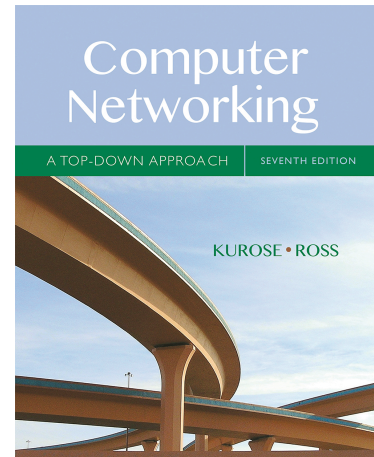


Wireshark Lab: TCP v7.0

Supplement to *Computer Networking: A Top-Down Approach*, 7th ed., J.F. Kurose and K.W. Ross

“Tell me and I forget. Show me and I remember. Involve me and I understand.” Chinese proverb

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In this lab, we'll investigate the behavior of the celebrated TCP protocol in detail. We'll do so by analyzing a trace of the TCP segments sent and received in transferring a 150KB file (containing the text of Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*) from your computer to a remote server. We'll study TCP's use of sequence and acknowledgement numbers for providing reliable data transfer; we'll see TCP's congestion control algorithm – slow start and congestion avoidance – in action; and we'll look at TCP's receiver-advertised flow control mechanism. We'll also briefly consider TCP connection setup and we'll investigate the performance (throughput and round-trip time) of the TCP connection between your computer and the server.

Before beginning this lab, you'll probably want to review sections 3.5 and 3.7 in the text¹.

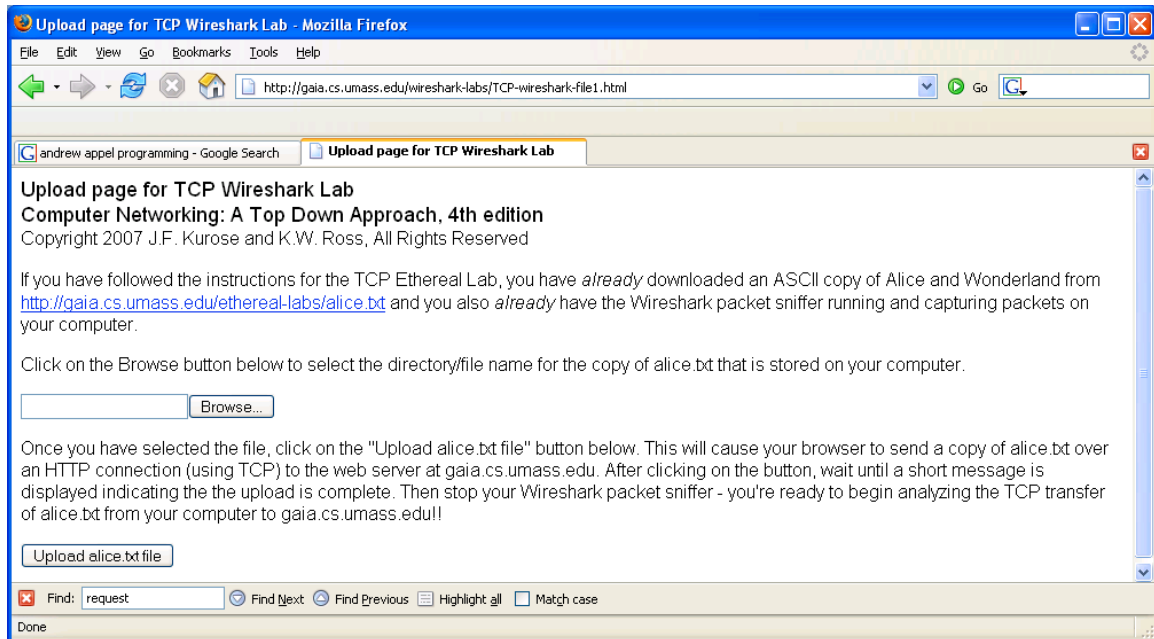
1. Capturing a bulk TCP transfer from your computer to a remote server

Before beginning our exploration of TCP, we'll need to use Wireshark to obtain a packet trace of the TCP transfer of a file from your computer to a remote server. You'll do so by accessing a Web page that will allow you to enter the name of a file stored on your computer (which contains the ASCII text of *Alice in Wonderland*), and then transfer the file to a Web server using the HTTP POST method (see section 2.2.3 in the text). We're using the POST method rather than the GET method as we'd like to transfer a large amount of data *from* your computer to another computer. Of course, we'll be running Wireshark during this time to obtain the trace of the TCP segments sent and received from your computer.

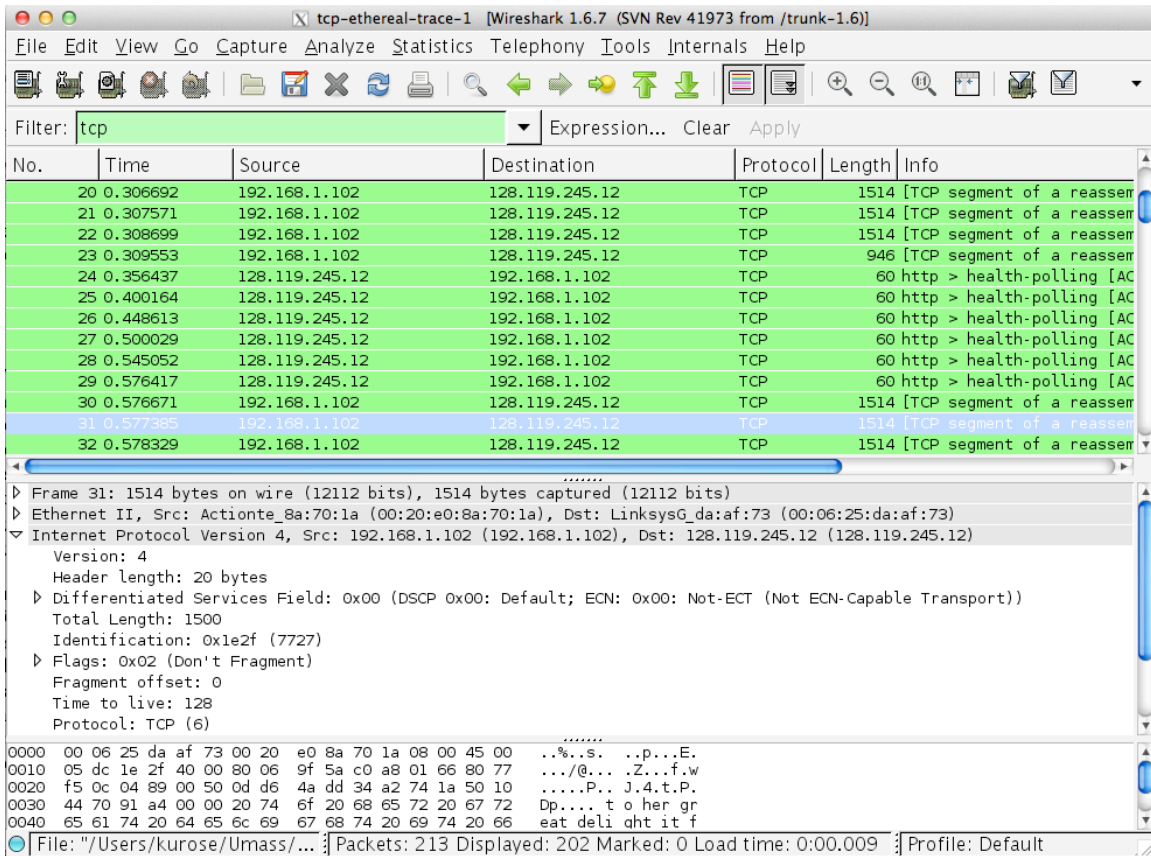
¹ References to figures and sections are for the 7th edition of our text, *Computer Networks, A Top-down Approach*, 7th ed., J.F. Kurose and K.W. Ross, Addison-Wesley/Pearson, 2016.

