

Progress report:

Fontra

A new browser-based font editor



Black[Foundry] & Just van Rossum — ATypI Paris, 12 May 2023

Intro

Black[Foundry] and Just van Rossum

- Collaboration since 2020
- Just is an experienced Python developer, co-originated FontTools, DrawBot, UFO
- Jérémie co-founded Black[Foundry] in 2014
- Black[Foundry] are heavy RoboFont users and use a lot of Python scripting and tech to design fonts and manage projects.
- 🐹➡️ A good match

What

Open source, browser-based font editor

- Cross-platform: it runs in a modern web browser (Chrome, Safari, FireFox)
- But not tied to the Internet, can run locally with no connection
- A server application enables live online collaboration
- Variable from the ground up:
 - Variable glyphs are first class citizens
 - Variable components are a cornerstone of the design

Why

Context & history

- Large scale CJK projects, using a RoboFont extension: RoboCJK
- Reaching limits of RoboCJK
- Desire to have Variable Font technology more deeply integrated
- Improving usability of Variable Components as variable design elements
- Making the design and production of CJK fonts more efficient

How

Technical

- Hybrid approach with client-server architecture
- Fast browser-based UI using native JavaScript (client)
- Leverage well-tested existing Python code such as fonttools (server)
- Access local files (server)

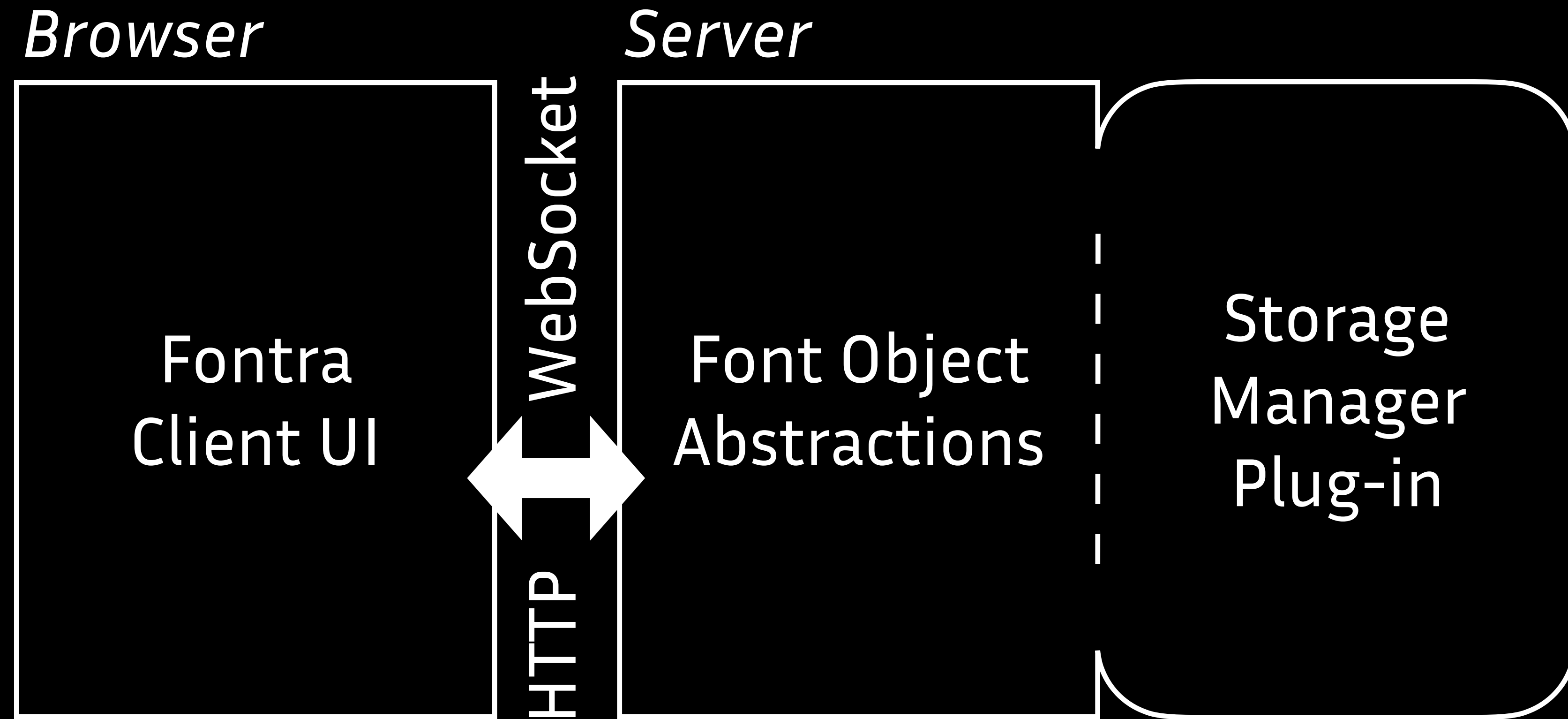
How

Less Technical

- Part of the Fontra application runs in the browser
- Part of the Fontra application runs either locally on your computer, or remotely on a web server
- To access local files it needs a local Fontra application (such as Fontra Pak)

