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Real Time Streaming Protocol (RTSP)

Status of this Memo

This document specifies an Internet standards track protocol for the Internet community, and requests discussion and suggestions for improvements. Please refer to the current edition of the "Internet Official Protocol Standards" (STD 1) for the standardization state and status of this protocol. Distribution of this memo is unlimited.

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Abstract

The Real Time Streaming Protocol, or RTSP, is an application-level protocol for control over the delivery of data with real-time properties. RTSP provides an extensible framework to enable controlled, on-demand delivery of real-time data, such as audio and video. Sources of data can include both live data feeds and stored clips. This protocol is intended to control multiple data delivery sessions, provide a means for choosing delivery channels such as UDP, multicast UDP and TCP, and provide a means for choosing delivery mechanisms based upon RTP (RFC 1889).

Table of Contents

* 1 Introduction 5
    + 1.1 Purpose 5
    + 1.2 Requirements 6
    + 1.3 Terminology 6
    + 1.4 Protocol Properties 9
    + 1.5 Extending RTSP 11
    + 1.6 Overall Operation 11
    + 1.7 RTSP States 12
    + 1.8 Relationship with Other Protocols 13
* 2 Notational Conventions 14
* 3 Protocol Parameters 14
    + 3.1 RTSP Version 14

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+ 3.2 RTSP URL 14
+ 3.3 Conference Identifiers 16
+ 3.4 Session Identifiers 16
+ 3.5 SMPTE Relative Timestamps 16
+ 3.6 Normal Play Time 17
+ 3.7 Absolute Time 18
+ 3.8 Option Tags 18
o 3.8.1 Registering New Option Tags with IANA 18
* 4 RTSP Message 19
+ 4.1 Message Types 19
+ 4.2 Message Headers 19
+ 4.3 Message Body 19
+ 4.4 Message Length 20
* 5 General Header Fields 20
* 6 Request 20
+ 6.1 Request Line 21
+ 6.2 Request Header Fields 21
* 7 Response 22
+ 7.1 Status-Line 22
o 7.1.1 Status Code and Reason Phrase 22
o 7.1.2 Response Header Fields 26
* 8 Entity 27
+ 8.1 Entity Header Fields 27
+ 8.2 Entity Body 28
* 9 Connections 28
+ 9.1 Pipelining 28
+ 9.2 Reliability and Acknowledgements 28
* 10 Method Definitions 29
+ 10.1 OPTIONS 30
+ 10.2 DESCRIBE 31
+ 10.3 ANNOUNCE 32
+ 10.4 SETUP 33
+ 10.5 PLAY 34
+ 10.6 PAUSE 36
+ 10.7 TEARDOWN 37
+ 10.8 GET_PARAMETER 37
+ 10.9 SET_PARAMETER 38
+ 10.10 REDIRECT 39
+ 10.11 RECORD 39
+ 10.12 Embedded (Interleaved) Binary Data 40
* 11 Status Code Definitions 41
+ 11.1 Success 2xx 41
o 11.1.1 250 Low on Storage Space 41
+ 11.2 Redirection 3xx 41
+ 11.3 Client Error 4xx 42
o 11.3.1 405 Method Not Allowed 42
o 11.3.2 451 Parameter Not Understood 42
o 11.3.3 452 Conference Not Found 42

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o 11.3.4 453 Not Enough Bandwidth 42
o 11.3.5 454 Session Not Found 42
o 11.3.6 455 Method Not Valid in This State 42
o 11.3.7 456 Header Field Not Valid for Resource 42
o 11.3.8 457 Invalid Range 43
o 11.3.9 458 Parameter Is Read-Only 43
o 11.3.10 459 Aggregate Operation Not Allowed 43
o 11.3.11 460 Only Aggregate Operation Allowed 43
o 11.3.12 461 Unsupported Transport 43
o 11.3.13 462 Destination Unreachable 43
o 11.3.14 551 Option not supported 43
* 12 Header Field Definitions 44
+ 12.1 Accept 46
+ 12.2 Accept-Encoding 46
+ 12.3 Accept-Language 46
+ 12.4 Allow 46
+ 12.5 Authorization 46
+ 12.6 Bandwidth 46
+ 12.7 Blocksize 47
+ 12.8 Cache-Control 47
+ 12.9 Conference 49
+ 12.10 Connection 49
+ 12.11 Content-Base 49
+ 12.12 Content-Encoding 49
+ 12.13 Content-Language 50
+ 12.14 Content-Length 50
+ 12.15 Content-Location 50
+ 12.16 Content-Type 50
+ 12.17 CSeq 50
+ 12.18 Date 50
+ 12.19 Expires 50
+ 12.20 From 51
+ 12.21 Host 51
+ 12.22 If-Match 51
+ 12.23 If-Modified-Since 52
+ 12.24 Last-Modified..... 52
+ 12.25 Location 52
+ 12.26 Proxy-Authenticate 52
+ 12.27 Proxy-Require 52
+ 12.28 Public 53
+ 12.29 Range 53
+ 12.30 Referer 54
+ 12.31 Retry-After 54
+ 12.32 Require 54
+ 12.33 RTP-Info 55
+ 12.34 Scale 56
+ 12.35 Speed 57
+ 12.36 Server 57

