CSC 405 Computer Security

Web Security

Alexandros Kapravelos akaprav@ncsu.edu

(Derived from slides by Giovanni Vigna and Adam Doupe)

The XMLHttpRequest Object

- Microsoft developers working on Outlook Web Access for Exchange 2000
- Scalability problems with traditional web application
- They created a DHTML version (circa) 1998 using an ActiveX control to fetch bits of data from the server using JavaScript
- OWA team got the MSXML team (MSXML is Microsoft's XML library, and it shipped with IE) to include their ActiveX control (hence the XML in the name)
 - Shipped in IE 5, March 1999
- Exchange 2000 finally released in November 2000, and OWA used the ActiveX Object
- Added by Netscape in December 2000 as XMLHttpRequest
- Find the full story here: <u>https://hackerfall.com/story/the-story-of-xmlhttp-2008</u>

The XMLHttpRequest Object

- Allows JavaScript code to (asynchronously) retrieve data from the server, then process the data and update the DOM
- Because of the origin (ActiveX control on Windows and included in Netscape's DOM), used to need two different ways to instantiate the control
 - Most browsers (including Microsoft Edge):
 - http_request = new XMLHttpRequest();
 - Internet Explorer
 - http_request = new ActiveXObject("Microsoft.XMLHTTP");

Creating an XMLHttpRequest

 Using the onreadystatechange property of an XMLHttpRequest object one can set the action to be performed when the result of a query is received

- Then. one can execute the request
- http_request.open('GET',

```
'http://example.com/show.php?keyword=foo', true);
```

- http_request.send();
- Note that the third parameter indicates that the request is asynchronous, that is, the execution of JavaScript will proceed while the requested document is being downloaded

XMLHttpRequest Lifecycle

- The function specified using the "onreadystatechange" property will be called at any change in the request status
 - 0 (uninitialized: Object is not initialized with data)
 - 1 (loading: Object is loading its data)
 - 2 (loaded: Object has finished loading its data)
 - 3 (interactive: User can interact with the object even though it is not fully loaded)
 - 4 (complete: Object is completely initialized)
- Usually wait until the status is "complete"
 - if (http_request.readyState == 4) {
 operates on data} else {
 not ready, return}

XMLHttpRequest Success

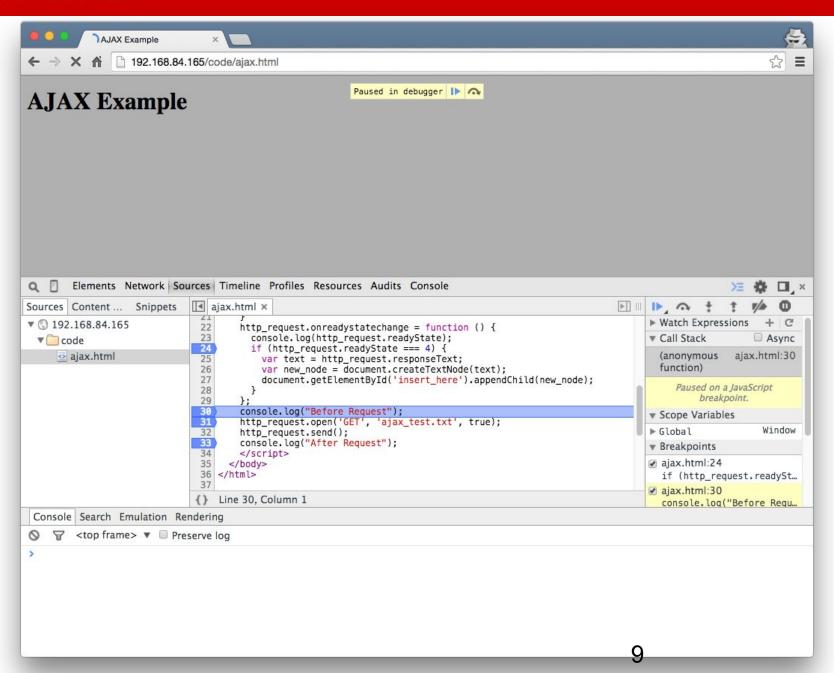
- After having received the document (and having checked for a successful return code – 200) the content of the request can be accessed:
 - As a string by calling: http_request.responseText
 - As an XMLDocument object: http_request.responseXML
 - In this case the object can be modified using the JavaScript DOM interface

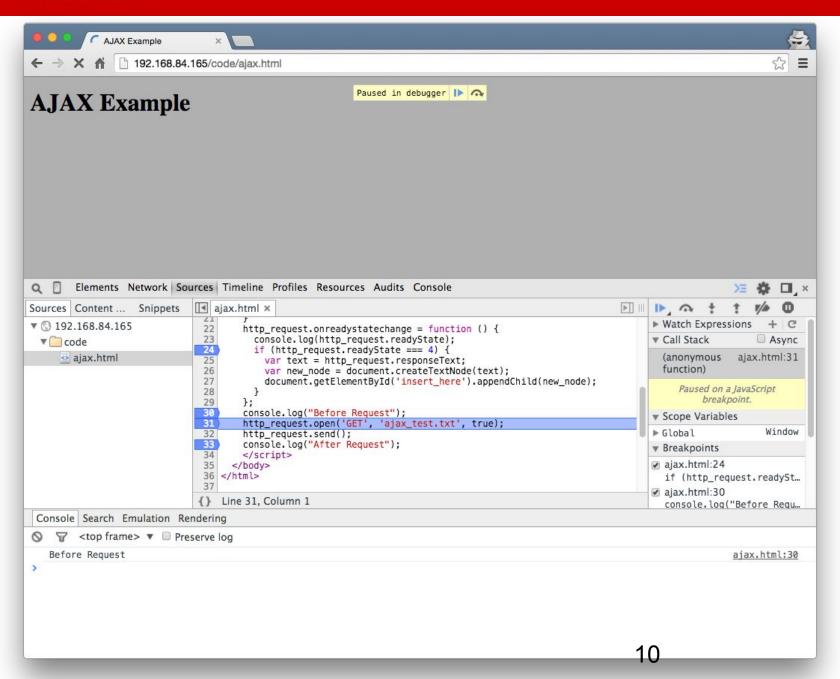
XMLHttpRequest Example

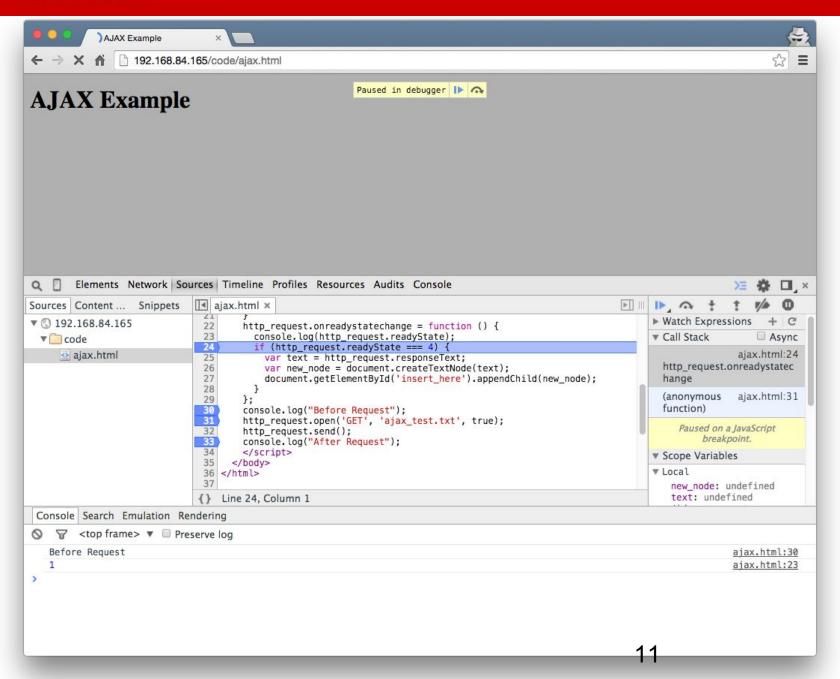
```
<!DOCTYPE html>
<html>
 <head>
   <meta charset="UTF-8">
   <title>AJAX Example</title>
 </head>
 <body>
   <h1>AJAX Example</h1>
   <div id='insert_here'>
   </div>
  <script>
   </script>
 </body>
</html>
```

