

Sustainability and Security in the Go ecosystem

Martin Czygan

CLT 2023, 2023-03-11

Hello!

- ▶ open data engineer at [Internet Archive](#), working on [scholar.archive.org](#) and [rclone](#); software developer at [Leipzig University Library](#) on index metadata for [libraries in Germany](#)
- ▶ learned about [Go](#) in 11/2009 through Google Tech Talks, active user since 2013
- ▶ since 2019 co-host of [Leipzig Gophers Meetup](#)
- ▶ open source [contributions](#), mostly “small tools”

Leipzig Gophers

- ▶ est. 2019, golangleipzig.space
- ▶ blog, 30+ (hybrid) events, 500+ members
- ▶ gave away tech books, JetBrains subs, [Zimaboard](#), and more swag, . . .



Leipzig Gopher

We talk about language features, libraries, cloud tools, databases and in the past collaborated with interesting companies using Go, like [edgeless systems](#), [Gridfuse](#), [deta](#), [CodeNotary](#) and others.

Reach out!

Overview

- ▶ sustainability, mostly as in **maintenance**

Sustainability refers to the capacity of a system to endure. – [An Interview Study on Sustainability Concerns in Software Development Projects](#)

- ▶ security, as in **vulnerabilities**
- ▶ sustainability as in **resource efficiency**

Motivation

- ▶ Go is a language and experiment on how to improve the software development process itself
- ▶ Go has inspired other ecosystems in the past (cf. [black](#), [sqlfmt](#), ...)
- ▶ Maintenance is 90% of the software life cycle (...)

Sustainability aspects

- ▶ stability
- ▶ dependencies

Sustainability and Stability

- ▶ Go has a [Go 1 compatibility guarantee](#)

It is intended that **programs written to the Go 1 specification will continue to compile and run correctly, unchanged, over the lifetime of that specification.**

Compatibility is at the **source level**.

Readability counts

easier to maintain: mechanical changes to the source don't cause unrelated changes to the file's formatting; diffs show only the real changes.

Surviving Software Dependencies

[Surviving Software Dependencies](#), Cox, 2019, [10.1145/3329781.3344149](#)

The Copay and Equifax ([2017 data breach](#) , Apache Struts, financials details leaked, 148M profiles) attacks are clear warnings of real problems in the way software dependencies are consumed today.

Various ways to cope with dependencies:

- ▶ test, isolate, avoid, upgrade

Dependency management with Go modules

- ▶ Go did not have an own dependency management from the start (deferred to third party tooling)
- ▶ reuse via URL-like import path, like `github.com/fatih/color`

Towards Go modules.

- ▶ Go modules first appeared in [Go 1.11](#) (2018-08-24) ([proposal](#))
- ▶ a Go module has a name and contains one or more packages
- ▶ since the beginning, Go had a decentralized approach, using URL-like import path

Version control systems package repository

Package names are locators. A decentralized infrastructure. There is no package *central*. There is an aggregation, however, pkg.go.dev.

```
package main

import "github.com/fatih/color"

func main() {
    color.Yellow("alert")
}
```

Go modules are the defacto standard

Relevant files are `go.mod` and `go.sum`, checked into version control. Both are mostly edited by tools, e.g. `go mod ...`

```
$ ls -l
```

```
main.go  # your program
```

```
go.mod   # dependencies
```

```
go.sum   # checksums
```

No lockfile. Run `go mod tidy` and you're good.

Example go.mod

The latest tag is used as version, but any commit id or pseudo-version would work. Indirect deps are transitive dependencies (included since Go 1.17).

```
module yellowalert
```

```
go 1.20
```

```
require github.com/fatih/color v1.14.1
```

```
require (  
    github.com/mattn/go-colorable v0.1.13 // indirect  
    github.com/mattn/go-isatty v0.0.17 // indirect  
    golang.org/x/sys v0.3.0 // indirect  
)
```

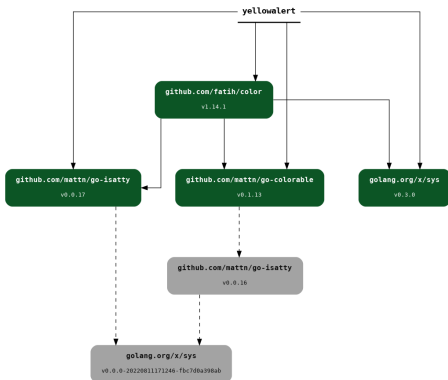
Visually

Go loves tools.

```
$ go install github.com/lucasepe/modgv@latest
```

Generate a dependency graph from go.mod, e.g. via:

```
$ go mod graph | modgv | dot -Tpng > gomod.png
```



Example go.sum

Currently, SHA256 (h1) is used; hashes over files or trees. Not a lock file.

```
github.com/fatih/color v1.14.1 h1:qfhVLaG5s+nCR0l1zJs...  
github.com/fatih/color v1.14.1/go.mod h1:2oHN61fhTpgc...  
...
```

Once a dependency has been fetched and its hash computed, it cannot be changed without notice.

