Integrating server-generated pages in hybrid applications

Overview

Many enterprises today decide to develop their own customer or employee-facing mobile applications. Some of those companies already have mobile-facing websites (mobile web).

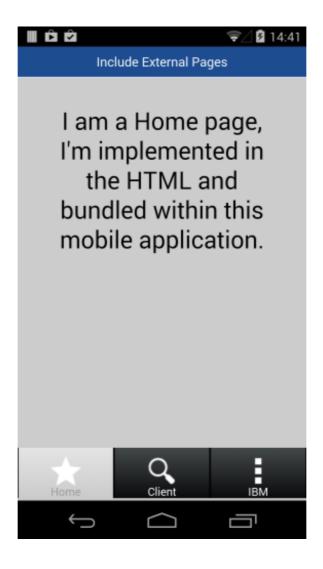
Such companies must make an important decision:

- Should all the mobile web features be implemented from scratch in the mobile application, which is great from a user experience perspective, but very time- and money-consuming?
- Should the mobile application contain only new features with old ones still accessible by a mobile browser, which is easier to implement but not great in terms of user experience?

The **WebViewOverlay** approach allows the reuse and integration of existing mobile websites within a mobile application.

Navigation is smooth and seamless between components that are internal in the mobile application and the external content on the external mobile website.

Web resources that are bundled inside the application



External web content



This tutorial demonstrates an application implementation for the Android environment.

The application contains three tab items. The first two tabs contain internal content. The third tab shows an external IBM mobile website.



First and second tabs contain internal web resources



Third tab looks like another application page



But technically, it contains an extra WebView component on top of it

Developers can easily create their own protocol between internal web components and the **WebViewOverlay** control. Use the provided MobileFirst project to understand the concepts of **WebViewOverlay**.

Prerequisite: Before you proceed, you must be proficient with implementing Cordova plug-ins (../../addingnative-functionality/).

Java implementation

Implementing the webViewOverlay

In Java, the sample implements the page integration as follows:

1. In the application main class, a webView0verlay object is declared to display the external content. Static references are used for simplicity.

```
public class IncludeExternalPages extends CordovaActivity implements
WLInitWebFrameworkListener {
   private static WebView webViewOverlay;
   public static Activity thisapp;
```

2. The object is created, its layout properties are set, and it is added as a view to the root element. It is invisible initially. The setMargins method positions the webView0verlay component in the screen.
Note: Android 4.4 introduces a new version of WebView that is based on Chromium and affects the WebView margins. For more information about this issue, see Migrating to WebView in Android 4.4 (http://developer.android.com/guide/webapps/migrating.html).

```
public void onInitWebFrameworkComplete(WLInitWebFrameworkResult result){
   if (result.getStatusCode() == WLInitWebFrameworkResult.SUCCESS) {
     super.loadUrl(WL.getInstance().getMainHtmlFilePath());
     thisapp = this:
     WebViewClient webViewClient = new WebViewClient() {
        public boolean shouldOverrideUrlLoading(WebView view, String url) {
          view.loadUrl(url);
          return true;
       }
     };
     webViewOverlay = new WebView(this);
     webViewOverlay.setVisibility(View.INVISIBLE);
     webViewOverlay.setWebViewClient(webViewClient);
     RelativeLayoutParams webViewOverlayLayoutParams = new
     RelativeLayout.LayoutParams(
        RelativeLayout.LayoutParams.MATCH PARENT,
        RelativeLayout.LayoutParams.MATCH_PARENT);<
       webViewOverlayLayoutParams.setMargins(0, 120, 0, 196);
       webViewOverlay.setLayoutParams(webViewOverlayLayoutParams);
       webViewOverlay.getSettings().setJavaScriptEnabled(true);
4
```

- 3. A RelativeLayout object is created.
 - The RelativeLayout object works as a root layout.
 - The current root view is removed from its original parent. Instead, the root and webView0verlay objects are added to the rootRelativeLayout object.
 - The content view is set to rootRelativeLayout.

Implementing the Java code of the Cordova plug-in

1. In a new class, WebViewOverlayPlugin.java, the actions that the plug-in supports are declared.

```
public class WebViewOverlayPlugin extends CordovaPlugin {
   private final String ACTION_OPEN_URL = "open";
   private final String ACTION_CLOSE_WEBVIEWOVERLAY = "close"
   ;
   ...
```

2. If an open request is received from the web part of the application, the external content is loaded and makes the webView0verlay visible.

3. If a close request is received from the web part of the application, the webView0verlay is cleaned

up and hidden.

UI-related actions occur on a dedicated UI thread.

```
public class WebViewOverlayPlugin extends CordovaPlugin {
    ...
    ...
} else if (action.equals(ACTION_CLOSE_WEBVIEWOVERLAY)) {
    IncludeExternalPages.thisapp.runOnUiThread(new Runnable() {
        public void run() {
            IncludeExternalPages.loadWebViewOverlayContent("");
            IncludeExternalPages.setWebViewOverlayVisibility(View.INVISIBLE
);
        IncludeExternalPages.clearWebViewOverlayHistory();
        }
    });
    return true;
} else
    return false;
}
```

JavaScript implementation

In JavaScript, the sample implements the page integration as follows.

1. A WebViewOverlayPlugin object is created and populated with the required methods.

```
function WebViewOverlayPlugin() {};
  WebViewOverlayPlugin.prototype.open = function() {
     cordova.exec(null, null, 'WebViewOverlayPlugin', 'open', [])
;
  };
  WebViewOverlayPlugin.prototype.close = function() {
     cordova.exec(null, null, 'WebViewOverlayPlugin', 'close', [])
;
  };
  window.webViewOverlay = new WebViewOverlayPlugin();
```

2. The clicked tab ID is analyzed and either shows or hides the webView0verlay accordingly. Loading external content can take time, so adding a Busy Indicator to improve the user experience should be considered.

```
function tabClicked(id){
  WL.Logger.debug("tabClicked >> id :: " + id)
  $(".tab").addClass('hidden');
  if (id=="3"){
     openWebViewOverlay();
  } else {
     $("#tab" + id).removeClass('hidden');
    closeWebViewOverlay();
  }
}
function openWebViewOverlay(){
  WL.Logger.debug("openWebViewOverlay");
  window.webViewOverlay.open();
}
function closeWebViewOverlay(){
  WL.Logger.debug("closeWebViewOverlay");
  window.webViewOverlay.close();
}
```

Sample application

Click to download (https://github.com/MobileFirst-Platform-Developer-Center/IncludeExternalPages) the MobileFirst project.

