;
```

```
public class ContactSpinners extends ListActivity
 implements AdapterView.OnItemSelectedListener {
 private static String[] options={"Contact Names",
                                   "Contact Names & Numbers",
                                   "Contact Names & Email Addresses"};
 private ListAdapter[] listAdapters=new ListAdapter[3];
 @Override
 public void onCreate(Bundle savedInstanceState) {
   super.onCreate(savedInstanceState);
   setContentView(R.layout.main);
   initListAdapters();
   Spinner spin=(Spinner)findViewById(R.id.spinner);
   spin.setOnItemSelectedListener(this);
   ArrayAdapter<String> aa=new ArrayAdapter<String>(this,
                             android.R.layout.simple spinner item,
                            options);
   aa.setDropDownViewResource(
           android.R.layout.simple spinner dropdown item);
   spin.setAdapter(aa);
 }
 public void onItemSelected(AdapterView<?> parent,
                               View v, int position, long id) {
   setListAdapter(listAdapters[position]);
 }
 public void onNothingSelected(AdapterView<?> parent) {
   // ignore
 }
 private void initListAdapters() {
   listAdapters[0]=ContactsAdapterBridge.INSTANCE.buildNameAdapter(this);
   listAdapters[1]=ContactsAdapterBridge.INSTANCE.buildPhonesAdapter(this);
   listAdapters[2]=ContactsAdapterBridge.INSTANCE.buildEmailAdapter(this);
 }
```

When the activity is first opened, it sets up three Adapter objects, one for each of three perspectives on the contacts data. The Spinner simply resets the list to use the Adapter associated with the Spinner value selected.

Dealing with API Versions

Of course, once again, we have to ponder different API levels.

Querying ContactsContract and querying Contacts is similar, yet different, both in terms of the Uri each uses for the query and in terms of the available column names for the resulting projection.

Rather than using reflection, this time we ruthlessly exploit a feature of the VM: classes are only loaded when first referenced. Hence, we can have a class that refers to new APIs (ContactsContract) on a device that lacks those APIs, so long as we do not reference that class.

To accomplish this, we define an abstract base class, ContactsAdapterBridge, that will have a singleton instance capable of running our queries and building a ListAdapter for each. Then, we create two concrete subclasses, one for the old API:

```
package com.commonsware.android.contacts.spinners;
import android.app.Activity;
import android.database.Cursor;
import android.provider.Contacts;
import android.widget.ListAdapter;
import android.widget.SimpleCursorAdapter;
class OldContactsAdapterBridge extends ContactsAdapterBridge {
 ListAdapter buildNameAdapter(Activity a) {
   String[] PROJECTION=new String[] { Contacts.People._ID,
                                       Contacts.PeopleColumns.NAME
                                     };
    Cursor c=a.managedQuery(Contacts.People.CONTENT_URI,
                           PROJECTION, null, null,
                           Contacts.People.DEFAULT_SORT_ORDER);
    return(new SimpleCursorAdapter(
                                     a,
                                   android.R.layout.simple_list_item_1,
                                   с,
                                   new String[] {
                                     Contacts.PeopleColumns.NAME
                                   },
                                   new int[] {
                                     android.R.id.text1
                                   }));
  }
 ListAdapter buildPhonesAdapter(Activity a) {
    String[] PROJECTION=new String[] { Contacts.Phones. ID,
                                       Contacts.Phones.NAME,
                                       Contacts.Phones.NUMBER
                                     1:
    Cursor c=a.managedQuery(Contacts.Phones.CONTENT_URI
```

```
PROJECTION, null, null,
                         Contacts.Phones.DEFAULT_SORT_ORDER);
  return(new SimpleCursorAdapter( a,
                                 android.R.layout.simple_list_item_2,
                                 с,
                                 new String[] {
                                   Contacts.Phones.NAME,
                                   Contacts.Phones.NUMBER
                                 },
                                 new int[] {
                                   android.R.id.text1,
                                   android.R.id.text2
                                 }));
}
ListAdapter buildEmailAdapter(Activity a) {
 String[] PROJECTION=new String[] { Contacts.ContactMethods._ID,
                                     Contacts.ContactMethods.DATA,
                                     Contacts.PeopleColumns.NAME
                                   };
 Cursor c=a.managedQuery(Contacts.ContactMethods.CONTENT_EMAIL_URI,
                         PROJECTION, null, null,
                         Contacts.ContactMethods.DEFAULT_SORT_ORDER);
  return(new SimpleCursorAdapter( a,
                                  android.R.layout.simple list item 2,
                                 с,
                                 new String[] {
                                   Contacts.PeopleColumns.NAME,
                                   Contacts.ContactMethods.DATA
                                 },
                                 new int[] {
                                   android.R.id.text1,
                                   android.R.id.text2
                                  }));
}
```

...and one for the new API:

```
package com.commonsware.android.contacts.spinners;
import android.app.Activity;
import android.database.Cursor;
import android.provider.ContactsContract.Contacts;
import android.provider.ContactsContract.CommonDataKinds.Email;
import android.provider.ContactsContract.CommonDataKinds.Phone;
import android.widget.ListAdapter;
import android.widget.SimpleCursorAdapter;
class NewContactsAdapterBridge extends ContactsAdapterBridge {
   ListAdapter buildNameAdapter(Activity a) {
```

```
String[] PROJECTION=new String[] { Contacts._ID,
                                     Contacts.DISPLAY_NAME,
                                    };
 Cursor c=a.managedQuery(Contacts.CONTENT_URI,
                         PROJECTION, null, null, null);
  return(new SimpleCursorAdapter( a,
                                  android.R.layout.simple list item 1,
                                 с,
                                 new String[] {
                                   Contacts.DISPLAY_NAME
                                 },
                                 new int[] {
                                   android.R.id.text1
                                 }));
}
ListAdapter buildPhonesAdapter(Activity a) {
 String[] PROJECTION=new String[] { Contacts._ID,
                                     Contacts.DISPLAY_NAME,
                                     Phone . NUMBER
                                    };
 Cursor c=a.managedQuery(Phone.CONTENT URI,
                         PROJECTION, null, null, null);
  return(new SimpleCursorAdapter( a,
                                 android.R.layout.simple list item 2,
                                 с,
                                 new String[] {
                                   Contacts.DISPLAY_NAME,
                                   Phone . NUMBER
                                 },
                                 new int[] {
                                   android.R.id.text1,
                                   android.R.id.text2
                                 }));
}
ListAdapter buildEmailAdapter(Activity a) {
 String[] PROJECTION=new String[] { Contacts._ID,
                                     Contacts.DISPLAY_NAME,
                                     Email.DATA
                                    -};
 Cursor c=a.managedQuery(Email.CONTENT_URI,
                         PROJECTION, null, null, null);
  return(new SimpleCursorAdapter( a,
                                 android.R.layout.simple_list_item_2,
                                 с,
                                 new String[] {
                                   Contacts.DISPLAY NAME,
                                   Email.DATA
                                 },
                                 new int[] {
```

```
android.R.id.text1,
android.R.id.text2
}));
```

Our ContactsAdapterBridge class then uses the SDK level to determine which of those two classes to use as the singleton:

```
package com.commonsware.android.contacts.spinners;
import android.app.Activity;
import android.os.Build;
import android.widget.ListAdapter;
abstract class ContactsAdapterBridge {
    abstract ListAdapter buildNameAdapter(Activity a);
    abstract ListAdapter buildPhonesAdapter(Activity a);
    abstract ListAdapter buildEmailAdapter(Activity a);
    public static final ContactsAdapterBridge INSTANCE=buildBridge();
    private static ContactsAdapterBridge buildBridge() {
        int sdk=new Integer(Build.VERSION.SDK).intValue();
        if (sdk<5) {
            return(new OldContactsAdapterBridge());
        }
        return(new NewContactsAdapterBridge());
    }
    }
}
```

Accessing People

}

The first Adapter shows the names of all of the contacts. Since all the information we seek is in the contact itself, we can use the CONTENT_URI provider, retrieve all of the contacts in the default sort order, and pour them into a SimpleCursorAdapter set up to show each person on its own row:

Assuming you have some contacts in the database, they will appear when you first open the ContactsDemo activity, since that is the default perspective:



Figure 68. The ContactsDemo sample application, showing all contacts

Accessing Phone Numbers



Figure 69. The ContactsDemo sample application, showing all contacts that have phone numbers

Accessing Email Addresses

Similarly, to get a list of all the email addresses, we can use the CONTENT_URI content provider. Again, the results are displayed via a two-line SimpleCursorAdapter:



Figure 70. The ContactsDemo sample application, showing all contacts with email addresses

Makin' Contacts

Let's now take a peek at the reverse direction: adding contacts to the system. This was never particularly easy and now is...well, different.

First, we need to distinguish between sync providers and other apps. Sync providers are the guts underpinning the accounts system in Android, bridging some existing source of contact data to the Android device. Hence, you can have sync providers for Exchange, Facebook, and so forth. These will need to create raw contacts for newly-added contacts to their backing stores that are being sync'd to the device for the first time. Creating sync providers is outside of the scope of this book for now.

It is possible for other applications to create contacts. These, by definition, will be phone-only contacts, lacking any associated account, no different than if the user added the contact directly. The recommended approach to doing this is to collect the data you want, then spawn an activity to let the user add the contact – this avoids your application needing the WRITE_CONTACTS permission and all the privacy/data integrity issues that creates. In this case, we will stick with the new ContactsContract content provider, to simplify our code, at the expense of requiring Android 2.0 or newer.

To that end, take a look at the Contacts/Inserter sample project. It defines a simple activity with a two-field UI, with one field apiece for the person's first name and phone number:

```
<?xml version="1.0" encoding="utf-8"?>
<TableLayout xmlns:android="http://schemas.android.com/apk/res/android"
    android:orientation="vertical"
   android:layout width="match parent"
   android:layout_height="match_parent"
   android:stretchColumns="1"
 <TableRow>
   <TextView
     android:text="First name:"
   />
    <EditText android:id="@+id/name"
   1>
 </TableRow>
 <TableRow>
    <TextView
     android:text="Phone:"
    <EditText android:id="@+id/phone"
     android:inputType="phone"
   />
 </TableRow>
 <Button android:id="@+id/insert" android:text="Insert!" />
:/TableLayout>
```

The trivial UI also sports a button to add the contact:

	🏭 📶 💶 4:24 PM
ContactsI	nserter
First name:	
Phone:	
	Insert!

Figure 71. The ContactInserter sample application

When the user clicks the button, the activity gets the data and creates an Intent to be used to launch the add-a-contact activity. This uses the ACTION_INSERT_OR_EDIT action and a couple of extras from the ContactsContract.Intents.Insert class:

```
package com.commonsware.android.inserter;
import android.app.Activity;
import android.content.Intent;
import android.os.Bundle;
import android.provider.ContactsContract.Contacts;
import android.provider.ContactsContract.Intents.Insert;
import android.view.View;
import android.widget.Button;
import android.widget.EditText;
public class ContactsInserter extends Activity {
 @Override
 public void onCreate(Bundle savedInstanceState) {
    super.onCreate(savedInstanceState);
   setContentView(R.layout.main);
   Button btn=(Button)findViewById(R.id.insert);
   btn.setOnClickListener(onInsert);
  }
```

```
View.OnClickListener onInsert=new View.OnClickListener() {
    public void onClick(View v) {
        EditText fld=(EditText)findViewById(R.id.name);
        String name=fld.getText().toString();
        fld=(EditText)findViewById(R.id.phone);
        String phone=fld.getText().toString();
        Intent i=new Intent(Intent.ACTION_INSERT_OR_EDIT);
        i.setType(Contacts.CONTENT_ITEM_TYPE);
        i.putExtra(Insert.PHONE, name);
        i.putExtra(Insert.PHONE, phone);
        startActivity(i);
    }
};
```

We also need to set the MIME type on the Intent via setType(), to be CONTENT_ITEM_TYPE, so Android knows what sort of data we want to actually insert. Then, we call startActivity() on the resulting Intent. That brings up an add-or-edit activity:

🔢 📶 💶 4:24 PM
Contacts
Create new contact
J
Jane Doe
John Smith

Figure 72. The add-or-edit-a-contact activity

...where if the user chooses "Create new contact", they are taken to the ordinary add-a-contact activity, with our data pre-filled in:

🏭 📶 🕼 4:25 PM			
Edit contact			
Phone-only (unsynced			
Jim			
Family nam	ne		
Phone			+
Home	+1.215	5.555.1212	-
Done		Revert	

Figure 73. The edit-contact form, showing the data from the ContactInserter activity

Note that the user could choose an existing contact, rather than creating a new contact. If they choose an existing contact, the first name of that contact will be overwritten with the data supplied by the ContactsInserter activity, and a new phone number will be added from those Intent extras.

Searching with SearchManager

One of the firms behind the Open Handset Alliance – Google – has a teeny weeny Web search service, one you might have heard of in passing. Given that, it's not surprising that Android has some amount of built-in search capabilities.

Specifically, Android has "baked in" the notion of searching not only on the device for data, but over the air to Internet sources of data.

Your applications can participate in the search process, by triggering searches or perhaps by allowing your application's data to be searched.

Hunting Season

There are two types of search in Android: local and global. Local search searches within the current application; global search searches the Web via Google's search engine. You can initiate either type of search in a variety of ways, including:

- You can call onSearchRequested() from a button or menu choice, which will initiate a local search (unless you override this method in your activity)
- You can directly call startSearch() to initiate a local or global search, including optionally supplying a search string to use as a starting point

 You can elect to have keyboard entry kick off a search via setDefaultKeyMode(), for either local search (setDefaultKeyMode(DEFAULT_KEYS_SEARCH_LOCAL)) or global search (setDefaultKeyMode(DEFAULT_KEYS_SEARCH_GLOBAL))

In either case, the search appears as a set of UI components across the top of the screen, with a suggestion list (where available) and IME (where needed).

🔊 🏭 🚮 🛃 12:44 рм
📽 lorem 🔍
dol
q w e r t y u i o p
a s d f g h j k l
₽ z x c v b n m .
?123 , <u> </u>

Figure 74. The Android local search popup, showing the IME and a previous search

🔊 🚯 📶 🛃 12:45 рм
Google
qwertyui op
a s d f g h j k l
?123 , <u> </u>

Figure 75. The Android global search popup

Where that search suggestion comes from for your local searches will be covered later in this chapter.

Search Yourself

Over the long haul, there will be two flavors of search available via the Android search system:

- 1. Query-style search, where the user's search string is passed to an activity which is responsible for conducting the search and displaying the results
- 2. Filter-style search, where the user's search string is passed to an activity on every keypress, and the activity is responsible for updating a displayed list of matches

Since the latter approach is decidedly under-documented, let's focus on the first one.

Craft the Search Activity

The first thing you are going to want to do if you want to support querystyle search in your application is to create a search activity. While it might be possible to have a single activity be both opened from the launcher and opened from a search, that might prove somewhat confusing to users. Certainly, for the purposes of learning the techniques, having a separate activity is cleaner.

The search activity can have any look you want. In fact, other than watching for queries, a search activity looks, walks, and talks like any other activity in your system.

All the search activity needs to do differently is check the intents supplied to onCreate() (via getIntent()) and onNewIntent() to see if one is a search, and, if so, to do the search and display the results.

For example, let's look at the Search/Lorem sample application. This starts off as a clone of the list-of-lorem-ipsum-words application originally encountered in *The Busy Coder's Guide to Android Development*. Now, we update it to support searching the list of words for ones containing the search string.

The main activity and the search activity both share a common layout: a ListView plus a TextView showing the selected entry:

```
<?xml version="1.0" encoding="utf-8"?>
<LinearLayout xmlns:android="http://schemas.android.com/apk/res/android"
    android:layout_width="match_parent"
    android:layout_height="match_parent" >
    <TextView
        android:layout_width="match_parent"
        android:layout_width="match_parent"
        android:layout_width="match_parent"
        android:layout_width="match_parent"
        android:layout_height="wrap_content"
        />
        <ListView
        android:layout_width="match_parent"
        android:layout_height="wrap_content"
        />
        <ListView
        android:layout_height="match_parent"
        android:layout_height="match_parent"
        android:layout_height="match_parent"
        android:layout_width="match_parent"
        android:layout_width="match_parent"
        android:layout_width="match_parent"
        android:layout_width="match_parent"
        android:layout_width="match_parent"
        android:layout_width="match_parent"
        android:layout_width="match_parent"
        android:layout_width="match_parent"
        android:layout_height="match_parent"
        android:layout_height="m
```

```
/>
</LinearLayout>
```

In terms of Java code, most of the guts of the activities are poured into an abstract LoremBase class:

```
abstract public class LoremBase extends ListActivity {
 abstract ListAdapter makeMeAnAdapter(Intent intent);
 private static final int LOCAL SEARCH ID = Menu.FIRST+1;
 private static final int GLOBAL_SEARCH_ID = Menu.FIRST+2;
 TextView selection;
 ArrayList<String> items=new ArrayList<String>();
 @Override
 public void onCreate(Bundle icicle) {
    super.onCreate(icicle);
   setContentView(R.layout.main);
    selection=(TextView)findViewById(R.id.selection);
   try {
     XmlPullParser xpp=getResources().getXml(R.xml.words);
     while (xpp.getEventType()!=XmlPullParser.END_DOCUMENT) {
        if (xpp.getEventType()==XmlPullParser.START TAG) {
         if (xpp.getName().equals("word")) {
           items.add(xpp.getAttributeValue(0));
         }
        }
       xpp.next();
     }
   }
   catch (Throwable t) {
     Toast
        .makeText(this, "Request failed: "+t.toString(), 4000)
        .show();
    }
   setDefaultKeyMode(DEFAULT_KEYS_SEARCH_LOCAL);
   onNewIntent(getIntent());
 }
 @Override
 public void onNewIntent(Intent intent) {
   ListAdapter adapter=makeMeAnAdapter(intent);
    if (adapter==null) {
     finish();
    }
   else {
```

```
setListAdapter(adapter);
 }
}
public void onListItemClick(ListView parent, View v, int position,
                long id) {
  selection.setText(parent.getAdapter().getItem(position).toString());
}
@Override
public boolean onCreateOptionsMenu(Menu menu) {
 menu.add(Menu.NONE, LOCAL_SEARCH_ID, Menu.NONE, "Local Search")
          .setIcon(android.R.drawable.ic_search_category_default);
 menu.add(Menu.NONE, GLOBAL SEARCH ID, Menu.NONE, "Global Search")
          .setIcon(R.drawable.search)
          .setAlphabeticShortcut(SearchManager.MENU KEY);
  return(super.onCreateOptionsMenu(menu));
}
@Override
public boolean onOptionsItemSelected(MenuItem item) {
  switch (item.getItemId()) {
    case LOCAL_SEARCH_ID:
      onSearchRequested();
      return(true);
    case GLOBAL_SEARCH_ID:
      startSearch(null, false, null, true);
      return(true);
  }
  return(super.onOptionsItemSelected(item));
}
```

This activity takes care of everything related to showing a list of words, even loading the words out of the XML resource. What it does not do is come up with the ListAdapter to put into the ListView – that is delegated to the subclasses.

The main activity - LoremDemo - just uses a ListAdapter for the whole word list:

```
package com.commonsware.android.search;
import android.content.Intent;
import android.widget.ArrayAdapter;
import android.widget.ListAdapter;
```

```
360
```

The search activity, though, does things a bit differently.

First, it inspects the Intent supplied to the abstract makeMeAnAdapter() method. That Intent comes from either onCreate() or onNewIntent(). If the intent is an ACTION_SEARCH, then we know this is a search. We can get the search query and, in the case of this silly demo, spin through the loaded list of words and find only those containing the search string. That list then gets wrapped in a ListAdapter and returned for display:

Update the Manifest

While this implements search, it doesn't tie it into the Android search system. That requires a few changes to the auto-generated AndroidManifest.xml file:

```
<supports-screens android:largeScreens="false"
                    android:normalScreens="true"
                    android:smallScreens="false" />
 <application android:icon="@drawable/cw"
             android:label="Lorem Ipsum">
    <activity android:label="LoremDemo"
              android:name=".LoremDemo">
     <intent-filter>
        <action android:name="android.intent.action.MAIN" />
        <category android:name="android.intent.category.LAUNCHER" />
     </intent-filter>
     <meta-data android:name="android.app.default searchable"
                android:value=".LoremSearch" />
    </activity>
    <activity android:label="LoremSearch"
              android:launchMode="singleTop"
              android:name=".LoremSearch">
      <intent-filter>
        <action android:name="android.intent.action.SEARCH" />
        <category android:name="android.intent.category.DEFAULT" />
     </intent-filter>
     <meta-data android:name="android.app.searchable"
                android:resource="@xml/searchable" />
    </activity>
    <provider
android:authorities="com.commonsware.android.search.LoremSuggestionProvider"
              android:name=".LoremSuggestionProvider" />
  </application>
</manifest>
```

The changes that are needed are:

- The LoremDemo main activity gets a meta-data element, with an android:name of android.app.default_searchable and a android:value of the search implementation class (.LoremSearch)
- 2. The LoremSearch activity gets an intent filter for android.intent.action.SEARCH, so search intents will be picked up
- 3. The LoremSearch activity is set to have android:launchMode = "singleTop", which means at most one instance of this activity will be open at any time, so we don't wind up with a whole bunch of little search activities cluttering up the activity stack
- 4. Add android:label and android:icon attributes to the application element these will influence how your application appears in the Quick Search Box among other places

5. The LoremSearch activity gets a meta-data element, with an android:name of android.app.searchable and a android:value of an XML resource containing more information about the search facility offered by this activity (@xml/searchable)

```
<searchable xmlns:android="http://schemas.android.com/apk/res/android"
android:label="@string/searchLabel"
android:hint="@string/searchHint"
android:searchSuggestAuthority="com.commonsware.android.search.LoremSuggestion
Provider"
android:searchSuggestSelection=" ? "
android:searchSettingsDescription="@string/global"
android:includeInGlobalSearch="true"
/>
```

That XML resource provides many bits of information, of which only two are needed for simple search-enabled applications:

- What name should appear in the search domain button to the left of the search field, identifying to the user where she is searching (android:label)
- 2. What hint text should appear in the search field, to give the user a clue as to what they should be typing in (android:hint)

The other attributes found in that file, and the other search-related bits found in the manifest, will be covered later in this chapter.

Searching for Meaning In Randomness

Given all that, search is now available – Android knows your application is searchable, what search domain to use when searching from the main activity, and the activity knows how to do the search.

The options menu for this application has both local and global search options. In the case of local search, we just call onSearchRequested(); in the case of global search, we call startSearch() with true in the last parameter, indicating the scope is global.
🔊 🏭 🚮 🛃 12	2:44 PM
🍣 lorem	Q
dol	
awertyui	o p
asdfghjk	
全 z x c v b n m	DEL
?123 ,	Go

Figure 76. The Lorem sample application, showing the local search popup

Typing in a letter or two, then clicking Search, will bring up the search activity and the subset of words containing what you typed, with your search query in the activity title bar:



Figure 77. The results of searching for 'co' in the Lorem search sample

You can get the same effect if you just start typing in the main activity, since it is set up for triggering a local search.

May I Make a Suggestion?

When you do a global search, you are given "suggestions" of search words or phrases that may be what you are searching for, to save you some typing on a small keyboard:



Figure 78. Search suggestions after typing some letters in global search

Your application, if it chooses, can offer similar suggestions. Not only will this give you the same sort of drop-down effect as you see with the global search above, but it also ties neatly into the Quick Search Box, as we will see later in this chapter.

To provide suggestions, you need to implement a ContentProvider and tie that provider into the search framework. You have two major choices for implementing a suggestion provider: use the built-in "recent" suggestion provider, or create your own from scratch.

SearchRecentSuggestionsProvider

The "recent" suggestions provider gives you a quick and easy way to remember past searches and offer those as suggestions on future searches.

To use this facility, you must first create a custom subclass of SearchRecentSuggestionsProvider. Your subclass may be very simple, perhaps

just a two-line constructor with no other methods. However, since Android does not automatically record recent queries for you, you will also need to give your search activity a way to record them such that the recent-suggestions provider can offer them as suggestions in the future.

Below, we have a LoremSuggestionProvider, extending SearchRecentSuggestionsProvider, that also supplies a "bridge" for the search activity to record searches:

```
package com.commonsware.android.search;
import android.content.Context;
import android.content.SearchRecentSuggestionsProvider;
import android.provider.SearchRecentSuggestions;
public class LoremSuggestionProvider
 extends SearchRecentSuggestionsProvider {
 private static String
AUTH="com.commonsware.android.search.LoremSuggestionProvider";
  static SearchRecentSuggestions getBridge(Context ctxt) {
    return(new SearchRecentSuggestions(ctxt, AUTH,
                                       DATABASE MODE QUERIES));
  }
  public LoremSuggestionProvider() {
      super();
      setupSuggestions(AUTH, DATABASE_MODE_QUERIES);
  }
```

The constructor, besides the obligatory chain to the superclass, simply calls setupSuggestions(). This takes two parameters:

- The authority under which you will register this provider in the manifest (see below)
- A flag indicating where the suggestions will come from in this case, we supply the required DATABASE_MODE_QUERIES flag

Of course, since this is a ContentProvider, you will need to add it to your manifest:

```
<provider
android:authorities="com.commonsware.android.search.LoremSuggestionProvider"
android:name=".LoremSuggestionProvider" />
```

The other thing that LoremSuggestionProvider has is a static method that creates a properly-configured instance of a SearchRecentSuggestions object. This object knows how to save search queries to the database that the content provider uses, so they will be served up as future suggestions. It needs to know the same authority and flag that you provide to setupSuggestions().

That SearchRecentSuggestions is then used by our LoremSearch class, inside its searchItems() method that actually examines the list of nonsense words for matches:

```
private List<String> searchItems(String query) {
  LoremSuggestionProvider
   .getBridge(this)
   .saveRecentQuery(query, null);
  List<String> results=new ArrayList<String>();
  for (String item : items) {
    if (item.indexOf(query)>-1) {
       results.add(item);
    }
   }
   return(results);
}
```

In this case, we always record the search, though you can imagine that some applications might not save searches that are invalid for one reason or another.

Custom Suggestion Providers

If you want to provide search suggestions based on something else – actual data, searches conducted by others that you aggregate via a Web service, etc. – you will need to implement your own ContentProvider that supplies that information. As with SearchRecentSuggestionsProvider, you will need to add your ContentProvider to the manifest so that Android knows it exists.