► flip a bit (e.g. git would allow us to move a tag, ...)

```
$ go mod verify  
github.com/fatih/color v1.14.1:  
    dir has been modified (...)
```

Any domain works

Not tied to any source code host, or any domain for that matter.

```
$ go install golangleipzig.space/clt23@latest
```

Details: [CLT23](#) - that site is run by a static-site-generator and redirects to the actual repository.

Leftpad!

Any problem ... can be solved by another level of indirection.

- ▶ [Go Module Proxy](#), launched 2019-08-29

The go tool will ask [proxy.golang.org](#) first, use `GOPRIVATE="*"` to disable. Run your own proxy, if you run a company.

Minimal Version Selection

An algorithm to resolve dependencies. Fast (not NP-complete), does not require lock files.

- ▶ choose minimal version required for any dependency
- ▶ depends on *import compatibility rule*

A human element required for any dependency management (e.g. we expect 1.2.3 be compatible with 1.2.4, and we expect a v2 to be backwards incompatible) - **import compatibility rule**: “If an old package and a new package have the same import path, the new package must be backwards compatible with the old package.”

MVS elsewhere

Other ecosystems are curious, e.g. cargo:

```
$ cargo -Z help | grep minimal-versions
```

```
-Z minimal-versions -- Resolve minimal dependency versions instead of maximum
```

Major Version Update

Go has a strict recommendation, when it comes to major version upgrades: you should use a different name - e.g. a different import path, typically `.../v2`, `.../v3`, ...

- ▶ `github.com/my/module 1.0.0`
- ▶ `github.com/my/module/v2 2.0.0`
- ▶ ...

The story so far

- ▶ cannot change code, once required (and `go.sum` is checked in)
- ▶ very slim chance for **leftpad** (when using a proxy)
- ▶ very **fast** dependency resolution and high-fidelity builds
- ▶ with vendoring, we get **reproducible builds**

We can be aware of what goes into our binary.

Security

- ▶ go tools: `go vet` and various linters
- ▶ third party tools, like [gosec](#)
- ▶ since 09/2022: [govulncheck](#), [blog](#)

Separate tool, in testing phase.

The new `govulncheck` command is a low-noise, reliable way for Go users to learn about known vulnerabilities that may affect their projects.

OSV Format

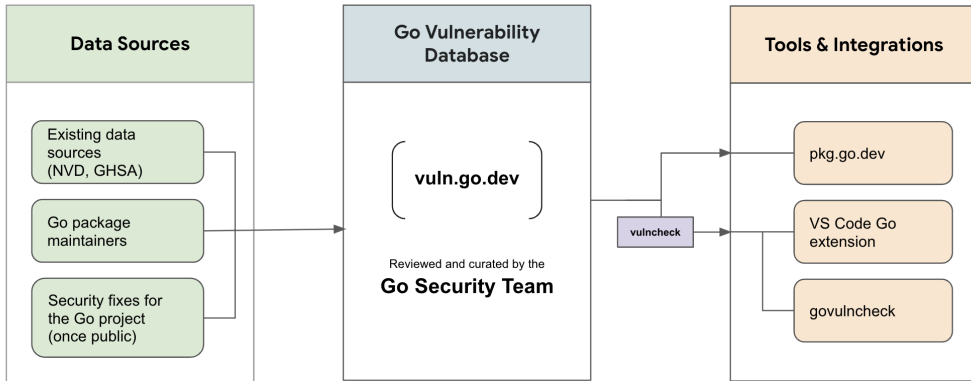
Open Source Vulnerability format, osv.dev

There are many problems to solve industry-wide concerning vulnerability detection, tracking, and response. One low-level problem is that there are many databases and no standard interchange format.

JSON schema, generic tools, like [osv-scanner](https://github.com/google/osv-scanner)

OSV-Scanner parses lockfiles, SBOMs, and git directories to determine your project's open source dependencies. These dependencies are matched against the OSV database via the OSV.dev API and known vulnerabilities are returned to you in the output.

Flow



From: [blog/vuln](https://blog.vuln)

Example

```
$ # z esbulk  
$ govulncheck ./...
```

Final bit: energy efficiency

- ▶ Paper on energy efficiency of programming languages: [Ranking Programming Languages by Energy Efficiency](#) (2021)
- ▶ Go shines in category “lowest peak memory usage”:
<https://github.com/miku/goenergy#where-go-shines>
- ▶ balance between performance and ease of use

Some anecdata.

- ▶ anecdata: a rewrite (of an internal project, written in a popular language) in Go used only 20% of the resources
- ▶ single data point: data web service, about 100 req/s sustained on commodity HW, simple web service on a 3W ARM (Dual-Core Cortex-A7 ARM CPU) [cubietruck](#) (2013) with similar numbers

Wrap up

- ▶ source code *compatibility guarantee*
- ▶ Go modules use *minimal version selection*, circumventing some potential issues stemming from the complexity of dependency management
- ▶ *distributed package management*, with central elements added for performance and reliability (proxy)
- ▶ balance between performance and ease of use

Thanks

- ▶ Slides: github.com/miku/goeco
- ▶ Leipzig Gophers: golangleipzig.space