

Re: Inhibiting Browser Back/Fwd Buttons via PHP?

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From: Tony Marston (tony_at_marston-home.demon.co.uk)

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Keith Bowes <do.not@spam.me> wrote in message news:<1066549704.905234@cache1>...

> *Ralph Freshour wrote:*

> > *Is it possible to inhibit the browser Back/Fwd buttons via PHP?*

> >

>

> *No. Firstly, PHP is a server-side technology and could only be used to*

> *generate the appropriate client-side code.*

Yes, it is possible, because I have done it. It involves the use of sessions and self-executing scripts (ones where the script that outputs a page via the GET method also deals with the corresponding POST method). The technique is as follows:–

- a) Within a form any link to a different form does not invoke that form directly, instead it sends a message to the current form containing the identity of the required form.
- b) The required form is validated as some users may not be able to access some forms. If it is valid then it stores the new script name in a session variable called `$_SESSION['expected_script']`, then passes control to that script using the `header()` function.
- c) At the start of each script is a call to a standard `initsession()` function which checks that the name of the current script is the same as the one in `$_SESSION['expected_script']`. If it is then it is allowed to run, otherwise a 'page has expired' message is generated.

This mechanism means that you have to go through the current script in order to be redirected to a new script, so if a user tries to use the browser back/forward button all they will see is a 'page has expired' message (unless that page is for a previous iteration of the current page).

> *And secondly, those buttons*

> *are a necessary function for browsing in graphical browsers, and*

> *inhibiting them would annoy users.*

I am afraid that allowing those buttons to be used annoys users even more than not having them at all. Take the following scenario:–

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- a) A user starts a session with form A, then chooses form B.
- b) Form B can potentially retrieve huge amounts of data, so it is displayed in separate pages with options to browse forwards and backwards through the available pages.
- c) Within form B the user browses through several pages, then wants to jump immediately back to form A. A button/hyperlink in the current form will do this, but the browser 'back' button will have to traverse all the prior pages the user visited while in form B before it gets to form A.
- d) To encourage the user to use the navigation controls within the page you have generated rather than the browser controls it is necessary to disable the browser controls. Although it is possible to make the back/forward buttons disappear they can still be invoked using the relevant key strokes.

In this fashion I can make a web application behave just like a non-web application and not have to bother about the user switching to a previous page outside the control of my application. The user is only allowed to process a script which my application considers to be the 'current' script.

Any questions?

Tony Marston

<http://www.tonymarston.net/>