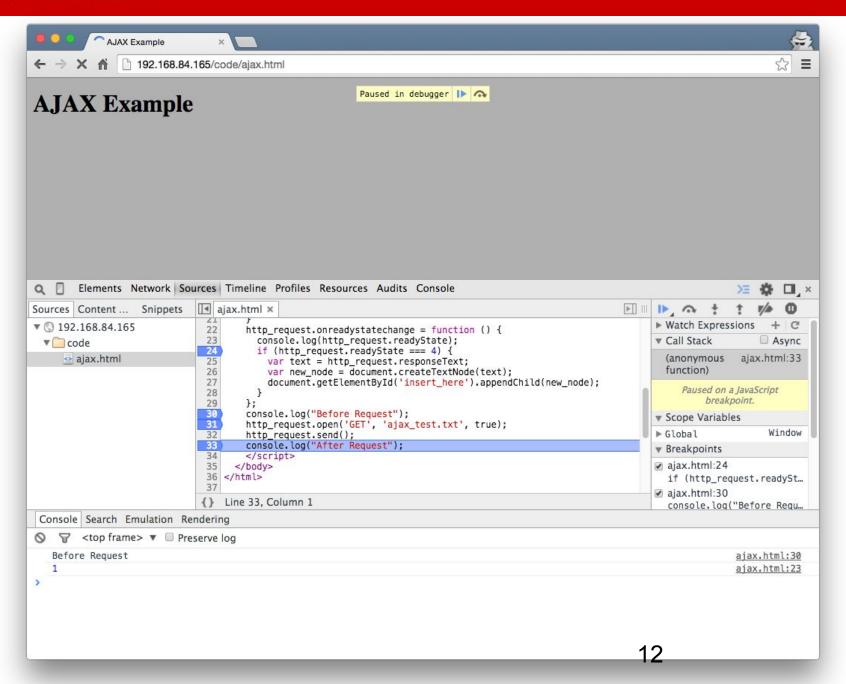
XMLHttpRequest Example

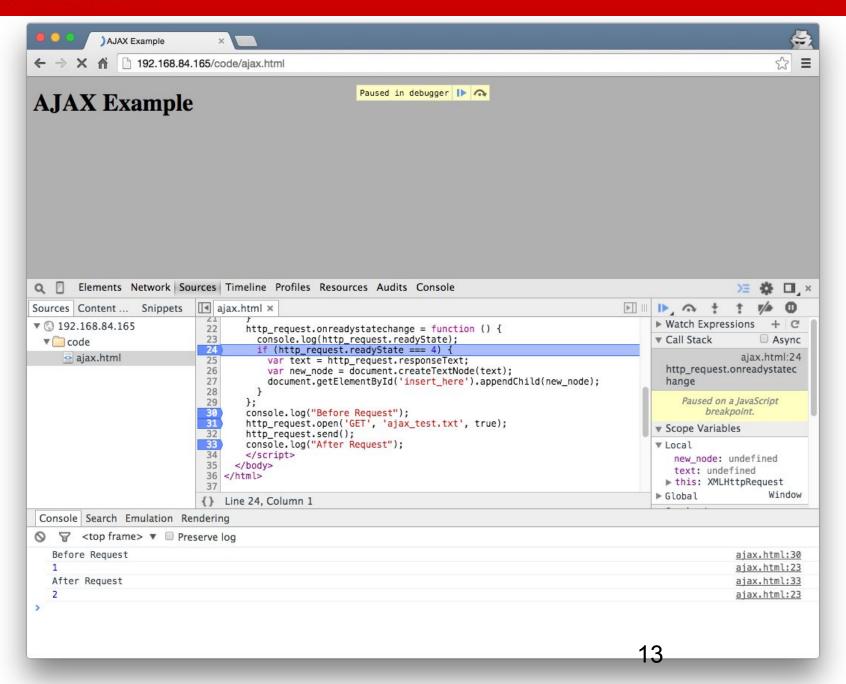
```
if (typeof XMLHttpRequest != "undefined") {
   var http request = new XMLHttpRequest();
 }
 else {
   var http_request = new ActiveXObject("Microsoft.XMLHTTP");
 if (typeof console == "undefined") {
   console = { "log" : function (text) { alert(text); } };
 http request.onreadystatechange = function () {
   console.log(http request.readyState);
   if (http request.readyState === 4) {
    var text = http request.responseText;
    var new node = document.createTextNode(text);
     document.getElementById('insert here').appendChild(new node);
 };
 console.log("Before Request");
 http request.open('GET', 'ajax test.txt', true);
 http request.send();
 console.log("After Request");
```

