## Internet Server Solution: Multiple Default HTML Pages (10/95)

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TOPIC -----------------------------------------------------------

WebSTAR server and Netscape client software cannot support multiple domain names
with multiple default HTML pages on a single IP address. Here is an example to
illustrate:

Several Internet Server Solution for the World Wide Web users are acting as Web
server providers. They setup the server, manage the internet connection, and
publish content for other clients. For ease of use reasons, clients want their
URL to contain only an FQDN and not a reference to the path of the HTML file.

For example, consult.com wants to advertise for customer.com. They have created
DNS entries for consult.com and customer.com that refer to their server at IP
address 1.2.3.4. They want to be able to advertise two URLs that contain only
hostname information, individualized for the "site":

  http://consult.com
  http://customer.com

Rather than:

  http://machine.consult.com/consult.HTML
  http://machine.consult.com/customer.HTML

However, when they try to do this, they always end up on the same default page.
They would like different URLs to deliver them to the appropriate home page.

DISCUSSION -------------------------------------------------------

There are WEB server implementations that allow you to determine which interface
a query came from and therefore send you to an specific page for that interface.
There are other implementations that allow you to have multiple IP addresses for
one single interface. Depending on the address used, the HTTP server will
present the client with the appropriate page for the domain requested.

Unfortunately, for the Macintosh servers, the only implementation available, as
of October, 1995, is the one presented during WebEdge. This is the only
information available right now.

IMPORTANT: Please remember this is NOT a solution supported by Apple Computer.

We are providing this information as a service, and Apple Computer does not
endorse or recommend any of the products or companies mentioned here.


From The WebEdge II Summary
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Multiple Home Pages/One Machine Name
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At the conference a "hack" was developed for Webmasters wanting to run multiple
"default" home pages from a single machine (for example, advertising agencies
wishing to house their client's home pages/sites).

The ideal answer to this problem is to allow multiple IP numbers to be served by
a single server. This capability lies in Open Transport's future. Until then,
some of this functionality has been addressed by John O'Fallon of Maxum
Development Corp. Maxum has in past produced commercial-grade cgi's such as
NetCloak, and in fact John's hack requires the use of NetCloak.

For more information on this potential solution, see the Maxum web site at
http://maxum.catalogue.com/NetCloak/HomingHome.HTML and direct questions to
them.

From the Page at, http://maxum.catalogue.com/NetCloak/HomingHome.HTML
---------------------------------------------------------------------
Serving Multiple Home Pages from Your Mac Server...

In many cases, we've heard of a WebMaster wanting to run several sites off of
their Macintosh-based WebSTAR Web server. While it is not a problem to have
multiple domains served by a single server (by configuring your DNS with
multiple domain names pointing to the same IP address), it is difficult to give
each domain its own page based strictly on a URL that is made up of just the
domain name.

Presented here is a hack I did at WebEdge II that makes this feature fairly easy
to implement using NetCloak 2.0 (currently in development, but publicly
available and quite stable). It uses the referrer sent by the browser, along
with a redirect (a "meta" tag for Netscape) to determine what domain is
currently being requested and redirects the browser to the appropriate page. In
a nutshell, here is how it works...

Browser: I'd like your server's home page please...

Server: OK, but you are coming from "Yahoo", and I don't know what that is, so
go to the domain parsing page...

Browser: Fine, redirecting to the parsing page...

Server: Ah, now I see that the last page you accessed (the original home page
from my site) was "www.foobar.com". If that's what you wanted, let me send you
there...

Browser: OK, redirecting to the "foobar" page...

Server: A request for the foobar page. I can deal with that, here you go...

As you can see, the redirect and referrer features of HTTP play a big role, and only browsers that support both will correctly find the page they want. For other browsers, we simply display a list of choices and the user has to pick which home page they wanted.

Also note that Netscape 1.1N does not support the referrer when it is redirecting, which causes a problem. So, for Netscape users, we send the "meta" tag, which Netscape uses to load the "parsing" page instead of redirecting. The referrer is sent to the server by Netscape when directed by "meta".

Conditionally redirecting based on the referrer (and browser type) is something that the standard version of NetCloak 2.0 has done for some time. I found a nice fast way of doing this hack, but others get the credit for the idea and early implementation. In particular...

Everyone on the MacHTTP-Talk (now WebSTAR-Talk) listserv, and in particular, the individual who asked if this could be done (whose name I can't find, remind me if you know).

Brad Shrick, who filled me in on "meta" when I hit the wall trying to get Netscape to work (and who runs a great site of great sites).

Peter Storm at Silk Presence and Pierre Duchene also had the idea and implemented a version that handled the problem for Netscape (and possibly others, I don't know the whole history).

Download the NetCloak HTML Example From
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http://maxum.catalogue.com/downloads/CrossTown.sit.hqx

This example file does not include the NetCloak demo package, which is available from the NetCloak 2.0 Page. If you have questions or problems, send me e-mail (john@maxum.com) and I'll add them (with answers) to this page to hopefully make this whole operation a piece of cake for anyone who wants to try it.

Last updated by John O'Fallon (john@maxum.com) on 8/25/95.


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