

Re: How to write something to a html textfield and send it?

Source: <http://coding.derkeiler.com/Archive/General/comp.programming/2004-03/1285.html>

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In article <f53a6ce0.0403131411.503038d3@posting.google.com>, alexhanh@ranssi.paivola.net (Alexander) writes:

>
>> *I have a standard html web-page with a textfield and a send button*
>>> *added to it (look below for html). I need a way to open the page, find*
>>> *the specific textfield, write something to it and "click" send. I need*
>>> *to do this through a program.*
>>
>> *Do you actually need to control a particular browser and make it*
>> *perform these actions, or do you need to write an HTTP user agent*
>> *which can submit the form with the text field populated?*
>
> *No need for controlling any particular browser. I just need to log on*
> *first and then start submitting data. I'm not familiar with HTTP user*
> *agents, but this sounds like something correct.*

A "user agent" is just the HTTP term for a client. It sounds like your best bet may be to just write a simple HTTP client that does what you want, since you don't need all the functions of a browser.

You may need more than something that just posts a form, though – see below.

> *I don't know if I need the browser for the solution. If I can "write"*
> *into the textfield without clicking on it and typing to it through a*
> *browser, then I don't need the browser at all.*

Note that the solution I'm proposing doesn't involve "writ[ing] into the textfield" at all. When you enter text in a textfield displayed by a browser, you're just giving the browser the data to put in its request to the server. I'm suggesting skipping that step entirely and building the request in your program.

The server doesn't know anything about a textfield; what it knows is that it served one page (with an HTML form – but it doesn't care

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about that), and then it got a request that contained some parameter data. That request could have been generated by all sorts of things; an HTML form is just the most common.

So what you want to send to the server is a request that says "this parameter has this value, and this other parameter has *this* value" and so on.

> *Google newsgroup is a*
> *very close to my problem. First, I need to log on.*

This probably complicates things. There's no standard mechanism for "logging on" to an HTTP server; there are a variety of them, some more common than others. Probably the most commonly-used one is a combination of an HTML form to pass some user credentials to the server, and a cookie set by the server to maintain the session information. There are a host of other possibilities, such as HTTP authentication. And if the "log on" process is supposed to be secure, SSL is probably being used, which will make writing a user agent significantly more complicated.

However, I don't recall any login process for using Google Groups. Is your application different from Google Groups in this respect, or do you mean something different by "log on"?

> *Then I need to go*
> *to comp.programming and click submit a new post. And then write*
> *something to the message field, and click post message – no preview.*

If you're writing your own user agent, typically you won't be doing anything like this. You'll create your request and post it to the server using the proper Request-URI. Navigation typically isn't required because the Request-URI for posting a message doesn't change; you can figure out what it is before writing your program and then hard-code it (or make it some kind of external configuration item, or whatever).

> *I*
> *need to run this process unlimited times. And the text written to the*
> *message field is gotten from outside or generated randomly.*

Purely application considerations; they don't affect the basic design of this sort of client.

> > *[snip example of POST request]*
>
> *This sounds good. If I just could fill in the text field*
> `<input type="text" name="test" size="60" maxlength="20" class="text"/>`
> `<input type="submit" value="test!" class="submit" />`
> *it would be something like*
> `test=somerandomstring+anotherone&action=submit ?`

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