Do the following:

- Start up your web browser. Go the <http://gaia.cs.umass.edu/wireshark-labs/alice.txt> and retrieve an ASCII copy of *Alice in Wonderland*. Store this file somewhere on your computer.
- Next go to <http://gaia.cs.umass.edu/wireshark-labs/TCP-wireshark-file1.html>.
- You should see a screen that looks like:



- Use the *Browse* button in this form to enter the name of the file (full path name) on your computer containing *Alice in Wonderland* (or do so manually). Don't yet press the "*Upload alice.txt file*" button.
- Now start up Wireshark and begin packet capture (*Capture->Start*) and then press *OK* on the Wireshark Packet Capture Options screen (we'll not need to select any options here).
- Returning to your browser, press the "*Upload alice.txt file*" button to upload the file to the gaia.cs.umass.edu server. Once the file has been uploaded, a short congratulations message will be displayed in your browser window.
- Stop Wireshark packet capture. Your Wireshark window should look similar to the window shown below.



If you are unable to run Wireshark on a live network connection, you can download a packet trace file that was captured while following the steps above on one of the author’s computers². You may well find it valuable to download this trace even if you’ve captured your own trace and use it, as well as your own trace, when you explore the questions below.

2. A first look at the captured trace

Before analyzing the behavior of the TCP connection in detail, let’s take a high level view of the trace.

- First, filter the packets displayed in the Wireshark window by entering “tcp” (lowercase, no quotes, and don’t forget to press return after entering!) into the display filter specification window towards the top of the Wireshark window.

What you should see is series of TCP and HTTP messages between your computer and `gaia.cs.umass.edu`. You should see the initial three-way handshake containing a SYN message. You should see an HTTP POST message. Depending on the version of

² Download the zip file <http://gaia.cs.umass.edu/wireshark-labs/wireshark-traces.zip> and extract the file `tcp-ethereal-trace-1`. The traces in this zip file were collected by Wireshark running on one of the author’s computers, while performing the steps indicated in the Wireshark lab. Once you have downloaded the trace, you can load it into Wireshark and view the trace using the *File* pull down menu, choosing *Open*, and then selecting the `tcp-ethereal-trace-1` trace file.

Wireshark you are using, you might see a series of “HTTP Continuation” messages being sent from your computer to `gaia.cs.umass.edu`. Recall from our discussion in the earlier HTTP Wireshark lab, that is no such thing as an HTTP Continuation message – this is Wireshark’s way of indicating that there are multiple TCP segments being used to carry a single HTTP message. In more recent versions of Wireshark, you’ll see “[TCP segment of a reassembled PDU]” in the Info column of the Wireshark display to indicate that this TCP segment contained data that belonged to an upper layer protocol message (in our case here, HTTP). You should also see TCP ACK segments being returned from `gaia.cs.umass.edu` to your computer.

Answer the following questions, by opening the Wireshark captured packet file *tcp-ethereal-trace-1* in <http://gaia.cs.umass.edu/wireshark-labs/wireshark-traces.zip> (that is download the trace and open that trace in Wireshark; see footnote 2). Whenever possible, when answering a question you should hand in a printout of the packet(s) within the trace that you used to answer the question asked. Annotate the printout³ to explain your answer. To print a packet, use *File->Print*, choose *Selected packet only*, choose *Packet summary line*, and select the minimum amount of packet detail that you need to answer the question.

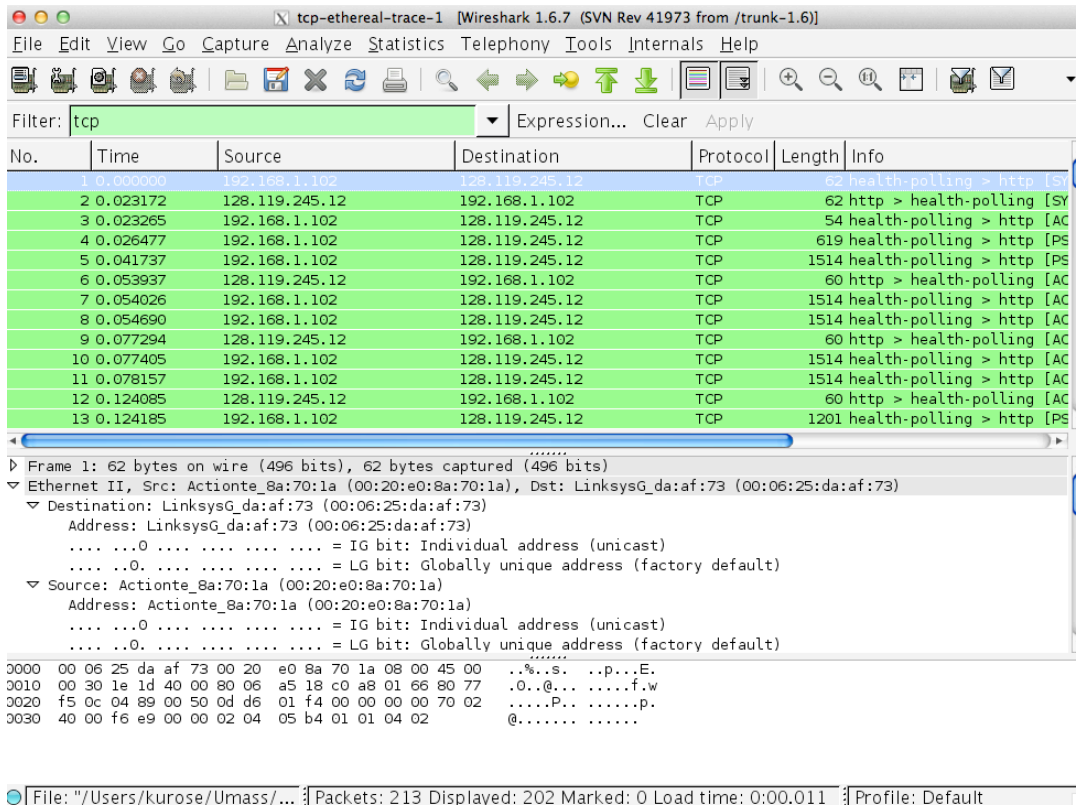
1. What is the IP address and TCP port number used by the client computer (source) that is transferring the file to `gaia.cs.umass.edu`? To answer this question, it’s probably easiest to select an HTTP message and explore the details of the TCP packet used to carry this HTTP message, using the “details of the selected packet header window” (refer to Figure 2 in the “Getting Started with Wireshark” Lab if you’re uncertain about the Wireshark windows).
2. What is the IP address of `gaia.cs.umass.edu`? On what port number is it sending and receiving TCP segments for this connection?

If you have been able to create your own trace, answer the following question:

3. What is the IP address and TCP port number used by your client computer (source) to transfer the file to `gaia.cs.umass.edu`?

Since this lab is about TCP rather than HTTP, let’s change Wireshark’s “listing of captured packets” window so that it shows information about the TCP segments containing the HTTP messages, rather than about the HTTP messages. To have Wireshark do this, select *Analyze->Enabled Protocols*. Then uncheck the HTTP box and select *OK*. You should now see a Wireshark window that looks like:

³ What do we mean by “annotate”? If you hand in a paper copy, please highlight where in the printout you’ve found the answer and add some text (preferably with a colored pen) noting what you found in what you’ve highlight. If you hand in an electronic copy, it would be great if you could also highlight and annotate.



This is what we're looking for - a series of TCP segments sent between your computer and gaia.cs.umass.edu. We will use the packet trace that you have captured (and/or the packet trace *tcp-ethereal-trace-1* in <http://gaia.cs.umass.edu/wireshark-labs/wireshark-traces.zip>; see earlier footnote) to study TCP behavior in the rest of this lab.

