

Monday, April 29, 2013

KRAD Synergy

For my first topic, I have to talk about the incredible amount of synergy happening now around KRAD. Over the past few months in particular the effort has really grown. There are many pockets of work occurring and each will have a significant impact on the project. My goal is to shine the light on each of these and talk about how everything will come together in the near future.

To appreciate how much growth has occurred, let me run you through from the beginning of the KRAD effort. Work began at the end of 2010, so we are at two and half years (roughly). I moved from the KFS project at that time to work on KRAD. Initially there was of course a lot of analysis work completed, looking closely at the KNS and other frameworks. Scott Gibson came in shortly after to be the development manager for the effort. Then shortly after that Brian, David, and Samuel joined as developers. That was the team for essentially the first year of development (through 2011). During this time Kuali Student started consuming the framework, and towards the end of 2011 the MyPlan project began.

After this we went into 2.2 development (KRAD Phase 2). For a short time, we had a team of size 7, but due to changing priorities we were cut down to just three of us (myself, Brian, and Samuel). That was pretty much the team through 2012. During this time (or possibly a little before) other projects/institutions started using KRAD as well: OLE, KSA, ClearingHouse, University of Toronto, and Michigan State University.

Now we are a few months into 2.3 development, and everything is going full force! All Rice developers are focused on KRAD related work, broken down into four major deliverables:

- KRAD Phase 3 (third round of UI functionality)
- KNS Equalivalence (filling any gaps with the KNS, developing conversion scripts and a conversion guide)
- Rice Conversion (conversion of Rice screens to use KRAD)
- JPA Support (refactoring of KRAD data layer and full support for JPA)

Projects and institutions now using KRAD for development include:

- KS
- KSA
- MyPlan

- OLE
- ClearingHouse
- University of Toronto
- Michigan State University
- Stellenbosch and NWU (South Africa)
- Indiana University

Any I am missing?

And that's not all! There is high energy around UX, including prototype work being done in KC and spawning of the UXI project. Also, projects are beginning to contribute to KRAD, which is absolutely key. Indiana University is working on a project named KART (Kuali Application Resource Template) which will simplify getting started with new KRAD projects and allow designers to work outside an IDE!

It is really exciting to see the effort ramp up. I haven't felt this amount of energy from the community since really the beginning of Kuali itself! There have been many great champions of KRAD to get things to this point. First, it is certainly not easy to get developers from various projects/institutions to embrace a common framework. Today we see a new development framework about every week, each with its own posse of developers! Quick sidebar ... I greatly enjoy checking out new frameworks. There are so many good ideas which in many cases we can reuse. Maybe a little overwhelming though. For example, in KRAD we hope to do more rendering client side using one of the JS frameworks. The question is what to 'bet' on. Right now Angular JS (<https://wiki.kuali.org/display/KULRICE/AngularJS>), Handlebars, and Backbone are at the top of the list (**what do others like?**). Second, getting the functional support to move forward with an effort that includes a lot of 'paying back technical debt' can be even more difficult! Despite these challenges, overall the support has been great and there is an overwhelming sense that Kuali is headed in the right direction. Hats off to our project manager Jessica Coltrin for organizing such a huge effort!

Oh yes there are some big challenges remaining! Actually the biggest challenge KRAD faces, conversion of KFS and KC. These are huge projects with a huge amount of investment in the current UIs. Projects of this size don't just move to a new technology at a drop of dime. How well we are able to do with the conversion scripts will make a big difference, and we have a terrific start (which I will share in another post, another time).

The work mentioned above will be finished for Rice 2.4, which is scheduled to release November of this year. It has not been determined what the Rice team will work on after that. Typically, the ARC would vote on a list of roadmap items. However a proposal has been made that instead of taking on new roadmap work, the Rice team would help the Kuali projects convert to KRAD along with general maintenance work. This would be great in my opinion. Not only for assuring the conversion is a success, but also for giving us the opportunity to work on things like KRAD tooling, getting started with Rice, etc.

Exciting times for the Kuali community! If your institution is not a Rice partner or using Rice, talk to your colleagues and management. The more that join, the more great functionality will get added to the framework, yielding more for all involved. This is Kuali's greatest value proposition!

And for next time, I promise a topic with some technical meat :)

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Posted by Jerry Neal at 12:41 PM