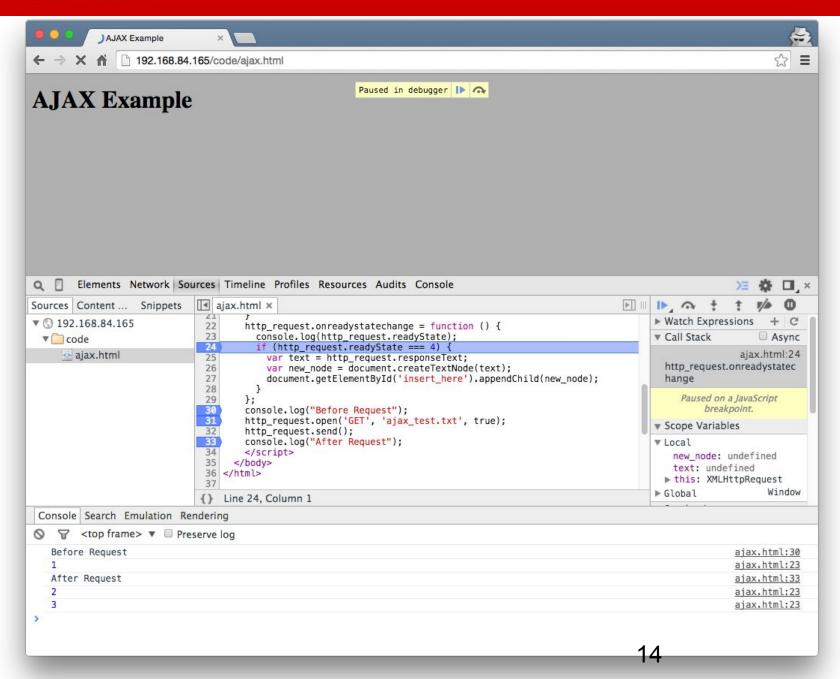


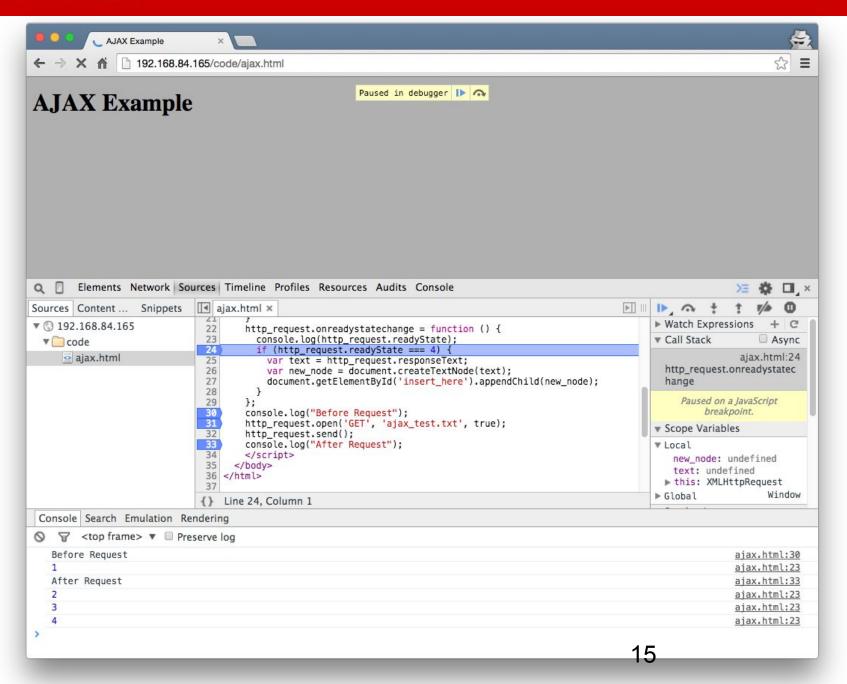


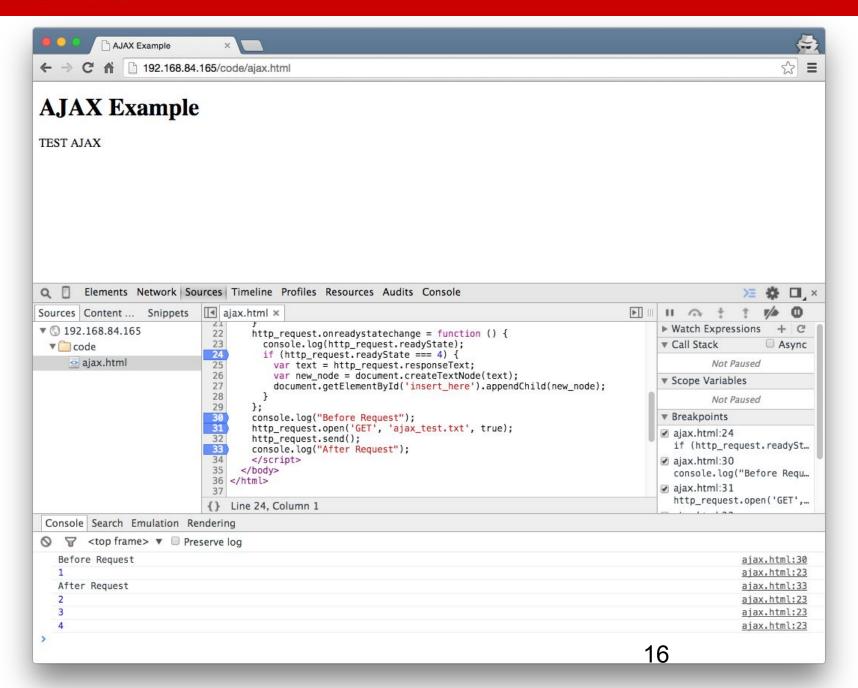


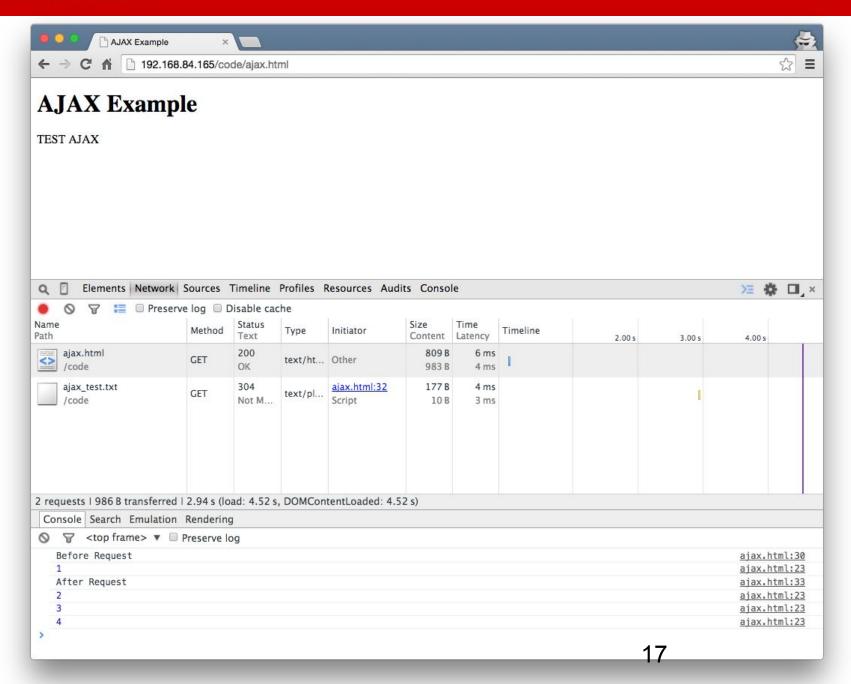


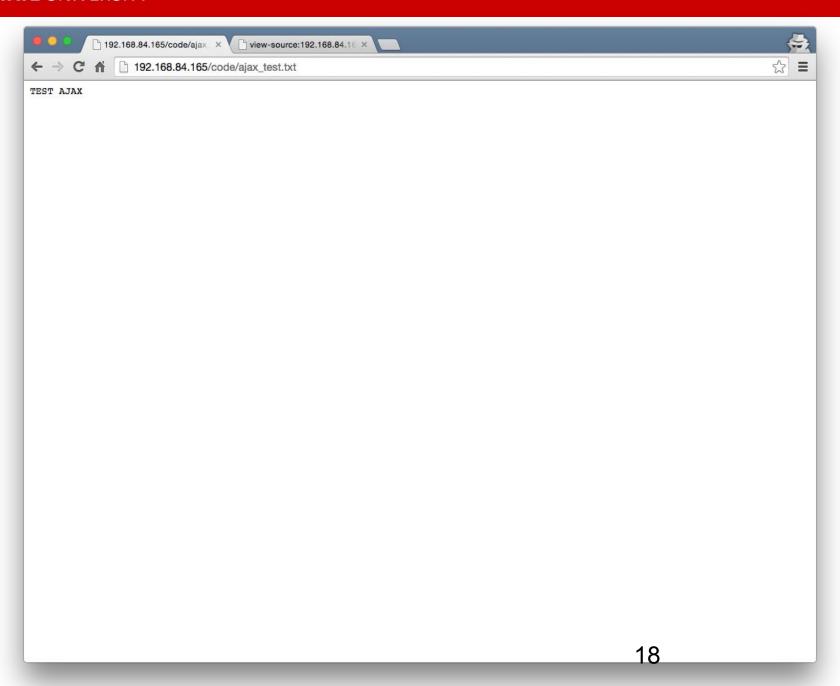


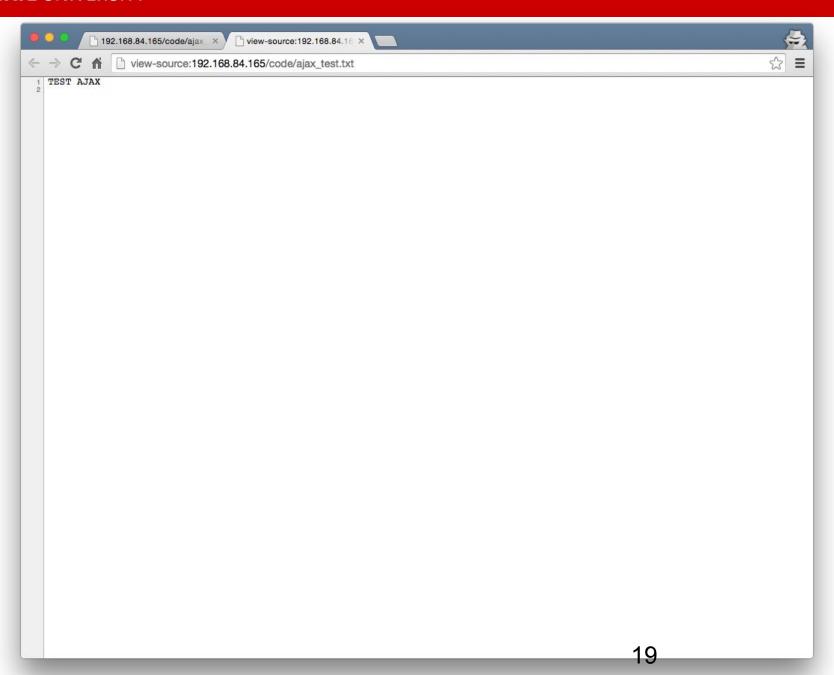


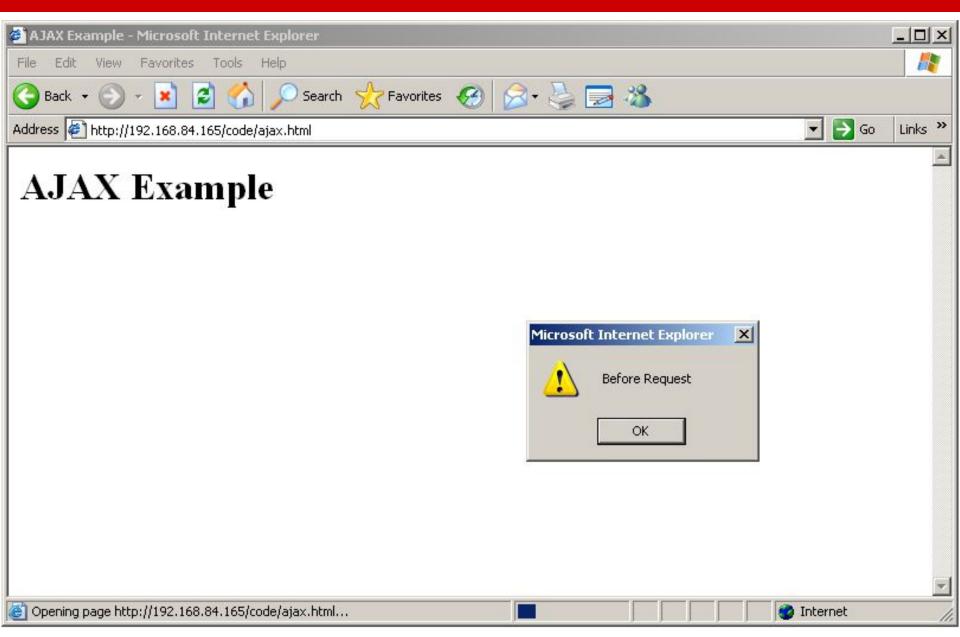


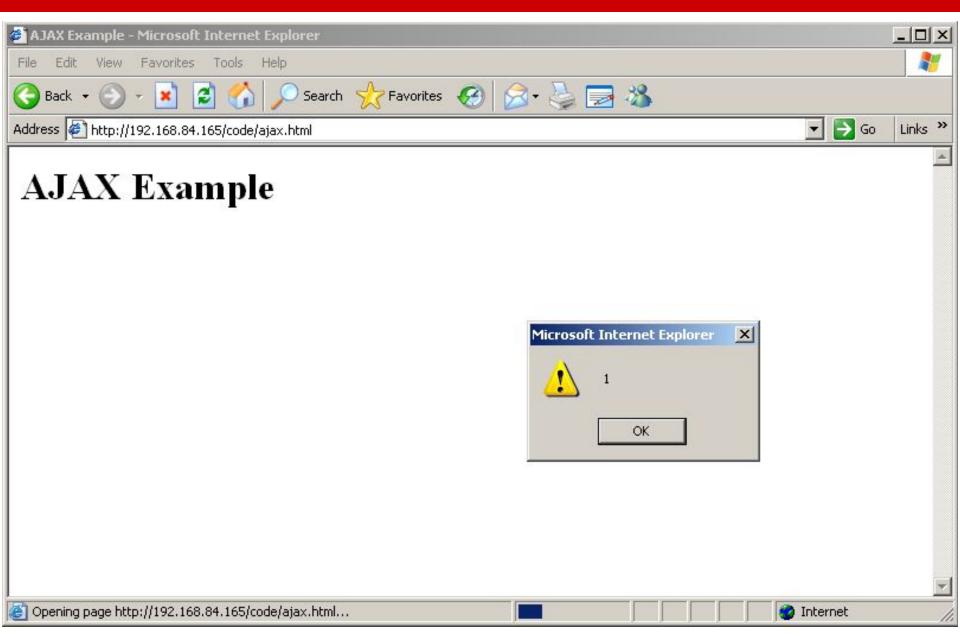


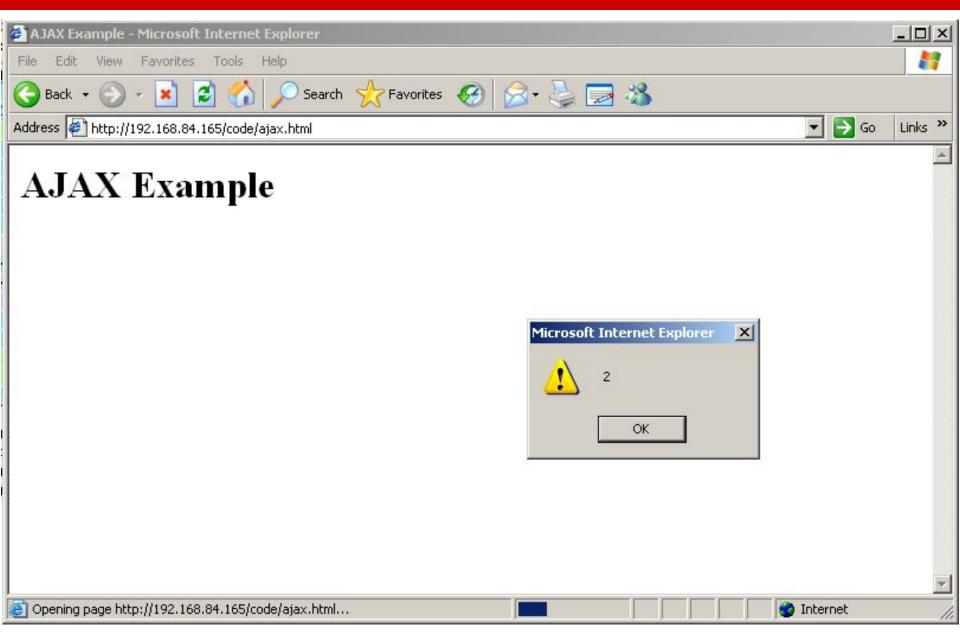