3. TCP Basics

Answer the following questions for the TCP segments:

4. What is the sequence number of the TCP SYN segment that is used to initiate the TCP connection between the client computer and gaia.cs.umass.edu? What is it in the segment that identifies the segment as a SYN segment?
5. What is the sequence number of the SYNACK segment sent by gaia.cs.umass.edu to the client computer in reply to the SYN? What is the value of the Acknowledgement field in the SYNACK segment? How did gaia.cs.umass.edu determine that value? What is it in the segment that identifies the segment as a SYNACK segment?
6. What is the sequence number of the TCP segment containing the HTTP POST command? Note that in order to find the POST command, you'll need to dig into the packet content field at the bottom of the Wireshark window, looking for a segment with a "POST" within its DATA field.
7. Consider the TCP segment containing the HTTP POST as the first segment in the TCP connection. What are the sequence numbers of the first six segments in the

TCP connection (including the segment containing the HTTP POST)? At what time was each segment sent? When was the ACK for each segment received? Given the difference between when each TCP segment was sent, and when its acknowledgement was received, what is the RTT value for each of the six segments? What is the `EstimatedRTT` value (see Section 3.5.3, page 242 in text) after the receipt of each ACK? Assume that the value of the `EstimatedRTT` is equal to the measured RTT for the first segment, and then is computed using the `EstimatedRTT` equation on page 242 for all subsequent segments.

Note: Wireshark has a nice feature that allows you to plot the RTT for each of the TCP segments sent. Select a TCP segment in the “listing of captured packets” window that is being sent from the client to the `gaia.cs.umass.edu` server. Then select: *Statistics->TCP Stream Graph->Round Trip Time Graph*.

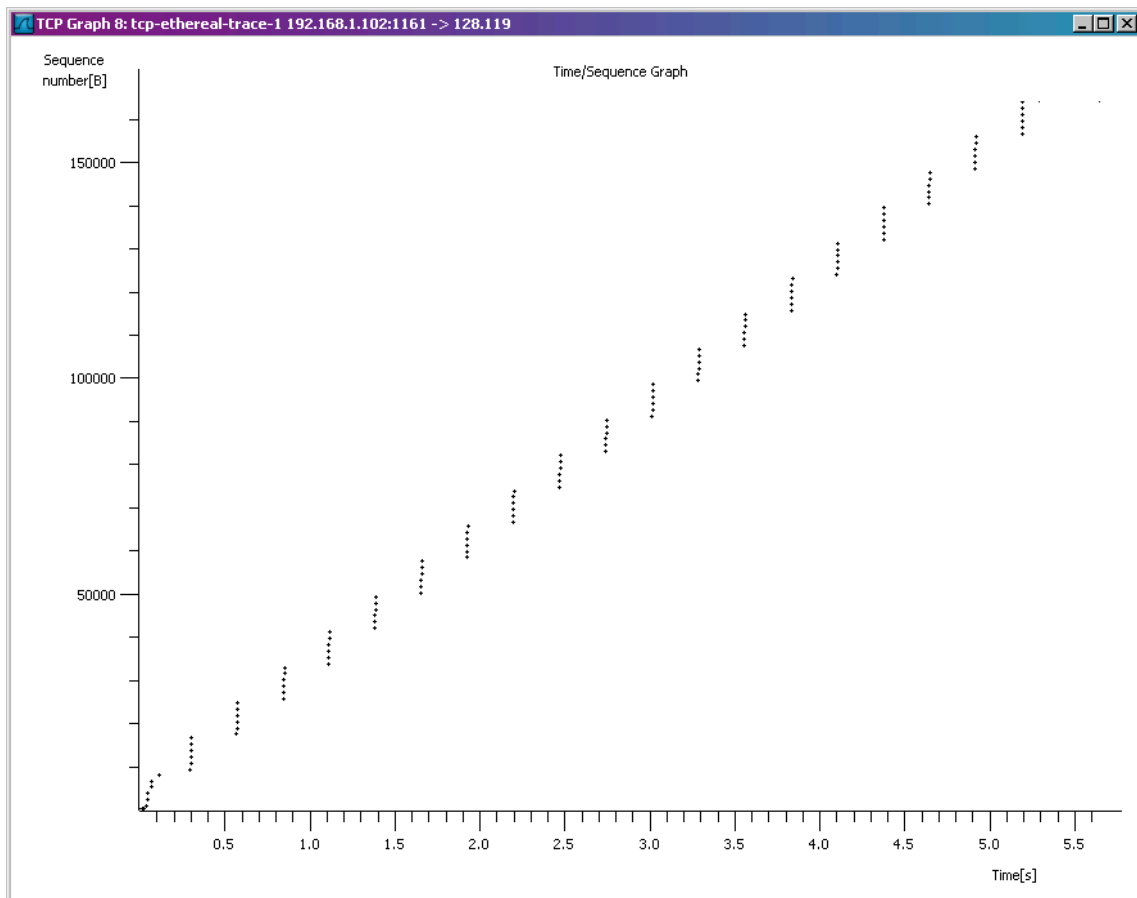
8. What is the length of each of the first six TCP segments?⁴
9. What is the minimum amount of available buffer space advertised at the receiver for the entire trace? Does the lack of receiver buffer space ever throttle the sender?
10. Are there any retransmitted segments in the trace file? What did you check for (in the trace) in order to answer this question?
11. How much data does the receiver typically acknowledge in an ACK? Can you identify cases where the receiver is ACKing every other received segment (see Table 3.2 on page 250 in the text).
12. What is the throughput (bytes transferred per unit time) for the TCP connection? Explain how you calculated this value.

⁴ The TCP segments in the `tcp-ethereal-trace-1` trace file are all less than 1460 bytes. This is because the computer on which the trace was gathered has an Ethernet card that limits the length of the maximum IP packet to 1500 bytes (40 bytes of TCP/IP header data and 1460 bytes of TCP payload). This 1500 byte value is the standard maximum length allowed by Ethernet. If your trace indicates a TCP length greater than 1500 bytes, and your computer is using an Ethernet connection, then Wireshark is reporting the wrong TCP segment length; it will likely also show only one large TCP segment rather than multiple smaller segments. Your computer is indeed probably sending multiple smaller segments, as indicated by the ACKs it receives. This inconsistency in reported segment lengths is due to the interaction between the Ethernet driver and the Wireshark software. We recommend that if you have this inconsistency, that you perform this lab using the provided trace file.

4. TCP congestion control in action

Let's now examine the amount of data sent per unit time from the client to the server. Rather than (tediously!) calculating this from the raw data in the Wireshark window, we'll use one of Wireshark's TCP graphing utilities - *Time-Sequence-Graph(Stevens)* - to plot out data.

- Select a TCP segment in the Wireshark's "listing of captured-packets" window. Then select the menu : *Statistics->TCP Stream Graph-> Time-Sequence-Graph(Stevens)*. You should see a plot that looks similar to the following plot, which was created from the captured packets in the packet trace *tcp-ethereal-trace-1* in <http://gaia.cs.umass.edu/wireshark-labs/wireshark-traces.zip> (see earlier footnote):



Here, each dot represents a TCP segment sent, plotting the sequence number of the segment versus the time at which it was sent. Note that a set of dots stacked above each other represents a series of packets that were sent back-to-back by the sender.

