

Monday, August 30, 2004

Upcoming conferences

I'll be speaking at two more conferences this fall. First is the German "Internet World" in Munich in October, where I'll be giving "PHP for High-End applications", a talk that focusses on PHP used for high traffic sites that are used to really make some money.

Later on in November, I'll visit the International PHP Conference in Frankfurt to give two talks. One will be about developing a PHP-based server that stores session data in a centralized spot, the other one is about documenting your code and tools that help you in extracting this documentation.

Posted by schst in PHP at 21:26

Making huge progress with Services_Ebay

About 6 months ago, I started a wrapper for the eBay webservice and created a draft in Pepr.

As I realized that eBay already is promoting a PHP package for accessing their API, I put this project on hold and worked on my other projects. But after some coverage of the project by Harry Fuecks and the PHP Magazine Adam Trachtenberg, technical evangelist at eBay, contacted me and asked me to update the project to implement eBay's new authentication method.

After we exchanged some mails, Adam told me that there's no official eBay package for PHP yet and so I started working on this again.

This was about 10 days ago, and I made huge progress already. I implemented 50 of the available API calls and now only some of the seldomly used methods are left to implement. The project makes heavy use of PHP5's new OO-features like overloading (methods are loaded on demand) and SPL's iterators. This allows you to work with eBay entities, like they were some native PHP objects, available on your system. Adam, who already saw some of my examples, was absolutely amazed, how easy it is to work with the complex API.

But enough of the talk and let's take a look at some examples:

<?PHP

```
// get information about a user
```

```
$user = $ebay->GetUser('superman-74');
```

```
// display user ID
```

```
echo $user->UserId;
```

```
// display all user data
```

```
print_r($user->toArray());
```

```
// get feedback for the user
```

```
$feedback = $user->getFeedback(Services_Ebay::FEEDBACK_BRIEF);
```

```
foreach ($feedback as $entry) {
```

```
    echo $entry;
```

```
}
```

```
?>
```

All these return values are objects, that may also be used in foreach() loops or echo'd to the user, overloading will take care of how they are handled.

Adding a new item is also easy as baking cake:

If you realised that there's a mistake in the recently added item, just change it and send it back to eBay:

Most methods can be either called on the Services_Ebay object or on the model directly:

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When calling a method, you may either pass scalar parameters in the parameter order defined in the call object itself or you pass an associative array, using the names specified in the official API documentation. This keeps Services_Ebay simple for all users, while offering the full, complex functionality for the users who want to use advanced features of the API.

Services_Ebay already provides Calls and Models for working with users, items, searchresults, feedback, transactions, feedback, MyEbay, etc.

All code and a lot of examples are available in my CVS, there you can see all methods that have been implemented at a glance.

I'll probably start a real PEAR proposal next week, so this can be included in PEAR as fast as possible.

Posted by schst in PHP at 16:30

Sunday, August 29. 2004

Sailing under a new flag

Last friday, I had my last day at my former employer, Metrix Internet Design GmbH. After nearly five years, I decided, that it was time for something new and I took an offer from 1&1, Europe's largest Webhosting company, which has branches in the US, UK and France and is a member of United Internet.

That means, only one of the pat team is left at Metrix, as gERD left last May to go to Australia (those of you who understand German, may read his blog at oz.exit0.net). But Sebastian already is packing his things and will be leaving for France (as he's been living there nearly his whole life and found the love of his life there) in mid-September to work as a freelancer. If you are looking for someone to support your company, you may reach him at [argh\[at\]php-tools\[dot\]net](mailto:argh[at]php-tools[dot]net). He is not only an excellent PHP developer, but also a great designer (he designed all our sites plus a lot of other websites) and an HTML and Javascript expert. He is currently working on his site <http://sebastian.mordziol.de> (sorry all texts are French)

But that we are spread around the world, does not mean that we are stopping our open-source efforts. Sebastian will soon release the first versions of patForms and patBBCode and I'm heavily working on some PEAR/pecl stuff as well as moving patTemplate3 towards a stable release. So, "pat's not dead!"

Posted by schst in PHP at 13:53

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Wednesday, August 25, 2004

Bye, bye luckec!

Today, Carsten left for BRB. We had a lot of fun, while he was staying with us in Karlsruhe and the future will probably see releases of ext/id3, Services_Ebay and patPortal, as we have been working on these projects. I'll post more information on these projects during the next days.

