TChannel Documentation

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Uber Technologies, Inc.

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A Python implementation of TChannel.

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Getting Started

The code matching this guide is here.

1.1 Initial Setup

Create a directory called keyvalue to work inside of:

```
$ mkdir ~/keyvalue
$ cd ~/keyvalue
```

Inside of this directory we're also going to create a keyvalue module, which requires an __init__.py and a setup.py at the root:

```
$ mkdir keyvalue
$ touch keyvalue/__init__.py
```

Setup a virtual environment for your service and install the tornado and tchannel:

```
$ virtualenv env
$ source env/bin/activate
$ pip install tchannel thrift tornado
```

1.2 Thrift Interface Definition

Create a Thrift file under thrift/service.thrift that defines an interface for your service:

```
$ mkdir thrift
$ vim thrift/service.thrift
$ cat thrift/service.thrift
```

```
exception NotFoundError {
    1: string key,
}
service KeyValue {
    string getValue(
        1: string key,
    ) throws (
        1: NotFoundError notFound,
    )
```

```
void setValue(
    1: string key,
    2: string value,
)
}
```

This defines a service named KeyValue with two functions:

getValue a function which takes one string parameter, and returns a string.

setValue a void function that takes in two parameters.

Once you have defined your service, generate corresponding Thrift types by running the following:

```
$ thrift --gen py:new_style,dynamic,slots,utf8strings \
  -out keyvalue thrift/service.thrift
```

This generates client- and server-side code to interact with your service.

You may want to verify that your thrift code was generated successfully:

```
$ python -m keyvalue.service.KeyValue
```

1.3 Python Server

To serve an application we need to instantiate a TChannel instance, which we will register handlers against. Open up keyvalue/server.py and write something like this:

```
from __future__ import absolute_import
from tornado import ioloop
from tornado import gen
from service import KeyValue
from tchannel.tornado import TChannel
app = TChannel('keyvalue-server')
@app.register(KeyValue)
def getValue(request, response, tchannel):
   pass
@app.register(KeyValue)
def setValue(request, response, tchannel):
    pass
def run():
   app.listen()
if __name__ == '__main__':
    run()
    ioloop.IOLoop.current().start()
```

Here we have created a TChannel instance and registered two no-op handlers with it. The name of these handlers map directly to the Thrift service we defined earlier.

NOTE: Method handlers do not need to be declared at import-time, since this can become unwieldy in complex applications. We could also define them like so:

```
def run():
    app = TChannel('keyvalue-server')
    app.register(KeyValue, handler=Get)
    app.register(KeyValue, handler=Set)
    app.listen()
    ioloop.IOLoop.current().start()
```

A TChannel server only has one requirement: a name for itself. By default an ephemeral port will be chosen to listen on (although an explicit port can be provided).

(As your application becomes more complex, you won't want to put everything in a single file like this. Good code structure is beyond the scope of this guide.)

Let's make sure this server is in a working state:

```
python keyvalue/server.py
^C
```

The process should hang until you kill it, since it's listening for requests to handle. You shouldn't get any exceptions.

1.4 Handlers

To implement our service's endpoints let's create an in-memory dictionary that our endpoints will manipulate:

```
values = {}

@app.register(KeyValue)
def getValue(request, response, tchannel):
    key = request.args.key
    value = values.get(key)

    if value is None:
        raise KeyValue.NotFoundError(key)

    return value

@app.register(KeyValue)
def setValue(request, response, tchannel):
    key = request.args.key
    value = request.args.value
    values[key] = value
```

You can see that the return value of Get will be coerced into the expected Thrift shape. If we needed to return an additional field, we could accomplish this by returning a dictionary.

This example service doesn't do any network IO work. If we wanted to take advantage of Tornado's asynchronous capabilities, we could define our handlers as coroutines and yield to IO operations:

```
@app.register(KeyValue)
@gen.coroutine
def setValue(request, response, tchannel):
```

1.4. Handlers 5

```
key = request.args.key
value = request.args.value

# Simulate some non-blocking IO work.
yield gen.sleep(1.0)

values[key] = value
```

You have probably noticed that all of these handlers are passed response and *tchannel* objects, in addition to a request. The response object is available for advanced use cases where it doesn't make sense to return one object as a response body – for example, long-lived connections that gradually stream the response back to the caller.