Answer the following questions for the TCP segments the packet trace *tcp-ethereal-trace-1* in <http://gaia.cs.umass.edu/wireshark-labs/wireshark-traces.zip>

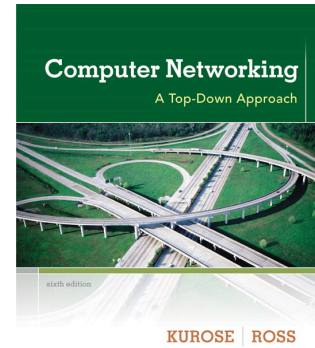
13. Use the *Time-Sequence-Graph(Stevens)* plotting tool to view the sequence number versus time plot of segments being sent from the client to the `gaia.cs.umass.edu` server. Can you identify where TCP's slowstart phase begins and ends, and where congestion avoidance takes over? Comment on ways in which the measured data differs from the idealized behavior of TCP that we've studied in the text.
14. Answer each of two questions above for the trace that you have gathered when you transferred a file from your computer to `gaia.cs.umass.edu`

Wireshark Lab: TCP

SOLUTION

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The answers below are based on the trace file *tcp-ethereal-trace-1* in in <http://gaia.cs.umass.edu/wireshark-labs/wireshark-traces.zip>

TCP Basics

Answer the following questions for the TCP segments:

1. *What is the IP address and TCP port number used by your client computer (source) to transfer the file to gaia.cs.umass.edu?*
2. *What is the IP address and port number used by gaia.cs.umass.edu to receive the file.*

Solution: Client computer (source)

IP address: 192.168.1.102

TCP port number: 1161

Destination computer: gaia.cs.umass.edu

IP address: 128.119.245.12

TCP port number: 80

3. If you did this problem on your own computer, you'll have your own solution

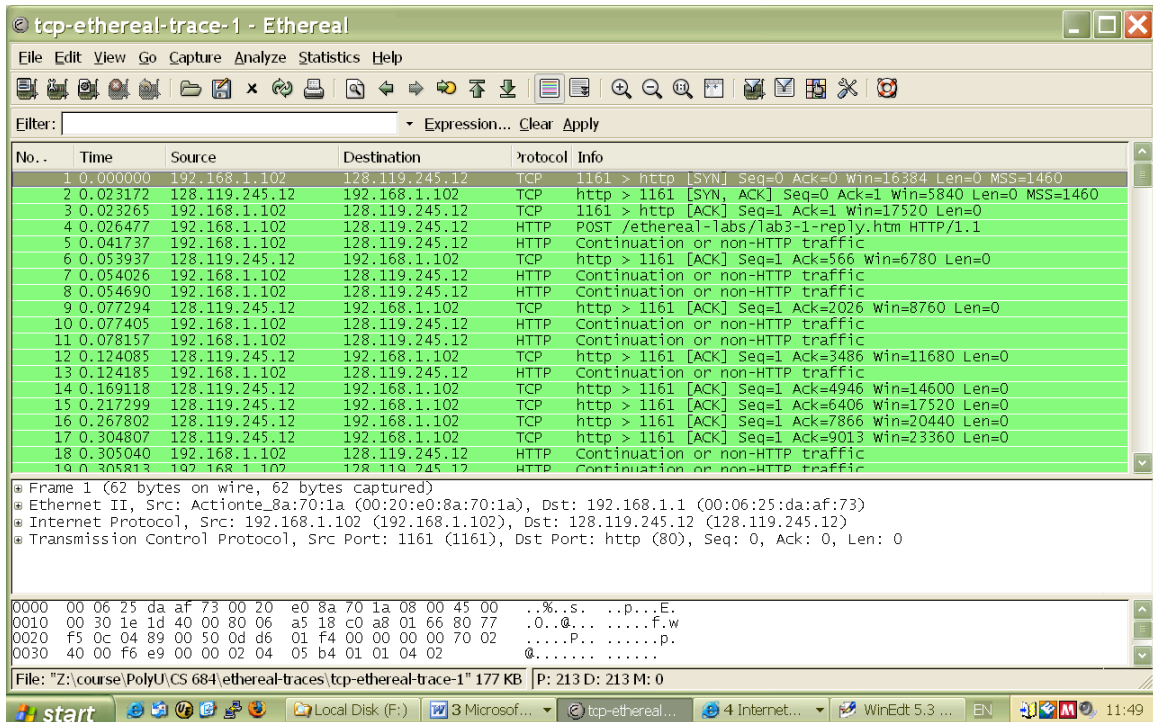


Figure 1: IP addresses and TCP port numbers of the client computer (source) and gaia.cs.umass.edu

4. What is the sequence number of the TCP SYN segment that is used to initiate the TCP connection between the client computer and gaia.cs.umass.edu? What is it in the segment that identifies the segment as a SYN segment?

Solution: Sequence number of the TCP SYN segment is used to initiate the TCP connection between the client computer and gaia.cs.umass.edu. The value is 0 in this trace.

The SYN flag is set to 1 and it indicates that this segment is a SYN segment.

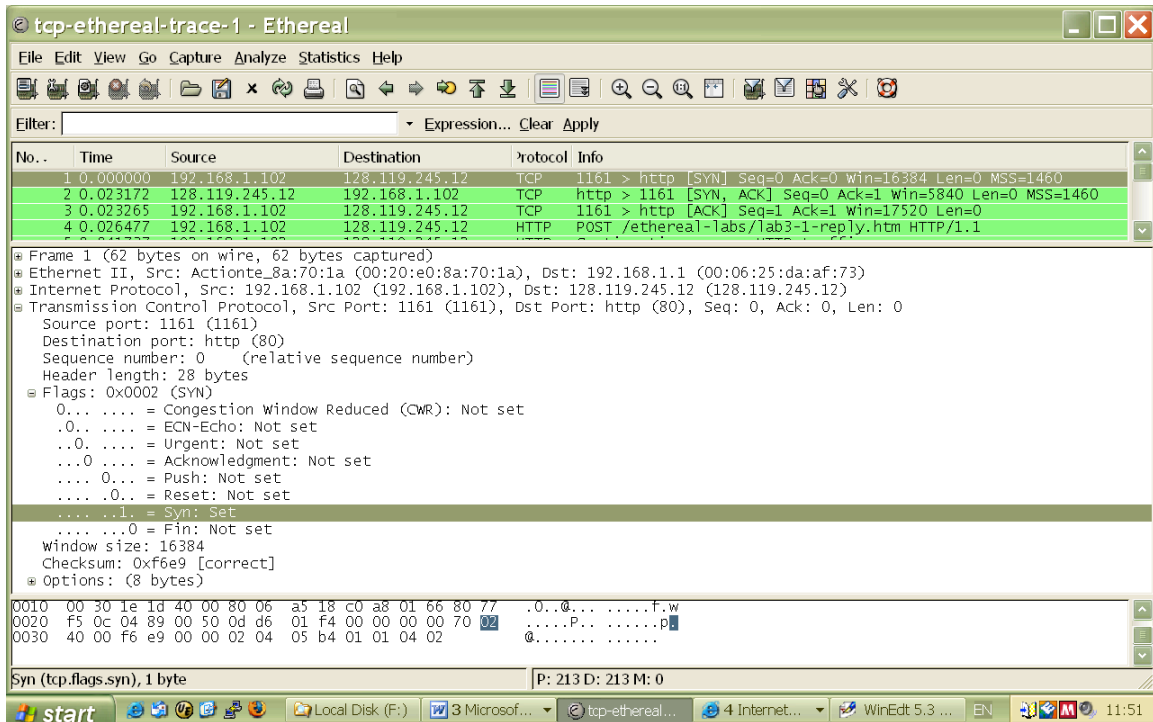


Figure 2: Sequence number of the TCP SYN segment

5. What is the sequence number of the SYNACK segment sent by gaia.cs.umass.edu to the client computer in reply to the SYN? What is the value of the ACKnowledgement field in the SYNACK segment? How did gaia.cs.umass.edu determine that value? What is it in the segment that identifies the segment as a SYNACK segment?

Solution: Sequence number of the SYNACK segment from gaia.cs.umass.edu to the client computer in reply to the SYN has the value of 0 in this trace.

The value of the ACKnowledgement field in the SYNACK segment is 1. The value of the ACKnowledgement field in the SYNACK segment is determined by gaia.cs.umass.edu by adding 1 to the initial sequence number of SYN segment from the client computer (i.e. the sequence number of the SYN segment initiated by the client computer is 0.).

The SYN flag and Acknowledgement flag in the segment are set to 1 and they indicate that this segment is a SYNACK segment.

