

Moving to the Server-Side

Early Release

Learning



Node

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Shelley Powers

Preface

Not Your Ordinary JavaScript

You picked the perfect time to learn Node.

The technology evolving around Node is still young and vibrant, with interesting new variations and twists popping up on a regular basis. At the same time, the technology has reached a level of maturity that assures you your time learning Node will be well spent: installation has never been easier, even on Windows; the "best of breed" modules are beginning to surface from the seeming hundreds available for use; the infrastructure is becoming robust enough for production use.

Two important things to keep in mind when you work with Node. The first is that it is based in JavaScript, more or less the same JavaScript you're used to working with in client-side development. True, you can use another language variation, such as CoffeeScript, but JavaScript is the lingua franca of the technology.

The second important thing to remember is that Node isn't your ordinary JavaScript. This is server-side technology, which means some of the functionality—and safeguards—you've come to expect in your browser environment just won't be there, and all sorts of new and potentially very unfamiliar capabilities, will.

Of course, if Node was like JavaScript in the browser, what fun would that be?

Why Node?

If you explore the source code for Node, you'll find the source code for Google's V8, the JavaScript (technically, ECMAScript) engine that's also at the core of Google's Chrome browser. One advantage to Node.js, then, is that you can develop Node applications for just one implementation of JavaScript—not half a dozen different browsers and browser versions.

Yes, no more worrying about having to code JavaScript for IE6. Well, at least not for Node.

Node is designed to be used for applications that are heavy on input/output, but light on computation. More importantly, it provides this functionality directly out of the box. You don't have to worry about blocking while waiting for a file to finish loading, or a database to finish updating, because most of the functionality is asynchronous by default. And you don't have to worry about working with threads, because Node is implemented on a single thread.

Most importantly, Node is written in a language that many traditional web developers are familiar with: JavaScript. You may be learning how to use new technologies, such as working with web sockets or developing to a framework like Express, but at least you won't have to learn a new language along with the concepts. This language familiarity makes it a lot easier to just focus on the new material.

Also consider that Node has been around long enough to generate a healthy community of generally supportive folks and a wealth of modules, libraries, and applications that can make it simpler to create Node applications.

This Book's Intended Audience

One of the challenges associated with working with Node is there is an assumption that most people coming into Node development have come from a Ruby or Python environment, or have worked with Rails. I don't have this assumption, so I won't explain a Node component by saying it's "just like Sinatra".

This book's only assumption is that you, the reader, have worked with JavaScript and are comfortable with it. You don't have to be expert, but you should know what I'm talking about when I mention closures, and have worked with Ajax and are familiar with event handling in the client environment. In addition, you'll get more from this book if you have done some traditional web development, and are familiar with concepts such as HTTP methods (GET and POST), web sessions, cookies, and so on. You'll also need to be familiar with working either with the Console in Windows, or the Unix command line in the Mac OS X or Linux.

You'll also enjoy the book more if you're interested in some of the new technologies such as web sockets, or working with frameworks to create applications. I cover these as a way of introducing you to how Node can be used in real world applications.

Most importantly as you progress through the book, keep an open mind. Be prepared to hit an occasional alpha/beta wall and to respond, if not gracefully, at least not painfully. Above all, meet the prospect of learning Node with anticipation, because it really can be a lot of fun.

If you're not sure you're familiar enough with JavaScript, you might want to check out my introductory text on JavaScript, "Learning JavaScript, 2nd Edition".

How Best to Use this Book

You don't have to read the book chapters in order, but there are paths through the book that are dependent on what you're after, and how much experience with Node you have.

If you've never worked with Node, then you're going to want to start with Chapter 1, and read through at least Chapter 5. These chapters cover how to get both Node, and the package manager, npm installed, how to use them, creating your first applications, and utilizing modules. Chapter 5 also covers some of the style issues associated with Node, including how to deal with Node's unique approach to asynchronous development.

If you have had some exposure to Node, and have worked with both the built-in Node modules, as well as a few external ones, and REPL, the interactive console, you could comfortably skip Chapters 1 through 4, but I still recommend starting no later than Chapter 5.

I incorporate the use of the Express framework, which is also utilizes the Connect Middleware, throughout the book. If you've not worked with Express, you're going to want to go through Chapters 6 through 8, which cover the concepts of routing, the use of proxies, web servers, middleware, and introduces Express. In particular, if you're curious about using Express in a Model-View-Controller framework, definitely read Chapters 7 and 8.

After these foundation chapters, you can skip about a bit. For instance, if you're only going to work with a relational database, you can skip the Redis and MongoDB chapters, though do check them out sometime—they might provide a new viewpoint to working with data. Of course, if you're primarily working with key-value pairs, access the Redis chapter; if you're interested in document-centric data, check out Chapter 10, which introduces how to use MongoDB with Node.

After the three data chapters, we get into specialized application use. For instance, Chapter 12 focuses purely on graphics and media access, including how to provide media for the new HTML5 video element.

Chapter 13 covers the very popular Sockets.io module, especially for working with the new web socket functionality.

After the split into two different specialized uses of Node, we come back together again in the end of the book. After you've had a time to work with the examples in the other chapters, then you're going to want to spend some in Chapter 14, learning in-depth practices for Node debugging and testing.

Chapter 15 is probably one of the tougher chapters, and also one of the more important. It covers issues of security and authority. I don't recommend it be one of the first chapters you access, but it is essential you spend time in this chapter before you roll a Node application out for general use.

Chapter 16 is the final chapter and you can safely leave that for last, regardless of your interest and experience. It focuses on how to prepare your application for production use, including how to deploy your Node application, not only on your own system, but in one of the cloud servers that are popping up to host Node applications. I'll also cover how to deploy a Node application to your server, including how to ensure it plays well with another web server such as Apache, and how to ensure your application survives a crash and restarts when the system is re-booted.

Node is heavily connected with the Git source control technique, and most (if not all) Node modules are hosted on Github. Appendix A provides a Git/Github survival guide for those who haven't worked with either.

I mentioned earlier that you don't *have to* follow the chapters in order, but I recommend that you do. Many of the chapters work off effort in previous chapters, and you may miss out on important points if you skip about. In addition, though there are numerous stand alone examples all throughout the book, I do use one one relatively simple Express application called Widgets that begins life in Chapter 7 and is touched on, here and there, in most of the rest of the chapters. I believe you'll have a better time with the book if you start at the beginning, and then lightly skim the sections that you know, rather than skip the chapter altogether.

As the King says in Alice in Wonderland, "Begin at the beginning and go on till you come to the end; and then stop".

[Insert the O'Reilly front matter here](#)

Acknowledgments

Thanks, as always, to friends and family who help keep me sane when I worked on a book. Special thanks to my editor, Simon St. Laurent, who listened to me vent more than once.

Thanks also to the editors (list editors and tech reviewer) both technical and copy, who help refine the writing, as well as catch the gotchas. Having said this, any typos or bugs missed are solely the responsibility of yours truly.

My thanks also to the production crew who helped take this book from an idea to the work you're now holding (list the production crew).

When you work with Node, you're the recipient of a great deal of generosity, starting with the creator of Node.JS, Ryan Dahl, and including the creator of npm, Isaac Schlueter, who is also now the Node.js gatekeeper.

Others who provided extremely useful code and modules are Bert Belder, TJ Holowaychuk, Jeremy Ashkenas, Mikeal Rogers, Guillermo Rauch, Jared Hanson, Felix Geisendorfer, Steve Sanderson, Matt Ranney, Caolan McMahon, Remy Sharp, and Gianni Chiappetta,

And what would Node be without the good people who provide tutorials, how-tos, and helpful guides, including Tim Caswell, Mikato Takada, Peter Krumins, Ben Nadel, and the entire crew of Nodejitsu and Joyent.

There are so many good people involved with Node that I can't list all of them, so for the others not listed:
my deepest thanks!

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Node.js, Up and Running

Node.js is a server-side technology that's based on Google's V8 JavaScript engine. It's a highly scalable system that uses asynchronous event-driven I/O (input/output), rather than threads or separate processes. It's ideal for web applications that are frequently accessed, but computationally simple.

If you're using a traditional web server, such as Apache, each time a web resource is requested, Apache creates a separate thread or invokes a new process in order to process the request. Even though Apache responds quickly to requests, and cleans up after the request has been satisfied, this approach can still tie up a lot of resources. A popular web application is going to have serious performance issues.

Node, on the other hand, doesn't create a new thread or process for every request. Instead, it listens for specific events, and when the event happens, responds accordingly. Node doesn't block any other request while waiting for the event functionality to complete, and events are processed, first come, first served, in a relatively uncomplicated *event loop*.

Node applications are created with JavaScript (or alternative language that compiles to JavaScript). The JavaScript is the same as you'd use in your client-side applications. However, unlike JavaScript in a browser, you have to set up a development environment for Node.

Node can be installed in a Unix/Linux, Mac OS, or Windows environment. This chapter is going to walk you through setting up a development environment for Node in Windows 7 and Linux (Ubuntu). Installation on a Mac should be similar to installation on Linux. I'm also covering any requirements or preparation you need to take before installing the application.

Once your development environment is operational, I'm going to demonstrate a basic Node application and walk you through the important bits, the event loop I mentioned earlier, so you can try Node yourself.

Setting up a Node Development Environment

There is more than one way to install Node in most environments. Which approach you use is dependent on your existing development environment, your comfort level working with source code, or how you plan on using Node in your existing applications.

Package installers are provided for both Windows and Mac OS, but you can install Node by grabbing a copy of the source and compiling the application. You can also use Git to *clone* (check out) the Node *repo* (repository) in all three environments.

As noted in this last paragraph, working with Node also means expanding your vocabulary, including adding new words such as *repo* and *clone*.

In this section I'm going to demonstrate how to get Node working in a Linux system (an Ubuntu 10.04 VPS, or virtual private server), by retrieving and compiling the source directly. I'm also going to demonstrate how to install Node so that you can use it with Microsoft's WebMatrix on a Windows 7 PC.

Download source and basic package installers for Node from <http://nodejs.org/#download>. A wiki page providing some basic instruction for installing Node in various environments is at <https://github.com/joyent/node/wiki/Installing-Node-via-package-manager>. I also encourage you to search for the newest tutorials for installing Node in your environment, as Node is a very dynamic environment.

Installing Node on Linux (Ubuntu)

Before installing Node in Linux, you're going to need to prepare your environment. According to the documentation provided in the Node wiki, make sure Python is installed first, and you'll also need to install libssl-dev if you plan on using SSL/TLS (Secure Sockets Layer/Transport Layer Security). Depending on your Linux installation, Python may already be installed. If not, you can use your systems package installer to install the most stable version of Python available for your system, as long as it's version 2.6 or 2.7 (required for the most recent version of Node).

The book assumes the reader only has previous experience with JavaScript and traditional web development. As such, I'm erring on the side of caution and being verbose in descriptions of what needs to be done to install Node.

For both Ubuntu and Debian, you'll also need to install other libraries. Using the Advanced Packaging Tool (APT) available in most Debian GNU/Linux systems, you can ensure the libraries you need are installed with the following commands:

```
| sudo apt-get update  
| sudo apt-get upgrade  
| sudo apt-get install build-essential openssl libssl-dev pkg-config
```

The `update` command just ensures the package index on your system is up-to-date, and the `upgrade` command upgrades any existing outdated packages. The third command line is the one that installs all of the necessary packages. Any existing package dependencies are pulled in by the package manager.

Once your system is prepared, download the Node *tarball* (compressed, archived file of the source) to your system. I use `wget` to access tarballs, though you can also use `curl`. At the time I'm writing this, the most recent source for Node is version 0.6.18:

```
| wget http://nodejs.org/dist/v0.6.18/node-v0.6.18.tar.gz
```

Once downloaded, unzip and untar the file:

```
| tar -zxf node-v0.6.18.tar.gz
```

You now have a directory labeled `node-v0.6.18`. Change into the directory and issue the following commands to compile and install Node:

```
| ./configure  
| make  
| sudo make install
```

If you've not used the `make` utility in Unix before, these three commands set up the *makefile* based on your system environment and installation, run a preliminary make to check for dependencies, and then perform a final make with installation. After processing these commands, Node should now be installed, and accessible globally, via the command line.

The fun challenge of programming is that no two systems are alike. These sequence of actions should be successful in most Linux environments. Operative word here is "should".

Notice in the last command that you had to use `sudo` to install Node. You typically need root privileges to install Node. There is a way of installing Node locally, using the following which installs Node in a given local subdirectory:

```
mkdir ~/working  
./configure --prefix=~/working  
make  
make install  
echo 'export PATH=~/working/bin:${PATH}' >> ~/.bashrc  
. ~/.bashrc
```

Setting the `prefix` configuration option to a given path in your home directory installs Node locally. You'll need to remember to update your `PATH` environmental variable accordingly.

To use `sudo`, you have to be granted root, or *superuser*, privileges, and your user name must be listed in a special file located at `/etc/sudoers`.

You can install Node locally, but if you're thinking of using this approach to use Node in your shared hosting environment, think again. Installing Node is just one part of using Node in an environment. You also need privileges to compile an application, as well as run applications off of certain ports (such as port 80). Most shared hosting environments are not going to allow you to install your own version of Node.

Unless there's compelling reason, I recommend installing Node using `sudo` for the installation.

At one time there was concern about running the Node Package Manager (npm), covered in Chapter 4 with root privilege. However, the security issues associated with running npm with root privilege have since been addressed.

Partnering Node with WebMatrix on Windows 7

You can install Node in Windows using a very basic installation sequence as outlined in the wiki installation page, provided earlier. However, chances are if you're going to use Node in a Windows environment, you're going to use it as part of a Windows web development infrastructure.

There are two different Windows infrastructures you can use Node with at this time. One is the new Windows Azure cloud platforms that allows developers to host applications in a remote service, called a *cloud*. Installing the Windows Azure SDK for Node is outlined by Microsoft, and I won't be covering the process in this chapter (though I will examine and demonstrate the SDK later in the book).

The Windows Azure SDK for Node and installation instructions can be found at <https://www.windowsazure.com/en-us/develop/nodejs/>.

The other approach to using Node on Windows, in this case, Windows 7, is by integrating Node into Microsoft's WebMatrix: a tool for web developers integrating open source technologies. The following are the steps we'll need to take to get Node up and running with WebMatrix in Windows 7:

1. Install WebMatrix
2. Install Node using the latest Windows installation package
3. Install iisnode for IIS Express 7.x--enables Node applications with IIS on Windows
4. Lastly, install Node templates for WebMatrix. These simplify Node development.

WebMatrix is installed using the Microsoft Web Platform Installer, as shown in Figure 1-1. The tool also installs IIS Express, a developer version of Microsoft's web server. WebMatrix can be downloaded from <http://www.microsoft.com/web/webmatrix/>.

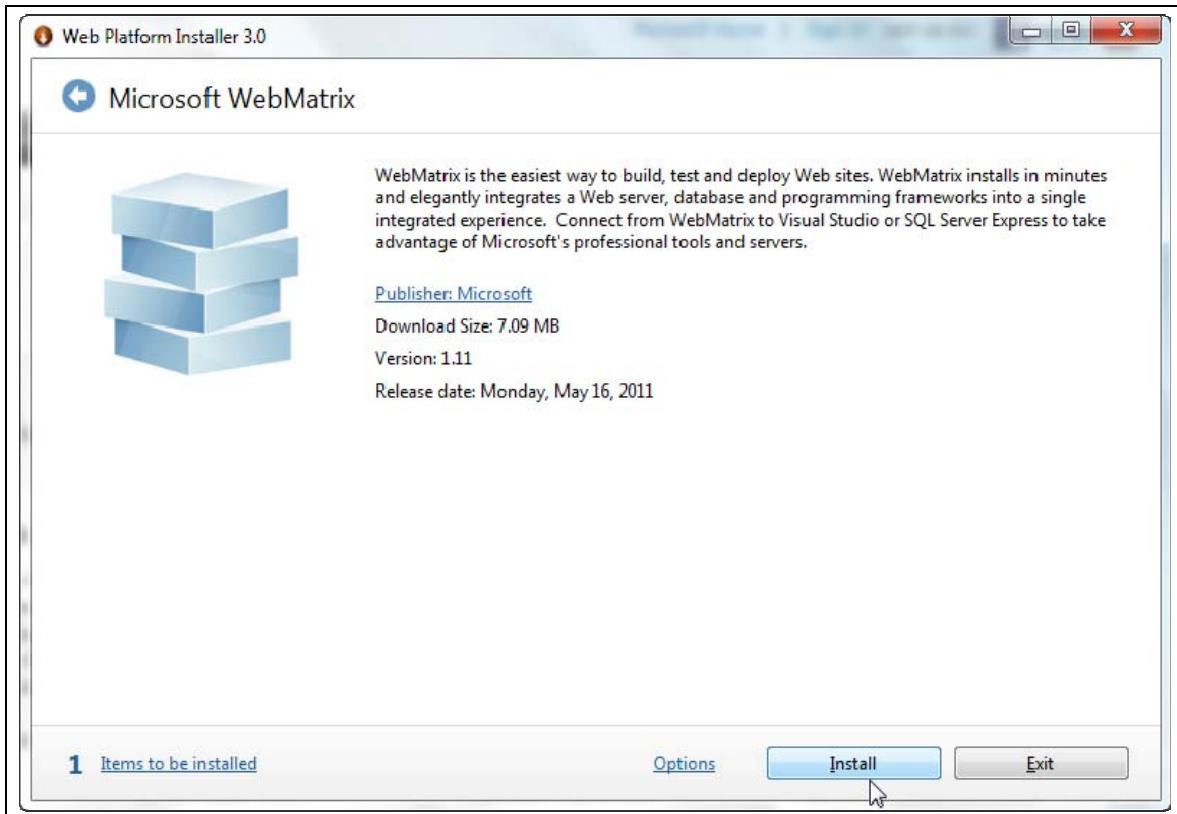


Figure 1-1. Installing WebMatrix in Windows 7

Once the installation of WebMatrix is finished, install the latest version of Node, using the installer provided at the primary Node site, at <http://nodejs.org/#download>. Installation is one-click, and once you're finished you can open a Command window and type `node`, and see that the application is operational, as shown in Figure 1-2.

A screenshot of a Command Prompt window titled "Command Prompt". The window displays the usage information for the "node" command. The output includes the usage command, options for printing node's version, evaluating scripts, printing results of eval, printing v8 command line options, printing various compiled-in variables, setting max v8 stack size, environment variables like NODE_PATH, NODE_MODULE_CONTEXTS, and NODE_DISABLE_COLORS, and documentation at <http://nodejs.org/>. The command "node -v" is run, resulting in the output "v0.6.8". The command prompt ends with "C:\Users\Shelley>".

Figure 1-2. Testing in Command window to ensure Node properly installed

For Node to work with IIS in Windows, install iisnode, a native IIS 7.x module created and maintained by Tomasz Janczuk. As with Node, installation is a snap using the pre-built installation package, available at <https://github.com/tjanczuk/iisnode>. There are x86 and x64 installations, but for x64, you'll need to install both.

During the iisnode installation, a window may pop up telling you that you're missing the Microsoft Visual C++ 2010 Redistributable Package, as shown in Figure 1-3. If so, you'll need to install this package, making sure you get the one that matches the version of iisnode you're installing—either the (x86) package (available at <http://www.microsoft.com/download/en/details.aspx?id=5555>) or the (x64) package (available at <http://www.microsoft.com/download/en/details.aspx?id=14632>), or both. Once you've installed the requisite package, run the iisnode installation again.

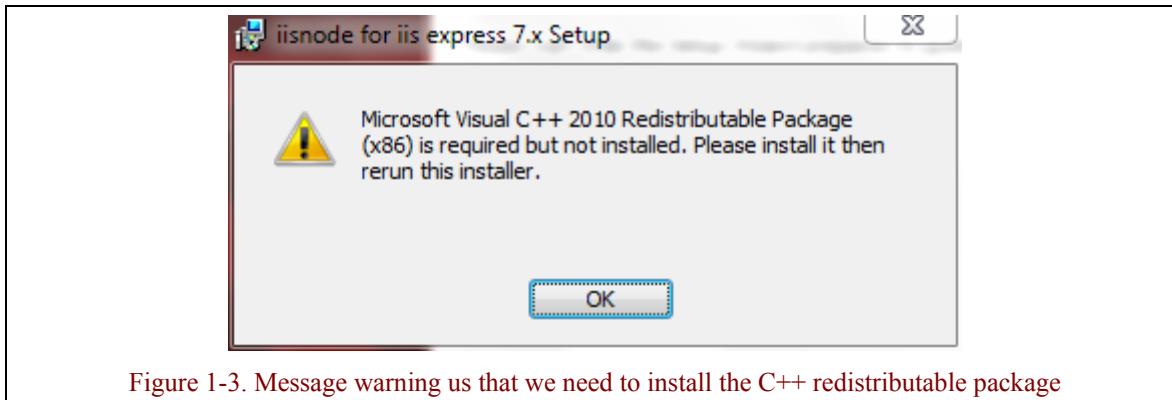


Figure 1-3. Message warning us that we need to install the C++ redistributable package

If you want to install the iisnode samples, from a Command window, opened with administrator privileges, go to the directory where iisnode is installed (either Program Files for 64-bit, or Program Files (x86)), and run the *setupsamples.bat* file.

To complete the WebMatrix/Node set up, download and install the Node templates for WebMatrix, created by Steve Sanderson and found at <https://github.com/SteveSanderson/Node-Site-Templates-for-WebMatrix>.

You can test that everything worked by running WebMatrix, and in the opening pages, select the **Site from Template** option. In the page that opens, shown in Figure 1-4, you'll see two Node template options: one for Express (introduced in Chapter 5) and one for creating a basic, empty site configured for Node. Choose the latter option, giving the site a name of *First Node Site*. Or whatever you want to use, it doesn't matter.

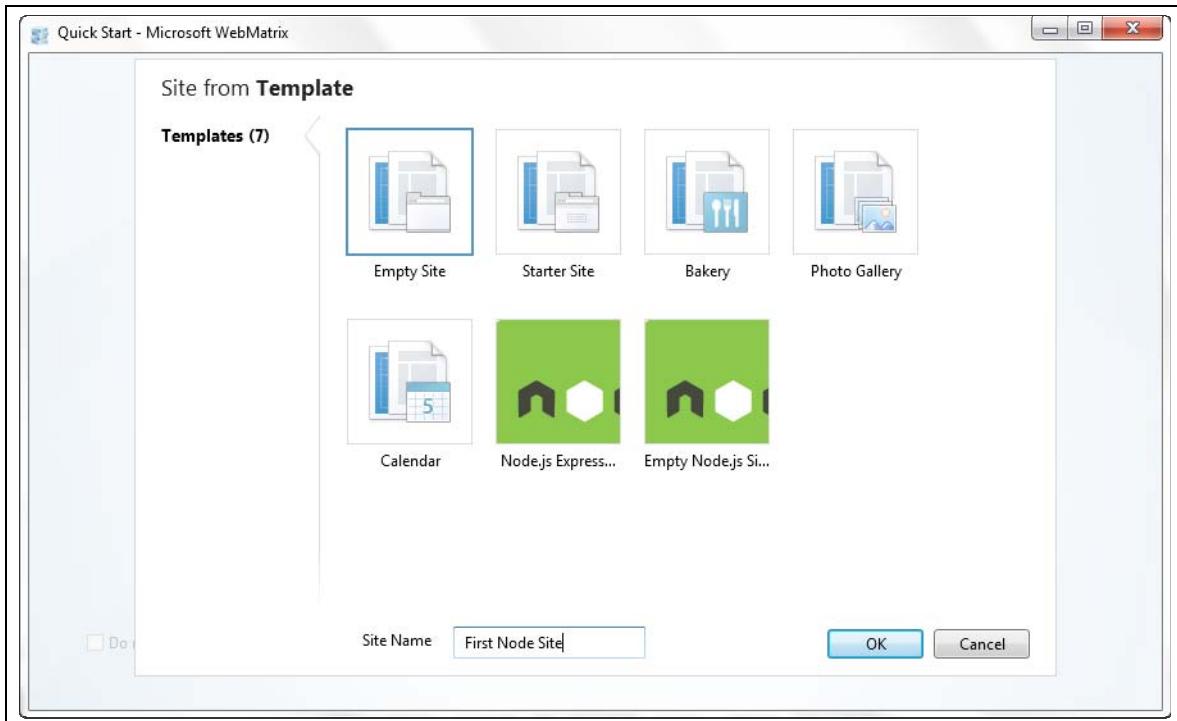


Figure 1-4. Creating a new Node site using a template in WebMatrix

Figure 1-5 shows WebMatrix once the site has been generated. Click the **Run** button, located in the top left of the page and a browser page should open with the ubiquitous "Hello, world!" message displayed.

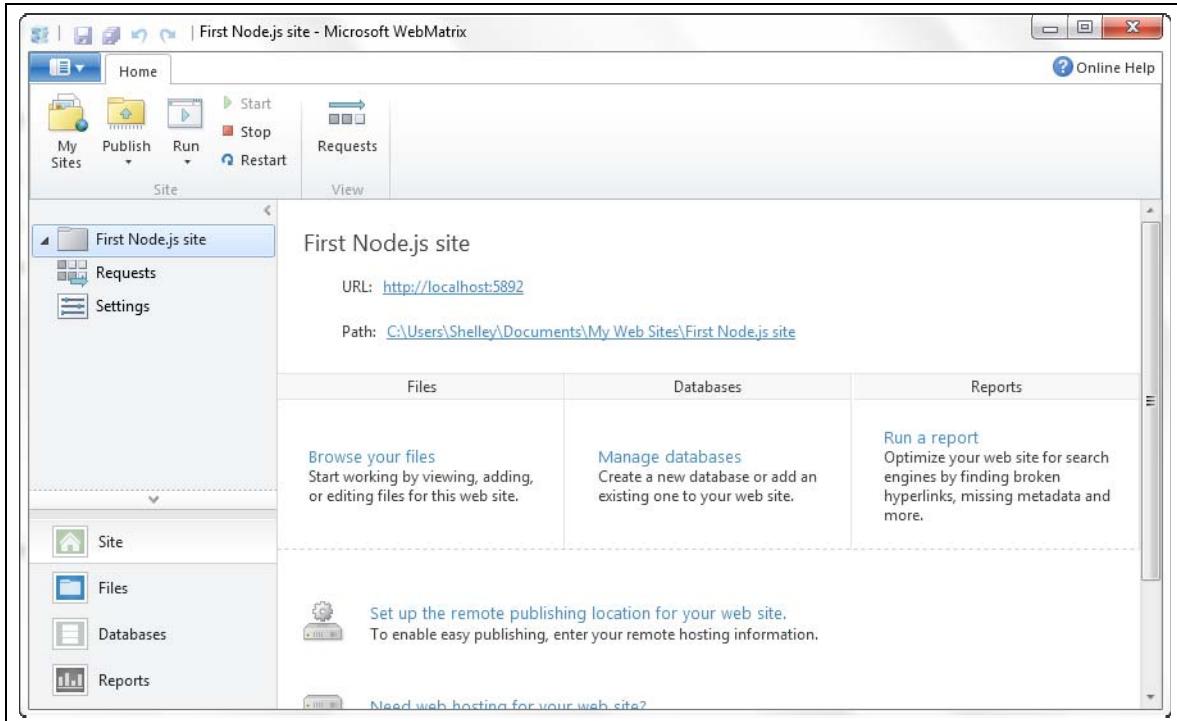


Figure 1-5. Newly generated Node site in WebMatrix

If you're running the Windows Firewall, the first time you run a Node application, you may get a warning like that shown in Figure 1-6. Don't be alarmed if you do. You just need to let the Firewall know this

application is cool by checking the **Private networks** option, and then the **Allow access** button. You want to restrict communication to just your private network on your development machine.

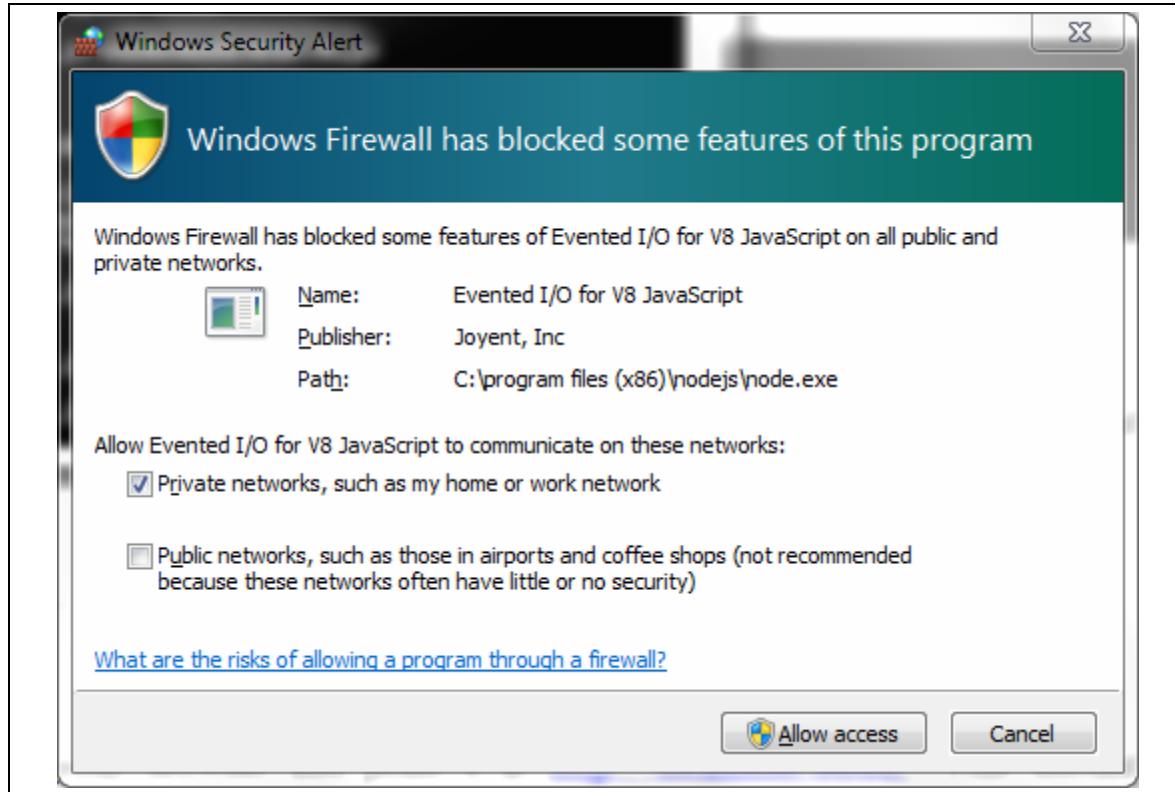


Figure 1-6. Warning that the Windows Firewall blocked Node application, and option to bypass

If you look at the generated files for your new WebMatrix Node project, you'll see one named app.js. This is the Node file, and contains the following code:

```
var http = require('http');

http.createServer(function (req, res) {
    res.writeHead(200, { 'Content-Type': 'text/html' });
    res.end('Hello, world!');
}).listen(process.env.PORT || 8080);
```

What this all means I'll get into in the second part of this chapter. The important item to take away from this code right now is that we can run this same application in any operating system where Node is installed and get the exact same functionality: a service that returns a simple message to the user.

To access the issnode examples from WebMatrix, select the WebMatrix option Site from Folder, and then input the following into the dialog that opens:
%localappdata%\iisnode\www.

Updating Node

Node is under active development and new releases are issued from time to time. I recommend sticking with stable releases only—at least until you have some experience with Node

Updating your Node installation isn't complicated. If you used a package installer, using the package installer for the new version should just override the old installation. If you're working directly with the source, you can always uninstall the old source and install the new if you're concerned about potential clutter, or file corruption. In the Node source directory, just issue the `uninstall` make option:

```
| make uninstall
```

Download the new source, compile it, and install it, and you're ready to go again.

The challenge with updating Node is whether a specific environment, module, or other application works with the new version.

In most cases, you shouldn't have version troubles. However, if you do, there is an application you can use to "switch" Node versions. The application is the Node Version Manager, abbreviated as Nvm.

Nvm can be downloaded from github, at <https://github.com/creationix/nvm>. Like Node, Nvm must be compiled and installed on your system.

To install a specific version of Node, install it with Nvm:

```
| nvm install v0.4.1
```

To switch to a specific version, use the following:

```
| nvm run v0.4.1
```

To see what versions are available, use:

```
| nvm ls
```

Node: Jumping In

Now that you have Node installed, it's time to jump into your first application.

Hello, World in Node

As is typical for testing out any new development environment, language, or tool, the first application we'll create is "Hello, World"—a simple application that prints out a greeting to whomever accesses it.

Example 1-1 shows all the text needed to create "Hello, World" in Node.

Example 1-1. Hello, World in Node

```
// load http module
var http = require('http');

// create http server
http.createServer(function (req, res) {

    // content header
    res.writeHead(200, {'content-type': 'text/plain'});

    // write message and signal communication is complete
    res.end("Hello, World!\n");
}).listen(8124);

console.log('Server running on 8124');
```

The code is saved in a file named `helloworld.js`. As server-side functionality goes, this Node application is neither too verbose, nor too cryptic; one can intuit what's happening, even without knowing Node. Best of all, it's familiar since it's written in a language we know well: JavaScript.

To run the application, from the command line in Linux, the Terminal window in Mac OS, or via the Command window in Windows, type the following:

```
| node helloworld.js
```

The following line is printed to the command line once the program has successfully started:

```
| Server running at 8124
```

Now, access the site using any browser. If the application is running on your local machine, you'll use `localhost:8124`. If it's running remotely, use the URL of the remote site, with the 8124 port. A web page with the words "Hello, World!", is displayed.

You've now created your first complete and working Node application.

Since we didn't use an ampersand (&) following the `node` command—telling the application to run in the background—the application starts and doesn't return you back to the command line. You can continue accessing the application, and the same words get displayed. The application continues until you type CTRL-C to cancel it, or otherwise kill the process.

If you want to run the application in the background within a Linux system, use the following:

```
| node helloworld.js &
```

However, you'll then have to find the process identifier using `ps -ef`, and manually kill the right process using `kill`:

```
| ps -ef | grep node  
| kill 3747
```

(Assuming 3747 is the process identifier.)

You can also add `helloworld.js` as a new file to the existing WebMatrix web site you created earlier, if you're using WebMatrix. Just open the site, choose the `New File...` option from the menu bar, and add the text shown in Example 1-1 to the file. Then click the Run button.

WebMatrix overrides the port in the application. When you run the application, you'll access the application from the port defined for the project, not specified in the `http.Server.listen` method.