Posted by schst in PHP at 12:41

Tuesday, August 24. 2004

Cloaking like a search engine would want you to

A recent entry in our patSpiderizer forum initiated me to renew the discussion about the ethics of cloaking. patSpiderizer enables you to create spider pages with contents tailored for a spider's needs, with the motivation to help websites with few indexable content (like flash-sites) to get listed in search engines. At the time of the initial release of patSpiderizer in 2001, about everybody was involved in cloaking, and everyone had his own more or less successful cloaking recipe. Can you remember those pages with a giant keyword block at the bottom with black text on black background? At the time, this worked, as the spiders did not filter those pages out yet.

What has changed since then? Not much - the cloaker/spider war goes on, each side inventing new ways to screw each other. Did you know that some spiders actually check the grammatical structure of your website's content? Forget keyword lists. All this nonsense awakens my urge to break a few necks. Imagine all that fake content automatically generated from keyword lists, just to get to the top of search engine rankings until the spiders filter those out too... I would not want to have to write the search algorithms needed to get intelligible search results from that heap of garbage.

This is not only about ethics - it's also about better ways to success. I have several patSpiderizer installations that have been running for about three years now, and apart from updating the content from time to time, I did not have to change anything to get very good results. As I see it, there is only one way to cloak - the way a search engine would want you to. So let's see how that can be done:

- Cloaking: this implies that you hide something from the spiders, but why would you have to? Don't interfere with the way a spider indexes your site - on the contrary, help it by providing links to relevant pages, and especially those which may be hidden quite far in the navigation.

- Automatic content generation: admit it, you are just lazy. You will only get good and persistent rankings if you don't invent any new content, but mirror that of your website, in a more organized fashion. Group your content by theme, and create spider pages for each theme so that it is clear the user will find that particular information on your website (example: if you sell vacuum cleaners and soap, make one page for vacuum cleaners and one for soap). Also, always add links to the corresponding pages in your site so they get indexed too - after all, those are the pages your visitors will want to see!

- Link rating: no secrets here - the more external links you have to your site, the better your ranking. If you want a good link rating, you will have to make sure you have the best information so that everybody links to you.

- Structuring your content: if you are not happy with your search engine rankings, don't blame the search engine, blame yourself. There is a lot of time to be invested in finding the right wording to get good results, and also in finding out what people search for to find you. I have one really search-engine obsessed customer that has a patSpiderizer installation, and she spends a lot of time changing the wording of her spider pages, with a hell of success. Cloaking simply gives you the possibility to structure your content in a way you cannot in your website.

My conclusion is that there is no miracle solution, no hack, no trick, no joker that will shazam! get you a pole position in search engines without giving it some thought, work, and respecting the way the web works. And with the risk of getting your neck broken by a reactionary spider-friendly cloaker like myself, I would not dare try the opposite

P.S. Comments welcome in the forum

Posted by argh in PHP at 13:40

Monday, August 23. 2004

patTemplate 3.0.0 beta2 available

The second beta version of the completely recoded patTemplate 3.0.0 is now available. This is supposed to be the last beta release before 3.0.0 stable and only bugs will be fixed until 3.0.0 is released. If you are using patTemplate, please test this release.

A list of changes since beta1 is available in the changelog, if you never used 3.0.0, you will find a summary of all new features in the patTemplate 3.0.0 overview.

Go to the [download page](#).

Posted by schst in PHP at 11:43

Saturday, August 21. 2004

Calculating holidays with PHP

Today a new package has been released at pear.php.net, which helps you calculating holidays. `Date_Holidays` has been developed by Carsten Lucke, a friend of mine is a driver-based package that provides holiday calculation rules for different religions and countries.

Using the package is quite easy:

Posted by schst in PHP at 00:23

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Wednesday, August 11. 2004

Comment feature has been disabled

Due to massive comment spamming, we have disabled this feature. Please use our forum if you would like to comment on our blog entries.

Thanks für your support,

Stephan

Posted by schst at 21:53

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Monday, August 2, 2004

OSCON presentation available

I finally managed to upload the materials for the "PEAR for the masses" talk I gave at the OSCON. You may download it in Powerpoint format from our presentation page.

Posted by schst in PHP at 06:44