The *tchannel* object contains context about the current request (such as Zipkin tracing information) and should be used to make requests to other TChannel services. (Note that this API may change in the future.)

1.4.1 Transport Headers

In addition to the call arguments and headers, the request object also provides some additional information about the current request under the request.transport object:

transport.flags Request flags used by the protocol for fragmentation and streaming.

transport.ttl The time (in milliseconds) within which the caller expects a response.

transport .headers Protocol level headers for the request. For more information on transport headers check the Transport Headers section of the protocol document.

1.5 Hyperbahn

As mentioned earlier, our service is listening on an ephemeral port, so we are going to register it with the Hyperbahn routing mesh. Clients will use this Hyperbahn mesh to determine how to communicate with your service.

Let's change our *run* method to advertise our service with a local Hyperbahn instance:

```
import json
import os

@gen.coroutine
def run():

    app.listen()
    print 'Listening on', app.hostport

if os.path.exists('/path/to/hyperbahn_hostlist.json'):
    with open('/path/to/hyperbahn_hostlist.json', 'r') as f:
        hyperbahn_hostlist = json.load(f)
    yield app.advertise(routers=hyperbahn_hostlist)
```

The *advertise* method takes a seed list of Hyperbahn routers and the name of the service that clients will call into. After advertising, the Hyperbahn will connect to your process and establish peers for service-to-service communication.

Consult the Hyperbahn documentation for instructions on how to start a process locally.

1.6 Debugging

Let's spin up the service and make a request to it through Hyperbahn. Python provides tourl.py script, but we need to use the Node version for now since it has Thrift support.

```
$ python keyvalue/server.py &
$ tcurl -H /path/to/hyperbahn_host_list.json -t ~/keyvalue/thrift/service.thrift service KeyValue::se
$ tcurl -H /path/to/hyperbahn_host_list.json -t ~/keyvalue/thrift/service.thrift service KeyValue::ge
$ tcurl -H /path/to/hyperbahn_host_list.json -t ~/keyvalue/thrift/service.thrift service KeyValue::ge
```

Your service can now be accessed from any language over Hyperbahn + TChannel!

1.7 Python Client

Let's make a client call from Python in keyvalue/client.py:

```
from tornado import gen
from tornado import ioloop
from tchannel.thrift import client_for
from tchannel.tornado import TChannel
from service import KeyValue
KeyValueClient = client_for('keyvalue-server', KeyValue)
@gen.coroutine
def run():
   app_name = 'keyvalue-client'
   app = TChannel(app_name)
   app.advertise(routers=['127.0.0.1:21300'])
   client = KeyValueClient(app)
   yield client.setValue("foo", "bar")
   response = yield client.getValue("foo")
   print response
if __name__ == '__main__':
   ioloop.IOLoop.current().run_sync(run)
```

Similar to the server case, we initialize a TChannel instance and advertise ourselves on Hyperbahn (to establish how to communicate with *keyval-server*). After this we create a client class to add TChannel functionality to our generated Thrift code. We then set and retrieve a value from our server.

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API Documentation

2.1 TChannel

call (*args, **kwargs)

Make low-level requests to TChannel services.

This method uses TChannel's protocol terminology for param naming.

For high level requests with automatic serialization and semantic param names, use raw, json, and thrift methods instead.