Hello World, From the Top

I'll get more in depth on the anatomy of Node applications in the next couple of chapters, but for now, let's take a closer look at the Hello World application.

Returning to the text in Example 1-1, the first line of code is:

```
| var http = require('http');
```

This JavaScript loads the `http` module, assigning it to a local variable. The `http` module provides basic `http` protocol functionality, enabling network access of the application.

The next line of code is:

```
| http.createServer(function (req, res) { ...
```

In this line of code, a new server is created using `createServer`, and an anonymous function is passed as the parameter to the function call. This anonymous function is the `requestListener` function, and has two parameters: a server request (`http.ServerRequest`) and a server response (`http.ServerResponse`).

Within the anonymous function, we have the following line:

```
| res.writeHead(200, {'Content-Type': 'text/plain'});
```

The `http.ServerResponse` object has a method, `writeHead`, that sends a response header with the response status code (200), as well as providing the `content-type` of the response. You can also

include other response header information within the `headers` object, such as `content-length` or `connection`:

```
| { 'content-length': '123',
|   'content-type': 'text/plain',
|   'connection': 'keep-alive',
|   'accept': '*/*' }
```

A second, optional parameter to `writeHead` is a *reasonPhrase*, which is a textual description of the status code.

Following the code to create the header is the command to write the Hello World message:

```
| res.end("Hello, World!\n");
```

The `http.ServerResponse.end` method signals that the communication is finished; all headers and the response body have been sent. It *must* be used with every `http.ServerResponse` object.

The `end` method has two parameters:

- a chunk of data, which can be either a string or a buffer
- if the chunk of data is a string, the second parameter specifies the encoding

Both parameters are optional, and the second parameter is only required if the encoding of the string is anything other than `utf8`, which is the default.

Instead of passing the text in the `end` function, I could have used another method, `write`:

```
| res.write("Hello, World!\n");
```

And then:

```
| res.end();
```

The anonymous function and the `createServer` function are both finished on the next line in the code:

```
| }).listen(8124);
```

The `http.Server.listen` method chained at the end of the `createServer` method listens for incoming connections on a given port, in this case, port 8124. Optional parameters are a host name and a `callback` function. If a host name isn't provided, the server accepts connections to any IPv4 addresses, such as `oreilly.com` or `examples.burningbird.net`.

[More on the callback function later in the chapter.](#)

The `listen` method is asynchronous, which means the application doesn't block waiting for the connection to be established. Whatever code following the `listen` call is processed and the `listen` callback function is invoked when the `listening` event is fired—when the port connection is established.

The last line of code is:

```
| console.log('Server running on 8124/');
```

The `console` object is one of the objects from the browser world that is incorporated into Node. It's a familiar construct for most JavaScript developers, and provides a way to output text to the command line (or development environment), rather than to the client.

Asynchronous Functions and the Node Event Loop

The fundamental design behind Node is that an application is executed on a single thread (or process), and all events are handled asynchronously.

Consider how the typical web server works, such as Apache. Apache has two different approaches to how it handles incoming requests. The first is to assign each request to a separate process until the request is satisfied; the second is to spawn a separate thread for each request.

The first approach (known as the *prefork* Multi-Processing Model, or MPM) can create as many child processes as specified in an Apache configuration file. The advantage to creating a separate process is that applications accessed via the request, such as a PHP application, don't have to be thread safe. The disadvantage is that each process is memory intensive, and doesn't scale very well.

The second approach (known as the *worker* MPM), implements a hybrid process-thread approach. Each incoming request is handled via a new thread. It's more efficient from a memory perspective, but also requires that all applications be thread safe. Though the popular web language PHP is now thread safe, there's no guarantee all the many different libraries used with PHP are thread safe.

Regardless of approach used, both types respond to requests in parallel. If five people access a web application at the exact same time, and the server is set up accordingly, the web server handles all five requests simultaneously.

Node does things differently. What happens is that when you start a Node application, it's created on a single thread of execution. It sits there, content, waiting for someone to come along and make a request. When it gets a request, no other request can be processed until it's finished processing the code for the current request.

You might be thinking that this doesn't sound very efficient, and it wouldn't be except for one thing: Node operates asynchronously, via an *event loop* and *callback* functions. An event loop is nothing more than functionality that basically polls for specific events and invokes event handlers at the proper time. In Node, a callback function is this event handler.

Unlike other single threaded applications, when you make a request to a Node application and it must, in turn, make some request of resources (such as a database request or file access), Node processes the request, but doesn't wait around until the request receives a response. Instead, it attaches a callback function to the request. When whatever has been requested is ready (or finished), an event is emitted to that effect, triggering the associated callback function to do something with either the results of the requested action, or the resources requested.

If five people access an application at the exact same time, and the application needs to access a resource from a file, Node attaches a callback function to a response event for each request. As the resource becomes available for each, in turn, the callback function is called, and each person's request is satisfied. In the meantime, the Node application can be processing other requests, either for the same people, or different people.

Though it doesn't process the requests in parallel, depending on how busy the application is, and how it's designed, most people usually won't perceive any delay in the response. Best of all, the application is very frugal with memory and other limited resources.

Reading a File Asynchronously

To demonstrate the asynchronous nature of Node, Example 1-2 is a modification of the Hello World application from earlier in the chapter. Instead of just typing out "Hello, World!", it actually opens up the previously created *helloworld.js*, and outputs the contents to the client.

Example 1-2. Asynchronously opening and writing out contents of a file

```
// load http module
var http = require('http');
var fs = require('fs');

// create http server
http.createServer(function (req, res) {

    // open and read in helloworld.js
    fs.readFile('helloworld.js', 'utf8', function(err, data) {
```

```

        res.writeHead(200, {'Content-Type': 'text/plain'});
        if (err)
            res.write('Could not find or open file for reading\n');
        else

            // if no error, write JS file to client
            res.write(data);
            res.end();
        });
    ).listen(8124, function() { console.log('bound to port 8124');});

    console.log('Server running on 8124/');

```

A new module, File System (fs), is used in this example. The File System module wraps standard POSIX file functionality, including opening up and accessing the contents from a file. The method used is `readFile`. In the example, it's passed the name of the file to open, the encoding, and an anonymous function.

The two instances of asynchronous behavior I want to point out in Example 1-2 are the callback function that's attached to the `readFile` method, and the callback function attached to the `listen` method.

As discussed earlier, the `listen` method tells the HTTP server object to begin listening for connections on the given port. Node doesn't block, waiting for the connection to be established, so if we need to do something once the connection is established, we provide a callback function, as shown in Example 1-2.

When the connection is established, a `listening` event is emitted, which then invokes the callback function—outputting a message to the console.

The second, more important callback instance is the one attached to `readFile`. Accessing a file is a time consuming operation, relatively speaking, and a single threaded application accessed by multiple clients that blocked on file access would soon bog down and be unusable.

Instead, the file is opened and the contents read asynchronously. Only when the contents have been read into the data buffer—or an error occurs during the process—is the callback function passed to the `readFile` method called. It's passed the error, if any, and the data if no error occurs.

In the callback function, the error is checked, and if there is no error, the data is then written out to the response back to the client.

A Closer Look at Asynchronous Program Flow

Most people who have developed with JavaScript have done so in client applications, meant to be run by one person at a time in a browser. Using JavaScript in the server may seem odd. Creating a JavaScript application accessed by multiple people at the same time may seem even odder.

Our job is made easier because of the Node event loop, and being able to put our trust in asynchronous function calls. However, we're no longer in Kansas, Dorothy—we are developing for a different environment.

To demonstrate the differences in this new environment, I created two new applications: one as a service, and one to test the new service. Example 1-3 shows the code for the service application.

In the code, a function is called, synchronously, to write out numbers from 1 to 100. Then a file is opened, similar to what happened in Example 1-2, but this time the name of the file is passed in as a query string parameter. In addition, the file is opened only after a timer event.

Example 1-3. New service that prints out a sequence of numbers, and then the contents of a file

```

var http = require('http');
var fs = require('fs');

```

```

// write out numbers
function writeNumbers(res) {

    var counter = 0;

    // increment global, write to client
    for (var i = 0; i<100; i++) {
        counter++;
        res.write(counter.toString() + '\n');
    }
}

// create http server
http.createServer(function (req, res) {

    var query = require('url').parse(req.url).query;
    var app = require('querystring').parse(query).file + ".txt";

    // content header
    res.writeHead(200, {'Content-Type': 'text/plain'});

    // write out numbers
    writeNumbers(res);

    // timer to open file and read contents
    setTimeout(function() {

        console.log('opening ' + app);
        // open and read in file contents
        fs.readFile(app, 'utf8', function(err, data) {
            if (err)
                res.write('Could not find or open file for reading\n');
            else {
                res.write(data);
            }
            // reponse is done
            res.end();
        });
    }, 2000);
}).listen(8124);

console.log('Server running at 8124/');

```

The loop to print out the numbers is used to delay the application, similar to what could happen if you performed a computationally intensive process and then blocked until the process was finished. The `setTimeout` function is another asynchronous function, which in turn evokes a second asynchronous function: `readFile`. The application combines both asynchronous and synchronous function calls.

Create a text file named `main.txt`, containing any text you want. Running the application and accessing the page from Chrome with a query string of `file=main` generates the following console output:

```

Server running at 8124/
opening main.txt
opening undefined.txt

```

The first two lines are expected. The first is the result of running `console.log` at the end of the application, and the next line is a print out of the file being opened...but `undefined.txt`?

When processing a web request from a browser, be aware that browsers may send more than one request. For instance, a browser may also send a second request, looking for a `favicon.ico`. Because of this, when you're processing the query string, you must check for to see if the data you need is being provided, and ignore requests without the data.

That the browser sends multiple requests can impact on your application if you're expecting values via a query string. You must adjust your application, accordingly. And yes, you'll still need to test your application with several different browsers.

So far, all we've done is test our Node applications from a browser. This isn't really putting much stress into the "asynchronous" nature of the Node application.

Example 1-4 contains the code for a very simple test application. All it does is use the `http` module to request the example server several times in a loop. The requests aren't asynchronous. However, we'll also be accessing the service using the browser as we run the test program. Both, combined, asynchronously test the application.

I'll cover creating asynchronous testing applications in Chapter 14, "Testing and Debugging Node Applications"

Example 1-4. Simple application to call the new Node application 2000 times

```
var http = require('http');

//The url we want, plus the path and options we need
var options = {
  host: 'localhost',
  port: 8124,
  path: '/?file=secondary',
  method: 'GET'
};

var processPublicTimeline = function(response) {
  // finished? ok, write the data to a file
  console.log('finished request');
};

for (var i = 0; i < 2000; i++) {
  // make the request, and then end it, to close the connection
  http.request(options, processPublicTimeline).end();
}
```

Create the second text file, named `secondary.txt`. Put whatever you wish in it, but make the contents obviously different from `main.txt`.

After making sure the Node application is running, start the test application:

```
| node test.js
```

As the test application is running, access the application using your browser. If you look at the console messages being output by the application, you'll see it process both your manual and the test application's automated requests. Yet the results are consistently what we would expect, a web page with:

- the numbers 1 through 100 printed out
- the contents of the text file, in this case `main.txt`.

Now, let's mix things up a bit. In Example 1-3 make the `counter` global rather than local to the loop function, and start the application again. Then run the test program and access the page in the browser.

The results have definitely changed. Rather than the numbers starting at 1 and going to 100, they start at numbers like 2601 and 26301. They still print out the next sequential 99 numbers, but the starting value is different.

The reason why is, of course, the use of the global `counter`. Since you're accessing the same application in the browser, as the test program is doing automatically, you're both updating `counter`. Both the manual and automated application requests are processed, in turn, so there's no contention for the shared data (a major problem with thread safety in a multi-threaded environment), but if you're expecting a consistent beginning value, you might be surprised.

Now change the application again, but this time remove the `var` keyword in front of the `app` variable—'accidentally' making it a global variable. We all have, from time to time, forgotten the `var` keyword with our client-side JavaScript applications. The only time we get bit by this mistake is if any libraries we're using are using the same variable name.

Run the test application and access the Node service in your browser a couple of times. As you'll immediately see, Node is not your ordinary JavaScript.

When coding for Node, `var` is your friend.

Benefits of Node

By now you have a working Node installation—possibly even a couple.

You've also had a chance to create a couple of Node applications, and test out the differences between synchronous and asynchronous code (and what happens if you accidentally forget the `var` keyword).

Node isn't all asynchronous function calls. Some objects may provide both synchronous and asynchronous versions of the same function. However, Node works best when you use asynchronous coding, as much as possible.

The Node event loop and callback functions have two major benefits.

First, the application can easily scale, since a single thread of execution doesn't have an enormous amount of overhead. If we were to create a PHP application similar to the Node application in Example 1-3, the user would see the same page—but your system would definitely notice the difference. If you ran the PHP application in Apache with the default prefork MPM, each time the application was requested, it would have to be handled in a separate child process. Chances are, unless you have a significantly loaded system, you'll only be able to run—at most—a couple of hundred child processes in parallel. More than that number of requests means that a client needs to wait for a response.

A second benefit to Node is that you minimize resource usage, but without having to resort to multi-threaded development. In other words: you don't have to create a thread-safe application. If you've ever developed a thread-safe application previously, you're probably feeling profoundly glad at this statement.

However, as was demonstrated in the last example application, you also aren't developing JavaScript applications for single users to run in the browser, either. When you work with asynchronous applications, you need to make sure that you don't build in dependencies on one asynchronous function call finishing ahead of another, because there are no guarantees—not unless you call the second function call within the code of the first. In addition, global variables are extremely hazardous in Node, as is forgetting the `var` keyword.

Still, these are issues we can work with—especially considering the benefits of Node's low resource requirements and not having to worry about threads.

A final reason for liking Node? You can code in JavaScript without having to worry about IE6.

2

Interactive Node with REPL

While you're exploring the use of Node, and figuring out the code for your custom module or Node application, you don't have to type JavaScript into a file and run it with Node to test your code. Node also comes with an interactive component known as REPL, or Read-Eval-Print-Loop.

REPL supports a simplified Emacs style of line editing, and a small set of basic commands. Whatever is typed into REPL is processed no differently than if you type the JavaScript into a file and ran the file using Node. You can actually use REPL to code your entire application—literally testing the application on the fly.

REPL has some interesting quirks, which I'll also cover—and provide ways you can work around the quirks. This includes replacing the underlying mechanism that persists commands, as well as providing command line editing.

Lastly, if the built-in REPL doesn't provide exactly what you need for an interactive environment, there's also an API to create your own custom REPL, which I'll demonstrate in the latter part of the chapter.

A handy guide for using REPL can be found at <http://docs.nodejitsu.com/articles/REPL/how-to-use-nodejs-repl>. The Nodejitsu site also provides a nice tutorial on how to create a custom REPL at <http://docs.nodejitsu.com/articles/REPL/how-to-create-a-custom-repl>.

REPL: First Looks and Undefined Expressions

REPL is begun simply, just by typing `node`, without providing any Node application file.

```
| $ node
```

REPL then provides a command line prompt—an angle bracket (`>`) by default. Anything you type from this point on is processed by the underlying V8 JavaScript engine.

REPL is very simple to use. Just start typing in your JavaScript, like you'd add it to a file:

```
| > a = 2;
| 2
```

The tool prints out the result of whatever expression you just typed. In this session excerpt, the value of the expression is 2. In the following, the expression result is an array with three elements:

```
| > b = ['a','b','c'];
| [ 'a', 'b', 'c' ]
```

To access the last expression, use the underscore/underline character (_). In the following, `a` is set to 2, and the resulting expression is incremented by 1, and then 1 again:

```
| > a = 2;
| 2
| > _++;
| 3
| > _++;
| 4
```

You can even access properties or call methods on the underscored expression:

```
| > ['apple','orange','lime']
| [ 'apple', 'orange', 'lime' ]
| > _.length
| 3
| > 3 + 4
| 7
| > _.toString();
| '7'
```

You can use the `var` keyword with REPL in order to access an expression or value at a later time, but you might get an unexpected result. For instance, the following line in REPL:

```
| > var a = 2;
```

Doesn't return the value `2`, it returns a value of `undefined`. The reason why is that the result of the expression is undefined, since variable assignment doesn't return a result when evaluated.

Consider the following instead, which is what's happening, more or less, under the skin in REPL:

```
| console.log(eval('a = 2'));
| console.log(eval('var a = 2'));
```

Typing this into a file and running the file using Node returns:

```
| 2
| undefined
```

There is no result from the second call to `eval`, and hence the result is undefined. REPL is, literally, Read-Eval-Print-Loop, with emphasis on the `eval`.

Still, you can use the variable in REPL, just as you would in a Node application:

```
| > var a = 2;
| undefined
| > a++;
| 2
| > a++;
| 3
```

The latter two command lines do have results, which are printed out by REPL.

I'll demonstrate how to create your own custom REPL in the section titled "Creating Your Own REPL". One that doesn't output the `undefined`.

To end the REPL session, either type in CTRL-C twice, or CTRL-D once. Other ways to end the session are covered later, in the section on REPL commands.

REPL's Own Unique Hello World

A REPLEsque variation of Hello World is the following:

```
| > 3 > 2 > 1;
| false
```

This code snippet is a good demonstration about why REPL can be useful. At first glance, we might expect the expression we typed to evaluate to `true`, since 3 is greater than 2, which is greater than 1. However, in JavaScript, expressions are evaluated left to right, and each expression's result is returned for the next evaluation.

A better way of looking at what's happening with this code snippet is the following REPL session:

```
| > 3 > 2 > 1;
| false
| > 3 > 2;
| true
| > true > 1;
| false
```

Now the result makes more sense. What's happening is that the expression `3 > 2` is evaluated, returning `true`. But then the value of `true` is compared to the numeric 1. Since JavaScript provides automatic data type conversion, and `true` and 1 are equivalent values after data type conversion, `true` is not greater than 1, and hence the result is false.

The helpfulness of REPL is being able to discover these little interesting quirks in JavaScript. Hopefully, after testing our code in REPL, we don't have unexpected side effects in our applications, such as expecting a result of true, and getting a result of false.

Multiline and More Complex JavaScript

You can type the same JavaScript into REPL just like you'd type it into a file, including `require` statements to import modules. A session to try out the Query String module is repeated in the following text:

```
$ node
> qs = require('querystring');
{ unescapeBuffer: [Function],
  unescape: [Function],
  escape: [Function],
  encode: [Function],
  stringify: [Function],
  decode: [Function],
  parse: [Function] }
> val = qs.parse('file=main&file=secondary&test=one').file;
[ 'main', 'secondary' ]
```

Since you didn't use the `var` keyword, the expression result is printed out, in this instance, the interface for the `querystring` object. How's that for a bonus? Not only are you getting access to the object, but you're also learning more about the object's interface, while you're at it. However, if you want to forgo the potentially lengthy output of text, use the `var` keyword.

```
| > var qs = require('querystring');
```

You'll be able to access the `querystring` object with `qs` variable the same with either approach.

In addition to being able to incorporate external modules, REPL gracefully handles multiline expressions, providing a textual indicator of code that's nested following an opening curly bracket:

```
> var test = function (x, y) {
...   var val = x * y;
...   return val;
... };
undefined
> test(3,4);
12
```

REPL provides repeating dots to indicate that everything that's being typed is following an open curly bracket, and hence the command isn't finished yet. It does the same for an open parenthesis, too:

```
> test(4,  
... 5);  
20
```

Increasing levels of nesting generate more dots—necessary in an interactive environment, where you might lose track of where you're at, as you type:

```
> var test = function (x, y) {  
...   var test2 = function (x, y) {  
....     return x * y;  
....   }  
...   return test2(x,y);  
... }  
undefined  
> test(3,4);  
12  
>
```

You can type in, or copy and paste in, an entire Node application, and run it from REPL:

```
> var http = require('http');  
undefined  
> http.createServer(function (req, res) {  
...  
...   // content header  
...   res.writeHead(200, {'Content-Type': 'text/plain'});  
...  
...   res.end("Hello person\n");  
... }).listen(8124);  
{ connections: 0,  
  allowHalfOpen: true,  
  _handle:  
    { writeQueueSize: 0,  
      onconnection: [Function: onconnection],  
      socket: [Circular] },  
  events:  
    { request: [Function],  
      connection: [Function: connectionListener] },  
  httpAllowHalfOpen: false }  
>  
undefined  
> console.log('Server running at http://127.0.0.1:8124/');  
Server running at http://127.0.0.1:8124/  
undefined
```

This application can be accessed from a browser no differently than if you typed the text into a file and ran it using Node. And again, the responses back from REPL can provide an interesting look at the code, as shown in the highlighted text.

In fact, my favorite use of REPL is to get a quick look at objects. For instance, the Node core object `global` is sparsely documented at the Node.js web site. In order to get a better look, I opened up a REPL session and passed the object to the `console.log` method:

```
| > console.log(global)
```

Or, the following, which has the same result:

```
| > gl = global;
```

I'm not replicating what was displayed in REPL: I'll leave that for you to try on your own installation, since the interface for `global` is so large. The important point to take away from this exercise is we can, at any

time, quickly and easily, get a quick look at an object's interface. It's a handy way of remembering what a method is called, or what properties are available.

[More on `global` in Chapter 3, "The Node Core".](#)

You can use the up UP and DOWN arrow keys to traverse through the commands you've typed into REPL. This can be a handy way of reviewing what you've done, but can also be a way of 'editing' what you've done, though in a somewhat limited way.

Consider the following session in REPL:

```
> var myFruit = function(fruitArray,pickOne) {  
... return fruitArray[pickOne - 1];  
... }  
undefined  
> fruit = ['apples','oranges','limes','cherries'];  
[ 'apples',  
  'oranges',  
  'limes',  
  'cherries' ]  
> myFruit(fruit,2);  
'oranges'  
> myFruit(fruit,0);  
undefined  
> var myFruit = function(fruitArray,pickOne) {  
... if (pickOne <= 0) return 'invalid number';  
... return fruitArray[pickOne - 1];  
... };  
undefined  
> myFruit(fruit,0);  
'invalid number'  
> myFruit(fruit,1);  
'apples'
```

Though you can't demonstrate it in a session print out, when I modified the function to check the input value, I actually arrowed up through the content to the beginning function declaration, and then hit ENTER to restart the function. I added the new line, and then again, used the arrow keys to repeat previously typed entries until the function was finished. I also used the UP arrow key to repeat the function call that resulted in an `undefined` result.

It seems like a lot of work just to retype something that could be simply typed again, but consider working with regular expressions, such as the following:

```
> var ssRe = /^\\d{3}-\\d{2}-\\d{4}$/;  
undefined  
> ssRe.test('555-55-5555');  
true  
> var decRe = /\\s*(\\+|-)?((\\d+(\\.\\d+)?)|(.\\.\\d+))\\s*/$/  
undefined  
> decRe.test(56.5);  
true
```

I'm absolutely useless when it comes to regular expressions, and have to tweak them several times before they're just right. Using REPL to test regular expressions is very attractive. However, re-typing in long regular expressions again would be a monstrous amount of work.

Luckily, all we have to do with REPL is arrow up to find the line where the regular expression was created, tweak it, hit ENTER, and continue with the next test.

In addition to the arrow keys, you can also use the TAB key to *autocomplete* text. As an example, type "va" at the command line, and then type TAB, and REPL will autocomplete "var". The tab key can be used to autocomplete any global or local variable.

A quick summary of keyboard commands that work with REPL is given in Table 2-1.

Table 2-1. Keyboard control in REPL

Keyboard Entry	What it does
CTRL-C	Terminates current command. Pressing CTRL-C twice forces an exit.
CTRL-D	Exits REPL
tab	Autocompletes global or local variable
UP arrow	Traverses up through command history
DOWN arrow	Traverses down through command history
Underscore (_)	References result of last expression

If you're concerned about spending a lot of time coding in REPL with nothing to show for it when you're done, no worries: you can save the results of the current context with the `.save` command. It and the other REPL commands are covered in the next section.

REPL Commands

REPL has a simple interface with a small set of useful commands. In the last section I mentioned `.save`. What `.save` does is save your inputs in the current object context into a file. Unless you specifically created a new object context or used the `.clear` command, the context should be all of the input in the current REPL session:

```
| > .save ./dir/session/save.js
```

Just your inputs are saved, as if you had typed them directly into a file using a text editor.

The REPL commands are:

`.break`

If you get lost during a multi-line entry, typing `.break` will start you over again. You'll lose the multi-line content, though.

`.clear`

Resets the context object and clears any multi-line expression. Basically starts you over again.

`.exit`

Causes REPL to exit.

`.help`

Displays all available REPL commands.

`.save`

Saves the current REPL session to a file.

.load

Loads a file into the current session (.load /path/to/file.js)

If you're working on an application using REPL as editor, a hint: save your work often, using .save. Though current commands are persisted to history, trying to recreate your code from history would be a painful exercise.

Speaking of persistence and history, how to customize both with REPL is covered in the next section.

REPL and rlwrap

The Node.JS website documentation for REPL mentions setting up an environmental variable so you can use REPL with `rlwrap`. What is `rlwrap`, and why would you use it with REPL?

The `rlwrap` utility is a wrapper that adds GNU `readline` library functionality to command lines that allow increased flexibility with keyboard input. It intercepts keyboard input and provides additional functionality, such as enhanced line editing, as well as a persistent history of commands.

You'll need to install `rlwrap` and `readline` to use this facility with REPL, though most flavors of Unix provide an easy package installation. For instance, in my own Ubuntu system, it was as easy to install `rlwrap` as using:

```
| apt-get install rlwrap
```

Windows users have to use a Unix environmental emulator, such as Cygwin.

A quick and visual demonstration of using REPL with `rlwrap` is the following, which changes the REPL prompt to purple:

```
| env NODE_NO_READLINE=1 rlwrap -ppurple node
```

If I always want my REPL prompt to be purple, I can add an alias to my `bashrc` file:

```
| alias node="env NODE_NO_READLINE=1 rlwrap -ppurple node"
```

To change both the prompt and the color, I'd use the following:

```
| env NODE_NO_READLINE=1 rlwrap -ppurple -S "::>" node
```

Now my prompt would be:

```
| ::>
```

And purple.

The especially useful component of `rlwrap` is the ability to persist history across REPL sessions. By default, we have access to command line history only within a REPL session. By using `rlwrap`, the next time we access REPL, not only will we have access to a history of commands within the current session, but also a history of commands in past sessions (and other command line entries). In the following session output, the commands shown were not typed in, but were instead, pulled up from history using the UP arrow key:

```
# env NODE_NO_READLINE=1 rlwrap -ppurple -S "::>" node
::>e = ['a','b'];
[ 'a', 'b' ]
::>3 > 2 > 1;
false
```

As helpful as `rlwrap` is, we still end up with `undefined` every time we type in an expression that doesn't return a value. However, we can adjust this, and other functionality, just by creating our own custom REPL, discussed next.

Creating Your Own REPL

Node provides us access to creating our own custom REPL.

First, you need to include the `repl` module:

```
| var repl = require("repl");
```

To create a new REPL, call the `start` method on the `repl` object. The syntax for this method is:

```
| repl.start([prompt], [stream], [eval], [useGlobal], [ignoreUndefined]);
```

All of the parameters are optional. If not provided, the default value for each is:

- `prompt`, default is "`>`"
- `stream`, default is `process.stdin`
- `eval`, default is the `async` wrapper for `eval`
- `useGlobal`, default is `false`, to start a new context rather than use the global object
- `ignoreDefined`, default is `false`, don't ignore the undefined responses

I find the `undefined` expression result in REPL to be unedifying, so I created my own REPL. It took exactly two lines of code (not including the comment):

```
repl = require("repl");
// start REPL with ignoreUndefined set to true
repl.start("node via stdin> ", null, null, null, true);
```

I ran the file, `repl.js`, using Node:

```
| node repl.js
```

I used the custom REPL just like I use the built-in version, except now I have a different prompt and I longer get the annoying `undefined` after the first variable assignment. I do still get the other responses that aren't `undefined`:

```
node via stdin> var ct = 0;
node via stdin> ct++;
0
node via stdin> console.log(ct);
1
node via stdin> ++ct;
2
node via stdin> console.log(ct);
2
```

In my code, I wanted the defaults for all but the prompt and `ignoreUndefined`. Setting the other parameters to null triggers Node to use the default values for each.

You can replace the `eval` function with your custom REPL. The only requirement is that it has a specific format:

```
function eval(cmd, callback) {
  callback(null, result);
}
```

The stream option is interesting. You can run multiple versions of REPL, taking input from both the standard input (the default), as well as sockets. The documentation for REPL at the Node.js site provides an example of a REPL listening in on a TCP socket, using code similar to the following:

```
var repl = require("repl"),
    net = require("net");
// start REPL with ignoreUndefined set to true
```

```

repl.start("node via stdin> ", null, null, null, true);

net.createServer(function (socket) {
  repl.start("node via TCP socket> ", socket);
}).listen(8124);

```

When you run the application, you get the standard input prompt where the Node application is running. However, you can also access REPL via TCP. I used PuTTY as a telnet client to access this TCP enabled version of REPL. It does work...to a point. I had to issue a `.clear`, first, the formatting is off, and when I tried to use the underscore to reference the last expression, Node didn't know what I was talking about, as shown in Figure 2-1.

```

examples.burningbird.net - PuTTY
Clearing context...
node via TCP socket> undefined
node via TCP socket> ['a', 'b'];
[ 'a', 'b' ]
node via TCP socket> undefined
node via TCP socket> _length;
TypeError: Cannot read property 'length' of undefined
    at repl:1:2
        at REPLServer.eval (repl.js:8:5)
            at repl.js:190:20
                at REPLServer.eval (repl.js:8:5)
                    at Interface.<anonymous> (repl.js:182:12)
                        at Interface.emit (events.js:67:17)
                            at Interface._onLine (readline.js:162:10)
                                at Socket.<anonymous> (readline.js:75:12)
                                    at Socket._emit (events.js:67:17)
                                        node via TCP socket> undefined
                                            node via TCP socket>

```

Figure 2-1. PuTTY and REPL via TCP don't exactly like each other

I also tried with the Windows 7 telnet client, and the response was even worse. However, using my Linux telnet client worked without a hitch.

The problem is, as is expected, telnet client settings. However, I didn't pursue it further, because running REPL from an exposed telnet socket is not something I plan on implementing, and not something I would recommend, either—at least, not without heavy security. It's no different than using eval() in your client-side code, and not scrubbing the text your users send you to run. But worse.

You could keep a running REPL and communicate via a Unix socket with something like the GNU Netcat utility:

```
| nc -U /tmp/node-repl-sock
```

You can type in commands no differently than typed in using stdin. Do be aware, though, if using either a TCP or Unix socket that any console.log commands are printed out to the server console, not to the client:

```
| console.log(someVariable); // actually printed out to server
```

Another application option that I consider to be more useful is to create a REPL application that preloads modules. In the application in Example 2-1, after the REPL is started, the HTTP, OS, and Utilities modules are loaded and assigned to context properties.

Example 2-1. Creating a custom REPL that preloads modules

```
var repl = require('repl');
var context = repl.start(">>", null, null, null, true).context;

// preload in modules
context.http = require('http');
context.util = require('util');
context.os = require('os');
```

Running the application with node brings up the REPL prompt, where I can then access the modules:

```
>>os.hostname();
'einstein'
>>util.log('message');
5 Feb 11:33:15 - message
>>
```

If you want to run the REPL application like an executable in Linux, add the following line as the first line in the application:

```
|#!/usr/local/bin/node
```

Modify the file to be an executable and run it:

```
# chmod u+x replcontext.js
# ./replcontext.js
>>
```

Stuff Happens. Save Often.

Node's REPL is a handy interactive tool that can make our development tasks a little easier. Not only can we try out JavaScript before including it in our files, we could actually create out applications interactively, and then save the results when we're finished.

Another added feature of REPL is being able to create a custom REPL so that we can eliminate the unhelpful `undefined` responses, as well as preload modules. Or change the prompt, or the `eval` routine we use, and so on.

I also strongly recommend that you look into using REPL with `rlwrap`, in order to persist commands across sessions. This could end up being a major time saver in the end. Plus, who of us doesn't like additional editing capability?

As you explore REPL, one important thing to keep in mind, and take away with you from this chapter:

Stuff Happens. Save Often.

If you're going to be spending a lot of time developing in REPL, even with the use of `rlwrap` to persist history, you're going to want to frequently save your work. Working in REPL is no different than working in other editing environments: stuff happens, so save often.

3

The Node Core

Chapter 1 provided a first look at a Node application with the traditional (and always entertaining) Hello, World application. The examples in the chapter made use of a couple of modules from what is known as the Node Core: the API providing much of the functionality necessary for building Node applications.

In this chapter, I'm going to provide more detail on the Node core system. It's not an exhaustive overview, since the API is quite large and dynamic in nature. Instead, I'm focusing on key elements of the API, and taking a closer look at those that we'll use in later chapters, and/or are complex enough to need a more in-depth review.

[Node.js documentation for current stable release can be found at `http://nodejs.org/api/`.](http://nodejs.org/api/)

Globals: Global, Process, and Buffer

There are several objects available to all node applications without having to incorporate any module. The Node.js web site groups these items under the descriptive label of "Globals".

We've been using one global, `require`, to include modules into our applications. We've also made extensive use of another global, `console`, to log messages to the console. Others are essential to the underlying implementation of Node, but aren't necessarily anything we'd access or need to know about directly. Some, though, are important enough taking a closer look at., because they help define key aspects of how Node works.

In particular, we're going to take a closer look at:

- The Global object: the global namespace
- Process: provides essential functionality, such as wrappers for the three STDIO streams, and functionality to transform a synchronous function into a asynchronous callback
- Buffer: Provides raw data storage and manipulation

Global

Global is the global `namespace` object. In some ways, it's similar to `windows` in a browser environment, in that it provides access to global properties and methods and doesn't have to be explicitly referenced by name.

From REPL, you can print out the `global` object to the console:

```
| > console.log(global)
```

What prints out is the interface for all of the other global objects, as well as a good deal of information about the system in which you're running.

I mentioned that Global is like the `windows` object in a browser, but there are key differences—and not just the methods and properties available. The `windows` object in a browser is truly global in nature. If you define a global variable in client-side JavaScript, it's accessible by the web page, and every single library. However, if you create a variable at the top level scope in a Node module (a variable outside a function), it only becomes global to the module, not to all of the modules, as we discovered with Examples 1-3 and 1-4 in Chapter 1.