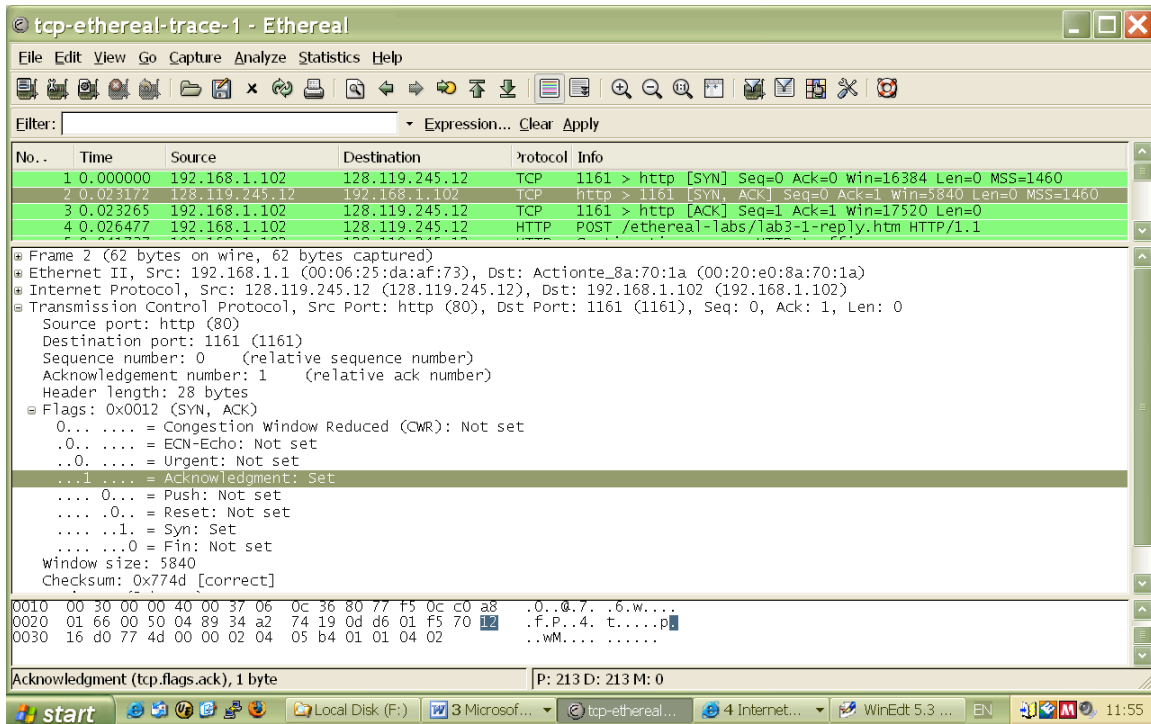


Figure 3: Sequence number and Acknowledgement number of the SYNACK segment

6. *What is the sequence number of the TCP segment containing the HTTP POST command? Note that in order to find the POST command, you'll need to dig into the packet content field at the bottom of the Wireshark window, looking for a segment with a "POST" within its DATA field.*

Solution: No. 4 segment is the TCP segment containing the HTTP POST command. The sequence number of this segment has the value of 1.

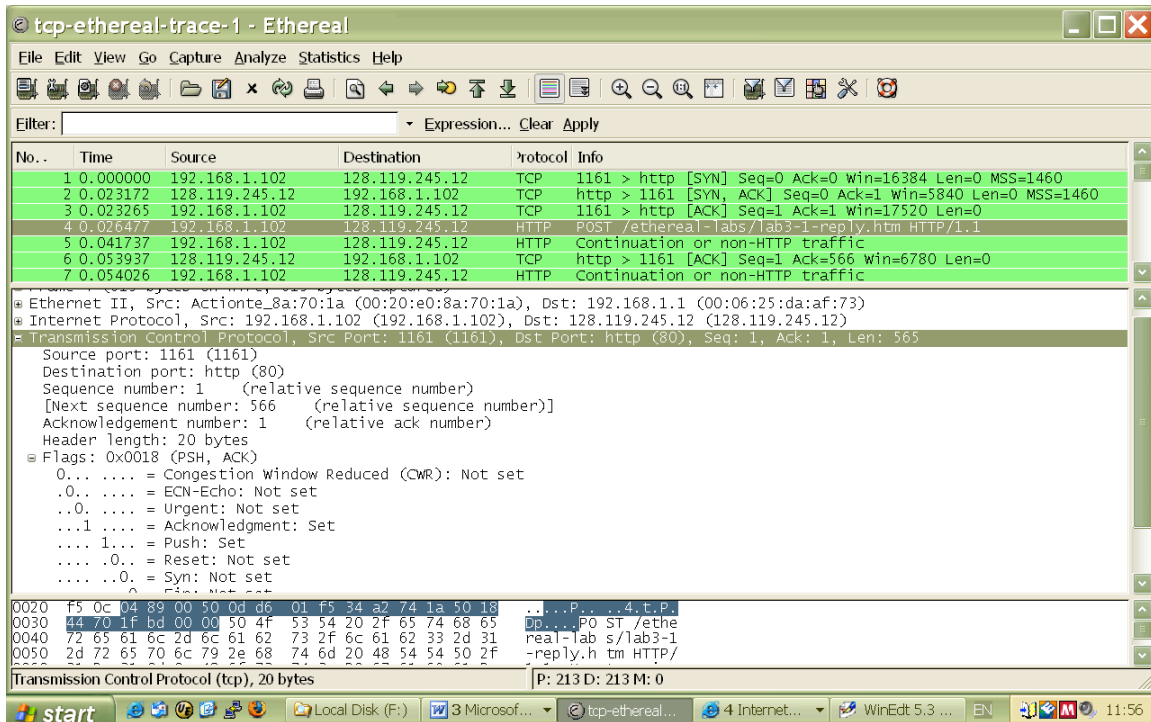


Figure 4: Sequence number of the TCP segment containing the HTTP POST command

- Consider the TCP segment containing the HTTP POST as the first segment in the TCP connection. What are the sequence numbers of the first six segments in the TCP connection (including the segment containing the HTTP POST)? At what time was each segment sent? When was the ACK for each segment received? Given the difference between when each TCP segment was sent, and when its acknowledgement was received, what is the RTT value for each of the six segments? What is the EstimatedRTT value (see page 237 in text) after the receipt of each ACK? Assume that the value of the EstimatedRTT is equal to the measured RTT for the first segment, and then is computed using the EstimatedRTT equation on page 237 for all subsequent segments.

Note: Wireshark has a nice feature that allows you to plot the RTT for each of the TCP segments sent. Select a TCP segment in the “listing of captured packets” window that is being sent from the client to the *gaia.cs.umass.edu* server. Then select: Statistics->TCP Stream Graph->Round Trip Time Graph.

Solution: The HTTP POST segment is considered as the first segment. Segments 1 – 6 are No. 4, 5, 7, 8, 10, and 11 in this trace respectively. The ACKs of segments 1 – 6 are No. 6, 9, 12, 14, 15, and 16 in this trace.

- Segment 1 sequence number: 1
- Segment 2 sequence number: 566
- Segment 3 sequence number: 2026
- Segment 4 sequence number: 3486

Segment 5 sequence number: 4946

Segment 6 sequence number: 6406

The sending time and the received time of ACKs are tabulated in the following table.