Parameters

- **scheme** (*string*) Name of the Arg Scheme to be sent as the Transport Header as; eg. 'raw', 'json', 'thrift' are all valid values.
- **service** (*string*) Name of the service that is being called. This is used internally to route requests through Hyperbahn, and for grouping of connection, and labelling stats. Note that when hostport is provided, requests are not routed through Hyperbahn.
- **arg1** (*string*) Value for arg1 as specified by the TChannel protocol this varies by Arg Scheme, but is typically used for endpoint name.
- arg2 (*string*) Value for arg2 as specified by the TChannel protocol this varies by Arg Scheme, but is typically used for app-level headers.
- **arg3** (*string*) Value for arg3 as specified by the TChannel protocol this varies by Arg Scheme, but is typically used for the request body.
- timeout (int) How long to wait before raising a TimeoutError this defaults to tchannel.glossary.DEFAULT_TIMEOUT.
- retry_on (string) What events to retry on valid values can be found in tchannel.retry.
- retry_limit (*string*) How many times to retry before
- hostport (*string*) A 'host:port' value to use when making a request directly to a TChannel service, bypassing Hyperbahn.

class tchannel.schemes.RawArgScheme (tchannel)

Semantic params and serialization for raw.

```
class tchannel.schemes.JsonArgScheme (tchannel)
```

Semantic params and serialization for json.

```
class tchannel.schemes.ThriftArgScheme (tchannel)
```

Semantic params and serialization for Thrift.

```
class tchannel.tornado.RequestDispatcher
```

A synchronous RequestHandler that dispatches calls to different endpoints based on arg1.

Endpoints are registered using register or the route decorator.

```
handler = # ...
@handler.route('my_method')
def my_method(request, response, proxy):
    response.write('hello world')
```

```
static not_found (request, response, proxy)
```

Default behavior for requests to unrecognized endpoints.

```
register (rule, handler, broker=None)
```

Register a new endpoint with the given name.

```
@dispatcher.register('is_healthy')
def check_health(request, response, proxy):
    # ...
```

Parameters

• rule – Name of the endpoint. Incoming Call Requests must have this as arg1 to dispatch to this handler.

If RequestHandler.FALLBACK is specified as a rule, the given handler will be used as the 'fallback' handler when requests don't match any registered rules.

- handler A function that gets called with Request, Response, and the proxy.
- **broker** Broker injects customized serializer and deserializer into request/response object.

broker==None means it registers as raw handle. It deals with raw buffer in the request/response.

```
route(rule, helper=None)
```

See register for documentation.

Represents an incoming request to an endpoint.

Request class is used to represent the CallRequestMessage at User's level. This is going to hide the protocol level message information.

```
get_body (*args, **kwargs)
```

Get the body value from the resquest.

Returns a future contains the descrialized value of body

```
get_body_s()
```

Get the raw stream of body.

Returns the argstream of body

```
get_header (*args, **kwargs)
```

Get the header value from the request.

Returns a future contains the descrialized value of header

get_header_s()

Get the raw stream of header.

Returns the argstream of header

should_retry_on_error(error)

rules for retry

Parameters error – ProtocolException that returns from Server

An outgoing response.

Response class is used to represent the CallResponseMessage at User's level. This is going to hide the protocol level message information.

flush()

Flush the response buffer.

No more write or set operations is allowed after flush call.

```
get_body (*args, **kwargs)
```

Get the body value from the response.

Returns a future contains the deserialized value of body

get_body_s()

Get the raw stream of body.

Returns the argstream of body

```
get_header (*args, **kwargs)
```

Get the header value from the response.

Returns a future contains the descrialized value of header

get_header_s()

Get the raw stream of header.

Returns the argstream of header

set_body_s (stream)

Set customized body stream.

Note: the body stream can only be changed before the stream is consumed.

Parameters stream - InMemStream/PipeStream for body

Raises TChannelError Raise TChannelError if the stream is being sent when you try to change the stream.

set_header_s (stream)

Set customized header stream.

Note: the header stream can only be changed before the stream is consumed.

Parameters stream - InMemStream/PipeStream for header

Raises TChannelError Raise TChannelError if the stream is being sent when you try to change the stream.

2.1. TChannel

write body(chunk)

Write to header.

Note: whenever write_body is called, the header stream will be closed. write_header method is unavailable.

Parameters chunk – content to write to body

Raises TChannelError Raise TChannelError if the response's flush() has been called

write header(chunk)

Write to header.

Note: the header stream is only available to write before write body.