You can actually see what happens to the Global object when you define a module/global variable in REPL. First, define the top-level variable:

```
| > var test = "This really isn't global, as we know global";
```

Then print out Global:

```
| > console.log(global);
```

You should see your variable, as a new property of `global`, at the bottom. For another interesting perspective, assign `global` to a variable, but don't use the `var` keyword:

```
| g1 = global;
```

The global object interface is printed out to the console, and at the bottom you'll see the local variable assigned as a *circular reference*:

```
| > g1 = global;
| ...
|   g1: [Circular],
|   _: [Circular] }
```

Any other global object or method, including `require`, is part of the Global object's interface.

When Node developers discuss `context`, they're really referring to the Global object. In Example 2-1 in Chapter 2, the code accessed the `context` object when creating a custom REPL object. The context object is a Global object. When an application creates a custom REPL, it exists within a new context, which in this case means, has its own Global object. The way to override this and use the existing Global object is to create a custom REPL and set the `useGlobal` flag to `true`, rather than the default `false`.

Modules exist in their own global namespace, which means that if you define a top-level variable in one module it is not available in other modules. More importantly, it means that only what is explicitly exported from the module becomes part of whatever application includes the module. Point of fact: you can't access a top-level module variable in an application or other module, even if you deliberately tried.

To demonstrate, the following code contains a very simple module that has a top-level variable named `globalValue`, and functions to set and return the value. In the function that returns the value, the Global object is printed out using a `console.log` method call.

```
var globalValue;

exports.setGlobal = function(val) {
  globalValue = val;
};

exports.returnGlobal = function() {
  console.log(global);
  return globalValue;
};
```

We might expect that in the print out of the Global object we'll see `globalValue`, as we do when we set a variable in our applications. This doesn't happen, though.

Start a REPL session and issue a `require` call to include the new module:

```
| > var mod1 = require('/mod1.js');
```

Set the value and then ask for the value back:

```
| > mod1.setGlobal(34);
| > var val = mod1.returnGlobal();
```

The `console.log` method prints out the global object before returning its globally defined value. We can see at the bottom, the new variable holding a reference to the imported module, and the new variable assigned the returned value...but no reference to that module's own top-level `globalValue`:

```
| mod1: { setGlobal: [Function], returnGlobal: [Function] },
|   _ : undefined,
|   val: 34 }
```

Even when the exported Module object prints out the Global object, we don't see the module's own global data. The only access we have to it, is by whatever means the module provides. For JavaScript developers, this means no more unexpected and harmful name collisions because of accidental or intentional global variables in libraries.

Process

Each Node application is an instance of a Node Process object, and as such, comes with certain built-in functionality.

Many of the Process object's methods and properties provide identification or information about the application and its environment. The `process.execPath` method returns the execution path for the Node application, `process.version`, provides Node version, and `process.platform` identifies the server platform:

```
| console.log(process.execPath);
| console.log(process.version);
| console.log(process.platform);
```

This code returns the following in my system (at the time when this was written):

```
| /usr/local/bin/node
| v0.6.9
| linux
```

The Process object also wraps the STDIO (Standard IO) streams `stdin`, `stdout`, and `stderr`. Both `stdin` and `stdout` are asynchronous, and are readable and writable, respectively. The `stderr` stream is a synchronous, blocking stream.

To demonstrate how to read and write data from `stdin` and `stdout`, in Example 3-1 the Node application listens for data in `stdin`, and repeats the data to `stdout`. The `stdin` stream is paused by default, so we have to issue a `resume` call before sending data.

Example 3-1. Reading and writing data to stdin and stdout, respectively

```
| process.stdin.resume();
|
| process.stdin.on('data', function (chunk) {
|   process.stdout.write('data: ' + chunk);
| });
```

Run the application using Node, and then, start typing into the terminal. Every time you type something and hit `ENTER`, what you typed is reflected back to you.

Another useful Process method is `memoryUsage`, which tells us how much memory the Node application is using. This could be helpful for performance tuning, and just general curiosity about the application. The response has the following structure:

```
| { rss: 7450624, heapTotal: 2783520, heapUsed: 1375720 }
```

The `heapTotal` and `heapUsed` properties refer to the V8 engine's memory usage.

A last Process method I'm going to cover is `process.nextTick`. This method attaches a callback function that's fired during the next tick (loop) in the Node event loop.

The reason you would use `process.nextTick` is if you want to delay a function for some reason, but you want to delay it asynchronously. A good example would be if you're creating a new function that has a callback function as parameter and you want to ensure that the callback is truly asynchronous. The following code is a demonstration:

```
function asynchFunction = function (data, callback) {  
  process.nextTick(function() {  
    callback(val);  
  });  
};
```

If we just called the callback function, then the action would be synchronous. Now, the callback function won't be called until the next tick in the event loop, rather than right away.

You could use `setTimeout` with a zero (0) millisecond delay instead of `process.nextTick`:

```
setTimeout(function() {  
  callback(val);  
, 0);
```

However, `setTimeout` isn't as efficient as `process.nextTick`. When both were tested against each other, `process.nextTick` was called far more quickly than `setTimeout` with a zero (0) millisecond delay.

Another reason you could use `process.nextTick` is if you're running an application that has a function performing some computationally complex, and time consuming, operation. You could break the process into sections, each called via `process.nextTick`, to allow other requests to the Node application to be processed without waiting for the time consuming process to finish.

Of course, the converse of this is you don't want to break up a process where you need to ensure that the process is processed sequentially, because you may end up with unexpected results.

Buffer

The Buffer class is a way of handling binary data in Node. In the Streams, Servers, and Sockets section later in the chapter, we'll cover the fact that streams are oftentimes binary data rather than strings. To convert the binary data to a string, the data encoding for the stream socket is changed using `setEncoding`. To create a buffer from a string, we typically create a new buffer:

```
| var buf = new Buffer(strng);
```

If you create a buffer to hold a string, you can pass in an optional second parameter with the encoding. Possible encodings are:

- ascii - 7 bit ASCII
- utf8 - multibyte encoded Unicode characters
- usc2 - 2 bytes, little endian encoded Unicode characters
- base64 - Base64 encoding
- hex - Encodes each byte as two hexadecimal characters

We can also write a string to an existing buffer, providing an optional offset, length, and encoding:

```
| buf.write(strng); // offset defaults to 0, length defaults to  
|                   buffer.length - offset, encoding is utf8
```

Data sent between sockets is transmitted as a buffer (in binary format), by default. To send a string instead, you either need to call `setEncoding` directly on the socket, or specify the encoding in the function that

writes to the socket. By default, the TCP `socket.write` method does set the second parameter to 'utf8' by default, but the socket returned in the `connectionListener` callback to the TCP `createServer` function sends the data as a buffer, not a string.

There are several methods for reading and writing various types of data to the buffer, such as `buffer.readInt8`, and `buffer.writeUInt8`.

The Timers: `setTimeout`, `clearTimeout`, `setInterval`, `clearInterval`

The timer functions in client-side JavaScript are part of the global `window` object. They're not part of JavaScript, but have become such an ubiquitous part of JavaScript development that the Node developers incorporated them into the Node core API.

The timer functions operate in Node just like they operate in the browser. In fact, they operate in Node exactly the same as they would in Chrome, since Node is based on Chrome's V8 JavaScript engine.

The Node `setTimeout` function takes a callback function as first parameter, the delay time (in milliseconds) as second parameter, and an optional list of arguments:

```
// timer to open file and read contents to HTTP response object
function on_OpenAndReadFile(filename, res) {

    console.log('opening ' + filename);

    // open and read in file contents
    fs.readFile(filename, 'utf8', function(err, data) {
        if (err)
            res.write('Could not find or open file for reading\n');
        else {
            res.write(data);
        }
        // reponse is done
        res.end();
    });

    setTimeout(openAndReadFile, 2000, filename, res);
}
```

In the code, the callback function `on_OpenAndReadFile` opens and reads a file to the HTTP response when the function is called after approximately 2000 milliseconds have passed.

As the Node documentation carefully notes, there's no guarantee that the callback function will be invoked in exactly `n` milliseconds (whatever `n` is). This is no different than the use of `setTimeout` in a browser--we don't have absolute control over the environment, and factors could slightly delay the timer.

The function `clearTimeout` clears a preset `setTimeout`. If you need to have a repeating timer, you can use `setInterval` to call a function for every `n` milliseconds, `n` being the second parameter passed to the function. Clear the interval with `clearInterval`.

Servers, Streams, and Sockets

Much of the Node core API has to do with creating services that listen to specific types of communications. In the examples in Chapter 1, we used the HTTP module to create an HTTP web server. Other methods can create a TCP server, a TLS (Transport Layer Security) server, and a `UDP/datagram` socket. I'll cover TLS later, in Chapter 13 covering security, but in this section I want to introduce the TCP and UDP Node core functionality. First, though, a brief introduction to the terms used in this section.

A *socket* is an end point in a communication, and a *network socket* is an end point in a communication between applications running on two different computers running on the network. The data that flows between the sockets is known as the *stream*. The data in the stream can be transmitted as binary data, in a buffer, or in Unicode, as a string. Both types of data are transmitted as packets: parts of the data split off into specifically sized pieces. There is a special kind of packet, a FIN, or finish packet, that is sent by a socket to signal that it is done. How the communication is managed, and how reliable the stream, is a consideration of the type of socket created.

TCP Sockets and Servers

We can create a basic TCP (Transmission Control Protocol) server and client with the Net module. TCP forms the basis for most internet applications, such as web service and email. It provides a way of reliably transmitting data between client and server sockets.

Creating the TCP server is little different than creating the HTTP server in Example 1-1 in Chapter 1. We create the server, passing in a callback function. The TCP server differs from the HTTP server, in that rather than passing a *requestListener*, the TCP callback function's sole argument is an instance of a socket, listening for incoming connections.

Example 3-2 contains the code to create a TCP server. Once the server socket is created, it listens for two events: when data is received, and when the client closes the connection.

```
Example 3-2. A simple TCP server, with a socket listening for client communication on port 8124
var net = require('net');

var server = net.createServer(function(conn) {
    console.log('connected');

    conn.on('data', function (data) {
        console.log(data + ' from ' + conn.remoteAddress + ' ' +
            conn.remotePort);
        conn.write('Repeating: ' + data);
    });

    conn.on('close', function() {
        console.log('client closed connection');
    });
}).listen(8124);

console.log('listening on port 8124');
```

There is an optional parameter for `createServer: allowHalfOpen`. Setting this parameter to `true` instructs the socket not to send a FIN when it receives a FIN packet from the client. Doing this keeps the socket open for writing (not reading). To close the socket, you'd then need to explicitly use the `end` method. By default, `allowHalfOpen` is false.

Notice how a callback function is attached to the two events via the `on` method. Many objects in Node that emit events provide a way to attach a function as event listener via the use of the `on` method. This method takes the name of the event as first parameter, and the function listener, as the second.

The TCP client is just as simple to create as the server, as shown in Example 3-3. The call to the `setEncoding` method on the client changes the encoding for the received data. As discussed in the section earlier in the chapter on the Buffer object, data is transmitted as a non-humanly readable buffer, but we can use `setEncoding` to read it as a string. The socket's `write` method is used to transmit the data. It also attaches listener functions to two events: `data`, for received data, and `close`, in case the server closes the connection.

```
Example 3-3. Client Socket sending data to TCP server
var net = require('net');
```

```

var client = new net.Socket();
client.setEncoding('utf8');

// connect to server
client.connect ('8124','localhost', function () {
  console.log('connected to server');
  client.write('Who needs a browser to communicate?');
});

// prepare for input from terminal
process.stdin.resume();

// when receive data, send to server
process.stdin.on('data', function (data) {
  client.write(data);
});

// when receive data back, print to console
client.on('data',function(data) {
  console.log(data);
});

// when server closed
client.on('close',function() {
  console.log('connection is closed');
});

```

The data being transmitted between the two sockets is typed in at the terminal, and transmitted when you hit **ENTER**. The client application first sends the a string you just typed, which the TCP server writes out to the console. The server repeats the message back to the client, which in turn writes the message out to the console. The server also prints out the IP address and port for the client using the socket's `remoteAddress` and `remotePort` properties. Following is the console output for the server after several strings were sent from the client (with IP address edited out for the book):

```

Hey, hey, hey, hey-now.
  from #ipaddress 57251
Don't be mean, we don't have to be mean.
  from #ipaddress 57251
Cuz remember, no matter where you go,
  from #ipaddress 57251
there you are.
  from #ipaddress 57251

```

The connection between the client and server is maintained until one or the other is killed using CTRL-C. Whichever socket is still open receives a `close` event that's printed out to the console. The server can also serve more than one connection from more than one client, since all the relevant functions are asynchronous.

As I mentioned earlier, TCP is the underlying transport mechanism for much of the functionality we use on the internet today, including HTTP.

HTTP

You had a chance to work with the HTTP module in Chapter 1. Servers are created using the `createServer` method, passing in the function that will act as the `requestListener`. Requests are processed as they come, asynchronously.

In a network, TCP is the transportation layer and HTTP is the application layer. If you scratch around in the modules included with Node, you'll see that when you create an HTTP server, you're inheriting functionality from the TCP-based `net.Server`.

For the HTTP server, the `requestListener` is a socket, while the `http.ServerRequest` object is a readable stream and the `http.ServerResponse` is a writable stream. The HTTP protocol adds an additional level of complexity because of the *chunked transfer encoding* supported by HTTP. The chunked transfer encoding allows transfer of data when the exact size of the response isn't known until fully processed. Instead, a zero sized chunk is sent to indicate the end of a query. This type of encoding is useful when processing a request such as a large database query output to an HTML table: writing the data can begin before the rest of the query data has been received.

[More on streams in the section titled, appropriately enough, "Streams".](#)

The TCP examples earlier, and the HTTP examples in Chapter 1, were both coded to work with network sockets. However, all of the server/socket modules can also connect to a Unix socket, rather than a specific network port. Unlike a network socket, a Unix or IPC (inter-process communication) enables communication between processes within the same system.

To demonstrate Unix socket communication, I duplicated Example 1-3's code, but instead of binding to a port, the new server binds to a Unix socket, as shown in Example 3-4. The application also makes use of `readFileSync`, the synchronous version of the function to open a file and read its contents.

Example 3-4. HTTP Server bound to a Unix Socket

```
// create server
// and callback function
var http = require('http');
var fs = require('fs');

http.createServer(function (req, res) {

  var query = require('url').parse(req.url).query;
  console.log(query);
  file = require('querystring').parse(query).file;

  // content header
  res.writeHead(200, {'Content-Type': 'text/plain'});

  // increment global, write to client
  for (var i = 0; i<100; i++) {
    res.write(i + '\n');
  }

  // open and read in file contents
  var data = fs.readFileSync(file, 'utf8');
  res.write(data);
  res.end();
}).listen('/tmp/node-server-sock');
```

The client is based on a code sample provided in documentation of the Node core at the Node.js site for the `http.request` object. The `http.request` object, by default, makes use of `http.globalAgent`, which supports pooled sockets. The size of this pool is five sockets by default, which can be adjusted by changing the `agent.maxSockets` value.

The client accepts the chunked data returned from the server, printing out to the console. It also triggers a response on the server with a couple of minor writes, as shown in Example 3-5.

Example 3-5. Connecting to the Unix Socket and printing out received data

```
var http = require('http');

var options = {
  method: 'GET',
  socketPath: '/tmp/node-server-sock',
  path: "/?file=main.txt"
};
```

```

var req = http.request(options, function(res) {
  console.log('STATUS: ' + res.statusCode);
  console.log('HEADERS: ' + JSON.stringify(res.headers));
  res.setEncoding('utf8');
  res.on('data', function (chunk) {
    console.log('chunk o\' data: ' + chunk);
  });
});

req.on('error', function(e) {
  console.log('problem with request: ' + e.message);
});

// write data to request body
req.write('data\n');
req.write('data\n');
req.end();

```

I didn't use the asynchronous file read function with the `http.request` object because the connection is already closed when the asynchronous function is called and no file contents are returned.

Before leaving this section on the HTTP module, be aware that much of the behavior you've come to expect with Apache or other web server isn't built into a Node HTTP server. For instance, if you password protect your web site, Apache will pop up a window asking for user name and password; a Node HTTP server will not. If you want this functionality, you're going to have to code for it.

The SSL version of HTTP, HTTPS, is covered, along with Crypto and TLS/SSL, in Chapter 15.

UDP/Datagram Socket

TCP requires a dedicated connection between the two end points of the communication. UDP, or User Datagram Protocol, is a connectionless protocol, which means there's no guarantee of a connection between the two end points. Because of this, UDP is less reliable and robust than TCP. On the other hand, UDP is generally faster than TCP, which makes it more popular for realtime uses, as well as technologies such as VoIP (voice over internet protocol), where the TCP connection requirements could adversely impact on the quality of the signal.

Node core supports both types of sockets. In the last section, I demonstrated the TCP functionality. Now, it's UDP's turn.

The UDP module identifier is `dgram`:

```
| require ('dgram');
```

To create a UDP socket, use the `createSocket` method, passing in the type of socket: either `udp4` or `udp6`. You can also pass in a callback function to listen for events. Unlike messages sent with TCP, messages sent using UDP must be sent as buffers, not strings.

Example 3-6 contains the code for a demonstration UDP client. In it, data is accessed via `process.stdin`, and then sent, as is, via the UDP socket. Note that we don't have to set the encoding for the string, since the UDP socket only accepts a buffer, and the `process.stdin` data is a buffer. We do, however, have to convert the buffer to a string, using the buffer's `toString` method, in order to get a meaningful string for the `console.log` method call that echos the input.

Example 3-6. A datagram client that sends messages typed into the terminal

```

var dgram = require('dgram');

var client = dgram.createSocket("udp4");

```

```

// prepare for input from terminal
process.stdin.resume();

process.stdin.on('data', function (data) {
  console.log(data.toString('utf8'));
  client.send(data, 0, data.length, 8124, "examples.burningbird.net",
    function (err, bytes) {
      if (err)
        console.log('error: ' + err);
      else
        console.log('successful');
    });
});

```

The UDP server, in Example 3-7, is even more simple than the client. All the server application does is create the socket, bind it to a specific port (8124), and listen for the `message` event. When a message arrives, the application prints it out using `console.log`, along with the IP address and port of the sender. Especially note that no encoding is necessary to print out the message—it's automatically converted from a buffer to a string.

We didn't have to bind the socket to a port. However, without the binding, the socket would attempt to listen in on every port.

Example 3-7. A UDP Socket Server, bound to port 8124, listening for messages

```

var dgram = require('dgram');

var server = dgram.createSocket("udp4");

server.on ("message", function(msg, rinfo) {
  console.log("Message: " + msg + " from " + rinfo.address + ":" +
    rinfo.port);
});

server.bind(8124);

```

I didn't call the `close` method on either the client or the server after sending/receiving the message. However, no connection is being maintained between the client and server—just the sockets capable of sending a message, and receiving communication.

Streams, Pipes, and Readline

The communication stream between the sockets discussed in the previous sections is an implementation of the underlying abstract `stream` interface. Streams can be readable, writable, or both, and all streams are instances of `EventEmitter`, discussed in the section titled "Events and the `EventEmitter`".

It's important to take away with you from this section that all of these communication streams, including `process.stdin` and `process.stdout` are all implementations of the abstract stream interface. Because of this underlying interface, there is basic functionality available in all streams in Node:

- You can change the encoding for the stream data with `setEncoding`
- You can check whether the stream is readable, writable, or both
- You can capture stream events, such as data received or connection closed, and attach callback functions for each
- You can pause and resume the stream
- You can pipe data from a readable stream to a writable stream

The last capability is one we haven't covered to this point. A simple way to demonstrate a `pipe` is to open a REPL session and type in the following:

```
| > process.stdin.resume();
```

```
| > process.stdin.pipe(process.stdout);
```

And then enjoy the fact that everything you type from that point on is echoed back to you.

If you want to keep the output stream open for continued data, pass an option, `{ end: false }`, to the output stream:

```
| process.stdin.pipe(process.stdout, { end : false });
```

There is one additional object that provides a specific functionality to readable streams: Readline. You include the Readline module with code like the following:

```
| var readline = require('readline');
```

Be aware, though, that once you do include this module, the Node program doesn't terminate until you close the interface and the stdin stream. The Node site documentation contains an example of how to begin and terminate a Readline interface, which I adapted in Example 3-8. The application asks a question as soon as you run it, and then outputs the answer. It also listens for any "command", which is really any line that terminates with '\n'. If the command is `.leave`, it leaves the application; otherwise, it just repeats the command and prompts the user for more. A CTRL+C or CTRL+D key combination also causes the application to terminate.

Example 3-8. Using Readline to create a simple command-driven user interface

```
var readline = require('readline');

// create a new interface
var interface = readline.createInterface(process.stdin, process.stdout, null);

// ask question
interface.question("=>What is the meaning of life? ", function(answer) {
    console.log("About the meaning of life, you said " + answer);
    interface.setPrompt("=>");
    interface.prompt();
});

// function to close interface
function closeInterface() {
    console.log('Leaving interface...');
    process.exit();
}

// listen for .leave
interface.on('line', function(cmd) {
    if (cmd.trim() == '.leave') {
        closeInterface();
        return;
    } else {
        console.log("repeating command: " + cmd);
    }
    interface.setPrompt("=>");
    interface.prompt();
});

interface.on('close', function() {
    closeInterface();
});
```

An example session is the following:

```
>>What is the meaning of life? ===
About the meaning of life, you said ===
=>This could be a command
repeating command: This could be a command
=>We could add eval in here and actually run this thing
repeating command: We could add eval in here and actually run this thing
```

```

>>And now you know where REPL comes from
repeating command: And now you know where REPL comes from
>>And that using rlwrap replaces this Readline functionality
repeating command: And that using rlwrap replaces this Readline functionality
>>Time to go
repeating command: Time to go
>>.leave
Leaving interface...

```

Remember from Chapter 2 that we can use `rlwrap` to override the command line functionality for REPL. We use the following to trigger its use:

```
| env NODE_NO_READLINE=1 rlwrap node
```

And now we know what the flag is triggering: to instruct REPL not to use Node's Readline module for command line processing, but use `rlwrap`, instead.

Child Processes

Node provides us the ability to run a system command within a new child process, and listen in its input/output. This includes being able to pass arguments to the command, and even pipe the results of one command to another.

First thing to keep in mind as you're working with child processes: it does no good to invoke a system command if the system doesn't support it. All but the last example demonstrated in this section are using Unix commands. You can try running the applications in a Windows Command window, or even Web Matrix, but they won't do a bit of good. The same holds true for the example that works in Windows—it won't work in Unix.

`child_process.spawn`

There are four different techniques you can use to create a child process. The most utilized one is invoked using the `spawn` method. It launches a command in a new process, passing in any arguments. In the following, a child process is created to call the `pwd` command to print the current directory. The command takes no arguments:

```

var spawn = require('child_process').spawn,
    pwd = spawn('pwd');

pwd.stdout.on('data', function (data) {
  console.log('stdout: ' + data);
});

pwd.stderr.on('data', function (data) {
  console.log('stderr: ' + data);
});

pwd.on('exit', function (code) {
  console.log('child process exited with code ' + code);
});

```

Notice the events that are captured on the the child process `stdout` and `stderr`. If no error occurs, any output from the command is transmitted to the child process' `stdout`, triggering a `data` event on the process. If an error occurs, such as in the following where we're passing an invalid option to the command:

```
| var spawn = require('child_process').spawn,
    pwd = spawn('pwd', ['-g']);
```

The error gets sent to `stderr`, which prints the error out to the console:

```
| stderr: pwd: invalid option -- 'g'
Try `pwd --help` for more information.
```

```
| child process exited with code 1
```

The process exited with a code of 1 (one), which signifies that an error occurred. The exit code varies depending on the operating system and error. When no error occurs, the child process exits with a code of 0 (zero).

The earlier code demonstrated sending output to the child process stdout and stderr, but what about stdin? In the Node documentation for child processes is an example of being able to direct data to stdin. It's used to emulate a Unix pipe () whereby the result of one command is immediately directed as input to another command. I adapted the example in order to use one of my more favorite uses of the Unix pipe--being able to look through all subdirectories starting in the local directory, for a file with a specific term ('test') in the file name:

```
| find . -ls | grep test
```

Example 3-9 implements this functionality as child processes. Note that the first command, which performs the find, takes two arguments, while the second one takes just one: a term passed in via user input from stdin. Also note that, unlike the example in the Node documentation, the grep child process stdout encoding is changed using `setEncoding`. Otherwise, when the data is printed out, it would be printed out as a buffer.

Example 3-9. Using child processes to find files in subdirectories with a given search term 'test'

```
var spawn = require('child_process').spawn,
    find = spawn('find', ['./','-ls']),
    grep = spawn('grep',['test']);

grep.stdout.setEncoding('utf8');

// direct results of find to grep
find.stdout.on('data', function(data) {
  grep.stdin.write(data);
});

// now run grep and output results
grep.stdout.on('data', function (data) {
  console.log(data);
});

// error handling for both
find.stderr.on('data', function (data) {
  console.log('find stderr: ' + data);
});
grep.stderr.on('data', function (data) {
  console.log('grep stderr: ' + data);
});

// and exit handling for both
find.on('exit', function (code) {
  if (code !== 0) {
    console.log('find process exited with code ' + code);
  }

  // go ahead and end grep process
  grep.stdin.end();
});

grep.on('exit', function (code) {
  if (code !== 0) {
    console.log('grep process exited with code ' + code);
  }
});
```

When you run the application, you'll get a listing of all files in the current directory and any subdirectories that have 'test' in the file name somewhere.

child_process.exec and child_process.execFile

In addition to spawning a child process, you can also use `child_process.exec` and `child_process.fileExec` to run a command in a shell and buffer the results. The only difference between the two is `fileExec` runs an application in a file, rather than run a command.

The first parameter in the methods is either the command or the file and its location. The second parameter is options for the command, while the third is a callback function. The callback function takes three arguments: error, stdout, and stderr. The data is buffered to stdout if no error occurs.

If the executable file contains:

```
#!/usr/local/bin/node
console.log(global);
```

The following application prints out the buffered results:

```
var execfile = require('child_process').execFile,
    child;

child = execfile('./app.js', function(error, stdout, stderr) {
  if (error == null) {
    console.log('stdout: ' + stdout);
  }
});
```

child_process.fork

The last child process method is `child_process.fork`. This variation of spawn is for spawning Node processes, and is very useful for Node testing, as we'll see in Chapter 14.

What sets the `child_process.fork` process apart from the others is that there's actual communication channel established to the child process. Note, though, that each process requires a whole new instance of V8, which takes both time and memory.

Running a Child Process Application in Windows

Earlier I warned you that child processes that invoke Unix system commands won't work with Windows, and vice versa. I know this sounds obvious, but not everyone knows what you're doing in code, or are aware that not all Node applications work in all environments.

It wasn't until recently that the Windows binary installation of Node even provided access to child processes. You also need to invoke whatever command you want to run via the Windows command interpreter, `cmd.exe`.

An example of running a Windows command is shown in Example 3-10. In the application, the Windows `cmd.exe` is used to create a directory listing, which is then printed out to the console via the data event handler.

Example 3-10. Running a child process application in Windows

```
var cmd = require('child_process').spawn('cmd', ['/c', 'dir\n']);

cmd.stdout.on('data', function (data) {
  console.log('stdout: ' + data);
});

cmd.stderr.on('data', function (data) {
```

```

        console.log('stderr: ' + data);
    });

cmd.on('exit', function (code) {
    console.log('child process exited with code ' + code);
});

```

The `/c` flag passed as the first argument to the `cmd.exe` instructs it to carry out the command and then terminate. The application doesn't work without this flag. You especially don't want to pass in the `/K` flag, which tells `cmd.exe` to execute the application and then remain because your application won't terminate.

Domain Resolution and URL Processing

The DNS module provides DNS resolution using C-Ares, a C library that provides asynchronous DNS requests. It's used by Node with some of its other modules, and can be useful for our applications that need to be able to discover domains or IP address.

To discover the IP address given a domain, use the `dns.lookup` method and print out the returned IP address:

```

var dns = require('dns');
dns.lookup('burningbird.net',function(err,ip) {
    if (err) throw err;
    console.log(ip);
});

```

The `dns.reverse` method returns an array of domain names for a given IP address:

```

dns.reverse('173.255.206.103', function(err,domains) {
domains.forEach(function(domain) {
    console.log(domain);
});
});

```

The `dns.resolve` method returns an array of record types by a given type, such as **A**, **MX**, **NS**, and so on. In the following code, I'm looking for the name server domains for my domain name:

```

var dns = require('dns');
dns.resolve('burningbird.net', 'NS', function(err,domains) {
domains.forEach(function(domain) {
    console.log(domain);
});
});

```

Which returns:

```

ns1.linode.com
ns3.linode.com
ns5.linode.com
ns4.linode.com

```

We used the URL module in Example 1-3 in Chapter 1. This simple module provides a way of parsing a URL and returning an object with all of the URL components. Passing in the following URL:

```

var url = require('url');
var urlObj = url.parse('http://examples.burningbird.net:8124/?file=main');

```

Returns the following JavaScript object:

```

{ protocol: 'http:',
  slashes: true,
  host: 'examples.burningbird.net:8124',
  port: '8124',
  hostname: 'examples.burningbird.net',
  href: 'http://examples.burningbird.net:8124/?file=main',
}

```

```
    search: '?file=main',
    query: 'file=main',
    pathname: '/',
    path: '/?file=main' }
```

Each of the components can then be discretely accessed:

```
| var qs = urlObj.query; // get the query string
```

Calling the `URL.format` method performs the reverse operation:

```
| console.log(url.format(urlObj)); // returns original URL
```

The URL module is oftentimes used with the Query String module. This module is a simple utility module providing functionality to parse a received query string, or prepare a string for use as a query string.

To chunk out the key/value pairs in the query string, use the `parse` method:

```
| var vals = querystring.parse('file=main&file=secondary&type=html');
```

Results in the following JavaScript object, allowing for easy access of the individual query string values:

```
| { file: [ 'main', 'secondary' ], type: 'html' }
```

Since `file` is given twice in the query string, both values are grouped into an array, each of which can be accessed individually:

```
| console.log(vals.file[0]); // returns main
```

You can also convert an object into a query string, using `stringify`:

```
| var qryString = querystring.stringify(vals)
```

Utilities and a JavaScript OO Refresher

The Utilities module is a very handy set of functionality. Include the module with:

```
| var util = require('util');
```

You can use Utilities to test if an object is an array (`util.isArray`) or regular expression (`util.isRegExp`), and to format a string (`util.format`). A new experimental addition to the module provides functionality to pump data from a readable stream to a writable stream (`util.pump`):

```
| util.pump(process.stdin, process.stdout);
```

However, I wouldn't type this into REPL, as anything you type from that point on is echoed as soon as you type it—making the session a little awkward.

I make extensive use of `util.inspect` to get a string representation of an object. I find it's a great way to discover more about an object. The first required argument is the object, the second optional argument is whether to display the non-enumerable properties, the third optional argument is the number of times the object is recursed (depth), and the fourth, also optional, is whether to style the output in ANSI colors. If you assign a value of null to the depth, it recurses indefinitely (the default is two times)—as much as necessary to exhaustively inspect the object. From experience, be careful using null for the depth because you're going to get a large output.

You can use `util.inspect` in REPL, but I recommend a simple application, such as the following:

```
| var util = require('util');
| var jsdom = require('jsdom');
|
| console.log(util.inspect(jsdom, true, null, true));
```

When you run it, pipe the result to a file:

```
| node inspectjsdom.js > jsdom.txt
```

Now you can inspect and re-inspect the object interface at your leisure. Again, if you use `null` for depth, expect a large output file.

The Utilities module provides several other methods, but the one you're most likely to use is `util.inherits`. The `util.inherits` function takes two parameters, `constructor` and `superconstructor`. The result is the constructor will inherit the functionality from the superconstructor.

The example and its explanation cover some core JavaScript functionality you might already be familiar with. However, it's important that all readers come away from this section with the same understanding of what's happening.

Example 3-11 demonstrates all the nuances associated with using `util.inherits`. The explanation of the code follows.

Example 3-11. Enabling object inheritance via the util.inherits method

```
var util = require('util');

function first() {
  var self = this;
  this.name = 'first';
  this.test = function() {
    console.log(self.name);
  };
}

first.prototype.output = function() {
  console.log(this.name);
}

function second() {
  second.super_.call(this);
  this.name = 'second';
}
util.inherits(second, first);

var two = new second();

function third(func) {
  this.name = 'third';
  this.callMethod = func;
}

var three = new third(two.test);

// all three should output "second"
two.output();
two.test();
three.callMethod();
```

The first object is named `first`, and has two properties: a `name` and a method called `test` that outputs the name to the console. The second object is named `second`, and also assigns a value to its `name` property. This second object also invokes the `call` method on `super_`. If we look under the hood of `util.inherits`, we see where `super_` is defined:

```
exports.inherits = function(ctor, superCtor) {
  ctor.super_ = superCtor;
  ctor.prototype = Object.create(superCtor.prototype, {
    constructor: {
      value: ctor,
      enumerable: false,
      writable: true,
      configurable: true
  });
}
```

```
|   });
| );
```

The `super_` is assigned as a property to the second object when `util.inherits` is called:

```
| util.inherits (second, first);
```

We also discover that `util.inherits` is making use of `Object.create` to create an object from an existing object prototype, setting the object to be writable and configurable, but not enumerable.

Returning to the example, the first object has two methods: `test` and `output`. The `test` method is defined directly in the object, while the `output` method added later via the `prototype` object. The reason I used both techniques for defining a method on the object is to demonstrate an important aspect of inheritance with `util.inherits`. Well, of JavaScript, but enabled by `util.inherits`.

If we eliminate the following line from the second object constructor:

```
| second.super_.call(this);
```

The call to `output` would succeed but the call to `test` would generate an error and force the Node application to terminate with a message about `test` being undefined.

The `call` method chains the constructors between the two objects, ensuring that the superconstructor is invoked as well as the constructor. We need to invoke the superconstructor since the `test` method doesn't exist until `first` is created. However, we didn't need the `call` method for the `output` method, because it's defined directly on the `prototype` object. When the second object inherits properties from the first, it also inherits the new method.

Another aspect to JavaScript inheritance to note is the use of `self`, which you'll find to be quite common in Node applications and modules. The third object in the output, `third`, doesn't inherit from either `first` or `second`, but does expect a function passed to it when its instantiated. This function is assigned to its own `callMethod` property. When the code creates an instance of this object, the `two` object instance's `test` method is passed to the constructor.

```
| var three = new third(two.test);
```

When `three.callMethod` is called, what's output is "second" not "third", as you might expect at first glance. And that's where the `self` reference comes in.