	Sent time	ACK received time	RTT (seconds)
Segment 1	0.026477	0.053937	0.02746
Segment 2	0.041737	0.077294	0.035557
Segment 3	0.054026	0.124085	0.070059
Segment 4	0.054690	0.169118	0.11443
Segment 5	0.077405	0.217299	0.13989
Segment 6	0.078157	0.267802	0.18964

$$\text{EstimatedRTT} = 0.875 * \text{EstimatedRTT} + 0.125 * \text{SampleRTT}$$

EstimatedRTT after the receipt of the ACK of segment 1:

$$\text{EstimatedRTT} = \text{RTT for Segment 1} = 0.02746 \text{ second}$$

EstimatedRTT after the receipt of the ACK of segment 2:

$$\text{EstimatedRTT} = 0.875 * 0.02746 + 0.125 * 0.035557 = 0.0285$$

EstimatedRTT after the receipt of the ACK of segment 3:

$$\text{EstimatedRTT} = 0.875 * 0.0285 + 0.125 * 0.070059 = 0.0337$$

EstimatedRTT after the receipt of the ACK of segment 4:

$$\text{EstimatedRTT} = 0.875 * 0.0337 + 0.125 * 0.11443 = 0.0438$$

EstimatedRTT after the receipt of the ACK of segment 5:

$$\text{EstimatedRTT} = 0.875 * 0.0438 + 0.125 * 0.13989 = 0.0558$$

EstimatedRTT after the receipt of the ACK of segment 6:

$$\text{EstimatedRTT} = 0.875 * 0.0558 + 0.125 * 0.18964 = 0.0725 \text{ second}$$