Parameters chunk – content to write to header

Raises TChannelError Raise TChannelError if the response's flush() has been called

2.2 Exceptions

exception tchannel.errors.AdvertiseError

Represent advertise failure exception

exception tchannel.errors.AlreadyListeningError

Represents exception from attempting to listen multiple times.

exception tchannel.errors.InvalidChecksumError

Represent invalid checksum type in the message

exception tchannel.errors.InvalidEndpointError

Represent an message containing invalid endpoint.

$\textbf{exception} \; \texttt{tchannel.errors.InvalidErrorCodeError} \; (code)$

Represent Invalid Error Code exception

exception tchannel.errors.InvalidMessageError

Represent an invalid message.

exception tchannel.errors.NoAvailablePeerError

Represents a failure to find any peers for a request.

$exception \verb| tchannel.errors.OneWayNotSupportedError| \\$

Raised when oneway Thrift procedure is called.

exception tchannel.errors.**ProtocolError** (code, description, id=None, tracing=None)

Represent a protocol-level exception

exception tchannel.errors.ReadError

Raised when there is an error while reading input.

exception tchannel.errors.StreamingError

Represent Streaming Message Exception

exception tchannel.errors.TChannelApplicationError(code, args)

The remote application returned an exception.

This is not a protocol error. This means a response was received with the code flag set to fail.

exception tchannel.errors.TChannelError

Represent a TChannel-generated exception.

```
exception tchannel.errors.ValueExpectedError
```

Raised when a non-void Thrift response contains no value.

2.3 Thrift

tchannel.thrift.client.client_for (service, service_module, thrift_service_name=None)
Build a client class for the given Thrift service.

The generated class accepts a TChannel and an optional hostport as initialization arguments.

Given CommentService defined in comment.thrift and registered with Hyperbahn under the name "comment", here's how this may be used:

```
from comment import CommentService

CommentServiceClient = client_for("comment", CommentService)

@gen.coroutine
def post_comment(articleId, msg, hostport=None):
    client = CommentServiceClient(tchannel, hostport)
    yield client.postComment(articleId, CommentService.Comment(msg))
```

Parameters

- **service** Name of the Hyperbahn service being called. This is the name with which the service registered with Hyperbahn.
- **service_module** The Thrift-generated module for that service. This usually has the same name as defined for the service in the IDL.
- **thrift_service_name** If the Thrift service has a different name than its module, use this parameter to specify it.

Returns An object with the same interface as the service that uses the given TChannel to call the service.

tchannel.thrift.client.generate_method(service_module, service_name, method_name)
Generate a method for the given Thrift service.

Parameters

- **service_module** Thrift-generated service module
- service name Name of the Thrift service
- method_name Method being called

2.4 Synchronous Client

```
{\bf class} \; {\tt tchannel.sync.client.Response} \; ({\it header,body})
```

body

Alias for field number 1

header

Alias for field number 0

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class tchannel.sync.client.SyncClientOperation (operation, threadloop)

Allows making client operation requests synchronously.

This object acts like tchannel.TChannelClientOperation, but instead uses a threadloop to make the request synchronously.

```
send (arg1, arg2, arg3)
```

Send the given triple over the wire.

Parameters

- arg1 String containing the contents of arg1. If None, an empty string is used.
- arg2 String containing the contents of arg2. If None, an empty string is used.
- arg3 String containing the contents of arg3. If None, an empty string is used.

Return concurrent.futures.Future Future response from the peer.

Make synchronous TChannel requests.

This client does not support incoming connections or requests- this is a uni-directional client only.

The client is implemented on top of the Tornado-based implementation and starts and stops IOLoops on-demand.

```
client = TChannelSyncClient()
response = client.request(
   hostport='localhost:4040',
   service='HelloService',
).send(
   'hello', None, json.dumps({"name": "World"})
)
```

advertise(routers, name=None, timeout=None)

Advertise with Hyperbahn.

Parameters

- **routers** list of hyperbahn addresses to advertise to.
- name service name to advertise with.
- timeout backoff period for failed requests.

Returns first advertise result.