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+ 12.37 Session 57
+ 12.38 Timestamp 58
+ 12.39 Transport 58
+ 12.40 Unsupported 62
+ 12.41 User-Agent 62
+ 12.42 Vary 62
+ 12.43 Via 62
+ 12.44 WWW-Authenticate 62

* 13 Caching 62
* 14 Examples 63
+ 14.1 Media on Demand (Unicast) 63
+ 14.2 Streaming of a Container file 65
+ 14.3 Single Stream Container Files 67
+ 14.4 Live Media Presentation Using Multicast 69
+ 14.5 Playing media into an existing session 70
+ 14.6 Recording 71
* 15 Syntax 72
+ 15.1 Base Syntax 72
* 16 Security Considerations 73
* A RTSP Protocol State Machines 76
+ A.1 Client State Machine 76
+ A.2 Server State Machine 77
* B Interaction with RTP 79
* C Use of SDP for RTSP Session Descriptions 80
+ C.1 Definitions 80
o C.1.1 Control URL 80
o C.1.2 Media streams 81
o C.1.3 Payload type(s) 81
o C.1.4 Format-specific parameters 81
o C.1.5 Range of presentation 82
o C.1.6 Time of availability 82
o C.1.7 Connection Information 82
o C.1.8 Entity Tag 82
+ C.2 Aggregate Control Not Available 83
+ C.3 Aggregate Control Available 83
* D Minimal RTSP implementation 85
+ D.1 Client 85
o D.1.1 Basic Playback 86
o D.1.2 Authentication-enabled 86
+ D.2 Server 86
o D.2.1 Basic Playback 87
o D.2.2 Authentication-enabled 87
* E Authors' Addresses 88
* F Acknowledgements 89
* References 90
* Full Copyright Statement 92

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1 Introduction

1.1 Purpose

The Real-Time Streaming Protocol (RTSP) establishes and controls either a single or several time-synchronized streams of continuous media such as audio and video. It does not typically deliver the continuous streams itself, although interleaving of the continuous media stream with the control stream is possible (see Section 10.12). In other words, RTSP acts as a "network remote control" for multimedia servers.

The set of streams to be controlled is defined by a presentation description. This memorandum does not define a format for a presentation description.

There is no notion of an RTSP connection; instead, a server maintains a session labeled by an identifier. An RTSP session is in no way tied to a transport-level connection such as a TCP connection. During an RTSP session, an RTSP client may open and close many reliable transport connections to the server to issue RTSP requests. Alternatively, it may use a connectionless transport protocol such as UDP.

The streams controlled by RTSP may use RTP [1], but the operation of RTSP does not depend on the transport mechanism used to carry continuous media. The protocol is intentionally similar in syntax and operation to HTTP/1.1 [2] so that extension mechanisms to HTTP can in most cases also be added to RTSP. However, RTSP differs in a number of important aspects from HTTP:

* RTSP introduces a number of new methods and has a different protocol identifier.
* An RTSP server needs to maintain state by default in almost all cases, as opposed to the stateless nature of HTTP.
* Both an RTSP server and client can issue requests.
* Data is carried out-of-band by a different protocol. (There is an exception to this.)
* RTSP is defined to use ISO 10646 (UTF-8) rather than ISO 8859-1, consistent with current HTML internationalization efforts [3].
* The Request-URI always contains the absolute URI. Because of backward compatibility with a historical blunder, HTTP/1.1 [2] carries only the absolute path in the request and puts the host name in a separate header field.

This makes "virtual hosting" easier, where a single host with one IP address hosts several document trees.

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