

Re: Session Variables – why aren't novice developers warned?

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<http://www.tech-archive.net/Archive/DotNet/microsoft.public.dotnet.framework.aspnet/2006-10/msg03061.html>

- *From:* "Marina Levit [MVP]" <someone@xxxxxxxxxx>
 - *Date:* Wed, 18 Oct 2006 11:42:40 -0400
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Again, there are hundreds of ways that a developer that does not know any better can cause major problems in an application.

Additionally, you cannot claim this is a disadvantage in any way. For many applications (and probably more than not), it is actually an advantage. Developers want the session to be preserved when a new browser is opened from an existing browser session. This avoids having to have people log in again, and allows the user to continue work in the application. Many times this is exactly what people want.

You don't want this behavior – but it doesn't make it a bug, or a disadvantage, or anything else. It just means, this is how things work. And as with anything, it's going to fit perfectly with some applications, and not with others. Just because it's not the way you want it, doesn't mean no one else wants it that way, or that it is a shortcoming.

In any case, all this has more to do with the fact that it is the browser maintaining the session cookies. And when you open up a new browser from an existing one, the new window shares those session cookies with the original. This really has nothing to do with ASP.NET – it is the browser doing this. Different browsers can if they choose to, implement this differently.

And as someone pointed out, the most basic QA or test of the application should have revealed this immediately.

"BillE" <belgie@xxxxxxxxxx> wrote in message
<news:et7L5Es8GHA.2120@xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx>

Marina, I certainly agree with everything you say – particularly in not putting the blame on others!

However, I also feel that this potential hazard is severe enough that it should be explicitly identified as a disadvantage. Worst of all, it is a shortcoming that can go undetected, compromising data until finally noticed. I expect there may be countless ASP applications deployed which are silently adding orders to the wrong customer and the like because the developer did not stumble across this issue.

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You can research session state very thoroughly without finding any reference to this damaging problem.

Respectfully, can you tell me where this issue is raised in MSDN, for example, so that a developer responsibly researching the use of session state prior to implementation would be likely to find it? Search on "session state disadvantages" for example – performance is the only disadvantage mentioned.

Thanks!
Bill

"Marina Levit [MVP]" <someone@xxxxxxxxxxx> wrote in message
news:O%23AAO2r8GHA.940@xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx

I am sure we can all identify hundreds of ways that a novice could screw up their entire application. It does not mean that MS can identify or document all of them.

It is best to not make assumptions and to research how things work before relying on them. That is what the job of a developer is – and sometimes you can only learn by making mistakes. You don't put the blame on others.

"Bille" <belgie@xxxxxxxxxxx> wrote in message
news:%23L4PAyr8GHA.4116@xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx

Thanks for your response Mark.

I would ask why it is not a fundamental role of the Visual Studio documentation to identify the potentially damaging risks associated with the use of Session Variables?

I think it is a basic role of documentation to point out potential pitfalls and provide guidance on correct usage.

Thanks!
Bill

"Mark Fitzpatrick" <markfitz@xxxxxxxxxxx> wrote in message
news:%23i1s3or8GHA.4572@xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx

Bill,
Unfortunatley, that's not the job of

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documentation. The docs are meant to instruct on a particular subject, not to speculate on the pros and cons. There are plenty of articles out there as well as books that discuss these pros and cons in-depth. The pros and cons have been discussed now for the better part of a decade so the information is there, it's just not the place of the documentation to inform you of comparisons with other technologies and with the pros and cons. It's the docs job simply to explain and instruct on the particular topic. Before attempting to implement something new, it's always useful to seek out some of the info that's out there on a topic. For example, there are plenty of articles out there on session variables, how to use them in web-farms, high-jacking of cookiless sessions, etc., as developers we just need to seek them out as the docs are never the be-all and end-all on a subject.

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Hope this helps,
Mark Fitzpatrick
Former Microsoft FrontPage MVP
199?-2006

"Bille" <belgie@xxxxxxxxxxxx> wrote in message
news:OZ2foZr8GHA.2288@xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx

When a user opens a new IE browser window using File-New-Window the integrity of an application which relies on session state is COMPLETELY undermined. Anyone who overlooks the fact that File-New-Window creates an instance of IE in the same process with the same SessionID as the

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parent window is in big trouble. This fundamentally restricts the usefulness of using session state management.

I probably missed it somewhere – can someone please help me find where in the Visual Studio 2005 documentation this pitfall is PLAINLY mentioned? Such that developers seeking basic guidance will not fail to note the warning? There are articles which explain elementary concepts such as how to create a session variable, without pointing out this serious hazard.

I have read the articles entitled Session State Overview, Session Identifiers, Session State Events, etc. and I can't find this trap openly described. For example, the article ASP.NET State Management Recommendations identifies only performance considerations in the Disadvantage of Using Session State section.

Why aren't developers warned of this while the basics of ASP.NET development are being explained?

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I agree that the injudicious use of global variables in any type of application is sloppy and can incur pitfalls. However, in most types of applications global variables are limited in scope to the instance of the application. If there are multiple instances of the same application open on one machine, each instance has its own scope. I think many (most?) asp developers may have naive expectations that this is the case when using session variables in an asp application hosted by Internet Explorer. I did.

–Bill

"GroupReader"

<newsgroups_01@xxxxxxxxxxx>

wrote in message

news:1161148121.175510.124660@xx

You'll have these issues *any* time you use global variables in *any* type of application. It's best to use local variables whenever possible. In asp.net this translates to

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passing
your
variables
around
from form
to form.
Use
querystring
variables or
form
variables
instead.
Sorry I
don't have a
decent
solution,
but one
more
thought:
I think your
issue may
get worse
when IE7
introduces
"tabbed
browsing"...
which
makes it
much easier
to "open
new
windows".
Maybe
there's an IE
setting that
tells IE to
start a new
session
when a new
window is
opened(?)

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