In JavaScript, `this` is the object context, which can change as a method is passed around, or passed to an event handler. The only way you can preserve data for an object's method is to assign `this` to an object variable, in this case `self`, and then use the variable within any functions in the object.

Running this application results in the following output:

```
| second
| second
| second
```

I provided this little refresher course on object oriented development with JavaScript for two reasons. The first is a reminder that though we're on the server, not in the client, and using new technology like `util.inherits`, we're still using the same old JavaScript with all its interesting challenges and quirks.

The second reason for the refresher course is the next section which provides an overview of Node's `EventEmitter`. `EventEmitter` is heavily dependent on JavaScript inheritance, and example applications and modules that make use of `EventEmitter` feature both the `call` method and the `self` references.

Events and `EventEmitter`

Scratch underneath the surface of many of the Node core objects and you'll find `EventEmitter`. Anytime you see an object emit an event, and an event handled with `on`, you're seeing `EventEmitter` in action.

Understanding how EventEmitter works and how to use it are two of the more important components of Node development.

The EventEmitter object is what provides the asynchronous event handling to objects in Node. To demonstrate its core functionality, we'll try a quick test application. First include the Events module:

```
| var events = require('events');
```

Next, create an instance of EventEmitter:

```
| var em = new events.EventEmitter();
```

Use the newly created eventEmitter instance to do two essential tasks: attach an event handler to an event, and emit the actual event. The `on` event handler is triggered when a specific event is emitted. The first parameter to the method is the name of the event, the second a function to process the event:

```
| em.on('someevent', function(data) { ... });
```

The event is emitted on the object based on some criteria using the `emit` method:

```
| if (somecriteria) {
|   em.emit('data');
| }
```

In Example 3-12, an EventEmitter instance is created, which emits an event, `timed`, every 3 seconds. In the event handler function for this event, a message with a counter is output to the console:

Example 3-12. Very basic test of the EventEmitter functionality

```
var eventEmitter = require('events').EventEmitter;
var counter = 0;

var em = new eventEmitter();

setInterval(function() { em.emit('timed', counter++); }, 3000);

em.on('timed', function(data) {
  console.log('timed ' + data);
});
```

Running the application outputs timed event messages to the console until the application is terminated.

An interesting example, but not particularly helpful. What we need is the ability to add EventEmitter functionality to our existing objects—not use instances of EventEmitter throughout our applications.

To add this necessary EventEmitter functionality to an object, use the `util.inherits` method, described in the last section:

```
| util.inherits(someobj, EventEmitter);
```

Now you can call the `emit` method within the object's methods, and code event handlers on the object instances:

```
someobj.prototype.somemethod = function() { this.emit('event'); };
...
someobjinstance.on('event', function() { });
```

Rather than attempt to decipher how EventEmitter works in the abstract sense, Example 3-13 shows a working example of an object inheriting EventEmitter's functionality. In the application, a new object is created, `inputChecker`. The constructor takes two values, a person's name and a file name. It assigns the person's name to an object variable, and also creates a reference to a writable stream using the File System's `createWriteStream` method.

Readable and Writable Stream

The Node File System module ('fs') provides the ability to open a file for reading and writing, to watch specific files for new activity, as well as manipulate directories. It also provides us with readable and writable stream capability.

You create a readable stream using `fs.createReadStream` passing in the name and path for the file and other options. Create a writable stream with `fs.createWriteStream`, also passing in a file name and path.

The reason you'd use a writable and readable stream over the more traditional read and write methods is when you're reading and writing from a file based on events where the reads and writes can occur frequently. The streams are opened in the background and reads (and writes) are queued.

The object also has a method, `check`, that checks incoming data for specific commands. One command triggers a write event, another an end event. If no command is present, then an echo event is triggered. The object instance provides event handlers for all three events. It writes to the output file for the write event, it echos the input for the command-less input, and it terminates the application with an end event, using the `process.exit` method.

All input comes from standard input (`process.stdin`).

Example 3-13. Creating an event-based object that inherits from EventEmitter

```
var util = require('util');
var eventEmitter = require('events').EventEmitter;
var fs = require('fs');

function inputChecker (name, file) {
    this.name = name;
    this.writeStream = fs.createWriteStream('./' + file + '.txt',
        {'flags' : 'a',
         'encoding' : 'utf8',
         'mode' : 0666});
};

util.inherits(inputChecker, eventEmitter);

inputChecker.prototype.check = function check(input) {
    var command = input.toString().trim().substr(0,3);
    if (command == 'wr:') {
        this.emit('write',input.substr(3,input.length));
    } else if (command == 'en:') {
        this.emit('end');
    } else {
        this.emit('echo',input);
    }
};
// testing new object and event handling
var ic = new inputChecker('Shelley','output');

ic.on('write', function(data) {
    this.writeStream.write(data, 'utf8');
});

ic.on('echo', function( data) {
    console.log(this.name + ' wrote ' + data);
});

ic.on('end', function() {
    process.exit();
});

process.stdin.resume();
process.stdin.setEncoding('utf8');
```

```
process.stdin.on('data', function(input) {
  ic.check(input);
});
```

The EventEmitter functionality is bolded in the example. Note this also includes the `process.stdin.on` event handler method, since `process.stdin` is one of the many Node objects that inherit from EventEmitter.

We don't have to chain the constructors from the new object to EventEmitter, as demonstrated in `util.inherits`, because the functionality we need—`on` and `emit`—are prototype methods, not object instance properties.

The `on` method is really a shortcut for `EventEmitter.addListener` method, which takes the exact same parameters. This:

```
ic.addListener('echo', function( data) {
  console.log(this.name + ' wrote ' + data);
});
```

Is exactly equivalent to:

```
ic.on('echo', function( data) {
  console.log(this.name + ' wrote ' + data);
});
```

You can listen to the first event, only, with:

```
| ic.once(event, function);
```

When you exceed ten listeners for an event, you'll get a warning by default. Use `setMaxListeners`, passing in a number, to change the number of listeners. Use a value of zero (0) for an unlimited amount of listeners.

Many of the core Node objects, as well as third party modules, make use of EventEmitter. In Chapter 4, I'll demonstrate how to convert the code in Example 3-13 into a module.

4

The Node Module System

The basic implementation of Node is kept as streamlined as possible. Rather than incorporate every possible component of use directly into Node, additional functionality is included via Node's modules.

Node's module system is patterned after the CommonJS Module system. The CommonJS Module System is a way of creating modules so that they're interoperable. The core of the system is a contract that developers adhere to in order to ensure that their modules play well with others.

Among the CommonJS Module system requirements implemented with Node are:

- Support for a "require" function that takes the module identifier and returns the exported API.
- The module name is a string of characters, and may include forward slashes (for identification of path).
- That the module must specifically export that which is to be exposed outside of the module.
- That variables are private to the module.

In the next several sections, we'll see how Node adheres to these requirements.

Loading a Module with Require and Default Paths

Node supports a simple module loading system: there is a one to one correspondence between file and module.

To include a module within a Node application, use the `require` statement, passing in a string with the identifier for the module:

```
| var http = require ('http');
```

You can also just include a specific object, rather than all objects, from a module:

```
| var spawn = require('child_process').spawn;
```

Modules that are core modules—native to Node—or loaded from the `node_modules` folder can be loaded just by providing the module identifier, such as 'http' for the HTTP module. Modules not part of core, or not included in the `node_modules` folder should include forward slashes to indicate path. As an example, Node expects to find the module named `mymodule.js` in the same directory as the Node application in the following `require` statement:

```
| require ('./mymodule');
```

Or you can use the full path:

```
| require ('/home/myname/myapp/mymodule.js');
```

Module files can have either a .js, .node, or .json file extension. The .node extension assumes that the file is a compiled binary, not a text file containing JavaScript.

Node core modules have higher priority than external modules. If you're trying to load a custom module named 'http', Node loads the core version of the HTTP module. You'll have to provide either a different module identifier, or you'll need to provide the full path.

Earlier I mentioned the *node_modules* folder. If you specify the node identifier without providing a path, and the module isn't a core module, Node first looks for a *node_modules* folder local to the application, and looks for the module in this folder. If it doesn't find the module, Node then looks in the parent subdirectory for a *node_modules* folder and the node, and so on.

If the module is named `mymodule`, and the application is located in a subdirectory with the following path:

```
| /home/myname/myprojects/myapp
```

Node looks for the module using the following searches, in turn:

- `/home/myname/myprojects/myapp/node_modules/mymodule.js`
- `/home/myname/myprojects/node_modules/mymodule.js`
- `/home/myname/node_modules/mymodule.js`
- `/node_modules/mymodule.js`

Node can optimize the search depending on where the file issuing the `require` statement resides. For instance, if the file making the `require` statement is, itself, a module in a subdirectory contained in the *node_modules* folder, Node begins the search for the required module in the topmost *node_modules* folder.

There are two additional variations of require: `require.resolve` and `require.cache`. The `require.resolve` method performs the look up for the given module, but rather than load the module, just returns the resolved file name. The `resolve.cache` object contains a cached version of all loaded modules. When you try to load the module again, in the same context, it's loaded from the cache. If you want to force a new load, delete the item from the cache.

If the item's path is:

```
| var circle = require('./circle.js');
```

Delete it with:

```
| delete require.cache['./circle.js'];
```

This code forces a reload of the module the next time a `require` is called on it.

External Modules and the Node Package Manager

Much of the rich functionality associated with Node comes in via third-party modules. There are router modules, modules for working with relational or document database systems, template modules, testing modules, and even modules for payment gateways.

Though there is no formal Node module developer system, developers are encouraged to upload the module to Github. Following are good resources for finding Node modules:

- npm Registry <http://search.npmjs.org/>
- Node Module Wiki <https://github.com/joyent/node/wiki/modules>
- The node-toolbox at <http://toolbox.no.de/>
- nipster at <http://eirikb.github.com/nipster/>

The modules are roughly categorized into different types such as the aforementioned Routers, Database, Templating, Payment Gateway, and so on.

To use a module, you can download the source from Github (or wherever the source is located), and then install it manually into your application environment. Most modules provide basic installation instructions, or, at a minimum, you can deduce installation requirements by examining the files and directories included in the module. However, there is a far easier way to install a Node module: using the Node Package Manager, otherwise known as npm.

The npm site is at <http://npmjs.org/>. Basic instruction on npm can be found at <http://npmjs.org/doc/README.html>. Essential reading for Node module developers is the Developers section of the npm manual at <http://npmjs.org/doc/developers.html>. Another useful writing explains the differences between local and global installation, at <http://blog.nodejs.org/2011/03/23/npm-1-0-global-vs-local-installation/>.

The npm site provides a simple one line instruction for installing npm, but we're in luck, because it's now included as part of the basic Node installation. You can double check its existence by typing npm at the command line in the same environment that you access Node with node. To get an overview of npm, use the following:

```
| $ npm help npm
```

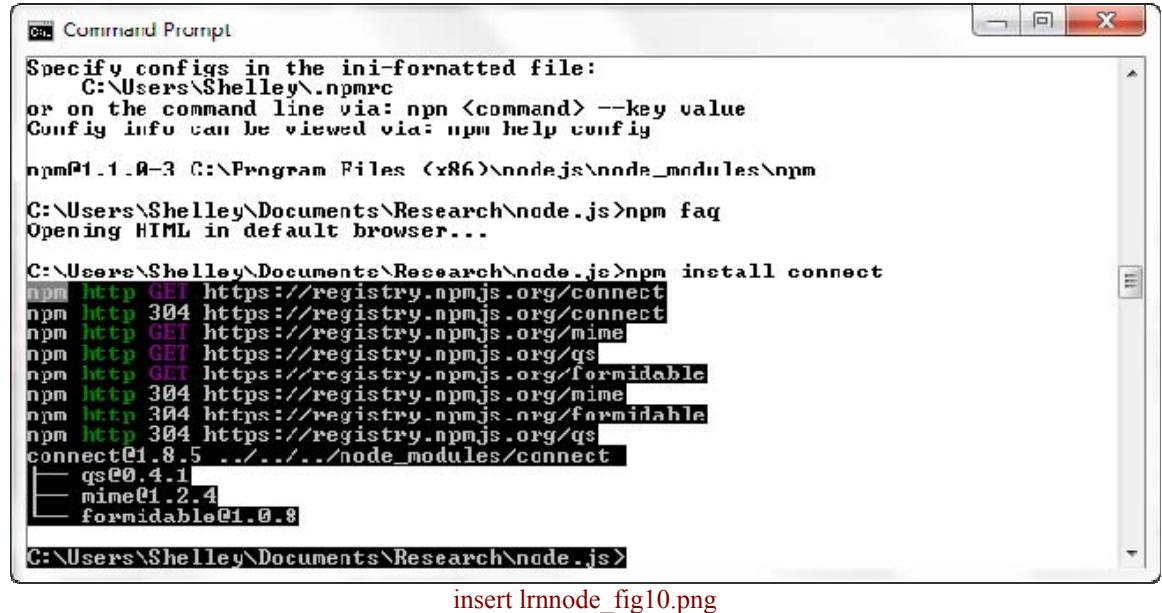
You can install modules globally or locally. The local installation is the best approach if you're working on a project and not everyone using the same system needs access to this module. A local installation, which is the default, installs the module in the current location, in the *node_modules* directory.

```
| $ npm install modulename
```

As an example, to install Connect, a very popular middleware framework, use the following:

```
| $ npm install connect
```

npm not only installs Connect, it also discovers the module dependencies for Connect, and installs them, too, as shown in Figure 4-1.



```
C:\> Command Prompt
Specify configs in the ini-formatted file:
  C:\Users\Shelley\.npmrc
or on the command line via: npm <command> --key value
Config info can be viewed via: npm help config

npm@1.0-3 C:\Program Files (x86)\nodejs\node_modules\npm

C:\Users\Shelley\Documents\Research\node.js>npm faq
Opening HTML in default browser...

C:\Users\Shelley\Documents\Research\node.js>npm install connect
npm http GET https://registry.npmjs.org/connect
npm http 304 https://registry.npmjs.org/connect
npm http GET https://registry.npmjs.org/mime
npm http GET https://registry.npmjs.org/qs
npm http GET https://registry.npmjs.org/formidable
npm http 304 https://registry.npmjs.org/mime
npm http 304 https://registry.npmjs.org/formidable
npm http 304 https://registry.npmjs.org/qs
connect@1.8.5 ..../node_modules/connect
  qs@0.4.1
  mime@1.2.4
  formidable@1.0.8

C:\Users\Shelley\Documents\Research\node.js>
```

insert lrnnode_fig10.png

Figure 4-1. Installing Connect in Windows 7 using Npm

Once installed, you can find the module in your local directory's *node_modules* directory. Any dependencies are installed in the newly installed module's *node_modules* directory.

If you want to install the package globally, use the `-g` or `--global` option:

```
| $ npm -g install connect
```

These examples install packages that are registered at the npm site. You can also install a module that's in a folder on the file system, or a tarball that's either local, or fetched via a URL:

```
| npm install http://somecompany.com/somemodule.tgz
```

If the package has versions, you can install a specific version:

```
| npm install modulename@0.1
```

npm can also work with Git, as demonstrated in Appendix A.

You can even install an old friend, jQuery:

```
| npm install jquery
```

Now you can make use of a familiar syntax in your Node application development.

If you're no longer using a module, you can uninstall it:

```
| npm uninstall modulename
```

The following command causes Npm to check for new modules, and perform an update if any are found:

```
| npm update
```

Or you can update a single module:

```
| npm update modulename
```

If you just want to check to see if any packages are outdated, use the following:

```
| npm outdated
```

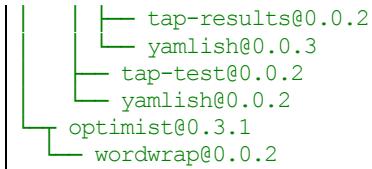
Again, you can run this command just against a simple module.

List installed packages and dependencies with `list`, `ls`, `la`, or `ll`:

```
| npm ls
```

The `la` and `ll` options provided extended descriptions. The following is the text I get running `npm ll` in my Windows 7 machine:

```
C:\Users\Shelley>npm ls
npm WARN jscdom >= 0.2.0 Unmet dependency in C:\Users\Shelley\node_modules\html5
C:\Users\Shelley
├── async@0.1.15
├── colors@0.6.0-1
├── commander@0.5.2
├── connect@1.8.5
└── formidable@1.0.8
  ├── mime@1.2.4
  └── qs@0.4.1
html5@v0.3.5
  └── UNMET DEPENDENCY jscdom >= 0.2.0
    ├── opts@1.2.2
    └── tap@0.0.13
      ├── inherits@1.0.0
      ├── tap-assert@0.0.10
      ├── tap-consumer@0.0.1
      ├── tap-global-harness@0.0.1
      ├── tap-harness@0.0.3
      ├── tap-producer@0.0.1
      ├── tap-results@0.0.2
      └── tap-runner@0.0.7
        ├── inherits@1.0.0
        ├── slide@1.1.3
        ├── tap-assert@0.0.10
        ├── tap-consumer@0.0.1
        └── tap-producer@0.0.1
```



Note the warning about an unmet dependency for the HTML5 module. The HTML5 module requires an older version of the JSDOM library. To correct, I installed the necessary version of the module:

```
| npm install jsdom@0.2.0
```

You can also directly install all dependencies with the `-d` flag. For instance, in the directory for the module, type the following:

```
| npm install -d
```

if you want to install a version of the module that hasn't yet been uploaded to the npm Registry, you can install directly from the git repository:

```
| npm install https://github.com/visionmedia/express/tarball/master
```

Use caution, though, as I've found that when you install a not yet released version of a module, and you do an npm update, the version the npm Registry has can overwrite the version you're using.

Running the `npm ls` command again now no longer shows any unmet dependencies.

To see which modules are installed globally, use:

```
| npm ls -g
```

You can learn more about your npm installation using the `config` command. The following lists the npm configuration settings:

```
| npm config list
```

You can get a more in-depth look at all configuration settings with:

```
| npm config ls -l
```

Configuration settings can be modified or removed, either by using a command line:

```
| npm config delete keyname  
| npm config set keyname value
```

Or by directly editing the configuration file:

```
| $ npm config edit
```

I would strongly recommend you leave your Npm configuration settings alone, unless you're very sure of the effect of a change.

You can also search for a module using whatever terms you think might return the best selection:

```
| npm search html5 parser
```

The first time you do a search, npm builds an index, which can take a few minutes. When finished though, you'll get a list of possible modules that match the term or terms you provided. The search terms `html5` and `parser` returned just two modules: `HTML5`, an HTML parser that includes support for SVG and MathML; `Fabric`, an object model with support for HTML5 Canvas and an SVG-to-Canvas parser.

The npm web site provides a registry of modules you can browse through, and an up-to-date listing of modules most depended on—modules most used by other modules or by Node applications. In the next section, I'll cover a sampling of these modules.

I'll cover other npm commands in the last section of this chapter on [Creating a Custom Node Module](#).

Finding Modules

Though Node.js has only been active for a few years, it's already attracted a large body of work. When you look at the Node.js Modules wiki page, you'll find a significant number of modules. The good thing is, you can find a lot of useful modules that implement the functionality you need. The bad news is, it's difficult to determine which module to use.—which modules are "best of breed".

Using a search tool, like Google, can provide you a fair idea of which modules are popular. It quickly became apparent when I was exploring middleware and framework modules to see that both Connect and Express were very popular.

In addition, when you look at the Github registry for the item you can see if it's actively supported, and up-to-date with the current Node installation. I was checking out one named Apricot, which does HTML parsing and is recommended in the Node documentation, but then I noticed it hadn't updated for some time, and when I tried to use the module, I found it didn't work with my installation of Node. At least, not when this book was written.

Many of the modules provide example applications, and a quick test of these will let you know if you can use the module in your current environment.

As mentioned in the last paragraph, the Node documentation site does provide a listing of recommended third-party modules, starting with the npm, which is now incorporated into the installation of Node. However, it's the npm web site, and its module registry that provides us with a better view of what modules are used in most applications.

At the npm Registry page, you can search for modules, but you can also review a list of the "most depended on" modules, which are modules either used in other modules, or in Node applications. At the time this was written, the top modules were:

- Underscore: general JavaScript utility functions
- Coffee-script: enables use of CoffeeScript, a language that compiles to JavaScript
- Request: simplified HTTP request client
- Express: framework
- Optimist: lightweight option parsing
- Async: functions and patterns for asynchronous code
- Connect: middleware
- Colors: add colors to console
- Uglify-js: Parser and compressor/beautifier
- Socket.IO: enables realtime client/server communication
- Redis: A Redis client
- Jade: Templating engine
- Commander: for command line programs
- Mime: support for file extensions and MIME mapping
- JSDOM: Implements the W3C DOM

We're already covering several of these modules in future chapters, but I want to cover a few in the next several sections—both because they give us a chance to better understand how Node works, and because they are useful modules.

- Colors
- JSDOM
- Optimist

- Underscore

The Colors Module: Simple is Best

The Colors module is one of the simpler modules. You can use it to provide different color and style effects to the `console.log` output, and that's it. However, it's also a good demonstration of an effective module because it is simple to use, focused on providing one service, and does a good job with that one service.

Testing how a module works is a great reason for REPL. To try Colors, install it using Npm:

```
| $ npm install colors
```

Open a new REPL session and include the library:

```
| > var colors = require('colors');
```

Because the Colors module is included in the current location's `node_modules` subdirectory, Node is able to find it rather quickly.

Now try something out, such as the following:

```
| console.log('This Node kicks it!'.rainbow.underline);
```

The result is a colorful, underlined rendering of your message. The style only applies for the one message, you'll need to apply another style for another message.

If you've worked with jQuery, you recognize the chaining used to combine effects. The example makes use of two: a font effect, `underlined`, and a font color, `rainbow`.

Try another, this time `zebra` and `bold`:

```
| console.log('We be Nodin'.zebra.bold);
```

You can change the style for sections of the Console message:

```
| console.log('rainbow'.rainbow, 'zebra'.zebra);
```

Why would something like Colors be useful? One reason is the ability to provide specific formatting for various events, such as providing one color for errors in one module, another color or effect for warnings in a second module, and so on. To do this, you can use the Colors presets, or create a custom theme:

```
> colors.setTheme({
..... mod1_warn: 'cyan',
..... mod1_error: 'red',
..... mod2_note: 'yellow'
..... });
> console.log("This is a helpful message".mod2_note);
This is a helpful message
> console.log("This is a bad message".mod1_error);
This is a bad message
```

More on Colors at <https://github.com/Marak/colors.js>.

Optimist: Another Short and Simple

Optimist is another module focused at solving a specific problem: parsing command options. That's it, that's all it does, but it does it very well.

As an example, a simple application uses the Optimist module to print command line options to the console, both as short short options:

```
#!/usr/local/bin/node
var argv = require('optimist').argv;
console.log(argv.o + " " + argv.t);
...
# ./app.js -o 1 -t 2
```

And long options:

```
#!/usr/local/bin/node
var argv = require('optimist').argv;
console.log(argv.one + " " + argv.two);
...
./app2.js --one="My" --two="Name"
```

You can also use the module to process boolean and unhyphenated options. Any type of option, Optimist can handle it.

Read more about Optimist at <https://github.com/substack/node-optimist>.

Exploring JSDOM

JSDOM generates a DOM (Document Object Model) from a scrap of HTML, an HTML file, or from a web page loaded via its URL. It's a powerful library that's used in many applications and other modules.

To install the module, use the following:

```
| $ npm install jsdom
```

There is documentation for JSDOM, but it's a bit sketchy and we want to learn more about how it works. This is where you'll be able to use your reverse engineering skills—and REPL—to discover more information about a Node module.

First thing, open a REPL session, and include the module, and also include the Utilities module

```
> var jsdom = require('jsdom');
> var util = require('util');
```

The method we want to look at is `jsdom.env`. It has the following arguments:

- HTML fragment, HTML file reference, or URL
- references to scripting files or URLs - optional
- a configuration object - optional
- callback function with two arguments: an array of errors, and a window

The window object passed to the callback function isn't an actual window that pops up, but the representation of an HTML document/fragment, as we're used to seeing it within client-side scripting. What we're going to do is inspect this object. Type the following into REPL:

```
> jsdom.env('<p id="test">This is a test</p>', function(errors,window) {
..... console.log(util.inspect(window));
.....});
```

If you've worked directly with the W3C DOM in your client-side scripting projects, you'll recognize what's returned. I've included a sampling, below:

```
_window:
{ location: [Object],
  addEventListener: [Function],
  removeEventListener: [Function],
  dispatchEvent: [Function],
  raise: [Function],
  setTimeout: [Function],
  setInterval: [Function],
  clearInterval: [Function: stopTimer],
  clearTimeout: [Function: stopTimer],
  __stopAllTimers: [Function: stopAllTimers],
  run: [Function],
  getGlobal: [Function],
  dispose: [Function],
  top: [Circular],
```

```
    parent: [Circular],  
    self: [Circular],  
    frames: [Circular],  
    window: [Circular],  
    document: [Object] } },
```

These are our old friends, including the `document` object. We can actually use these objects like we'd use them in client-side scripting.

To make it easier to play with this new window object, let's assign it to a global variable so we have access to it outside the callback function. Type the following into REPL':

```
> var wind;  
> jsdom.env('<p id="test">This is a test</p>', function(errors,window) {  
.... wind = window;  
....});
```

Next, access the paragraph in the HTML fragment using the `document.getElementById` method, but make sure you reference it from the new window object:

```
| > var p = wind.document.getElementById('test');
```

If you inspect this new object, again you'll see a data structure that should look very familiar:

```
| > console.log(util.inspect(p));
```

You'll see the event methods, such as `onfocus`, the `parentNode` property, a collection of attributes—all the data and functionality we'd expect to see when working with the W3C DOM in a browser. Try out the new paragraph object by accessing the paragraph's text. Remember, to access a paragraph's contents, you first have to access the paragraph's child node, which is a text element, and then access the child node's contents:

```
| > console.log(p.childNodes[0].nodeValue);  
| This is a test
```

Again, nothing unfamiliar—DOM document manipulation at its pedantic and overly complex best. Which naturally leads us to another set of functionality that JSDOM provides: the ability to "jQueryify" the DOM.

You can incorporate the use of jQuery functionality by passing in the URL to the JQuery library when you generate the DOM using `jsdom.env`. In the following, we'll include the URL to a recent version of jQuery, and also load HTML from a file:

```
> jsdom.env('./test.html', ['http://code.jquery.com/jquery-1.7.1.min.js'],  
... function(errors, window) {  
.... wind = window;  
....});
```

The HTML is simple:

```
<!DOCTYPE html>  
<html>  
<head>  
  <style>  
    p { color:blue; margin:8px; }  
  </style>  
</head>  
<body>  
  <p id='test'>Test Paragraph.</p>  
</body>  
</html>
```

You can now access the paragraph's text using the jQuery approach:

```
| > console.log(wind.$("#test").text());
```

Another method that allows you to use jQuery is `jsdom.jQueryify`, which takes an existing window object as first parameter and "jQueryifies" it, as shown in Example 4-1. If you look in the implementation

for jQueryify, what it basically does is create a script element using the DOM and then loads either the latest jQuery script or the one passed into the method, into the existing window object:

```
|   jQueryTag = window.document.createElement("script");  
| ...  
|   jQueryTag.src = path || 'http://code.jquery.com/jquery-latest.js';  
|   window.document.body.appendChild(jQueryTag);
```

The documentation doesn't let us know that it automatically pulls in the latest jQuery if we don't provide a jQuery URL. In Example 4-1, the code first creates the empty (no document) window object using `jsdom.jsdom.createWindow`, and then it calls `jsdom.jqueryify`. Since we want the latest jQuery, and know this is used automatically, we don't have to provide the URL.

```
| Example 4-1. Apply jQuery to a newly created window  
| var jsdom = require("jsdom"),  
|     window = jsdom.jsdom().createWindow();  
  
| jsdom.jqueryify(window, function() {  
|     window.$('body').append('<p>Yet another test</div>');  
|     console.log(window.$('p').text());  
| });
```

Not every module's code is as readable as JSDOM, but most are. When you're working with a new module, it pays to explore under the hood as well as read any and all documentation.

Underscore

Install Underscore with:

```
| npm install underscore
```

As the developers write, Underscore is a utility-belt library for Node. It provides a lot of extended JavaScript functionality we're used to with third-party libraries, such as jQuery or Prototype.js.

Underscore is so-named because, traditionally, its functionality is accessible with an underscore (`_`)—similar to jQuery's `$`. An example:

```
| var _ = require('underscore');  
| _.each(['apple','cherry'], function (fruit) { console.log(fruit); });
```

Of course, the problem with the underscore is that this character has a specific meaning in REPL. No worries, though, because we can just use another variable:

```
| var us = require('underscore');  
| us.each(['apple','cherry'], function(fruit) { console.log(fruit); });
```

Underscore provides expanded functionality for arrays, collections, functions, objects, chaining, and general utility. Fortunately, there's also excellent documentation for all of its functionality, so I'll forgo repeating any of it here.

I did want to mention one nice capability: a controlled way to extend Underscore with your own utility functions, via the `mixin` function. We can try this method, and the others, quickly, in a REPL session:

```
| > var us = require('underscore');  
| undefined  
| > us.mixin({  
| ... betterWithNode: function(str) {  
| ..... return str + ' is better with Node';  
| ..... }  
| ... });  
| > console.log(us.betterWithNode('chocolate'));  
| chocolate is better with Node
```

You'll see the term *mixin* used in several Node modules. It's based on a pattern where properties of one object are added ("mixin") to another.

Of course, it makes more sense to extend Underscore from a module that can be reused in our applications, which leads us to the next section on creating our own custom modules.

Creating Your Own Custom Module

Just as you do for your client-side JavaScript, you'll want to split off reusable JavaScript into its own libraries. The only difference is that you need to take a couple of extra steps to convert your JavaScript library into a module for use with Node.

Let's say you have a JavaScript library function, `concatArray`, that takes a string, and an array of strings, and concatenates the first string to each string in the array.

```
function concatArray(str, arry) {
  return arry.map(function(element) {
    return str + ' ' + element;
  });
}
```

You want to use this function, as well as others, in your Node applications.

To convert your JavaScript library for use in Node, you'll need to export all of your exposed functions using the `exports` object, as shown in the following code:

```
exports.concatArray = function(str, arry) {
  return arry.map(function(element) {
    return str + ' ' + element;
  });
};
```

To use `concatArray` in a Node application, import the library using `require`, assigning the library to a variable name. Once assigned, you can call any of the exposed functions in your code:

```
var newArray = require ('./arrayfunctions.js');
console.log(newArray.concatArray('hello', ['test1','test2']));
```

It's not very complicated, as long as you remember two things:

1. Use the `exports` object to export the function.
2. Treat the library as a single imported object, assigned to a variable, in order to access the functions.

Packaging an Entire Directory

You can split your module into separate JavaScript files, all located within a directory. Node can load the directory contents, as long as you organize the contents in one of two ways.

The first way is to provide a JSON file named `package.json` with information about the directory. The structure can contain other information, but the only relevant entries to Node are:

```
{ "name" : "mylibrary",
  "main" : "./mymodule/mylibrary.js" }
```

The first property, `name`, is the name of the module. The second, `main`, indicates the entry point for the module.

The second way is to include either an `index.js` or `index.node` file in the directory to serve as the main module entry point.

Why would you provide a directory rather than just a single module? The most likely reason is that you're making use of existing JavaScript libraries, and just providing a "wrapper" file that wraps the exposed functions with exports statements. Another reason is that your library is so large, and you want to break it down to make it easier to modify.

Regardless of reason, be aware that all of the exported objects must be in the one main file that Node loads.

Preparing your Module for Publication

If you want to make your package available others, you can promote it at your web site, but you're missing out on a significant audience. When you're ready to publish a module, you're going to want to add it to the list of modules at the Node.js web site, and you're going to want to publish it to the npm Registry.

Earlier I mentioned the package.json file. It's actually based on the CommonJS module system recommendations, which you find at http://wiki.commonjs.org/wiki/Packages/1.0#Package_Descriptor_File (though do check to see if there's a more up-to-date version).

Among the required fields for this file are:

- name: name of package
- description: package description
- version: current version conforming to semantic version requirements
- keywords: array of search terms
- maintainers: array of maintainers of package (with name, email, and web)
- contributors: array of contributors of package (name, email, and web)
- bugs: URL where bugs can be submitted
- licenses: array of licenses
- repositories: array of repositories where package can be found
- dependencies: prerequisite packages and version number

The other fields are optional. Still, that's a lot of fields. Thankfully, npm makes it easier to create this file. If you type the following at the command line:

```
| npm init
```

The tool will run through the required fields prompting you for each. When it's done, it generates a package.json file.

In Chapter 3, Example 3-13, I started an object called `inputChecker` that checks incoming data for commands and then processes the command. The example demonstrates how to incorporate EventEmitter. We're going to modify this simple object to make it usable by other applications and modules.

First, we'll create a subdirectory in node_modules and name it `inputcheck`, and move the existing `inputChecker` code file to it. Next, we need to modify the code to pull out the part of the code that implements the new object. We'll save it for a future test file. The last modification we'll do is add the `exports`, resulting in the code shown in Example 4-2.

Example 4-2. Application from example 3-14 modified to be a module object

```
var util = require('util');
var eventEmitter = require('events').EventEmitter;
var fs = require('fs');

exports.inputChecker = inputChecker;

function inputChecker(name, file) {
    this.name = name;
```

```

        this.writeStream = fs.createWriteStream('./' + file + '.txt',
          {'flags' : 'a',
           'encoding' : 'utf8',
           'mode' : 0666});
    };

util.inherits(inputChecker,eventEmitter);
inputChecker.prototype.check = function check(input) {
  var self = this;
  var command = input.toString().trim().substr(0,3);
  if (command == 'wr:') {
    self.emit('write',input.substr(3,input.length));
  } else if (command == 'en:') {
    self.emit('end');
  } else {
    self.emit('echo',input);
  }
};

```

We can't export the object function directly, because `util.inherits` expects an object to exist in the file named `inputChecker`. We're also modifying the `inputChecker` object's `prototype` later in the file. We could have changed these code references to use `exports.inputChecker`, but that's *kludgy*. It's just as easy to assign the object in a separate statement.

To create the `package.json` file, I ran `npm init` and answered each of the prompts. The resulting file is shown in Example 4-3.

