Characterizing JSON Traffic Patterns on a CDN

Santiago Vargas, Utkarsh Goel, Moritz Steiner, Aruna Balasubramanian
JSON Traffic is Growing on Akamai’s CDN

- JSON is 4x more requested than HTML
- JSON is the leading content type on Akamai’s CDN
What is JSON?

JSON is a text-based data format

1. Key-value Pairs
2. Lightweight
3. Structured
Motivation

• Little is known about JSON usage
• Optimizations exist for types of content, ie. browsing and media content. Unsure if these apply to JSON content
Akamai’s Network as a Vantage Point

• Collect HTTP request logs from Akamai edge servers
  • Data Fields: Mime Type, Time of Request, User-Agent, Caching Information, HTTP Method, URL, Anonymized IP

• Collect 2 datasets:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dataset</th>
<th># of Logs</th>
<th>Duration</th>
<th># of Domains</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Short-term</td>
<td>25 million</td>
<td>10 mins</td>
<td>~5k</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Long-term</td>
<td>10 million</td>
<td>24 hours</td>
<td>~170</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

• Short-term – wide network coverage for overall characterization
• Long-term – wide temporal coverage for pattern characterization
Extracting Our Data

• Develop a taxonomy to look at JSON traffic on different dimensions:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>JSON Traffic Taxonomy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Source</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Embedded Device, App, Browser, or Unknown</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

• Device/Application
• Machine-Generated
• Request Type
• Response Type
What Devices Request JSON?

- Majority of JSON is from mobile smartphones and embedded devices (>64%)
  - Embedded devices include game consoles, wearables, and smart appliances
- 88% of JSON is non-browser
Identifying Machine Traffic

- Autocorrelation techniques identify 6% of JSON traffic is requested periodically
  - Objects are requested in standard periods

- Machine-to-machine traffic
  - 78% upload traffic & 56% uncacheable
  - One optimization avenue: Deprioritize machine traffic that is not QoE sensitive
Does Caching Help?

• Majority (84%) of requests are downloads making them ideal for caching
  • 55% of requests are uncachable
  • 50% of domains don’t use caching for JSON

Since caching doesn’t help JSON content delivery for specific industries, can other optimizations help?
Using Dependencies as avenue for optimization

• Dependencies Example:

```
A -> B -> C
```

Requests for JSON Object A then B then C

**Question:** Given request for A, can we predict object B will be requested next?

• Methodology: Cluster objects with similar URLs

```
a.com/abc123/profile
a.com/def456/profile
```

• Results: 90% accuracy using ngram model for clustered URLs*

```
a.com/*/profile
```

Clustered URL

Analyzing these patterns can inform Prefetching, Server Push, Anomaly Detection systems

*when considering top 10 predictions
Conclusions

• JSON is becoming a leading content type on the Web

• Majority of JSON is from mobile & embedded devices and is non-browser

• Avenues for optimization:
  • Periodic machine-to-machine traffic can be deprioritized
  • JSON has ordering patterns that can be predicted