Outline

What is Gazebo, and why should you use it

Overview and architecture

Environment modeling

Robot modeling

Interfaces

Getting Help
Simulation for Robots

Towards accurate physical simulation
Easy transition to and from simulation
Remove hardware issues and resource constraints

Support common robot control software
Custom client code
ROS interface
Player interfaces
Use Cases
Overview & Architecture
New in 1.0

Separation of physics and visualization
  server: physics and sensor generation
  client: visualization and user interface

Socket communication
  Protobuf provides message passing

Simplified plugin interface
  Control any aspect of simulation

Simulation Description Format (SDF)
  XML based format for worlds and models
Architecture

Physics
- Rigid Body Dynamics
  - ODE
  - Bullet*

Rendering
- OpenGL
  - OGRE

Interfaces
- Plugins and IPC
  - Google Protobuf
  - Boost ASIO

User Interfaces
- GUI
  - QT
  - CEGUI
Architecture

Run Loop

Physics Update

Sensor Data Generation

Plugins and IPC Update

server

client
Environment Modeling
Environments

Simple
- Focused scenario
- Manipulation
- Perception

Indoor
- Path planning
- Mobile manipulation
- Clone real environment

Outdoor
- Aerial robots
- Outdoor mobile and legged robots
Creating Environments

Built into Gazebo

3D Warehouse or model editor

Image editor
A Word on Meshes

Alignment and size
  Move meshes to origin (0,0,0) when exporting
  Stay consistent with units (preferably metric)

Materials and lighting
  Ambient and diffuse color properties are important
  Lighting requires outward facing normals
  Improve texture quality before mesh quality

Efficient meshes
  Reduce polygon count
  Use normal maps for improved lighting
Organizing Resources

Directory structure for a project

Meshes: [project_path]/Media/models
Images: [project_path]/Media/materials/textures
Materials: [project_path]/Media/materials/scripts

Environment variable

export GAZEBO_RESOURCE_PATH=[project_path]

API

gazebo::SystemPaths::AddGazeboPaths(string);
Efficient Environments

Static Models
- Not dynamically simulated
- Act only as collision objects
- Static models can be animated

Reduce Joints
- Create models using composite links
Add Visual Realism

**Lighting**
- Limit number of lights, and reduce ambient light
- Use directional lights for shadows
- Desired effects requires parameter tuning

**Custom shaders**
- Create and load vertex and pixel shader via material scripts

**Sky and fog**
- Add any material to a sky dome
- Fog can add a horizon and add sense of distance
Robot Modeling
What is a Robot (Model)?

A collection of links, joints, sensors, actuators and plugins.
Example: Mass Spring System

Simple mass spring system in Gazebo:
Example: SCARA Arm

Simplified arm model
Robot Models

Simple platforms
- Built-in shapes
- Mesh skinning

Realistic physical properties
- Meshes as collision objects
- Mass and inertia properties
- Surface friction
- 6 joint types

Full sensor suite
- Laser range finders
- Mono/Stereo cameras
- Kinect
- Contact
- Joint force/torques
Why 3D Dynamics Simulator

Dynamics simulation

"Looks right" interactive mechanical behaviors
Non-interactive higher fidelity dynamics

Visual simulation

3D image, range, depth sensor generation

Closing the loop between visual and dynamics simulation.
What to Expect (Dynamics)

Motion
  Newton-Euler equations.
  First order time integrator.
Constraints
  Frictionless joints.
Collision
  Perfectly inelastic collision*.
Contact
  Friction pyramid.
Modeling: URDF and SDF

How to specify a robot model

URDF format and SDF format

URDF vs SDF

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>URDF</th>
<th>SDF</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>● Tree</td>
<td>● Graph</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● Link --&gt; Link transforms</td>
<td>● Model --&gt; Link transforms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● Link and Joint + &quot;Extensions&quot;</td>
<td>● Link, Joint, Sensors, Plugins, Lights, Physics, Scene.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

URDF --> SDF converters

```
rosrun urdf2model -f <urdf> -o <sdf>
```

Contributing robot models

Soon to be released online model database
What are Links

Inertial (mass, moment of inertia)
   The "M" in \( f=Ma \) for physics engines

Collision (geometry)
   Used by collision engine to generate contact joints for the physics engine

Visual (geometry)
   Used by render engine to generate images for GUI and camera or depth sensors
Joints

User defined joints

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>DOF</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>revolute</td>
<td>1 rotational</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>prismatic</td>
<td>1 translational</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>revolute2</td>
<td>2 rotational</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>DOF</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>universal</td>
<td>2 rotational</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ball</td>
<td>3 rotational</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>screw</td>
<td>1 trans. 1 rot.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Dynamically created

