

Theme: Shanghai library FOLIO project

Time: Sept 14, 2022 07:30pm (EDT) / Sept 15, 2022 07:30am (GMT+8)

Attendees:

Vincent Bateau (Enterprise Architect, EBSCO)

Gang Zhou (Project manager, Shanghai library)

Sha Jiang (Technical Director, Jiata)

Lucy Liu (Product Owner, Folio China)

Notes:

1. Could you share some information on the development of ERM? Is there a future plan for the e-usage module? I think counter-report is not enough for us. We have received some requirements for e-Usage or similar functions. Counter-report is not enough to fulfill that requirement. We are thinking of gathering usage messages from VuFind or discovery systems and put it into e-Usage or other similar modules to show how people search and use e-resources. (Shang Jiang)

Vince:

- e-Usage is an application that was built once and is not actively built currently. It does not have a roadmap. And it no longer has a PO. The previous PO has left the FOLIO project. I don't think there's any particular plan to enhance it.
- If there's a need for new functionality, we'll have to have someone who can develop it or develop it on your own.

2. Could you share with us your experience and thoughts about the WOLFcon? (Lucy)

Vince:

- Overall the conference was good. People were happy to get together and discuss things. It was quite collaborative in the WOLFcon conference.
- The blueprint session that Tod and I presented was well received. There was a good discussion and a good agreement from everybody, even though I deliberately had set up some subjects which might be challenging or controversial. I think actually there was not really any controversy. People were on board with it. Earlier in the same day, I sat in another session with Mike Taylor from index Data called Platform Minimal. He was presenting some ideas and some experiments that are being conducted by Index Data around platform minimal/smaller platform and packaging around applications - two of the main things that I presented. Clearly there was the same thinking even though we hadn't discussed these things between us ahead of time. This is an example of good collaboration, consensus of the things that we need to go for, and the long-term vision of how to develop the platform.
- I watched the recording of your presentation. It was very interesting. And I can say that I had heard from several people who have been in your session or had watched the recording that they were very impressed by a lot of the work that has been done with the Shanghai Library crew, and how they are advancing FOLIO in the direction of anything

that has not been done yet by the general FOLIO community. Some people have expressed the desire to align a little bit closer of the work that's being done in Shanghai or FOLIO China in general because there's also concern that if it's too far ahead in one group or another, there might be some divergence on the overall project with could be difficult in the long term.

Lucy: Thank you for watching our recording and for sharing with us your feedback and other people's feedback. FOLIO China is willing to collaborate with the general FOLIO community to move the project forward. We agree with you that we need close cooperation.

3. Do you have any updates to the blueprint topic? You and @Tod Olson led a very lively discussion around the potential architectural changes and got a lot of input from the attendees at WOLFcon. How would you adjust the architectural vision based on the input you received? What steps will you take to turn the ideas into reality? (Lucy)

Here is the recording of the blueprint session at WOLFcon

https://prod-zoom-recordings-openlibraryfoundation-org.s3.amazonaws.com/61bee6e4-1a13-45fc-ba56-249f7fad9cd3%2Fshared_screen_with_speaker_view.mp4

Vince: I think there will be some changes. The feedback is a clear indication that there was interest in getting these changes in there, and that the changes that were being proposed were acceptable. And they are compatible with some of the experiments that Index Data is doing. There are going to be some further discussions. We are going to continue the conversation and propose some designs. There's a Slack channel that Mike Taylor created called #platform-minimal. There haven't been a lot of activities yet because other people are still catching up after the conference. There will be some proposals coming through to refine some of these things like Platform minimal and how to pack things up with applications. That would be the first step to support app stores and to provide structures within the project to support these things.

Lucy: Can we say the ideas discussed in your session will actually happen in the near future? Is there a timeline to turn them into reality?

Vince:

- Ideas take time to distribute, get thought about and discussed. If "the near future" means next year, yes, absolutely.
- No timeline. It depends on the development capacity of the community to execute the design. There are a lot of ideas. But not many development resources can be used. A lot of things we've mentioned fall under the core-platform team which has only one FTE. And that one FTE is not one full-time developer. Actually several part-time developers contribute to it. It's not enough to move ahead on that immediately.

Lucy: You introduced the ideas in the logic sequence: Bounded context → Applications → Platform minimal → Cross-app data sync. Must we achieve one goal before moving on to the next?

Vince: We can work on them in parallel. There are a few dependencies, but not tremendously in a large way. Cross-app data sync is independent of the other subjects. A proposal has been

established. We just need a good use case so that it can be applied. We want to confirm the proposed design can be applied to use cases before we apply it to other things.

