



Preface

Active Server Pages (ASP) allows for powerful web application development. It is both simple to use and, with its extensibility through ActiveX and Java components, very powerful. But what is it? Is it a programming language? No, not exactly. Is it a Microsoft-only rapid development platform? No, not really.

Active Server Pages is a technology originally created by Microsoft as an answer to the sometimes complex problems posed by CGI application development. It allows you to use any scripting language, from VBScript to Python, to create real-world web applications.

Although originally only available for Microsoft platforms, ASP is quickly becoming available for nearly any web server on many operating systems. Microsoft suggests that there are 250,000 web developers using ASP and over 25,000 web applications built using ASP. So you're not alone.

You hold in your hands the desktop reference for this exciting technology.

Who Is This Book For?

This book is intended as a reference guide for developers who write Active Server Page web applications. Whether you are a professional developer paid to work magic with the Web or an amateur trying to figure out this web development thing, this book is for you. If you are coming to ASP from CGI, I hope this book will help make your transition from CGI to ASP an easy one.

I hope this book will be a very accessible, very convenient reference book. While I was writing this book, I envisioned myself (or one of you) with half a line of code written, trying to remember what options were available for the specific property or method I was attempting to use. I wanted a quick access book that would sit on my desk and be there when I needed it. I hope I have achieved that goal.

This book is not for the beginning programmer that knows nothing about the Web. There are already several books out there that will teach you about web applications and even how to write ASP applications specifically. Although each chapter starts with a brief overview, I have included these sections only to put the current object for that chapter in the context of Active Server Pages as a whole.

How to Use This Book

As mentioned above, this book is a reference. Although you can read the entire book from beginning to end and understand Active Server Pages from a holistic perspective, that was not my intent. There are two ways to use this book:

- You can navigate to the particular chapter that covers the intrinsic ASP object or component in which you're interested. This method of navigating the book will help you learn more about the intrinsic object or component with which you are working.
- You can look up the particular method, property, or event with which you're working and go directly to the explanation and example code that you need.

Each chapter is divided into sections to help make reference simple. Each section covers a specific topic related to the intrinsic ASP object or component that is the focus of that chapter. The sections are:

Introduction

This section introduces the object or component in the context of its use in ASP applications.

Summary

This section lists the object or component's properties, methods, collections, and events. Note that not all of these elements are present for every object or component.

Comments/Troubleshooting

This section contains my comments on experiences I have had with the specific object or component. It is here that I will talk about possible discrepancies between Microsoft's documentation and my experience.

Properties

This section covers all the properties and their uses of the specific object or component.

Collections

This section covers all the collections for the specific object or component.

Methods

This section covers all the methods for the specific object or component.

Events

This section covers all the events for the specific object or component. (Note that most objects and components don't support any events.)

Each Properties, Collections, Methods, and Events section is further divided into an introduction, an example, and comments.

How This Book Is Structured

ASP in a Nutshell is divided into three parts. Part I, *Introduction to Active Server Pages*, provides a fast-paced introduction to ASP that consists of three chapters. Chapter 1, *Active Server Pages: An Introduction*, places ASP within the broader context of the evolution of web application development, provides a quick example Active Server Page, and briefly examines the ASP object model. Chapter 2, *Active Server Pages: Server-Side Scripting*, examines the difference between client-side scripting and server-side scripting, takes a look at the structure and syntax of ASP pages, and examines the scripting languages that can be used for ASP development. Chapter 3, *Extending Active Server Pages*, examines the general mechanism for incorporating external COM components into an ASP application and lists the components that are included with Internet Information Server (IIS).

In part, Active Server Pages is an object model that features six intrinsic objects (Application, ObjectContext, Request, Response, Server, and Session) that are always available to your scripts. (Actually, the ObjectContext object is a Microsoft Transaction Server object that is available only if you're using ASP 2.0 or greater.) Part II, *Object Reference*, documents each of these intrinsic objects. These chapters are arranged alphabetically by object. In addition, Chapter 10, *Preprocessing Directives, Server-Side Includes, and GLOBAL.ASA*, covers three major structural features of ASP that are not closely related to its object model.

ASP is extensible. That is, by calling the Server object's CreateObject method, you can instantiate external COM components that can be accessed programmatically just like any of the six intrinsic objects. Part III, *Installable Component Reference*, documents the components that are included with the IIS installation. These eleven chapters are again arranged alphabetically by component name.

Finally, *ASP in a Nutshell* includes three appendixes. Appendix A, *Converting CGI/WinCGI Applications into ASP Applications*, shows what's involved in converting a simple application from Perl and Visual Basic to ASP and VBScript. It also includes two handy tables that list CGI and WinCGI environment variables and their equivalent ASP properties. Appendix B, *ASP on Alternative Platforms*, examines some of the beta and released software that will allow you to develop ASP applications for software other than Microsoft's. Finally, Appendix C, *Configuration of ASP Applications on IIS*, covers the configuration details that you need to know about to get your ASP application to run successfully.

Conventions Used in This Book

Throughout this book, we've used the following typographic conventions:

Constant width

Constant width in body text indicates an HTML tag or attribute, a scripting language construct (like `For` or `Set`), an intrinsic or user-defined constant, or an expression (like `dELapTime = Timer() - dStartTime`). Code fragments and code examples appear exclusively in constant-width text. In syntax statements and prototypes, text in constant width indicates such language elements as the method or property name and any invariable elements

required by the syntax. Constant width is also used for operators, statements, and code fragments.

Constant width italic

Constant width italic in body text indicates parameter and variable names. In syntax statements or prototypes, constant width italic indicates replaceable parameters.

Italic

Italicized words in the text indicate intrinsic or user-defined functions and procedure names. Many system elements, such as paths, filenames, and URLs, are also italicized. Finally, italics are used to denote a term that's used for the first time.



This symbol indicates a tip.



This symbol indicates a warning.

How to Contact Us

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Finally, I'd like to thank you for buying this book and for using it. I hope it helps you get home a little earlier or get a little more done in your day.