How do I use Sessions on LiveCode Server?

This lesson describes the use of LiveCode sessions in order to track sequential interactions with a user who is accessing the server. Sample code is provided.

Introduction

Sessions provide a means for storing persistent data from one page view to the next. This allows the server to track the pages or interactions a user has made while navigating through a web page. This is particularly useful when user specific data is to be displayed on the screen, or the server has to be aware of data the users entered a few pages back.

Note: Session support is only available on LiveCode Server running in CGI mode.

Setting up Sessions

Server side, sessions are stored in a session array that is called: \$_SESSION. This array is created and populated when the start session command is first called:

```lc
// specify the properties here before you start the session
// ...
start session
```

If a session identifier is specified by the sessionID property or can be retrieved via the session cookie, then the server side \$_SESSION array is restored from that information provided.

Note: If you are using the session properties, such as sessionID, sessionLifetime, sessionName and sessionSavePath, then these properties need to be set before start session is called.

Note: You need to start your session before page headers of any other page content is generated.

Adding Data to the Session Array

Once you have started a session, you can store data that is specific to that session in the \$_SESSION array. You may want to record data the user previously entered for example the name and the address:

```lc
put "John" into \$_SESSION ["first_name"]
put "Smith" into \$_SESSION ["last_name"]
put "My Street" into \$_SESSION ["street_name"]
```
Getting Data out of a Session

Data can be retrieved from a session in the reverse way it was added. The following example retrieves the Name and Street information that was added in the previous step:

```livecode
<?lc
  put $_SESSION ["fist_name"] into tMyFirstName
  put $_SESSION ["last_name"] into tMyLastName
  put $_SESSION ["street_name"] into tMyStreetName
?>
```

Deleting and Existing a Session

An existing session can be deleted using:

```livecode
<?lc
  delete session
?>
```

This command ends the current session, removes the information for the particular session from the server and expires the session cookie. Once a session has been deleted, it cannot be retrieved or restored again.

You may want to delete the session information when a transaction is complete, for example the purchase of items that were in a shopping trolley.

**Note:** A session expires after 24 minutes or the expiry time you define with `sessionLifetime`, if you do not explicitly delete a session beforehand.