Example 4-3. Generated package.json for inputChecker module

```
{
  "author": "Shelley Powers <shelleyp@burningbird.net> (http://burningbird.net)",
  "name": "inputcheck",
  "description": "Looks for commands within the string and implements the commands",
  "version": "0.0.1",
  "homepage": "http://inputcheck.burningbird.net",
  "repository": {
    "url": ""
  },
  "main": "inputcheck.js",
  "engines": {
    "node": "~0.6.10"
  },
  "dependencies": {},
  "devDependencies": {},
  "optionalDependencies": {}
}
```

The `npm init` command doesn't prompt for dependencies, so these need to be added to directly to the file. However, the `inputChecker` module isn't dependent on any external modules, so I can leave these fields blank.

[Chapter 16 has a more in-depth look at the package.json file.](#)

At this point in time, we can test the new module, make sure it actually works as a module. Example 4-4 is the portion of the previously existing `inputChecker` application that tested the new object, pulled out into a separate test application.

Example 4-4. InputChecker Test application

```

var inputChecker = require('inputcheck').inputChecker;

// testing new object and event handling
var ic = new inputChecker('Shelley','output');

```

```

ic.on('write', function(data) {
  this.writeStream.write(data, 'utf8');
});

ic.addListener('echo', function( data) {
  console.log(this.name + ' wrote ' + data);
});

ic.on('end', function() {
  process.exit();
});

process.stdin.resume();
process.stdin.setEncoding('utf8');
process.stdin.on('data', function(input) {
  ic.check(input);
});

```

The test application can be moved into a new `examples` subdirectory within the module directory to be packaged with the module as an example. Good practice demands we also provide a `test` directory with one or more testing applications, as well as a `doc` directory with documentation. For a module this small, a README file should be sufficient. Lastly, we create a gzipped tarball of the module.

Once we've provided all we need to provide, the module can be published.

Publishing the Module

The folks who brought us npm also provide a really great source for Node developers: the Developer Guide. It provides everything we need to know about how to publish our modules.

The Guide provides some additional requirements for the `package.json` file. In addition to the fields already created, we also need to add in a `directories` field, with a hash of folders, such as the previously mentioned test and doc:

```

"directories" : {
  "doc" : ".",
  "test" : "test",
  "example" : "examples"
}

```

Before publishing the Guide recommends we test that the module can cleanly install. The test for this is to type the following in the root directory for the module:

```
| npm install . -g
```

At this point, the `inputChecker` module has been tested, the `package.json` package has been modified to add directories, and the package successfully installs.

Next, we need to add ourselves as a npm user if we hadn't done so already. This is accomplished with:

```
| npm adduser
```

And following the prompts to add a user name, a password, and an email address.

One last thing to do:

```
| npm publish
```

We can provide the path to the tarball or the directory. As the Guide warns us, everything in the directory is exposed unless we use a `.npmignore` list in the `package.json` file to ignore material. It's better, though, just to remove anything that's not needed before publishing the module.

Once published, and the source also uploaded to Github (if this is the repository you're using), the module is now officially ready for others to use. Promote the module on Twitter, in Google+, Facebook, your web

site and wherever else you think people would want to know about the module. This type of promotion isn't bragging: it's sharing.

5

Control Flow, Asynchronous Patterns, and Exception Handling

Node might seem to be intimidating at times, with discussions about asynchronous events and callbacks and new objects such as `EventEmitter`—not to mention all that new server-side functionality we have to play with.

If you've worked with any of the modern JavaScript libraries, though, you've had a chance to work with much of the functionality that goes into Node, at least when it comes to asynchronous development. For instance, if you've used a timer in JavaScript, you've used an asynchronous function. If you've ever developed in Ajax, you've used an asynchronous function. Even the plain old `onclick` event handling is an asynchronous function, since we never know when the user is going to click that mouse, or tap that keyboard.

Any method that doesn't block the control thread while waiting for some event or result is an asynchronous function. When it comes to the `onclick` handling, the application doesn't block all other application processing, waiting for that user mouse click. The same as it doesn't block all functionality while the timer is in effect, or waiting on the server to return from an Ajax call.

In this chapter, we're going to look more closely at exactly what it means when we use the term, asynchronous control. In particular, we're going to look at some asynchronous design patterns, as well as explore some of the Node modules that provide finer control over program flow when working in this new environment. And since asynchronous control can add some new and interesting twists when it comes to error handling, we're going to also take a closer look at exception handling within an asynchronous Node environment.

Promises, No Promises, Callback Instead

In the earlier days of Node, asynchronous functionality was facilitated through the use of `promises`. The concept of a `promise` arose in the 1970s. It's an object that represents the result of an asynchronous action. It's also known as a `future`, `deferred`, and a `delay`. The CommonJS design model embraced the concept of the promise, which led to its early implementation in Node.

In the earlier Node implementation, a promise was an object that emitted exactly two events: success and error. The use was simple: if an asynchronous operation succeeds the success event is emitted; otherwise, the error event is emitted. No other events were emitted, and the object would emit one or the other, but not both, and no more than once. Example 5-1 is an example function that incorporated a promise into a function that opens and reads in a file.

Example 5-1. Using a previously implemented Node promise

```
function test_and_load(filename) {
  var promise = new process.Promise();
  fs.stat(filename).addCallback(function (stat) {

    // Filter out non-files
    if (!stat.isFile()) { promise.emitSuccess(); return; }

    // Otherwise read the file in
    fs.readFile(filename).addCallback(function (data) {
      promise.emitSuccess(data);
    }).addErrback(function (error) {
      promise.emitError(error);
    });

  }).addErrback(function (error) {
    promise.emitError(error);
  });
  return promise;
}
```

Each object would return the promise. The code to process a successful result would be passed as a function to the promise object's `addCallback` method, which had one parameter, the data. The code to process the error would be passed as a function to the promise object's `addErrback` method, which received the error as its one and only parameter.

```
var File = require('file');
var promise = File.read('mydata.txt');
promise.addCallback(function (data) {
  // process data
});
promise.addErrback(function (err) {
  // deal with error
})
```

The promise object ensured that the proper functionality was performed whenever the event finished—either the results could be manipulated, or the error processed.

The code for Example 5-1 is one of a number of examples of possible asynchronous function techniques documented at http://groups.google.com/group/nodejs/browse_thread/thread/8dab9f0a5ad753d5, part of discussions about how Node was going to handle this concept in the future.

The promise object was pulled from Node in version 0.1.30. As Ryan Dahl noted at the time:

Because many people (myself included) only want a low-level interface to file system operations that does not necessitate creating an object, while many other people want something like promises but different in one way or another. So instead of promises we'll use last argument callbacks and consign the task of building better abstraction layers to user libraries.

Rather than the promise object, Node incorporated the *last argument callbacks* we've seen in use in previous chapters. All asynchronous methods feature a callback function as the last argument. The first argument in this callback function is always an error object.

To demonstrate the fundamental structure of the callback functionality, Example 5-2 is a complete Node application that creates an object with one method, `someMethod`. This method takes three arguments, the second of which must be a string, and the third is the callback. In the method, if the second argument is

missing or is not a string, the object creates a new Error object, which is passed to the callback function. Otherwise, whatever the result of the method is passed to the callback function.

```
Example 5-2. Demonstrating the fundamental structure of the last callback functionality  
var obj =function() { };  
  
obj.prototype.doSomething = function(arg1, arg2_) {  
    var arg2 = typeof(arg2_) === 'string' ? arg2_ : null;  
  
    var callback_ = arguments[arguments.length - 1];  
    callback = (typeof(callback_) === 'function' ? callback_ : null);  
  
    if (!arg2)  
        return callback(new Error('second argument missing or not string'));  
  
    callback(arg1);  
}  
var test = new obj();  
  
try {  
    test.doSomething('test', 3.55, function(err,value) {  
        if (err) throw err;  
  
        console.log(value);  
    });  
} catch(err) {  
    console.error(err);  
}
```

The key elements of the callback functionality are in bold text in the code.

The first key component is to ensure the last argument is a callback function. Well, we can't determine the intent of the user, but we can make sure the last argument is a function and that will have to do. The second key component is to create the new Node Error object if an error occurs, and return it as the result to the callback function. The last component is to invoke the callback function, passing in the method's result if no error occurs. Everything else is changeable, as long as these three key elements are present.

The application output is the following error message printed out to the console:

```
| [Error: second argument missing or not string]
```

Changing the method call in the code to the following:

```
| test.doSomething('test','this',function(err,value) {
```

Results in `test` being printed out to the console. Changing it to the following:

```
| test.doSomething('test',function(err,value) {
```

Again results in an error, this time because the second argument is missing.

If you look through the code in the `lib` directory of the Node installation, you'll see the last callback pattern repeated throughout. Though the functionality may change, this pattern remains the same.

This approach is quite simple and ensures consistent results from asynchronous methods. However, it also creates its own unique challenges, as we'll cover in the next section.

Sequential Functionality, Nested Callbacks, and Exception Handling

It's not unusual to find the following in a client-side JavaScript application:

```
| val1 = callFunctionA();
```

```
| val2 = callFunctionB(val1);
| val3 = callFunctionC(val2);
```

The functions are called, in turn, passing the results from the earlier function to each subsequent function. Since all the functions are synchronous, we don't have to worry about the function calls getting out of sequence. No unexpected results.

A relatively common example of this type of sequential programming is shown in Example 5-3. The application uses synchronous versions of Node's File System methods to open a file and get its data, modify the data by replacing all references to "apple" with "orange", and outputting the resulting string to a new file.

```
Example 5-3. Example of a sequential synchronous application
```

```
var fs = require('fs');

try {
  var data = fs.readFileSync('./apples.txt', 'utf8');
  console.log(data);
  var adjData = data.replace(/([A|a]pple)/g, 'orange');

  fs.writeFileSync('./oranges.txt', adjData);
} catch(err) {
  console.error(err);
}
```

Since problems can occur and we can't be sure errors are handled internally in any module function, we wrap all of the function calls in a `try` block to provide for graceful—or at least, more informative—exception handling. The following is an example of what the error looks like when the application can't find the file to read:

```
{ [Error: ENOENT, no such file or directory './apples.txt']
  errno: 34,
  code: 'ENOENT',
  path: './apples.txt',
  syscall: 'open' }
```

Perhaps not very user friendly, but at least it's a lot better than the alternative:

```
node.js:201
    throw e; // process.nextTick error, or 'error' event on first tick
^

Error: ENOENT, no such file or directory './apples.txt'
    at Object.openSync (fs.js:230:18)
    at Object.readFileSync (fs.js:120:15)
    at Object.<anonymous> (/home/examples/public_html/node/read.js:3:18)
    at Module._compile (module.js:441:26)
    at Object..js (module.js:459:10)
    at Module.load (module.js:348:31)
    at Function._load (module.js:308:12)
    at Array.0 (module.js:479:10)
    at EventEmitter._tickCallback (node.js:192:40)
```

In the example, we're going to have expected results because each function call is performed in sequence.

To convert this synchronous sequential application pattern to an asynchronous implementation requires a couple of modifications. First, we have to replace all functions with their asynchronous counterparts. However, we also have to account for the fact that each function doesn't block when called, which means we can't guarantee the proper sequence if the functions are called independent of each other. The only way to ensure that each function is called in its proper sequence is to use *nested callbacks*.

Example 5-4 is an asynchronous version of the application from Example 5-3. All of the File System function calls have been replaced by their asynchronous versions, and the functions are called in the proper sequence by using a nested callback.

Example 5-4: Application converted into asynchronous nested callbacks

```
var fs = require('fs');

try {
  fs.readFile('./apples2.txt', 'utf8', function(err, data) {
    if (err) throw err;

    var adjData = data.replace(/([A|a]pple)/g, 'orange');

    fs.writeFile('./oranges.txt', adjData, function(err) {
      if (err) throw err
    });
  }) catch(err) {
    console.error(err);
  }
}
```

In Example 5-4, the input file is open and read, and only when both are finished does the callback function passed as the last parameter get called. In this function, the error is checked to make sure it's `null`. If not, the error is thrown for catching in the outer exception handling block.

Some style guides frown on throwing an error, and more complex frameworks provide error handling objects and functions to ensure all errors are resolved.

If no error occurs, the data is processed and the asynchronous `writeFile` method is called. It's callback function has only one parameter, the error object. If it's not null, it's thrown for handling in the outer exception block.

If an error occurred, it would look similar to the following:

```
/home/examples/public_html/node/read2.js:11
  if (err) throw err;
  ^
Error: ENOENT, no such file or directory './boogabooga/oranges.txt'
```

If you want the stack trace of the error, you can print out the `stack` property of the Node error object:

```
catch(err) {
  console.log(err.stack);
}
```

Adding in another sequential function call adds another level of callback nesting. In Example 5-5, a listing of files is accessed for a directory. In each of the files, a genetic domain name is replaced with a specific domain name using the `String replace` method, and the result is written *back* to the original file. A log is maintained of each changed file, using an open write stream.

Example 5-5: Retrieving directory listing for files to modify

```
var fs = require('fs');

var writeStream = fs.createWriteStream('./log.txt',
  {'flags' : 'a',
   'encoding' : 'utf8',
   'mode' : 0666});

try {
  // get list of files
  fs.readdir('./data/', function(err, files) {

    // for each file
    files.forEach(function(name) {
```

```

// modify contents
fs.readFile('./data/' + name, 'utf8', function(err,data) {
    if (err) throw err;
    var adjData = data.replace(/somecompany\.com/g, 'burningbird.net');

    // write to file
    fs.writeFile('./data/' + name, adjData, function(err) {
        if (err) throw err;

        // log write
        writeStream.write('changed ' + name + '\n', 'utf8', function(err) {
            if(err) throw err;
        });
    });
});
} catch(err) {
    console.error(util.inspect(err));
}

```

Though the application looks like it's processing each single file individually before moving on to the next, remember that each of the methods used in this application are asynchronous. If you run the application several times and check the *log.txt* file, you'll see that the files are processed in a different, seemingly random order. In my *data* subdirectory I had five files. Running the application three times in a row resulted in the following output to *log.txt* (blank lines inserted for clarity):

```

changed data1.txt
changed data3.txt
changed data5.txt
changed data2.txt
changed data4.txt

changed data3.txt
changed data1.txt
changed data5.txt
changed data2.txt
changed data4.txt

changed data1.txt
changed data3.txt
changed data5.txt
changed data4.txt
changed data2.txt

```

Another issue is if you want to check when all of the files have been modified in order to do something. The `forEach` method invokes the iterator callback functions asynchronously, so it doesn't block. Adding a statement following the use of `forEach`, like the following:

```
| console.log('all done');
```

Doesn't really mean the application is all done, just that the `forEach` method didn't block. If you add a `console.log` statement at the same time you log the changed file:

```

|     writeStream.write('changed ' + name + '\n', 'utf8', function(err) {

|         if(err) throw err;
|         console.log('finished ' + name);
|     });

```

And added the following after the `forEach` method call:

```
| console.log('all finished');
```

You'll actually get the following console output:

```
all done
finished data3.txt
finished data1.txt
finished data5.txt
finished data2.txt
finished data4.txt
```

You can add a counter that is incremented with each log message, and then checked against the file array's length to print out the all finished message:

```
// before accessing directory
var counter = 0;
...
    writeStream.write('changed ' + name + '\n', 'utf8', function(err) {
        if(err) throw err;
        console.log('finished ' + name);
        counter++;
        if (counter >= files.length)
            console.log('all done');

});
```

You'd then get the expected results: an "all done" message after all the files have been updated.

The application works quite well—except if the directory we're accessing has subdirectories as well as files. If the application encounters a subdirectory it spits out the following error:

```
/home/examples/public_html/node/example5.js:20
    if (err) throw err;
          ^
Error: EISDIR, illegal operation on a directory
```

Example 5-6 prevents this type of error by using the `fs.stats` method to return an object representing the data from a Unix `stat` command. This object contains information about the object, including whether it's a file or not. The `fs.stats` method is, of course, another asynchronous method, requiring yet more callback nesting.

Example 5-6. Adding in a Stats check of each directory object to make sure it's a file

```
var fs = require('fs');

var writeStream = fs.createWriteStream('./log.txt',
    {'flags' : 'a',
     'encoding' : 'utf8',
     'mode' : 0666});

try {
    // get list of files
    fs.readdir('./data/', function(err, files) {

        // for each file
        files.forEach(function(name) {

            // check to see if object is file
            fs.stat('./data/' + name, function(err, stats) {

                if (err) throw err;

                if (stats.isFile())
                    // modify contents
```

```

fs.readFile('./data/' + name, 'utf8', function(err,data) {
    if (err) throw err;
    var adjData = data.replace(/somecompany\.com/g, 'burningbird.net');

    // write to file
    fs.writeFile('./data/' + name, adjData, function(err) {
        if (err) throw err;

        // log write
        writeStream.write('changed ' + name + '\n', 'utf8',
            function(err) {
                if(err) throw err;
            });
    });
});
} catch(err) {
    console.error(err);
}

```

Again, the application performs its purpose, and performs it well—but how difficult to read and maintain. I've heard this type of nested callback called *callback spaghetti* and the even more colorful *pyramid of doom*, both of which are apt terms.

The nested callbacks continue to push against the right side of the document, making it more difficult to ensure we have the right code in the right callback. However, we can't break the callback nesting apart because it's essential that the methods be called in turn:

1. First the directory lookup
2. Filter out subdirectories
3. Then read each file's contents
4. Modify the contents
5. Write back to the original file.

What we'd like to do is find a way of implementing this series of method calls but without having to depend on nested callbacks. For this, we need to look at third party modules that provide asynchronous control flow.

Another approach is to provide a named function as callback function for each method. This way you can flatten the pyramid, and it can simplify debugging. However, this approach doesn't solve some of the other problems, such as determining when all processes have finished.

Asynchronous Patterns and Control Flow Modules

The application in Example 5-6 is an example of an asynchronous pattern, where each function is called, in turn, and passes its results to the next function, and the entire chain stopped only if an error occurs. There are several such patterns, though some are variations of others and not everyone uses the exact same terminology.

One Node module, Async, provides names, and support, for the most extensive list of asynchronous control flow patterns:

- waterfall: functions are called in turn and results of all are passed as array to last callback (also called series and sequence by others)

- series: functions are called in turn and, optionally, results passed as an array to the last callback
- parallel: functions are run in parallel and when all completed results are passed to last callback (though the result array isn't part of the pattern in some interpretations of the parallel pattern)
- whilst: repeatedly calling one function, invoking the last callback only if a preliminary test returns false or an error occurs
- queue: calls functions in parallel up to a given limit of concurrency, and new functions are queued until one of the functions finishes
- until: repeatedly calling one function, invoking the last callback only if a post-process test returns false or an error occurs
- auto: functions are called based on requirements, each function receiving results of previous callbacks
- iterator: each function calls the next, with ability to individually access next iterator
- apply: a continuation function with arguments already applied combined with other control flow functions
- nextTick: calls callback in next loop of an event loop—based on process.nextTick in Node

In the listing of modules provided at the Node.js web site, there is one category titled "Control Flow/Async Goodies". In the list is the Async module, which provided the asynchronous control patterns I just listed. Though not every control flow module provides capability to handle all possible patterns, most provide functionality for the most common patterns: *series* (also called *sequence* and sometimes referred to as *waterfall*, though Async lists it separate from *series*) and *parallel*. In addition, some of the modules also reinstate the concept of *promises* that existed with earlier editions of Node, while others implement a concept called *fibers*, which emulate threads.

In the next couple of sections, I'm going to demonstrate two of the more popular and/or unique of the actively maintained control flow modules. Each provides its own unique perspective on asynchronous control flow management, though all provide a very useful—and likely, essential—service.

Step

Step is a focused utility module that enables simplified control flow for serial and parallel execution. It can be installed using npm:

```
| npm install step
```

The Step module exports exactly one object. To use the object for serial execution, wrap your asynchronous function calls within functions that are then passed as parameters to this object. For instance, in Example 5-7, Step is used to read the contents of a file, modify the contents, and write them back to the file.

Example 5-7. Using Step to perform serial asynchronous tasks

```
var fs = require('fs'),
    Step = require('step');

try {

  Step (
    function readData() {
      fs.readFile('./data/data1.txt', 'utf8', this);
    },
    function modify(err, text) {
      if (err) throw err;
      console.log(text);
      return text.replace(/somecompany\.com/g, 'burningbird.net');
    },
    function writeData(err, text) {
      if (err) throw err;
    }
  );
}
```

```

        fs.writeFile('./data/data1.txt', text, this);
    }
}
} catch(err) {
    console.error(err);
}

```

The first function in the Step sequence, `readData`, reads a file's contents into a string, which is then passed to a second function. The second function modifies the string using replacement, and the result is passed to a third function. In the third function, the modified string is written back to the original file.

The Step Github site is at <https://github.com/creationix/step>.

In more detail, the first function wraps the asynchronous `fs.readFile`. However, rather than pass a callback function as the last parameter, the code passes the `this` context. When the function is finished, its data and any possible error is sent to the next function, `modify`. The `modify` function isn't an asynchronous function, as all it's doing is replacing one substring for another in the string. It doesn't require the `this` context, and just returns the result at the end of the function.

The last function gets the newly modified string and writes it back to the original file. Again, since it's an asynchronous function, it gets `this` in place of the callback function. If we didn't include `this` as the last parameter to the final function, any errors that occur wouldn't be thrown, and caught in the outer loop. If the `boogabooga` subdirectory didn't exist with the following modified code:

```

function writeFile(err, text) {
    if (err) throw err;
    fs.writeFile('./boogabooga/data/data1.txt');
}

```

We'd never know that the write failed.

Even though the second function isn't asynchronous, every function but the first in Step requires the error object as the first parameter for consistency. It's just null by default in a synchronous function.

Example 5-7 performs part of the functionality of the application in Example 5-6. Could it do the rest of the functionality, especially handling modification to multiple files? The answer is yes, and no. Yes, it can do the work, but only if we throw in some kludgy code.

In Example 5-8, I added in the `readDir` asynchronous function to get a list of files in a given subdirectory. The array of files is processed with a `forEach` command, like in Example 5-6, but the end of the call to `readFile` isn't a callback function or this. In Step, the call to the group object signals to reserve a parameter for a group result; the call to the group object in the `readFile` asynchronous function results in each of the callbacks called, in turn, and the results grouped into an array for the next function.

Example 5-8. Using Step's group() capability to handle grouped asynchronous processes

```

var fs = require('fs'),
    Step = require('step'),
    files,
    _dir = './data/';

try {

    Step (
        function readDir() {
            fs.readdir(_dir, this);
        },
        function readFile(err, results) {
            if (err) throw err;
            files = results;
            var group = this.group();
            results.forEach(function(name) {
                fs.readFile(_dir + name, 'utf8', group());
            });
        }
    ).group().each(function(error, grouped) {
        if (error) throw error;
        console.log(grouped);
    });
}

```

```

        });
    },
    function writeAll(err, data) {
      if (err) throw err;
      for (var i = 0; i < files.length; i++) {
        var adjdata = data[i].replace(/somecompany\.com/g, 'burningbird.net');
        fs.writeFile(_dir + files[i], adjdata, 'utf8',this);
      }
    }
  );
} catch(err) {
  console.log(err);
}

```

To preserve the file names, the `readdir` result is assigned to a global variable, `files`. In the last Step function, a regular `for` loop is used to cycle through the data to modify it, and then cycle through the `files` variable to get the file name. Both are used in the last asynchronous call to `fileWrite`.

One other approach I could have used if I wanted to hard code the change to each file was to use the Step parallel feature. In Example 5-9, a `readFile` is performed on a couple of different files, passing in `this.parallel()` as the last parameter. This results in a parameter being passed to the `next` function for each `readFile` in the first function. The `parallel` function call also has to be used in the `writeFile` function in the second function, to ensure each callback is processed, in turn.

Example 5-9. Reading and writing to a group of files using Step's group functionality

```

var fs = require('fs'),
  Step = require('step'),
  files;

try {

  Step (
    function readFiles() {
      fs.readFile('./data/data1.txt', 'utf8',this.parallel());
      fs.readFile('./data/data2.txt', 'utf8',this.parallel());
      fs.readFile('./data/data3.txt', 'utf8',this.parallel());
    },
    function writeFiles(err, data1, data2, data3) {
      if (err) throw err;
      data1 = data1.replace(/somecompany\.com/g, 'burningbird.net');
      data2 = data2.replace(/somecompany\.com/g, 'burningbird.net');
      data3 = data3.replace(/somecompany\.com/g, 'burningbird.net');

      fs.writeFile('./data/data1.txt', data1, 'utf8',this.parallel());
      fs.writeFile('./data/data2.txt', data2, 'utf8', this.parallel());
      fs.writeFile('./data/data3.txt', data3, 'utf8', this.parallel());
    }
  );
} catch(err) {
  console.log(err);
}

```

It works, but is clumsy. It would be better to reserve the use of the parallel functionality for a sequence of different asynchronous functions that can be implemented in parallel, and the data processed post-callback.

As for our earlier application, rather than have to force Step into contortions to fit our use case, we can use another library that provides the additional flexibility we need. We can use Async.

Async

The Async module provides functionality for managing collections, such as its own variation of `forEach`, map, and filter. It also provides some utility functions, including ones for `memoization`. However, what we're interested in in this chapter are its facilities for handling control flow.

There is both an `Async` and a `Async.js` module, so be careful not to confuse the two. The one covered in this section is `Async`, by Caolan McMahon. The Github site is at <https://github.com/caolan/async>.

Install `Async` using npm:

```
| npm install async
```

As mentioned earlier, `Async` provides control flow capability for a variety of asynchronous patterns, including the serial, parallel, and waterfall. Like `Step`, it gives us a tool to tame the wild nested callback pyramid, but its approach is quite different. For one, we don't insert ourselves between each function and its callback. Instead, we incorporate the callback as part of the process.

As an example, we've already identified that the pattern of the earlier application matches with `Async`'s waterfall, so we'll be using the `async.waterfall` method. In Example 5-10, I used `async.waterfall` to open and read a data file using `fs.readFile`, perform the synchronous string substitution, and then write the string back to the file using `fs.writeFile`. Pay particular attention to the callback function used with each sequential step in the application.

```
Example 5-10. Using async.waterfall to read, modify, and write a file's contents, asynchronously
var fs = require('fs'),
    async = require('async');

try {
    async.waterfall([
        function readData(callback) {
            fs.readFile('./data/data1.txt', 'utf8', function(err, data) {
                callback(err, data);
            });
        },
        function modify(text, callback) {
            var adjdata=text.replace(/somecompany\.com/g,'burningbird.net');
            callback(null, adjdata);
        },
        function writeData(text, callback) {
            fs.writeFile('./data/data1.txt', text, function(err) {
                callback(err, text);
            });
        }
    ], function (err, result) {
        if (err) throw err;
        console.log(result);
    });
} catch(err) {
    console.log(err);
}
```

The `async.waterfall` method takes two parameters: an array of tasks and an optional final callback function. Each asynchronous task function is an element of the `async.waterfall` method array, and each function requires a callback as the last of its parameters. It is this callback function that allows us to chain the asynchronous callback results without having to physically nest the functions. However, as you can see in the code, each function's callback is handled as we would normally handle it if we were using nested callbacks—other than the fact that we don't have to test the errors in each function. The callbacks look for an error object as first parameter. If we pass an error object in the callback function, the process is

ended at this point, and the final callback routine is called. In the final callback is when we can test for an error, and throw the error to the outer exception handling block (or handle however we want).

The `readData` function wraps our `fs.readFile` call, which checks for an error, first. If an error is found, it throws the error, ending the process. If not, it issues a call to the callback as its last operation. This is the trigger to tell Async to invoke the next function, passing any relevant data. The next function isn't asynchronous, so it does its processing, passing null as the error object, and the modified data. The last function, `writeData`, calls the asynchronous `writeFile`, using the passed in data from the previous callback, and then testing for an error in its own callback routine.

Example 5-10 uses named functions while the Async documentation shows anonymous functions. However, named functions can simplify debugging and error handling. Both work equally well.

The processing is very similar to what we had in Example 5-4, but without the nesting (and having to test for an error in each function). It may seem more complicated than what we had in Example 5-4, and I wouldn't necessarily recommend its use for such simple nesting, but look what it can do with a more complex nested callback. Example 5-11 duplicates the exact functionality from Example 5-6, but without the callback nesting, and the excessive indenting.

Example 5-11. Get objects from directory, test to look for files, read file test, modify, and write back output log results

```
var fs = require('fs'),
    async = require('async'),
    _dir = './data/';

var writeStream = fs.createWriteStream('./log.txt',
    {'flags' : 'a',
     'encoding' : 'utf8',
     'mode' : 0666});

try {
    async.waterfall([
        function readDir(callback) {
            fs.readdir(_dir, function(err, files) {
                callback(err, files);
            });
        },
        function loopFiles(files, callback) {
            files.forEach(function (name) {
                callback(null, name);
            });
        },
        function checkFile(file, callback) {
            fs.stat(_dir + file, function(err, stats) {
                callback(err, stats, file);
            });
        },
        function readData(stats, file, callback) {
            if (stats.isFile())
                fs.readFile(_dir + file, 'utf8', function(err, data) {
                    callback(err, file, data);
                });
        },
        function modify(file, text, callback) {
            var adjdata=text.replace(/somecompany\.com/g,'burningbird.net');
            callback(null, file, adjdata);
        },
        function writeData(file, text, callback) {
            fs.writeFile(_dir + file, text, function(err) {
                callback(err, file);
            });
    ],
    function (err) {
        if (err)
            writeStream.end();
        else
            writeStream.write('Success');
    }
});
```

```

        },
        function logChange(file, callback) {
            writeStream.write('changed ' + file + '\n', 'utf8', function(err) {
                callback(err, file);
            });
        }
    ], function (err, result) {
        if (err) throw err;
        console.log('modified ' + result);
    });
} catch(err) {
    console.log(err);
}

```

Every last bit of functionality is present from Example 5-6. The `fs.readdir` method is used to get an array of directory objects. The Node `forEach` method (not the Async `forEach`) is used to access each specific object. The `fs.stats` method is used to get the `stats` for each object. The `stats` is used to check for files, and when a file is found, it's opened and its data accessed. The data is then modified, and passed on to be written back to the file using `fs.writeFile`. The operation is logged in the log file, and also echoed to the console.

Note that there is more data passed in some of the callbacks. Most of the functions need the file name as well as the text, so this is passed in the last several callbacks. Any amount of data can be passed in the callbacks, as long as the first parameter is the error object (or `null`, if no error object), and the last parameter in each function is the callback function.

We don't have to check for an error in each asynchronous task function either, because Async tests the error object in each callback, and stops processing and calls the final callback function if an error is found. And we don't have to worry about using special processing when handling an array of items, as we did when we used Step, earlier in the chapter.

The other Async control flow methods, such as `async.parallel` and `async.serial`, perform in a like manner, with an array of tasks as the first method parameter, and a final optional callback as the second. How they process the asynchronous tasks differ, though, as you would expect.

The `async.parallel` method calls all of the asynchronous functions at once, and when they are each finished, calls the optional final callback. Example 5-12 uses `async.parallel` to read in the contents of three files in parallel. However, rather than an array of functions, this example uses an alternative approach that Async supports: passing in an object with each asynchronous task listed as a property of the object. The results are then printed out to the console when all three tasks have finished.

Example 5-12. Opening three files in parallel and reading in their contents

```

var fs = require('fs'),
    async = require('async');

try {
    async.parallel({
        data1 : function (callback) {
            fs.readFile('./data/data1.txt', 'utf8', function(err, data) {
                callback(err,data);
            });
        },
        data2 : function (callback) {
            fs.readFile('./data/data2.txt', 'utf8', function(err, data) {
                callback(err,data);
            });
        },
        data3 : function readData3(callback) {
            fs.readFile('./data/data3.txt', 'utf8', function(err, data) {
                callback(err,data);
            });
        },
    },

```

```

    }, function (err, result) {
      if (err) throw err;
      console.log(result);
    });
} catch(err) {
  console.log(err);
}

```

The results are returned as an array of objects, with each result tied to each of the properties. If the three data files in the example had the following content:

- `data1.txt` : apples
- `data2.txt`: oranges
- `data3.txt`: peaches

The result of running Example 5-12 is:

```
| { data1: 'apples\n', data2: 'oranges\n', data3: 'peaches\n' }
```

I'll leave the testing of the other Async control flow methods as a reader exercise. Just remember that when working with the Async control flow methods, all you need is to pass a callback to each asynchronous task, and to call this callback when you're finished, passing in an error object (or `null`), and whatever data you need.

Speaking of Node Style

A couple of times in the chapter I mentioned people recommending certain restraints, such as using named functions rather than anonymous in Node applications. Collectively, these restraints are known as *preferred Node style*, though there is no one style guide, or set of exactly same shared preferences. In fact, there are several different recommendations for proper Node style.

A helpful Node.js style guide is Felix's Node.js Style Guide at <http://nodeguide.com/style.html>.

Among some of the recommendations, and my own take on each:

Use asynchronous functions over synchronous.

Yes, this is essential for Node applications.

Use a 2 space indentation.

My take: Sorry, I'm used to 3 spaces, and I'll continue to use 3 spaces. I think it's more important to be consistent and *not* to use tabs; I'm not going to split hairs on number of spaces.

Use semicolons/Don't use semicolons.

Amazing how contentious this one is. I use semicolons, but follow your own instincts.

Use single quotes.

I'm rather used to double quotes, but have managed to kick the habit (more or less). Regardless, it's better to use double quotes than to escape a single quote in a string.

Use one `var` keyword/don't use one `var` keyword when defining several variables.

Some of the applications in this book use the `var` keyword for each variable, some don't. Again, old habits are hard to break. but I don't think this is as much an issue as some people make it.

Constants should be uppercase.

I agree with this one.

Variables should be camel cased.

I more or less agree with this, but not religiously.

Use the strict equality operator (==).

Sound advice, but again, old habits are hard to break. I mean to use strict equality, but frequently use just the regular equality (==). Don't be bad, like me.

Name your closures.

My bad, again. This really is sound advice, and I'm trying to improve, but most of my code still uses anonymous functions.

Line length should be less than 80 characters.

Again, sound advice.

Curly braces begin on the same line as what necessitates them.

I do follow this religiously.

The most important one to remember of all of these is use asynchronous functions whenever and wherever possible. After all, asynchronous functionality is the heart of Node.

6

Routing Traffic, Serving Files, and Middleware

Click a link in a web page and you expect something to happen. That something is typically a page being loaded. However, there's actually a lot that goes on before that web resource loads—some of which is mostly out of our control (such as packet routing), while others are dependent on us having software installed that understands how to do something based on the contents of that link.