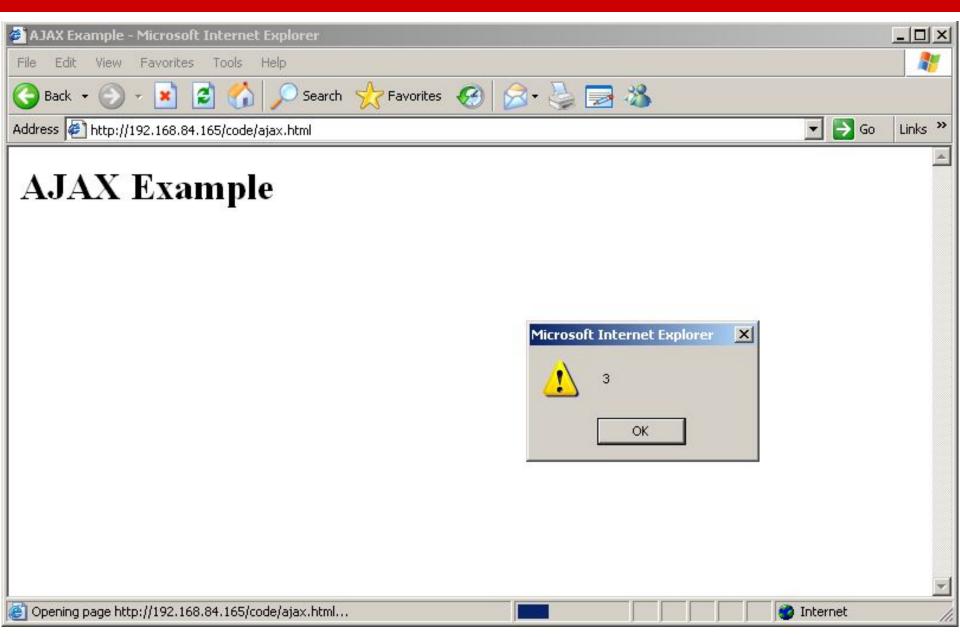


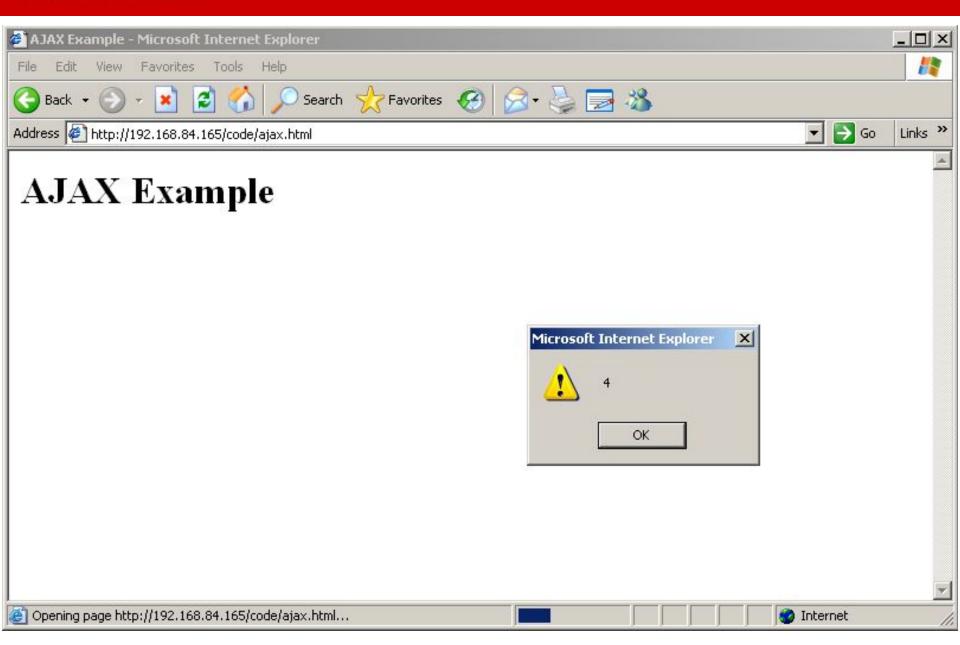


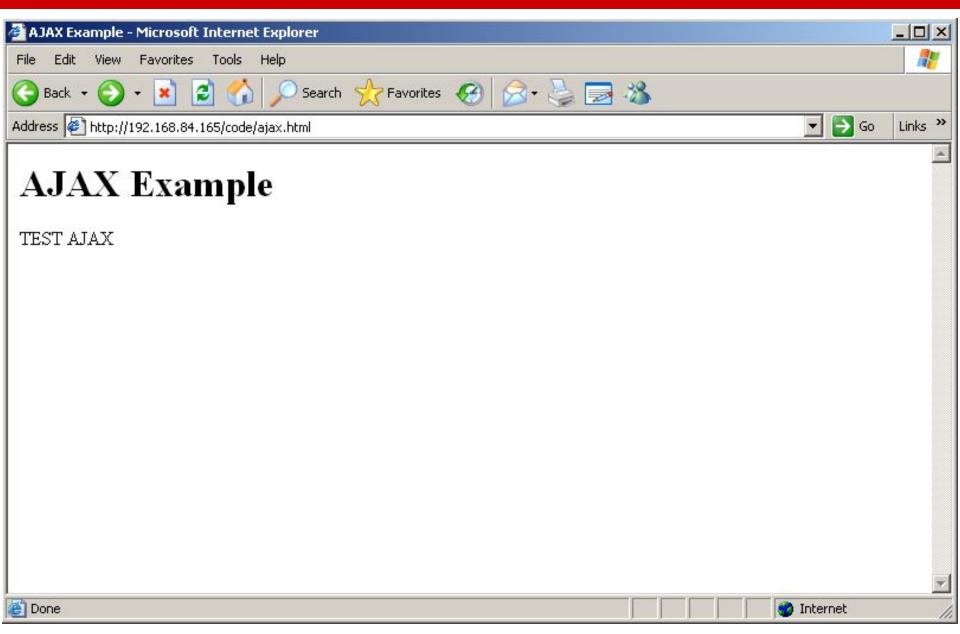


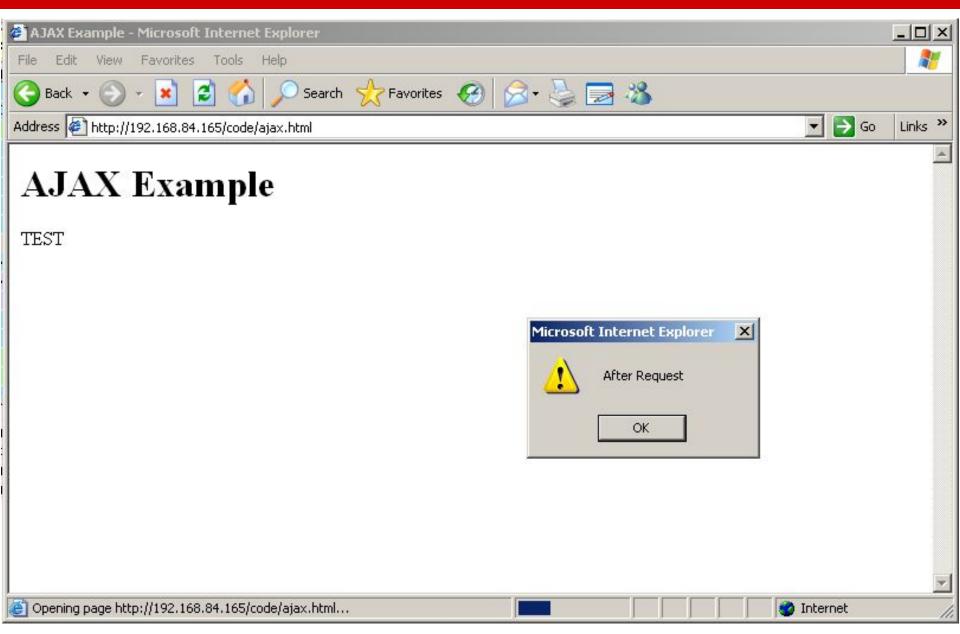


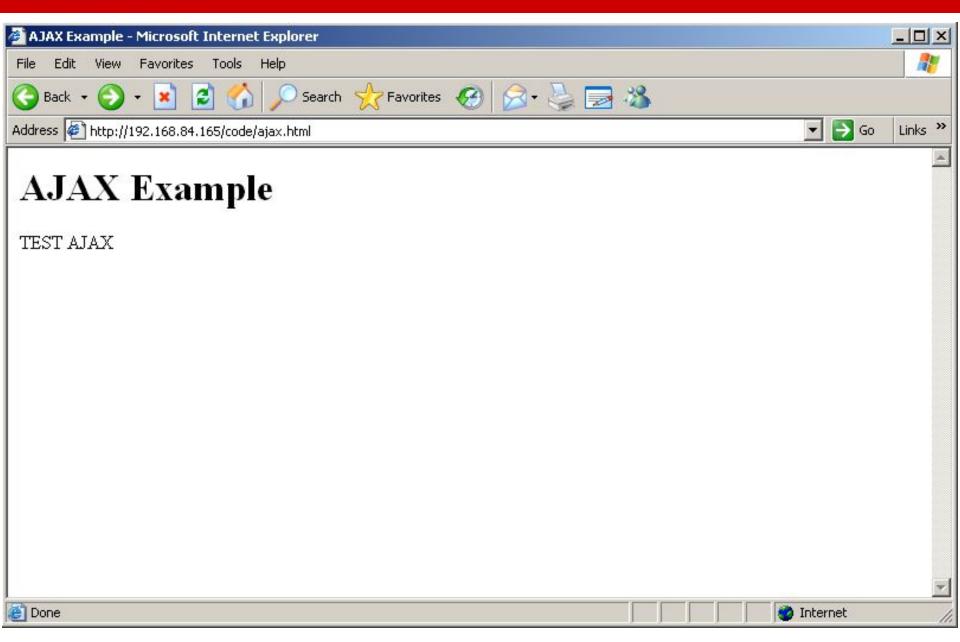


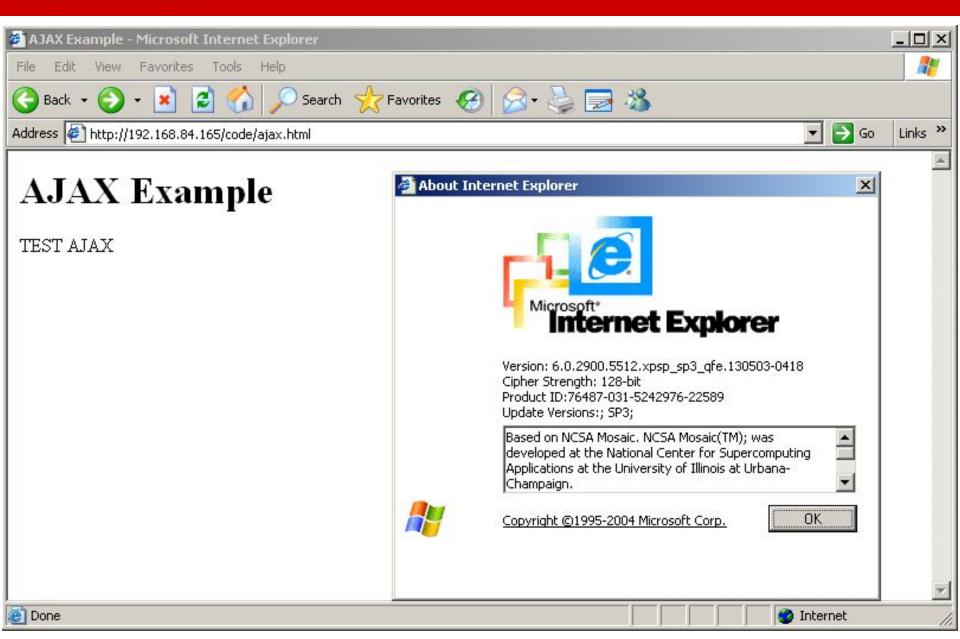






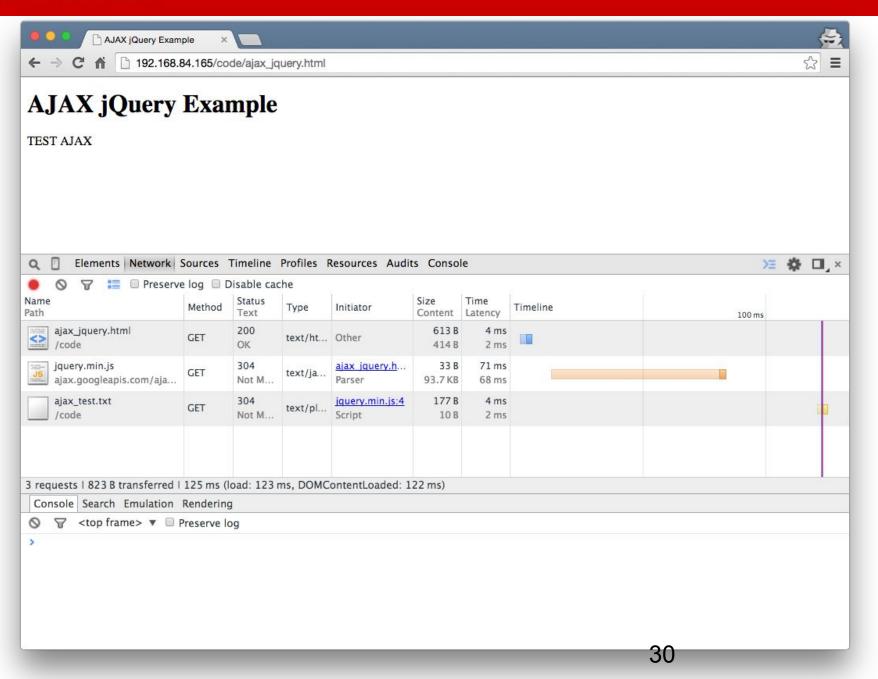


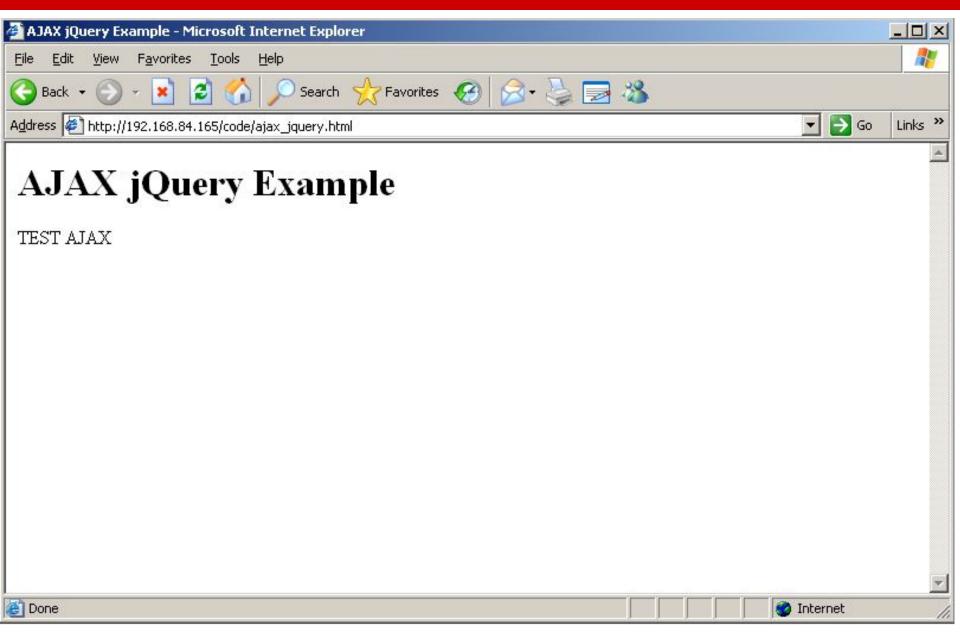




XMLHttpRequest with jQuery

```
<!DOCTYPE html>
<html>
 <head>
   <meta charset="UTF-8">
   <title>AJAX jQuery Example</title>
 </head>
 <body>
   <h1>AJAX jQuery Example</h1>
   <div id='insert here'>
   </div>
   <script src="https://ajax.googleapis.com/ajax/libs/jquery/1.11.2/jquery.min.js">
   </script>
   <script>
   $.get( "ajax test.txt", function( data ) {
      $( "#insert here" ).html( data );
    });
 </script>
 </body>
</html>
```





Asynchronous JavaScript and XML – AJAX

- Can now make web applications that asynchronously fetch only the required data from the server
 - Can also respond to user input (clicks, form), and potentially load data
- First reference to the term AJAX
 - https://web.archive.org/web/20050223021343/
 http://adaptivepath.com/publications/essays/archives/000385.php