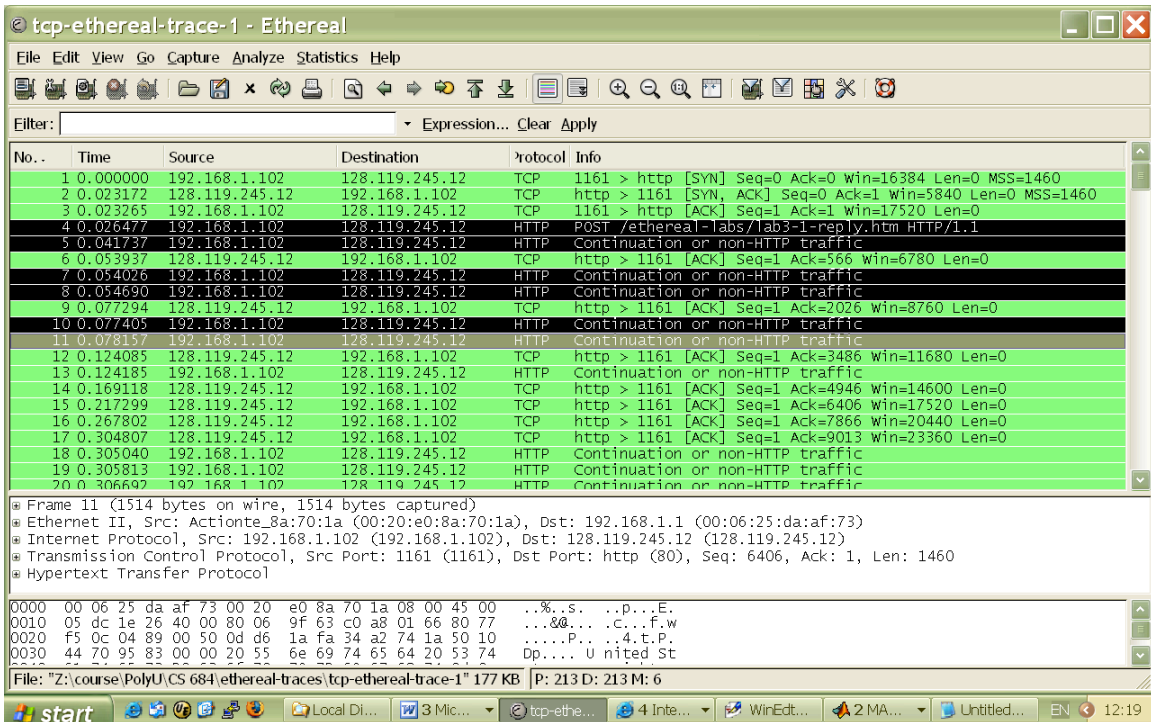


Figure 5: Segments 1 – 6

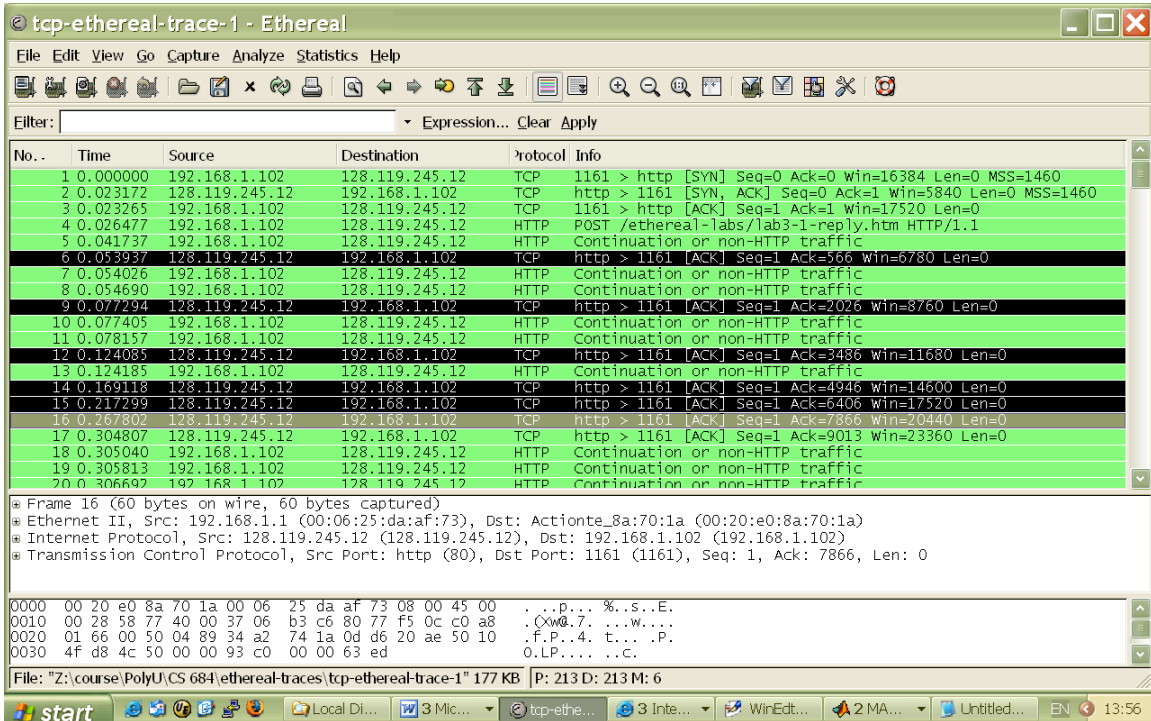


Figure 6: ACKs of segments 1 - 6

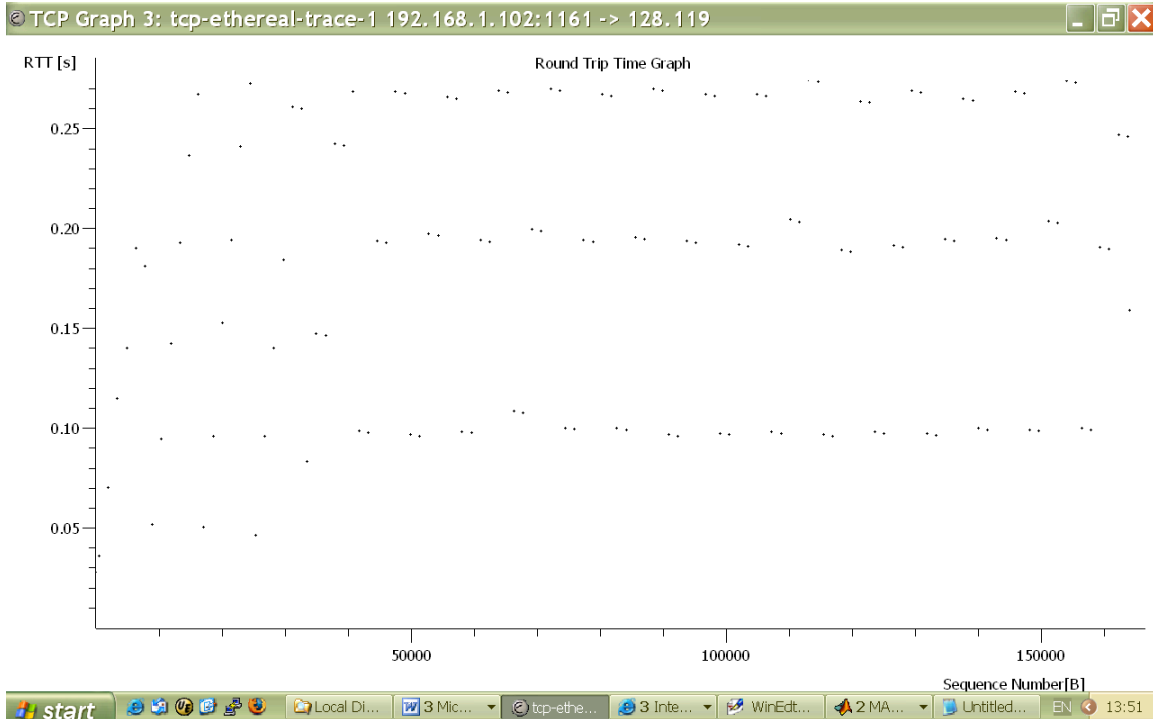


Figure 7: Round Trip Time Graph

8. What is the length of each of the first six TCP segments?

Solution: Length of the first TCP segment (containing the HTTP POST): 565 bytes

Length of each of the other five TCP segments: 1460 bytes (MSS)

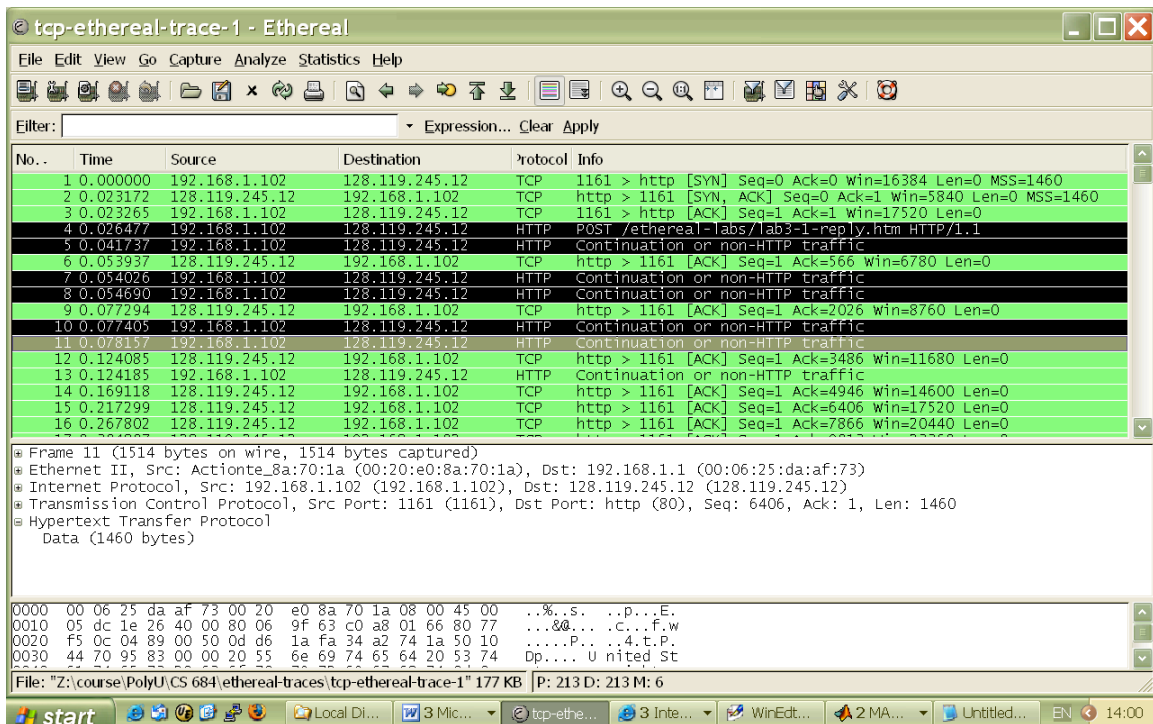


Figure 8: Lengths of segments 1 - 6

9. *What is the minimum amount of available buffer space advertised at the received for the entire trace? Does the lack of receiver buffer space ever throttle the sender?*

Solution: The minimum amount of buffer space (receiver window) advertised at gaia.cs.umass.edu for the entire trace is 5840 bytes, which shows in the first acknowledgement from the server. This receiver window grows steadily until a maximum receiver buffer size of 62780 bytes. The sender is never throttled due to lacking of receiver buffer space by inspecting this trace.

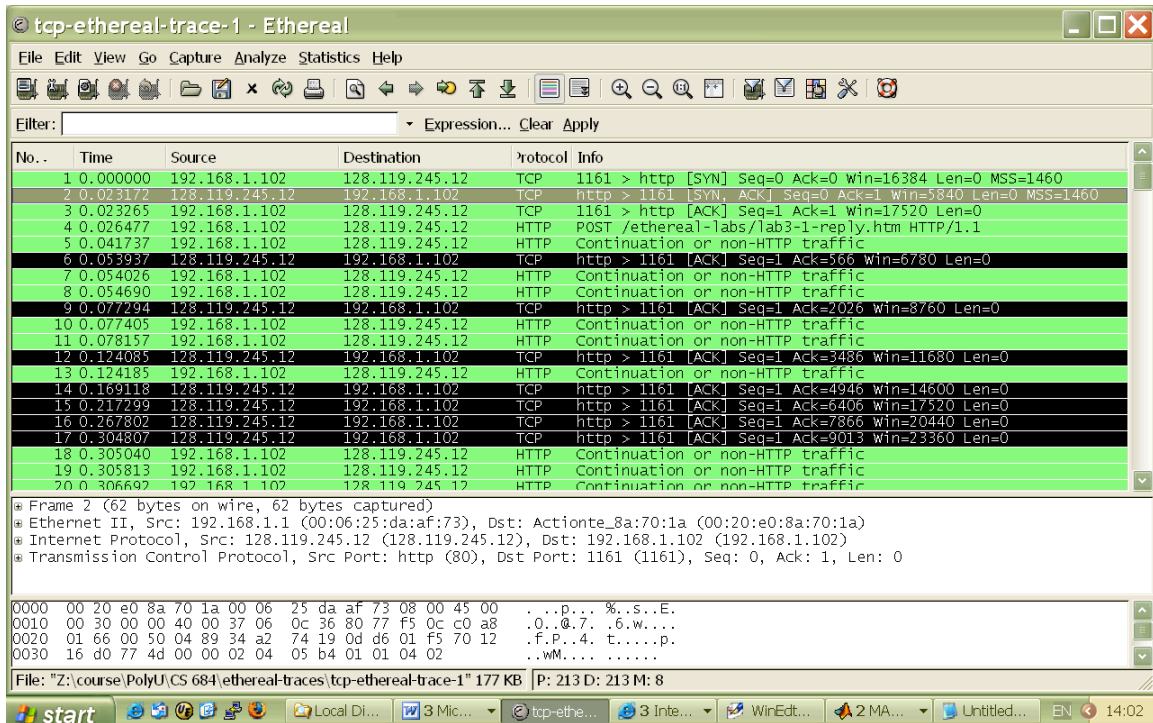


Figure 9: Minimum receive window advertised at gaia.cs.umass.edu (packet No. 2)

10. *Are there any retransmitted segments in the trace file? What did you check for (in the trace) in order to answer this question?*

Solution: There are no retransmitted segments in the trace file. We can verify this by checking the sequence numbers of the TCP segments in the trace file. In the *Time-Sequence-Graph (Stevens)* of this trace, all sequence numbers from the source (192.168.1.102) to the destination (128.119.245.12) are increasing monotonically with respect to time. If there is a retransmitted segment, the sequence number of this retransmitted segment should be smaller than those of its neighboring segments.