Of course, when we use web servers, such as Apache, and software such as Drupal, much of the mechanics of serving a file or a resource are handled behind the scenes. However, when we're creating our own server-side applications in Node, and bypassing our usual technology, we have to get more involved in ensuring the right resource gets delivered at the right time.

This chapter focuses on the technology available to Node developers for providing the very basic routing and middleware functionality we need to ensure that resource A gets delivered to User B, correctly, and quickly.

Building a Simple Static File Server from Scratch

We have all the functionality we need to build a simple router or to serve static files built directly into Node. But being able to do so, and doing so are two different things.

When thinking of what's necessary to build a simple but functional static file server, we might come up with the following set of steps:

1. Create an HTTP server and listen for requests
2. When a request arrives, parse the request URL to determine location for the file
3. Check to make sure the file exists
4. If the file doesn't exist, respond accordingly.
5. If the file does exist, open the file for reading
6. Prepare a response header
7. Write the file to the response
8. Wait for next request

Creating an HTTP server and reading files requires the HTTP and File System modules. The Path module will also come in handy, because it has a way of checking to make sure a file exists before trying to open it for reading. In addition, we'll want to define a global variable with the base directory.

The top of the application has the following code at this point:

```
var http = require('http'),
    path = require('path'),
    fs = require('fs'),
    _base = '/home/examples/public_html';
```

Creating a server isn't anything new, using the HTTP module. And the application can get the document requested by directly accessing the HTTP request object's url property. To double-check response compared to requests, we'll also throw in a console.log of the requested file's path name. This is in addition to the first console.log message written when the server is first started.

```
http.createServer(function (req, res) {
    pathname = _base + req.url;
    console.log(pathname);

}).listen(8124);

console.log('Server running at 8124/');
```

Before attempting to open the file for reading and writing to the HTTP response, the application needs to check that it exists, first. The `path.exists` function is a good choice at this point. If the file doesn't exist, write a brief message to this effect and set the status code to `404`: document not found.

```
path.exists(pathname, function(exists) {
    if (exists) {
        // insert code to process request
    } else {
        res.writeHead(404);
        res.write('Bad request 404\n');
        res.end();
    }
});
```

Now we're getting into the meat of the new application. In previous examples in past chapters, the examples used `fs.readFile` to read in a file. The problem with `fs.readFile`, though, is that it wants to read the file completely into memory before making it available. Documents served over the web can be quite large. In addition, there can be many requests for a document at any given time. Something like `fs.readFile` just won't scale.

Instead of using `fs.readFile`, then, the application creates a read stream via the `fs.createReadStream` method, using the default settings. Then it's a simple matter to just `pipe` the file contents directly to the HTTP response object. Since the stream sends an end signal when it's finished, we don't need to use the `end` method call with the read stream:

```
res.setHeader('Content-Type', 'text/html');

// 200 status - found, no errors
res.statusCode = 200;

// create and pipe readable stream
var file = fs.createReadStream(pathname);
file.on("open", function() {
    file.pipe(res);
});
file.on("error", function(err) {
    console.log(err);
});
```

The read stream has two events of interest: open and error. The open event is sent when the stream is ready, and the error if a problem occurs. The application calls the pipe method in the callback function for the open event.

At this point, the static file server looks like the application in Example 6-1.

Example 6-1. A Simple Static File Web Server

```
var http = require('http'),
    path = require('path'),
    fs   = require('fs'),
    _base = '/home/examples/public_html';

http.createServer(function (req, res) {

    pathname = _base + req.url;
    console.log(pathname);

    path.exists(pathname, function(exists) {
        if (!exists) {
            res.writeHead(404);
            res.write('Bad request 404\n');
            res.end();
        } else {
            res.setHeader('Content-Type', 'text/html');

            // 200 status - found, no errors
            res.statusCode = 200;

            // create and pipe readable stream
            var file = fs.createReadStream(pathname);
            file.on("open", function() {
                file.pipe(res);
            });
            file.on("error", function(err) {
                console.log(err);
            });
        }
    });
}).listen(8124);

console.log('Server running at 8124');
```

I tested it with a simple HTML file, which has nothing more than an `img` element, and the file loaded and displayed properly:

```
<!DOCTYPE html>
<head>
  <title>Test</title>
  <meta charset="utf-8" />
</head>
<body>
  
</body>
```

I then tried it with another example file I had, that contained an HTML5 `video` element:

```
<!DOCTYPE html>
<head>
  <title>Video</title>
  <meta charset="utf-8" />
</head>
<body>
  <video id="meadow" controls>
    <source src="videofile.mp4" />
```

```

<source src="videofile.ogv" />
  <source src="videofile.webm" />
</video>
</body>

```

Though the file would open and the video display when I tried the page with Chrome, the `video` element did not work when I tested the page with IE 10. Looking at the console output provided the reason why:

```

Server running at 8124/
/home/examples/public_html/html5media/chapter1/example2.html
/home/examples/public_html/html5media/chapter1/videofile.mp4
/home/examples/public_html/html5media/chapter1/videofile.ogv
/home/examples/public_html/html5media/chapter1/videofile.webm

```

Though IE10 is capable of playing the MP4 video, it tests all three of the videos because the content type of the response header is "text/html" for each. Though other browsers will ignore the incorrect content type and display the media correctly, IE does not. Appropriately so, in my opinion, because I may not have quickly found the error in the application otherwise.

This application is a perfect example of why we have to test our server-side applications in all target browsers, even though, seemingly, we should be able to test the application with just one since the functionality we're testing is on the server.

The application has to be modified to test for the file extension for each file, and then return the appropriate MIME type in the response header. We could code this functionality ourselves, but I'd rather make use of an existing module: node-mime.

You can install node-mime using npm: `npm install mime`. The Github site is at <https://github.com/bentomas/node-mime>.

The node-mime module can return the proper MIME type given a file name (with or without path), and can also return file extensions given a content type. The node-mime module is added to the requirements list:

```

|   mime = require('mime');

```

The returned content type is used in the response header, and also output to the console, so we can check the value as we test the application:

```

// content type
var type = mime.lookup(pathname);
console.log(type);
res.setHeader('Content-Type', type);

```

Now when we access the file with the video element in IE10, the video file works.

What doesn't work, though, is when we access a directory, instead of a file. When this happens, an error is output to the console, and the web page remains blank for the user:

```

| { [Error: EISDIR, illegal operation on a directory] errno: 28, code: 'EISDIR' }

```

We not only need to check if the resource being accessed exists, we also need to check whether it's a file or a directory. If a directory is accessed, we can either display the contents of the directory, or we can output an error—it's the developer's choice.

The final version of a minimal static file server, in Example 6-2, uses `fs.stats` to check for the existence of the requested object and that it's a file. If the resource doesn't exist, an HTTP status of `404` is returned. If the resource exists, but it's a directory, an HTTP error status code of `403`—forbidden—is returned. In all cases, the request is handled properly.

Example 6-2. Final version of minimal static file server

```

var http = require('http'),
  url = require('url'),
  fs = require('fs'),
  mime = require('mime');

```

```

_base = '/home/examples/public_html';

http.createServer(function (req, res) {

    pathname = _base + req.url;
    console.log(pathname);

    fs.stat(pathname, function(err, stats) {
        if (err) {
            res.writeHead(404);
            res.write('Bad request 404\n');
            res.end();
        } else if (stats.isFile()) {
            // content type
            var type = mime.lookup(pathname);
            console.log(type);
            res.setHeader('Content-Type', type);

            // 200 status - found, no errors
            res.statusCode = 200;

            // create and pipe readable stream
            var file = fs.createReadStream(pathname);
            file.on("open", function() {

                file.pipe(res);
            });
            file.on("error", function(err) {
                console.log(err);
            });
        } else {
            res.writeHead(403);
            res.write('Directory access is forbidden');
            res.end();
        }
    });
}).listen(8124);
console.log('Server running at 8124/');

```

The following is the console output for accessing one web page that contains both image and video file links:

```

/home/examples/public_html/html5media/chapter2/example16.html
text/html
/home/examples/public_html/html5media/chapter2/bigbuckposter.jpg
image/jpeg
/home/examples/public_html/html5media/chapter2/butterfly.png
image/png
/home/examples/public_html/favicon.ico
image/x-icon
/home/examples/public_html/html5media/chapter2/videofile.mp4
video/mp4
/home/examples/public_html/html5media/chapter2/videofile.mp4
video/mp4

```

Note the proper handling of the content types now. Figure 6-1 shows one web page that contains a video element loaded into Chrome, and the network access displayed in the browser's console.

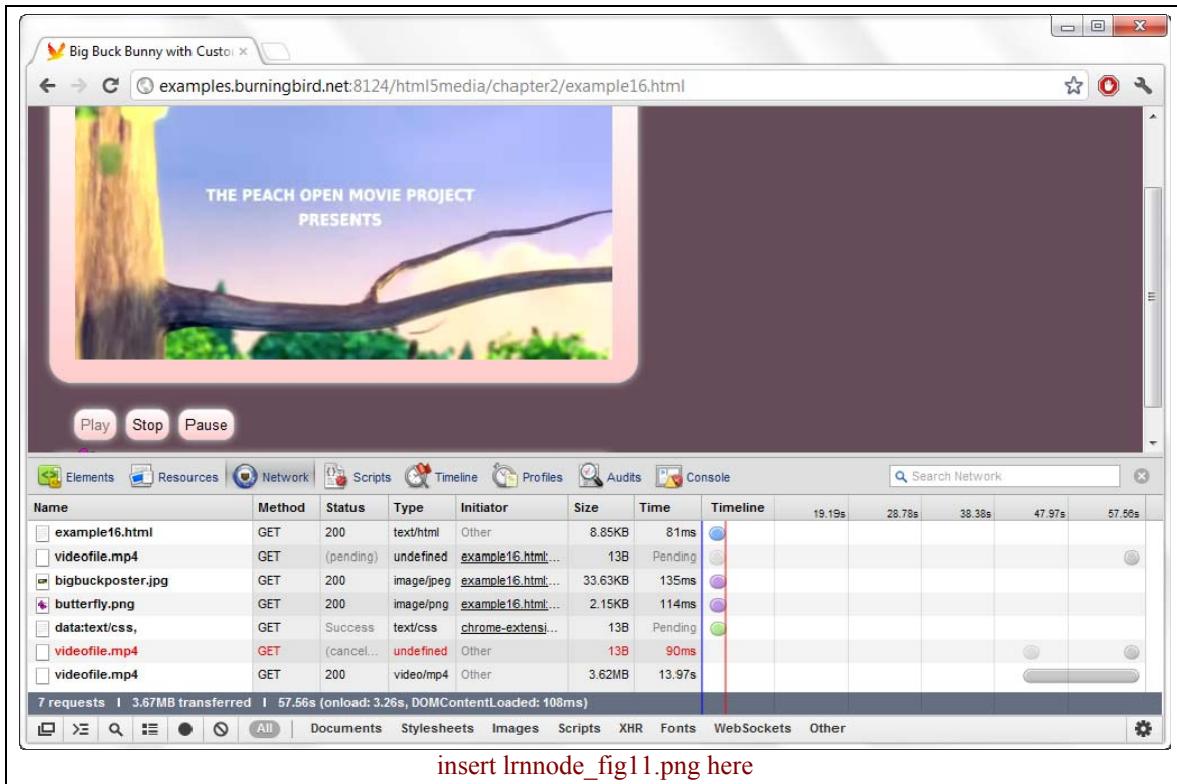


Figure 6-1. Displaying browser console while loading a web page served by the simple static file server from Example 6-2.

You get a better feel for how the read stream works when you load a page that has a video element and begin to play it. The browser grabs the read stream output at a speed it can manage, filling its own internal buffer and then pauses the output. If you close the server while the video content is playing, the video continues to play...up to the point where it exhausts its current video buffer. The video element then goes blank because the read stream is no longer available. It's actually a little fascinating to see how well everything works with so little effort on our part.

Why not use `__dirname`?

In some of the examples in the book, I hard code the base location for web documents, typically as `/home/examples/public_html`. You might be asking why I'm not using `__dirname`?

In Node, you can use the predefined `__dirname` as a way of specifying the current working directory for a Node application. However, in my development system, my Node applications are in a subdirectory off the main web document path, because I'm testing more than one technology at a time. In addition, the documents I'm using to test the web servers in this chapter are not located as subdirectories to my Node environment.

But do be aware of `__dirname`, and its usefulness when developing with Node, because it can provide a way of testing applications and then moving them to production without having to change the value of a base location variable.

You use `__dirname` in the following manner:

```
var pathname = __dirname + req.url;
```

Note the double underscore with `__dirname`.

Though the application works when tested with several different documents, it's not perfect. It doesn't handle many other types of web requests, it doesn't handle security or caching, nor does it properly handle the video requests. One web page application I tested that uses HTML5 video also makes use of the HTML5

video element API to output the state of the video load process. This application didn't get the information it needs to work as designed.

Chapter 12 revisits this application and covers what additional effort is needed to create a multimedia server.

It is all the little gotchas that can trip us when it comes to creating a static file server. Another approach is to use an existing static file server, and we'll look at one included in the Connect middleware, covered in the next section.

Middleware

What is middleware? That's a good question, and one that, unfortunately, doesn't have a definitive answer.

Generally, middleware is software that exists between you, as the developer, and the underlying system. By system, we can mean either the operating system, but it can also mean the underlying system of technology, such as we get from Node. More specifically, middleware inserts itself into the communication chain between your application and the underlying system—hence the rather descriptive name.

For instance, rather than have to provide all the functionality necessary for serving static files via a web server, you can use middleware that handles most of it. The middleware then takes care of all the tedious bits, so you can focus on those aspects of your application that are unique to your needs and requirements. However, middleware doesn't stop with just serving up static files. Some middleware provide authorization components, proxies, routers, cookie and session management, and other necessary web technologies.

Middleware isn't a utility library or simple set of functions. What middleware you choose defines how your application is both designed and developed. You have to be comfortable with your choice of middleware before you begin incorporating it, because you'd have a difficult time switching mid-development.

Currently, there are two major middleware applications used in Node applications: JSGI and Connect. JSGI is a middleware technology for JavaScript, generally, not specifically Node. Its use is facilitated for Node with the JSGI-node module. Connect, on the other hand, was developed for use with Node.

The JSGI site is at <http://wiki.commonjs.org/wiki/JSGI/Level0/A/Draft2>. The JSGI-node Github site is at <https://github.com/persvr/jsgi-node>.

I'm only covering Connect in this book, for three reasons. One, it's simpler to use. JSGI would require spending too much time having to understand how JSGI works, regardless of its use with Node, whereas with Connect, we can jump right in. Two, it provides middleware support for Express, a very popular framework (covered in Chapter 7). Three, and perhaps most importantly, over time Connect has seemingly floated to the top as best-in-breed. It's the most used middleware if the npm Registry is any indication.

An introduction to Connect 2.0 can be found at <http://tjholowaychuk.com/post/18418627138/connect-2-0>. The Connect source is at <https://github.com/senchalabs/Connect>.

Connect Basics

You can install Connect using npm:

```
| npm install connect
```

Working with Alpha Modules

At the time I wrote the first draft of this chapter, the npm Registry had the stable version (1.8.5) of Connect, but I wanted to cover the development version, 2.x, since it will, most likely, be the version you'll be using.

I downloaded the source code for Connect 2.x directly from Github, and moved into my development environment's `node_modules` directory. I then changed to the Connect directory and installed it using `npm`, but without specifying the module's name, and using the `-d` flag to install the dependencies:

```
npm install -d
```

You can use `npm` to install directly from the git repository. You can also use Git, directly, to clone the version and then use the technique I just described to install it.

Be aware that if you install a module directly from source, and you perform an `npm update`, `npm` will overwrite the module with what it considers to be the "latest" module—even if you are using a newer version of the module.

The documentation for Connect is sparse. However, Connect is relatively simple to use once you've seen a couple of working examples.

In Example 6-3, I created a simple server application using Connect, and using two of the middleware bundled with Connect: `connect.logger` and `connect.favicon`. The `logger` middleware logs all requests to a stream, in this case the default `STDIO.output` stream, and the `favicon` middleware serves up the `favicon.ico` file. The application includes the middleware using the `use` method on the Connect request listener, which is then passed as parameter to the HTTP object's `createServer` method.

Example 6-3. Incorporating two middleware, logger and favicon, into a Connect-based application

```
var connect = require('connect');
var http = require('http');

var app = connect()
  .use(connect.favicon())
  .use(connect.logger())
  .use(function(req,res) {
    res.end('Hello World\n');
  });

http.createServer(app).listen(8124);
```

Rather than create the Connect request listener first, we can also incorporate the Connect middleware directly into the `createServer` method, as shown in Example 6-4.

Example 6-4. Second example incorporating Connect bundled middleware into application

```
var connect = require('connect');
var http = require('http');

http.createServer(connect()
  .use(connect.favicon())
  .use(connect.logger())
  .use(function(req,res) {
    res.end('Hello World\n'));
)).listen(8124);
```

In both examples, the Connect request listener is passed in the HTTP `createServer` method, allowing us to add which middleware to use is defined using the Connect `use` method.

Connect refers to the individual middleware options as just middleware. I followed its convention in this chapter.

The Connect Middleware

Connect comes bundled with at least 20 middleware. I'm not going to cover them all in this section, but I am going to demonstrate enough of them so that you have a good understanding how the middleware work together.

Other of the Connect middleware are utilized in the Express applications created in Chapter 7.

connect.static

Earlier, we created a simplified static file server from scratch. Connect provides middleware that implements the functionality of that server...and more. It is extremely easy to use—you just specify the `connect.static` middleware option, passing in the root directory for all requests. The following implements most of what we created in Example 6-2, but with far less code.

```
var connect = require('connect'),
    http = require('http'),
    _dirname = '/home/examples';

http.createServer(connect()
    .use(connect.logger())
    .use(connect.static(_dirname + '/public_html'), {redirect: true})
).listen(8124);
```

The `connect.static` middleware takes the root path as first parameter, and an optional object as second. Among the options supported in the second object are :

- `maxAge`: browser cache in milliseconds, defaults to 0
- `hidden`: set to true to allow transfer of hidden files, default is false
- `redirect`: set to true to redirect to trailing '/' when pathname is a directory

This small application has far less code, but a big difference in behavior between the earlier scratch application and the Connect middleware application. The Connect solution handles browser cache, as well protecting against malformed URLs, and more properly handles HTTP *ranges*, which neither the server built from scratch could not.

[More on handling ranges with video files in Chapter 12.](#)

The only difference between it and the scratch server is that we have more control over error handling with the scratch server. However, the `connect.static` middleware does provide the appropriate response and status code to the browser.

The code just shown, and the earlier examples in the section also demonstrate another Connect middleware: `connect.logger`.

connect.logger

The logger middleware module logs incoming requests to a stream, set to `stdout` by default. You can change the stream, as well as other options: buffer duration, format, and an immediate flag, which signals whether to write the log immediately or on response.

There are several tokens that can be used to build the format string, in addition to four predefined formats you can use:

- `default ':remote-addr -- [:date] ":method :url HTTP/:http-version" :status :res[content-length] ":referrer" ":user-agent"`
- `short ':remote-addr - :method :url HTTP/:http-version :status :res[content-length] - :response-time ms'`
- `tiny ':method :url :status :res[content-length] - :response-time ms'`
- `dev` concise output colored by response status for development use

The default format generates log entries like the following:

```
99.28.217.189 -- [Sat, 25 Feb 2012 02:18:22 GMT] "GET /example1.html HTTP/1.1" 304
- "-" "Mozilla/5.0 (Windows NT 6.1; WOW64) AppleWebKit/535.11 (KHTML, like Gecko)
Chrome/17.0.963.56 Safari/535.11"
99.28.217.189 -- [Sat, 25 Feb 2012 02:18:22 GMT] "GET /phoenix5a.png HTTP/1.1" 304
```

```

- "http://examples.burningbird.net:8124/example1.html"
"Mozilla/5.0 (Windows NT 6.1; WOW64) AppleWebKit/535.11 (KHTML, like Gecko)
Chrome/17.0.963.56 Safari/535.11"
99.28.217.189 - - [Sat, 25 Feb 2012 02:18:22 GMT] "GET /favicon.ico HTTP/1.1"
304 - "-" "Mozilla/5.0 (Windows NT 6.1; WOW64) AppleWebKit/535.11 (KHTML, like Gecko)
Chrome/17.0.963.56 Safari/535.11"
99.28.217.189 - - [Sat, 25 Feb 2012 02:18:28 GMT]
"GET /html5media/chapter2/example16.html HTTP/1.1" 304 - "-"
"Mozilla/5.0 (Windows NT 6.1; WOW64) AppleWebKit/535.11 (KHTML, like Gecko)
Chrome/17.0.963.56 Safari/535.11"

```

Very informative, but also very verbose. Also very familiar, resembling the default log format we get with a server such as Apache. You can change the format, and you can also direct the output to a file. Example 6-5 makes use of `connect.logger`, directing the log entries to a file and setting the format to the `dev` predefined format.

Example 6-5. Setting logging to a file and changing logger format

```

var connect = require('connect'),
    http = require('http'),
    fs = require('fs'),
    __dirname = '/home/examples';

var writeStream = fs.createWriteStream('./log.txt',
    {'flags' : 'a',
     'encoding' : 'utf8',
     'mode' : 0666});

http.createServer(connect()
    .use(connect.logger({format : 'dev', stream : writeStream }))
    .use(connect.static(__dirname + '/public_html'))
).listen(8124);

```

Now the logging output looks like:

```

GET /example1.html 304 4ms
GET /phoenix5a.png 304 1ms
GET /favicon.ico 304 1ms
GET /html5media/chapter2/example16.html 304 2ms
GET /html5media/chapter2/bigbuckposter.jpg 304 1ms
GET /html5media/chapter2/butterfly.png 304 1ms
GET /html5media/chapter2/example1.html 304 1ms
GET /html5media/chapter2/bigbuckposter.png 304 0ms
GET /html5media/chapter2/videofile.mp4 304 0ms

```

Not as informative, but a handy way of checking request state and load times.

`connect.parseCookie` and `connect.cookieSession`

The scratch file server didn't provide any functionality to work with HTTP cookies, nor did it handle session state. Luckily for us, both are handled with Connect middleware.

Chances are one of your first JavaScript client applications was to create an HTTP request cookie. The `connect.parseCookie` middleware provides the functionality allowing us to access the cookie data on the server. It parses the cookie header, populating `req.cookies` with the cookie/data pairs. Example 6-6 shows a simple web server that extracts the cookie for a key value of `username` and writes a somewhat creepy but relevant message to stdout.

Example 6-6. Accessing an HTTP request cookie, and using it for console message

```

var connect = require('connect')
, http = require('http');

var app = connect()
.use(connect.logger('dev'))

```

```

.use(connect.cookieParser())
.use(function(req, res, next) {
  console.log('tracking ' + req.cookies.username);
  next();
})
.use(connect.static('/home/examples/public_html'));

http.createServer(app).listen(8124);
console.log('Server listening on port 8124');

```

I'll get into the use of the anonymous function, and especially the purpose of `next()` in the next section. Focusing for now on `connect.cookieParser`, this middleware intercepts the incoming request, pulls the cookie data out of the header, and stores the data in the request object. The anonymous function then accesses the `username` data from the cookies object, outputting it to the console.

To create an HTTP response cookie, `connect.parseCookie` is paired with `connect.cookieSession`, to provide secure session persistence. Text is passed as a string to the `connect.cookieParser` function, providing a secret key for session data. The data is added directly to the session object. To clear the session data, set the session object to null.

Example 6-7 creates two functions—one to clear the session data, and one to output a tracking message—that are used as middleware for incoming requests. They're added as middleware in addition to `logger`, `parseCookie`, `cookieSession`, and `static`. The user is prompted for their user name in the client page, which is then used to set a request cookie. On the server, the user name and the number of resources the person has accessed in the current session, are persisted using an encrypted response cookie.

Example 6-7. Using a session cookie to track resource accesses

```

var connect = require('connect')
, http = require('http');

// clear all session data
function clearSession(req, res, next) {
  if ('/clear' == req.url) {
    req.session = null;
    res.statusCode = 302;
    res.setHeader('Location', '/');
    res.end();
  } else {
    next();
  }
}

// track user
function trackUser(req, res, next) {
  req.session.ct = req.session.ct || 0;
  req.session.username = req.session.username || req.cookies.username;
  console.log(req.cookies.username + ' requested ' +
              req.session.ct++ + ' resources this session');
  next();
}

// cookie and session
var app = connect()
  .use(connect.logger('dev'))
  .use(connect.cookieParser('mumble'))
  .use(connect.cookieSession({key : 'tracking'}))
  .use(clearSession)
  .use(trackUser);

// static server
app.use(connect.static('/home/examples/public_html'));
// start server and listen

```

```

| http.createServer(app).listen(8124);
|   console.log('Server listening on port 8124');

```

Figure 6-2 shows a web page accessed through the server application in Example 6-8. The JavaScript console is open to display both cookies. Note that the response cookie, unlike the request, is encrypted.

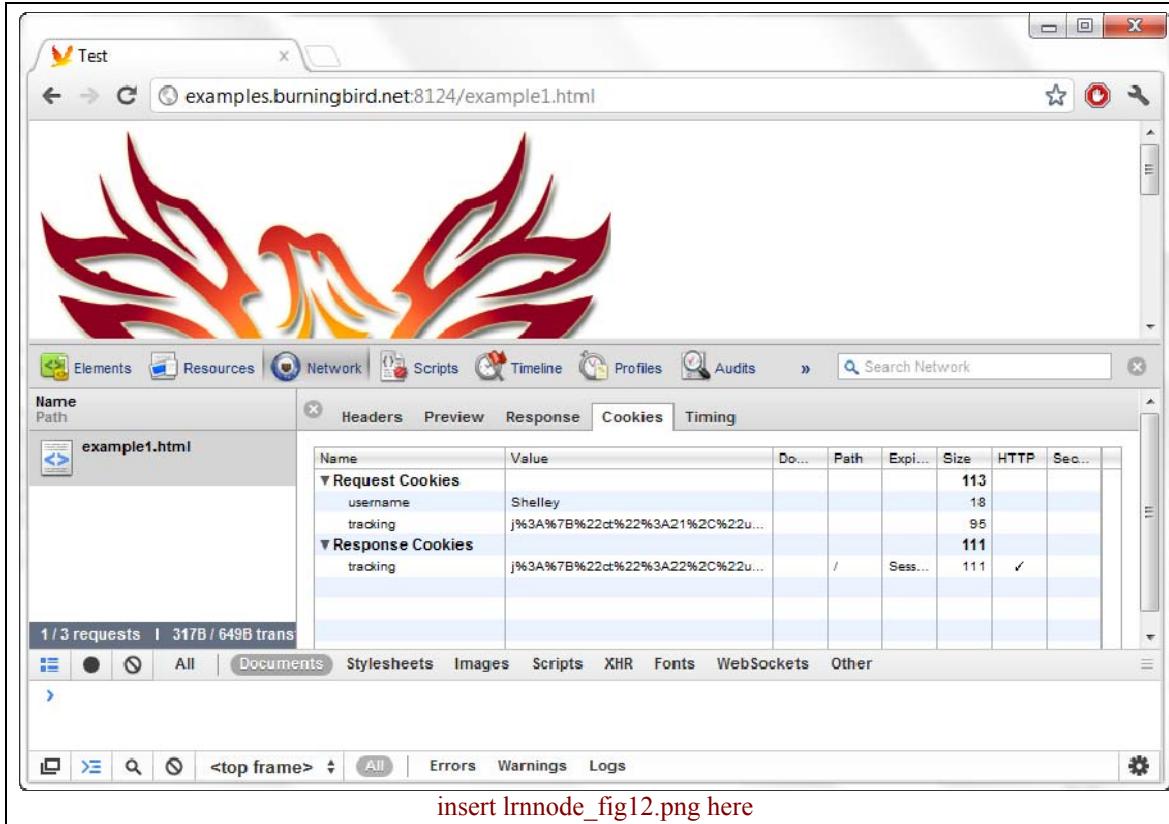


Figure 6-2. JavaScript console open in Chrome, display request and response cookies

The number of documents the person accesses is tracked, either until they access the /clear URL, in which case the session object is set to null; or until they close the browser, ending the session.

Example 6-8 also made use of a couple of custom middleware functions. How these work with Connect, and how to create a third-party middleware, are discussed in the next, and last, section on Connect.

Creating a Connect Middleware

In Example 6-7 in the last section, two functions are created as Connect middleware, in order to process incoming requests before the final static server. The three parameters passed to the functions are the HTTP request and response objects, and `next`, a callback function. These three form the signature for a Connect middleware function.

To get a closer look at how Connect middleware works, another Connect middleware used in earlier code is `connect.favicon`. This is nothing more than a simple function to serve either the default `favicon.ico`, or to provide a custom path:

```

| connect()
|   .use (connect.favicon('someotherloc/favicon.ico'))

```

The reason I cover `connect.favicon`, other than its own usefulness, is it's one of the simplest of the middleware, and therefore easy to reverse engineer.

The source code for `connect/favicon`, especially when compared with other source, shows that all exported middleware return a function with the following minimum signature or profile:

```
| return function(req, res, next)
```

The `next` callback, passed as last parameter to the function, is called if the middleware does not process the current request, or doesn't process it completely. The `next` callback is also called if the middleware has an error, and an `error` object is returned as parameter, as shown in Example 6-8.

Example 6-8. The favicon Connect middleware

```
module.exports = function favicon(path, options) {
  var options = options || {}
  , path = path || __dirname + '/../public/favicon.ico'
  , maxAge = options.maxAge || 86400000;

  return function favicon(req, res, next) {
    if ('/favicon.ico' == req.url) {
      if (icon) {
        res.writeHead(200, icon.headers);
        res.end(icon.body);
      } else {
        fs.readFile(path, function(err, buf) {
          if (err) return next(err);
          icon = {
            headers: {
              'Content-Type': 'image/x-icon'
            , 'Content-Length': buf.length
            , 'ETag': '"' + utils.md5(buf) + '"'
            , 'Cache-Control': 'public, max-age=' + (maxAge / 1000)
            },
            body: buf
          };
          res.writeHead(200, icon.headers);
          res.end(icon.body);
        });
      }
    } else {
      next();
    }
  };
};
```

The `next` callback is, of course, how the chained functions are called, in sequence. In an incoming request, if the middleware can completely handle the request, such as the request `favicon.ico` request, no further middleware are invoked. This is why you would include the `connect/favicon` middleware before `connect/logger` in your applications—to prevent requests for `favicon.ico` from cluttering up the logs:

```
http.createServer(connect()
  .use(connect/favicon('/public_html/favicon.ico'))
  .use(connect/logger())
  .use(connect/static(__dirname + '/public_html'))
  ).listen(8124);
```

You've seen how you can create a custom Connect middleware directly in the application, and we've seen how a bundled Connect middleware looks, but how would you create a third-party middleware that's not going to be embedded directly in the application?

To create an external Connect middleware, create the module as you would any other module, but make sure it has all the pieces that Connect requires: the three parameters (`req`, `res`, and `next`), and that it calls `next` if it doesn't completely handle whatever is the request.

Example 6-9 creates a Connect middleware that checks to see if the requested file exists and that it is a file (not a directory). If the request is a directory, it returns a 403 status code and a custom message. If the file

doesn't exist, it returns a 404 status code and, again, a custom message. If neither happens, then it calls `next` to trigger the Connect middleware into invoking the next function (in this case, `connect.static`).

Example 6-9. Creating a custom error handler middleware module

```
var fs = require('fs');

module.exports = function customHandler(path, missingmsg, directorymsg) {
  if (arguments.length < 3) throw new Error('missing parameter in customHandler');

  return function customHandler(req, res, next) {
    var pathname = path + req.url;
    console.log(pathname);
    fs.stat(pathname, function(err, stats) {
      if (err) {
        res.writeHead(404);
        res.write(missingmsg);
        res.end();
      } else if (!stats.isFile()) {
        res.writeHead(403);
        res.write(directorymsg);
        res.end();
      } else {
        next();
      }
    });
  }
}
```

The custom Connect middleware throws an error when one occurs, but if an error occurs within the returned function, `next` is called with an error object:

```
| next(err);
```

The following code shows how this custom middleware can be used in an application:

```
var connect = require('connect'),
  http = require('http'),
  fs = require('fs'),
  custom = require('./custom'),
  _base = '/home/examples';

http.createServer(connect()
  .use(connect.favicon('/public_html/favicon.ico'))
  .use(connect.logger())
  .use(custom(_base + '/public_html', '404 File Not Found',
    '403 Directory Access Forbidden'))
  .use(connect.static(_base + '/public_html'))
).listen(8124);
```

Connect does have an `errorHandler` function, but it doesn't serve the purpose of what we're trying to achieve. Its purpose is to provide a formatted output of an exception. You'll see it in use with an Express application in Chapter 7.

There are several other bundled middleware, in addition to a significant number of third-party middleware you can use with Connect. In addition, Connect forms the middleware layer for the Express application framework, discussed in Chapter 7. First, though, a quick look at two other types of services necessary for many Node applications: routers and proxies.

Routers

Routers accept something from one source, and forward it to another. Typically the something that's forwarded is a data packet, but at the application level, it can also be a resource request.

If you've used Drupal or Wordpress, you've seen a router in action. Without any URL redirection, rather than your readers accessing an article with a URL like

```
| http://yourplace.org/article/your-title
```

They'd use:

```
| http://yourplace.org/node/174
```

The latter URL is an example of a router in action. The URL provides information about what the web application should do. In this case:

- access the node database (node in this case being a Drupal node)
- find and display the node identified by 174

Another variation is:

```
| http://yourplace.org/user/3
```

Again, access the *user* database, find and display the user identified by 3.

In Node, the primary use for a router is to extract the information we need from a URI, usually using some pattern, and to use that information to trigger the right process—passing the extracted information to the process.

There are several routers available for Node developers, including one built into Express, but I'm going to look at, and demonstrate, one of the more popular: Crossroads.

The primary Crossroads site is at <http://millermedeiros.github.com/crossroads.js/>.

The Crossroad router module can be installed with npm:

```
| npm install crossroads
```

The module provides an extensive, and well documented, API, but I'm only going to focus on three different methods:

- `addRoute` - define a new route pattern listener
- `parse` - parses a string and dispatches a match to the appropriate route
- `matched.add` - map a route handler to a route match

A route is defined using a regular expression that can contain curly brackets ({}), delimiting named variables that will be passed to the route handler function. For instance, both of the following route patterns:

```
| {type}/{id}  
| node/{id}
```

will match:

```
| http://something.org/node/174
```

The difference is that a parameter named type is passed to the route handler for the first pattern, but not the second.