Lucy: TC did a WOLFcon briefing in a recent meeting. What topics are on the TC agenda for the next few meetings?

Vince:

- The purpose of the briefing is just to provide information to TC members who had not been at the conference on some of the points that were raised there. There's no particular decision that TC needs to make, not until somebody has presented something.
- There will be designs coming up. And there will be the problem of finding somebody with the capacity and resources willing to do that. The CC has decided at WOLFcon that it would reach out to the community and see if institutions can contribute development resources.
- We have an example of the Calendar App. An independent team from University of Alabama decided on their own that they don't like it and they developed a replacement which is quite good. The TC right now is working on the process for how to include it in FOLIO. As you have known, the TC has developed a process to accept new modules/new functions in collaboration with the PC in the past few months. But this case is not someone introducing a new module. It's someone introducing a replacement module. The set of criteria can be different. It's a good application and has been reviewed by the TC. We are at the final stage of getting it into FOLIO. It will happen in the next few months. So an independent team can contribute a new/replacement application and submit it to the project.

4. Are the topics of platform-minimum, Spring Way just a discussion, or the direction of future technology and products in FOLIO? (Gang Zhou)

Vince:

- Some of the topics represent things that are already existing in Folio and the purpose of the presentations was to raise awareness and give an update to the latest improvements. An example of this is Springway, which has updated documentation, a how-to guide and a new sample module project (pet store)
- Other sessions/topics were to present ideas and gather feedback: as is the case for platform minimal, applications packaging. The purpose there was to validate the ideas and measure the interest in the proposed direction. Based-on the positive reaction, these will become a reality.

5. As for Spring Way, some modules have been developed. Does TC have mandatory regulations or recommendations for new modules in the future? (Gang Zhou)

Vince:

- The TC has not made any mandatory rules about using RMB or SpringWay. They have previously recognized that SpringWay is the desirable approach going forward for any developers who are looking for the simplest path to building a new module. RMB has not

yet been deprecated, but maybe it should be. It has fallen behind in its support of underlying technology - for example the choice of RAML has made it difficult to find libraries in support, since mostly OpenAPI is the mainstream standard (which SpringWay supports). It was previously accepted that legacy modules written with RMB would eventually be rewritten in SpringWay, but that new modules would preferably be created in SpringWay instead of RMB. Unfortunately, some new modules had since been created using RMB. This may be because the documentation available to new developers didn't even mention SpringWay, only RMB. Therefore, this was the motivation to update the documentation to mention SpringWay, create a sample module, and promote Springway in a WolfCon session.

- However, there are no restrictions in HOW a module is created. SpringWay is a framework that offers an easy path (as did RMB before). For various reasons, developers may choose not to use a framework and do it all the hard way. This is the purpose of the folio-vrtx-lib presented by Adam. It is not a framework but merely a library that provides the integration to VrtX. It does support OpenAPI, but it does not do any of the other things that RMB does such as manage your SQL interfaces to storage.

6. Does TC have any technology roadmap? (Gang Zhou)

Vince: It does not. The current state of the TC is mostly reactive. It will respond and evaluate modules that are submitted to it. But its mandate does not include creating a technology roadmap. The TC is not an Architectural Council. The roles of the different councils and their responsibilities have been established by the recently adopted Governance structure for the Folio project. As you are aware, there is an ongoing discussion between the councils as to whether the new Governance model is correct or whether it should be changed.

7. I noticed that there are many languages used in modules, such as Groovy for mod-agreements, Perl for Net-Z3950-FOLIO. Does the community have any restriction on languages/frameworks used in modules? How does the community control code quality of various languages? (Sha Jiang)

Vince:

- This is an active point of discussion within the Folio community on which there is no formal agreement at this time. Folio was originally intended to be polyglot and allow the choice of programming languages to be made by the development team. The argument for this is to allow teams to develop in the language and stack that they are most comfortable with. This fits with the overall design of Folio because it supports an API-first pattern. The only contract that matters is the API being provided by a module - how the APIs are implemented internally is not seen by the consumers of those APIs. However, the counter argument has been that Folio will be deployed into production and there are operational costs involved in supporting multiple languages and tech stacks. From an operational point of view the preference is to have a limited (single?) language in use. Furthermore, there is the case that some modules have become orphaned by development teams that have left the project. The language choices made by that team may not be widely used by other teams in the project, which makes ongoing maintenance and improvements difficult.

- That said, it is the case that the vast majority of Folio backend modules are written in Java. This is partly due to the popularity of Java, but also because the frameworks (SpringWay and previously RMB) only support Java as a target language.