```
368
```

The details for doing this will be covered in a future edition of this book. For now, you are best served with the Android SearchManager documentation on the topic.

Integrating Suggestion Providers

Before your suggestions will appear, though, you need to tell Android to use your ContentProvider as the source of suggestions. There are two attributes on your searchable XML that make this connection:

- android:searchSuggestAuthority indicates the content authority for your suggestions – this is the same authority you used for your ContentProvider
- android:searchSuggestSelection is how the suggestion should be packaged as a query in the ACTION_SEARCH Intent – unless you have some reason to do otherwise, " ? " is probably a fine value to use

The result is that when we do our local search, we get the drop-down of past searches as suggestions:



Figure 79. The Android local search popup, showing the IME and a previous search

There is also a clearHistory() method on SearchRecentSuggestions that you can use, perhaps from a menu choice, to clear out the search history, in case it is cluttered beyond usefulness.

Putting Yourself (Almost) On Par with Google

The Quick Search Box is Android's new term for the search widget at the top of the home screen. This is the same UI that appears when your application starts a global search. When you start typing, it shows possible matches culled from both the device and the Internet. If you choose one of the suggestions, it takes you to that item – choose a contact, and you visit the contact in the Contacts application. If you choose a Web search term, or you just submit whatever you typed in, Android will fire up a Browser instance showing you search results from Google. The order of suggestions is adaptive, as Android will attempt to show the user the sorts of things the user typically searches for (e.g., if the user clicks on contacts a lot in prior searches, it may prioritize suggested contacts in the suggestion list).

Your application can be tied into the Quick Search Box. However, it is important to understand that being in the Quick Search Box does *not* mean that your content will be searched. Instead, your *suggestions provider* will be queried based on what the user has typed in, and those suggestions will be blended into the overall results.

And, your application will not show up in Quick Search Box suggestions automatically – the user has to "opt in" to have your results included.

And, until the user demonstrates an interest in your results, your application's suggestions will be buried at the bottom of the list.

This means that integrating with the Quick Search Box, while still perhaps valuable, is not exactly what some developers will necessarily have in mind. That being said, here is how to achieve this integration.

NOTE: there is some flaw in the Android 2.2 emulator that prevents this from working, though it works fine on Android 2.2 hardware.

Implement a Suggestions Provider

Your first step is to implement a suggestions provider, as described in the previous section. Again, Android does not search your application, but rather queries your suggestions provider. If you do not have a suggestions provider, you will not be part of the Quick Search Box. As we will see below, this approach means you will need to think about what sort of suggestion provider to create.

Augment the Metadata

Next, you need to tell Android to tie your application into the Quick Search that, Box suggestion list. То do you need to add the android:includeInGlobalSearch attribute to your searchable XML, setting it true. You probably also should consider adding the to

android:searchSettingsDescription, as this will be shown in the UI for the user to configure what suggestions the Quick Search Box shows.

Convince the User

Next, the user needs to activate your application to be included in the Quick Search Box suggestion roster. To do that, the user needs to go into Settings > Search > Searchable Items and check the checkbox associated with your application:



Figure 80. The Searchable Items settings screen

Your application's label and the value of android:searchSettingsDescription are what appears to the left of the checkbox.

You have no way of toggling this on yourself – the user has to do it. You may wish to mention this in the documentation for your application.

The Results

If you and the user do all of the above, now when the user initiates a search, your suggestions will be poured into the suggestions list, at the bottom:



Figure 81. The Quick Search Box, showing application-supplied suggestions

On versions of Android prior to 2.2, to actually see your suggestions, the user also needs to click the arrow to "fold open" the actual suggestions:

	🌇 📶 💶 3:19 PM				
dol	Q				
4	aonywooa				
Q	dollar rent a car				
Q	dolphin olympics 2				
Q	dolce and gabbana				
Q	dolly parton				
Q	Search the web for 'dol'				
\odot	More results Lorem Ipsum: 1				
•	Lorem Ipsum 1 result				

Figure 82. The Quick Search Box, showing another placeholder for applicationsupplied suggestions

Even here, we do not see the actual suggestion. However, if the user clicks on that item, your suggestions then take over the list:



Figure 83. The Quick Search Box, showing application-supplied suggestions

Again, Android is not showing *actual data* from your application – our list of nonsense words does not contain the value "dol". Instead, Android is showing *suggestions* from your suggestion provider based on what the user typed in. In this case, our application's suggestion provider is based on the built-in SearchRecentSuggestionsProvider class, meaning the suggestions are *past queries*, not actual results.

Hence, what you want to have appear in the Quick Search Box suggestion list will heavily influence what sort of suggestion provider you wish to create. While a SearchRecentSuggestionsProvider is simple, what you get in the Quick Search Box suggestions may not be that useful to users. Instead, you may wish to create your own custom suggestions provider, providing suggestions from actual data or other more useful sources, perhaps in addition to saved searches.

Introspection and Integration

Introspection, from a software development standpoint, refers to inspecting one's environment at runtime to figure out what is possible and how to integrate disparate components. In Android, this comes in two main flavors:

- 1. Sometimes, the introspection is based on a Uri you get a Uri from someplace, and to you it is an opaque handle, and you do not necessarily know what to do with it
- 2. Sometimes, the introspection is more at the Intent or package level, where you are trying to figure out if such-and-so application is installed, or asking Android to give you choices for who can handle such-and-so Intent, etc.

Android has a fairly rich, somewhat disheveled, and frequently misunderstood collection of introspection techniques. This chapter outlines some of those, so you know how to make use of them to enhance your own applications.

We start with the ways to inject other activities into your own application's option menus and how, in theory, you could use that to get your activity in somebody else's option menu. We then cover ACTION_SEND and createChooser(), showing how you can hook into capabilities without knowing exactly what all the options are. We then spend a pair of sections examining PackageManager and how you can use it to peer inside the device and see what all is installed. We then see how you can implement

ACTION_SEND support in your own application, so you can appear as an option when some other application allows its users to "send" things. Next, we look at how to get control when the user clicks on certain links in Web browsers, such as a for a certain MIME type or Web site. We wrap up with a discussion of how to create application shortcuts that can be dropped onto a user's home screen.

Would You Like to See the Menu?

Another way to give the user ways to take actions on a piece of content, without you knowing what actions are possible, is to inject a set of menu choices into the options menu via addIntentOptions(). This method, available on Menu, takes an Intent and other parameters and fills in a set of menu choices on the Menu instance, each representing one possible action. Choosing one of those menu choices spawns the associated activity.

The canonical example of using addIntentOptions() illustrates another flavor of having a piece of content and not knowing the actions that can be taken. Android applications are perfectly capable of adding new actions to existing content types, so even though you wrote your application and know what you expect to be done with your content, there may be other options you are unaware of that are available to users.

For example, imagine the tagging subsystem mentioned in the introduction to this chapter. It would be very annoying to users if, every time they wanted to tag a piece of content, they had to go to a separate tagging tool, then turn around and pick the content they just had been working on (if that is even technically possible) before associating tags with it. Instead, they would probably prefer a menu choice in the content's own "home" activity where they can indicate they want to tag it, which leads them to the set-a-tag activity and tells that activity what content should get tagged.

To accomplish this, the tagging subsystem should set up an intent filter, supporting any piece of content, with their own action (e.g., ACTION_TAG) and a category of CATEGORY_ALTERNATIVE. The category CATEGORY_ALTERNATIVE

is the convention for one application adding actions to another application's content.

If you want to write activities that are aware of possible add-ons like tagging, you should use addIntentOptions() to add those add-ons' actions to your options menu, such as the following:

Here, myContentUri is the content Uri of whatever is being viewed by the user in this activity, MyActivity is the name of the activity class, and menu is the menu being modified.

In this case, the Intent we are using to pick actions from requires that appropriate intent receivers support the CATEGORY_ALTERNATIVE. Then, we add the options to the menu with addIntentOptions() and the following parameters:

- The sort position for this set of menu choices, typically set to 0 (appear in the order added to the menu) or ALTERNATIVE (appear after other menu choices)
- A unique number for this set of menu choices, or 0 if you do not need a number
- A ComponentName instance representing the activity that is populating its menu this is used to filter out the activity's own actions, so the activity can handle its own actions as it sees fit
- An array of Intent instances that are the "specific" matches any actions matching those intents are shown first in the menu before any other possible actions
- The Intent for which you want the available actions

- A set of flags. The only one of likely relevance is represented as MATCH_DEFAULT_ONLY, which means matching actions must also implement the DEFAULT_CATEGORY category. If you do not need this, use a value of 0 for the flags.
- An array of Menu.Item, which will hold the menu items matching the array of Intent instances supplied as the "specifics", or null if you do not need those items (or are not using "specifics")

Give Users a Choice

Let's suppose you want to send a message. There are many ways you can do that in standard Android: email (via the Email or Gmail apps) or a text message. Third-party apps may also have the notion of "sending", such as alternative email clients (e.g., K9) or Twitter clients (e.g., Twidroid).

You want to allow the user to choose both the means (i.e., the application) and the destination (i.e., the contact or address) for this message to be sent.

That can be handled very simply in Android:

The magic is in the ACTION_SEND protocol and createChooser().

ACTION_SEND is an activity action that says, "Hey! I want to send...ummm...something! To...er...somebody! Yeah!". The documentation for ACTION_SEND describes a series of Intent extras you can attach to the Intent that provides the actual content of the message, from the message body (EXTRA_TEXT and EXTRA_STREAM) to the subject line (EXTRA_SUBJECT). You

can even supply specific addresses (EXTRA_EMAIL, EXTRA_CC, EXTRA_BCC), if you know them already.

The createChooser() static method on Intent returns another Intent, one to a system-provided dialog-themed activity that gives the user a choice of available activities that can support the desired action. This list is determined on the fly by introspection, seeing what capabilities exist on the device. So, one user might get just Email and Messaging, while another user might get K9, Gmail, Messaging, and Twidroid. Your code stays the same – Android provides the "glue" that connects your application to these arbitrary other applications that can handle your request to send the message.

Asking Around

The addIntentOptions() and createChooser() methods in turn use queryIntentActivityOptions() for the "heavy lifting" of finding possible actions. The queryIntentActivityOptions() method is implemented on PackageManager, which is available to your activity via getPackageManager().

The queryIntentActivityOptions() method takes some of the same parameters as does addIntentOptions(), notably the caller ComponentName, the "specifics" array of Intent instances, the overall Intent representing the actions you are seeking, and the set of flags. It returns a List of Intent instances matching the stated criteria, with the "specifics" ones first.

If you would like to offer alternative actions to users, but by means other than addIntentOptions(), you could call queryIntentActivityOptions(), get the Intent instances, then use them to populate some other user interface (e.g., a toolbar).

A simpler version of this method, queryIntentActivities(), is used by the Introspection/Launchalot sample application. This presents a "launcher" – an activity that starts other activities – but uses a ListView rather than a grid like the Android default home screen uses.

Here is the Java code for Launchalot itself:

```
package com.commonsware.android.launchalot;
import android.app.ListActivity;
import android.content.ComponentName;
import android.content.Intent;
import android.content.pm.ActivityInfo;
import android.content.pm.PackageManager;
import android.content.pm.ResolveInfo;
import android.os.Bundle;
import android.view.View;
import android.view.ViewGroup;
import android.widget.ArrayAdapter;
import android.widget.ImageView;
import android.widget.ListView;
import android.widget.TextView;
import java.util.Collections;
import java.util.Comparator;
import java.util.List;
public class Launchalot extends ListActivity {
 AppAdapter adapter=null;
 @Override
 public void onCreate(Bundle savedInstanceState) {
    super.onCreate(savedInstanceState);
    setContentView(R.layout.main);
   PackageManager pm=getPackageManager();
   Intent main=new Intent(Intent.ACTION MAIN, null);
   main.addCategory(Intent.CATEGORY LAUNCHER);
    List<ResolveInfo> launchables=pm.queryIntentActivities(main, 0);
   Collections.sort(launchables,
                    new ResolveInfo.DisplayNameComparator(pm));
   adapter=new AppAdapter(pm, launchables);
   setListAdapter(adapter);
 }
 @Override
 protected void onListItemClick(ListView 1, View v,
                               int position, long id) {
    ResolveInfo launchable=adapter.getItem(position);
   ActivityInfo activity=launchable.activityInfo;
   ComponentName name=new ComponentName(activity.applicationInfo.packageName,
                                       activity.name);
    Intent i=new Intent(Intent.ACTION_MAIN);
    i.addCategory(Intent.CATEGORY_LAUNCHER);
    i.setFlags(Intent.FLAG ACTIVITY NEW TASK
```

```
Intent.FLAG_ACTIVITY_RESET_TASK_IF_NEEDED);
  i.setComponent(name);
  startActivity(i);
}
class AppAdapter extends ArrayAdapter<ResolveInfo> {
 private PackageManager pm=null;
 AppAdapter(PackageManager pm, List<ResolveInfo> apps) {
    super(Launchalot.this, R.layout.row, apps);
    this.pm=pm;
  }
 @Override
 public View getView(int position, View convertView,
                       ViewGroup parent) {
    if (convertView==null) {
      convertView=newView(parent);
    }
    bindView(position, convertView);
   return(convertView);
  }
  private View newView(ViewGroup parent) {
   return(getLayoutInflater().inflate(R.layout.row, parent, false));
  private void bindView(int position, View row) {
    TextView label=(TextView)row.findViewById(R.id.label);
    label.setText(getItem(position).loadLabel(pm));
    ImageView icon=(ImageView)row.findViewById(R.id.icon);
   icon.setImageDrawable(getItem(position).loadIcon(pm));
  }
}
```

In onCreate(), we:

- Get a PackageManager object via getPackageManager()
- Create an Intent for ACTION_MAIN in CATEGORY_LAUNCHER, which identifies activities that wish to be considered "launchable"
- Call queryIntentActivities() to get a List of ResolveInfo objects, each one representing one launchable activity

•	Sort	those	ResolveInfo	objects	via	a
	ResolveIn	fo.DisplayN	lameComparator insta	ance		

• Pour them into a custom AppAdapter and set that to be the contents of our ListView

AppAdapter is an ArrayAdapter subclass that maps the icon and name of the launchable Activity to a row in the ListView, using a custom row layout.

Finally, in onListItemClick(), we construct an Intent that will launch the clicked-upon Activity, given the information from the corresponding ResolveInfo object. Not only do we need to populate the Intent with ACTION_MAIN and CATEGORY_LAUNCHER, but we also need to set the component to be the desired Activity. We also set FLAG_ACTIVITY_NEW_TASK and FLAG_ACTIVITY_RESET_TASK_IF_NEEDED flags, following Android's own launcher implementation from the Home sample project. Finally, we call startActivity() with that Intent, which opens up the activity selected by the user.

The result is a simple list of launchable activities:



Figure 84. The Launchalot sample application

There is also a resolveActivity() method that takes a template Intent, as do queryIntentActivities() and queryIntentActivityOptions(). However, resolveActivity() returns the single best match, rather than a list.

Middle Management

The PackageManager class offers much more than merely queryIntentActivities() and queryIntentActivityOptions(). It is your gateway to all sorts of analysis of what is installed and available on the device where your application is installed and available. If you want to be able to intelligently connect to third-party applications based on whether or not they are around, PackageManager is what you will want.

Finding Applications and Packages

Packages are what get installed on the device – a package is the in-device representation of an APK. An application is defined within a package's

manifest. Between the two, you can find out all sorts of things about existing software installed on the device.

Specifically, getInstalledPackages() returns a List of PackageInfo objects, each of which describes a single package. Here, you can find out:

- The version of the package, in terms of a monotonically increasing number (versionCode) and the display name (versionName)
- Details about all of the components activities, services, etc. offered by this package
- Details about the permissions the package requires

Similarly, getInstalledApplications() returns a List of ApplicationInfo objects, each providing data like:

- The user ID that the application will run as
- The path to the application's private data directory
- Whether or not the application is enabled

In addition to those methods, you can call:

- getApplicationIcon() and getApplicationLabel() to get the icon and display name for an application
- getLaunchIntentForPackage() to get an Intent for something launchable within a named package
- setApplicationEnabledSetting() to enable or disable an application

Finding Resources

You can access resources from another application, apparently without any security restrictions. This may be useful if you have multiple applications and wish to share resources for one reason or another.

The getResourcesForActivity() and getResourcesForApplication() methods on PackageManager return a Resources object. This is just like the one you get

for your own application via getResources() on any Context (e.g., Activity). However, in this case, you identify what activity or application you wish to get the Resources from (e.g., supply the application's package name as a String).

There are also getText() and getXml() methods that dive into the Resources object for an application and pull out specific String or XmlPullParser objects. However, these require you to know the resource ID of the resource to be retrieved, and that may be difficult to manage between disparate applications.

Finding Components

Not only does Android offer "query" and "resolve" methods to find activities, but it offers similar methods to find other sorts of Android components:

- queryBroadcastReceivers()
- queryContentProviders()
- queryIntentServices()
- resolveContentProvider()
- resolveService()

For example, you could use resolveService() to determine if a certain remote service is available, so you can disable certain UI elements if the service is not on the device. You could achieve the same end by calling bindService() and watching for a failure, but that may be later in the application flow than you would like.

There is also a setComponentEnabledSetting() to toggle a component (activity, service, etc.) on and off. While this may seem esoteric, there are a number of possible uses for this method, such as:

• Flagging a launchable activity as disabled in your manifest, then enabling it programmatically after the user has entered a license key, achieved some level or standing in a game, or any other criteria

 Controlling whether a BroadcastReceiver registered in the manifest is hooked into the system or not, replicating the level of control you have with registerReceiver() while still taking advantage of the fact that a manifest-registered BroadcastReceiver can be started even if no other component of your application is running

Get In the Loop

Earlier in this chapter, we saw how to request to send a message somewhere via ACTION_SEND. If you have an application that has an intrinsic notion of "sending" or "sharing" things, you may wish to advertise that your application can respond to ACTION_SEND. Then, you automatically integrate with every Android application ever written that uses ACTION_SEND, without any additional work on their part.

The key is in the intent filter.

For example, take a look at Introspection/FauxSender. This is a trivial implementation of an ACTION_SEND responder, in the form of an activity that just raises a Toast with the message to be "sent".

Our application will have two activities:

- 1. The main activity (FauxSender) that supports ACTION_SEND
- 2. A test activity that sends a message via ACTION_SEND and createChooser(), so our FauxSender will be an option

The Manifest

First, let's take a peek at the project's AndroidManifest.xml file:

```
<supports-screens android:largeScreens="true"
                   android:normalScreens="true"
                   android:smallScreens="false" />
 <application android:icon="@drawable/cw"
            android:label="@string/app_name">
   <activity android:label="@string/test name"
             android:name="FauxSenderTest">
     <intent-filter>
       <action android:name="android.intent.action.MAIN" />
       <category android:name="android.intent.category.LAUNCHER" />
     </intent-filter>
   </activity>
   <activity android:label="@string/app_name"
             android:name="FauxSender"
             android:theme="@android:style/Theme.NoDisplay">
     <intent-filter android:label="@string/app name">
       <action android:name="android.intent.action.SEND" />
       <data android:mimeType="text/plain" />
       <category android:name="android.intent.category.DEFAULT" />
     </intent-filter>
   </activity>
 </application>
/manifest>
```

The test activity has the normal "please show me in the Launcher" configurations.

The other activity - FauxSender - has a somewhat more unusual <intentfilter> element. Here, we state that this activity should respond to any Intent used to start an activity that:

- References the ACTION_SEND action,
- Has content that is of type text/plain, and
- Appears in the DEFAULT category

That is the "secret sauce" that enables FauxSender to work with ACTION_SEND Intent objects of the type we aim to support.

The Main Activity

FauxSender is almost trivial:

```
package com.commonsware.android.fsender;
import android.app.Activity;
import android.content.Intent;
import android.os.Bundle;
import android.text.TextUtils;
import android.widget.Toast;
public class FauxSender extends Activity {
 @Override
 public void onCreate(Bundle savedInstanceState) {
    super.onCreate(savedInstanceState);
   String msg=getIntent().getStringExtra(Intent.EXTRA_TEXT);
    if (TextUtils.isEmpty(msg)) {
     msg=getIntent().getStringExtra(Intent.EXTRA_SUBJECT);
    }
   if (TextUtils.isEmpty(msg)) {
     Toast
        .makeText(this, "No message supplied!", Toast.LENGTH_LONG)
        .show();
    }
   else {
     Toast
        .makeText(this, msg, Toast.LENGTH LONG)
        .show();
    }
    finish();
  }
```

We check both EXTRA_TEXT and EXTRA_SUBJECT to see if there is a message to be sent. If not, we raise a Toast to tell the user that something is messed up. Assuming we have a message, we display a Toast with the text of the message.

In either case – valid or invalid input – we finish() the activity, without showing any actual UI. That is because there is nothing really to show, having delegated all results to the Toast class. Because there is no UI to be shown, we use the Theme.NoDisplay them in our AndroidManifest.xml entry for this activity – this suppresses the otherwise-empty activity window from displaying.

Obviously, a production-grade ACTION_SEND implementation would be more involved, including probably sending the message (using an IntentService) over the Internet via some protocol to some destination.

The Test Activity

Our test activity - FauxSenderTest - just fires off a pre-defined message using ACTION_SEND, using the createChooser() technique described earlier in this chapter:

```
package com.commonsware.android.fsender;
import android.app.Activity;
import android.content.Intent;
import android.os.Bundle:
import android.text.TextUtils;
import android.widget.Toast;
public class FauxSenderTest extends Activity {
 @Override
 public void onCreate(Bundle savedInstanceState) {
    super.onCreate(savedInstanceState);
    sendIt("This is a test of FauxSender");
    finish();
 }
 void sendIt(String theMessage) {
    Intent i=new Intent(Intent.ACTION SEND);
    i.setType("text/plain");
    i.putExtra(Intent.EXTRA SUBJECT, R.string.share subject);
    i.putExtra(Intent.EXTRA_TEXT, theMessage);
   startActivity(Intent.createChooser(i,
                                     getString(R.string.share_title)));
  }
```

The Results

Running FauxSender Test will bring up a chooser to pick which means you want to use to send the message:



Figure 85. The ACTION_SEND chooser

If you choose FauxSender, you will get a Toast with the test message:



Figure 86. The result of sending via FauxSender

Take the Shortcut

Another way to integrate with Android is to offer custom shortcuts. Shortcuts are available from the home screen. Whereas app widgets allow you to draw on the home screen, shortcuts allow you to wrap a custom Intent with an icon and caption and put that on the home screen. You can use this to drive users not just to your application's "front door", like the launcher icon, but to some specific capability within your application, like a bookmark.

In our case, in the Introspection/QuickSender sample, we will allow users to create shortcuts that use ACTION_SEND to send a pre-defined message, either to a specific address or anywhere, as we have seen before in this chapter.

Once again, the key is in the intent filter.

Registering a Shortcut Provider

Here is the manifest for QuickSender:

```
<?xml version="1.0" encoding="utf-8"?>
<manifest android:versionCode="1"
         android:versionName="1.0"
         package="com.commonsware.android.gsender"
         xmlns:android="http://schemas.android.com/apk/res/android">
 <supports-screens android:largeScreens="true"</pre>
                    android:normalScreens="true"
                    android:smallScreens="false" />
 <application android:icon="@drawable/cw"
             android:label="@string/app_name">
   <activity android:label="@string/app_name"
              android:name="QuickSender">
     <intent-filter>
        <action android:name="android.intent.action.CREATE_SHORTCUT" />
        <category android:name="android.intent.category.DEFAULT" />
     </intent-filter>
    </activity>
 </application>
</manifest>
```

Our single activity does not implement a traditional launcher <intent-filter>. Rather, it has one that watches for a CREATE_SHORTCUT action. This does two things:

- 1. It means that our activity will show up in the list of possible shortcuts a user can configure
- 2. It means this activity will be the recipient of a CREATE_SHORTCUT Intent if the user chooses this application from the shortcuts list

Implementing a Shortcut Provider

The job of a shortcut-providing activity is to:

- Create an Intent that will be what the shortcut launches
- Return that Intent and other data to the activity that started the shortcut provider
- Finally, finish(), so the caller gets control

You can see all of that in the QuickSender implementation:

```
package com.commonsware.android.gsender;
import android.app.Activity;
import android.content.Intent;
import android.os.Bundle;
import android.text.TextUtils;
import android.view.View;
import android.widget.TextView;
public class QuickSender extends Activity {
  @Override
  public void onCreate(Bundle savedInstanceState) {
    super.onCreate(savedInstanceState);
    setContentView(R.layout.main);
  }
  public void save(View v) {
    Intent shortcut=new Intent(Intent.ACTION SEND);
    TextView addr=(TextView)findViewById(R.id.addr);
   TextView subject=(TextView)findViewById(R.id.subject);
    TextView body=(TextView)findViewById(R.id.body);
    TextView name=(TextView)findViewById(R.id.name);
    if (!TextUtils.isEmpty(addr.getText())) {
      shortcut.putExtra(Intent.EXTRA_EMAIL, addr.getText().toString());
    }
    if (!TextUtils.isEmpty(subject.getText())) {
      shortcut.putExtra(Intent.EXTRA SUBJECT, subject.getText().toString());
    }
    if (!TextUtils.isEmpty(body.getText())) {
      shortcut.putExtra(Intent.EXTRA_TEXT, body.getText().toString());
    }
    shortcut.setType("text/plain");
    Intent result=new Intent();
    result.putExtra(Intent.EXTRA_SHORTCUT_INTENT, shortcut);
    result.putExtra(Intent.EXTRA_SHORTCUT_NAME,
                    name.getText().toString());
    result.putExtra(Intent.EXTRA_SHORTCUT_ICON_RESOURCE,
                    Intent.ShortcutIconResource.fromContext(
                                          this,
                                          R.drawable.icon);
    setResult(RESULT OK, result);
    finish();
  }
```

The shortcut Intent is the one that will be launched when the user taps the shortcut icon on the home screen. The result Intent packages up shortcut plus the icon and caption, where the icon is converted into an Intent.ShortcutIconResource object. That result Intent is then used with the setResult() call, to pass that back to whatever called startActivityForResult() to open up QuickSender. Then, we finish().

At this point, all the information about the shortcut is in the hands of Android (or, more accurately, the home screen application), which can add the icon to the home screen.

Using the Shortcuts

To create a custom shortcut using QuickSender, long-tap on the background of the home screen to bring up the customization options:



Figure 87. The home screen customization options list

Choose Shortcuts, and scroll down to find QuickSender in the list:



Figure 88. The available types of shortcuts

Click the QuickSender entry, which will bring up our activity with the form to define what to send:

QuickSender		
Shortcut Name:		
Address:		
Subject:		
Body:		
Create Shortcut		

Figure 89. The QuickSender configuration activity

Fill in the name, either the subject or body, and optionally the address. Then, click the Create Shortcut button, and you will find your shortcut sitting on your home screen:



Figure 90. The QuickSender-defined shortcut, labeled Shortcut

If you launch that shortcut, and if there is more than one application on the device set up to handle ACTION_SEND, Android will bring up a special chooser, to allow you to not only pick how to send the message, but optionally make that method the default for all future requests:


Figure 91. The ACTION_SEND request, as triggered by the shortcut

Depending on what you choose, of course, will dictate how the message actually gets sent.

Your Own Private URL

You may have noticed that Android supports a market: URL scheme. Web pages can use such URLs so that, if they are viewed on an Android device's browser, the user can be transported to an Android Market page, perhaps for a specific app or a list of apps for a publisher.

Fortunately, that mechanism is not limited to Android's code – you can get control for various other types of links as well. You do this by adding certain entries to an activity's <intent-filter> for an ACTION_VIEW Intent.

Manifest Modifications

First, any <intent-filter> designed to respond to browser links will need to have a <category> element with a name of

android.intent.category.BROWSABLE. Just as the LAUNCHER category indicates an activity that should get an icon in the launcher, the BROWSABLE category indicates an activity that wishes to respond to browser links.

You will then need to further refine which links you wish to respond to, via a <data> element. This lets you describe the URL and/or MIME type that you wish to respond to. For example, here is the AndroidManifest.xml file from the Introspection/URLHandler project:

```
<?xml version="1.0" encoding="utf-8"?>
<manifest android:versionCode="1"
         android:versionName="1.0"
         package="com.commonsware.android.urlhandler"
         xmlns:android="http://schemas.android.com/apk/res/android">
 <supports-screens android:largeScreens="true"</pre>
                    android:normalScreens="true"
                    android:smallScreens="false" />
 <application android:icon="@drawable/cw"
              android:label="@string/app_name">
    <activity android:label="@string/app_name"</pre>
              android:name="URLHandler">
     <intent-filter>
       <action android:name="android.intent.action.MAIN" />
        <category android:name="android.intent.category.LAUNCHER" />
     </intent-filter>
     <intent-filter>
        <action android:name="android.intent.action.VIEW" />
        <category android:name="android.intent.category.DEFAULT" />
        <category android:name="android.intent.category.BROWSABLE" />
        <data android:mimeType="application/pdf" />
     </intent-filter>
      <intent-filter>
        <action android:name="android.intent.action.VIEW" />
        <category android:name="android.intent.category.DEFAULT" />
        <category android:name="android.intent.category.BROWSABLE" />
        <data android:host="www.this-so-does-not-exist.com"
              android:scheme="http" />
     </intent-filter>
     <intent-filter>
        <action android:name="com.commonsware.android.MY ACTION" />
        <category android:name="android.intent.category.DEFAULT" />
        <category android:name="android.intent.category.BROWSABLE" />
     </intent-filter>
    </activity>
  </application>
/manifest>
```

Here, we have four <intent-filter> elements for our one activity:

- 1. The first is a standard "put an icon for me in the launcher, please" filter, with the LAUNCHABLE category
- The second claims that we handle PDF files (MIME type of application/pdf), and that we will respond to browser links (BROWSABLE category)
- 3. The third claims that we will handle any HTTP request (scheme of "http") for a certain Web site (host of "www.this-so-does-notexist.com"), and that we will respond to browser links (BROWSABLE category)
- 4. The last is a custom action, for which we will generate a URL that Android will honor, and that we will respond to browser links (BROWSABLE category)

Note that the last one also requires the DEFAULT category in order to work.

Creating a Custom URL

Responding to MIME types makes complete sense...if we implement something designed to handle such a MIME type.

Responding to certain schemes, hosts, paths, or file extensions is certainly usable, but other than perhaps the file extension approach, it makes your application a bit fragile. If the site changes domain names (even a subdomain) or reorganizes its site with different URL structures, your code will break.

If the goal is simply for you to be able to trigger your own application from your own Web pages, though, the safest approach is to use an intent: URL. These can be generated from an Intent object by calling toUri(Intent.URI_INTENT_SCHEME) on a properly-configured Intent, then calling toString() on the resulting Uri.

For example, the intent: URL for the fourth <intent-filter> from above is:

intent:#Intent;action=com.commonsware.android.MY_ACTION;end

This is not an official URL scheme, any more than market: is, but it works for Android devices. When the Android built-in Browser encounters this URL, it will create an Intent out of the URL-serialized form and call startActivity() on it, thereby starting your activity.

Reacting to the Link

Your activity can then examine the Intent that launched it to determine what to do. In particular, you will probably be interested in the Uri corresponding to the link – this is available via the getData() method. For example, here is the URLHandler activity for this sample project:

```
package com.commonsware.android.urlhandler;
import android.app.Activity;
import android.content.Intent;
import android.net.Uri;
import android.os.Bundle;
import android.util.Log;
import android.view.View;
import android.widget.TextView;
public class URLHandler extends Activity {
  @Override
  public void onCreate(Bundle savedInstanceState) {
    super.onCreate(savedInstanceState);
    setContentView(R.layout.main);
    TextView uri=(TextView)findViewById(R.id.uri);
    if (Intent.ACTION MAIN.equals(getIntent().getAction())) {
      String intentUri=(new Intent("com.commonsware.android.MY_ACTION"))
                         .toUri(Intent.URI INTENT SCHEME)
                         .toString();
      uri.setText(intentUri);
     Log.w("URLHandler", intentUri);
    }
    else {
      Uri data=getIntent().getData();
      if (data==null) {
        uri.setText("Got com.commonsware.android.MY_ACTION Intent");
      else {
        uri.setText(getIntent().getData().toString());
      }
```

}

This activity's layout has a TextView (uri) for showing a Uri and a Button to launch a page of links, found on the CommonsWare site (http://commonsware.com/sample). The Button is wired to call visitSample(), which just calls startActivity() on the aforementioned URL to display it in the Browser.

When the activity starts up, though, it first loads up the TextView. What goes in there depends on how the activity was launched:

- If it was launched via the launcher (e.g., the action is MAIN), then we display in the TextView the intent: URL shown in the previous section, generated from an Intent object designed to trigger our fourth <intent-filter>. This also gets dumped to LogCat, and is how the author got this URL in the first place to put on the sample Web page of links.
- If it was not launched via the launcher, it was launched from a Web link. If the Uri from the launching Intent is null, though, that means the activity was launched via the custom intent: URL (which only has an action string), so we put a message in the TextView to match.
- Otherwise, the Uri from the launching Intent will have something we can use to process the link request. For the PDF file, it will be the local path to the downloaded PDF, so we can open it. For the www.this-so-does-not-exist.com URL, it will be the URL itself, so we can process it our own way.

Note that for the PDF case, clicking the PDF link in the Browser will download the file in the background, with a Notification indicating when it is complete. Tapping on the entry in the notification drawer will then trigger the URLHandler activity.

Also, bear in mind that the device may have multiple handlers for some URLs. For example, a device with a real PDF viewer will give the user a choice of whether to launch the downloaded PDF in the real view or URLHandler.

Homing Beacons for Intents

If you are encountering problems with Intent resolution – you create an Intent for something and try starting an Activity or Service with it, and it does not work – you can add the FLAG_DEBUG_LOG_RESOLUTION flag to the Intent. This will dump information to LogCat about how the Intent resolution occurred, so you can better diagnose what might be going wrong.

Tapjacking

On the whole, Android's security is fairly good for defending an app from another app. Between using Linux users and filesystems for protecting an application's files from other apps, to the use of custom permissions to control access to public interfaces, an application would seem to be relatively protected.

However, there is one attack vector that exists that, to date, has only been lightly addressed by the operating system: tapjacking. This chapter outlines what tapjacking is and what you can do about it to protect your app's users.

What is Tapjacking?

Tapjacking refers to another program intercepting and inspecting touch events that are delivered to your foreground activity (or related artifacts, such as the input method editor). At its worst, tapjackers could intercept passwords, PINs, and other private data.

The term "tapjacking" seems to have been coined by Lookout Mobile Security, in a blog post that originally demonstrated this issue.

You might be wondering how this is possible. There are a handful of approaches to implementing this. The Lookout blog post cited perhaps the least useful approach: making a transparent Toast. The

Tapjacking/Jackalope sample application will illustrate a far more troublesome implementation.

World War Z (Axis)

You may recall that there are three axes to consider with Android user interfaces. The X and Y axes are the ones you typically think about, as they control the horizontal and vertical positioning of widgets in an activity. The Z axis – effectively "coming out the screen towards the user's eyes" – can be used in applications for sophisticated techniques, such as the pop-up panel used in the maps and streaming video samples presented earlier in this book.

Normally, you think of the Z axis within the scope of your activity and its widgets. However, there are ways to display "system alerts" – widgets that can float over top of any activity. A Toast is the one you are familiar with, most likely. A Toast displays something on the screen, yet touch events on the Toast itself will be passed through to the underlying activity. Lookout demonstrated that it is possible to create a fully-transparent Toast. However, the lifetime of a Toast is limited (3.5 seconds maximum), which would limit how long it can try to grab touch events.

However, any application holding the SYSTEM_ALERT_WINDOW permission can display their own "system alerts" with custom look and custom duration. By making one that is fully transparent and lives as long as possible, a tapjacker can obtain touch events for any application in the system, including lock screens, home screens, and any standard activity.

Enter the Jackalope

To demonstrate this, let's take a look at the Jackalope sample application. It consists of a tiny activity and a service, with the service doing most of the work.

The activity employs Theme.NoDisplay:

```
<?xml version="1.0" encoding="utf-8"?>
<manifest xmlns:android="http://schemas.android.com/apk/res/android"
     android:versionCode="1"
     android:versionName="1.0" package="com.commonsware.android.tj.jackalope">
   <uses-permission android:name="android.permission.SYSTEM_ALERT_WINDOW" />
   <application android:label="Jackalope">
       <activity android:name=".Jackalope"
                    android:theme="@android:style/Theme.NoDisplay">
            <intent-filter>
                <action android:name="android.intent.action.MAIN" />
                <category android:name="android.intent.category.LAUNCHER" />
            </intent-filter>
       </activity>
       <service android:name=".Tapjacker" />
   </application>
</manifest>
```

The activity then just starts up the service and finishes:

```
package com.commonsware.android.tj.jackalope;
import android.app.Activity;
import android.content.Intent;
import android.os.Bundle;
public class Jackalope extends Activity {
  @Override
  public void onCreate(Bundle savedInstanceState) {
    super.onCreate(savedInstanceState);
    startService(new Intent(this, Tapjacker.class));
    finish();
  }
}
```

The visible effect is... nothing. Tapping the icon in the launcher appears to have no effect, but it does actually start up the tapjacker. You just cannot see it.

The Tapjacker service does its evil work in a handful of lines of code:

```
package com.commonsware.android.tj.jackalope;
import android.app.Service;
import android.content.Intent;
import android.graphics.PixelFormat;
import android.os.IBinder;
import android.util.Log;
import android.view.Gravity;
```

```
import android.view.MotionEvent;
import android.view.View;
import android.view.WindowManager;
public class Tapjacker extends Service implements View.OnTouchListener {
 private View v=null;
 private WindowManager mgr=null;
 @Override
 public void onCreate() {
    super.onCreate();
   v=new View(this);
   v.setOnTouchListener(this);
   mgr=(WindowManager)getSystemService(WINDOW_SERVICE);
   WindowManager.LayoutParams params
      =new WindowManager.LayoutParams(
       WindowManager.LayoutParams.FILL PARENT,
       WindowManager.LayoutParams.FILL_PARENT,
       WindowManager.LayoutParams.TYPE_SYSTEM_OVERLAY,
       WindowManager.LayoutParams.FLAG_WATCH_OUTSIDE_TOUCH,
        PixelFormat.TRANSPARENT);
   params.gravity=Gravity.FILL_HORIZONTAL Gravity.FILL_VERTICAL;
   mgr.addView(v, params);
   // stopSelf(); - uncomment for "component-less" operation
  }
 @Override
 public IBinder onBind(Intent intent) {
   return(null);
  }
 @Override
 public void onDestroy() {
   mgr.removeView(v); // comment out for "component-less" operation
   super.onDestroy();
 }
 @Override
 public boolean onTouch(View v, MotionEvent event) {
    Log.w("Tapjacker",
          String.valueOf(event.getX())+":"+String.valueOf(event.getY()));
   return(false);
  }
```

In onCreate(), we create an invisible View in Java code. Note that while you normally create a widget by passing in the Activity to the constructor, any Context will work, and so here we use the Tapjacker service itself.

Then, we access the WindowManager system service and add the invisible View to the system. To do this, we need to supply a WindowManager.LayoutParams object, much like you might use LinearLayout.LayoutParams or RelativeLayout.LayoutParams when putting a View inside of one of those containers. In this case, we:

- Say that the View is to fill the screen
- Indicates that the View is to be treated as a "system overlay" (TYPE_SYSTEM_OVERLAY), which will be at the top of the Z axis, floating above anything else (activities, dialogs, etc.)
- Indicates that we are to receive touch events that are beyond the View itself (FLAG_WATCH_OUTSIDE_TOUCH), such as on the system bar in Honeycomb

We attach the Tapjacker service itself as the OnTouchListener to the View, and simply log all touch events to LogCat. In onDestroy(), we remove the system overlay View.

The result is that every screen tap results in an entry in LogCat – including data entry via the soft keyboard – even though the user is unaware that anything might be intercepting these events.

Note, though, that this does not intercept regular key events, including those from hardware keyboards. Also note that this does not magically give the malware author access to data entered before the tapjacker was set up. Hence, even if the tapjacker can sniff a password, if they do not know the account name, the user may still be safe.

Thinking Like a Malware Author

So, you have touch events. On the surface, this might not seem terribly useful, since the View cannot see what is being tapped upon.

However, a savvy malware author would identify what activity is in the foreground and log that information along with the tap details and the screen size, periodically dumping that information to some server. The malware author can then scan the touch event dumps to see what interesting applications are showing up. With a minor investment – and possibly collaboration with other malware authors – the author can know what touch events correspond to what keys on various input method editors, including the stock keyboards used by a variety of devices. Loading a pirated version of the APK on an emulator can indicate which activity has the password, PIN, or other secure data. Then, it is merely a matter of identifying the touch events applied to that activity and matching them up with the soft keyboard to determine what the user has entered. Over time, the malware author can perhaps develop a script to help automate this conversion.

Hence, the on-device tapjacker does not have to be very sophisticated, other than trying to avoid detection by the user. All of the real work to leverage the intercepted touch events can be handled offline.

Detecting Potential Tapjackers

Tapjacking seems bad.

This begs the question: can we identify when a tapjacker is running? That would allow users and developers to "route around the damage", such as uninstalling the tapjacker application.

Unfortunately, this does not appear to be possible. There is no obvious way for an application – or the user – to determine if some other application has employed WindowManager to add a TYPE_SYSTEM_OVERLAY View to the screen. Even if there were, there is no way to determine if this View represents a tapjacker or somebody exploiting this capability for other, less nefarious ends.

All we can do is identify applications that might pose a problem.

Who Holds a Permission?

The biggest identifier of a possible tapjacker is the SYSTEM_ALERT_WINDOW permission. This is required to add a TYPE_SYSTEM_OVERLAY View to the screen. Relatively few applications request this, since built-in system alerts, like Toast, do not require the permission.

Also, a tapjacker probably needs the INTERNET permission, to deliver the results to the malware author. In principle, the tapjacker could be split into two applications, one with SYSTEM_ALERT_WINDOW and one with INTERNET. However, this adds to deployment complexity and therefore may be avoided by malware authors.

An end user can use programs like RL Permissions to examine the applications that have these permissions. A developer can use PackageManager to enumerate the installed applications and see which ones hold these permissions. We will examine some code for doing this later in this chapter.

Who is Running?

Of course, a tapjacker is only a threat if it is actually running in the background. Applications might use those two permissions just in the course of normal activity-centric operations, not with an everlasting service trying to maintain the interception View.

We can use ActivityManager to enumerate the running processes and what packages' code are in each. Any package that holds the permission combination from the previous section and is running in a process is a possible tapjacking threat. We will examine some code for doing this in the next section.

Note that it is important to examine running processes, not running services. For example, the Tapjacker service from earlier in this chapter could add the interception View and immediately exit. You can see this in action by adjusting the code as indicated in the comments in onCreate()

and onDestroy(). The interception View will remain intact (with the Tapjacker service object leaked) until the process is terminated. That process might be terminated quickly or slowly, depending on what all is going on with the device. A sophisticated malware author might try to run without a running service to increase stealthiness, at the cost of occasionally losing some data.

Combining the Two: TJDetect

To see these techniques in action, take a look at the Tapjacking/TJDetect sample project. This consists of a single ListActivity, whose list is populated with the applications that hold both SYSTEM_ALERT_WINDOW and INTERNET permissions and are presently running:

```
package com.commonsware.android.tj.detect;
import android.app.ActivityManager;
import android.app.ListActivity;
import android.content.pm.PackageInfo;
import android.content.pm.PackageManager;
import android.os.Bundle;
import android.widget.ArrayAdapter;
import java.util.ArrayList;
import java.util.HashSet;
public class TJDetect extends ListActivity {
 @Override
 public void onCreate(Bundle savedInstanceState) {
    super.onCreate(savedInstanceState);
   ActivityManager am=(ActivityManager)getSystemService(ACTIVITY SERVICE);
   HashSet<CharSequence> runningPackages=new HashSet<CharSequence>();
   for (ActivityManager.RunningAppProcessInfo proc :
        am.getRunningAppProcesses()) {
      for (String pkgName : proc.pkgList) {
        runningPackages.add(pkgName);
      }
    }
   PackageManager mgr=getPackageManager();
   ArrayList<CharSequence> scary=new ArrayList<CharSequence>();
   for (PackageInfo pkg :
       mgr.getInstalledPackages(PackageManager.GET_PERMISSIONS)) {
      if (PackageManager.PERMISSION GRANTED==
            mgr.checkPermission(android.Manifest.permission.SYSTEM ALERT WINDOW,
```

To find the unique set of packages that are running across all processes, we iterate over the RunningAppProcessInfo objects returned by ActivityManager from a call to getRunningAppProcesses(). One public data member of RunningAppProcessInfo is a list of all the packages whose code runs in this process (pkgList). We use a simple HashSet to come up with the unique set of packages.

Then, we find all installed packages via a call to getInstalledPackages() on PackageManager. For each package, we use checkPermission() on PackageManager to see if the package in question holds a permission. Packages that pass those two tests are then checked against the HashSet of running packages, and those that are running are recorded in an ArrayList, later wrapped in an ArrayAdapter.

If you run TJDetect, it will not detect Jackalope, since Jackalope lacks the INTERNET permission. And, particularly on production hardware, it will detect several packages that may not be tapjackers at all, but rather are system applications installed in the firmware by the device manufacturer.

Defending Against Tapjackers

OK, so users and developers cannot reliably detect tapjackers. Surely there must be something in the OS that helps defend users and developers against tapjacking, right?

The answer is "yes", for a generous definition of the term "defend" and an equally generous definition of "users and developers".

Filtering Touch Events

The only "defense" directly provided by Android is to allow applications to filter out touch events that had been intercepted by a tapjacker, Toast, or any other form of system overlay or alert. Those touch events are simply dropped, never delivered to the underlying activity.

Implementing the Filter

The simplest way to implement the touch event filter is to add the android:filterTouchesWhenObscured attribute to a widget or container, setting it to true. The equivalent Java setter method on View is setFilterTouchesWhenObscured().

For example, take a look at the res/layout/main.xml file in the Tapjacking/RelativeSecure sample project:

```
<?xml version="1.0" encoding="utf-8"?>
<RelativeLavout
 xmlns:android="http://schemas.android.com/apk/res/android"
 android:layout width="match parent"
 android:layout_height="wrap_content"
 android:filterTouchesWhenObscured="true">
 <TextView android:id="@+id/label"
   android:layout width="wrap content"
    android:layout_height="wrap_content"
   android:text="URL:"
   android:layout alignBaseline="@+id/entry"
    android:layout_alignParentLeft="true"/>
 <EditText
    android:id="@id/entry"
   android:layout width="match parent"
   android:layout_height="wrap_content"
    android:layout toRightOf="@id/label"
    android:layout_alignParentTop="true"/>
 <Button
    android:id="@+id/ok"
    android:layout_width="wrap_content"
    android:layout_height="wrap_content"
    android:layout_below="@id/entry"
```

```
android:layout_alignRight="@id/entry"
android:text="OK" />
<Button
android:id="@+id/cancel"
android:layout_width="wrap_content"
android:layout_height="wrap_content"
android:layout_toLeftOf="@id/ok"
android:layout_alignTop="@id/ok"
android:text="Cancel" />
</RelativeLayout>
```

Here, we have android:filterTouchesWhenObscured="true" on the RelativeLayout at the root of the layout resource. This property cascades to a container's children, and so if a tapjacker (or Toast or whatever) is above any of the widgets in the RelativeLayout, none of the touch events will be processed.

More fine-grained control can be achieved in custom widgets by overriding onFilterTouchEventForSecurity(), which gets control before the regular touch event methods. You can determine if a touch event had been intercepted by looking for the FLAG_WINDOW_IS_OBSCURED flag in the MotionEvent passed to onFilterTouchEventForSecurity(), and you can make the decision of how to handle this on an event-by-event basis.

The User Experience and the Hoped-For Security

Normally, the user will not see a difference when interacting with widgets that have this attribute set. However, if a tapjacker is intercepting these events, the user will not see any reaction from the widgets when they are tapped. For example, clicking a Button will have no visual effect (e.g., orange flash).

The hope is that users will realize that the UI is not responding to their touch events and therefore will not complete whatever it is they are doing. For example, they might not complete their PIN entry after realizing that the number pad supplied by the app is not responding to their taps.

For some users and some apps, this will be an effective defense. However, there will be some users who will remain oblivious until after completing the attempt to enter the private information.

The Flaws

The user can still use the soft keyboard to enter data into EditText widgets. While the soft keyboard will not automatically appear in portrait mode (since the EditText will not respond to the tap), if it has the focus, the user can long-press the MENU button to raise the soft keyboard and enter data that way.

Similarly, if the user is in landscape mode and gets the full-screen soft keyboard, since this is not the EditText widget defended by the touch event filtering, everything works normally – including interception by tapjacking. Developers could try to prevent this by adding flagNoFullscreen to the android:imeOptions attribute on the EditText in the layout XML, though this may not be honored by all soft keyboards. Developers could also try to prevent this by locking the activity into portrait mode (android:screenOrientation="portrait"), but this would be bad for users with side-slider keyboards, Google TV devices, etc.

And, most importantly, the tapjacking still happens. If users keep trying to enter their credentials despite the lack of UI feedback, they may eventually enter the whole thing and therefore become vulnerable to having that information used for ill ends.

Availability

Filtering touch events when the activity is obscured is supported in API Level 9 and above – in other words, Android 2.3 and newer. At the time of this writing, that leaves out 90% of active Android devices, based on the June 1, 2011 published edition of the platform versions data from Google.

By 2013, a majority of devices should run API Level 9 or higher, and by 2014 or 2015, only a tiny percentage will run older versions of Android. However, this does users and developers little good in the near term.

Detect-and-Warn

You can use the tapjacker detection logic illustrated earlier in this chapter. It is not particularly accurate, but you may feel it is worthwhile.

To minimize hassle for the user, your application should maintain a "whitelist" of approved packages. Any time you detect a package that is not on the approved list, you would raise an AlertDialog (or the equivalent) to let the user know of the potential tapjacker. If they elect to continue onward in your app, add the new package(s) to the whitelist, so you do not bother the user again for the same package.

Why Is This Being Discussed?

Some of you are by this time wondering why this book has a chapter on this subject.

Google's security team indicated to the author that android:filterTouchesWhenObscured is sufficient security. If so, developers need to realize when to use it, and for that, developers need to understand what tapjacking is to start with. The code to implement tapjacking is sufficiently trivial that "security by obscurity" of the code seems pointless.

It is eminently possible that android:filterTouchesWhenObscured is not sufficient security, despite Google's claim. In that case, developers may be able to help inform the public about the dangers of applications that request the SYSTEM_ALERT_WINDOW permission.

There are legitimate uses for tapjacking techniques. Some apps use this to provide a universal gesture interface, for example, to get control no matter

what application is presently in the foreground. Whether the value that such apps provide is worth the risks inherent in tapjacking is up for debate.

If you feel that tapjacking is a problem and that android:filterTouchesWhenObscured is inadequate, you may wish to let Google know when you have the opportunity to interact with Google engineers at conferences and similar events. If you come up with other ways to detect and/or prevent tapjacking, you may wish to distribute that knowledge, so other developers can learn from your discovery.

Working With SMS

SMS and Android is a frustrating experience.

While Android devices have reasonable SMS capability, much of that is out of the reach of developers following the official SDK. For various reasons – some defensible, others less so – there is no officially-supported way to create an SMS client, receive SMS data messages on specified ports, and so forth. Eventually, perhaps, this situation will be improved.

This chapter starts with the one thing you can do – send an SMS, either directly or by invoking the user's choice of SMS client. The chapter ends with a discussion of the various unsanctioned aspects of SMS that you may see other developers using, and why you may not want to follow suit.

Sending Out an SOS, Give or Take a Letter

While much of Android's SMS capabilities are not in the SDK, sending an SMS is. You have two major choices for doing this:

- 1. Invoke the user's choice of SMS client application, so they can compose a message, track its progress, and so forth using that tool
- 2. Send the SMS directly yourself, bypassing any existing client

Which of these is best for you depends on what your desired user experience is. If you are composing the message totally within your application, you may want to just send it. However, as we will see, that comes at a price: an extra permission.

Sending Via the SMS Client

Sending an SMS via the user's choice of SMS client is very similar to the use of ACTION_SEND described in the previous chapter. You craft an appropriate Intent, then call startActivity() on that Intent to bring up an SMS client (or allow the user to choose between clients).

The Intent differs a bit from the ACTION_SEND example:

- You use ACTION_SENDTO, rather than ACTION_SEND
- Your Uri needs to begin with smsto:, followed by the mobile number you want to send the message to
- Your text message goes in an sms_body extra on the Intent

For example, here is a snippet of code from the SMS/Sender sample project:

Here, our phone number is coming out of the third column of a Cursor, and the text message is coming from an EditText – more on how this works later in this section, when we review the Sender sample more closely.

Sending SMS Directly

If you wish to bypass the UI and send an SMS directly, you can do so through the SmsManager class, in the android.telephony package. Unlike most Android classes ending in Manager, you obtain an SmsManager via a static getDefault() method on the SmsManager class. You can then call sendTextMessage(), supplying:

- The phone number to send the text message to
- The "service center" address leave this null unless you know what you are doing
- The actual text message
- A pair of PendingIntent objects to be executed when the SMS has been sent and delivered, respectively

If you are concerned that your message may be too long, use divideMessage() on SmsManager to take your message and split it into individual pieces. Then, you can use sendMultipartTextMessage() to send the entire ArrayList of message pieces.

For this to work, your application needs to hold the SEND_SMS permission, via a child element of your <manifest> element in your AndroidManifest.xml file:

```
<uses-permission android:name="android.permission.READ_CONTACTS" />
```

For example, here is code from Sender that uses SmsManager to send the same message that the previous section sent via the user's choice of SMS client:

Inside the Sender Sample

The Sender example application is fairly straightforward, given the aforementioned techniques.

The manifest has both the SEND_SMS and READ_CONTACTS permissions, because we want to allow the user to pick a mobile phone number from their list of contacts, rather than type one in by hand:

```
<?xml version="1.0" encoding="utf-8"?>
<manifest android:installLocation="preferExternal"
         android:versionCode="1"
         android:versionName="1.0"
         package="com.commonsware.android.sms.sender"
         xmlns:android="http://schemas.android.com/apk/res/android">
 <uses-permission android:name="android.permission.READ CONTACTS" />
 <uses-permission android:name="android.permission.SEND SMS" />
 <uses-sdk android:minSdkVersion="4"
           android:targetSdkVersion="8" />
 <supports-screens android:largeScreens="true"</pre>
                    android:normalScreens="true"
                    android:smallScreens="false" />
 <application android:icon="@drawable/cw"
             android:label="@string/app name">
    <activity android:label="@string/app_name"
              android:name="Sender">
     <intent-filter>
       <action android:name="android.intent.action.MAIN" />
       <category android:name="android.intent.category.LAUNCHER" />
     </intent-filter>
    </activity>
 </application>
</manifest>
```

If you noticed the android:installLocation attribute in the root element, that is to allow this application to be installed onto external storage, such as an SD card – this will be covered in greater detail in an upcoming chapter.

The layout has a Spinner (for a drop-down of available mobile phone numbers), a pair of RadioButton widgets (to indicate which way to send the message), an EditText (for the text message), and a "Send" Button:

```
<?xml version="1.0" encoding="utf-8"?>
<LinearLayout xmlns:android="http://schemas.android.com/apk/res/android"
    android:orientation="vertical"
    android:layout_width="match_parent"
    android:layout_height="match_parent"
    <Spinner android:id="@+id/spinner"
    android:layout_width="match_parent"
    android:layout_height="wrap_content"
    android:layout_height="wrap_content"
    android:drawSelectorOnTop="true"
    />
    <RadioGroup android:id="@+id/means"
    android:orientation="horizontal"
    android:layout_width="match_parent"
    android:layout_width="match_parent"
    android:orientation="horizontal"
    android:layout_width="match_parent"
    android:layout_width="match_parent"
    android:layout_height="wrap_content"
    android:orientation="horizontal"
    android:layout_width="match_parent"
    android:layout_height="wrap_content"
    bybettype:"
    bybetty
```

```
<RadioButton android:id="@+id/client"
       android:layout_width="wrap_content"
       android:layout_height="wrap_content"
       android:checked="true"
       android:text="Via Client" />
     <RadioButton android:id="@+id/direct"
       android:layout_width="wrap_content"
       android:layout height="wrap content"
       android:text="Direct" />
 </RadioGroup>
 <EditText
   android:id="@+id/msg"
   android:layout_width="match_parent"
   android:layout height="0px"
   android:layout_weight="1"
   android:singleLine="false"
   android:gravity="top|left"
 />
 <Button
   android:id="@+id/send"
   android:text="Send!"
   android:layout_width="match_parent"
   android:layout height="wrap content"
   android:onClick="sendTheMessage"
 />
</LinearLayout>
```

Sender uses the same technique for obtaining mobile phone numbers from our contacts as is seen in the chapter on contacts. To support Android 1.x and Android 2.x devices, we implement an abstract class and two concrete implementations, one for the old API and one for the new. The abstract class then has a static method to get at an instance suitable for the device the code is running on:

```
package com.commonsware.android.sms.sender;
import android.app.Activity;
import android.os.Build;
import android.widget.SpinnerAdapter;
abstract class ContactsAdapterBridge {
   abstract SpinnerAdapter buildPhonesAdapter(Activity a);
   public static final ContactsAdapterBridge INSTANCE=buildBridge();
   private static ContactsAdapterBridge buildBridge() {
     int sdk=new Integer(Build.VERSION.SDK).intValue();
     if (sdk<5) {
        return(new OldContactsAdapterBridge());
     }
```

```
return(new NewContactsAdapterBridge());
```

}

The Android 2.x edition uses ContactsContract to find just the mobile numbers:

```
package com.commonsware.android.sms.sender;
import android.app.Activity;
import android.database.Cursor;
import android.provider.ContactsContract.Contacts;
import android.provider.ContactsContract.CommonDataKinds.Phone;
import android.widget.SpinnerAdapter;
import android.widget.SimpleCursorAdapter;
class NewContactsAdapterBridge extends ContactsAdapterBridge {
  SpinnerAdapter buildPhonesAdapter(Activity a) {
    String[] PROJECTION=new String[] { Contacts._ID,
                                            Contacts.DISPLAY NAME,
                                            Phone.NUMBER
                                          1:
    String[] ARGS={String.valueOf(Phone.TYPE_MOBILE)};
    Cursor c=a.managedQuery(Phone.CONTENT_URI,
                           PROJECTION, Phone.TYPE+"=?"
                           ARGS, Contacts.DISPLAY_NAME);
    SimpleCursorAdapter adapter=new SimpleCursorAdapter(a,
                                   android.R.layout.simple_spinner_item,
                                   с,
                                   new String[] {
                                     Contacts.DISPLAY_NAME
                                    },
                                   new int[] {
                                     android.R.id.text1
                                   });
    adapter.setDropDownViewResource(
            android.R.layout.simple_spinner_dropdown_item);
    return(adapter);
  }
```

...while the Android 1.x edition uses the older Contacts provider to find the mobile numbers:

package com.commonsware.android.sms.sender;

```
import android.app.Activity;
import android.database.Cursor;
import android.provider.Contacts;
import android.widget.SpinnerAdapter;
import android.widget.SimpleCursorAdapter;
class OldContactsAdapterBridge extends ContactsAdapterBridge {
 SpinnerAdapter buildPhonesAdapter(Activity a) {
    String[] PROJECTION=new String[] { Contacts.Phones._ID,
                                       Contacts.Phones.NAME,
                                       Contacts.Phones.NUMBER
                                     };
    String[] ARGS={String.valueOf(Contacts.Phones.TYPE_MOBILE)};
    Cursor c=a.managedQuery(Contacts.Phones.CONTENT URI,
                           PROJECTION,
                           Contacts.Phones.TYPE+"=?", ARGS,
                           Contacts.Phones.NAME);
   SimpleCursorAdapter adapter=new SimpleCursorAdapter(a,
                                   android.R.layout.simple_spinner_item,
                                   с,
                                   new String[] {
                                     Contacts.Phones.NAME
                                   },
                                   new int[] {
                                     android.R.id.text1
                                   });
    adapter.setDropDownViewResource(
            android.R.layout.simple_spinner_dropdown_item);
    return(adapter);
  }
```

For more details on how those providers work, please see the chapter on contacts.

The activity then loads up the Spinner with the appropriate list of contacts. When the user taps the Send button, the sendTheMessage() method is invoked (courtesy of the android:onClick attribute in the layout). That method looks at the radio buttons, sees which one is selected, and routes the text message accordingly:

```
package com.commonsware.android.sms.sender;
import android.app.Activity;
import android.app.PendingIntent;
import android.content.Intent;
```