Raises AdvertiseError when unable to begin advertising.

```
request (*args, **kwargs)
```

Initiate a new request to a peer.

Parameters

- **hostport** If specified, requests will be sent to the specific host. Otherwise, a known peer will be picked at random.
- **service** Name of the service being called. Defaults to an empty string.
- **service_threshold** If hostport was not specified, this specifies the score threshold at or below which peers will be ignored.

Returns SyncClientOperation An object with a send (arg1, arg2, arg3) operation.

tchannel.sync.thrift.client_for (service, service_module, thrift_service_name=None)
Build a synchronous client class for the given Thrift service.

The generated class accepts a TChannelSyncClient and an optional hostport as initialization arguments.

Given CommentService defined in comment.thrift and registered with Hyperbahn under the name "comment", here's how this might be used:

```
from tchannel.sync import TChannelSyncClient
from tchannel.sync.thrift import client_for

from comment import CommentService

CommentServiceClient = client_for('comment', CommentService)

tchannel_sync = TChannelSyncClient('my-service')
comment_client = CommentServiceClient(tchannel_sync)

future = comment_client.postComment(
    articleId,
    CommentService.Comment("hi")
)
result = future.result()
```

Parameters

- **service** Name of the Hyperbahn service being called.
- **service_module** The Thrift-generated module for that service. This usually has the same name as definied for the service in the IDL.
- **thrift_service_name** If the Thrift service has a different name than its module, use this parameter to specify it.

Returns An Thrift-like class, ready to be instantiated and used with TChannelSyncClient.

```
tchannel.sync.thrift.generate_method(method_name)
```

Generate a method for a given Thrift service.

Uses the provided TChannelSyncClient's threadloop in order to convert RPC calls to concurrent.futures

Parameters method_name - Method being called.

Returns A method that invokes the RPC using TChannelSyncClient

2.5 Testing

2.5.1 VCR

tchannel.testing.vcr provides VCR-like functionality for TChannel. Its API is heavily inspired by the vcrpy library.

This allows recording TChannel requests and their responses into YAML files during integration tests and replaying those recorded responses when the tests are run next time.

The simplest way to use this is with the use_cassette() function.

```
tchannel.testing.vcr.use_cassette (path, record_mode=None, inject=False)
Use or create a cassette to record/replay TChannel requests.
```

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This may be used as a context manager or a decorator.

```
from tchannel.testing import vcr

@pytest.mark.gen_test
@vcr.use_cassette('tests/data/foo.yaml')
def test_foo():
    channel = TChannel('test-client')
    service_client = MyServiceClient(channel)

    yield service_client.myMethod()

def test_bar():
    with vcr.use_cassette('tests/data/bar.yaml', record_mode='none'):
    # ...
```

Note that when used as a decorator on a coroutine, the use_cassette decorator must be applied BEFORE gen.coroutine or pytest.mark.gen_test.

Parameters

- path Path to the cassette. If the cassette did not already exist, it will be created. If it existed, its contents will be replayed (depending on the record mode).
- record_mode The record mode dictates whether a cassette is allowed to record or replay interactions. This may be a string specifying the record mode name or an element from the tchannel.testing.vcr.RecordMode object. This parameter defaults to tchannel.testing.vcr.RecordMode.ONCE. See tchannel.testing.vcr.RecordMode for details on supported record modes and how to use them.
- inject If True, when use_cassette is used as a decorator, the cassette object will be injected into the function call as the first argument. Defaults to False.

Configuration

Record Modes

class tchannel.testing.vcr.RecordMode

Record modes dictate how a cassette behaves when interactions are replayed or recorded. The following record modes are supported.

ONCE = 'once'

If the YAML file did not exist, record new interactions and save them. If the YAML file already existed, replay existing interactions but disallow any new interactions. This is the default and usually what you want.

NEW_EPISODES = 'new_episodes'

Replay existing interactions and allow recording new ones. This is usually undesirable since it reduces predictability in tests.

