CHAPTER 7

Authentication

"(To Lisa) You got the brains and talent to go as far as you want and when you do, I'll be right there to borrow money."

—Bart Simpson

Chapter Objectives/Student Learning Outcomes

After completing this chapter, the student will be able to:

- Define sessions and explain how they are used for authentication
- Create a PHP program that authenticates user logon
- Create a PHP program that registers users
- Create a PHP program that will allow users to change their passwords
- Create a PHP program that logs invalid login attempts
- Create a PHP program that will use current password encryption techniques

Verification and Sessions

No discussion of security would be complete without including user ID/password authentication. The current version of PHP includes many techniques to assist developers in validating users. This chapter looks at one of the more simplistic methods.

Due to the nature of immediate verification of login credentials, the authentication process directly accesses the data source for validation (it does not pass through the business rules tier). Thus, the authentication process is considered a separate tier that is placed on top of the application to provide access. As you will see, only minor changes need to occur in the interface tier programs to restrict access. Most of the coding needed is placed in the authentication tier.

In addition to authentication, levels of access can also be determined during the sign-in process. Not every user needs full access to an application. Some users may only need read access, some may need write access to only the information that pertains to them, and some (administrators) may need full access to the complete application. Each part of the application needs to be able to determine the correct level of access without requesting additional information from the user (beyond the original login to the application).

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