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Ajax-Enabled Rich Internet Applications

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... the challenges are for the designers of these applications: to forget what we think we know about the limitations of the Web, and begin to imagine a wider, richer range of possibilities. It's going to be fun.

—Jesse James Garrett

Dojo is the standard library JavaScript never had.

—Alex Russell

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To know how to suggest is the great art of teaching. To attain it we must be able to guess what will interest ...

—Henri-Fredreic Amiel

It is characteristic of the epistemological tradition to present us with partial scenarios and then to demand whole or categorical answers as it were.

—Avrum Stroll

O! call back yesterday, bid time return.

—William Shakespeare


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OBJECTIVES

In this chapter you will learn:


- What Ajax is and why it is important for building Rich Internet Applications.
- What asynchronous requests are and how they help give web applications the feel of desktop applications.
- What the XMLHttpRequest object is and how it's used to create and manage asynchronous requests to servers and to receive asynchronous responses from servers.

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OBJECTIVES


- Methods and properties of the XMLHttpRequest object.
- How to use XHTML, JavaScript, CSS, XML, JSON and the DOM in Ajax applications.
- How to use Ajax frameworks and toolkits, specifically Dojo, to conveniently create robust Ajax-enabled Rich Internet Applications.
- About resources for studying Ajax-related issues such as security, performance, debugging, the “back-button problem” and more.

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Outline

- 15.1 Introduction
- 15.2 Traditional Web Applications vs. Ajax Applications
- 15.3 Rich Internet Applications (RIAs) with Ajax
- 15.4 History of Ajax
- 15.5 “Raw” Ajax Example Using the XMLHttpRequest Object
- 15.6 Using XML and the DOM
- 15.7 Creating a Full-Scale Ajax-Enabled Application
- 15.8 Dojo Toolkit
- 15.9 Wrap-Up
- 15.10 Web Resources

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Property	Description
onreadystatechange	Stores the callback function—the event handler that gets called when the server responds.
readyState	Keeps track of the request's progress. It is usually used in the callback function to determine when the code that processes the response should be launched. The <code>readyState</code> value 0 signifies that the request is uninitialized; 1 signifies that the request is loading; 2 signifies that the request has been loaded; 3 signifies that data is actively being sent from the server; and 4 signifies that the request has been completed.
responseText	Text that is returned to the client by the server.
responseXML	If the server's response is in XML format, this property contains the XML document; otherwise, it is empty. It can be used like a <code>document</code> object in JavaScript, which makes it useful for receiving complex data (e.g. populating a table).
status	HTTP status code of the request. A <code>status</code> of 200 means that request was successful. A <code>status</code> of 404 means that the requested resource was not found. A <code>status</code> of 500 denotes that there was an error while the server was processing the request.
statusText	Additional information on the request's status. It is often used to display the error to the user when the request fails.

Fig. 15.6 | XMLHttpRequest object properties.

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Method	Description
open	Initializes the request and has two mandatory parameters—method and URL. The method parameter specifies the purpose of the request—typically GET if the request is to take data from the server or POST if the request will contain a body in addition to the headers. The URL parameter specifies the address of the file on the server that will generate the response. A third optional boolean parameter specifies whether the request is asynchronous—it's set to <code>true</code> by default.
send	Sends the request to the server. It has one optional parameter, <code>data</code> , which specifies the data to be POSTed to the server—it's set to <code>null</code> by default.

Fig. 15.7 | XMLHttpRequest object methods. (Part 1 of 2.)

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Method	Description
setRequestHeader	Alters the header of the request. The two parameters specify the header and its new value. It is often used to set the <code>content-type</code> field.
getResponseHeader	Returns the header data that precedes the response body. It takes one parameter, the name of the header to retrieve. This call is often used to determine the response's type, to parse the response correctly.
getAllResponseHeaders	Returns an array that contains all the headers that precede the response body.
abort	Cancels the current request.

Fig. 15.7 | XMLHttpRequest object methods. (Part 2 of 2.)

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```

1 [ { "first": "Cheryl", "last": "Blacc" },
2   { "first": "James", "last": "Blue" },
3   { "first": "Mike", "last": "Brown" },
4   { "first": "Meg", "last": "Gold" } ]

```

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Outline

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1 <?xml version = "1.0" encoding = "UTF-8"?>
2 <!DOCTYPE html PUBLIC "-//W3C//DTD XHTML 1.0 Strict//EN"
3   "http://www.w3.org/TR/xhtml1/DTD/xhtml1-strict.dtd">
4
5 <!-- Fig. 15.11 Calendar.html -->
6 <!-- Calendar application built with dojo. -->
7 <html xmlns = "http://www.w3.org/1999/xhtml">
8 <head>
9   <script type = "text/javascript" src = "/doj o43/dojo.js"></script>
10  <script type = "text/javascript" src = "json.js"></script>
11  <script type = "text/javascript">
12  <!--
13  // specify all the required dojo scripts
14  dojo.require("dojo.event.*"); // use scripts from event package
15  dojo.require("dojo.widget.*"); // use scripts from widget package
16  dojo.require("dojo.dom.*"); // use scripts from dom package
17  dojo.require("dojo.io.*"); // use scripts from the io package
18
19  // configure calendar event handler
20  function connectEventHandler()
21  {
22    var calendar = dojo.widget.byId("calendar"); // get calendar
23    calendar.setDate("2007-07-04");
24    dojo.event.connect(
25      calendar, "onCalendarChange", "retrieveItems");
26  } // end function connectEventHandler
27

```

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Outline

Calendar.html

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28 // location of CalendarService web service
29 var webServiceUrl = "/CalendarService/CalendarService.asmx";
30
31 // obtain scheduled events for the specified date
32 function retrieveItems(eventDate)
33 {
34   // convert date object to string in yyyy-mm-dd format
35   var date = dojo.date.toRFC3339(eventDate).substring(0, 10);
36
37   // build parameters and call web service
38   var params = [{"param": "eventDate", "value": "" +
39     date + ""}];
40   callWebService("getItemsByDate", params, displayItems);
41 } // end function retrieveItems
42
43 // call a specific web service asynchronously to get server data
44 function callWebService(method, params, callback)
45 {
46   // url for the asynchronous request
47   var requestUrl = webServiceUrl + "/" + method;
48   var params = paramString.parseJSON();
49
50   // build the parameter string to append to the url
51   for ( var i = 0; i < params.length; i++)
52   {
53     // check if it is the first parameter and build
54     // the parameter string accordingly
55     if ( i == 0 )
56       requestUrl = requestUrl + "?" + params[ i ].param +
57       "=" + params[ i ].value; // add first parameter to url

```

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Outline

Calendar.html

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