```
427
```

```
import android.database.Cursor;
import android.net.Uri;
import android.os.Bundle;
import android.telephony.SmsManager;
import android.view.View;
import android.widget.EditText;
import android.widget.RadioGroup;
import android.widget.Spinner;
public class Sender extends Activity {
  Spinner contacts=null;
  RadioGroup means=null;
  EditText msg=null;
  @Override
  public void onCreate(Bundle savedInstanceState) {
    super.onCreate(savedInstanceState);
    setContentView(R.layout.main);
    contacts=(Spinner)findViewById(R.id.spinner);
    contacts.setAdapter(ContactsAdapterBridge
                       .INSTANCE
                       .buildPhonesAdapter(this));
    means=(RadioGroup)findViewById(R.id.means);
    msg=(EditText)findViewById(R.id.msg);
  }
  public void sendTheMessage(View v) {
    Cursor c=(Cursor)contacts.getSelectedItem();
    if (means.getCheckedRadioButtonId()==R.id.client) {
      Intent sms=new Intent(Intent.ACTION_SENDTO,
                           Uri.parse("smsto:"+c.getString(2)));
      sms.putExtra("sms_body", msg.getText().toString());
     startActivity(sms);
    }
    else {
      SmsManager
        .getDefault()
        .sendTextMessage(c.getString(2), null,
                       msg.getText().toString(),
                       null, null);
    }
  }
```

You Can't Get There From Here

The Android SDK is vast. It, however, does not cover everything. Many Android capabilities are not part of the SDK, though they can be accessed via indirect means. Doing so is dangerous, for two reasons:

- 1. Things not in the SDK and not part of the Compatibility Definition Document might well be replaced by device manufacturers. For example, even though the Android open source project has a stock SMS client, device manufacturers could replace it. Your application, therefore, may work on some devices but not others.
- 2. Things not in the SDK are subject to modification by the core Android team, and if you fail to react to those modifications (or cannot react, as the case may be), your application will fail on future versions of Android.

Developers are strongly encouraged to stick within the limits of the SDK. That being said, let us take a look at a pair of SMS capabilities that are beyond the SDK, still get used by developers, and what risks you will encounter by mirroring their techniques.

Receiving SMS

It is possible for an application to receive an incoming SMS message...if you are willing to listen on the undocumented android.provider.Telephony.SMS_RECEIVED broadcast Intent. That is sent by Android whenever an SMS arrives, and it is up to an application to implement a BroadcastReceiver to respond to that Intent and do something with the message. The Android open source project has such an application – Messaging – and device manufacturers can replace it with something else.

The BroadcastReceiver can then turn around and use the SmsMessage class, in the android.telephony package, to get at the message itself, through the following undocumented recipe:

- Given the received Intent (intent), call intent.getExtras().get("pdus") to get an Object[] representing the raw portions of the message
- For each of those "pdus" objects, call SmsMessage.createFromPdu() to convert the Object into an SmsMessage though to make this work, you need to cast the Object to a byte[] as part of passing it to the createFromPdu() static method

The resulting SmsMessage object gets you access to the text of the message, the sending phone number, etc.

The SMS_RECEIVED broadcast Intent is broadcast a bit differently than most others in Android. It is an "ordered broadcast", meaning the Intent will be delivered to one BroadcastReceiver at a time. This has two impacts of note:

- In your receiver's <intent-filter> element, you can have an android:priority attribute. Higher priority values get access to the broadcast Intent earlier than will lower priority values. The standard Messaging application has the default priority (undocumented, appears to be 0 or 1), so you can arrange to get access to the SMS before the application does.
- Your BroadcastReceiver can call abortBroadcast() on itself to prevent the Intent from being broadcast to other receivers of lower priority. In effect, this causes your receiver to consume the SMS – the Messaging application will not receive it.

However, just because the Messaging application has the default priority does not mean all SMS clients will, and so you cannot reliably intercept SMS messages this way. That, plus the undocumented nature of all of this, means that applications you write to receive SMS messages are likely to be fragile in production, breaking on various devices due to device manufacturer-installed apps, third-party apps, or changes to Android itself in the future.

Working With Existing Messages

When perusing the Internet, you will find various blog posts and such referring to the SMS inbox ContentProvider, represented by the content://sms/inbox Uri.

This ContentProvider is undocumented and is not part of the Android SDK, because it is not part of the Android OS.

Rather, this ContentProvider is used by the aforementioned Messaging application, for storing saved SMS messages. And, as noted, this application may or may not exist on any given Android device. If a device manufacturer replaces Messaging with their own application, there may be nothing on that device that responds to that Uri, or the schemas may be totally different. Plus, Android may well change or even remove this ContentProvider in future editions of Android.

For all those reasons, developers should not be relying upon this ContentProvider.

More on the Manifest

If you come to this book from *The Busy Coder's Guide to Android Development*, you will already have done a fair number of things with your project's AndroidManifest.xml file:

- Used it to define components, like activities, services, content providers, and manifest-registered broadcast receivers
- Used it to declare permissions your application requires, or possibly to define permissions that other applications need in order to integrate with your application
- Used it to define what SDK level, screen sizes, and other device capabilities your application requires

In this chapter, we continue looking at things the manifest offers you, starting with a discussion of controlling where your application gets installed on a device, and wrapping up with a bit of information about activity aliases.

Just Looking For Some Elbow Room

On October 22, 2008, the HTC Dream was released, under the moniker of "T-Mobile G1", as the first production Android device.

Complaints about the lack of available storage space for applications probably started on October 23rd.

The Dream, while a solid first Android device, offered only 70MB of onboard flash for application storage. This storage had to include:

- The Android application (APK) file
- Any local files or databases the application created, particularly those deemed unsafe to put on the SD card (e.g., privacy)
- Extra copies of some portions of the APK file, such as the compiled Dalvik bytecode, which get unpacked on installation for speed of access

It would not take long for a user to fill up 70MB of space, then have to start removing some applications to be able to try others.

Users and developers alike could not quite understand why the Dream had so little space compared to the available iPhone models, and they begged to at least allow applications to install to the SD card, where there would be more room. This, however, was not easy to implement in a secure fashion, and it took until Android 2.2 for the feature to become officially available.

Now that it is available, though, let's see how to use it.

Configuring Your App to Reside on External Storage

Indicating to Android that your application can reside on the SD card is easy...and necessary, if you want the feature. If you do not tell Android this is allowed, Android will *not* install your application to the SD card, nor allow the user to move the application to the SD card. Hence, once Android 2.2 becomes available on a substantial number of devices, you will be pressured by your user base to enable this feature, more so if your application is large.

All you need to do is add an android:installLocation attribute to the root <manifest> element of your AndroidManifest.xml file. There are three possible values for this attribute:

- 1. internalOnly, the default, meaning that the application cannot be installed to the SD card
- 2. preferExternal, meaning the application would like to be installed on the SD card
- 3. auto, meaning the application can be installed in either location

If you use preferExternal, then your application will be initially installed on the SD card in most cases. Android reserves the right to still install your application on internal storage in cases where that makes too much sense, such as there not being an SD card installed at the time.

If you use auto, then Android will make the decision as to the installation location, based on a variety of factors. In effect, this means that auto and preferExternal are functionally very similar – all you are doing with preferExternal is giving Android a hint as to your desired installation destination.

Because Android decides where your application is initially installed, and because the user has the option to move your application between the SD card and on-board flash, you cannot assume any given installation spot. The exception is if you choose internalOnly, in which case Android will honor your request, at the potential cost of not allowing the installation at all if there is no more room in on-board flash.

For example, here is the manifest from the SMS/Sender application, profiled in another chapter, showing the use of preferExternal:
Since this feature only became available in Android 2.2, to support older versions of Android, just have your build tools target API level 8 (e.g., target=android-8 in default.properties for those of you building via Ant) while having your minSdkVersion attribute in the manifest state the lowest Android version your application supports overall. Older versions of Android will ignore the android:installLocation attribute. So, for example, in the above manifest, the Sender application supports API level 4 and above (Android 1.6 and newer). but still can use android:installLocation="preferExternal", because the build tools are targeting API level 8.

What the User Sees

For an application that wound up on the SD card, courtesy of your choice of preferExternal or auto, the user will have an option to move it to the phone's internal storage. This can be done by choosing the application in the Manage Applications list in the Settings application, then clicking the "Move to phone" button:

More on the Manifest

Application info	
SMS: Senc version 1.0	ler
Force stop	Uninstall
Storage	
Total	8.00KB
Application	8.00KB
Data	0.00B
Clear data	Move to phone
Cache	
Cache	0.00B
	Clear cache
Launch by default	
No defaults set.	

Figure 92. An application, installed on the SD card

Conversely, if your application is installed in on-board flash, and it is movable to external storage, they will be given that option:

More on the Manifest

Application info	🚯 📊 🕑 3:55 рм
SMS: Sender version 1.0	
Force stop	Uninstall
Storage	
Total	20.00KB
Application	20.00KB
Data	0.00B
Clear data	Move to SD card
Cache	
Cache	0.00B
	Clear cache
Launch by default	
No defaults set.	

Figure 93. An application, installed on the on-board flash but movable to the SD card

What the Pirate Sees

Ideally, the pirate sees nothing at all.

One of the major concerns with installing applications to the SD card is that the SD card is usually formatted FAT₃₂ (vfat), offering no protection from prying eyes. The concern was that pirates could then just pluck the APK file off the SD card and distribute it, even for paid apps from the Android Market.

Apparently, they solved this problem.

To quote the Android developer documentation:

The unique container in which your application is stored is encrypted with a randomly generated key that can be

decrypted only by the device that originally installed it. Thus, an application installed on an SD card works for only one device.

Moreover, this "unique container" is not normally mounted when the user mounts external storage on their host machine. The user mounts /mnt/sdcard; the "unique container" is /mnt/asec.

What Your App Sees...When the Card is Removed

So far, this has all seemed great for users and developers. Developers need to add a single attribute to the manifest, and Android 2.2 users gain the flexibility of where the app gets stored.

Alas, there is a problem, and it is a big one: either the host PC or the device can have access to the SD card, but not both. As a result, if the user makes the SD card available to the host PC, by plugging in the USB cable and mounting the SD card as a drive via a Notification or other means, that SD card becomes unavailable for running applications.

So, what happens?

- First, your application is terminated forcibly, as if your process was being closed due to low memory. Notably, your activities and services will not be called with onDestroy(), and instance state saved via onSaveInstanceState() is lost.
- Second, your application is unhooked from the system. Users will not see your application in the launcher, your AlarmManager alarms will be canceled, and so on.
- When the user makes the SD card available to the phone again, your application will be hooked back into the system and will be once again available to the user (for example, your icon will reappear in the launcher)

The upshot: if your application is simply a collection of activities, otherwise not terribly connected to Android, the impact on your application is no

different than if the user reboots the phone, kills your process via a socalled "task killer" application, etc. If, however, you are doing more than that, the impacts may be more dramatic.

Perhaps the most dramatic impact, from a user's standpoint, will be if your application implements app widgets. If the user has your app widget on her home screen, that app widget will be removed when the SD card becomes unavailable to the phone. Worse, your app widget cannot be re-added to the home screen until the phone is rebooted (a limitation that hopefully will be lifted sometime after Android 2.2).

The user is warned about this happening, at least in general:



Figure 94. Warning when unmounting the SD card

Two broadcast Intents are sent out related to this:

23. ACTION_EXTERNAL_APPLICATIONS_UNAVAILABLE, when the SD card (and applications installed upon it) become unavailable

24. ACTION_EXTERNAL_APPLICATIONS_AVAILABLE, when the SD card and its applications return to normal

Note that the documentation is unclear as to whether your own application, that had been on the SD card, can receive ACTION_EXTERNAL_APPLICATIONS_AVAILABLE once the SD card is back in action. There is an outstanding issue on this topic in the Android issue tracker.

Also note that all of these problems hold true for longer if the user physically removes the SD card from the device. If, for example, they replace the card with a different one – such as one with more space – your application will be largely lost. They will see a note in their applications list for your application, but the icon will indicate it is on an SD card, and the only thing they can do is uninstall it:



Figure 95. The Manage Applications list, with an application shown from a removed SD card

Choosing Whether to Support External Storage

Given the huge problem from the previous section, the question of whether or not your application should support external storage is far from clear.

As the Android developer documentation states:

Large games are more commonly the types of applications that should allow installation on external storage, because games don't typically provide additional services when inactive. When external storage becomes unavailable and a game process is killed, there should be no visible effect when the storage becomes available again and the user restarts the game (assuming that the game properly saved its state during the normal Activity lifecycle).

Conversely, if your application implements any of the following features, it may be best to not support external storage:

- Polling of Web services or other Internet resources via a scheduled alarm
- Account managers and their corresponding sync adapters, for custom sources of contact data
- App widgets, as noted in the previous section
- Device administration extensions
- Live folders
- Custom soft keyboards ("input method engines")
- Live wallpapers
- Custom search providers

Using an Alias

As was mentioned in the chapter on integration, you can use the PackageManager class to enable and disable components in your application. This works at the component level, meaning you can enable and disable activities, services, content providers, and broadcast receivers. It does not support enabling or disabling individual <intent-filter> stanzas from a given component, though.

Why might you want to do this?

- Perhaps you have an activity you want to be available for use, but not necessarily available in the launcher, depending on user configuration or unlocking "pro" features or something
- Perhaps you want to add browser support for certain MIME types, but only if other third-party applications are not already installed on the device

While you cannot control individual <intent-filter> stanzas directly, you can have a similar effect via an activity alias.

An activity alias is another manifest element – <activity-alias> – that provides an alternative set of filters or other component settings for an already-defined activity. For example, here is the AndroidManifest.xml file from the Manifest/Alias project:

```
</intent-filter>
</activity>
<activity-alias android:label="@string/app_name2"
android:name="ThisIsTheAlias"
android:targetActivity="AliasActivity">
<intent-filter>
<action android:name="android.intent.action.MAIN" />
<category android:name="android.intent.category.LAUNCHER" />
</intent-filter>
</activity-alias>
</application>
</manifest>
```

Here, we have one <activity> element, with an <intent-filter> to put the activity in the launcher. We also have an <activity-alias> element...which puts a second icon in the launcher for the same activity implementation.

An activity alias can be enabled and disabled independently of its underlying activity. Hence, you can have one activity class have several independent sets of intent filters and can choose which of those sets are enabled at any point in time.

For testing purposes, you can also enable and disable these from the command line. Use the adb shell pm disable command to disable a component:

```
adb shell pm disable
com.commonsware.android.alias/com.commonsware.android.alias.ThisIsTheAlias
```

...and the corresponding adb shell pm enable command to enable a component:

```
adb shell pm enable
com.commonsware.android.alias/com.commonsware.android.alias.ThisIsTheAlias
```

In each case, you supply the package of the application (com.commonsware.android.alias) and the class of the component to enable or disable (com.commonsware.android.alias.ThisIsTheAlias), separated by a slash.

Device Configuration

This chapter is a bit esoteric for most developers. It covers various places where Android has configuration-style data and how one can modify it. This mostly should be of interest to teams responsible for configuring devices *en masse*, such as an enterprise or consulting teams supporting an enterprise.

Some of what is written here, notably the portions involving root access, have not been tested by the author. This chapter is the result of a research project, and so while the techniques have been described online as being used, the author is not presently able to confirm their accuracy.

Also, note that this material may change significantly between Android releases, and errors may result in permanent damage to a device (e.g., somehow leave it in a state where it cannot boot and cannot reset to factory settings). If you are concerned about these things, do not bother with this chapter.

However, the rumor that reading this chapter causes hair loss in men is completely unsubstantiated.

We start by enumerating various places where ordinary Android applications can modify the device configuration. Then, we look at some other places where configuration data gets stored that regular Android applications cannot access, but that device manufacturer-written apps

might. We wrap by a brief discussion of the issues involved in automating some of this configuration, such as an enterprise deployment of hundreds or thousands of Android devices.

The Happy Shiny Way

Certainly, some portions of the configuration of a device are available for applications to manipulate without special privileges or permissions. There are a few places in the Android SDK where you can modify settings; some of these are described below.

Settings.System

As described in the chapter on system services, there is a Settings.System class in the android.provider package that allows you to configure the device. These range from whether the password is shown when being typed in on a password-defined EditText to whether "airplane mode" is on (i.e., whether all radios are disabled, perhaps in compliance with an airline's regulations).

You can retrieve these settings via static getter methods on Settings.System (e.g., getInt(), getFloat()), keyed by public static data members on Settings.System itself. There are a similar set of setters to modify these settings. There are methods to get and set a Configuration object, which allows one to get or set several settings at once, but it does not appear that Configuration supports the full range of possible settings. Hence, in all likelihood, if you wish to automate manipulating these settings, you will want to create an application to do that...or apply some less public techniques described below.

WifiManager

It may be that you want to pre-populate a WiFi network on a device, so it is ready to use with an office wireless network without manual on-screen configuration. To do that, you can use the WifiManager class, obtained by calling Context.getSystemService(WIFI_SERVICE) and downcasting the result to WifiManager.

WifiManager has an addNetwork() method that takes a WifiConfiguration object as a parameter. The WifiConfiguration object has numerous fields for describing the network, including the SSID, the pre-shared key for WPA-PSK, and so on. This method returns an integer ID for the network being added. Initially, the network is marked as disabled, so most likely you will want to immediately follow the addNetwork() call with an enableNetwork() call, supplying the network ID from addNetwork() and true to enable the network.

The Dark Arts

While you have control over a fair number of settings this way, there are still others that appear to be unreachable through the standard SDK. Modifying these areas of the device configuration require techniques that are not recommended if you can at all avoid them. Contributions to the Android open source project are welcome, so you might consider writing something that will allow for device configuration without having to use undocumented risky steps, while maintaining the security that the Android project has established.

Settings.Secure

As described in the chapter on system services, prior to Android 1.5, there were more settings in Settings.System. However, due to perceived abuses by third-party developers, a number of them were moved into Settings.Secure. While you can read these settings as before (via static getter methods), attempts to use the setter methods will result in errors.

If you wish to populate the Settings.Secure values, you have two choices:

- 1. Create an Android application that has the rights to use those setter methods. While the exact rules here are unclear, it is possible that an application signed with the same production signing key as the firmware will have such rights. Hardware manufacturers, therefore, should be in position to create such an application.
- 2. Modify the underlying SQLite database that holds the data. That database, as of Android 1.5, is /data/data/com.android.providers.settings/databases/settings.db, and the secure settings are stored in a table named secure. However, to either execute SQL statements against this database, or to replace the database outright, you would need root permissions. Many devices can be "rooted", though for the publicly documented hacks, rooting is a permanent process. Hardware manufacturers may know if there is a way on their devices to temporarily have root privileges, long enough to run some scripts.

System Properties

At an even lower level are so-called system properties. You can see these by running adb shell getprop with a device or emulator attached. This contains everything from the URLs from which to obtain legal agreements to display on initial sign-on to the location where application-not-responding (ANR) traces are dumped.

The only known way to modify these settings is to actually modify the init script (init.rc) for Android itself, adding in setprop commands to override the system default values. For example, to hardwire in some DNS resolvers, rather than rely on DHCP, you could add statements like setprop net.dns1 ... and setprop net.dns2 ... (where the ... are replaced with dot-notation IP addresses for the servers).

Bear in mind that init.rc might well be replaced when a device is upgraded to newer versions of Android, so making changes this way may not be reliable.

Automation, Both Shiny and Dark

If you are trying to modify a single device, and you can stick to SDKsupported changes, either just use the built-in Settings screens or write a standard Android application of your own to modify those settings.

Modifying settings on a bunch of devices this way, though, can be tedious. You would need to install the application, perhaps off of an internet office Web server, and that would require entering a URL in on the Browser application to download the APK. After a few installation screens, you could then run the application, then uninstall it. All of that cannot readily be automated, and it still does not cover the situations where you wish to modify settings beyond those supported by the SDK.

For bulk work, it may be simpler, albeit substantially more dangerous, to automate this process via adb commands. For example, you could create a SQL script that updates the Settings.System (system table) and Settings.Secure (secure table) and apply that script to the aforementioned settings.db via adb shell sqlite3. There should be some similar means to update the WiFi networks, though where that data is stored is not obvious. This, of course, requires root access.

Push Notifications with C2DM

C₂DM – short for "cloud to device messaging" – is Google's new framework for asynchronously delivering notifications from the Internet ("cloud") to Android devices. Rather than the device waking up and polling on a regular basis at the behest of your app, your app can register for notifications and then wait for them to arrive. C₂DM is engineered with power savings in mind, aiming to minimize the length of time 3G radios are exchanging data.

The proper use of C₂DM means better battery life for your users. It can also reduce the amount of time your code runs, which helps you stay out of sight of users looking to pounce on background tasks and eradicate them with task killers.

C₂DM is beta technology as of the time of this writing. It is available on an invitation basis only and is likely to undergo some revisions before it is widely available. Hence, more so than most chapters in this book, please bear in mind that the material presented here may well have changed by the time you get around to using C₂DM. Also,note that C₂DM is only available on Android 2.2 and higher. And, if you intend to use the Android 2.2 emulator, you will need to register a Google account on the emulator, via the Settings application.

Pieces of Push

C2DM has a lot of parts that need to connect together to allow your servers to asynchronously deliver messages to your Android applications.

The Account

You will need a Google account to represent the server from which the messages are delivered. The Android client application will register for messages from this account, and the server will send messages to Google for delivery using this account.

This account can be a pure Google account (e.g., @gmail.com) or one that is set up for your own domain using Google Apps. However, it is probably a good idea to use an account that you will not be using for anything else or likely to need to change. Considering that this account name will be "baked into" your Android application (in simple implementations, anyway), changing it may not be that easy.

During the C₂DM beta period, this account is the one you will use on the C₂DM signup form.

The Android App

Obviously, there is your Android app – without this, having a chapter on C₂DM in this book would be rather silly. Your Android application will need at least one new class, some other additional Java code, and some manifest modifications to be able to participate in C₂DM.

Your Server

Something has to send messages to the Android apps by way of Google. This is generally called "the server application", though technically it does not need to run on a server. Whatever it is, it will have a reason to send data asynchronously to your Android applications, and it will need to have the ability to send HTTP requests to Google's servers to actually send that data.

Google's Server

Your server is not directly communicating with the Android apps. Instead, you send the messages to Google, who queues them up and will deliver them as soon as is practical. That may be nearly immediately, but it may take some time, particularly depending on how the message is configured and whether the device is on.

Google's On-Device Code

The reason that Android 2.2 is required is that 2.2 is the first release containing Google's code for managing its side of the C2DM connection. In effect, Google's on-device code maintains an open socket with its servers. Messages, when they arrive at the servers, are delivered over this open socket.

Google's Client Code

Google has created some client-side code to help you manage your C2DM registrations and messages, handling a lot of the boilerplate logic for you. As of the time of this writing, that code is part of the chrome2phone sample application. Google has indicated that it will be pulling that code out into a separate library, and this chapter demonstrates the use of that code.

Getting From Here to There

So, how does this all work?

First, your Android application will tell Google's on-device code that it wants to register for messages from your Google account. Using the Google C₂DM client code, this is a single call to a static method on a class – under

the covers, it packages the information in an Intent and sends it to the Google on-device code.

When the registration occurs, you will be notified by a broadcast Intent, containing a registration ID. Google's C2DM client code will route that to an IntentService, where you can do whatever is necessary. A typical thing to do would be to make a Web service call to your server, supplying the registration ID, so the server knows how to send messages to your application on this device.

At this point, given the registration ID, the server is able to send messages to your app. It will do this by first getting a valid set of authentication credentials – effectively turning the Google account name and password into a long-lived authentication token. Then, your server can do an HTTP POST to the Google C2DM servers, supplying that authentication token, the registration ID of the app, and whatever data should be passed along.

Once Google's servers receive that POST, your app will receive the message at the next available opportunity. This could be in a matter of seconds. It could be in a matter of days, if the user is traveling and has their phone on "airplane mode". It could be anywhere in between. And, if the user does not pick up the message within a reasonable period of time, Google may drop the message.

Assuming the message makes it to the device, it will be routed to you via a broadcast Intent, perhaps handled by the same IntentService you set up for registration notices.

Your app can unregister whenever it wishes, to invalidate the registration ID and stop receiving messages.

Permissions for Push

C₂DM uses Android permissions in a somewhat more sophisticated fashion than do most applications. That sophistication will require you to do a few things in your manifest above and beyond the norm.

First, you will need to request the INTERNET permission. Technically, this is only required if you are using the Internet (e.g., a Web service) to send the registration ID to your server. However, that will be a fairly typical pattern.

Next, you will need to request the com.google.android.c2dm.permission.RECEIVE permission. This allows your application to receive messages from the C2DM engine that forms the core of Google's on-device C2DM code.

You also will want to define a custom permission – C2D_MESSAGE, prefixed by your application's package – and declare that you use that permission. This will be used to help prevent other applications from spoofing you with fake C2DM messages.

If you are using the Google C₂DM client code, as is shown in the sample project for this chapter, you will also need to request the WAKE_LOCK permission, as the C₂DM client code uses a WakeLock to help ensure that the device stays awake long enough for you to handle incoming messages, much like the WakefulIntentService shown elsewhere in this book.

From the Push/C2DM sample project, here are the permission-related elements from AndroidManifest.xml corresponding to the preceding points:

Registering an Interest

Now, let's start taking a closer look at some code, to get C2DM going in an application. Again, all source code listings are coming from the Push/C2DM sample project.

In a production application, you would probably register for messages from your server on first run of the app, such as after the user has launched it from the launcher and clicked through any license agreement you might have. For the Push/C2DM sample, though, we have you type in your Google account name in an EditText, then click a Button to perform the registration:

```
<?xml version="1.0" encoding="utf-8"?>
<LinearLayout xmlns:android="http://schemas.android.com/apk/res/android"
    android:orientation="vertical"
    android:layout width="match parent"
    android:layout_height="match_parent"
  <EditText android:id="@+id/account"
    android:layout_width="match_parent"
    android:layout_height="wrap_content"
    android:layout_marginBottom="4dip"
  />
  <Button
    android:layout_width="match_parent"
    android:layout_height="wrap_content"
   android:text="Register!"
   android:onClick="registerAccount"
  />
</LinearLayout>
```

Using the Google C2DM client code, all you need to do to register for messages is call C2DMessaging.register(), supplying a Context (e.g., your Activity) and the Google account name:

```
package com.commonsware.android.c2dm;
import android.app.Activity;
import android.os.Bundle;
import android.view.View;
import android.widget.EditText;
import com.google.android.c2dm.C2DMessaging;
public class PushEndpointDemo extends Activity {
  @Override
  public void onCreate(Bundle savedInstanceState) {
    super.onCreate(savedInstanceState);
    setContentView(R.layout.main);
  }
  public void registerAccount(View v) {
    EditText acct=(EditText)findViewById(R.id.account);
    C2DMessaging.register(this, acct.getText().toString());
```

<u>}</u>

To get your registration ID, and to receive messages later on, you will need to receive the broadcasts sent out by Google's on-device C2DM code. If you are using Google's C2DM client code, you can do this by implementing a class named C2DMReceiver, as a subclass of C2DMBaseReceiver:

```
package com.commonsware.android.c2dm;
import android.content.Context;
import android.content.Intent;
import android.util.Log;
import com.google.android.c2dm.C2DMBaseReceiver;
public class C2DMReceiver extends C2DMBaseReceiver {
 public C2DMReceiver() {
   super("this.is.not@real.biz");
  }
 @Override
 public void onRegistered(Context context, String registrationId) {
   Log.w("C2DMReceiver-onRegistered", registrationId);
 @Override
  public void onUnregistered(Context context) {
   Log.w("C2DMReceiver-onUnregistered", "got here!");
  3
 @Override
 public void onError(Context context, String errorId) {
   Log.w("C2DMReceiver-onError", errorId);
  }
 @Override
 protected void onMessage(Context context, Intent intent) {
   Log.w("C2DMReceiver", intent.getStringExtra("payload"));
  }
```

You must override the onMessage() and onError() methods, as they are declared abstract in C2DMBaseReceiver. onMessage() will be called when a message arrives; onError() will be called if there is some problem. Typically, you will also override onRegistered(), where you will get your registration ID and can pass that along to your Web service...or just dump it to LogCat, as shown above. You might also consider overriding onUnregistered(), which will be called if you call C2DMessaging.unregister() at some point to

retract your interest in messages from this Google account. Also, C2DMBaseReceiver requests that you supply the Google account in the constructor. The sample application hard-wires in a fake value, because the real Google account is being supplied via the EditText – your production code can probably hard-wire in the proper account name. Reportedly, this is only used for logging purposes at this time.

We will explain a bit more about how you interpret received messages later in this chapter.

You also need to add a few things to your manifest, above and beyond the permissions cited in the previous section.

First, you need to add your C2DMReceiver service, just as an ordinary <service> element, with no <intent-filter> required:

</intent-filter>

Then, you need to add C2DMBroadcastReceiver, via a <receiver> element, to your manifest. This class, supplied by the Google C2DM client code, will receive the C2DM broadcasts and will route them to your C2DMReceiver class. The <receiver> element is a little unusual:

Specifically:

• The android:name attribute has to specify the full class name, including package, since this is a class from Google's C2DM client code, not your own package

- For your protection, you should have the android:permission="com.google.android.c2dm.permission.SEND" attribute, to require the broadcaster of the Intent to hold that permission, to further limit the ability for other applications to spoof messages from your app
- You need <intent-filter> elements for the com.google.android.c2dm.intent.RECEIVE and com.google.android.c2dm.intent.REGISTRATION actions, where the category for those filters is your application's package (com.commonsware.android.c2dm in this sample) this ensures that the broadcasts will only go to your application, not to anyone else's

This is all largely boilerplate, except for the custom category values.

If you do all of that and register a Google account, you will get a registration ID back. This is a 120 character cryptic string that your server will need to send messages to this specific app on this specific device.

While this all seems a little bit complicated, the Google C₂DM client code wraps up most of the ugliness – your code could be even *more* complicated!

Push It Real Good

Your server need to get the registration IDs from instances of your app, then send messages to those IDs when appropriate. Sending a message is a matter of doing 1 or 2 HTTP POST requests, and therefore can be accomplished by any serious server-side programming environment. You do not even strictly need a server for this – the Push/C2DM sample project will demonstrate sending a message using the curl command-line HTTP client.

Getting Authenticated

Before you can send a message, you need to authenticate yourself with Google's C₂DM servers. This involves an HTTP POST request, where you supply your account credentials and get in return an authentication token.

This uses the same basic logic that is used to log into any Google server for any of their exposed APIs, and there are client libraries for Google authentication available for many programming languages.

Here is the auth.sh script from the Push/C2DM project, showing how to perform an authentication request using curl:

```
curl https://www.google.com/accounts/ClientLogin -d Email=$1 -d "Passwd=$2" -d
accountType=GOOGLE -d source=Google-cURL-Example -d service=ac2dm
```

This script expects two command-line parameters: your Google account name (e.g., foo@gmail.com) and its password. The curl command supplies those two values with three others in a request to ClientLogin:

- 1. The accountType, which is GOOGLE if your account is a plain Google account or HOSTED if your account comes from one managed by Google App for your domain
- 2. The source, which apparently is an arbitrary string identifying what is making the authentication request
- 3. The service, which must be ac2dm for this to work

The result will be text response with three long strings, named LID, SID, and Auth. You will need the Auth value. This is a 16o-character string, representing a token showing that you have been authenticated. This token will be good for several days, so you do not need to request a fresh Auth token on each message. Ideally, you do not even store the Google account information on the server, lest your server be hacked and that account be put to ill use. Instead, store the Auth token somewhere on the server and refresh it periodically. Also, a request to send a message will include an Update-Client-Auth header with a fresh Auth token if the Google C2DM servers determine that your existing token will expire soon.

Sending a Notification

Given the 120-character registration ID and the 160-character Auth token, you can now send a message to the app. This involves doing an HTTP POST to the C2DM servers themselves, as shown in the post.sh curl script:

```
curl --header "Authorization: GoogleLogin auth=$1"
"https://android.apis.google.com/c2dm/send" -d registration_id=$2 -d
"data.payload=$3" -d collapse_key=something
```

This script expects three command-line parameters:

- 1. The Auth token
- 2. The registration ID
- 3. The "payload" a simple string that will be sent to the app

The Auth token goes in a GoogleAuth Authorization HTTP header. The registration ID is supplied as a parameter on the POST request, along with:

- Your specified payload, as a POST parameter named data.payload
- The collapse_key, which will be explained later in this chapter

About the Message

You can pass up to 1,024 characters' worth of data in your message, spread across one or more values. Each POST parameter prefixed with data. will be considered part of the message and will be put into the Intent sent to your C2DMReceiver class as a String extra (minus the data. prefix). Hence, the sample post.sh script uses data.payload for your message, and the sample C2DMReceiver implementation retrieves that via the payload Intent extra. While this sample only shows a single value being sent, you can provide several data. POST parameters if you wish, so long as they combine to be under 1,024 characters.

A Controlled Push

Of course, the Push/C2DM sample project is a simplified look at the entire push notification process. When you start dealing with thousands of users and thousands of messages, things get a wee bit more complicated. Here are a couple of control points you should be aware of as you think about applying these techniques to a production application.

Message Parameters

Devices may not be in position to receive messages right away. While the delay may be temporary, it could be of indefinite duration. Somebody having their phone turned off, or on "airplane mode", for an extended period is an obvious example. Even if the phone is on and operating normally, though, it may be that the socket connection between the device and the C₂DM servers has been interrupted, and the power-optimized on-device C₂DM code may be a bit slow to re-establish the connection. At the same time, you are going to be sending out messages typically based on your own schedule, such as in response to external data sources, ignorant of what is going on with any given device.

Google is not considering C2DM to be a guaranteed store-and-forward queue system. In particular, Google reserves the right to try to coalesce messages, in part to reduce storage demands, but also so as not to flood the device when a connection is re-established.

Key to this is the collapse_key parameter on the message request. If a device is unavailable, and during that time you send two or more messages with the same collapse_key, the C2DM servers may elect to only send one of those messages – typically the last one, though not necessarily. You can use this to your advantage, to minimize processing you need to do on the client. For example, if your use of C2DM is to alert your custom email application that "you've got mail", you can use a consistent collapse_key with messages telling the client how many unread emails are in their inbox. That can be used by the client to update a Notification and, eventually, cajole the user into actually reading her mail.

A related optional parameter you can include in your messages is delay_while_idle. If you specify this as a POST parameter, that will indicate to the C2DM servers that, while you want the message to be delivered, it is not important enough to wake up the device. C2DM will hold onto the message (or the last one if several are sent with the same collapse_key), but it will not push it to the device until it knows the device is awake (perhaps due to another C2DM message for that device lacking this parameter). You

can think of this as being akin to choosing an AlarmManager alarm type lacking the _WAKEUP suffix. The goal is to minimize battery consumption.

Notable Message Responses

When you send a message, you should get a 200 OK response from the C₂DM servers. If everything went well, you will get back a body of the form id=..., where ... is some unique ID of the message. If, however, you get a body of Error=..., that means something went wrong.

Some errors, like MissingCollapseKey, will probably be found and fixed during development. Some errors, like MessageTooBig, are hopefully found during stress testing. Others, though, may legitimately happen during normal operations. In particular, here are four to watch for:

- QuotaExceeded and DeviceQuotaExceeded will be returned if you have sent too many messages too quickly, either in general (QuotaExceeded) or to a specific device (DeviceQuotaExceeded). Google would appreciate it if you would try again later, perhaps using some sort of exponential back-off algorithm.
- 2. InvalidRegistration means that the registration ID you supplied is incorrect. This suggests there is some form of corruption in the channel by which you got that registration ID to the server.
- 3. NotRegistered, for a registration ID that used to work, means that the user has unregistered that ID, and it should no longer be used. If you get NotRegistered from the beginning, there may be a problem with your C2DM setup. In particular, during this beta period, it may mean there are problems with your Google ID that was added to the beta test whitelist.

The Right Way to Push

Google recommends that you use C2DM not to deliver data, but to deliver a wakeup call to your application, which then goes and pulls the data. C2DM is not a guaranteed store-and-forward engine – that, coupled with the collapse_key concept, means that not every one of your messages will make

it through to the device. If you put "real data" in the C2DM message, that data may be lost. Also, this means you will (hopefully) never run into the 1,024-byte cap on message length.

You may also need to do push by some means *other* than C₂DM, in all likelihood. C₂DM has two key limitations:

- 1. It only works on devices running Android 2.2 and higher, which at the time of this writing is a very small percentage of the market
- 2. It requires some of the infrastructure that powers the Android Market, and so may not be available on devices lacking the Market

The first limitation will fall away in time; how much the second limitation impacts you will be determined by the mix of devices your users are using. If a significant number are using older or non-Market devices, you will need some separate solution: polling, WebSockets, etc.

NFC

NFC, courtesy of high-profile boosters like Google Wallet, is poised to be a significant new capability in Android devices. While at the time of this writing, only the Samsung Nexus S has NFC built in, other handsets are slated to be NFC-capable in the coming months. Google is hoping that developers will write NFC-aware applications to help further drive adoption of this technology by device manufacturers.

This, of course, begs the question: what is NFC? Besides being where the Green Bay Packers play, that is?

(For those of you from outside of the United States, that was an American football joke. We now return you to your regularly-scheduled chapter.)

What Is NFC?

NFC stands for Near-Field Communications. It is a wireless standard for data exchange, aimed at very short range transmissions – on the order of a couple of centimeters. NFC is in wide use today, for everything from credit cards to passports. Typically, the NFC data exchange is for simple data – contact information, URLs, and the like.

In particular, NFC tends to be widely used where one side of the communications channel is "passive", or unpowered. The other side (the "initiator") broadcasts a signal, which the passive side converts into power

enough to send back its response. As such, NFC "tags" containing such passive targets can be made fairly small and can be embedded in a wide range of containers, from stickers to cards to hats.

The objective is "low friction" interaction – no pairing like with Bluetooth, no IP address shenanigans as with WiFi. The user just taps and goes.

...Compared to RFID?

NFC is often confused with or compared to RFID. It is simplest to think of RFID as being an umbrella term, under which NFC falls. Not every RFID technology is NFC, but many things that you hear of being "RFID" may actually be NFC-compliant devices or tags.

...Compared to QR Codes?

In many places, NFC will be used in ways you might consider using QR codes. For example, a restaurant could use either technology, or both, on a sign to lead patrons to the restaurant's Yelp page, as a way of soliciting reviews. Somebody with a capable device could either tap the NFC tag on the sign to bring up Yelp or take a picture of the QR code and use that to bring up Yelp.

NFC's primary advantage over QR codes is that it requires no user intervention beyond physically moving their device in close proximity to the tag. QR codes, on the other hand, require the user to launch a barcode scanning application, center the barcode in the viewfinder, and then get the results. The net is that NFC will be faster.

QR's advantages include:

- No need for any special hardware to generate the code, as opposed to needing a tag and something to write information into the tag for NFC
- The ability to display QR codes in distant locations (e.g., via Web sites), whereas NFC requires physical proximity

To NDEF, Or Not to NDEF

RFID is a concept, not a standard. As such, different vendors created their own ways of structuring data on these tags or chips, making one vendor's tags incompatible with another vendor's readers or writers. While various standards bodies, like ISO, have gotten involved, it's still a bit of a rat's nest of conflicting formats and approaches.

The NFC offshoot of RFID has had somewhat greater success in establishing standards. NFC itself is an ISO and ECMA standard, covering things like transport protocols and transfer speeds. And a consortium called the NFC Forum created NDEF – the NFC Data Exchange Format – for specifying the content of tags.

However, not all NFC tags necessarily support NDEF. NDEF is much newer than NFC, and so lots of NFC tags are out in the wild that were distributed before NDEF even existed.

You can roughly divide NFC tags into three buckets:

- 1. Those that support NDEF "out of the box"
- 2. Those that can be "formatted" as NDEF
- 3. Those that use other content schemes

Android has some support for non-NDEF tags, such as the MIFARE Classic. However, the hope and expectation going forward is that NFC tags will coalesce around NDEF.

NDEF, as it turns out, maps neatly to Android's Intent system, as you will see as we proceed through this chapter.

NDEF Modalities

Most developers interested in NFC will be interested in reading NFC tags and retrieving the NDEF data off of them. In Android, tapping an NDEF tag with an NFC-capable device will trigger an activity to be started, based on a certain IntentFilter.

Some developers will be interested in writing to NFC tags, putting URLs, vCards, or other information on them. This may or may not be possible for any given tag.

And while the "traditional" thinking around NFC has been that one side of the communication is a passive tag, Android will help promote the "peer-to-peer" approach – having two Android devices exchange data via NFC and NDEF. Basically, putting the two devices back-to-back will cause each to detect the other device's "tag", and each can read and write to the other via this means.

The peer-to-peer approach exists in Android 2.3.4 (Gingerbread) and Android 3.0/3.1 (Honeycomb), but it is supposed to be given a significant boost in the Ice Cream Sandwich (ICS) release slated for later in 2011. ICS will also NFC-enable many of the built-in apps, to offer "zero-click sharing" – for example, viewing a contact will automatically push that contact to another NFC-capable phone if they are touching.

Right now, this chapter will focus more on interfacing NFC-capable Android devices with NDEF-capable tags. Peer-to-peer will be covered in a future edition of this book.

Of course, all of these are only available on hardware. At the present time, there is no emulator for NFC, nor any means of accessing a USB NFC reader or writer from the emulator.

NDEF Structure and Android's Translation

NDEF is made up of messages, themselves made up of a series of records. From Android's standpoint, each tag consists of one such message.

Each record consists of a binary (byte[]) payload plus metadata to describe the nature of the payload. The metadata primarily consists of a type and a

subtype. There are quite a few combinations of these, but the big three for new Android NFC uses are:

- 1. A type of TNF_WELL_KNOWN and a subtype of RTD_TEXT, indicating that the payload is simply plain text
- 2. A type of TNF_WELL_KNOWN and a subtype of RTD_URI, indicating that the payload is a URI, such as a URL to a Web page
- 3. A type of TNF_MIME_MEDIA, where the subtype is a standard MIME type, indicating that the payload is of that MIME type

When Android scans an NDEF tag, it will use this information to construct a suitable Intent to use with startActivity(). The action will be android.nfc.action.NDEF_DISCOVERED, to distinguish the scanned-tag case from, say, something simply asking to view some content. The MIME type in the Intent will be text/plain for the first scenario above or the supplied MIME type for the third scenario above. The data (Uri) in the Intent will be the supplied URI for the second scenario above. Once constructed, Android will invoke startActivity() on that Intent, bringing up an activity or an activity chooser, as appropriate.

NFC-capable Android devices have a Tags application pre-installed that will handle any NFC tag not handled by some other app. So, for example, an NDEF tag with an HTTP URL will fire up the Tags application, which in turn will allow the user to open up a Web browser on that URL.

The Reality of NDEF

The enthusiasm that some have with regards to Android and NFC technology needs to be tempered by the reality of NDEF, NFC tags in general, and Android's support for NFC. It is easy to imagine all sorts of possibilities that may or may not be practical when current limitations are reached.

Some Tags are Read-Only

Some tags come "from the factory" read-only. Either you arrange for the distributor to write data onto them (e.g., blast a certain URL onto a bunch of NFC stickers to paste onto signs), or they come with some other preestablished data. Touchatag, for example, distributes NFC tags that have Touchatag URLs on them – they then help you set up redirects from their supplied URL to ones you supply.

While these tags will be of interest to consumers and businesses, they are unlikely to be of interest to Android developers, since their use cases are already established and typically do not need custom Android application support. Android developers seeking customizable tags will want ones that are read-write, or at least write-once.

Some Tags Can't Be Read-Only

Conversely, some tags lack any sort of read-only flag. An ideal tag for developers is one that is write-once: putting an NDEF message on the tag and flagging it read-only in one operation. Some tags do not support this, or making the tag read-only at any later point.

Some Tags Need to be Formatted

The MIFARE Classic 1K NFC tag is NDEF-capable, but must be "formatted" first, supplying the initial NDEF message contents. You have the option of formatting it read-write or read-only (turning the Classic 1K a write-once tag).

This is not a problem – in fact, the write-once option may be compelling. However, it is something to keep in mind.

Tags Have Limited Storage

The "1K" in the name "MIFARE Classic 1K" refers to the amount of storage on the tag: 1 kilobyte of information.

And that's far larger than other tags, such as the MIFARE Ultralight C, some of which have ~64 bytes of storage.

Clearly, you will not be writing an MP3 file or JPEG photo to these tags. Rather, the tags will tend to either be a "launcher" into something with richer communications (e.g., URL to a Web site) or will use the sorts of data you may be used to from QR codes, such as a vCard or iCalendar for contact and event data, respectively.

NDEF Data Structures Are Documented Elsewhere

The Android developer documentation is focused on the Android classes related to NFC and on the Intent mechanism used for scanned tags. It does not focus on the actual structure of the payloads.

For TNF_MIME_MEDIA and RTD_TEXT, the payload is whatever you want. For RTD_URI, however, the byte array has a bit more structure to it, as the NDEF specification calls for a single byte to represent the URI prefix (e.g., http://www.versus http://versus https://www.). The objective, presumably, is to support incrementally longer URLs on tags with minuscule storage. Hence, you will need to convert your URLs into this sort of byte array if you are writing them out to a tag.

Generally speaking, the rules surrounding the structure of NDEF messages and records is found at the NFC Forum site.

Availability of NFC-Capable Android Devices

At the time of this writing, there is one NFC-capable Android device – the Samsung Nexus S. While ostensibly available for consumers, this device has
largely been marketed at developers and Android aficionados (e.g., its firmware can be replaced readily).

Reports indicate that more NFC-capable devices will be showing up in stores in the coming months. However, right now, NFC features in an app will not be very widely used.

Sources of Tags

NFC tags are not the sort of thing you will find on your grocer's shelves. In fact, few, if any, mainstream firms sell them today.

The author is in the process of researching reliable sources of NFC tags and will update this section of the book in the next edition to reflect the result of that research.

Writing to a Tag

So, let's see what it takes to write an NDEF message to a tag, formatting it if needed. The code samples shown in this chapter are from the NFC/URLTagger sample application. This application will set up an activity to respond to ACTION_SEND activity Intents, with an eye towards receiving a URL from a browser, then waiting for a tag and writing the URL to that tag. The idea is that this sort of application could be used by non-technical people to populate tags containing URLs to their company's Web site, etc.

Getting a URL

First, we need to get a URL from the browser. As we saw in the chapter on integration, the standard Android browser uses ACTION_SEND of text/plain contents when the user chooses the "Share Page" menu. So, we have one activity, URLTagger, that will respond to such an Intent:

```
<activity android:name="URLTagger"
android:label="@string/app_name">
<intent-filter android:label="@string/app_name">
```

Of course, lots of other applications support ACTION_SEND of text/plain contents that are not URLs. A production-grade version of this application would want to validate the EXTRA_TEXT Intent extra to confirm that, indeed, this is a URL, before putting in an NDEF message claiming that it is a URL.

Detecting a Tag

When the user shares a URL with our application, our activity is launched. At that point, we need to go into "detect a tag" mode – the user should then tap their device to a tag, so we can write out the URL.

First, in onCreate(), we get access to the NfcAdapter, which is our gateway to much of the NFC functionality in Android:

```
@Override
public void onCreate(Bundle savedInstanceState) {
   super.onCreate(savedInstanceState);
   setContentView(R.layout.main);
   nfc=NfcAdapter.getDefaultAdapter(this);
}
```

We use a boolean data member – inWriteMode – to keep track of whether or not we are set up to write to a tag. Initially, of course, that is set to be false. Hence, when we are first launched, by the time we get to onResume(), we can go ahead and register our interest in future tags:

```
PendingIntent pi=PendingIntent.getActivity(this, 0, i, 0);
inWriteMode=true;
nfc.enableForegroundDispatch(this, pi, tagFilters, null);
}
```

When an NDEF-capable tag is within signal range of the device, Android will invoke startActivity() for the NfcAdapter.ACTION_TAG_DISCOVERED Intent action. However, it can do this in one of two ways:

- 1. Normally, it will use a chooser (via Intent.createChooser()) to allow the user to pick from any activities that claim to support this action.
- 2. The foreground application can request via enableForegroundDispatch() for it to handle all tag events while it is in the foreground, superseding the normal startActivity() flow. In this case, while Android still will invoke an activity, it will be our activity, not any other one.

We want the second approach right now, so the next tag brought in range is the one we will try writing to.

To do that, we need to create an array of IntentFilter objects, identifying the NFC-related actions that we want to capture in the foreground. In this case, we only care about ACTION_TAG_DISCOVERED – if we were supporting non-NDEF NFC tags, we might also need to watch for ACTION_TECH_DISCOVERED.

We also need a PendingIntent identifying the activity that should be invoked when such a tag is encountered while we are in the foreground. Typically, this will be the current activity. By adding FLAG_ACTIVITY_SINGLE_TOP and FLAG_ACTIVITY_CLEAR_TOP to the Intent as flags, we ensure that our current specific instance of the activity will be given control again via onNewIntent().

Armed with those two values, we can call enableForegroundDispatch() on the NfcAdapter to register our request to process tags via the current activity instance.

In onPause(), if the activity is finishing, we call disableForegroundDispatch() to undo the work done in onResume():

```
@Override
public void onPause() {
    if (isFinishing()) {
        nfc.disableForegroundDispatch(this);
        inWriteMode=false;
    }
    super.onPause();
}
```

We have to see if we are finishing, because even though our activity never leaves the screen, Android still calls onPause() and onResume() as part of delivering the Intent to onNewInent(). Our approach, though, has flaws – if the user presses HOME, for example, we never disable the NFC dispatch logic. A production-grade application would need to handle this better.

For any of this code to work, we need to hold the NFC permission via an appropriate line in the manifest:

<uses-permission android:name="android.permission.NFC" />

Also note that if you have several activities that the user can reach while you are trying to also capture NFC tag events, you will need to call enableForegroundDispatch() in each activity – it's a per-activity request, not a per-application request.

Reacting to a Tag

Once the user brings a tag in range, onNewIntent() will be invoked with the ACTION_TAG_DISCOVERED Intent action:

```
475
```

```
new byte[] {}, url);
NdefMessage msg=new NdefMessage(new NdefRecord[] {record});
write(msg, tag);
finish();
}
```

If we are in write mode and the delivered Intent is indeed an ACTION_TAG_DISCOVERED one, we can get at the Tag object associated with the user's NFC tag via the NfcAdapter.EXTRA_TAG Parcelable extra on the Intent.

Writing an NDEF message to the tag, therefore, is a matter of crafting the message and actually writing it. An NDEF message consists of one or more records (though, typically, only one record is used), with each record wrapping around a byte array of payload data.

Getting the Shared URL

We did not do anything to get the URL out of the Intent back in onCreate(), when our activity was first started up. Now, of course, we need that URL. You might think it is too late to get it, since our activity was effectively started again due to the tag and onNewIntent().

However, getIntent() on an Activity always returns the Intent used to create the activity in the first place. The getIntent() value is not replaced when onNewIntent() is called.

Hence, as part of the buildUrlBytes() method to create the binary payload, we can go and call getIntent().getStringExtra(Intent.EXTRA_TEXT) to retrieve the URL.

Creating the Byte Array

Given the URL, we need to convert it into a byte array suitable for use in a TNF_WELL_KNOWN, RTD_URI NDEF record. Ordinarily, you would just call toByteArray() on the String and be done with it. However, the byte array we need uses a single byte to indicate the URL prefix, with the rest of the byte array for the characters after this prefix.

This is efficient. This is understandable. This is annoying.

First, we need the roster of prefixes, defined in URLTagger as a static data member cunningly named PREFIXES:

Then, in buildUrlBytes(), we need to find the prefix (if any) and use it:

```
private byte[] buildUrlBytes() {
   String raw=getIntent().getStringExtra(Intent.EXTRA_TEXT);
   int prefix=0;
   String subset=raw;
   for (int i=0;i<PREFIXES.length;i++) {
      if (raw.startsWith(PREFIXES[i])) {
        prefix=i+1;
        subset=raw.substring(PREFIXES[i].length());
   }
}</pre>
```

```
break;
}
byte[] subsetBytes=subset.getBytes();
byte[] result=new byte[subsetBytes.length+1];
result[0]=(byte)prefix;
System.arraycopy(subsetBytes, 0, result, 1, subsetBytes.length);
return(result);
```

We iterate over the PREFIXES array and find a match, if any. If there is a match, we record the NDEF value for the first byte (our PREFIXES index plus one) and create a subset string containing the characters after the prefix. If there is no matching prefix, the prefix byte is Ø and we will include the full URL.

Given that, we construct a byte array containing our prefix byte in the first slot, and the rest taken up by the byte array of the subset of our URL.

Creating the NDEF Record and Message

Given the result of buildUrlBytes(), OUR onNewIntent() implementation creates a TNF_WELL_KNOWN, RTD_URI NdefRecord object, and pours that into an NdefMessage object.

The third parameter to the NdefRecord constructor is a byte array representing the optional "ID" of this record, which is not necessary here.

Finally, we delegate the actual writing to a private write() method, as writing the NdefMessage to the Tag is... interesting.

Writing to a Tag

Here is the aforementioned write() method:

```
private void write(NdefMessage msg, Tag tag) {
 int size=msg.toByteArray().length;
 try {
   Ndef ndef=Ndef.get(tag);
   if (ndef==null) {
      NdefFormatable formatable=NdefFormatable.get(tag);
      if (formatable!=null) {
       try {
          formatable.connect();
          try {
            formatable.format(msg);
          }
          catch (Exception e) {
            goBlooey("Tag refused to format");
          }
        }
        catch (Exception e) {
          goBlooey("Tag refused to connect");
        3
        finally {
          formatable.close();
        }
      }
      else {
        goBlooey("Tag does not support NDEF");
      }
    }
   else {
      ndef.connect();
      try {
        if (!ndef.isWritable()) {
          goBlooey("Tag is read-only");
        }
        else if (ndef.getMaxSize()<size) {</pre>
          goBlooey("Message is too big for tag");
        }
        else {
          ndef.writeNdefMessage(msg);
        }
      }
      catch (Exception e) {
        goBlooey("Tag refused to connect");
      finally {
        ndef.close();
      }
    }
  }
  catch (Exception e) {
```