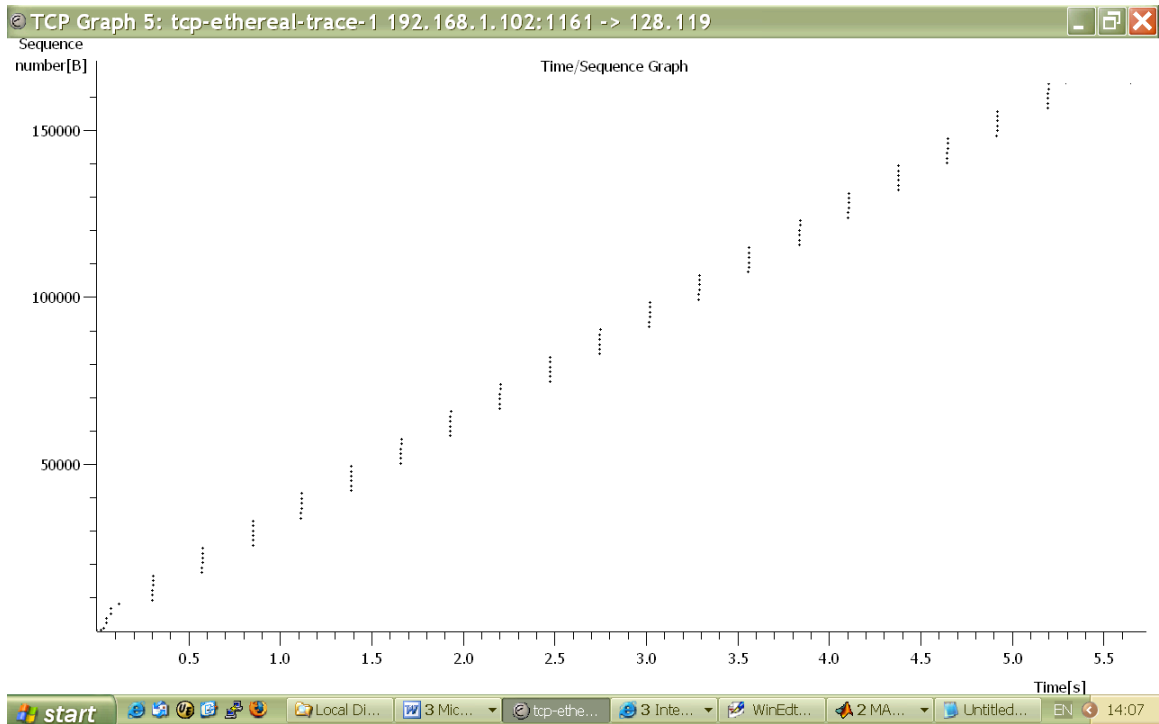


Figure 10: Sequence numbers of the segments from the source (192 . 168 . 1 . 102) to the destination (128 . 119 . 245 . 12)

11. How much data does the receiver typically acknowledge in an ACK? Can you identify cases where the receiver is ACKing every other received segment (see Table 3.2 on page 247 in the text).

Solution: The acknowledged sequence numbers of the ACKs are listed as follows.

	acknowledged sequence number	acknowledged data
ACK 1	566	566
ACK 2	2026	1460
ACK 3	3486	1460
ACK 4	4946	1460
ACK 5	6406	1460
ACK 6	7866	1460
ACK 7	9013	1147
ACK 8	10473	1460
ACK 9	11933	1460
ACK 10	13393	1460
ACK 11	14853	1460
ACK 12	16313	1460

...

The difference between the acknowledged sequence numbers of two consecutive ACKs indicates the data received by the server between these two ACKs. By inspecting the amount of acknowledged data by each ACK, there are cases where the receiver is

ACKing every other segment. For example, segment of No. 80 acknowledged data with 2920 bytes = 1460*2 bytes.

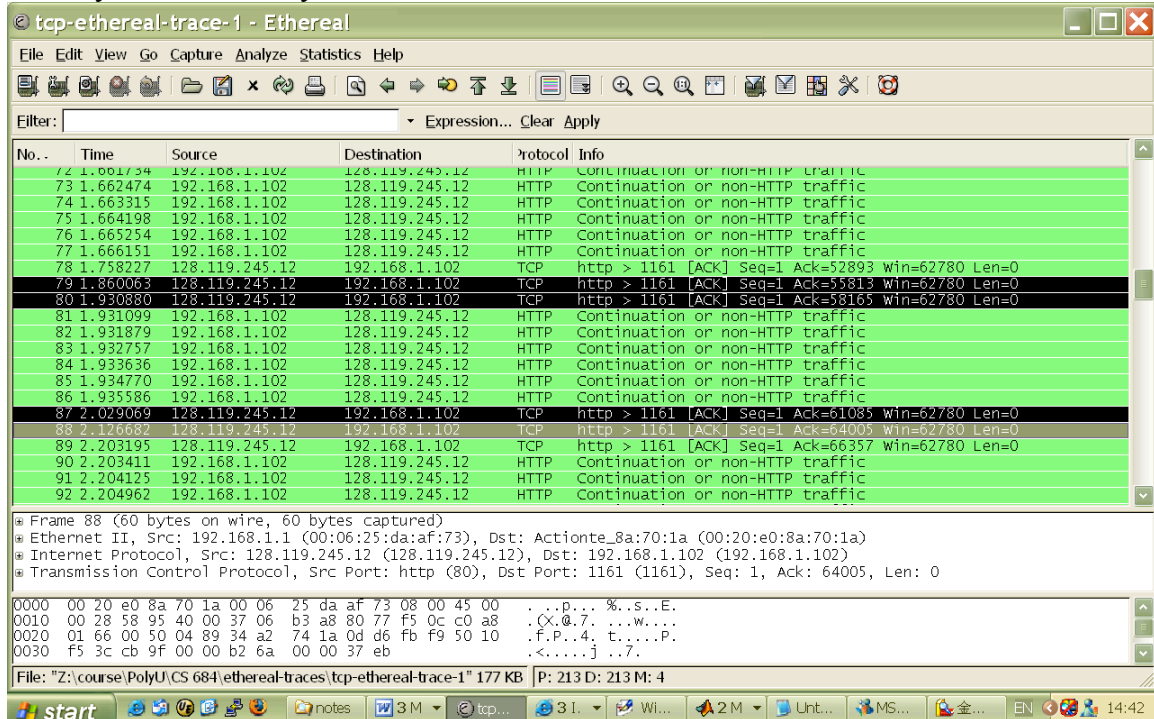


Figure 8: Cumulative ACKs (No. 80, 87, 88, etc) where the receiver is ACKing every other received segment.

12. What is the throughput (bytes transferred per unit time) for the TCP connection? Explain how you calculated this value.

Solution: The computation of TCP throughput largely depends on the selection of averaging time period. As a common throughput computation, in this question, we select the average time period as the whole connection time. Then, the average throughput for this TCP connection is computed as the ratio between the total amount data and the total transmission time. The total amount data transmitted can be computed by the difference between the sequence number of the first TCP segment (i.e. 1 byte for No. 4 segment) and the acknowledged sequence number of the last ACK (164091 bytes for No. 202 segment). Therefore, the total data are 164091 - 1 = 164090 bytes. The whole transmission time is the difference of the time instant of the first TCP segment (i.e., 0.026477 second for No.4 segment) and the time instant of the last ACK (i.e., 5.455830 second for No. 202 segment). Therefore, the total transmission time is 5.455830 - 0.026477 = 5.4294 seconds. Hence, the throughput for the TCP connection is computed as 164090/5.4294 = 30.222 KByte/sec.