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 fist 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:

```
<?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:

```
<?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.