

Lesson 7 Outline – Cookies and other Advanced Tasks

- I. Applications of Cookies
 - A. Saving state (especially shopping sites!)
 - B. Remembering visitors & personalizing your site for them
 - C. Marketing information
 - D. Website traffic analysis

- II. Cookie Details
 - A. Setting a cookie
 - 1. The cookie is set as part of the HTTP header. It must be printed the content type line.
 - 2. The cookie can specify a name and value, as well as a few parameters (domain, path, expiration date, security)
 - 3. Libraries can automate this for you
 - 4. You can only set cookies for the domain & path you are currently running from
 - B. Reading a cookie
 - 1. The cookie is part of the environment variables in perl
 - 2. Libraries can automate this for you
 - 3. You can only read cookies for the domain & path you are currently running from
 - C. Using libraries with perl
 - 1. CGI.pm automates setting and reading cookies
 - 2. Another library is cookie-lib.pl, although it is a bit buggy
 - D. Alternatives
 - 1. Using the IP address
 - 2. Routing all page views through a CGI script, using form fields to pass state information
 - E. Limitations
 - 1. Not all browsers/users accept cookies
 - 2. The general public is somewhat scared of the concept
 - F. Debugging tips
 - 1. Setting the domain to .yourdomain.com will work for both www.yourdomain.com and <http://www2.yourdomain.com> but will *not* work for <http://yourdomain.com>. (Note, the textbook says differently here, but this has been my experience. So just keep this in mind if you have trouble.)
 - 2. Setting the domain to yourdomain.com will not work for both www.yourdomain.com although it will work for <http://yourdomain.com>.
 - 3. When debugging your scripts, turn on the “notify when accepting cookies” option in your browser. It will help you make sense of what’s going on!

- III. Other advanced tasks (this is unrelated to cookies, but an overflow from the last lesson!)
 - A. HTML templates
 - 1. This technique is quite useful and you’ll see it in many public domain scripts
 - 2. Allows the site owner to modify the design of the site without having to edit the CGI scripts