Async dialog execution – What it is and why it’s needed

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LibreOffice Online: Server part

The Websocket Daemon - loolwsd

- Manages communication with file storage via WOPI protocol
- Spawns LibreOffice instances via LibreOfficeKit (LOK) and manages their lifecycle
  - These take care of rendering of the document
- Manages the user’s interaction with the document
  - Passing commands to LOK
  - Passing callbacks back to the JavaScript clients
- All this is in C++
LibreOffice Online: Client part

Loleaflet

- Written in JavaScript, based on ‘leaflet’ - framework for map rendering
- Communicates with loolwsd
- The document itself consists of tiles:
  - Menus, toolbars, status bar
  - All that is JS

But: it’s very impractical to reimplement everything in JS...
Finding the Right Balance: JS vs. Core

Initially everything was rendered by LibreOffice

- In the early prototypes – no tiles, just gtk broadway
- Then we decided to use the tiled approach
- Cursors, selections – all that turned to be impractical in tiles, and we started rendering that separately, in an overlay
- Comments and redlining were next, those needed too much interaction when in tiles
  - Also they look better in JS (possibility to animate etc.)
But what about dialogs?

We started adding JS ones

- Find / replace, special character, insert table, ...
- Lengthy process! Needed something better...

Dialog tunneling!

- Just reuse all the dialogs that are already there in LibreOffice
- The plan: Let the core render them, and pass them as bitmaps to Online
  - Nearly a year later: finally done ;-)  
  - Most of the hard work done by Pranav Kant, big thanks!
Working!

The following features are now exposed

- Advanced character, paragraph and page properties
- Line, fill, cell properties, etc.
- All that collaboratively!
Technical Details
How Does it Work?

Nearly everything is done down in VCL

- Added various callbacks – dialog created, invalidate, etc.
- Reusing the dialog screenshotting feature for rendering the content
- Added a concept of LOKNotifier
  - Most of the LOK notification is done in sfx2 – but that is a higher layer
  - LOKNotifier is an interface that is instantiated in sfx2, but can be used in VCL – for the notifications about dialog creation, what was invalidated, where to paint
- LibreOfficeKit extended accordingly
LibreOfficeKit Extensions for Dialog Tunneling

Methods

- void paintWindow(unsigned nWindowId, unsigned char * pBuffer, const int x, const int y, const int width, const int height)
- void postWindow(unsigned nWindowId, int nAction)
- General events, so far only closing the window
- void postWindowKeyEvent(unsigned nWindowId, int nType, int nCharCode, int nKeyCode)
- void postWindowMouseEvent(unsigned nWindowId, int nType, int nX, int nY, int nCount, int nButtons, int nModifier)
- void postWindowMouseMoveEvent(unsigned nWindowId, int nType, int nX, int nY, int nCount, int nButtons, int nModifier)

Callbacks

- LOK_CALLBACK_WINDOW, with a JSON payload
- Indicating actions like “created”, “title_changed”, “size_changed”, “invalidate”, “cursor_invalidate”, “cursor_visible” and “close”
Language Support

One document can be co-edited by multiple users

- And each of them can have their UI in a different language
- LibreOffice used static objects for the text resources
- ~All the places had to be converted:
  - static std::locale loc(Translate::Create("cui"));
  - return Translate::get(pKey, loc);
  + return Translate::get(pKey, Translate::Create("cui"));
- Similarly SfxModule had to be adapted to be able to switch language when the view switches to a different user
Converting dialogs to async
Modal Dialogs

They call Execute() which blocks

- Not that events would stop flowing – Yield() called inside Execute()
  - Editing still works, AND two (or more) users can open the same dialog just fine from different views!
- The problem is when they are to be closed & the changes have to be applied
  - All the Execute()’s have to end first before the execution continues
  - Problem! - one of the users can go for lunch in the meantime, and the other never gets the changes applied
Modal → Modal Async Execution

The solution is to convert the modal dialogs to async

- They still stay modal, but do not block in Execute() any more
- LibreOffice already had StartExecuteModal which was working fine, but the converting code was leading to big amount to changes
- Introduced a new StartExecuteAsync() with a lambda – thanks Michael Meeks

- `ScopedVclPtr<SfxAbstractTabDialog> pDlg(pFact→CreateScAttrDlg(...));`
+ `VclPtr<SfxAbstractTabDialog> pDlg(pFact→CreateScAttrDlg(...));`  
  
  
  
  ...
- `short nResult = pDlg→Execute();`
+ `std::shared_ptr<SfxRequest> pRequest(new SfxRequest(rReq));`
+ `pDlg->StartExecuteAsync([=](sal_Int32 nResult){
    [... the code that was previously following after Execute ...]`
+ `});`
Non-modal dialogs

Work out of the box

- No conversion to asynchronous is necessary
- Usually they are using the sfx infrastructure
  - Using the ChildWindow::RegisterChildWindow(SID_<name>)
  - Show / hidden using ToggleChildWindow(SID_<name>)
    - In the main event loop, no Execute() => no problem
Usual Caveats

“I issued a dialog via .uno: command, but it does not appear in the Online”

• Most probably the dialog does not have a parent – uses nullptr
• Solution: Assign it a parent, ideally window of the view shell

“The dialog does not switch languages for users”

• Static variable holding the locale; but less of a problem these days after conversion to gettext – thanks Caolán McNamara
• Solution: Find it & de-static-ize

Anything else

• Happy to help on the dev mailing list or on the IRC!
Thank You for Listening!

And the following people for working on this:

Pranav Kant (main author of the tunnelling), Henry Castro, Michael Meeks

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