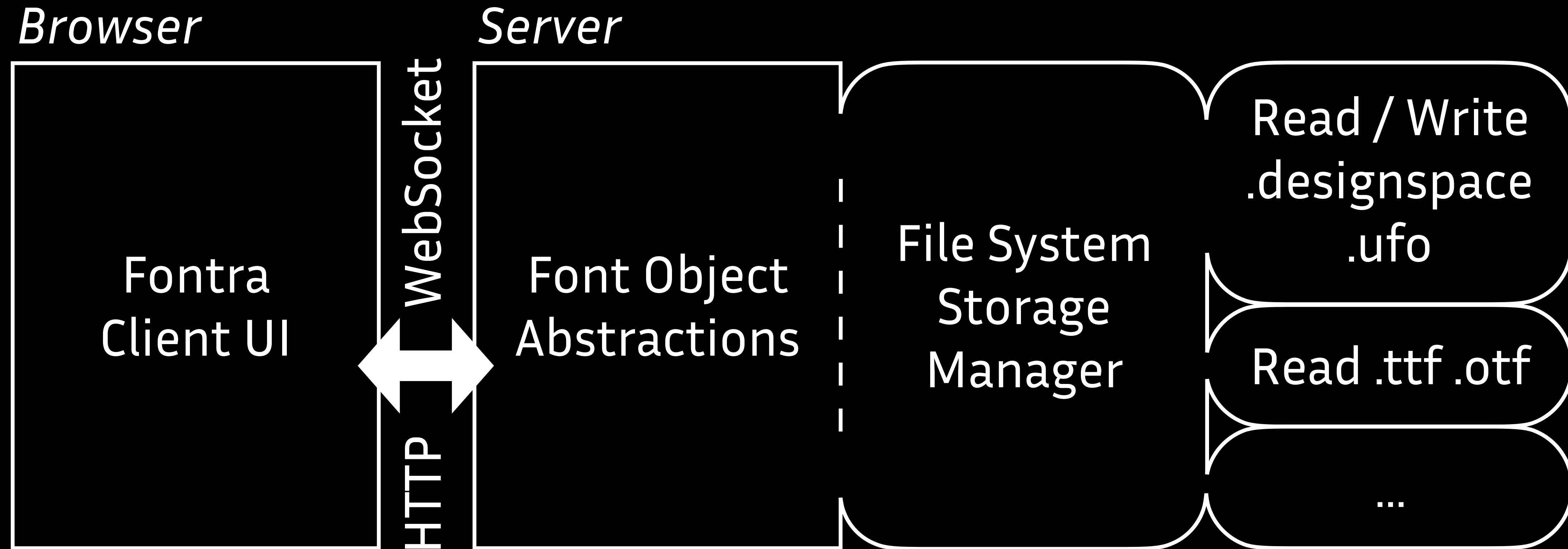
Inside Fontra

Block Diagram



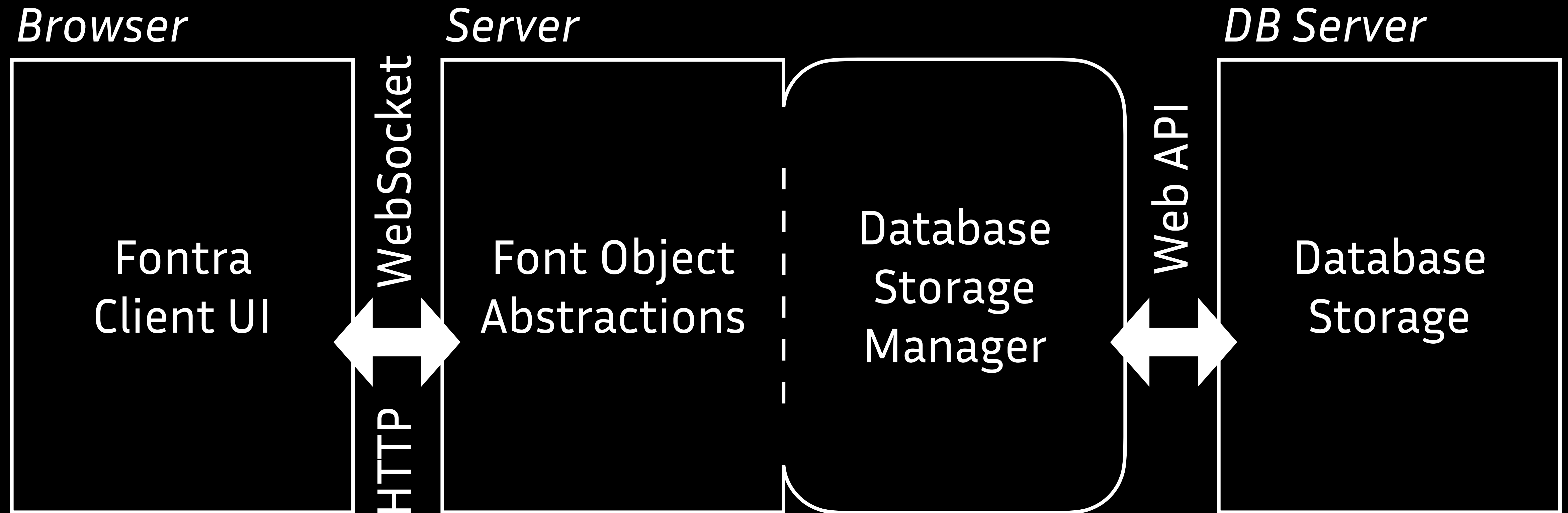
Inside Fontra

Desktop



Inside Fontra

Database



Live demos...

Short term future

2023

- Improve usability
- Fix bugs
- Implement more core features
- More dogfooding at Black[Foundry]
- User documentation
- General usability before the end of the year

Longer term future

2024 and beyond

- More advanced collaborative functionality:
 - Gateway to GitHub: make font PR's directly in Fontra
 - Better database solution, explore public server
 - Peer-to-peer collaboration between Fontra desktop apps
- OpenType features + shaping
- Incremental font building
- Plug-ins + Scripting: Python (via Web Assembly) + JavaScript

Longer term future

Financial model

- Fontra is funded by Google Fonts until the end of 2024
- Working hard to gain enough momentum for the project to “lift off” before then

Time for questions?

Thank you!

fontra.xyz

github.com/googlefonts/fontra

github.com/googlefonts/fontra-pak

discord.gg/3w3DTs4JvU

black-foundry.com