Contact joints between objects

Created from colliding collision geometries

Limited to 20 contacts for each colliding pair by default

Contact information accessible through Contact Sensor
Sensors

Camera
  Render to offscreen buffer
Kinect
  Depth camera
Laser
  CPU and GPU based ray casting
Contact
  Generated by collision engine
RFID
  Information generated from model positions
Force torque
  Specific to joints at the moment
Efficient Robot Models

Physics (CPU):
- Limit contacts (<physics max_contacts="3"/>)
- Kinematic trees are better than loops
- Reduce number of joints in a model

Collision (CPU):
- Primitives are more efficient than trimeshes
- Limit collision mesh size (< ~5k triangles per link)

Rendering (GPU):
- Limit visual mesh size (< ~5k triangles per link)
- Limit image/depth sensor resolution or rate
How to Improve Dynamics Accuracy

...with maximal (Cartesian) coordinate solvers such as ODE or Bullet.

How to choose time step size:
Motor controller frequency driven.
First order Euler time stepping $O(\Delta t)$.

How to tweak solver parameters:
<solver type="quick" iters="100"/>
Default 10 iterations for LCP solve, increase if necessary.

Model physics of the real robot more closely
Account for more details. E.g. prismatic vs. screw.
Controlling the Robot Model

Graphical joint control widget in Gazebo

- Direct force control.
- PID position and velocity.

Programmatic control

- Level of abstraction, hardware/software transparency.
- World plugins: access to all models.
- Model plugins: access to all joints and links.
Troubleshooting Models

Mesh is out of place or has improper scale
Recenter and scale mesh using 3D modeling application
Enable "Show Collisions" in GUI to debug

Improper joint placement and rotation
Enable "Show Joints" in GUI to debug

Improper inertial values
Troubleshooting Models

Symptom: Model flies away, spins out of control

**Cause:** Interpenetration with surroundings

**Solution:** Step through simulation slowly. Check for collisions, interpenetrations between model/ground. Spawn model away from other objects.
Troubleshooting Models

Symptom: Model spins out of control

**Cause:** Large accelerations \( f \gg m \)

**Solution:** Remove forces, e.g. disable plugins that sets forces on joints or links, and see if problem goes away. Look for tiny inertia values.
Troubleshooting Models

Symptom: Model is jittery

Cause: Stiff system. Large mass ratio between connected links

Solution: Reduce time step size or increase inner iteration counts
Interfaces
Plugins

Programmatic interface to Gazebo

Types

- System: Control the load and init process
- World: All models and physics engine
- Model: Joints and links
- Sensor: Control data generation and processing

Use cases

- System: Specify custom search paths
- World: Dynamically change physics engine
- Model: Joint controller, such as a differential drive
- Sensor: Data filtering or add noise models
Creating Plugins

Reference
- Gazebo wiki tutorials and API specification
- Examples distributed with the gazebo sources

ROS plugins
- Gazebo ROS package provides interface between Gazebo and ROS framework
  - `gazebo_plugins` ROS package

Contribute plugins
- Submit patches to Gazebo
- Near future: Online database for plugins
Interprocess Communication

Topics

Usage nearly identical to ROS

PublisherPtr pub = node->Advertise<msg_type>(topic_name);
SubscriberPtr sub = node->Subscribe(todoic_name, callback);

Topics vs plugins

Topics: Run server remotely, start & stop client
Plugins: Access to complete API, updates every cycle
Commandline Tools

Gazebo tools
  System inspection: gztopic, gzstats
  Insert and remove models: gzfactory

ROS tools
  rosrune gazebo spawn_model
  rosrune gazebo urdf2model
Getting Help

ROS Answers
answers.ros.org

Gazebo mailing list
gazebosim.org/support.html

Wiki and Tutorials
gazebosim.org/wiki

Contributing code
Submit patches (kforge.ros.org/gazebo/trac)
Send email to mailing list for suggestions
Questions
Plugin Examples

Differential Drive
Controls two joints attached to a chassis and wheels
Accepts velocity commands, produce joint torques
Example usage: Pioneer2dx mobile base

ROS PR2 Controller

gazebo_ros_controller_manager ROS plugin
Mimics the real PR2 motors at transmission level
Allows code developed in simulation run on a real PR2
Topic Examples

Graphical Interface
All communication between the server and client is handled via topics

Player Interface
Plugins are loaded into Player which then communicate to Gazebo via Topics

Command line tools
Report statistics and offer basic world control functionality