You can also use a colon (:) to denote optional segments. The following:

```
| category/:type/:id:
```

Will match:

```
| category/  
| category/tech/  
| category/history/143
```

To trigger the route handler, you parse the request:

```
| parse(request);
```

If the request matches any of the existing route handler function that function is called.

In Example 6-10, I created a simple application that looks for any given category, and an optional publication and publication item. It prints out to the console, the action that would take place based on the request.

```
| Example 6-10. Using Crossroads to route URL request into specific actions  
var crossroads = require('crossroads'),  
    http = require('http');  
  
crossroads.addRoute('/category/{type}/:pub/:id:', function(type,pub,id) {  
    if (!id && !pub) {  
        console.log('Accessing all entries of category ' + type);  
        return;  
    } else if (!id) {  
        console.log('Accessing all entries of category ' + type +  
            ' and pub ' + pub);  
        return;  
    } else {  
        console.log('Accessing item ' + id + ' of pub ' + pub +  
            ' of category ' + type);  
    }  
});  
http.createServer(function(req,res) {  
  
    crossroads.parse(req.url);  
    res.end('and that\'s all\n');  
}).listen(8124);
```

The following requests:

```
| http://examples.burningbird.net:8124/category/history  
| http://examples.burningbird.net:8124/category/history/journal  
| http://examples.burningbird.net:8124/category/history/journal/174
```

Generate the following console messages:

```
| Accessing all entries of category history  
| Accessing all entries of category history and pub journal  
| Accessing item 174 of pub journal of category history
```

To match how something like Drupal works, with its combination of type of object and identifier, Example 6-11 uses another Crossroads method, `matched.add`, to map a route handler to a specific route.

```
| Example 6-11. Mapping a route handler to a given route  
var crossroads = require('crossroads'),  
    http = require('http');  
  
var typeRoute = crossroads.addRoute('/{type}/{id}');  
  
function onTypeAccess(type,id) {  
    console.log('access ' + type + ' ' + id);  
};  
  
typeRoute.matched.add(onTypeAccess);  
  
http.createServer(function(req,res) {
```

```
crossroads.parse(req.url);
res.end('processing');
}).listen(8124);
```

This application would match any of the following:

```
/node/174
/user/3
```

Routing can be typically used with database access, to generate the returned page content. It can also be used with middleware or framework modules, in order to process incoming requests, though these applications may also provide their own routing software. I'll demonstrate using Crossroads with Connect and a proxy in the next section.

Proxies

A proxy is a way of routing requests from several different sources through one server for whatever reason: caching, security, even obscuring the originator of the request. As an example, publicly accessible proxies have been used in situations that restrict access to some web content, by making it seem as a request that originate from one place, actually originates in another. This type of proxy is also called a forward proxy.

A reverse proxy is a way of controlling how requests are sent to a server. As an example, you may have five servers, but you don't want people directly accessing four. Instead, you direct all traffic through the fifth server, which proxies the requests to the other servers. Reverse proxies can also be used for load balancing, and to improve the overall performance of a system by caching requests as they are made.

Another form of proxying is to expose a local service to a cloud-based service. An example of this type of proxy is [reddish-proxy](#), which exposes a local redis instance to the new Reddish service, at <https://reddi.sh/>.

In Node, the most popular proxy module is http-proxy. This module provides all of the proxy uses I could think of, and some I couldn't. It provides forward and reverse proxying, can be used with WebSockets, supports HTTPS, and can incorporate latency. It's used at the popular [nodejitsu.com](#) web site, so, as the creators claim, it's *battle hardened*.

The http-proxy Github page is at <https://github.com/nodejitsu/node-http-proxy>.

Install http-proxy using npm:

```
| npm install http-proxy
```

The simplest use of http-proxy is to create a standalone proxy server that listens for incoming requests on one port, and proxies them to a web server listening on another:

```
var http = require('http'),
    httpProxy = require('http-proxy');

httpProxy.createServer(8124, 'localhost').listen(8000);

http.createServer(function (req, res) {
    res.writeHead(200, { 'Content-Type': 'text/plain' });
    res.write('request successfully proxied!' + '\n' + JSON.stringify(req.headers, true, 2));
    res.end();
}).listen(8124);
```

All this simple application does is listen for requests on port [8000](#) and proxy them to the HTTP server listening on port [8124](#).

The output to the browser from running this application on my system was:

```
| request successfully proxied!
| {
```

```

    "host": "examples.burningbird.net:8000",
    "connection": "keep-alive",
    "user-agent": "Mozilla/5.0 (Windows NT 6.1; WOW64) AppleWebKit/535.11
      (KHTML, like Gecko) Chrome/17.0.963.56 Safari/535.11",
    "accept": "text/html,application/xhtml+xml,application/xml;q=0.9,*/*;q=0.8",
    "accept-encoding": "gzip,deflate,sdch",
    "accept-language": "en-US,en;q=0.8",
    "accept-charset": "ISO-8859-1,utf-8;q=0.7,*;q=0.3",
    "cookie": "username=Shelley",
    "x-forwarded-for: "99.190.71.234",
    "x-forwarded-port: "54344",
    "x-forwarded-proto: "http"
}

```

The bits related to the use of the proxy are in bold text in the output. Notice the request cookie still hanging around from an earlier example?

You can also use http-proxy from the command line. In the bin directory is a command line application, which takes port, target, a configuration file, a flag to indicate silencing the proxy log output, or -h, for help. To listen for requests in port `8000` and proxy to port `8124` on the `localhost`, use:

```
| ./node-http-proxy --port 8000 --target localhost:8124
```

It can't get much more simple than this. If you want to run the proxy in the background, attach the ampersand (&) to the end.

I'll demonstrate some of the http-proxy capabilities with WebSockets and HTTPS later in the book, but for now, I'm going to pull together the technologies demonstrated in this chapter—a static file server, the Connect middleware, the Crossroads router, and the http-proxy proxy—to create one last example, just so you can try a working application with all these pieces, combined.

In Example 6-12, I'm using the http-proxy to test for a dynamic incoming request (request URL starts with `/node/`). If a match is found, the router proxies the request to one server, which uses the Crossroads router to parse out the relevant data. If the request isn't for a dynamic resource, the proxy then routes the request to a static file server that's utilizing several Connect middleware, including logger, favicon, and static.

Example 6-12. Combining Connect, Crossroads, and http-proxy to handle dynamic and static content requests

```

var connect = require('connect'),
  http = require('http'),
  fs = require('fs'),
  crossroads = require('crossroads'),
  httpProxy = require('http-proxy'),
  _base = '/home/examples';

// create the proxy that listens for all requests
httpProxy.createServer(function(req,res,proxy) {

  if (req.url.match(/^\/node\//))
    proxy.proxyRequest(req, res, {
      host: 'localhost',
      port: 8000
    });
  else
    proxy.proxyRequest(req,res, {
      host: 'localhost',
      port: 8124
    });
}).listen(9000);

// add route for request for dynamic resource
crossroads.addRoute('/node/{id}/', function(id) {

```

```
    console.log('accessed node ' + id);
});

// dynamic file server
http.createServer(function(req,res) {
  crossroads.parse(req.url);
  res.end('that\'s all!');
}).listen(8000);

// static file server
http.createServer(connect()
  .use(connect/favicon())
  .use(connect/logger('dev'))
  .use(connect/static(_base + '/public_html'))
).listen(8124);
```

Trying the server out with the following URL requests:

```
/node/345
/example1.html
/node/800
/html5media/chapter2/example14.html
```

Results in the following console entries, as well as the proper response being returned to the browser:

```
accessed node 345
GET /example1.html 304 3ms
GET /phoenix5a.png 304 1ms
accessed node 800
GET /html5media/chapter2/example14.html 304 1ms
GET /html5media/chapter2/bigbuckposter.jpg 304 1ms
```

I wouldn't say we're halfway there to our own CMS (Content Management System), but we're getting the tools we need if we wanted to build one. But then, why build our own when we can use Node enabled frameworks, covered in the next chapter.

The Express Framework

Framework software provides infrastructure support that allow us to create web sites and applications more quickly. They provide a skeleton on which to build, handling many of the mundane and ubiquitous aspects of development so we can focus on creating the functionality unique to our application or site. They also provide a cohesiveness to our code, which can make it easier to manage and maintain.

The terms *frameworks* and *libraries* have been used interchangeably, because both provide reusable functionality that can be utilized by developers in a variety of applications. However, where they differ is that libraries provide discrete capabilities, while frameworks usually provide an infrastructure that can impact on the overall design of your application, as well as providing discrete capabilities.

There are some very sound frameworks in Node.js, including Connect, though I see Connect as middleware more than framework (we covered Connect in Chapter 6). Two Node frameworks that stand out—because of support, capability, and popularity—are Express and Geddy. If you ask people the differences between the two, they'll say Express is more Sinatra like, while Geddy is more like Rails. What this means in non-Ruby terms is that Geddy is MVC (Model-View-Controller) based, while Express is, well, RESTful.

There's also a new kid in town, Flatiron, which existed as independent components now being pulled together into a comprehensive product. Another framework popular at the node-toolbox web site is Ember.js, formerly known as SproutCore 2.0. This in addition to CoreJS, which is also MVC based.

I debated how much to cover of each in this chapter, and decided I would have a hard enough time covering one in a single chapter much less several. So I decided to focus on Express. Though the other frameworks are excellent, I like the openness and extensibility of Express, and it is, currently, the most popular of the Frameworks. It's also the one I'm most familiar and comfortable with—probably the best reason of all to focus on it.

The Geddy.js site is at <http://geddyjs.org/>. Flatiron can be found at <http://flatironjs.org/>, the Ember.js Github page is at <https://github.com/emberjs/ember.js>, and the primary CoreJS site is at <http://echo.nextapp.com/site/corejs>.

Express: Up and Running

We can easily install Express with npm:

```
| npm install express
```

To get a feel for Express, the best first step is to use the command line version of the tool to generate an application. Since you're never sure what an application will do, you'll want to run this application in a clean directory—not a directory where you have all sorts of valuable stuff.

I used the alpha release of Express 3.x in this chapter, installed with:

```
npm install -g express@3.0
```

Not all modules built on Express have upgraded to this non-stable release at the time this was written.

I named my new application `site`, which is simple enough:

```
| express site
```

The application generates several directories:

```
create : site
create : site/package.json
create : site/app.js
create : site/public
create : site/public/javascripts
create : site/public/images
create : site/routes
create : site/routes/index.js
create : site/public/stylesheets
create : site/public/stylesheets/style.css
create : site/views
create : site/views/layout.jade
create : site/views/index.jade
```

It also provides a helpful message to change to the site directory and run npm install:

```
| npm install -d
```

Once the new application is installed, run the generated app.js file with node:

```
| node app.js
```

It starts a server at port 3000. Accessing the application shows a web page with the words:

```
Express
```

```
Welcome to Express
```

You've now created your first Express application. Now let's see what we need to do to make it do something more interesting.

The Express Github page is at <https://github.com/visionmedia/express>. The Express documentation can be found at <http://expressjs.com/>.

The app.js File in More Detail

Example 7-1 shows the source code for the app.js file we just ran.

```
/**
 * Module dependencies.
 */

var express = require('express')
, routes = require('./routes')
, http = require('http');

var app = express();

app.configure(function(){
  app.set('views', __dirname + '/views');
  app.set('view engine', 'jade');
```

```

app.use(express.favicon());
app.use(express.logger('dev'));
app.use(express.static(__dirname + '/public'));
app.use(express.bodyParser());
app.use(express.methodOverride());
app.use(app.router);
});

app.configure('development', function() {
  app.use(express.errorHandler());
});

app.get('/', routes.index);

http.createServer(app).listen(3000);

console.log("Express server listening on port 3000");

```

From the top, the application includes three modules: Express, Node's HTTP, and a module just generated, `routes`. In the `routes` subdirectory, an `index.js` file has the following code:

```

/*
 * GET home page.
 */

exports.index = function(req, res){
  res.render('index', { title: 'Express' });
};

```

A little digging in the code shows us that the Express response object's `render` method renders a given view with a set of options, in this case, a title of "Express". I'll cover this more in the next section that discusses routing.

Returning to `app.js`, after all the necessary modules have been included, an Express object instance is created, and then configured with a set of options via the `configure` method. An optional first parameter to `configure` is a string identifying whether the application is of a specific environment (such as `development` or `production`). When not provided, the application is run in every environment. A second call to `configure` in `app.js` is specific only for the development environment. You can call `configure` for every possible environment, if you wish. The one that matches the environment is the one that will be processes.

Setting the Application Mode

Express applications can define which middleware, settings, and options to use for any given mode when they call the `configure` method. The following applies whatever settings and options to all modes:

```
app.config(function() { ... })
```

While the next code ensures the settings only apply in a `development` environment:

```
app.config('development', function() { ... })
```

This mode can be any that you designate, and is controlled by an environmental variable, `NODE_ENV`:

```
$ export NODE_ENV=production
```

Or:

```
$ export NODE_ENV=ourproduction
```

You can use any term you want. By default, the environment is `development`.

To ensure your application always runs in a specific mode, add a `NODE_ENV` export to the user profile file.

The second function to `configure` is an anonymous function enclosing several middleware references. Some of this is familiar (the `use` method) from our work with the Connect middleware in Chapter 6. (Naturally, since the same person, TJ Holowaychuk, is the primary author of both applications.) What isn't familiar are the two `app.set` method calls.

The `app.set` method is used to define various settings, such as the location for application views:

```
| app.set('views', __dirname + '/views');
```

And for setting the view engine, in this case, Jade:

```
| app.set('view engine', 'jade');
```

What follows in `app.js` is a call to the Express encapsulated `favicon`, `logger`, and `static` file server middleware, which should need no further explanation:

```
app.use(express.favicon());
app.use(express.logger('dev'));
app.use(express.static(__dirname + '/public'));
```

We can also call the middleware as methods when we create the server:

```
var app = express.createServer(
  express.logger(),
  express.bodyParts()
);
```

It doesn't matter which approach you use.

The next three middleware/framework components included in the generated application are:

```
app.use(express.bodyParser());
app.use(express.methodOverride());
app.use(app.router);
```

The `bodyParser` middleware, like the other middleware come directly from Connect. All Express does is re-export them.

I covered `logger`, `favicon`, and `static` in the last chapter, but not `bodyParse`. This middleware parses the incoming request body, converting it into request object properties. The `methodOverride` option also comes to Express via Connect, and allows Express applications to emulate full REST capability via a hidden form field named `_method`.

Full REST support means support for HTTP PUT and DELETE, as well as GET and POST.

The last configuration item is `app.router`. This optional middleware contains all the defined routes and performs the lookup for any given route. If omitted, the first call to `app.get`, `app.post`, etc., mounts the routes, instead.

Just as with Connect, the order of middleware is important. The `favicon` middleware is called before `logger`, because we don't want `favicon.ico` accesses cluttering the log. The `static` middleware is included before `bodyParser` and `methodOverride`, because neither of these are useful with the static pages—form processing occurs dynamically, in the Express application, not via a static page.

More on Express/Connect in the section titled "A Closer Look at the Express/Connect Handshake", later in the chapter.

The second call to `configure`, specific to `development` mode, only, adds support for the Express `errorHandler`. I'll cover it, and other error handling techniques, next.

Error Handling

Express provides its own error handling, and also provides access to the Connect `errorHandler`.

The Connect `errorHandler` provides a way of handling exceptions. It's a development tool, providing a way to get a better idea of what's happening when an exception occurs. You can include it like you'd include other middleware:

```
| app.use(express.errorHandler());
```

You can direct exceptions to stderr using the `dumpExceptions` flag:

```
| app.use(express.errorHandler({dumpExceptions : true }));
```

We can also generate HTML for an exception using the `showStack` flag:

```
| app.use(express.errorHandler({showStack : true; dumpExceptions : true}));
```

Again, though, this type of error handling is for development only—we definitely don't want our users to see exceptions. But we do want to provide more effective handling for when pages aren't found, or a person tries to access a restricted subdirectory.

One approach you can use is to add a custom anonymous function as the last middleware in the middleware list. If no other of the middleware can process the request, it should fall gracefully to this last function:

```
app.configure(function() {
  app.use(express.favicon());
  app.use(express.logger('dev'));
  app.use(express.static(__dirname + '/public'));
  app.use(express.bodyParser());
  app.use(express.methodOverride());
  app.use(app.router);
  app.use(function(req, res, next){
    res.send('Sorry ' + req.url + ' does not exist');
  });
});
```

In the next chapter, we'll fine tune the response by using a template to generate a nice 404 page.

Another form of error handling can be used to capture thrown errors and process them accordingly. In the Express documentation, this type of error handler is named `app.error`, but didn't seem exist at the time this was written. However, the function signature does work—a function with four parameters: `error`, `request`, `response`, and `next`.

I added a second error handler middleware function, and adjusted the one to capture 404 to throw an error, rather than process the error directly:

```
app.configure(function() {
  app.use(express.favicon());
  app.use(express.logger('dev'));
  app.use(express.static(__dirname + '/public'));
  app.use(express.bodyParser());
  app.use(express.methodOverride());
  app.use(app.router);
  app.use(function(req, res, next){
    throw new Error(req.url + ' not found');
  });
  app.use(function(err, req, res, next) {
    console.log(err);
    res.send(err.message);
  });
});
```

Now I can process the page not found error, as well as other errors, within the same function. And again, I can use templates to generate a more attractive page.

A Closer Look at the Express/Connect Partnership

Throughout this chapter we've seen the Express/Connect partnership in action. It's through Connect that Express gets much of its basic functionality.

For instance, you can use Connect's session support middleware, `cookieParser`, `cookieSession`, and `session`, to provide session support. You just have to remember to use the Express version of the three:

```
| app.use(express.cookieParser('mumble'))  
| app.use(express.cookieSession({key : 'tracking'}))
```

You can also enable static caching with the `staticCache` middleware:

```
| app.use(express.favicon());  
| app.use(express.logger('dev'));  
| app.use(express.staticCache());  
| app.use(express.static(__dirname + '/public'));
```

By default, the cache maintains a maximum of 128 objects, with a maximum of 256k each, for a total of about 32MB. You can adjust these with options `maxObjects` and `maxLength`:

```
| app.use(express.staticCache({maxObjects: 100, maxLength: 512}));
```

Prettify a directory listing with `directory`:

```
| app.use(express.favicon());  
| app.use(express.logger('dev'));  
| app.use(express.staticCache({maxObjects: 100, maxLength: 512}));  
| app.use(express.directory(__dirname + '/public'));  
| app.use(express.static(__dirname + '/public'));
```

If you're using `express.directory` with routing, though, make sure that the directory middleware follows the `app.router` middleware, or it could conflict with the routing. A good rule of thumb: place it after the other middleware, but before any error handling.

The `express.directory` options include whether to display hidden files (false by default), to display icons (false by default), and a filter.

You can also use third party Connect middleware with Express. Use caution, though, when combining it with routing.

Now it's time to return to a closer look at the key component of Express: routing.

Routing

The core of all the Node frameworks—in fact, many modern frameworks—is the concept of routing. I covered a stand alone routing module in Chapter 6, and demonstrated how it can be used to extract a service request from a URL.

Express routing is managed using the HTTP verbs GET, PUT, DELETE, and POST. The methods are named accordingly, such as `app.get` for GET and `app.post` for POST. In the generated application, shown in Example 7-1, `app.get` is used to access the application root ('/'), and is passed a request listener, in this instance the `routes.index` function, to process the data request.

The `routes.index` function is simple:

```
| exports.index = function(req, res){  
|   res.render('index', { title: 'Express' });  
|};
```

It makes a call to the `render` method on the resource object. The `render` method takes the name of file that provides the template. Since the application has already identified the view engine:

```
|   app.set('view engine', 'jade');
```

Providing an extension for the file isn't necessary. However, you could also use:

```
| res.render('index.jade', { title: 'Express' });
```

The template file can be found in another generated directory named *views*. It has two files: *index.jade* and *layout.jade*. The *index.jade* file is the file the template file referenced in the *render* method, and has the following contents:

```
extends layout

block content
  h1= title
  p Welcome to #{title}
```

The content of the document is an H1 element with the title, and a paragraph element with a greetings to the title value. The *layout.jade* template provides the overall layout for the document, including a *title* and *link* in the head element, and the body contents in the *body* element:

```
!!!
html
  head
    title= title
    link(rel='stylesheet', href='/stylesheets/style.css')
  body
    block content
```

The *index.jade* file is what provides the content for the body contents defined in *layout.jade*.

I'm covering the use of templates and CSS with Express applications in Chapter 8.

To recap what's happening in this application:

1. The main Express application uses *app.get* to associate a request listener function (*routes.index*) with an HTTP GET request.
2. The *routes.index* function calls *res.render* to render the response to the get request.
3. The *res.render* function invokes the application object's *render* function.
4. The application *render* function renders the specified view, with whatever options—in this case, the *title*.
5. The rendered content is then written to the response object, and back to the user's browser.

The last step in the process is when the generated content is written back to the response to the browser. Snooping around the source code shows us that both resource and application render method take a third argument, a callback function that's called with any error and the generated text.

Wanting to take a closer look at the generated content, I modified the *route.index* file to add in the function and intercept the generated text. I output the text to the console. Since I'm overriding the default functionality, I also sent the generated text back to the browser using *res.write*—just like we have with other applications in previous chapters—and then called *res.end* to signal the finish.

```
exports.index = function(req, res){
  res.render('index', { title: 'Express' }, function(err, stuff) {
    if (!err) {
      console.log(stuff);
      res.write(stuff);
      res.end();
    }
  });
};
```

Just as we hoped, the application now writes the content to the console as well as the browser. This just demonstrates that, though we're using an unfamiliar framework, it's all based on Node and functionality

we've used previously. Of course, since this is a framework, we know there has to be a better method than using `res.write` and `res.end`. There is, and it's discussed in the next section that looks at routing paths a little more closely.

Routing Path

The route or route path given in Example 7-1 is just a simple '/', signifying the root address. Express compiles all routes to a RegExp object internally, so you can use strings with special characters, or just use regular expressions directly in the path strings.

To demonstrate, I created a bare bones routing path application in Example 7-2 that listens for three different routes. If a request is made of the server for one of these routes, the parameters from the request are returned to the sender using the Express response object's `send` method.

Example 7-2. Simple application to test different routing path patterns

```
var express = require('express')
, http = require('http');

var app = express();

app.configure(function() {
});

app.get(/^\/node?(?:\/(\d+)(?:\.\.(.\d+))?)?/, function(req, res) {
  console.log(req.params);
  res.send(req.params);
});

app.get('/content/*', function(req, res) {
  res.send(req.params);
});

app.get("/products/:id/:operation?", function(req, res) {
  console.log(req);
  res.send(req.params.operation + ' ' + req.params.id);
});

http.createServer(app).listen(3000);

console.log("Express server listening on port 3000");
```

We're not doing any routing to views or handling any static content, so we didn't need to provide middleware in the `app.configure` method. However, we do need the `app.configure` method if we want to gracefully handle requests that don't match any of the routes. The application is also using the default environment (`development`).

The first of the `app.get` method calls is using a regular expression for the path. This regular expression is adapted from one provided in the Express Guide, and listens for any request for a `node`. If the request also provides a unique identifier or range of identifiers, these are captured in the request object's `params` array, which is sent back as a response. The following requests:

```
node
nodes
/node/566
/node/1..10
/node/50..100/something
```

Return the following `params` array values:

```
[null, null]
[null, null]
["566", null]
```

```
| ["1", "10"]
| ["50", "100"]
```

The regular expression is looking for a single identifier or a range of identifiers, given as two values with a range indicator (...) between them. Anything after the identifier or range is ignored. If no identifier or range is provided, the parameters are null.

The code to process the request doesn't use the underlying HTTP response object's `write` and `end` methods to send the parameters back to the requester. Instead, it uses the Express `send` method. The `send` method determines the proper headers for the response (given the data type of what's being sent), and then sends the content using the underlying HTTP `end` method.

The next `app.get` is using a string to define the routing path pattern. In this case, we're looking for any `content` item. This pattern will match anything that begins with `/content/`. The following requests:

```
| /content/156
| /content/this_is_a_story
| /content/apples/oranges
```

Result in the following `params` values:

```
| ["156"]
| ["this_is_a_story"]
| ["apples/oranges"]
```

The asterisk(*) is liberal in what it accepts, and everything after `content/` is returned.

The last `app.get` method is looking for a product request. If a product identifier is given, it can be accessed directly via `params.id`. If an operation is given, it also can be accessed directly using `params.operation`. Any combination of the two values is allowed, *except* not providing at least one identifier or one operation.

The following URLs:

```
| /products/laptopJK3444445/edit
| /products/fordfocus/add
| /products/add
| /products/tablet89/delete
| /products/
```

Result in the following returned values:

```
| edit laptopJK3444445
| add fordfocus
| undefined add
| delete tablet89
| Cannot GET /products/
```

The application outputs the request object to the console. When running the application, I directed the output to an `output.txt` file, so I could examine the request object more closely:

```
| node app.js > output.txt
```

The request object is a socket, of course, and we'll recognize much of the object from our previous work exploring the Node HTTP request object. What we're mainly interested in, is the route object added via Express. Following is the output for the route object for one of the requests:

```
| route:
|   { path: '/products/:id/:operation?',
|     method: 'get',
|     callbacks: [ [Function] ],
|     keys: [ [Object], [Object] ],
|     regexp: /^\/products\/(?:([^\/]+?))(?:\/([^\/]+?))?\$/i,
|     params: [ id: 'laptopJK3444445', operation: 'edit' ] },
```

Note the generated RegEx object, converting my use of the optional indicator (:) in the path string into something meaningful for the underlying JavaScript engine. Thankfully, too, since I'm lousy at regular expressions.

Now that we have a better idea of how the routing paths work, let's look more closely at the use of the HTTP verbs.

Any request that doesn't match one of the three given path patterns just generates a generic 404 response: Cannot GET /whatever.

Routing and HTTP Verbs

In the previous examples we used `app.get` to process incoming requests. This method is based on the HTTP GET method, and is useful if we're looking for data, but not if we want to process new incoming data or edit or delete existing data. We need to make use of the other HTTP verbs to create an application that maintains data as well as retrieves it. In other words, we need to make our application *RESTful*.

REST means Representational State Transfer. RESTful is used to describe any web application that uses HTTP and REST principles: directory structured URLs, stateless, data transferred in an internet media type (such as JSON), using HTTP methods (GET, POST, DELETE, and PUT).

Let's say our application is managing that infamous of all products, the widget. To create a new widget, we'll need to create a web page that provides a form that gets the information about the new widget. We can generate this form, and I'll demonstrate this approach in Chapter 8, but for now, we'll use a static web page, shown in Example 7-3.

Example 7-3. Sample HTML form to post widget data to Expression application

```
<!doctype html>
<html lang="en">
<head>
<meta charset="utf-8" />
<title>Widgets</title>
</head>
<body>
<form method="POST" action="/widgets/add"
enctype="application/x-www-form-urlencoded">

<p>Widget name: <input type="text" name="widgetname" id="widgetname"
size="25" required/></p>

<p>Widget Price: <input type="text"
pattern="^$|([0-9]{1,3},([0-9]{3},)*[0-9]{3}|[0-9]+)(.[0-9][0-9])?${"
name="widgetprice" id="widgetprice" size="25" required/></p>

<p>Widget Description: <br /><textarea name="widgetdesc" id="widgetdesc"
cols="20" rows="5">No Description</textarea>
<p>

<input type="submit" name="submit" id="submit" value="Submit"/>
<input type="reset" name="reset" id="reset" value="Reset"/>
</p>
</form>
</body>
```

The page takes advantage of the new HTML5 attributes `required` and `pattern` to provide validation of data. Of course, this only works with browsers that support HTML5, but for now, we'll assume you're using a modern HTML5 capable browser.

The widget form requires a widget name, price (with an associated regular expression in the pattern attribute), and description. Browser-based validation should ensure we get the three values, and that the price is properly formatted as US currency.

In the Express application, we're just going to persist new widgets in memory, as we want to focus purely on the Express technology, not data persistence. As each new widget is posted to the application it's added to an array of widgets via the `app.post` method. Each widget can be accessed by their application generated identifier via the `app.get` method. Example 7-4 shows the entire application.

Example 7-4. Express application to add and display widgets

```
var express = require('express')
, http = require('http')
, app = express();

app.configure(function(){
  app.use(express.favicon());
  app.use(express.logger('dev'));
  app.use(express.static(__dirname + '/public'));
  app.use(express.bodyParser());
  app.use(app.router);
});

app.configure('development', function(){
  app.use(express.errorHandler());
});

// in memory data store
var widgets = [
  { id : 1,
    name : 'My Special Widget',
    price : 100.00,
    descr : 'A widget beyond price'
  }
]

// add widget
app.post('/widgets/add', function(req, res) {
  var indx = widgets.length + 1;
  widgets[widgets.length] =
    { id : indx,
      name : req.body.widgetname,
      price : parseFloat(req.body.widgetprice),
      descr : req.body.widgetdesc };
  console.log('added ' + widgets[indx-1]);
  res.send('Widget ' + req.body.widgetname + ' added with id ' + indx);
});

// show widget
app.get('/widgets/:id', function(req, res) {
  var indx = parseInt(req.params.id) - 1;
  if (!widgets[indx])
    res.send('There is no widget with id of ' + req.params.id);
  else
    res.send(widgets[indx]);
});

http.createServer(app).listen(3000);

console.log("Express server listening on port 3000");
```

The first widget is seeded into the widget array, so we have existing data if we want to immediately query for a widget without adding one first. Note the conditional test in `app.get` to respond to a request for a non-existent or removed widget.

Accessing the application using '/' or '/index.html' (or '/example3.html', in the examples) serves up the static HTML page with the form. Submitting the form generates a page with a message about the widget being added, and providing its identifier. The identifier can be used to display the widget—in effect, a dump of the widget object instance:

```
| http://whateverdomain.com:3000/widgets/2
```

Works..but there's a problem with the simple application.

First, it's easy to make a typo in the widget fields. You can't put in data formatted as currency in the price field, but you can put in the wrong price. You definitely can put in the wrong name or description. What we need is a way to update a widget. We also need a way to remove a widget we no longer need.

The application needs to incorporate support for two other RESTful verbs: PUT and DELETE. PUT is used to update the widget, while DELETE is used to remove it. To update the widget, we'll need a form that comes pre-populated with the widget data. To delete the widget, we'll need a form that confirms that we do want to delete the widget. In an application, these are generated dynamically using a template, but for now, since we're focusing on the HTTP verbs, I created static web pages that edit and then delete the already created widget, `widget 1`.

The form for updating `widget 1` is shown in the following code. Other than being populated with the information for `widget 1`, there is just one other difference between this form and the form to add a new widget: the addition of a hidden field named `_method`, shown in bold text:

```
<form method="POST" action="/widgets/1/update"
enctype="application/x-www-form-urlencoded">

<p>Widget name: <input type="text" name="widgetname"
id="widgetname" size="25" value="My Special Widget" required/></p>

<p>Widget Price: <input type="text"
pattern="^\$?([0-9]{1,3},([0-9]{3},)*[0-9]{3}|[0-9]+)(.[0-9][0-9])?\$" name="widgetprice" id="widgetprice" size="25" value="100.00" required/></p>

<p>Widget Description: <br />
<textarea name="widgetdesc" id="widgetdesc" cols="20" rows="5">A widget beyond price</textarea>
<p>

<input type="hidden" value="put" name="_method" />

<input type="submit" name="submit" id="submit" value="Submit"/>
<input type="reset" name="reset" id="reset" value="Reset"/>
</p>
</form>
```

Since GET and DELETE are not supported in the form `method` attribute, they have to be added using a hidden field with a specific name, `_method`, and given a value of either `put`, for PUT, or `delete` for DELETE.

The form to delete the widget is simple: it contains the hidden `_method` field, and a button to confirm the deletion of `widget 1`:

```
<form method="POST" action="/widgets/1/delete"
enctype="application/x-www-form-urlencoded">

<input type="hidden" value="delete" name="_method" />

<p>
```

```

<input type="submit" name="submit" id="submit" value="Delete Widget 1"/>
</p>
</form>
```

To ensure the HTTP verbs are handled properly, we need to add another middleware, `express.methodOverride`, following `express.bodyParser` as a parameter in the `app.configure` method call. The `express.methodOverride` middleware alters the HTTP method to whatever is given as value in this hidden field:

```

app.configure(function() {
  app.use(express.favicon());
  app.use(express.logger('dev'));
  app.use(express.static(__dirname + '/public'));
  app.use(express.bodyParser());
  app.use(express.methodOverride());
  app.use(app.router);
});
```

Next, we'll need to add functionality to process these two new verbs. The update request replaces the widget object's contents with the new contents, while the delete request deletes the widget array entry, *in place*, deliberately leaving a `null` value since we do not want to re-order the array because of the widget removal.

To complete our Widget application, we'll also add in an index page for accessing widgets without any identifier or operation. All the index page does is list all the widgets currently in the memory store.

Example 7-5 shows the complete widget application with all the new functionality shown in bold text.

