Lecture 2:
Links and Signaling

CSE 123: Computer Networks
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Lecture 2 Overview

- **Signaling**
  - Channel characteristics
  - Types of physical media

- **Modulation**
  - Narrowband vs. Broadband
  - Encoding schemes

- A lot of this material is *not in the book*

- **Caveat**: I am not an EE Professor
Today’s Goal: Send bits

- A three-step process
  - Take an input stream of bits (digital data)
  - Modulate some physical media to send data (analog)
  - Demodulate the signal to retrieve bits (digital again)
  - Anybody heard of a modem (Modulator-demodulator)?

CSE 123 – Lecture 2: Links and Signaling
A Simple Signaling System

SEMAPHORE (marine alphabet 1 of 3)

A or 1
B or 2
C or 3
D or 4
E or 5
F or 6
G or 7
H or 8
I or 9
J or letters follow
Another
Simple Signaling System

| A | V |
| B | W |
| C | X |
| D | Y |
| E | Z |
| F | . |
| G | , |
| H | ? |
| I | / |
| J | @ |
| K | 1 |
| L | 2 |
| M | 3 |
| N | 4 |
| O | 5 |
| P | 6 |
| Q | 7 |
| R | 8 |
| S | 9 |
| T | 0 |

CSE 123 – Lecture 2: Links and Signaling
Another Simple Signaling System

Let man have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the fowl of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth.
Binary signaling with Voltage

- Encode 1’s and 0’s on a wire
  - +5 volts = 1
  - -5 volts = 0
Signals and Channels

- A **signal** is some form of energy (light, voltage, etc)
  - Varies with time (on/off, high/low, etc.)
  - Can be continuous or discrete

- A **channel** is a physical medium that conveys energy
  - Any real channel will distort the input signal as it does so
  - How it distorts the signal depends on the signal
Channel Challenges

- Every channel degrades a signal
  - Distortion impacts how the receiver will interpret signal

![Diagram](freq-response-ideal-actual)
Channel Properties

- **Bandwidth-limited**
  - Range of frequencies the channel will transmit
  - Means the channel is slow to react to change in signal

- **Power attenuates** over distance
  - Signal gets softer (harder to “hear”) the further it travels
  - Different frequencies have different response (distortion)

- **Background noise** or interference
  - May add or subtract from original signal

- **Different physical characteristics**
  - Point-to-point vs. shared media
  - Very different price points to deploy
Copper

- Typical examples
  - Category 5/6 Twisted Pair
    - Speed: 10M-10Gbps
    - Distance: 50-100m
  - Coaxial Cable
    - Speed: 10-100Mbps
    - Distance: 200m

twisted pair

copper core
insulation
braided outer conductor
outer insulation

copper core
insulation
braided outer conductor
outer insulation

coaxial cable
(coax)
Fiber Optics

- Typical examples
  - Multimode Fiber: 100Mbps-10Gb, 500-2000m
  - Single Mode Fiber: 1-100Gbps, 100m-40km

- Cheaper to drive (LED vs laser) & terminate
- Longer distance (low attenuation)
- Higher data rates (low dispersion)
Wireless

- Widely varying channel bandwidths/distances
- Extremely vulnerable to noise and interference
Spectrum Allocation

- Policy approach forces spectrum to be allocated like a fixed spatial resource (e.g. land, disk space, etc)
- Reality is that spectrum is time and power shared
- Measurements show that fixed allocations are poorly utilized

Hot topic: Whitespace communication
Two Main Tasks

- First we need to transmit a signal
  - Determine how to send the data, and how quickly

- Then we need to receive a (degraded) signal
  - Figure out when someone is sending us bits
  - Determine which bits they are sending

- A lot like a conversation
  - “WhatintheworldamI saying” – needs punctuation and pacing
  - Helps to know what language I’m speaking
The Magic of Sine Waves

- All periodic signals can be expressed as sine waves
  - Component waves are of different frequencies

- Sine waves are “nice”
  - Phase shifted or scaled by most channels

- “Easy” to analyze
  - Fourier analysis can tell us how signal changes
  - But not in this class…
Carrier Signals

- **Baseband** modulation: send the “bare” signal
  - E.g. +5 Volts for 1, -5 Volts for 0
  - All signals fall in the same frequency range

- **Broadband** modulation
  - Use the signal to modulate a high frequency signal (carrier).
  - Can be viewed as the product of the two signals
Forms of Digital Modulation

- Amplitude Shift Keying (ASK)
- Frequency Shift Keying (FSK)
- Phase Shift Keying (PSK)
Why Different Schemes?

- Properties of channel and desired application
  - AM vs FM for analog radio

- Efficiency
  - Some modulations can encode many bits for each symbol
    (subject to Shannon limit – more on this next class)

- Aiding with error detection
  - Dependency between symbols… can tell if a symbol wasn’t decoded correctly

- Transmitter/receiver Complexity
For Next Class

- Read 2.3
- Log into Piazza; let us know if you have problems