Single Page Applications

Mendel Rosenblum

Web Apps and Browsers

- Web apps run in browsers (by definition)
- Users are use to browsing in browsers
 - Browser maintains a history of URLs visited
 - Back button Go back in history to previous URL
 - Forward button Go forward in history to next URL
 - Can move to a different page
 - Typing into location bar or forward/back buttons
 - Selecting a bookmarked URL
 - Page refresh operation
- Browser tosses the current JavaScript environment when navigating to a different page
 - Problematic for JavaScript frameworks: URL (and cookies) are the only information preserved

Problem with some web apps

Confirm Reload

All will be lost!

Are you sure you want to reload this page?

Prevent this page from creating additional dialogs.

Don't Reload Reload this Page

- Initial: pages served from web server
 - Each page had a URL and app switched between pages served by web server.
- Early JavaScript apps: Website a single page/URL with the JavaScript

```
Problem: Restart web app on navigation (Can lose a lot of work!)
window.onbeforeunload = function(e) { return 'All will be lost!'; }
```

- Users expect app in browser to do the right thing:
 - Navigate with forward and back buttons, browser page history
 - Navigate away and come back to the app
 - Bookmark a place in the app
 - Copy the URL from the location bar and share it with someone
 - Push the page refresh button on the browser

Changing URL without page refresh

Can change hash fragment in URL without reload

```
http://example.com
http://example.com#fragment
http://example.com?id=3535
http://example.com?id=3535#fragment
```

- HTML5 give JavaScript control of page reload
 - Browser History API window.history Change URL without reloading page

Deep linking

- Concept: the URL should capture the web app's context so that directing the browser to the URL will result the app's execution to that context
 - Bookmarks
 - Sharing
- Context is defined by the user interface designer!
 - Consider: Viewing information of entity and have an edit dialog open
 - Should the link point to the entity view or to the entity & dialog?
 - Does it matter if I'm bookmarking for self or sharing with others?
 - How about navigating away and back or browser refresh?

Deep linking in Single Page Apps

Two approaches:

- 1. Maintain the app's context state in the URL
 - + Works for browser navigation and refresh
 - + User can copy URL from location bar
- 2. Provide a share button to generate deep linking URL
 - + Allows user to explicitly fetch a URL based on need
 - + Can keep URL in location bar pretty

Either way web app needs to be able to initialize self from deep linked URL

Ugly URLs

```
http://www.example.org/dirmod?sid=789AB8&type=gen&mod=Core+Pages&gid=A6CD4967199
```

versus

http://www.example.org/show/A6CD4967199

What is that ugly thing in the location bar above my beautiful web application?

https://www.flickr.com/photos/jarnasen/24593000826/in/explore-2016-01-26/

ReactJS support for SPA

- ReactJS has no opinion! Need 3rd party module.
- Example: React Router https://reacttraining.com/react-router/
 - Idea: Use URL to control conditional rendering
- Various ways of encoding information in URL
 - In fragment part of the URL: <u>HashRouter</u>
 - Use HTML5 URL handler: <u>BrowserRouter</u>
- Import as a module:

```
import {HashRouter, Route, Link, Redirect} from 'react-router-dom';
```

Example React Router

```
<HashRouter>
   <div>
     . . .
     <Route path="/states" component={States} />
     . . .
     <Link to="/states">States</Link>
       . . .
    </div>
 </HashRouter>
```

- JSX block controlled by URL enclosed in HashRouter
- Route will render the component if URL matches.
- Use Link component to generated hyperlink: States

Passing parameters with React Router

Parameter passing in URL

```
<Route
   path="/Book/:book/ch/:chapter"
   component={BookChapterComponent}
/>
```

Parameters put in prop.match of the component function BookChapterComponent({ match }) {

```
<Link to="/Book/Moby/ch/1">
     Moby
</Link>
     Book: Moby
Chapter: 1
```

CS142 Lecture Notes - Single Page Apps

Route: component=, render=, children=

- component={BookChapterComponent}
 - Mounts components on match (unmounts on URL change)
 - Passes match object with: params, url, history
- - Calls function with props having match object from above.
 - Doesn't mount/unmount component (does update it)
- children= Like render= except is called regardless of the match
 - o match will be null if URL doesn't match
 - Useful if you want to have something always render but only active on matching URL.

Multiple route matches have precedence order: component, render, children

Switch is useful with multiple Route - Renders the first matching one CS142 Lecture Notes - Single Page Apps

Example



What to keep in URL: table length, viewport in table, search box, sort column, etc. Is it different for bookmark or share? Nav away and back?

Example: Not everything goes in URL