How to Design a Web Application

- Depends on the framework you use
- CGI applications
 - One single file that responds to multiple path infos
 - Multiple files that each respond to their own path
- PHP applications
 - Typically many files that correspond 1-1 with a URL
- ASP applications
 - Classic ASP is the same as PHP

"Natural" PHP code

```
<?php
session_start();
$_SESSION['username'] = 'admin';
$username_param = $_GET['username'];
if ($username_param != $_SESSION['username'])
  if ($_SESSION['username'] != 'admin')
    echo "<h1>Sorry, you can only view your own comments.</h1>";
    exit(0);
$username = $_SESSION['username'];
?>
```

"Natural" PHP code

```
<h1>CSC 591 Comments</h1>
<h2>Welcome <?php echo $username; ?>
for debugging purposes you are: <span id='userinfo'><?php echo $ SESSION['loggedin2'];</p>
?></span>
<h2>Here are the comments</h2>
 <?php
$db = sqlite open("comments.sqlite");
$query = "select * from comments where username = '" . sqlite_escape_string($username_param) .
"',";
$res = sqlite query($query, $db);
if ($res)
{
 while ($entry = sqlite fetch array($res, SQLITE ASSOC))
 {
   ?>
   <?php echo $entry['comment']; ?>
   <br />- <?php htmlspecialchars($username); ?>
   <?php
?>
```

"Natural" PHP code

```
<h2>Make your voice heard!</h2>
<form action="add_comment.php?username=<?php echo urlencode($username); ?>"
method="POST">
<textarea name="comment"></textarea> <br>
<input type="submit" value="Submit" />
</form>
>
 <a href="logout.php">Logout</a>
<?php
}
else {
?>
<h1>Error</h1> <?php echo
htmlspecialchars(sqlite_error_string(sqlite_last_error($db))); ?> 
<?php
}
?>
```

Spaghetti Code

- How maintainable is this code?
 - Imagine all the files are like this
 - You want to change how comments are stored, giving them extra metadata
 - You must change every single SQL query in every PHP files that touches the comments, as well as all the outputs
- HTML output intermixed with SQL queries intermixed with PHP code

Tight Coupling of URLs to Scripts

- The natural way to design a web application is to map every (valid) URL to a specific script that gets executed
- URLs look like:
 - http://example.com/add_comment.php
 - http://example.com/view_comments.php
 - http://example.com/users/view_users.php
 - http://example.com/admin/secret.php
- And map directly to the following file structure
 - add_comment.php
 - view_comments.php
 - users/view users.php
 - admin/secret.php
- Is this necessary?

NC STATE UNIVERSITY



Who's behind it? Rails has been conceived, coded, and evangelized by David Heinemeier Hansson with the kind help of a lot of contributors.

How did it start? Basecamp, a projectmanagement tool by 37signals/Next Angle, was the original Rails application.

Dave Thomas: "I think Rails may well be the framework to break Ruby into the mainstream'

Real-life apps Basecamp, 43 Things, Ta-da List, Hieraki, S5 Presents, Snowdevil

What's Ruby? Ruby is an objectoriented, highly dynamic "scripting" language created by Yukihiro Matsumoto with the intent to maximize the joy of programming »

Austin Moody:

"I'd rather write a video game in Fortran than have to write another webbased application without Rails."

What databases? MySOL, PostgreSOL. SQLite, SQL Server, DB2, and Oracle are supported out of the

Web servers? Apache, lighttpd, and

box.

Ruby's own WEBrick are the primary targets using serviets, FastCGI, mod_ruby, and CGI.

Michael Koziarski: "Rails is perhaps the most productive web development environment I've ever used."

Where to host? TextDrive is the official Ruby on Rails host and offers fantastic and cheap plans where 50% of the proceeds go to

Rails development!

Rails is a full-stack, open-source web framework in Ruby for writing real-world applications with joy and less code than most frameworks spend doing XML sit-ups

Being a full-stack framework means that all layers are built to work seamlessly together. That way you Don't Repeat Yourself (DRY) and you can use a single language from top to bottom. Everything from templates to control flow to business logic is written in Ruby-the language of love for industry heavy-weights.

In striving for DRY compliance, Rails shuns configuration files and annotations in favor of reflection and run-time extensions.

This means the end of XML files telling a story that has already been told in code. It means no compilation phase: Make a change, see it work. Meta-data is an implementation detail left for the framework to handle.

Ruby on Rails I Screencasts | Download | Documentation | Weblog | Community | Source

Get started with Ruby on Rails



10m setup video (22MB) More in Rails Academy



Hype and philosophy RUC video (2h/160MB) RubyConf '04 (1h/56MB)



New to Ruby on Rails? Starting with Ruby Beginning with Rails



Using RubyGems



Production Envs

The frameworks of Rails

Rails is composed of three sub-frameworks in addition to all the ties that makes them run so well together. The three frameworks are...

Active Record

Connects business objects and database tables to model where logic and data is presented in one wrapping.

Action Pack

Routes incoming requests through controllers with create a persistable domain one method per action and lets view rendering happen using Ruby templates.

Action Mailer

Consolidates code for sending out forgotten passwords and invoices for billing in easy-to-test email service layers on top of smtp or sendmail.

Flowing on the Rails

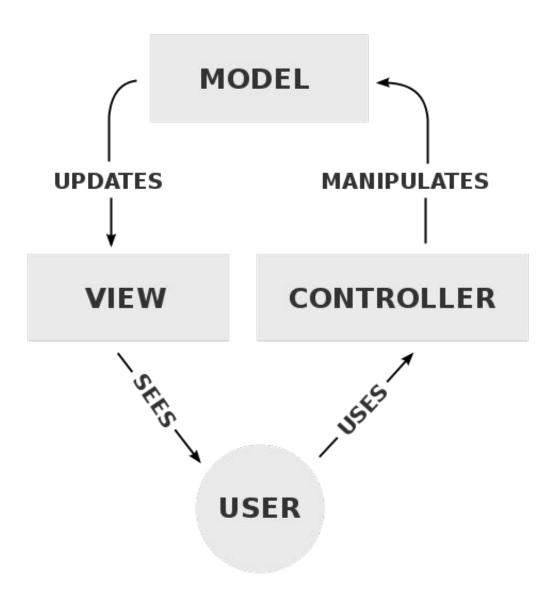
Most of the time, all the frameworks of Rails are invoked on each request in order to produce a response. The flow is as follows...





Model-View-Controller

- User Interface design framework
 - A way to separate the concerns of a GUI
 - Originally created in the early '90s
- Popularized by Ruby on Rails to structure the server-side code of web applications



Separation of Concerns

Model

- Handles all the "business logic" of the application
- Stores the application state

View

- Responsible for generating a view for the user of the data from the model
- Usually a simple templating system to display the data from the model

Controller

- Responsible for taking input from the user, fetching the correct data from the model, then calling the correct view to display the data
- Should be very simple

Object Relational Mapping

- As a programmer, you don't need to worry about the database or "SQL" language
- Rails (ActiveRecord)

```
- user = User.create(name: "David",
  occupation: "Code Artist")
- david = User.find_by(name: 'David')
- david.destroy()
- Article.where('id >
  10').limit(20).order('id asc')
```

Routing

- Define a mapping between URLs and server-side functions
- Also define parameters that get passed to the function from the URL
- Rails example:

```
class BooksController < ApplicationController</pre>
   def update
     @book = Book.find(params[:id])
     if @book.update(book params)
       redirect to(@book)
     else
       render "edit"
     end
   end
   end
```

Routing

```
class BooksController < ApplicationController
  def index
    @books = Book.all
  end
end</pre>
```