```
Log.e("URLTagger", "Exception when writing tag", e);
goBlooey("General exception: "+e.getMessage());
}
```

After making note of how big the message is in bytes, we first try to get the Ndef aspect of the Tag object, by calling the static get() method on the Ndef class. If the tag is an NDEF tag, this should return an Ndef instance. If it does not, we try to get an NdefFormatable aspect by calling get() on the NdefFormatable class. If the tag is not NDEF now but can be formatted as NDEF, this should give us an NdefFormatable object. If both aspect attempts fail, we bail out, displaying a Toast to let the user know that while the tag they used is NFC, it is not NDEF-compliant.

If the tag turned out to be NdefFormatable, to put the NdefMessage on it, we first connect() to the tag, then format() it, supplying the message. NdefFormatable also supports formatReadOnly() for tags that support that mode – this will write the message on the tag, then block it from further updates. When we are done, we close() the connection.

If the tag turned out to be Ndef already, we connect() to it, then see if it is writable and has enough room. If it meets both of those criteria, we can emit the message via writeNdefMessage(), which overwrites the NDEF message that had already existed on the tag (if any). If the tag supported it, a call to makeReadOnly() would block further updates to the tag. Again, when we are done, we close() the connection.

Responding to a Tag

Writing to a tag is a bit complicated. Responding to an NDEF message on a tag is significantly easier.

If the foreground activity is not consuming NFC events – as URLTagger does in write mode – then Android will use normal Intent resolution with startActivity() to handle the tag. To respond to the tag, all you need to do is have an activity set up to watch for an android.nfc.action.NDEF_DISCOVERED Intent. To get control ahead of the

built-in Tags application, also have a <data> element that describes the sort of content or URL you are expecting to find on the tag.

For example, suppose you used the Android browser to visit http://commonsware.com/nfctest, and you wrote that to a tag using URLTagger. The URLTagger application has another activity, URLHandler, that will respond when you tap the newly-written tag from the home screen or anywhere else. It accomplishes this via a suitable <intent-filter>:

The URLHandler activity can then use getIntent() to retrieve the key pieces of data from the tag itself, if needed. In particular, the EXTRA_NDEF_MESSAGES Parcelable array extra will return an array of NdefMessage objects. Typically, there will only be one of these. You can call getRecords() on the NdefMessage to get at the array of NdefRecord objects (again, typically only one). Methods like getPayload() will allow you to get at the individual portions of the record.

The nice thing is that the URL still works, even if URLTagger is not on the device. In that case, the Tags application would react to the tag, and the user could tap on it to bring up a browser on this URL. A production application might create a Web page that tells the user about this great and wonderful app the can install, and provide links to the Android Market (or elsewhere) to go get the app.

Expected Pattern: Bootstrap

Tags tend to have limited capacity. Even in peer-to-peer settings, the effective bandwidth of NFC is paltry compared to anything outside of dial-up Internet access.

As a result, NFC will be used infrequently as the complete communications solution between a publisher and a device. Sometimes it will, when the content is specifically small, such as a contact (vCard) or event (iCalendar). But, for anything bigger than that, NFC will serve more as a convenient bootstrap for more conventional communications options:

- Embedding a URL in a tag, as the previous sample showed, allows an installed application to run or a Web site to be browsed
- Embedding an Android Market URL in a tag allows for easy access to some specialized app (e.g., menu for a restaurant)
- A multi-player game might use peer-to-peer NFC to allow local participants to rapidly connect into the same shared game area, where the game is played over the Internet or Bluetooth
- And so on.

Mobile Devices are Mobile

Reading and writing NFC tags is a relatively slow process, mostly due to low bandwidth. It may take a second or two to actually complete the operation.

Users, however, are not know for their patience.

If a user moves their device out of range of the tag while Android is attempting to read it, Android simply will skip the dispatch. If, however, the tag leaves the signal area of the device while you are writing to it, you will get an IOException. At this point, the state of the tag is unknown.

You may wish to incorporate something into your UI to let the user know that you are working with the tag, encouraging them to leave the phone in place until you are done.

Additional Resources

To help make sense of the tags that you are trying to use with your app, you may wish to grab the NFC TagInfo application off of the Android Market. This application simply scans a tag and allows you to peruse all the details of that tag, including the supported technologies (e.g., does it support NDEF? is it NdefFormatable?), the NDEF records, and so on.

To learn more about NFC on Android – beyond this chapter or the Android developer documentation – this Google I|O| 2011 presentation is recommended.

PART IV – Scripting Languages

The Role of Scripting Languages

A scripting language, for the purpose of this book, has two characteristics:

- It is interpreted from source and so does not require any sort of compilation step
- It cannot (presently) be used to create a full-fledged Android application without at least some form of custom Java-based stub, and probably much more than that

In this part of the book, we will look at scripting languages on Android and what you can accomplish with them, despite any limitations inherent in their collective definition.

All Grown Up

Interpreted languages have been a part of the programming landscape for decades. The language most associated with the desktop computer revolution – BASIC – was originally an interpreted language. However, the advent of MS-DOS and the IBM PC (and clones) led developers in the direction of C for "serious programming", for reasons of speed. While interpreted languages continued to evolve, they tended to be described as "scripting" languages, used to glue other applications together. Perl, Python, and the like were not considered "serious" contenders for application development.

The follow-on revolution, for the Internet, changed all of that. Most interactive Web sites were written as CGI scripts using these "toy" languages, Perl first and foremost. Even in environments where Perl was unpopular, such as Windows, Web applications were still written using scripting languages, such as VBScript in Active Server Pages (ASP). While some firms developed Web applications using C/C++, scripting languages ruled the roost. That remains to this day, where you are far more likely to find people writing Web applications in PHP or Ruby than you will find them writing in C or C++. The most likely compiled language for Web development – Java – is still technically an interpreted language, albeit not usually considered a scripting language.

Nowadays, writing major components of an application using a scripting language is not terribly surprising. While this is still most common with Web applications, you can find scripting languages used in the browser (Javascript), games (Lua), virtual worlds (LSL), and so on. Even though these languages execute more slowly than there C/C++ counterparts, they offer much greater flexibility, and faster CPUs make the performance of scripts less critical.

Following the Script

Scripting languages are not built into Android, beyond the Javascript interpreter in the WebKit Web browser. Despite this, there is quite a bit of interest in scripting on Android, and the biggest reasons for this come down to experience and comfort level.

Your Expertise

Perhaps you have spent your entire career writing Python scripts, or you cut your teeth on Perl CGI programs, or you have gotten seriously into Ruby development.

Maybe you used Java in previous jobs and hate it with the fiery passion of a thousand suns.

Regardless of the cause, your expertise may lie outside the traditional Android realm of Java-based development. Perhaps you would never touch Android if you had to write in Java, or maybe you feel you would just be significantly more productive in some other language. How much that productivity gain is real versus "in your head" is immaterial – if you want to develop in some other language, you owe it to yourself to try.

Your Users' Expertise

Maybe you are looking to create a program where not only you can write scripts, but so can your users. This might be a utility, or a game, or rulesets for email management, or whatever.

In that case, you need:

- Something interpreted, so you can execute what the user types in
- Something embeddable, so your larger application (typically written in Java, of course) is capable of executing those scripts
- Something your users will be comfortable using for scripting

The last criterion is perhaps the toughest, as non-developers typically have limited experience in writing scripts in any language, let alone one that runs on Android. Perhaps the most popular such language is Basic, in the form of VBA and VBScript on Windows...but there are no interpreters for those languages for Android at this time.

Crowd-Developing

Perhaps your users will not only be entering scripts for their own benefit, but for others' benefit as well.

Many platforms have been improved by power users and amateur developers alike. Browser users gain from those writing GreaseMonkey scripts. Bloggers benefit from those writing WordPress themes. And so on.

To facilitate this sort of work, not only do you need an interpreted, embeddable, user-familiar scripting environment, but you need some means for users to publish their scripts and download the scripts of others. Fortunately, with Android having near-continuous connectivity, your challenge will lie more on organizing and hosting the scripts, more so than getting them on and off of devices.

Going Off-Script

Scripting languages on Android have their fair share of issues. It is safe to say that while Android does not prohibit the use of scripting languages, its architecture does not exactly go out of its way to make them easy to use, either.

Security

For a scripting language to do much that is interesting, it is going to need some amount of privileges. A script cannot access the Internet unless its process has that right. A script cannot modify the user's contacts unless its process has that right. And so on.

For scripts you write, so long as those scripts cannot be modified readily by malware authors, security is whatever you define it to be. If your scriptbased application needs Internet access, so be it.

For scripts your users write, things get a bit more challenging, since permissions cannot be modified on the fly by applications. Many interpreters will tend to request (or otherwise have access to) permissions that are broader than any individual user might need, because those permissions are needed by somebody. However, the risk is still minimal to the user, so long as they are careful with the scripts they write.

For scripts your users might download, written by others, security becomes a big problem. If the interpreter has a wide range of permissions, downloaded scripts can easily host malware that exploits those permissions for nefarious ends. An interpreter with both Internet access and the right to read the user's contacts means that any script the user might download and run could copy the user's contact data and send it to spammers or identity thieves.

Performance

Java, as interpreted by the Dalvik virtual machine, is reasonably fast, particularly on Android 2.2 and newer versions. C/C++, through the NDK, is far faster.

Scripting languages are a mixed bag.

Some scripting languages for Android have interpreters that are implemented in C code. Those interpreters' performance is partly a function of how well they were written and ported over to the chipsets Android runs on. However, if those interpreters expose Android APIs to the language, that can add considerable overhead. For example, the Scripting Layer for Android (SL4A) makes Android APIs available to scripting languages via a tiny built-in Java Web server and a Web service API. While convenient for language integration, converting simple Java calls into Web service calls slows things down quite a bit.

Some scripting languages have interpreters that themselves are written in Java and run on the virtual machine. Those are likely to perform worse on an Android device than when they are run on a desktop or server, simply because of the performance differences between the standard Java VMs and the Dalvik VM. However, they will have quicker access to the Java class libraries that make up much of Android than will C-based interpreters.

Cross-Platform Compatibility

Most of the scripting languages for Android are ports from versions that run across multiple platforms. This is one of their big benefits – that is where you and your users may have gained experience with those languages. However, just as, say, Perl and Python run a bit differently on Windows than on Linux or OS X, there will be some differences in how those languages run on Android. The Android operating system is not a traditional Linux environment, and so file paths, environment variables, available pre-installed programs, and the like will not be the same. Some of those may, in turn, impact how the scripting languages operate. You may need to make some modification to any existing scripts for those languages that you attempt to run on Android.

Maturity...On Android

Some scripting languages that have been ported to Android are rather old, like Perl and Python. Others are old and somewhat abandoned for traditional development, like BeanShell. Yet others are fairly new to the programming scene altogether, like JRuby.

However, none of them have a long track record on Android, simply because Android itself has not been around very long. This has several implications:

- There is more likely to be bugs in newer ports of a language than older ports
- Fewer people will have experience in supporting these languages on Android (compared to supporting them on Linux, for example)
- The number of production applications built using these languages on Android is minuscule compared to their use on more traditional environments

The Scripting Layer for Android

When it comes to scripting languages on Android, the first stop should always be the Scripting Layer for Android (SL4A). Led by Damon Kohler, this project is rather popular, both among hardcore Android developers and those people looking to automate a bit more of their Android experience.

The Role of SL4A

What started as an experiment to get Python and Lua going on Android, back in late 2008, turned into a more serious endeavor in June 2009, when the Android Scripting Environment (now called the Scripting Layer for Android, or SL4A) was announced on the Google Open Source blog and the Google Code site for it was established. Since then, SL4A has been a magnet for people interested in getting their favorite language working on Android or advancing its support.

On-Device Development

Historically, the primary role of SL₄A was as a tool to allow people to put together scripts, often written on the device itself, to take care of various chores. This appealed to developers who were looking for something lightweight compared to the Android SDK and Java. For those used to tinkering with scripts on other mobile Linux platforms (e.g., the Nokia N800 running Maemo), SL₄A promised a similar sort of capability.

Over time, SL₄A's scope in this area has grown, including preliminary support for SL₄A scripts packaged as APK files, much like an Android application written in Java or any of the alternative frameworks described in this book.

Getting Started with SL4A

SL₄A is a bit more difficult to install than is the average Android application, due to the various interpreters it uses and their respective sizes. That being said, none of the steps involved with getting SL₄A set up are terribly difficult, and most are just part of the application itself.

Installing SL4A

At the time of this writing, SL₄A is not distributed via the Android Market. Instead, you can download it to your device off of the SL₄A Web site. Perhaps the easiest way to do that is to scan the QR code on the SL₄A home page using Barcode Scanner or a similar utility.

Installing Interpreters

When you first install SL4A, the only available scripting language is for shell scripts, as that is built into Android itself. If you want to work with other interpreters, you will need to download those. That is why the base SL4A download is so small (~200KB) – most of the smarts are separate downloads, largely due to size.

To add interpreters, launch SL₄A from the launcher, then choose View > Interpreters from the option menu. You will be presented with the (presently short) list of installed interpreters:



Figure 96. The initial list of installed SL4A interpreters

Then, to install additional interpreters, choose Add from the option menu. You will be given a roster of SL4A-compatible interpreters to choose from:

슈 년 💮 🎓 📲 🖅 10:42 ам
Add
BeanShell 2.0b4
JRuby-1.4
Lua 5.1.4
PHP 5.3.3
Perl 5.10.1
Python 2.6.2

Figure 97. The list of available SL4A interpreters

Click on one of the interpreters, and this will trigger the download of an APK file for that specific interpreter. Slide down the notification drawer and click on that APK file to continue the installation process. When the APK itself is installed, open up that interpreter (e.g., click the [Open] button when the install is done). That will bring up an activity to let you download the rest of the interpreter binaries:



Figure 98. Downloading the Python SL4A interpreter, continued

Click the Install button, and SL₄A will download and install the interpreter's component parts:

4	$\sqrt{1}$	ф) 🛜 📶 🖅 10:44 ам	Л
Рy	thon f	or Android	
		Install	
ſ			
	\odot	Extracting	
	pyt	thon_r7.zip	
	20%	843793/4116976	

Figure 99. Downloading the Python SL4A interpreter

This may take one or several downloads, depending on the interpreter. When done, and after a few progress dialogs' worth of unpacking, the interpreter will appear in the list of interpreters:



Figure 100. The updated list of installed SL4A interpreters

Note that the interpreters will be installed on your device's "external storage" (typically some flavor of SD card), due to their size. You will find an SL4A/ directory on that card with the interpreters and scripts.

Running Supplied Scripts

Back on the Scripts activity (e.g., what you see when you launch SL4A from the launcher), you will be presented with a list of the available scripts. Initially, these will be ones that shipped with the interpreters, as examples for how to write SL4A scripts in that language:



Figure 101. The list of SL4A scripts

Tapping on any of these scripts will bring up a "quick actions" balloon:



Figure 102. Quick actions for the speak.py script

Click the little shell icon to run it, showing its terminal output along the way:



Figure 103. The visual results of running the speak.py SL4A script

Writing SL4A Scripts

While the scripts supplied with the interpreters are...entertaining, they only scratch the surface of what an SL4A script can accomplish. Of course, to go beyond what is there, you will need to start writing some scripts.

Editing Options

Since scripts are stored on your SD card (or whatever the "external storage" is for your device), you can create scripts using some other computer – one with fancy things like "mice" and "ergonomic keyboards" – and transfer it over via USB, like you would transfer over an MP3 file. This eases typing, but it will make for an awkward development cycle, since your computer and the Android device cannot both have access to the SD card simultaneously. The mount/unmount process may get a bit annoying. On the other hand, this is a great way to transfer over a script you obtained from somebody else.

Another option is to edit your scripts on the device. SL4A has a built in script editor designed for this purpose. Of course, the screen may be a bit small and the keyboard may be a bit...soft, but this is a great answer for small scripts.

To add a new script, from the Scripts activity, choose Add from the option menu. This will bring up a roster of available scripting languages and other items (e.g., add a folder):

. 🕺 🖓 🔶 🗇 🛜 🚛 🌆 10:50 ам
Scripts SL4Ar2
Add
Folder
HTML and JavaScript
Python 2.6.2
Shell
Scan Barcode

Figure 104. The add-script language selection dialog

(the "Scan Barcode" option gives you an easy route to install a third-party script, one encoded in a QR code)

Tap the language you want, and you will be taken into the script editor:

. 주 년 🔶 🕀 🕂
↓ру
import android
droid = android.Android()
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 0 q w e r t y u i o p
a s d f g h j k l
+ z x c v b n m ←
₽₽₽;12# ←

Figure 105. The script editor

The field at the top is for the script name, and the large text area at the bottom is for the script itself. A file extension and boilerplate code will be supplied for you automatically.

In fact, that boilerplate code is rather important, as you will see momentarily.

To edit an existing script, long-tap on the script in the list and choose Edit from the context menu.

To save your changes to a new or existing script, choose the Save option from the script editor option menu. You can also "Save and Run" to test the script immediately.

Calling Into Android

In the real world, Perl knows nothing about Android. Neither does Python, BeanShell, or most of the other scripting languages available for SL4A. This would be rather limiting, as most of what you would want a script to do will have to deal with the device to some level: collect input, get a location, say some text using speech synthesis, dial the phone, etc.

Fortunately, SL₄A has a solution, one of those "so crazy, it just might work" sorts of solutions: SL₄A has a built-in RPC server. While implementing a server on a smartphone is not something one ordinarily does, it provides an ingenious bridge from the scripting language to the device itself.

Each scripting language is given a local object proxy that works with the RPC server. For example, here is a Python script that speaks the current time:



Figure 106. The script editor, showing the say_time.py script

The import android and droid=android.Android() statements establish a connection between the Python interpreter and the SL4A RPC server. From that point, the droid object is available for use to access Android capabilities – in this case, speaking a message.

Python does not strictly realize that it is accessing local functionality. It simply makes RPC calls, ones that just so happen to be fulfilled on the device rather than via some remote RPC server accessed over the Internet.

Browsing the API

Therefore, SL₄A effectively exposes an API to each of its scripting languages, via this RPC bridge. While the API is not huge, it accomplishes a lot and is ever-growing.

If you are editing scripts on the device, you can browse the API by choosing the API Browser option menu from the script editor. This brings up a list of available methods on your RPC proxy (e.g., droid) that you can call:

<u>!</u> 🐴 🖞 🔶 🔶 🗇 🗇 👘 🖅 10:51 ам
API Browser SL4A r2
addContextMenuItem
addOptionsMenuItem
batteryCheckPresent
batteryGetHealth
batteryGetLevel
batteryGetPlugType
batteryGetStatus
batteryGetTechnology
batteryGetTemperature
batteryGetVoltage
batteryStartMonitoring
batteryStopMonitoring
bluetoothAccept
bluetoothConnect
bluetoothGetConnectedDeviceName
bluetoothMakeDiscoverable
bluetoothRead

Figure 107. The script editor's API browser

Tapping on any item in the list will "unfold" it to provide more details, such as the parameter list. Long-tapping on an item brings up a context menu where you can:

- insert a template call to the method into your script at the cursor position
- "prompt" you for the parameter values for the method, then insert the completed method call into your script

It is also possible to browse the API in a regular Web browser, if you are developing scripts off-device.

Running SL4A Scripts

Scripts are only useful if you run them, of course. We have seen two options for running scripts: tapping on them in the scripts list, or choosing "Save & Run" from the script editor. Those are not your only options, however.
Background

If you long-tap on a script in the script list, you will see a context menu option to "Start in Background". As the name suggests, this kicks off the script in the background. Rather than seeing the terminal window for the script, the script just runs. A notification will appear in the status bar, with the SL4A icon, indicating that the RPC server is in operation and that script(s) may be running.

Shortcuts

Rather than have to open up SL4A every time, you can set up shortcuts on your home screen to run individual scripts. Just long-tap on the home screen background and choose Shortcuts from the context menu, then Scripts from the available shortcuts. This brings up the scripts list, but this time, when you choose a script, you are presented with a quick actions balloon for how to start it: in a terminal or in the background:



Figure 108. Configuring an SL4A shortcut

Choose one, and at this point, a shortcut, with the interpreter's icon and the name of the script, will appear on your home screen. Tapping it runs the script.

Other Alternatives

Users of Locale – an application designed to trigger events at certain times or when you get to certain locations – can trigger SL₄A scripts in addition to invoking standard built-in tools.

In addition, there is preliminary support in SL4A for packaging scripts as APK files for wider distribution.

Potential Issues

As the SL4A Web site indicates, SL4A is "alpha-quality". It is not without warts. How much those warts are an issue for you, in terms of crafting and running utility scripts, is up to you.

Security...From Scripts

SL₄A itself holds a long list of Android permissions, including:

- The ability to read your contact data
- The ability to call phone numbers and place SMS messages
- Access to your location
- Access to your received SMS/MMS messages
- Bluetooth access
- Internet access
- The ability to write to the SD card
- The ability to record audio and take pictures
- The ability to keep your device awake

- The ability to retrieve the list of running applications and restart other applications
- And so on

Hence, its scripts – via the RPC-based API – can perform all of those actions. For example, a script you download from a third party could read all your contacts and send that information to a spammer. Hence, you should only run scripts that you trust, since SL4A effectively "wires open" many aspects of Android's standard security protections.

Security...From Other Apps

Originally, the on-device Web service supplying the RPC-based API was wide open. Any program that could find the port could connect to that Web service and invoke operations. That would not necessarily be all that bad...except that the Web service runs in its own process with its own permissions, and it may have permissions that other applications lack (e.g., right to access the Internet or to read contacts). Given that, malware could use SL4A to do things that it, by itself, could not do, allowing it to sneak onto more devices.

SL₄A now uses a token-based authentication mechanism for using the Web service, to help close this loophole. In principle, only SL₄A scripts should be able to use the RPC server.

JVM Scripting Languages

The Java virtual machine (JVM) is a remarkably flexible engine. While it was originally developed purely for Java, it has spawned its own family of languages, just as Microsoft's CIL supports multiple languages for the Windows platform. Some languages targeting the JVM as a runtime will work on Android, since the regular Java VM and Android's Dalvik VM are so similar.

Languages on Languages

Except for the handful of early language interpreters and compilers handconstructed in machine code, every programming language is built atop earlier ones. C and C++ are built atop assembly language. Many other languages, such as Java itself, are built atop C/C++.

Hence, it should not come as much of a surprise that an environment as popular as Java has spawned another generation of languages whose implementations are in Java.

There are a few flavors of these languages. Some, like Scala and Clojure, are compiled languages whose compilers created JVM bytecodes, no different than would a Java compiler. These do not strictly qualify as a "scripting language", however, since they typically compile their source code to bytecode ahead of time.

Some Java-based scripting languages use fairly simple interpreters. These interpreters convert scripting code into parsed representations (frequently so-called "abstract syntax trees", or ASTs), then execute the scripts from their parsed forms. Most scripting languages at least start here, and some, like BeanShell, stick with this implementation.

Other scripting languages try to bridge the gap between a purely interpreted language and a compiled one like Scala or Clojure. These languages turn the parsed scripting code into JVM bytecode, effectively implementing their own just-in-time compiler (JIT). Since many Java runtimes themselves have a JIT to turn bytecode into machine code ("opcode"), languages with their own JIT can significantly outperform their purely-interpreted counterparts. JRuby and Rhino are two languages that have taken this approach.

A Brief History of JVM Scripting

Back in the beginning, the only way to write for the JVM was in Java itself. However, since writing language interpreters is a common pastime, it did not take long for people to start implementing interpreters in Java. These had their niche audiences, but there was only modest interest in the early days – interpreters made Java applets too large to download, for example.

Things got a bit more interesting in 1999, when IBM released the Bean Scripting Framework (BSF). This offered a uniform API for scripting engines, meaning that a hosting Java application could write to the BSF API, then plug in arbitrary interpreters at runtime. It was even possible, with a bit of extra work, to allow new interpreters to be downloaded and used on demand, rather than having to be pre-installed with the application. BSF also standardized how to inject Java objects into the scripting engines themselves, for access by the scripts. This allowed scripts to work with the host application's objects, such as allowing scripts to manipulate the contents of the jEdit text editor.

This spurred interest in scripting. In addition to some IBM languages (e.g., NetREXX) supporting BSF natively, other languages, like BeanShell, created

BSF adapters to allow their languages to participate in the BSF space. On the consumer side, various Web frameworks started supporting BSF scripting for dynamic Web content generation, and so forth.

Interest was high enough that Apache took over stewardship of BSF in 2003. Shortly thereafter, Sun and others started work on JSR-223, which added the javax.script framework to Java 6. The javax.script framework advanced the BSF concept and standardized it as part of Java itself.

At this point, most JVM scripting languages that are currently maintained support javax.script integration, and may also support integration with the older BSF API as well. There is a long list of available javax.script-compatible scripting languages.

Android does not include javax.script as part of its subset of the Java SE class library from the Apache Harmony project. This certainly does not preclude integrating scripting languages into Android applications, but it does raise the degree of difficulty a bit.

Limitations

Of course, JVM scripting languages do not necessarily work on Android without issue. There may be some work to get a JVM language going on Android, above and beyond the challenges for scripting languages in general on Android.

Android SDK Limits

Android is not Java SE, or Java ME, or even Java EE. While Android has many standard Java classes, it does not have a class library that matches any traditional pattern. As such, languages built assuming Java SE, for example, may have some dependency issues.

For languages where you have access to the source code, removing these dependencies may be relatively straightforward, particularly if they are

ancillary to the operation of the language itself. For example, the language may come with miniature Swing IDEs, support for scripted servlets, or other capabilities that are not particularly relevant on Android and can be excised from the source code.

Wrong Bytecode

Android runs Dalvik bytecode, not Java bytecode. The conversion from Java bytecode to Dalvik bytecode happens at compile time. However, the conversion tool is rather finicky – it wants bytecode from Sun/Oracle's Java 1.5 or 1.6, nothing else. This can cause some problems:

- You may encounter a JAR that is old enough to have been compiled with Java 1.4.2
- You may encounter JARs compiled using other compilers, such as the GNU Compiler for Java (GCJ), common on Linux distributions
- Eventually, when Java 7 ships, there may be bytecode differences that preclude Java 7-compiled JARs from working with Android
- Languages that have their own JIT compilers will have problems, because their JIT compilers will be generating Java bytecodes, not Dalvik bytecodes, meaning that the JIT facility needs to be rewritten or disabled

Again, if you have the source code, recompiling on an Android-friendly Java compiler should be a simple process.

Age

The heyday of some JVM languages is in the past. As such, you may find that support for some languages will be limited, simply because few people are still interested in them. Finding people interested in those languages on Android – the cross-section of two niches – may be even more of a problem.

SL4A and JVM Languages

SL₄A supports three JVM languages today:

- BeanShell
- JRuby
- Rhino (Javascript)

You can use those within your SL4A environment no different than you can any other scripting language (e.g., Perl, Python, PHP). Hence, if what you are looking for is to create your own personal scripts, or writing small applications, SL4A saves you a lot of hassle. If there is a JVM scripting language you like but is not supported by SL4A, adding support for new interpreters within SL4A is fairly straightforward, though the APIs may change as SL4A is undergoing a fairly frequent set of revisions.

Embedding JVM Languages

While SL4A will drive end users towards writing their own scripts or miniature applications using JVM languages, another use of these languages is for embedding in a full Android application. Scripting may accelerate development, if the developers are more comfortable with the scripted language than with Java. Also, if the scripts are able to be modified or expanded by users, an ecosystem may emerge for user-contributed scripts.

Architecture for Embedding

Embedding a scripting language is not something to be undertaken lightly, even on a desktop or server application. Mobile devices running Android will have similar issues.

Asynchronous

One potential problem is that a script may take too long to execute. Android's architecture assume that work triggered by buttons, menus, and the like will either happen very quickly or will be done on background threads. Particularly for user-generated scripts, the script execution time is unknowable in advance – it might be a few milliseconds, or it might be several seconds. Hence, any implementation of a scripting extension for an Android application needs to consider executing all scripts in a background thread. This, of course, raises its own challenges for reflecting those scripts' results on-screen, since GUI updates cannot be done on a background thread.

Security

Scripts in Android inherit the security restrictions of the process that runs the script. If an application has the right to access the Internet, so will any scripts run in that application's process. If an application has the right to read the user's contacts, so will any scripts run in that application's process. And so on. If the scripts in question are created by the application's authors, this is not a big deal – the rest of the application has those same permissions, after all. But, if the application supports user-authored scripts, it raises the potential of malware hijacking the application to do things that the malware itself would otherwise lack the rights to do.

Inside the InterpreterService

One way to solve both of those problems is to isolate the scripting language in a self-contained low-permission APK – "sandboxing" the interpreter so the scripts it executes are less able to cause harm. This APK could also arrange to have the interpreter execute its scripts on a background thread. An even better implementation would allow the embedding application to decide whether or not the "sandbox" is important – applications with a controlled source of scripts may not need the extra security or the implementation headaches it causes.

With that in mind, let us take a look at the JVM/InterpreterService sample project, one possible implementation of the strategy described above.

The Interpreter Interface

The InterpreterService can support an arbitrary number of interpreters, via a common interface. This interface provides a simplified API for having an interpreter execute a script and return a result:

```
package com.commonsware.abj.interp;
import android.os.Bundle;
public interface I_Interpreter {
   Bundle executeScript(Bundle input);
}
```

As you can see, it is *very* simplified, offering just a single executeScript() method. That method accepts a Bundle (a key-value store akin to a Java HashMap) as a parameter – that Bundle will need to contain the script and any other objects needed to execute the script.

The interpreter will return another Bundle from executeScript(), containing whatever data it wants the script's requester to have access to.

For example, here is the implementation of EchoInterpreter, which just returns the same Bundle that was passed in:

```
package com.commonsware.abj.interp;
import android.os.Bundle;
public class EchoInterpreter implements I_Interpreter {
    public Bundle executeScript(Bundle input) {
        return(input);
    }
}
```

A somewhat more elaborate sample is the SQLiteInterpreter:

```
package com.commonsware.abj.interp;
import android.database.Cursor;
import android.database.sqlite.SQLiteDatabase;
import android.os.Bundle;
import java.util.ArrayList;
public class SQLiteInterpreter implements I Interpreter {
 public Bundle executeScript(Bundle input) {
    Bundle result=new Bundle(input);
    String script=input.getString(InterpreterService.SCRIPT);
   if (script!=null) {
      SQLiteDatabase db=SQLiteDatabase.create(null);
      Cursor c=db.rawQuery(script, null);
     c.moveToFirst();
     for (int i=0;i<c.getColumnCount();i++) {</pre>
        result.putString(c.getColumnName(i), c.getString(i));
      }
      c.close();
      db.close();
    return(result);
  }
```

This class accepts a script, in the form of a SQLite database query. It extracts the script from the Bundle, using a pre-defined key (InterpreterService.SCRIPT):

String script=input.getString(InterpreterService.SCRIPT);

Assuming there is such a script, it creates an empty in-memory database and executes the SQLite query against that database:

```
SQLiteDatabase db=SQLiteDatabase.create(null);
Cursor c=db.rawQuery(script, null);
```

The results come back in the form of a Cursor – itself a key-value store. SQLiteInterpreter takes those results and pours them into a Bundle to be returned:

```
c.moveToFirst();
for (int i=0;i<c.getColumnCount();i++) {
  result.putString(c.getColumnName(i), c.getString(i));
}
c.close();
db.close();
```

The Bundle being returned starts from a copy of the input Bundle, so the script requester can embed in the input Bundle any identifiers it needs to determine how to handle the results from executing this script.

SQLiteInterpreter is not terribly flexible, but you can use it for simple numeric and string calculations, such as the following script:

SELECT 1+2 AS result, 'foo' AS other_result, 3*8 AS third_result;

This would return a Bundle containing a key of result with a value of 3, a key of other_result with a value of foo, and a key of third_result with a value of 24.

Of course, it would be nice to support more compelling interpreters, and we will examine a pair of those later in this chapter.

Loading Interpreters and Executing Scripts

Of course, having a nice clean interface to the interpreters does nothing in terms of actually executing them on a background thread, let alone sandboxing them. The InterpreterService class itself handles that.

InterpreterService is an IntentService, which automatically routes incoming Intent objects (from calls to startService()) to a background thread via a call to onHandleIntent(). IntentService will queue up Intent objects if needed, and IntentService even automatically shuts down if there is no more work to be done.

Here is the implementation of onHandleIntent() from InterpreterService:

```
@Override
protected void onHandleIntent(Intent intent) {
 String action=intent.getAction();
 I_Interpreter interpreter=interpreters.get(action);
  if (interpreter==null) {
    try {
     interpreter=(I Interpreter)Class.forName(action).newInstance();
     interpreters.put(action, interpreter);
    }
   catch (Throwable t) {
      Log.e("InterpreterService", "Error creating interpreter", t);
    }
  }
 if (interpreter==null) {
   failure(intent, "Could not create interpreter: "+intent.getAction());
  3
 else {
   try {
     success(intent, interpreter.executeScript(intent.getBundleExtra(BUNDLE)));
    }
   catch (Throwable t) {
     Log.e("InterpreterService", "Error executing script", t);
      try {
        failure(intent, t);
      }
      catch (Throwable t2) {
        Log.e("InterpreterService",
              "Error returning exception to client",
              t2);
      }
    }
  }
```

We keep a cache of interpreters, since initializing their engines may take some time. That cache is keyed by the interpreter's class name, and that key comes in to the service by way of the action on the Intent that was used to start the service. In other words, the script requester tells us, by way of the Intent used in startService(), which interpreter to use.

Those interpreters are created using reflection:

```
try {
    interpreter=(I_Interpreter)Class.forName(action).newInstance();
    interpreters.put(action, interpreter);
}
catch (Throwable t) {
```

```
Log.e("InterpreterService", "Error creating interpreter", t);
```

This way, InterpreterService has no compile-time knowledge of any given interpreter class. Interpreters can come and go, but InterpreterService remains the same.

Assuming an interpreter was found (either cached or newly created), we have it execute the script, with the input Bundle coming from an "extra" on the Intent. Methods named success() and failure() are then responsible for getting the results to the script requester...as will be seen in the next section.

Delivering Results

Script requesters can get the results of the script back – in the form of the interpreter's output Bundle – in one of two ways.

One option is a private broadcast Intent. This is a broadcast Intent where the broadcast is limited to be delivered only to a specific package, not to any potential broadcast receiver on the device.

The other option is to supply a PendingIntent that will be sent with the results. This could be used by an Activity and createPendingIntent() to have control routed to its onActivityResult() method. Or, an arbitrary PendingIntent could be created, to start another activity, for example.

The implementations of success() and failure() in InterpreterService simply build up an Intent containing the results to be delivered:

```
private void success(Intent intent, Bundle result) {
    Intent data=new Intent();
    data.putExtras(result);
    data.putExtra(RESULT_CODE, SUCCESS);
    send(intent, data);
}
```

```
private void failure(Intent intent, String message) {
    Intent data=new Intent();
    data.putExtra(ERROR, message);
    data.putExtra(RESULT_CODE, FAILURE);
    send(intent, data);
}
private void failure(Intent intent, Throwable t) {
    Intent data=new Intent();
    data.putExtra(ERROR, t.getMessage());
    data.putExtra(RESULT_CODE, FAILURE);
    send(intent, data);
}
```

These, in turn, delegate the actual sending logic to a send() method that delivers the result Intent via a private broadcast or a PendingIntent, as indicated by the script requester:

```
private void send(Intent intent, Intent data) {
 String broadcast=intent.getStringExtra(BROADCAST_ACTION);
 if (broadcast==null) {
   PendingIntent pi=(PendingIntent)intent.getParcelableExtra(PENDING RESULT);
   if (pi!=null) {
     try {
        pi.send(this, Activity.RESULT_OK, data);
     catch (PendingIntent.CanceledException e) {
        // no-op - client must be gone
     }
    }
 }
 else {
   data.setPackage(intent.getStringExtra(BROADCAST_PACKAGE));
   data.setAction(broadcast);
   sendBroadcast(data);
 }
```

Packaging the InterpreterService

There are three steps for integrating InterpreterService into an application.

First, you need to decide what APK the InterpreterService goes in – the main one for the application (no sandbox) or a separate low-permission one (sandbox).

Second, you need to decide what interpreters you wish to support, writing I_Interpreter implementations and getting the interpreters' JARs into the project's libs/ directory.

Third, you need to add the source code for InterpreterService along with a suitable <service> entry in AndroidManifest.xml. This entry will need to support <intent-filter> elements for each scripting language you are supporting, such as:

```
<?xml version="1.0" encoding="utf-8"?>
<manifest android:versionCode="1"
         android:versionName="1.0"
         package="com.commonsware.abj.interp"
         xmlns:android="http://schemas.android.com/apk/res/android">
 <application android:icon="@drawable/cw"
             android:label="@string/app name">
   <service android:exported="false"</pre>
           android:name=".InterpreterService">
     <intent-filter>
       <action android:name="com.commonsware.abj.interp.EchoInterpreter" />
     </intent-filter>
     <intent-filter>
        <action android:name="com.commonsware.abj.interp.SQLiteInterpreter" />
     </intent-filter>
     <intent-filter>
        <action android:name="com.commonsware.abj.interp.BshInterpreter" />
     </intent-filter>
     <intent-filter>
        <action android:name="com.commonsware.abj.interp.RhinoInterpreter" />
     </intent-filter>
    </service>
 </application>
</manifest>
```

From there, it is a matter of adding in appropriate startService() calls to your application wherever you want to execute a script, and processing the results you get back.

Using the InterpreterService

To use the InterpreterService, you need to first determine which I_Interpreter engine you are using, as that forms the action for the Intent to be used with the InterpreterService. Create an Intent with that action, then add in an InterpreterService.BUNDLE extra for the script and other data to be supplied to the interpreter. Also, you can add an InterpreterService.BROADCAST_ACTION, to be used by InterpreterService to send results back to you via a broadcast Intent. Finally, call startService() on the Intent, and the results will be delivered to you asynchronously.

For example, here is a test method from the EchoInterpreterTests test case:

```
package com.commonsware.abj.interp;
import android.os.Bundle;
public class EchoInterpreterTests extends InterpreterTestCase {
 protected String getInterpreterName() {
   return("com.commonsware.abj.interp.EchoInterpreter");
  3
  public void testNoInput() {
    Bundle results=execServiceTest(new Bundle());
   assertNotNull(results);
    assert(results.size()==0);
 }
  public void testWithSomeInputJustForGrins() {
   Bundle input=new Bundle();
   input.putString("this", "is a value");
   Bundle results=execServiceTest(input);
   assertNotNull(results);
    assertEquals(results.getString("this"), "is a value");
  }
```

The echo "interpreter" simply echoes the input Bundle into the output. The execServiceTest() method is inherited from the InterpreterTestCase base class:

```
package com.commonsware.abj.interp;
import android.content.BroadcastReceiver;
import android.content.Context;
import android.content.Intent;
import android.content.IntentFilter;
import android.os.Bundle;
import android.test.AndroidTestCase;
import java.util.concurrent.CountDownLatch;
import java.util.concurrent.TimeUnit;
import junit.framework.TestCase;
abstract public class InterpreterTestCase extends AndroidTestCase {
 abstract protected String getInterpreterName();
 private static String ACTION="com.commonsware.abj.interp.InterpreterTestCase";
  private CountDownLatch latch=new CountDownLatch(1);
 private Bundle results=null;
 protected void setUp() throws Exception {
   super.setUp();
   getContext().registerReceiver(onBroadcast, new IntentFilter(ACTION));
 }
 protected void tearDown() {
   getContext().unregisterReceiver(onBroadcast);
  }
 protected Bundle execServiceTest(Bundle input) {
   Intent i=new Intent(getInterpreterName());
    i.putExtra(InterpreterService.BUNDLE, input);
    i.putExtra(InterpreterService.BROADCAST_ACTION, ACTION);
   getContext().startService(i);
   try {
     latch.await(5000, TimeUnit.MILLISECONDS);
    }
   catch (InterruptedException e) {
     // just keep rollin'
    }
   return(results);
  }
 private BroadcastReceiver onBroadcast=new BroadcastReceiver() {
   @Override
   public void onReceive(Context ctxt, Intent i) {
      results=i.getExtras();
      latch.countDown();
    3
```

};

The execServiceTest() method uses a CountDownLatch to wait on the interpreter to do its work before proceeding (or 5000 milliseconds, whichever comes first). The broadcast Intent containing the results, registered to watch for com.commonsware.abj.interp.InterpreterTestCase broadcasts, stuffs the output Bundle in a results data member and drops the latch, allowing the main test thread to continue.

BeanShell on Android

What if Java itself were a scripting language? What if you could just execute a snippet of Java code, outside of any class or method? What if you could still import classes, call static methods on classes, create new objects, as well?

That was what BeanShell offered, back in its heyday. And, since BeanShell does not use sophisticated tricks with its interpreter – like JIT compilation of scripting code – BeanShell is fairly easy to integrate into Android.

What is BeanShell?

BeanShell is Java on Java.

With BeanShell, you can write scripts in loose Java syntax. Here, "loose" means:

- In addition to writing classes, you can execute Java statements outside of classes, in a classic imperative or scripting style
- Data types are optional for variables
- Not every language feature is supported, particularly things like annotations that did not arrive until Java 1.5
- Etc.

BeanShell was originally developed in the late 1990's by Pat Niemeyer. It enjoyed a fair amount of success, even being considered as a standard interpreter to ship with Java (JSR-274). However, shortly thereafter, BeanShell lost momentum, and it is no longer being actively maintained. That being said, it works quite nicely on Android...once a few minor packaging issues are taken care of.

Getting BeanShell Working on Android

BeanShell has two main problems when it comes to Android:

- 1. The publicly-downloadable JAR was compiled for Java 1.4.2, and Android requires Java 5 or newer
- 2. The source code includes various things, like a Swing-based GUI and a servlet, that have no real place in an Android app and require classes that Android lacks

Fortunately, with BeanShell being open source, it is easy enough to overcome these challenges. You could download the source into an Android library project, then remove the classes that are not necessary (e.g., the servlet), and use that library project in your main application. Or, you could use an Android project for creating a JAR file that was compiled against the Android class library, so you are certain everything is supported.

However, the easiest answer is to use SL₄A's BeanShell JAR, since they have solved those problems already. The JAR can be found in the SL₄A source code repository, though you will probably need to check out the project using Mercurial, since JARs cannot readily be downloaded from the Google Code Web site.

Integrating BeanShell

The BeanShell engine is found in the bsh.Interpreter class. Wrapping one of these in an I_Interpreter interface, for use with InterpreterService, is fairly simple:

```
package com.commonsware.abj.interp;
import android.os.Bundle;
import bsh.Interpreter;
public class BshInterpreter implements I Interpreter {
 public Bundle executeScript(Bundle input) {
    Interpreter i=new Interpreter();
    Bundle output=new Bundle(input);
   String script=input.getString(InterpreterService.SCRIPT);
    if (script!=null) {
      try {
        i.set(InterpreterService.BUNDLE, input);
        i.set(InterpreterService.RESULT, output);
        Object eval_result=i.eval(script);
        output.putString("result", eval result.toString());
      }
      catch (Throwable t) {
        output.putString("error", t.getMessage());
    }
    return(output);
  }
```

BeanShell interpreters are fairly inexpensive objects, so we create a fresh Interpreter for each script, so one script cannot somehow access results from prior scripts. After setting up the output Bundle and extracting the script from the input Bundle, we inject both Bundle objects into BeanShell itself, where they can be accessed like global variables, named _bundle and _result.

At this point, we evaluate the script, using the eval() method on the Interpreter object. If all goes well, we convert the object returned by the script into a String and tuck it into the output Bundle, alongside anything else the script may have put into the Bundle. If there is a problem, such as a syntax error in the script, we put the error message into the output Bundle.

So long as the InterpreterService has an <intent-filter> for the com.commonsware.abj.interp.BshInterpreter action, and so long as we have a BeanShell JAR in the project's libs/ directory, InterpreterService is now capable of executing BeanShell scripts as needed.

For example, here are a couple of test methods from the BshInterpreterTests test case:

```
public void testSimpleResult() {
   Bundle input=new Bundle();
   input.putString(InterpreterService.SCRIPT, "1+2");
   Bundle output=execServiceTest(input);
   assertNull(output.getString("error"));
   assert(output.size()==2);
   assertEquals(output.getString("result"), "3");
}
public void testComplexResult() {
   Bundle input=new Bundle();
   input.putString(InterpreterService.SCRIPT, "_result.putInt(\"foo\", 1+2);");
   Bundle output=execServiceTest(input);
   assertNull(output.getString("error"));
   assertNull(output.getString("error"));
   assert(output.size()==3);
   assertEquals(output.getInt("foo"), 3);
}
```

With our inherited execServiceTest() method handling invoking the InterpreterService and waiting for responses, we can "simply" put our script as the InterpreterService.SCRIPT value in the input Bundle, and see what we get out. The first test script returns a simple value; the second test script directly calls methods on the output Bundle to return its results.

Rhino on Android

Javascript arrived on the language scene hot on the heels of Java itself. The name was chosen for marketing purposes more so than for any technical reason. Java and Javascript had little to do with one another, other than both adding interactivity to Web browsers. And while Java has largely faded from mainstream browser usage, Javascript has become more and more of a force on the browser, and even now on Web servers.

And, along the way, the Mozilla project put Javascript on Java and gave us Rhino.

What is Rhino?

If BeanShell is Java in Java, Rhino is Javascript in Java.

As part of Netscape's failed "Javagator" attempt to create a Web browser in Java, they created a Javascript interpreter for Java, code-named Rhino after the cover of O'Reilly Media's JavaScript: The Definitive Guide. Eventually, Rhino was made available to the Mozilla Foundation, which has continued maintaining it. At the present time, Rhino implements Javascript 1.7, so it does not support the latest and greatest Javascript capabilities, but it is still fairly full-featured.

Interest in Rhino has ticked upwards, courtesy of interest in using Javascript in places other than Web browsers, such as server-side frameworks. And, of course, it works nicely with Android.

Getting Rhino Working on Android

Similar to BeanShell, Rhino has a few minor source-level incompatibilities with Android. However, these can be readily pruned out, leaving you with a still-functional Javascript interpreter. However, once again, it is easiest to use SL₄A's Rhino JAR, since all that work is done for you.

Integrating Rhino

Putting an I_Interpreter facade on Rhino is incrementally more difficult than it is for BeanShell, but not by that much:

```
package com.commonsware.abj.interp;
import android.os.Bundle;
import org.mozilla.javascript.*;
public class RhinoInterpreter implements I_Interpreter {
    public Bundle executeScript(Bundle input) {
        String script=input.getString(InterpreterService.SCRIPT);
        Bundle output=new Bundle(input);
        if (script!=null) {
```

```
Context ctxt=Context.enter();
      try {
        ctxt.setOptimizationLevel(-1);
        Scriptable scope=ctxt.initStandardObjects();
        Object jsBundle=Context.javaToJS(input, scope);
        ScriptableObject.putProperty(scope, InterpreterService.BUNDLE,
isBundle);
        jsBundle=Context.javaToJS(output, scope);
        ScriptableObject.putProperty(scope, InterpreterService.RESULT,
jsBundle);
        String result=Context.toString(ctxt.evaluateString(scope, script,
                                                            "<script>", 1,
                                                            null));
        output.putString("result", result);
      finally {
       Context.exit();
    return(output);
  }
```

As with BshInterpreter, RhinoInterpreter sets up the output Bundle and extracts the script from the input Bundle. Assuming there is a script, RhinoInterpreter then sets up a Rhino Context object, which is roughly analogous to the BeanShell Interpreter object. One key difference is that you need to clean up the Context, by calling a static exit() method on the Context class, whereas with a BeanShell Interpreter, you just let garbage collection deal with it.

Rhino has a JIT compiler, one that unfortunately will not work with Android, since it generates Java bytecode, not Dalvik bytecode. However, Rhino lets you turn that off, by calling setOptimizationLevel() on the Context object with a value of -1 (meaning, in effect, disable all optimizations).

After that, we:

• Create a language scope for our script and inject standard Javascript global objects into that scope

- Wrap our two Bundle objects with Javascript proxies via calls to javaToJS(), then injecting those objects into the scope as _bundle and _result via putProperty() calls
- Execute the script via a call to evaluateString() on the Context object, converting the resulting object into a String and pouring it into the output Bundle

If our InterpreterService has an <intent-filter> for the com.commonsware.abj.interp.RhinoInterpreter action, and so long as we have a Rhino JAR in the project's libs/ directory, InterpreterService can now invoke Javascript.

For example, here are equivalent test methods from RhinoInterpreterTests to the ones shown above for BshInterpreterTests and BeanShell:

```
public void testSimpleResult() {
   Bundle input=new Bundle();
   input.putString(InterpreterService.SCRIPT, "1+2");
   Bundle output=execServiceTest(input);
   assertNull(output.getString("error"));
   assertEquals(output.getString("result"), "3");
}
public void testComplexResult() {
   Bundle input=new Bundle();
   input.putString(InterpreterService.SCRIPT, "_result.putInt(\"foo\", 1+2);");
   Bundle output=execServiceTest(input);
   assertNull(output.getString("error"));
   assertNull(output.getString("error"));
   assertIng(InterpreterService.SCRIPT, "_result.putInt(\"foo\", 1+2);");
   Bundle output=execServiceTest(input);
   assertNull(output.getString("error"));
   assertEquals(output.size()==3);
   assertEquals(output.getInt("foo"), 3);
```

Other JVM Scripting Languages

As mentioned previously, there are many languages that, themselves, are implemented in Java and can be ported to Android, with varying degrees of

difficulty. Many of these languages are fairly esoteric. Some, like JRuby, have evolved to the point where they transcend a simple "scripting language" on Android.

However, there are two other languages worth mentioning, as they are fairly well-known in Java circles: Groovy and Jython.

Groovy

Groovy is perhaps the most popular Java-based language that does not have its roots in some other previous language (Java, Javascript, Python, etc.). Designed in some respects to be a "better Java than Java", Groovy gives you access to Java classes while allowing you to write scripts with dynamic typing, closures, and so forth. Groovy has an extensive community, complete with a fair number of Groovy-specific libraries and frameworks, plus some books on the market.

At the time of this writing, it does not appear that Groovy has been successfully ported to work on Android, though.

Jython

Jython is an implementation of a Python language interpreter in Java. It has been around for quite some time, and gives you Python syntax with access to standard Java classes where needed. While the Jython community is not as well-organized as that of Groovy, there are plenty of books covering the use of Jython.

Jython's momentum has flagged a bit in recent months, in part due to Sun's waning interest in the technology and the departure of Sun employees from the project. One attempt to get Jython working with Android has been shut down, with people steered towards SL4A. It is unclear if others will make subsequent attempts.

PART V – Advanced Development

Reusable Components

In the world of Java outside of Android, reusable components rule the roost. Whether they are simple JARs, are tied in via inversion-of-control (IoC) containers like Spring, or rely on enterprise service buses like Mule, reusable Java components are a huge portion of the overall Java ecosystem. Even full-fledged applications, like Eclipse or NetBeans, are frequently made up of a number of inter-locking components, many of which are available for others to use in their own applications.

In an ideal world, Android will evolve similarly, particularly given its reliance upon the Java programming language. This begs the question: what are the best ways to package code into a reusable component? Or, perhaps more basic: what are the possibilities for making reusable components?

Pick Up a JAR

A Java JAR is simplicity incarnate: a ZIP archive of classes compiled to bytecode. While the JAR as a packaging method is imperfect – dealing with dependencies can be no fun – it is still a very easy way to bundle Java logic into a discrete item that can be uploaded, downloaded, installed, integrated, and used.

Android introduces a seemingly vast number of challenges, though.

The JAR Itself

Packaging up a set of Java code into a JAR is very straightforward, even if that Java code refers to Android APIs. Whether you use the jar command directly, the <jar> task in an Ant script, or the equivalent in Eclipse, you just package up the class files as you normally would.

For example, here is an Ant task that creates a JAR for an Android project:

```
<target name="jar" depends="compile">
    <jar
        destfile="bin/CWAC-MergeAdapter.jar"
        basedir="bin/classes"
    />
</target>
```

To create a project that targets a JAR file, just create a regular Android project (e.g., android create project or the Eclipse new-project wizard), but ignore the options to build an APK. Just compile the code and put it in the JAR.

Note that the JAR will contain Java class files, meaning Java bytecode. The reuser of your JAR will put your JAR into their project (e.g., in the libs/directory), and their project will convert your JAR'd classes into Dalvik bytecode as part of building their APK.

Resources

The JAR can take care of your Java code. And if all you need is Java code, reuse via JAR file is extremely easy.

Android code often uses other things outside of Java code, and that is where the problems crop up. The most prominent of these "other things" are resources: layouts, bitmaps, menus, preferences, custom view attributes, etc.

Android projects expect these resources to be in the project's own res/ directory, and there is no facility to get these resources from anywhere else. That causes some problems.

Packaging and Installing

First, you are going to need to package up the resources you want to ship and to distribute them along with your JAR. You could try to package them in the JAR itself, or you could put the JAR and resources into some larger container, like a ZIP file.

The people reusing your code will need to not only add the JAR to their projects, but also unpack those shipped resources (in their respective resource sets) and put them in their projects as well.

Naming

The act of unpacking those resources and putting them in a project leads to potential naming conflicts. If you have a layout named main.xml and the project already has a layout named main.xml, somebody loses.

Hence, when you write your reusable code, you will want to adopt a naming convention that "ensures" all your resource names are going to be unique. Of course, you have no true way of absolutely ensuring that they will be unique, but you can substantially increase your odds. One approach is to prefix all names with something distinctive for your project.

Note that the "names" will be filenames for file-based resources (layouts, drawables, etc.) and the values of android:name attributes for element-based resources (strings, dimensions, colors, etc.).

Also note that android:id values do not have to be unique, as Android is already set up to support the notion of multiple distinct uses of an ID.

ID Lookup

Complicating matters further is that even if your build process generates an R.java file, the resource identifiers encoded in that file will be different in your project than in the reuser's project. Hence, you cannot refer to resources via R. references, like you would in a regular Android application.

If all your resources have simple integer identifiers, you can use the getIdentifier() method on the Resources class to convert between a string representation of the resource identifier and the actual identifier itself. This uses reflection, and so is not fast. You should strongly consider caching these values to minimize the number of reflection calls.

However, at least one type of resource does not have a simple integer resource identifier – custom view attributes. R.styleable.foo is an int[], not an int. getIdentifier() will only work with an integer resource identifier. Your alternative is to do the reflection directly, or find some existing code that will handle that for you, so you can get at the int[] that you need.

Customizing and Overriding

Bear in mind that the reuser of your project may wish to change some things. Perhaps your bitmaps clash with their desired color scheme. Perhaps you did not ship string resources in all desired translations. Perhaps your context menu needs some more items.

There are two ways you can support such modifications. One is to tell the reusers to modify their copy of the resources they unpacked into their projects. This has the advantage of not requiring any particular code changes on your part. However, it may make support more difficult – perhaps some of the modifications they make accidentally break things, and you may have a tough time answering questions about a modified code base.

The alternative is for you to support setters, custom view attributes, or similar means for reusers to supply their own resource identifiers for you to use. Where they give you one, use it; where they do not, use the resource you shipped. This adds to your project's code but may offer a cleaner customization model for reusers.

Assets

Assets - files in assets/ in an Android project - will have some of the same issues as do resources:

- You need to package and distribute those assets
- Reusers need to unpack those assets into their projects
- You have to take steps to prevent name collisions (e.g., use a directory in assets/ likely to be unique to your project)
- Potentially, reusers may want to use a different asset than the one you shipped

Since assets are accessed by a string name, rather than a generated resource ID, at least you do not have to worry about that particular issue, as you would with a raw resource.

Manifest Entries

If your reusable code ships activities, services, content providers, or broadcast receivers, reusers of your code will need to add entries for your components in their AndroidManifest.xml file. Similarly, if you require certain permissions, or certain hardware features, you will have other manifest entries (e.g., <uses-permission>) that will be needed in a reusing project's manifest.

You can handle this by supplying a sample manifest and providing instructions for what pieces of it need to be merged into the reuser's own manifest.

AIDL Interfaces

If you are shipping a Service in your JAR, and if that Service is supposed to allow remote access via AIDL, you will need to ship the AIDL file(s) with the JAR itself. Those files will be needed by consumers of the Service, even if the developer integrating the JAR itself might not need those files.

This pattern – a JAR containing a remote Service – is probably going to be unusual. More likely, a remote Service will be packaged as part of an application in an APK file, rather than via a JAR.

Permissions

Your code may require certain Android permissions in order to succeed, such as needing WAKE_LOCK to use a WakeLock, or needing INTERNET, or whatever. Unfortunately, you cannot specify permissions in a JAR file, so you will need to make sure that reusers of your JAR correctly add the permissions you require, or find ways to gracefully degrade what you do when those permissions are missing.

You can see if the hosting project requested your permission by using checkPermission() on PackageManager:

If it did not, what you do is up to the way your API is designed and how you want to handle such problems:

• You could throw a RuntimeException. Since developers will encounter this problem during development, this should not harm their production application.

- You could return false or null or some other "didn't work" return value from a method. For example, you could design an API that allows developers to check if a certain feature is available, then return false from that method.
- You could ignore the problem and let the Android-generated RuntimeException handle it. However, this may not be as friendly to your reusers as might throwing your own RuntimeException.
- You could throw a regular checked exception if you prefer (e.g., a custom PermissionMissingException), though that requires extra try/catch blocks in the reuser's code for what should only be a configuration error in their project's manifest.

Other Source Code

You may have Java source beyond the actual reusable classes themselves, such as sample code demonstrating how to reuse the JAR and related files. You will need to consider how you wish to distribute this code, as part of the actual component package (e.g., ZIP) or via separate means (e.g., git repository).

Your API

Your reusable code should be exposing an API for reusing projects to call. Most times, if you are packaging code as a JAR, that API will be in the form of Java classes and methods.

Public versus Non-Public

Those classes and methods will need to be public, as you want the reusing project to reside in its own Java package, not yours.

This means that your black-box test suite (if you have one) and sample code (if you offer any) really should be in separate Java packages as well, so you test and demonstrate the public API. Otherwise, you may accidentally access package-protected classes and methods.
Flexibility versus Maintainability

As with any body of reusable code, you are going to have to consider how much you want to actually implement. The more features and options you provide, the more flexible your reusable code will be for reusers. However, the more features and options you provide, the more complex your reusable code becomes, increasing maintainability costs over time.

This is particularly important when it comes to the public API. Ideally, your public API expands in future releases but does not eliminate or alter the API that came before it. Otherwise, when you ship an updated JAR, your reusers' projects will break, making them unhappy with you and your code.

Documentation

If you are expecting people to reuse your code, you are going to have to tell them how to do that. Usually, these sorts of packages ship documentation with them, sometimes a clone of what is available online. That way, developers can choose the local or hosted edition of the documentation as they wish.

Note that generated documentation (e.g., Javadocs) may still need to be shipped or otherwise supplied to reusers, if you are not providing the source code in the package. Without the source code, reusers cannot regenerate the Javadocs.

Licensing

Your reusable code should be accompanied by adequate licensing information.

Your License

The first license you should worry about is your own. Is your component open source? If so, you will want to ship a license file containing those terms. If your component is not open source, make sure there is a license agreement shipped with the component that lets the reuser know the terms of use.

Bear in mind that not all of your code necessarily has to have the same license. For example, you might have a proprietary license for the component itself, but have sample code be licensed under Apache License 2.0 for easy copy-and-paste.

Third-Party License Impacts

You may need to include licenses for third party libraries that you have to ship along with your own JAR. Obviously, those licenses would need to give you redistribution rights – otherwise, you cannot ship those libraries in the first place.

Sometimes, the third party licenses will impact your project more directly, such as:

- Incorporating a GPL library may require your project to be licensed under the same license
- Adding support for Facebook data may require you to limit your API or require reusers to supply API access keys, since you probably do not have rights to redistribute Facebook data

Pros, Cons, and Other Forms of Navel-Gazing

So, which approach should you take? Just a JAR? A BrodcastReceiver? A service? Or maybe some hybrid of these approaches? Which of these will a "reuser" (developer reusing your component) find best?

Well, that depends.

There are any number of criteria upon which you can judge those three core techniques. Below, we examine a few such criteria, in hopes of

illustrating the benefits and the detriments of each approach, so you can apply the same sort of analysis for the criteria that are important to you.

Richness of API

One criterion is the richness of the API. In other words, how "natural" is it for somebody to reuse your reusable component? Does it feel like it is simply part of the Android API or other Java development? Or does the architecture of the potential component system leave reusers feeling constrained?

For fine-grained interactions, the JAR is tough to beat. You can publish whole class libraries this way, without being limited to certain data types or having to jump through hoops for each method you want to expose. Your component is just another set of Java classes a reuser can code against, or integrate into their layouts, or whatever.

A remote service does let you expose a Java API, but you are constrained to data types that work with AIDL. The Intent "extras" API actually allows a somewhat richer set of data to be passed along with the request, but it is more awkward if you need to get responses back.

You might also consider some form of hybrid, putting your own rich Java API wrapper around the service AIDL or Intent-based IPC scheme. This gives your reusers the best of both worlds.

Code Duplication

With space at a premium on some devices, minimizing code duplication may be worth considering. An ordinary JAR, used by several applications, must be bundled with each of those applications – there is no shared classpath for common JARs. As a result, one JAR can wind up consuming several times its "natural" size in actual footprint, if several copies are baked into several applications.

Conversely, a service – whether accessed via AIDL or by a set of Intents – can support several applications while only being installed once.

Ease of Initial Deployment

Unfortunately, Android's packaging mechanism runs a bit counter to the benefits of a single service described in the previous section.

Applications are installed on a per-APK basis. There is no "package manager" in the sense you see in Linux, or a .msi file like you might see on Windows, that let's you bundle up several components to be installed at once.

A remote service intended for use among several applications must be packaged and deployed as its own application. End users have to know that they need to not only install the main application but also install any support services that are not already installed. This can cause a fair amount of confusion, because end users are used to installing and running applications, not installing applications and ignoring them (since they are not meant for direct use). Also, end users are used to installing applications and having an associated icon appear in their launcher, yet there may not be a point for a remote service to offer any sort of UI, let alone appear in the launcher.

Until this issue is rectified in one form or fashion, it will generally be simpler to deploy a JAR baked into the application reusing it, whether that JAR exposes a class library or a local service.

Intended Form of Integration

Most of the time, reusable components are meant to be specifically reused by other developers, who code to an API, whether that API is expressed as a Java class or an IPC method or an Intent to be raised. However, Android does offer an introspection engine, allowing one activity to find other activities that can perform useful operations upon a piece of content. For example, you might create a PDF file viewer, since none are built into Android; Android email clients might then be able to use an Intent to trigger your activity to view a PDF attachment. To make this work, though, you need to implement a BroadcastReceiver, so you can provide your functionality to other applications this way. The benefit is that you can add value to existing applications without those applications specifically integrating your code.

A Private Library

The "r6" version of the Android SDK introduced the "library project". This offers a form of reuse, to share a chunk of code between projects. It is specifically aimed at developers or teams creating multiple applications from the same code base. Perhaps the most popular occurrence of this pattern is the "paid/free" application pair: two applications, one offered for free, one with richer functionality that requires a payment. Via a library project, the common portions of those two applications can be consolidated, even if those "common portions" include things like resources.

The library project support is integrated into Eclipse, though you can create library projects for use via Ant as well.

Creating a Library Project

An Android library project, in many respects, looks like a regular Android project. It has source code and resources. It has a manifest. It supports third-party JAR files (e.g., libs/).

What it does not do, though, is build an APK file. Instead, it represents a basket of programming assets that the Android build tools know how to blend in with a regular Android projects.

To create a library project in Eclipse, start by creating a normal Android project. Then, in the project properties window (e.g., right-click on the project and choose Properties), in the Android area, check the "Is Library" checkbox. Click [Apply], and you are done.

To create a library project for use with Ant, you can use the android create lib-project command. This has the net effect of putting an android.library=true entry in your project's default.properties file.

Using a Library Project

Once you have a library project, you can attach it to a regular Android project, so the regular Android project has access to everything in the library.

To do this in Eclipse, go into the project properties window (e.g., right-click on the project and choose Properties). Click on the Android entry in the list on the left, then click the [Add] button in the Library area. This will let you browse to the directory where your library project resides. You can add multiple libraries and control their ordering with the [Up] and [Down] buttons, or remove a library with the [Remove] button.

For developing using Ant, you can use android update lib-project command. This adds an entry like android.library.reference.1=... to your project's default.properties file, where ... is the relative path to your library project. You can add several such libraries, controlling their ordering via the numeric suffix at the end of each property name (e.g., 1 in the previous example).

Now, if you build the main project, the Android build tools will:

- Include the src/ directories of the main project and all of the libraries in the source being compiled.
- Include all of the resources of the projects, with the caveat that if more than one project defines the same resource (e.g., res/layout/main.xml), the highest priority project's resource is

included. The main project is top priority, and the priority of the remainder are determined by their order as defined in Eclipse or default.properties.

This means you can safely reference R. constants (e.g., R.layout.main) in your library source code, as at compile time it will use the value from the main project's generated R class(es).

Limitations of Library Projects

While library projects are useful for code organization and reuse, they do have their limits, such as:

- As noted above, if more than one project (main plus libraries) defines the same resource, the higher-priority project's copy gets used. Generally, that is a good thing, as it means that the main project can replace resources defined by a library (e.g., change icons). However, it does mean that two libraries might collide. It is important to keep your resource names distinct, a concept touched upon in greater detail later in this chapter.
- While you can define entries in the manifest file for a library, at present, they do not appear to be used.
- AIDL files defined in a library will not be picked up by the main project.
- While resources from libraries are put into the main project's APK, assets defined in a library's assets/ directory are not.
- One library cannot depend on another library. You can either produce or consume a library, but not both.

Picking Up a Parcel

The author of this book has also started The Android Parcel Project, a set of conventions and tools to help create reusable Android components. The goal is to make it just a bit easier to create an Android library project that

can successfully be reused by third party developers, once distributed in some form.

Binary-Only Library Projects

Android library projects are designed for distributing source code. That may or may not be palatable in all cases.

You can create a binary-only library project via the following steps:

- 1. Create an Android library project, with your source code and such this is your master project, from which you will create a version of the library project for distribution
- 2. Compile the Java source (e.g., ant compile) and turn it into a JAR file
- 3. Create a distribution Android library project, with the same resources as the master library project, but no source code
- 4. Put the JAR file in the distribution Android library project's libs/ directory

The resulting distribution Android library project will have everything a main project will need, just without the source code.

Note that if you use resources, you will need to take extra steps with a binary-only library project to deal with the resource identifiers, a topic covered in the next section.

Resource Naming Conventions

As mentioned previously, resources in multiple libraries might collide with one another, particularly for obvious names (e.g., res/layout/main.xml, the app_name string resource). You need to take steps to help minimize the odds of this occurring with your reusable component.

Resource Name Prefixes

The simple answer is to append a prefix to the front of all resource names. Here, "resource names" refers to:

- The filenames of resources where the resource itself is a file (e.g., the filename of a layout resource)
- The names of resources where more than one resource resides in an XML file (e.g., the name attribute of a string resource)

Bear in mind the resource naming limits (letters, numbers, underscores; cannot start with a number).

Hence, instead of res/layout/main.xml, you might have res/layout/cwac_touchlist_main.xml.

Ideally, we would use a prefix that is based on package-style naming conventions, for minimal chance of collision. However, com_commonsware_cwac_touchlist_main.xml would be painful to type. Also, since the "collision space" is merely the world of reusable libraries, not the Android Market, feel free to choose something shorter that is unlikely to be taken by anyone else.

Also, you do not need to prefix android:id values (e.g., in layout files), as Android assumes that there may be multiple definitions of those values.

Eventually, the Android Parcel Project will supply a lint-style utility to help you validate that you are applying a prefix for all required resources.

Runtime Resource ID Lookups

For library projects distributed with full source code, just applying the prefix to all resources is sufficient.

However, if you are distributing a binary-only library project, you will run into a problem. Your library-compiled code will use a generated ID that will

differ, in all likelihood, from the ID generated by the main project from the combined set of resources. Hence, if you simply use R.layout.cwac_touchlist_main (or the like) in your code, you will wind up with missing or invalid resources at runtime – the value that the javac compiler inlined in your class will be the wrong value.

Instead, we need to look up those resource IDs at runtime. There are two ways to do this:

- Use the getIdentifier() method on a Resources object, typically obtained via getResources() on some Context. This uses reflection under the covers, and since that can be slow, it is a really good idea to cache the results of these lookups. And, getIdentifier() does not support all types of identifiers – notably, it does not work with custom attributes in custom widgets.
- 2. Use the ParcelHelper class supplied by the Android Parcel Project.

This is distributed in a plain JAR file (CWAC-Parcel.jar), available from a GitHub repository.

You need to create an instance of ParcelHelper, supplying your prefix and a Context. Then, when you need a resource ID, you can call methods like:

- getLayoutId()
- getMenuId()
- getDrawableId()
- and so forth

These lookups are a bit expensive, since they involve reflection. Hence, ParcelHelper caches them on your behalf, to improve performance.

For example, here is some code to initialize a ParcelHelper, then inflate a layout named main (i.e., res/layout/cwac_colormixer_main.xml):

```
parcel=new ParcelHelper("cwac-colormixer", getContext());
((Activity)getContext())
```

```
553
```

```
.getLayoutInflater()
.inflate(parcel.getLayoutId("main"), this, true);
```

(note that, for backwards compatibility with a previous edition of the Android Parcel Project, you can supply a dash in a prefix, which will be converted to an underscore automatically)

Parcel Distribution

Android library projects designed to be reusable components (parcels) can just be packaged as ZIP files for distribution, much as Google did with the License Validation Library. The more immediate question is, what should be distributed?

- You will need to decide whether to distribute source code or go the binary-only library project route
- You may wish to consider having some sort of sample project included in the distribution (e.g., a demo/ subproject referencing the parent project as a library)
- You should have some sort of license (e.g., LICENSE file with Apache License 2.0 terms), so developers know the "rules of the game" for reusing your component
- You may wish to include documentation, or perhaps that can just be on a Web site
- Be sure to include any dependent JARs (e.g., in the library project's libs/ directory), or ensure potential reusers know where to get the JARs your code requires

Testing

Presumably, you will want to test your code, beyond just playing around with it yourself by hand.

To that end, Android includes the JUnit test framework in the SDK, along with special test classes that will help you build test cases that exercise Android components, like activities and services. Even better, Android has "gone the extra mile" and can pre-generate your test harness for you, to make it easier for you to add in your own tests.

This chapter assumes you have some familiarity with JUnit, though you certainly do not need to be an expert. You can learn more about JUnit at the JUnit site, from various books, and from the JUnit Yahoo forum.

You Get What They Give You

From the command line, you use android create project to create a regular Android project. To create a project designed to test another project – what we will call a "test project" – you use the android create test-project command. From Eclipse, you can create a test project using the appropriate wizard. You will need to tell it which project to test, where you want the test project to reside, etc.

An Android test project is complete set of Android project artifacts: manifest, source directories, resources, etc. Much of its structure is identical to a regular test project. In fact, the generated test project is all ready to go, other than not having any tests of significance. If you build and install your main project (onto an emulator or device), then build and install the test project, you will be able to run unit tests. For example, the Contacts/Spinners project has a tests/ subdirectory containing a test project set up to test various facets of the Spinners application.

Android ships with a very rudimentary JUnit runner, called InstrumentationTestRunner. Since this class resides in the Android environment (emulator or device), you need to invoke the runner to run your tests on the emulator or device itself. To do this, you can run the following command from a console:

```
adb shell am instrument -w com.commonsware.android.contacts.spinners.tests/android.test.InstrumentationTest Runner
```

In this case, we are instructing Android to run all the available test cases for the com.commonsware.android.contacts.spinners package, as this chapter uses some tests implemented on the Contacts/Spinners sample project.

If you were to run this on your own project, substituting in your package name, with just the auto-generated test files, you should see results akin to:

```
com.commonsware.android.contacts.spinners.ContactsDemoTest:.
Test results for InstrumentationTestRunner=.
Time: 0.61
OK (1 test)
```

The first line will differ, based upon your package and the name of your project's initial activity, but the rest should be the same, showing that a single test was run, successfully.

Of course, this is only the beginning.

Erecting More Scaffolding

Here is the source code for the test case that Android automatically generates for you:

```
package com.commonsware.android.contacts.spinners;
import android.test.ActivityInstrumentationTestCase;
 * This is a simple framework for a test of an Application. See
 * {@link android.test.ApplicationTestCase ApplicationTestCase} for more
information on
 * how to write and extend Application tests.
 * 
 * To run this test, you can type:
 * adb shell am instrument -w \setminus
 * -e class com.commonsware.android.contacts.spinners.ContactsDemoTest \
com.commonsware.android.contacts.spinners.tests/android.test.InstrumentationTest
Runner
 */
public class ContactsDemoTest extends
ActivityInstrumentationTestCase<ContactSpinners> {
 public ContactsDemoTest() {
 super("com.commonsware.android.contacts.spinners", ContactSpinners.class);
 }
```

As you can see, there are no actual test methods. Instead, we have an ActivityInstrumentationTestCase implementation named ContactsDemoTest. The class name was generated by adding Test to the end of the main activity (ContactsDemo) of the project.

In the next section, we will examine ActivityInstrumentationTestCase more closely and see how you can use it to, as the name suggests, test your activities.

However, you are welcome to create ordinary JUnit test cases in Android – after all, this is just JUnit, merely augmented by Android. So, you can create classes like this:

```
package com.commonsware.android.contacts.spinners;
import junit.framework.TestCase;
public class SillyTest extends TestCase {
   protected void setUp() throws Exception {
      super.setUp();
      // do initialization here, run on every test method
   }
   protected void tearDown() throws Exception {
      // do termination here, run on every test method
      super.tearDown();
   }
   public void testNonsense() {
      assertTrue(1==1);
   }
}
```

There is nothing Android-specific in this test case. It is simply standard JUnit, albeit a bit silly.

You can also create test suites, to bundle up sets of tests for execution. Here, though, if you want, you can take advantage of a bit of Android magic: TestSuiteBuilder. TestSuiteBuilder uses reflection to find test cases that need to be run, as shown below:

Here, we are telling Android to find all test cases located in FullSuite's package (com.commonsware.android.contacts.spinners) and all sub-packages, and to build a TestSuite out of those contents.

