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PHP: Hypertext Processor

Bill Patterson

PHP is an open source object oriented
scripting/programming language with strong
database capability.

1960s Muscle Car

- “PHP began as a simple macro replacement tool. ... On the hyperspeed development track of the Internet, PHP has become the equivalent of a 1960s muscle car. It’s cheap, it’s fast, and there’s plenty of room under the hood for you and your virtual wrench.”
 - Core PHP Programming by Leon Atkinson

Overview

- PHP works on multiple platforms
 - Linux and other Unices
 - Windows
- When providing Linux Web service, PHP lives in Apache, connects to favorite database management systems, reads and writes files, and especially likes to read posted variables and write HTML (and JavaScript) to web browsers.

Overview, continued

- I describe PHP as what you get if you tear apart C++ and Perl, toss the pieces in the air, and scoop the crumbs off the floor.
 - Object oriented, C++ like programming language with extensive string manipulation capability and dynamic variables that all begin with a dollar sign ('\$').
- The latest release as of June 23, 2001 is 4.0.6.

Features & Benefits

- Interpretive (almost)
 - Actually, a just-in-time compile occurs when PHP 4 pages are accessed
- Object oriented
- Variable names begin each with a dollar sign
- String types - many string functions
- All arrays are sparse - and you don't have to pre-define them (may use alpha indices)

More Benefits

- Fully capable programming language
- Short time to deployment

Web Applications

- Web sites

- Forms that receive and process information
- Content management
- Personalization

- Bulletin board

- Phorum available from <http://phorum.org/>

Web Applications, continued

■ Fast Template approach

- to separate the management of the HTML and the programming in PHP
- a mixed blessing
- if you are interested:
<http://www.thewebmasters.net/>

Batch Applications

- String and database capabilities make PHP a natural for some batch applications as well as web applications
- Examples
 - Screen scraping and resulting emailing
 - SSL data retrieval
 - Data base maintenance

Session Management

- Enables stateful processing
- Will use cookies if available, otherwise stores session identification (and other variables) in URL
- maintains session data on the server
- Useful for maintaining a dialog with the users without having to send data back and forth all the time between screens

Session management, continued

- Can manage sessions without cookies and still using POSTed data (avoiding extensive URLs), but it is tricky

Pricing



■ FREE

Availability

- Directly off the web at www.php.net
- (MySQL for database management can be obtained from www.mysql.com)

Web Hosting

- Check online for host services and reviews
 - <http://www.webhostdir.com/>
 - <http://www.findmyhost.com/>
 - <http://www.sitepointforums.com/showthread.php?threadid=16814>
 - <http://www.hostsearch.com/>
 - <http://www.hostspot.com/>

Web Hosting, continued

- I use
 - <http://www.phpwebhosting.com/>

Caveat Emptor

- See horror story
 - on <http://www.wired.com/news/technology/0,1282,40673,00.html>
 - <http://www.geocities.com/hostingmonitor/>

Web References

- <http://www.albasoftware.com/index.php3/>
(PHP resources directory)
- <http://www.devshed.com/>
- <http://www.php.net/> (the official site)
- <http://www.phpbuilder.com/>
- <http://www.phpusergroups.org/>
- <http://www.phpwizard.net/>
- <http://www.weberdev.com/>
- <http://hotwired.lycos.com/webmonkey/programming/php/index.html>

Book References

- Atkinson, Leon: Core PHP Programming
- Castagnetto, Jesus et al: Professional PHP Programming
- Meloni, Julie: PHP Fast and Easy Development
 - this is almost worth it for the CD and installation instructions alone
- (and many more)