NONE = 'none'

Replay existing interactions and disallow any new interactions. This is a good choice for tests whose behavior is unlikely to change in the near future. It ensures that those tests don't accidentally start making new requests.

ALL = 'all'

Do not replay anything and record all new interactions. Forget all existing interactions. This may be used to record everything anew.

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Changelog

3.1 0.15.3 (2015-08-25)

• Backported unhandled exception logging from 0.16.

3.2 0.15.2 (2015-08-07)

- Raise informative and obvious ValueError when anything but a map[string]string is passed as headers to the TChannel.thrift method.
- First param, request, in tchannel.thrift method is required.

3.3 0.15.1 (2015-08-07)

• Raise tchannel.errors.ValueExpectedError when calling a non-void Thrift procedure that returns no value.

3.4 0.15.0 (2015-08-06)

- Introduced new top level tchannel. TChannel object, with new request methods call, raw, json, and thrift. This will eventually replace the akward request / send calling pattern.
- Introduced tchannel.thrift_request_builder function for creating a request builder to be used with the tchannel.TChannel.thrift function.
- Introduced new simplified examples under the examples/simple directory, moved the Guide's examples to examples/guide, and deleted the remaining examples.
- Added ThriftTest.thrift and generated Thrift code to tchannel.testing.data for use with examples and playing around with TChannel.
- Fix JSON arg2 (headers) being returned a string instead of a dict.

3.5 0.14.0 (2015-08-03)

- Implement VCR functionality for outgoing requests. Check the documentation for tchannel.testing.vcr for details.
- Add support for specifying fallback handlers via TChannel.register by specifying TChannel.fallback as the endpoint.
- Fix bug in Response where code expected an object instead of an integer.
- Fix bug in Peer.close where a future was expected instead of None.

3.6 0.13.0 (2015-07-23)

- Add support for specifying transport headers for Thrift clients.
- Always pass shardKey for TCollector tracing calls. This fixes Zipkin tracing for Thrift clients.

3.7 0.12.0 (2015-07-20)

- Add TChannel.is_listening() to determine if listen has been called.
- Calling TChannel.listen() more than once raises a tchannel.errors.AlreadyListeningError.
- TChannel.advertise() will now automatically start listening for connections if listen() has not already been called.
- Use threadloop==0.4.
- Removed print_arg.

3.8 0.11.2 (2015-07-20)

• Fix sync client's advertise - needed to call listen in thread.

3.9 0.11.1 (2015-07-17)

• Fix sync client using 0.0.0.0 host which gets rejected by Hyperbahn during advertise.

3.10 0.11.0 (2015-07-17)

- Added advertise support to sync client in tchannel.sync.TChannelSyncClient.advertise.
- BREAKING renamed router argument to routers in tchannel.tornado.TChannel.advertise.

3.11 0.10.3 (2015-07-13)

- Support PyPy 2.
- Fix bugs in TChannel.advertise.

3.12 0.10.2 (2015-07-13)

• Made TChannel.advertise retry on all exceptions.

3.13 0.10.1 (2015-07-10)

• Previous release was broken with older versions of pip.

3.14 0.10.0 (2015-07-10)

- Add exponential backoff to TChannel.advertise.
- Make transport metadata available under request.transport on the server-side.

3.15 0.9.1 (2015-07-09)

• Use threadloop 0.3.* to fix main thread not exiting when tchannel.sync.TChannelSyncClient is used.

3.16 0.9.0 (2015-07-07)

- Allow custom handlers for unrecognized endpoints.
- Released tchannel.sync.TChannelSyncClient and tchannel.sync.thrift.client_for.

3.17 0.8.5 (2015-06-30)

• Add port parameter for TChannel.listen.

3.18 0.8.4 (2015-06-17)

• Fix bug where False and False-like values were being treated as None in Thrift servers.

3.19 0.8.3 (2015-06-15)

• Add as attribute to the response header.

3.20 0.8.2 (2015-06-11)

- Fix callable traceflag being propagated to the serializer.
- Fix circular imports.
- Fix TimeoutError retry logic.

3.21 0.8.1 (2015-06-10)

• Initial release.

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