Developing Effectively with VSCode

When writing software there are many different ways to set up your working environment to be more effective. For some languages this may take the form of an Integrated Development Environment (IDE) such as Eclipse. However, many developers use multiple applications to create a development environment that works for them, and the choice of code editor is key.

Many of us at epiGenesys use Visual Studio Code (VSCode) and we would recommend this for you and your team as a modern code editor with remote pair programming features. You can install VSCode on your machine by visiting: https://code.visualstudio.com

Load your application in VSCode by clicking **"File > Open Folder"** in the top menu and selecting your application's directory. You can also run the command **"code ."** from within a directory to open it via your terminal. Your application's files and directories should appear to the left, with a code editor on the right. Clicking on a file will open it in the code editor.

Syntax highlighting

To be able to quickly read code it is beneficial to have syntax highlighting which indicates different parts of the code using colours. To install Ruby syntax highlighting in VSCode press **CTRL+P** (or Command+P for macOS), enter the command **"ext install rebornix.Ruby"** and press enter. To install HAML syntax highlighting press **CTRL+P** (or Command+P for macOS) again, enter the command **"ext install karunamurti.haml"** and press enter. When opening .rb (Ruby) and .haml.html (HAML) files you should now see the highlighting.

Searching

Being able to effectively search within your application's files and directories is an important skill for all software developers. It can make it much faster to find the code you need to change. VSCode provides two ways to search your project.

Firstly, there is the fuzzy file search, which will find the "best guess" solution based on incomplete input. This can be activated by pressing **CTRL+P** (or Command+P for macOS). Within the box that appears, you can enter a file name to quickly go to that file. Additionally, you can enter partial file paths to quickly find specific files. For example, if you wished to open the book model you could search for "modboo", where the "mod" part would filter files to just the "models" folder and the "boo" part would filter to the book.rb file.

Secondly, VSCode can perform full text search of your entire application, which is accessed by pressing **CTRL+SHIFT+F** (or Command+Shift+F for macOS). This can be used to find any text within your application. For example, you can often find a method definition by searching for the name of the method preceded with "def", i.e. if we are searching for the method "load_book" then we could search for "def load_book".