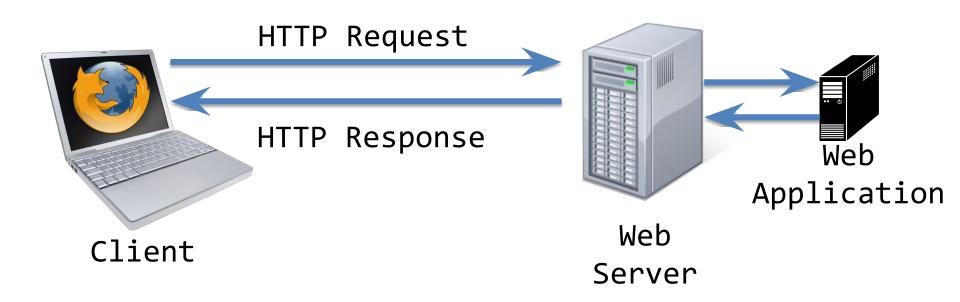
Templating

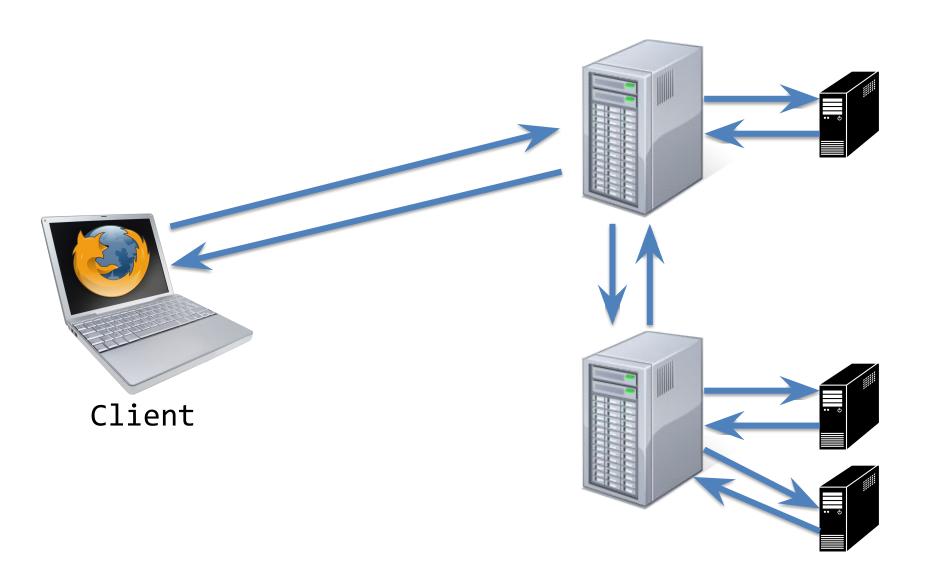
```
Define the view as a simplified language
       Input: well-defined variables or dictionaries

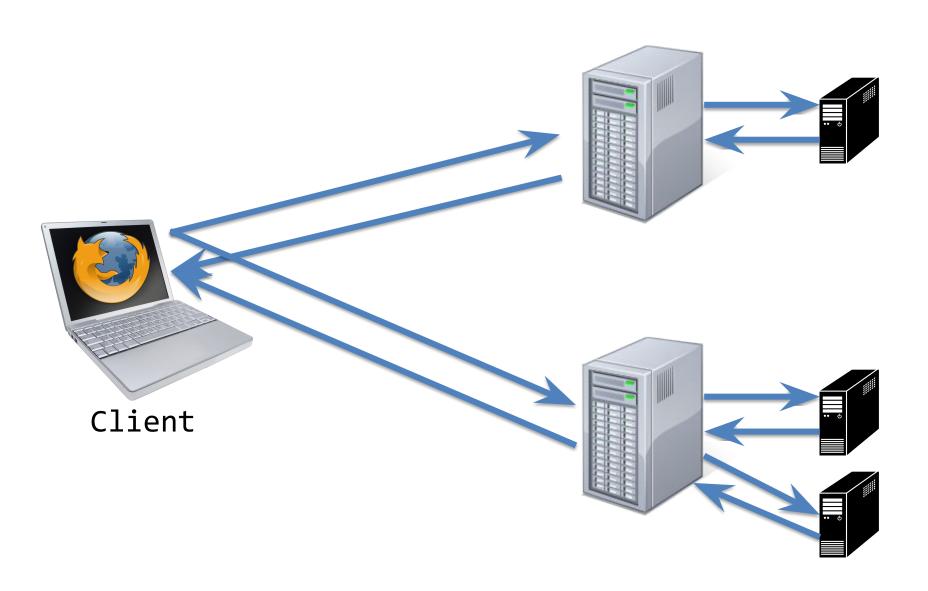
    Output: HTML (or JSON or XML, ...)

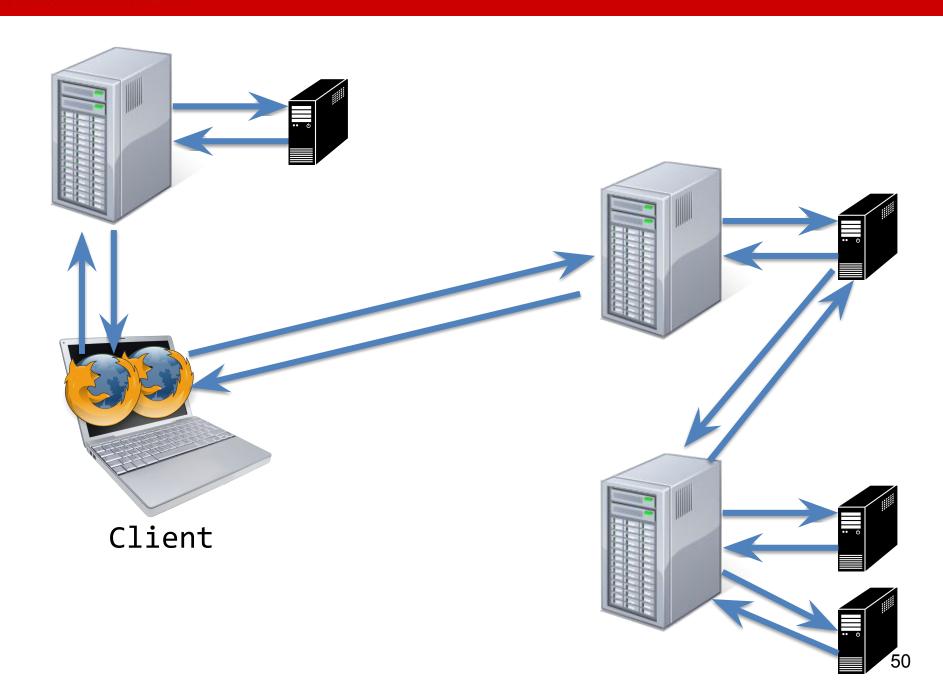
   Ruby on Rails uses ERB:
<h1>Listing Books</h1>
<% @books.each do |book| %>
<%= book.title %>
  <%= book.content %>
  <%= link to "Show", book %>
  <%= link_to "Edit", edit_book_path(book) %>
  <%= link_to "Remove", book, method: :delete, data: { confirm: "Are you
sure?" } %>
<% end %>
<%= link_to "New book", new_book_path %>
```

Web Ecosystem









Flask & Jekyll

- Similar to Ruby on Rails, but in Python
- Very nice tutorial if you want to build your own (complicated) site
 - https://blog.miguelgrinberg.com/post/the-flask-mega-tutorial-par t-i-hello-world
- Plain text -> static website
 - Jekyll: https://jekyllrb.com/
 - What I use for kapravelos.com
 - Originally developed for Github Pages
 - Easy to host
- Write your own website
 - Google App Engine with Flask (<u>link</u>)
 - Github Pages (<u>link</u>)

HackPack Meetings

- 6:00-7:15 PM at 2220 EB3 on Wednesdays
- 4:10-6:15 PM at 2220 EB3 on Fridays
- https://ncsu-hackpack.slack.com/messages/general
- https://getinvolved.ncsu.edu/organization/HackPack/
- Get some practical experience in discovering and exploiting security problems by playing CTFs!