```
558
```

A test suite may or may not be necessary for you. The command shown above to execute tests will execute any test cases it can find for the package specified on the command line. If you want to limit the scope of a test run, though, you can use the -e switch to specify a test case or suite to run:

```
adb shell am instrument -e class
com.commonsware.android.contacts.spinners.ContactsDemoTest -w
com.commonsware.android.contacts.spinners.tests/android.test.InstrumentationTest
Runner
```

Here, we indicate we only want to run ContactsDemoTest, not all test cases found in the package.

Testing Real Stuff

While ordinary JUnit tests are certainly helpful, they are still fairly limited, since much of your application logic may be tied up in activities, services, and the like.

To that end, Android has a series of TestCase classes you can extend designed specifically to assist in testing these sorts of components.

ActivityInstrumentationTestCase

The test case created by Android's SDK tools, ContactsDemoTest in our example, is an ActivityInstrumentationTestCase. This class will run your activity for you, giving you access to the Activity object itself. You can then:

- Access your widgets
- Invoke public and package-private methods (more on this below)
- Simulate key events

Of course, the automatically-generated ActivityInstrumentationTestCase does none of that, since it does not know much about your activity. Below you will find an augmented version of ContactsDemoTest that does a little bit more:

```
package com.commonsware.android.contacts.spinners;
import android.test.ActivityInstrumentationTestCase;
import android.widget.ListView;
import android.widget.Spinner;
public class ContactsDemoTest
  extends ActivityInstrumentationTestCase<ContactSpinners> {
  private ListView list=null;
 private Spinner spinner=null;
  public ContactsDemoTest() {
   super("com.commonsware.android.contacts.spinners",
          ContactSpinners.class);
  }
 @Override
 protected void setUp() throws Exception {
   super.setUp();
   ContactSpinners activity=getActivity();
   list=(ListView)activity.findViewById(android.R.id.list);
    spinner=(Spinner)activity.findViewById(R.id.spinner);
  }
  public void testSpinnerCount() {
   assertTrue(spinner.getAdapter().getCount()==3);
  public void testListDefaultCount() {
   assertTrue(list.getAdapter().getCount()>0);
  }
```

Here are the steps to making use of ActivityInstrumentationTestCase:

- Extend the class to create your own implementation. Since ActivityInstrumentationTestCase is a generic, you need to supply the name of the activity being tested (e.g., ActivityInstrumentationTestCase<ContactsDemo>).
- 2. In the constructor, when you chain to the superclass, supply the name of the package of the activity plus the activity class itself. You can optionally supply a third parameter, a boolean indicating if the activity should be launched in touch mode or not.
- In setUp(), use getActivity() to get your hands on your Activity object, already typecast to the proper type (e.g., ContactsDemo)

courtesy of our generic. You can also at this time access any widgets, since the activity is up and running by this point.

- 4. If needed, clean up stuff in tearDown(), no different than with any other JUnit test case.
- 5. Implement test methods to exercise your activity. In this case, we simply confirm that the Spinner has three items in its drop-down list and there is at least one contact loaded into the ListView by default. You could, however, use sendKeys() and the like to simulate user input.

If you are looking at your emulator or device while this test is running, you will actually see the activity launched on-screen. ActivityInstrumentationTestCase creates a true running copy of the activity. This means you get access to everything you need; on the other hand, it does mean that the test case runs slowly, since the activity needs to be created and destroyed for each test method in the test case. If your activity does a lot on startup and/or shutdown, this may make running your tests a bit sluggish.

Note that your ActivityInstrumentationTestCase resides in the same package as the Activity it is testing - ContactsDemoTest and ContactsDemo are both in com.commonsware.android.contacts.spinners, for example. This allows ContactsDemoTest to access both public and package-private methods and data members. ContactsDemoTest still cannot access private methods, though. This allows ActivityInstrumentationTestCase to behave in a whitebox (or at least gray-box) fashion, inspecting the insides of the tested activities in addition to testing the public API.

Now, despite the fact that Android's own tools create an ActivityInstrumentationTestCase subclass for you, that class is officially deprecated. They advise using ActivityInstrumentationTestCase2 instead, which offers the same basic functionality, with a few extras, such as being able to specify the Intent that is used to launch the activity being tested. This is good for testing search providers, for example.

AndroidTestCase

For tests that only need access to your application resources, you can skip some of the overhead of ActivityInstrumentationTestCase and use AndroidTestCase. In AndroidTestCase, you are given a Context and not much more, so anything you can reach from a Context is testable, but individual activities or services are not.

While this may seem somewhat useless, bear in mind that a lot of the static testing of your activities will come in the form of testing the layout: are the widgets identified properly, are they positioned properly, does the focus work, etc. As it turns out, none of that actually needs an Activity object – so long as you can get the inflated View hierarchy, you can perform those sorts of tests.

For example, here is an AndroidTestCase implementation, ContactsDemoBaseTest:

```
package com.commonsware.android.contacts.spinners;
import android.test.AndroidTestCase;
import android.view.LayoutInflater;
import android.view.View;
import android.view.ViewGroup;
import android.widget.ListView;
import android.widget.Spinner;
public class ContactsDemoBaseTest extends AndroidTestCase {
 private ListView list=null;
 private Spinner spinner=null;
 private ViewGroup root=null;
 @Override
 protected void setUp() throws Exception {
    super.setUp();
   LayoutInflater inflater=LayoutInflater.from(getContext());
   root=(ViewGroup)inflater.inflate(R.layout.main, null);
   root.measure(480, 320);
   root.layout(0, 0, 480, 320);
   list=(ListView)root.findViewById(android.R.id.list);
    spinner=(Spinner)root.findViewById(R.id.spinner);
  }
```

```
public void testExists() {
    assertNotNull(list);
    assertNotNull(spinner);
}
public void testRelativePosition() {
    assertTrue(list.getTop()>=spinner.getBottom());
    assertTrue(list.getLeft()==spinner.getLeft());
    assertTrue(list.getRight()==spinner.getRight());
}
```

Most of the complicated work is performed in setUp():

- Inflate our layout using a LayoutInflater and the Context supplied by getContext()
- 2. Measure and lay out the widgets in the inflated View hierarchy in this case, we lay them out on a 480x320 screen
- 3. Access the individual widgets to be tested

At that point, we can test static information on the widgets, but we cannot cause them to change very easily (e.g., we cannot simulate keypresses). In the case of ContactsDemoBaseTest, we simply confirm the widgets exist and are laid out as expected. We could use FocusFinder to test whether focus changes from one widget to the next should work as expected. We could ensure our resources exist under their desired names, test to see if our fonts exist in our assets, or anything else we can accomplish with just a Context.

Since we are not creating and destroying activities with each test case, these tests should run substantially faster.

Other Alternatives

Android also offers various other test case base classes designed to assist in testing Android components, such as:

• ServiceTestCase, used for testing services, as you might expect given the name

- ActivityUnitTestCase, a TestCase that creates the Activity (like ActivityInstrumentationTestCase), but does not fully connect it to the environment, so you can supply a mock Context, a mock Application, and other mock objects to test out various scenarios
- ApplicationTestCase, for testing custom Application subclasses

Monkeying Around

Independent from the JUnit system is the Monkey.

The Monkey is a test program that simulates random user input. It is designed for "bash testing", confirming that no matter what the user does, the application will not crash. The application may have odd results – random input entered into a Twitter client may, indeed, post that random input to Twitter. The Monkey does not test to make sure that results of random input make sense; it only tests to make sure random input does not blow up the program.

You can run the Monkey by setting up your initial starting point (e.g., the main activity in your application) on your device or emulator, then running a command like this:

adb shell monkey -p com.commonsware.android.database -v --throttle 100 600

Working from right to left, we are asking for 600 simulated events, throttled to run every 100 milliseconds. We want to see a list of the invoked events (-v) and we want to throw out any event that might cause the Monkey to leave our application, as determined by the application's package (-p com.commonsware.android.contacts.spinners).

The Monkey will simulate keypresses (both QWERTY and specialized hardware keys, like the volume controls), D-pad/trackball moves, and sliding the keyboard open or closed. Note that the latter may cause your emulator some confusion, as the emulator itself does not itself actually rotate, so you may end up with your screen appearing in landscape while

the emulator is still, itself, portrait. Just rotate the emulator a couple of times (e.g., <Ctrl>-<F12>) to clear up the problem.

For playing with a Monkey, the above command works fine. However, if you want to regularly test your application this way, you may need some measure of repeatability. After all, the particular set of input events that trigger your crash may not come up all that often, and without that repeatable scenario, it will be difficult to repair the bug, let alone test that the repair worked.

To deal with this, the Monkey offers the -s switch, where you provide a seed for the random number generator. By default, the Monkey creates its own seed, giving totally random results. If you supply the seed, while the sequence of events is random, it is random for that seed – repeatedly using the same seed will give you the same events. If you can arrange to detect a crash and know what seed was used to create that crash, you may well be able to reproduce the crash.

There are many more Monkey options, to control the mix of event types, to generate profiling reports as tests are run, and so on. The Monkey documentation in the SDK's Developer's Guide covers all of that and more.

Getting Ready for Production

Of course, all of this programming you have done will be a bit silly if you only have debug applications running on an emulator, or perhaps your own phone. Somewhere along the line, you may want others to run your applications as well, perhaps by buying them from you.

This chapter focuses on the steps you will need to take to get your application ready to be distributed in a production form, through the Android Market and elsewhere.

Making Your Mark

Perhaps the most important step in preparing your application for production distribution is signing it with a production signing key. While mistakes here may not be immediately apparent, they can have significant long-term impacts, particularly when it comes time for you to distribute an update.

Role of Code Signing

There are many reasons why Android wants you to sign your application with a production key. Here are perhaps the top three:

1. It will help distinguish your production applications from debug versions of the same applications

- 2. Multiple applications signed with the same key can access each other's private files, if they are set up to use a shared user ID in their manifests
- 3. You can only update an application if it has a signature from the same digital certificate

The latter one is the most important for you, if you plan on offering updates of your application. If you sign version 1.0 of your application with one key, and you sign version 2.0 of your application with another key, version 2.0 will not install over top version 1.0 – it will fail with a certificate-match error.

What Happens In Debug Mode

Of course, you may be wondering how you got this far in life without worrying about keys and certificates and signatures (unless you are using Google Maps, in which case you experienced a bit of this when you got your API key).

The Android build process, whether through Ant or Eclipse, creates a debug key for you automatically. That key is automatically applied when you create a debug version of your application (e.g., ant debug or ant install). This all happens behind the scenes, so it is very possible for you to go through weeks and months of development and not encounter this problem.

In fact, the most likely place where you might encounter this problem is in a distributed development environment, such as an open source project. There, you might have encountered problem #3 from the previous section, where a debug application compiled by one team member cannot install over the debug application from another team member, since they do not share a common debug key. You may have run into similar problems just on your own if you use multiple development machines (e.g., a desktop in the home office and a notebook for when you are on the road delivering Android developer training).

So, developing in debug mode is easy. It is mostly when you move to production that things get a bit more interesting.

Creating a Production Signing Key

To create a production signing key, you will need to use keytool. This comes with the Java SDK, and so it should be available to you already.

The keytool utility manages the contents of a "keystore", which can contain one or more keys. Each "keystore" has a password for the store itself, and keys can also have their own individual passwords. You will need to supply these passwords later on when signing an application with the key.

Here is an example of running keytool:

```
mmurphy@opti755:~$ keytool -genkey -v -keystore cw-release.keystore -alias cw-re
lease -keyalg RSA -validity 10000
```

```
Figure 109. Running keytool
```

The parameters used here are:

- -genkey, to indicate we want to create a new key
- -v, to be verbose about the key creation process
- -keystore, to indicate what keystore we are manipulating (cwrelease.keystore), which will be created if it does not already exist
- -alias, to indicate what human-readable name we want to give the key (cw-release)
- -keyalg, to indicate what public-key encryption algorithm to be using for this key (RSA)
- -validity, to indicate how long this key should be valid, where 10,000 days or more is recommended

The length of the validity is important. Once your key expires, you can no longer use it for signing new applications, which means once the key expires, you cannot update existing Android applications. 10,000 days, presumably, is beyond the expected lifespan of this signing mechanism. Also, the Android Market requires your key to be valid beyond October 22, 2033.

If you run the above command, you will be prompted for a number of pieces of information. If you have ever created an SSL certificate, the prompts will be familiar:

```
mmurphy@opti755:~$ keytool -genkey -v -keystore cw-release.keystore -alias cw-re
lease -keyalg RSA -validity 10000
Enter keystore password:
Re-enter new password:
What is your first and last name?
  [Unknown]: Mark Murphy
What is the name of your organizational unit?
  [Unknown]:
What is the name of your organization?
  [Unknown]: CommonsWare, LLC
What is the name of your City or Locality?
  [Unknown]:
What is the name of your State or Province?
  [Unknown]: PA
What is the two-letter country code for this unit?
  [Unknown]: US
Is CN=Mark Murphy, OU=Unknown, O="CommonsWare, LLC", L=Unknown, ST=PA, C=US corr
ect?
  [no]: yes
Generating 1,024 bit RSA key pair and self-signed certificate (SHAlwithRSA) with
 a validity of 10,000 days
        for: CN=Mark Murphy, OU=Unknown, O="CommonsWare, LLC", L=Unknown, ST=PA,
 C=US
Enter key password for <cw-release>
       (RETURN if same as keystore password):
Re-enter new password:
[Storing cw-release.keystore]
mmurphy@opti755:~$
```

Figure 110. Results of running keytool

You will note that this is a self-signed certificate – you do not have to purchase a certificate from Verisign or anyone. These keys are for creating immutable identity, but are not for creating confirmed identity. In other words, these certificates do not prove you are such-and-so person, but can prove that the same key signed two different APKs.

In theory, you only need to do the above steps once per business.

Signing with the Production Key

To sign an application with a production key, you must first create an unsigned version of the APK. By default (e.g., ant debug), you get an APK signed with the debug key. Instead, specifically build a release version (e.g., ant release), which should give you an -unsigned.apk file in your project's bin/directory.

Next, to apply the key, you will use the jarsigner tool. Like keytool, jarsigner comes with the Java SDK, and so you should already have it on your development machine.

Here is an example of running jarsigner:

```
mmurphy@opti755:~/stuff/CommonsWare/projects/vidtry$ jarsigner -verbose -keystor
e ~/cw-release.keystore bin/vidtry-unsigned.apk cw-release
Figure 111. Running jarsigner
```

In this case, the parameters supplied are:

- -verbose, to explain what is going on as the program runs
- -keystore, to indicate where the keystore that contains the production key resides (~/cw-release.keystore)
- the path to the APK to sign (bin/vidtry-unsigned.apk)
- the alias of the key in the keystore to apply (cw-release)

At this point, jarsigner will prompt you for the keystore's password (and the key's password if you supplied a distinct password for it to keytool), then it will apply the signature:

```
mmurphy@opti755:~/stuff/CommonsWare/projects/vidtry$ jarsigner -verbose -keystor
e ~/cw-release.keystore bin/vidtry-unsigned.apk cw-release
Enter Passphrase for keystore:
  adding: META-INF/MANIFEST.MF
  adding: META-INF/CW-RELEA.SF
  adding: META-INF/CW-RELEA.RSA
  signing: res/drawable/btn media player.9.png
  signing: res/drawable/btn media player disabled.9.png
  signing: res/drawable/btn media player disabled selected.9.png
  signing: res/drawable/btn media player pressed.9.png
  signing: res/drawable/btn media player selected.9.png
  signing: res/drawable/ic media pause.png
  signing: res/drawable/ic media play.png
  signing: res/drawable/media button background.xml
  signing: res/layout/main.xml
  signing: AndroidManifest.xml
  signing: resources.arsc
  signing: classes.dex
mmurphy@opti755:~/stuff/CommonsWare/projects/vidtry$
```

Figure 112. Results of running jarsigner

Next, you should test the signature by jarsigner -verify -verbose -certs on the same APK file, which now has a signature. You will get output akin to:

1090 Sat Aug 08 13:56:38 EDT 2009 META-INF/MANIFEST.MF 1211 Sat Aug 08 13:56:38 EDT 2009 META-INF/CW-RELEA.SF 946 Sat Aug 08 13:56:38 EDT 2009 META-INF/CW-RELEA.RSA sm 1683 Sat Aug 08 13:54:46 EDT 2009 res/drawable/btn_media_player.9.png X.509, CN=Mark Murphy, OU=Unknown, O="CommonsWare, LLC", L=Unknown, ST=PA, C=US [certificate is valid from 8/8/09 1:49 PM to 12/24/36 12:49 PM] sm 743 Sat Aug 08 13:54:46 EDT 2009 res/drawable/btn_media_player_disabled.9.png X.509, CN=Mark Murphy, OU=Unknown, O="CommonsWare, LLC", L=Unknown, ST=PA, C=US [certificate is valid from 8/8/09 1:49 PM to 12/24/36 12:49 PM] sm 1030 Sat Aug 08 13:54:46 EDT 2009 res/drawable/btn_media_player_disabled_selected.9.png X.509, CN=Mark Murphy, OU=Unknown, O="CommonsWare, LLC", L=Unknown, ST=PA, C=US [certificate is valid from 8/8/09 1:49 PM to 12/24/36 12:49 PM] sm 1220 Sat Aug 08 13:54:46 EDT 2009 res/drawable/btn media player pressed.9.png X.509, CN=Mark Murphy, OU=Unknown, O="CommonsWare, LLC", L=Unknown, ST=PA, C=US [certificate is valid from 8/8/09 1:49 PM to 12/24/36 12:49 PM] sm 1471 Sat Aug 08 13:54:46 EDT 2009 res/drawable/btn_media_player_selected.9.png

X.509, CN=Mark Murphy, OU=Unknown, O="CommonsWare, LLC", L=Unknown, ST=PA, C=US [certificate is valid from 8/8/09 1:49 PM to 12/24/36 12:49 PM] sm 576 Sat Aug 08 13:54:46 EDT 2009 res/drawable/ic_media_pause.png X.509, CN=Mark Murphy, OU=Unknown, O="CommonsWare, LLC", L=Unknown, ST=PA, C=US [certificate is valid from 8/8/09 1:49 PM to 12/24/36 12:49 PM] sm 938 Sat Aug 08 13:54:46 EDT 2009 res/drawable/ic media play.png X.509, CN=Mark Murphy, OU=Unknown, O="CommonsWare, LLC", L=Unknown, ST=PA, C=US [certificate is valid from 8/8/09 1:49 PM to 12/24/36 12:49 PM] sm 1176 Sat Aug 08 13:54:46 EDT 2009 res/drawable/media_button_background.xml X.509, CN=Mark Murphy, OU=Unknown, O="CommonsWare, LLC", L=Unknown, ST=PA, C=US [certificate is valid from 8/8/09 1:49 PM to 12/24/36 12:49 PM] sm 2668 Sat Aug 08 13:54:46 EDT 2009 res/layout/main.xml X.509, CN=Mark Murphy, OU=Unknown, O="CommonsWare, LLC", L=Unknown, ST=PA, C=US [certificate is valid from 8/8/09 1:49 PM to 12/24/36 12:49 PM] sm 1368 Sat Aug 08 13:54:46 EDT 2009 AndroidManifest.xml X.509, CN=Mark Murphy, OU=Unknown, O="CommonsWare, LLC", L=Unknown, ST=PA, C=US [certificate is valid from 8/8/09 1:49 PM to 12/24/36 12:49 PM] sm 2888 Sat Aug 08 13:54:46 EDT 2009 resources.arsc X.509, CN=Mark Murphy, OU=Unknown, O="CommonsWare, LLC", L=Unknown, ST=PA, C=US [certificate is valid from 8/8/09 1:49 PM to 12/24/36 12:49 PM] sm 16860 Sat Aug 08 13:54:46 EDT 2009 classes.dex X.509, CN=Mark Murphy, OU=Unknown, O="CommonsWare, LLC", L=Unknown, ST=PA, C=US [certificate is valid from 8/8/09 1:49 PM to 12/24/36 12:49 PM] s = signature was verified m = entry is listed in manifest k = at least one certificate was found in keystore i = at least one certificate was found in identity scope jar verified.

In particular, you want to make sure that the name of the key is what you expect and is not "Android Debug", which would indicate the APK was signed with the debug key instead of the production key.

At this point, you should also rename the APK, at least to remove the nowerroneous -unsigned portion of the filename.

Now, you have a production-signed APK, ready for distribution...or, hopefully, ready for more testing, *then* distribution.

Two Types of Key Security

There are two facets to securing your production key that you need to think about:

- 1. You need to make sure nobody steals your production keystore and its password. If somebody does, they could publish replacement versions of your applications since they are signed with the same key, Android will assume the replacements are legitimate.
- 2. You need to make sure you do not lose your production keystore and its password. Otherwise, even *you* will be unable to publish replacement versions of your applications.

For solo developers, the latter scenario is more probable. There already have been cases where developers had to rebuild their development machine and wound up with new keys, locking themselves out from updating their own applications. As with everything involving computers, having a solid backup regimen is highly recommended.

For teams, the former scenario may be more likely. If more than one person needs to be able to sign the application, the production keystore will need to be shared, possibly even stored in the revision control system for the project. The more people who have access to the keystore, the more likely it is somebody will wind up doing something evil with it. This is particularly true for projects with public revision control systems, such as open source projects – developers might not think of the implications of putting the production keystore out for people to access.

Related Keys

Switching from debug to production keys may have additional ramifications for your application.

For example, if you are integrating Google Maps, you no doubt obtained a Maps API key to use with your application. As it turns out, you most likely got an API that corresponds to your debug signing key. For production, you will need a different Maps API key, one that corresponds to your production signing key.

This will likely be a significant pain for you, because the Maps API key goes in the source code, meaning the source code is now dependent upon how it is being signed. You may wish to apply some automation to this, such as building custom Ant tasks that switches between debug and production Maps API keys in your source code depending on how you are building the project.

In principle, the same concept may extend to other keys for other Android development add-ons, though none are known at this time.

Get Ready To Go To Market

While being able to sign your application reliably with a production key is necessary for publishing a production application, it is not sufficient. Particularly for the Android Market, there are other things you must do, or should do, as part of getting ready to release your application.

Versioning

As was described in *The Busy Coder's Guide to Android Development*, you need to supply android:versionCode and android:versionName attributes in your <manifest> element in your AndroidManifest.xml file. The value of android:versionName is what users and prospective users will see in terms of the label associated with your application version (e.g., "1.0.1", "System V",

"Loquacious Llama"). More important, though, is the value of android:versionCode, which needs to be an integer increasing with each release – that is how Android tells whether some edition of your APK is an upgrade over what the user currently has.

You also need to specify the minSdkVersion of your application:

```
<manifest xmlns:android="http://schemas.android.com/apk/res/android"
package="com.commonsware.android.search">
<uses-sdk minSdkVersion="2" />
...
</manifest>
```

Package Name

You also need to make sure that your package name – as denoted by the package attribute of the root <manifest> element – is going to be unique. If somebody tries downloading your application onto their device, and some other application is already installed with that same package name, your application will fail to install.

Since the manifest's package name also provides the base Java package for your project, and since you hopefully named your Java packages with something based off of a domain name you own or something else demonstrably unique, this should not cause a huge problem.

Also, bear in mind that your package name must be unique across all applications on the Android Market, should you choose to distribute that way.

Icon and Label

Your <application> element needs to specify android:icon and android:name attributes, to supply the name and icon that will be associated with the application in the My Applications list on the device and related screens. Your activities will inherit the icon if they do not specify icons of their own.

If you have graphic design skills, the Android developer site has guidelines for creating icons that will match other icons in the system.

Logging

In production, try to minimize unnecessary logging, particularly at low logging levels (e.g., debug). Remember that even if Android does not actually log the information, whatever processing is involved in making the Log.d() call will still be done, unless you arrange to skip the processing somehow. You could outright delete the extraneous logging calls, or wrap them in an if() test:

```
if (!SomeClass.IS_DEVELOPMENT) {
  Log.d(TAG, "This is what happened");
}
```

Here, IS_DEVELOPMENT is a public static final boolean value, true during development, false as you work your way to production. Whether you adjust the definition by hand or by automating the build process is up to you. But, when IS_DEVELOPMENT is false, any work that would have been done to build up the actual Log invocation will be skipped, saving CPU cycles and battery life.

Conversely, error logs become even more important in production. Sometimes, you have difficult reproducing bugs "in the lab" and only encounter them on customer devices. Being able to get stack traces from those devices could make a major difference in your ability to get the bug fixed rapidly.

First, in addition to your regular exception handlers, consider catching everything those handlers miss, notably runtime exceptions:

Thread.setDefaultUncaughtExceptionHandler(onBlooey);

This will route all uncaught exceptions to an onBlooey handler:

```
private Thread.UncaughtExceptionHandler onBlooey=
    new Thread.UncaughtExceptionHandler() {
```

```
public void uncaughtException(Thread thread, Throwable ex) {
  Log.e(TAG, "Uncaught exception", ex);
}.
```

There, you can log it, raise a dialog if appropriate, etc.

Then, offer some means to get your logs off the device and to you, via email or a Web service. Some Android analytics firms, like Flurry, offer exception stack trace collection as part of their service. There are also open source projects that support this feature, such as android-remote-stacktrace.

Testing

As always, testing, particularly acceptance testing, is important.

Bear in mind that the act of creating the production signed version of your application could introduce errors, such as having the wrong Google Maps API key. Hence, it is important to do user-level testing of your application after you sign, not just before you sign, in case the act of signing messed things up. After all, what you are shipping to those users is the production signed edition – you do not want your users tripping over obvious flaws.

As you head towards production, also consider testing in as many distinct environments as possible, such as:

- Trying more than one device, particularly if you can get devices with different display sizes
- If you rely on the Internet, try your application with WiFi, with 3G, with EDGE/2G, and with the Internet unavailable
- If you rely on GPS, try your application with GPS disabled, GPS enabled and working, and GPS enabled but not available (e.g., underground)

EULA

End-user license agreements – EULAs – are those long bits of legal prose you are supposed to read and accept before using an application, Web site, or other protected item. Whether EULAs are enforcible in your jurisdiction is between you and your qualified legal counsel to determine.

In fact, many developers, particularly of free or open source applications, specifically elect not to put a EULA in their applications, considering them annoying, pointless, or otherwise bad.

However, the Android Market developer distribution agreement has one particular clause that might steer you towards having a EULA:

You agree that if you use the Market to distribute Products, you will protect the privacy and legal rights of users. If the users provide you with, or your Product accesses or uses, user names, passwords, or other login information or personal information, you must make the users aware that the information will be available to your Product, and you must provide legally adequate privacy notice and protection for those users...But if the user has opted into a separate agreement with you that allows you or your Product to store or use personal or sensitive information directly related to your Product (not including other products or applications) then the terms of that separate agreement will govern your use of such information.

(emphasis added)

Hence, if you are concerned about being bound by what Google thinks appropriate privacy is, you may wish to consider a EULA just to replace their terms with your own.

Unfortunately, having a EULA on a mobile device is particularly annoying to users, because EULAs tend to be long and screens tend to be short.
Again, please seek professional legal assistance on issues regarding EULAs.

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