Example 7-5. Widget application, modified to include the ability to edit and delete a widget, and list all widgets

```

var express = require('express')
, http = require('http')
, app = express();

app.configure(function(){
  app.use(express.favicon());
  app.use(express.logger('dev'));
  app.use(express.static(__dirname + '/public'));
  app.use(express.bodyParser());
  app.use(express.methodOverride());
  app.use(app.router);
});

app.configure('development', function(){
  app.use(express.errorHandler());
});

// in memory data store
var widgets = [
  { id : 1,
    name : 'My Special Widget',
    price : 100.00,
    descr : 'A widget beyond price'
  }
]

// index for /widgets/
app.get('/widgets', function(req, res) {
  res.send(widgets);
});

// show a specific widget
app.get('/widgets/:id', function(req, res) {
  var indx = parseInt(req.params.id) - 1;
```

```

    if (!widgets[indx])
        res.send('There is no widget with id of ' + req.params.id);
    else
        res.send(widgets[indx]);
});

// add a widget
app.post('/widgets/add', function(req, res) {
    var indx = widgets.length + 1;
    widgets[widgets.length] =
    { id : indx,
        name : req.body.widgetname,
        price : parseFloat(req.body.widgetprice),
        descr : req.body.widgetdesc };
    console.log(widgets[indx-1]);
    res.send('Widget ' + req.body.widgetname + ' added with id ' + indx);
});

// delete a widget
app.del('/widgets/:id/delete', function(req,res) {
    var indx = req.params.id - 1;
    delete widgets[indx];

    console.log('deleted ' + req.params.id);
    res.send('deleted ' + req.params.id);
});

// update/edit a widget
app.put('/widgets/:id/update', function(req,res) {
    var indx = parseInt(req.params.id) - 1;
    widgets[indx] =
    { id : indx,
        name : req.body.widgetname,
        price : parseFloat(req.body.widgetprice),
        descr : req.body.widgetdesc };
    console.log(widgets[indx]);
    res.send ('Updated ' + req.params.id);
});

http.createServer(app).listen(3000);

console.log("Express server listening on port 3000");

```

After running the application, I add a new widget, list the widgets out, update *widget 1*'s price, delete the widget, and then list the widgets out again. The `console.log` messages for this activity are:

```

Express server listening on port 3000
{ id: 2,
  name: 'This is my Baby',
  price: 4.55,
  descr: 'baby widget' }
POST /widgets/add 200 4ms
GET /widgets 200 2ms
GET /edit.html 304 2ms
{ id: 0,
  name: 'My Special Widget',
  price: 200,
  descr: 'A widget beyond price' }
PUT /widgets/1/update 200 2ms
GET /del.html 304 2ms
deleted 1
DELETE /widgets/1/delete 200 3ms
GET /widgets 200 2ms

```

Notice the HTTP PUT and DELETE verbs in bold text in the output. When I list the widgets out the second time, the values returned are:

```
[  
  null,  
  {  
    "id": 2,  
    "name": "This is my Baby",  
    "price": 4.55,  
    "descr": "baby widget"  
  }  
]
```

We now have a RESTful Express application. But we also have another problem.

If our application only managed one object, it might be okay to cram all the functionality into one file, but most applications manage more than one object, and the functionality for all of the applications isn't as simple as our little example application. What we need is to convert this RESTful Express application into a RESTful MVC Express application.

Cue the MVC

Handling all the functionality your application needs in one file would work for a very tiny application, but most applications need better organization. A popular software architecture is MVC, or Model-View-Controller, and we want to be able to incorporate the advantages of this architecture and still be able to use Express. This effort isn't as intimidating as it seems, because we already have existing functionality we can emulate: Ruby on Rails.

Ruby on Rails has inspired much of the fundamental nature of Node, providing an underlying design we can use to incorporate support for MVC into our Express application. Express has already incorporated the use of routes (fundamental to Rails), so we're half way there. Now we need to provide the second component—the separation of model, view, and controller. For the controller component, we're going to need a set of defined actions for each object we maintain.

Rails supports several different actions that map a route (verb and path) to a data action. The mapping is based on another concept, CRUD, or Create-Read-Update-Delete, the four fundamental persistent storage functions. The Rails web site provides a guide that supplies an excellent table that shows the mapping we need to create in our application. I extrapolated from the Rails table to the one in Table 7-1, for widgets.

Table 7-1. REST/Route/CRUD mapping for maintaining widgets

HTTP Verb	Path	action	used for
GET	/widgets	index	display widgets
GET	/widgets/new	new	return HTML form for creating a new widget
POST	/widgets	create	create a new widget
GET	/widgets/:id	show	display a specific widget
GET	/widgets/:id/edit	edit	return HTML for editing a specific widget

PUT	/widgets/:id	update	update a specific widget
DELETE	/widgets/:id	destroy	delete a specific widget

We're already there for most of the functionality—we just need to clean it up a bit.

Just a reminder that you also might have issues with existing middleware. For instance, the use of the `directory` middleware, which provides a pretty directory print out, conflicts with the `create` action, since they both work on the same route. Solution? Place the `express.directory` middleware after the `app.router` in the configure method call.

First, we're going to create a controllers subdirectory, and create a new file in it named `widgets.js`. Then we're going to copy all of our `apt.get` and `apt.put` method calls into this new file.

Next, we need to convert the method calls into the appropriate MVC format. This means converting the routing method call into a function for each, which is then exported. For instance, the function to create a new widget:

```
// add a widget
app.post('/widgets/add', function(req, res) {
  var indx = widgets.length + 1;
  widgets[widgets.length] =
    { id : indx,
      name : req.body.widgetname,
      price : parseFloat(req.body.widgetprice)};
  console.log(widgets[indx-1]);
  res.send('Widget ' + req.body.widgetname + ' added with id ' + indx);
});
```

Is converted into `widgets.create`:

```
// add a widget
exports.create = function(req, res) {
  var indx = widgets.length + 1;
  widgets[widgets.length] =
    { id : indx,
      name : req.body.widgetname,
      price : parseFloat(req.body.widgetprice)},
  console.log(widgets[indx-1]);
  res.send('Widget ' + req.body.widgetname + ' added with id ' + indx);
};
```

Each function still receives the request and resource object. The only difference is that there isn't a direct route-to-function mapping.

Example 7-6 shows the new `widgets.js` file in the controllers subdirectory. Two of the methods, `new` and `edit`, are placeholders for now, to be addressed in Chapter 8. We're still using an in-memory data store, and I simplified the widget object, removing the description field to make the application easier for testing. In addition,

Example 7-6. The Widgets controller

```
var widgets = [
  { id : 1,
    name : "The Great Widget",
    price : 1000.00
  }
]

// index listing of widgets at /widgets/
exports.index = function(req, res) {
```

```

        res.send(widgets);
    };

// display new widget form
exports.new = function(req, res) {
    res.send('displaying new widget form');
};

// add a widget
exports.create = function(req, res) {
    var indx = widgets.length + 1;
    widgets[widgets.length] =
        { id : indx,
            name : req.body.widgetname,
            price : parseFloat(req.body.widgetprice) };
    console.log(widgets[indx-1]);
    res.send('Widget ' + req.body.widgetname + ' added with id ' + indx);
};

// show a widget
exports.show = function(req, res) {
    var indx = parseInt(req.params.id) - 1;
    if (!widgets[indx])
        res.send('There is no widget with id of ' + req.params.id);
    else
        res.send(widgets[indx]);
};

// delete a widget
exports.destroy = function(req, res) {
    var indx = req.params.id - 1;
    delete widgets[indx];

    console.log('deleted ' + req.params.id);
    res.send('deleted ' + req.params.id);
};

// display edit form
exports.edit = function(req, res) {
    res.send('displaying edit form');
};

// update a widget
exports.update = function(req, res) {
    var indx = parseInt(req.params.id) - 1;
    widgets[indx] =
        { id : indx,
            name : req.body.widgetname,
            price : parseFloat(req.body.widgetprice) }
    console.log(widgets[indx]);
    res.send ('Updated ' + req.params.id);
};

```

Notice that `edit` and `new` are both GET methods, as their only purpose is to serve a form. It's the associated `create` and `update` that actually change the data: the former is served as POST, the latter as PUT.

To map the routes to the new functions, I created a second module, `maproutecontroller`, with one exported function `mapRoute`. It has two parameters—the Express `app` object and a `prefix` representing the mapped controller object, in this case "widgets". It uses the prefix to access the `widgets` controller

object, and then maps the methods it knows are in this object (because the object is a controller and has a fixed set of required methods), to the appropriate route. Example 7-7 has the code for this new module.

```
Example 7-7. Function to map routes to controller object methods
exports.mapRoute = function(app, prefix) {
    prefix = '/' + prefix;
    var prefixObj = require('./controllers/' + prefix);
    // index
    app.get(prefix, prefixObj.index);
    // add
    app.get(prefix + '/new', prefixObj.new);
    // show
    app.get(prefix + '/:id', prefixObj.show);
    // create
    app.post(prefix + '/create', prefixObj.create);
    // edit
    app.get(prefix + '/:id/edit', prefixObj.edit);
    // update
    app.put(prefix + '/:id', prefixObj.update);
    // destroy
    app.del(prefix + '/:id', prefixObj.destroy);
};
```

The `mapRoute` method is a very simple function, and should be recognizable when you compare the routes given to those in Table 7-1.

Lastly, we finish the main application that pulls all these pieces together. Thankfully, it's a lot cleaner now that we don't have all the routing method calls. To handle a possibly growing number of objects, I use an array to contain the prefix name for each. If I add a new object, I add a new prefix to the array.

Express comes with an MVC application in the examples subdirectory. It uses a routine that accesses the controllers directory and infers the prefix names from the file names it finds. With this approach, we don't have to change the application file to add a new object.

Example 7-8 has the finished application. I added back in the original `routes.index` view, except I changed the title value in the `routes/index.js` file from "Express" to "Widget Factory".

```
Example 7-8. Application that makes use of new MVC infrastructure to maintain widgets
var express = require('express')
, routes = require('./routes')
, map = require('./maproutecontroller')
, http = require('http')
, app = express();

app.configure(function() {
    app.use(express.favicon());
    app.use(express.logger('dev'));
    app.use(express.staticCache({maxObjects: 100, maxLength: 512}));
    app.use(express.static(__dirname + '/public'));
    app.use(express.bodyParser());
    app.use(express.methodOverride());
```

```

app.use(app.router);
app.use(express.directory(__dirname + '/public'));
app.use(function(req, res, next) {
  throw new Error(req.url + ' not found');
});
app.use(function(err, req, res, next) {
  console.log(err);
  res.send(err.message);
});
});

app.configure('development', function() {
  app.use(express.errorHandler());
});

app.get('/', routes.index);
var prefixes = ['widgets'];

// map route to controller
prefixes.forEach(function(prefix) {
  map.mapRoute(app, prefix);
});

http.createServer(app).listen(3000);

console.log("Express server listening on port 3000");

```

Cleaner, simpler, extensible. I still don't have the View part of the MVC, but I'll cover that in the next chapter.

Testing the Express Application with curl

Instead of testing with a browser, we'll test the application with `curl`. This Unix utility is extremely helpful when it comes to testing a RESTful application without having to create all the forms.

To test the widgets index, use the following curl command (based on running the application from my examples site, and on port 3000--adjust the command accordingly for your setup):

```
| curl --request GET http://examples.burningbird.net:3000/widgets
```

Following the request option, specify the method, in this case, GET, and then the request URL. You should get back a dump of all widgets currently in the data store.

To test creating a new widget, first issue a request for the new object:

```
| curl --request GET http://examples.burningbird.net:3000/new
```

A message is returned about returning the new widget form. Next, test adding a new widget, passing the data for the widget in the curl request, and changing the method to POST:

```
| curl --request POST http://examples.burningbird.net:3000/widgets --data
'widgetname=Smallwidget&widgetprice=10.00'
```

Run the index test again, to make sure the new widget is displayed:

```
| curl --request GET http://examples.burningbird.net:3000/widgets
```

The result should be:

```
[
{
  "id": 1,
  "name": "The Great Widget",
  "price": 1000
},
```

```
{  
  "id": 2,  
  "name": "Smallwidget",  
  "price": 10  
}
```

Next, update the new widget, setting its price to **75.00**. The method is now PUT:

```
| curl --request PUT http://examples.burndgets/2 --data 'widgetname=Smallwidget&widgetprice=75.00'
```

Once you verified the data was changed, go ahead and delete the new record, changing the HTTP method to DELETE:

```
| curl --request DELETE http://examples.burningbird.net:3000/widgets/2
```

Now that we have the controller component of the MVC, we need to add the view components, which I cover in Chapter 8.

Beyond Basic Express

Express is a framework, but it's a very basic framework. If you want to do something, such as create a content management system, you'll have quite a bit of work to do.

There are third party applications that are built on Express and that provide both types of functionality. One, Calipso, is a full Content Management System built on Express and using MongoDB for persistent storage.

Express-Resource is a lower level framework that provides simplified MVC functionality to Express so you don't have to create your own.

Tower.js, is another web framework that provides a higher level of abstraction and is modeled after Ruby on Rails, with full MVC support. RailwayJS, is also a MVC Framework, built on Express, and modeled after Ruby on Rails.

Another higher level framework is Strata, which takes a different tack from Tower.js and RailwayJS. Rather than a Rails model, it follows the module established by WSGI (Python) and Rack (Ruby). It's a lower level abstraction, which can be simpler to work with if you've not programmed in Ruby and Rails.

8

Express, Template Systems, and CSS

Frameworks, such as Express, provide a great deal of useful functionality, but one thing they don't provide is a way of separating the data from the presentation. You can use JavaScript to generate HTML to process the result of a query or update, but the effort can become quickly tedious—especially if you have to generate every part of the page, including sidebars, headers, and footers. Sure you can use functions, but the work can still verge on the overwhelming.

Luckily for us, as framework systems have developed so have template systems, and the same holds true for Node and for Express. In Chapter 7, we briefly used Jade, the template system installed by default with Express to generate an index page. Express also supports other compatible template systems, including another popular choice, EJS, or Embedded JavaScript. Each takes a completely different approach, but both deliver the expected results.

In addition, though you can manually create CSS files for your web site or application, you can also use a *CSS engine* that can simplify this aspect of your web design and development. Rather than having to remember to add in all of the curly brackets and semi-colons, you use a simplified structure that can be cleaner to maintain. One such CSS engine that works quite nicely with Express and other Node applications is Stylus.

In this chapter I'm primarily focusing on Jade, since it is installed by default with Express. However, I'm going to also briefly cover EJS, so you can see two different types of templates systems, and how they work. I'm going to demonstrate how to use them with an Express application, and also how to use them with just basic Node functionality.

As we go along, creating the example applications, I'll also introduce the use of Stylus to manage the CSS to ensure the pages present nicely. To have a little fun, we'll also explore an extension to Stylus that supports the use of *CSS sprites* in our web application.

The Embedded JavaScript (EJS) Template System

Embedded JavaScript is a good name for EJS, because it best describes how it works: JavaScript embedded into HTML markup to handle the melding of data and document structure. It's a very simple template system based on Ruby's ERB, or Embedded Ruby.

The EJS Github page can be found at <https://github.com/visionmedia/ejs>.

The Basic Syntax

If you've worked with Drupal, or Ruby, or most Content Management Systems, you'll quickly grasp the fundamentals of EJS. An example of an EJS template is the following:

```
<% if (names.length) { %>
  <ul>
    <% names.forEach(function(name) { %>
      <li><%= name %></li>
    <% }) %>
  </ul>
<% } %>
```

In the code, the EJS is literally embedded into HTML, in this case providing the data for the individual list items for an unordered list. The angle brackets and percentage sign pairs (`<%`, `%>`) are used to delimit EJS instructions, in this instance, a conditional test to ensure that an array has been provided, and then the JavaScript to process the array, outputting the individual array values.

EJS is based on the Ruby ERB templating system, which is why you'll frequently see "erb-like" used to describe its format.

The values, themselves, are output with the equal sign (=), providing a shortcut for "print this value here":

```
| <%= name %>
```

The value is escaped when it's printed out. To print out an unescaped value, use (`<%-` `%>`):

```
| <%- name %>
```

If for some reason you don't want to use the standard open and closing EJS tags (`<%`, `%>`), you can define custom ones using the EJS object's open and close methods:

```
| ejs.open('<<');
| ejs.close('>>');
```

You can then use these custom tags instead of the default ones:

```
| <h1><<title >></h1>
```

Unless you have a solid reason for doing so, though, I'd stick with the default.

Though blended with HTML, EJS is JavaScript, so you have to provide the open and closing curly brackets, as well as proper format when using the array object's `forEach` method.

To get the finished product, the HTML is then rendered via an EJS function call, either returning a JavaScript function that generates a result, or generating the finished result. I'll demonstrate this once we get EJS for Node installed.

Using EJS with Node

The module that's installed is a version of EJS capable of being used with Node. It's not the same thing you'll get if you go to the EJS site and download EJS, directly. EJS for Node can be used with client-side JavaScript, but I'm going to focus on its use with Node applications.

Install the template system using npm:

```
| npm install ejs
```

Once installed, you can use it directly in a simple Node application—you don't have to use it with a framework, like Express. As a demonstration, to render HTML from a given template file, shown in the following code:

```
<html>
<head>
<title><%= title %></title>
</head>
```

```

<body>
<% if (names.length) { %>
<ul>
  <% names.forEach(function(name) { %>
    <li><%= name %></li>
  <% }) %>
</ul>
<% } %>
</body>

```

Call the EJS object's `renderFile` method directly. Doing so opens the template and uses data provided as an option to generate the HTML.

Example 8-1 uses the standard HTTP server that comes with Node to listen for a request on port 8124. When a request is received, the application calls the EJS `renderFile` method, passing in the path for the template file, as well as a names array and a document title. The last parameter is a callback function that either provides an error (and a fairly readable error, at that), or the resulting generated HTML. In the example, the result is sent back via the response object if there's no error. If there is an error, an error message is sent in the result, and the error object is output to the console.

Example 8-1. Generating HTML from data and an EJS template

```

var http = require('http')
  , ejs = require('ejs')
;

// create http server
http.createServer(function (req, res) {

  res.writeHead(200, {'content-type': 'text/html'});

  // data to render
  var names = ['Joe', 'Mary', 'Sue', 'Mark'];
  var title = 'Testing EJS';

  // render or error
  ejs.renderFile(__dirname + '/views/test.ejs',
    {title : 'testing', names : names},
    function(err, result) {
      if (!err) {
        res.end(result);
      } else {
        res.end('An error occurred accessing page');
        console.log(err);
      }
    });
});

).listen(8124);

console.log('Server running on 8124/');

```

Another variation of rendering method is `render`, which takes the EJS template as a string and then returns the formatted HTML:

```

var str = fs.readFileSync(__dirname + '/views/test.ejs', 'utf8');

var html = ejs.render(str, {names : names, title: title });

res.end(html);

```

A third method, which I won't demonstrate is `compile`, which takes an EJS template string and returns a JavaScript function that can be invoked to render HTML each time it's called. This method can also be used to enable EJS for Node in client-side applications.

Using the EJS for Node Filters

In addition to support for rendering EJS templates, EJS for Node also provides a set of pre-defined filters, which can further simplify the HTML generation. One filter, `first`, extracts out the first value in a supplied array of values. Another filter, `downcase`, takes the result of the first filter and lower cases the text:

```
var names = ['Joe Brown', 'Mary Smith', 'Tom Thumb', 'Cinder Ella'];

var str = '<p><%= users | first | downcase %></p>';

var html = ejs.render(str, {users : names});
```

The result is the following:

```
| <p>joe brown</p>
```

The filters can be chained together, with the result of one being piped to the next. The use of the filter is triggered by the colon (:) following the equal sign (=), which is then followed by the data object. Another example of the use of filters is the following, which takes a set of people objects, maps a new object consisting solely of their names, sorts the names, and then prints out a concatenated string of the names:

```
var people = [
  {name : 'Joe Brown', age : 32},
  {name : 'Mary Smith', age : 54},
  {name : 'Tom Thumb', age : 21},
  {name : 'Cinder Ella', age : 16}];

var str = "<p><%= people | map:'name' | sort | join %></p>";
var html = ejs.render(str, {people : people});
```

The result of this filter combination is the following:

```
| Cinder Ella, Joe Brown, Mary Smith, Tom Thumb
```

The filters aren't documented in the EJS for Node documentation, and you have to be careful using them interchangeably because some of the filters want a string, not an array of objects. Table 8-1 has a list of the filters, and a brief description of what type of data they work with and what they do:

Table 8-1. EJS for Node Filters

filter	type of data	purpose
first	accepts and returns array	Returns first element of array
last	accepts and returns array	Returns last element of array
capitalize	accepts and returns string	Capitalizes first character in string
downcase	accepts and returns string	lower cases all characters in string
upcase	accepts and returns string	upper cases all characters in string
sort	accepts and returns array	applies Array.sort to array
sort_by:'prop'	accepts array and property name,	creates custom sort function to

	returns array	sort array of objects by property
size	accepts array, returns numeric	returns Array.length
plus:n	accepts two numbers or strings, returns number	returns a + b
minus:n	accepts two numbers or strings, returns number	returns b - a
times:n	accepts two numbers or strings, returns number	returns a * b
divided_by:n	accepts two numbers or strings, returns number	returns a / b
join:'val'	accepts array, returns string	applies Array.join with given value, or ',' by default
truncate:n	accepts string and length, returns string	applies String.substr
truncate_words:n	accepts string and word length, returns string	applies String.split and then String.splice
replace:pattern, substitution	accepts string, pattern, and substitution, returns string	applies String.replace
prepend:value	accepts string and string value, returns string	prepends value to string
append:value	accepts string and string value, returns string	appends value to string
map:'prop'	accepts array and property, returns array	creates new array consisting of given object properties using Array.map
reverse	accepts array or string	if array, applies Array.reverse; if string, splits words, reverses, rejoins
get	accepts object and property	returns property of given object
json	accepts object	converts to JSON string

Using a Template System (EJS) with Express

The template system provides the missing piece we need to complete the views portion of MVC application architecture that I introduced in Chapter 7.

The Model portion of the MVC (Model-View-Controller) architecture is added in Chapters 10.

In Chapter 7, I did provide a quick introduction for using a template system with Example 7-1. The example used Jade, but it could easily be converted to using EJS. How easily? Example 8-2 is an exact duplicate of the application in Example 7-1, except now using EJS rather than Jade. Exactly one line is changed, shown in bold text in the code.

Example 8-2. Using EJS as a template system for an application

```
var express = require('express')
, routes = require('./routes')
, http = require('http');

var app = express();

app.configure(function(){
    app.set('views', __dirname + '/views');
    app.set('view engine', 'ejs');
    app.use(express.favicon());
    app.use(express.logger('dev'));
    app.use(express.static(__dirname + '/public'));
    app.use(express.bodyParser());
    app.use(express.methodOverride());
    app.use(app.router);
});

app.configure('development', function(){
    app.use(express.errorHandler());
});

app.get('/', routes.index);

http.createServer(app).listen(3000);

console.log("Express server listening on port 3000");
```

The `index.js` route doesn't require any change, at all, because it's not using anything that's specific to any template system—it's using the Express resource object's `render` method, which works regardless of template system (as long as the system is compatible with Express):

```
exports.index = function(req, res){
    res.render('index', { title: 'Express' }), function(err, stuff) {
        if (!err) {
            console.log(stuff);
            res.write(stuff);
            res.end();
        }
    });
};
```

In the views directory, the `index.ejs` file (note the extension), uses EJS for Node annotation rather than the Jade we saw in Chapter 7:

```
<html>
<head>
<title><%= title %></title>
</head>
```

```
<body>
<h1><%= title %></h1>
<p>Welcome to <%= title %></p>
</body>
```

This demonstrates the beauty of working with an application that separates model, from controller, from the view, because you can swap technology in and out, such as using a different template system, without impacting on the application logic or data access.

To recap what's happening with this application:

1. The main Express application uses `app.get` to associate a request listener function (`routes.index`) with an HTTP GET request.
2. The `routes.index` function calls `res.render` to render the response to the get request.
3. The `res.render` function invokes the application object's `render` function.
4. The application `render` function renders the specified view, with whatever options—in this case, the `title`.
5. The rendered content is then written to the response object, and back to the user's browser.

In Chapter 7, we focused on the routing aspects of the application, and now we'll focus on the view. We'll take the application we created at the end of Chapter 7, in Examples 7-6 through 7-8, and add in the views capability. First, though, we need to do a little re-structuring of the environment, to ensure that the application can grow, as needed.

Restructuring for a Multiple Object Environment

Though the application is the Widget Factory, widgets aren't going to be the only objects the system maintains. We need to restructure the environment so that we can add objects, as needed.

Currently, the environment is as follows:

```
/application directory
  /routes - home directory controller
  /controllers - object controllers
  /public - static files
  /views - template files
```

The routes and the controllers directory can stay, as they are, but the views and the public directory need to be modified to allow for different objects. Instead of placing all widget views directly in views, they're added to a new subdirectory under views named, appropriately enough, widgets:

```
/application directory
  /views
    /widgets
```

And instead of all widget static files being placed directly in the public directory, they're also placed in a widgets subdirectory:

```
/application directory
  /public
    /widgets
```

Now, we can add new objects by adding new directories, and be able to use file names of `new.html` and `edit.ejs` for each, without working about overwriting existing files.

Note that this structure does assume we may have static files for our application. The next step is to figure out how to integrate the static files into the newly dynamic environment.

Routing to Static Files

The first component of the application to refine is adding a new widget. It consists of two parts: displaying a form to get the new widget's information, and storing the new widget into the existing widget data store.

We can create an EJS template for the form, though it won't have any dynamic components—or at least, it won't at this time with the way the page is designed. However, it makes no sense to serve something through the template system that doesn't need the system's capability.

We could also just change how the form is accessed—instead of accessing the form using `/widgets/new`, access it as `/widgets/new.html`. However, this introduces an inconsistency into the application routing. In addition, if we do add dynamic components later to the form page, then we'll have to change the references to the new form every where they exist.

A better approach is to handle the routing request and serve the static page, as if it were dynamic, but without using the template system.

The Express resource object has a `redirect` method we could use to redirect the request to the `new.html` file, but that's what's going to show up in the address bar on the browser when finished. It also returns a 302 status code, and we don't want this to happen. Instead, we'll use the resource object's `sendfile` method. This method takes, as parameters, a file path, possible options, and an optional callback function, with an error as its only parameter. The Widget controller is only using the first parameter.

The file path is:

```
| __dirname + '/../public/widgets/widget.html'
```

We used the relative indicator `..` since the public directory is located off the controllers directory's parent. However, we can't use this path in `sendfile`, as is, because it generates a 403 forbidden error. Instead, we use the `path` module's `normalize` method, to covert the path's use of relative indicators into the equivalent absolute path.

```
// display new widget form
exports.new = function(req, res) {
  var filePath = require('path').normalize(__dirname +
                                         '/../public/widgets/new.html');
  res.sendfile(filePath);
};
```

The HTML page with the form is nothing to get excited about: just a simple form, as shown in Example 8-3. However, we did add the description field back, to make the data a little more interesting.

Example 8-3. HTML New Widget Form

```
<!doctype html>
<html lang="en">
<head>
  <meta charset="utf-8" />
  <title>Widgets</title>
</head>
<body>
<h1>Add Widget:</h1>

<form method="POST" action="/widgets/create"
enctype="application/x-www-form-urlencoded">

  <p>Widget name: <input type="text" name="widgetname"
id="widgetname" size="25" required/></p>
  <p>Widget Price: <input type="text"
pattern="^\$?([0-9]{1,3},([0-9]{3},)*[0-9]{3}|[0-9]+)(.[0-9][0-9])? $">
name="widgetprice" id="widgetprice" size="25" required/></p>

  <p>Widget Description: <br />
<textarea name="widgetdesc" id="widgetdesc" cols="20">
```

```

rows="5">></textarea>
<p>
<input type="submit" name="submit" id="submit" value="Submit"/>
<input type="reset" name="reset" id="reset" value="Reset"/>
</p>
</form>
</body>
```

The form is POSTed, of course.

Now that the application can display the new Widget form, we need to modify the Widget controller to process the form posting.

There's also an Express extension module, `express-rewrite`, that provides URL rewrite capability. Install with npm: `npm install express-rewrite`.

Processing a New Object Post

Prior to adding in the new template support, we need to make changes to the main application file to incorporate the use of the EJS template system. I won't repeat the `app.js` file completely from Example 7-8 in Chapter 7, because the only change is to the `configure` method call, to include the EJS template engine and `views` directory:

```

app.configure(function() {
  app.set('views', __dirname + '/views');
  app.set('view engine', 'ejs');
  app.use(express.favicon());
  app.use(express.logger('dev'));
  app.use(express.staticCache({maxObjects: 100, maxLength: 512}));
  app.use(express.static(__dirname + '/public'));
  app.use(express.bodyParser());
  app.use(express.methodOverride());
  app.use(app.router);
  app.use(express.directory(__dirname + '/public'));
  app.use(function(req, res, next) {
    throw new Error(req.url + ' not found');
  });
  app.use(function(err, req, res, next) {
    console.log(err);
    res.send(err.message);
  });
});
```

Now we're ready to convert the widget controller to using templates, starting with the code to add a new widget.

The actual processing of the data in the Widget controller for the new widget doesn't change. We still pull the data from the request body, and add it to the in-memory widget store. However, now that we have access to a template system, we're going to change how we respond to the successful addition of a new widget.

I created a new EJS template, named `added.ejs`, shown in Example 8-3. All it does is provide a listing of the widget's properties, and a message composed of the title sent with the widget object.

Example 8-3. Widget added confirmation view template

```

<head>
<title><%= title %></title>
</head>
<body>
<h1><%= title %> | <%= widget.name %></h1>
<ul>
```

```

<li>ID: <%= widget.id %></li>
<li>Name: <%= widget.name %></li>
<li>Price: <%= widget.price.toFixed(2) %></li>
<li>Desc: <%= widget.desc %></li>
</ul>
</body>
```

The code to process the update is little different from that shown in Chapter 7, other than the fact that we're now rendering a view rather than sending a message back to the user (the part that changes is in bold text):

```

// add a widget
exports.create = function(req, res) {

    // generate widget id
    var indx = widgets.length + 1;

    // add widget
    widgets[widgets.length] =
    { id : indx,
      name : req.body.widgetname,
      price : parseFloat(req.body.widgetprice),
      desc : req.body.widgetdesc };

    //print out to console and confirm addition to user
    console.log(widgets[indx-1]);
    res.render('widgets/add', {title: 'Widget Added', widget : widgets[indx-1]});
};
```

The two options sent to the view are the page title and the widget object. Figure 8-1 shows the informative, though plain result.

The code to process a new widget doesn't do any validation of the data or check for authority, or SQL injection hacks. Data validation is covered in Chapter 11; security and authorization are covered in Chapter 15.



Figure 8-1. Displaying a confirmation of the added widget

The next two processes to convert to templates, the update and delete, require a way of specifying which widget to perform the action on. In addition, we also need to convert the index showing of all widgets. For all three, we're going to use a view to create both the widgets index page and a *picklist*, covered next.

Widgets Index and Generating a Picklist

A picklist is nothing more than a list of choices from which one can choose. For the Widgets application, a picklist could be a selection list or dropdown incorporated into an update or delete page, using Ajax and client-side scripting, but I'm going to incorporate the functionality into the Widget application's index page.

Right now, the Widget application index page just has a data dump of the widget data store. It's informative, but ugly and not all that useful. To improve the result, we're going to add a view to display all of the widgets in a table, one widget per row, and the widget properties as columns. We're also going to add two more columns: one with a link to edit the widget, and one with a link to delete the widget. These provide the missing piece to the application: a way for a person to edit or delete a widget without having to remember or know its identifier.

Example 8-4 has the contents of the template for this new view, named *index.ejs*. Since the file is located in the widgets subdirectory, we don't have to be worried that it's the same name as the higher level *index.ejs* file.

```
Example 8-4. Widgets Index page with links to edit and delete the individual widgets

<!doctype html>
<html lang="en">
<head>
  <meta charset="utf-8" />
  <title><%= title %></title>
</head>
<body>
<% if (widgets.length) { %>
  <table>
    <caption>Widgets</caption>
    <tr><th>ID</th><th>Name</th><th>Price</th><th>Description</th></tr>
    <% widgets.forEach(function(widget) { %>
      <tr>
        <td><%= widget.id %></td>
        <td><%= widget.name %></td>
        <td>$<%= widget.price.toFixed(2) %></td>
        <td><%= widget.desc %></td>
        <td><a href="/widgets/<%= widget.id %>/edit">Edit</a></td>
        <td><a href="/widgets/<%= widget.id %>">Delete</a></td>
      </tr>
    <% }) %>
  </table>
<% } %>
</body>
```

The controller code to trigger this new view is extremely simple: a call to render the view, sending the entire array of Widgets through as data:

```
// index listing of widgets at /widgets/
exports.index = function(req, res) {
  res.render('widgets/index', {title : 'Widgets', widgets : widgets});
};
```

In Example 8-4, if the object has a *length* property (is an array), its element objects are traversed and their properties are printed out as table data, including the links to edit and delete the object. Figure 8-2 shows the table after several widgets have been added to our in-memory data store.

Widgets				
ID	Name	Price	Description	
1	The Great Widget	\$1000.00	A widget of great value	Edit Delete
2	Second Widget	\$23.99	Second widget from the Widget Factory.	Edit Delete
3	Widget A2	\$245.00	Second generation widget.	Edit Delete
4	Widget Super 3	\$999.00	A new third generation widget that's new and improved.	Edit Delete
5	Ultimate Widget	\$1999.99	The ultimate in widgets--every person will want one of these. They're cool.	Edit Delete

insert lrnnode_fig14.png here

The link (route) to delete the object is actually the same as the link (route) to show it: /widgets/:id. What we're going to do is add a mostly hidden form to the Show Widget page that includes a button to delete the widget if it's no longer needed. This allows us to incorporate the necessary trigger for the deletion, without having to add a new route. It also provides another level of protection to ensure that a person knows exactly which widget they're deleting.

It's also perfectly acceptable to create another route, such as /widgets/:id/delete, and generate a "Are you sure?" page from the index page link which then triggers the deletion, rather than incorporate the delete request into the Show Widget page.

Showing an Individual Object and Confirming an Object Deletion

To display an individual widget is as simple as providing a placeholder for all of its properties, embedded into whatever HTML you want to use. In the Widgets application, I'm using an unordered list (ul) for the widget properties.

Since we're also encompassing the trigger for deleting the object into the page, at the bottom I've added a form that displays a button reading "Delete Widget". In the form is the hidden `_method` field that is used to generate the HTTP DELETE verb that routes to the application's `destroy` method. The entire template is shown in Example 8-5.

Example 8-5. View to display a widget's properties and a form to delete the widget

```
<!doctype html>
<html lang="en">
<head>
  <meta charset="utf-8" />
  <title><%= title %></title>
</head>
<body>
  <h1><%= widget.name %></h1>
  <ul>
    <li>ID: <%= widget.id %></li>
    <li>Name: <%= widget.name %></li>
    <li>Price: $<%= widget.price.toFixed(2) %></li>
    <li>Description: <%= widget.desc %></li>
  </ul>
  <form method="POST" action="/widgets/<%= widget.id %>">
    <input type="hidden" value="delete" name="_method" />
    <input type="submit" name="submit" id="submit" value="Delete Widget"/>
  </form>
</body>
</html>
```

```
| </form>  
|</body>
```

Very little modification is required in the controller code for either the `show` or the `destroy` methods. I've left the `destroy` method as is for now. All it does is delete the object from the in-memory store and send a message back to this effect:

```
exports.destroy = function(req, res) {  
  var indx = req.params.id - 1;  
  delete widgets[indx];  
  
  console.log('deleted ' + req.params.id);  
  res.send('deleted ' + req.params.id);  
};
```

The show method required little change: a replace of the `send` message with a call to `render` the new view:

```
// show a widget  
exports.show = function(req, res) {  
  var indx = parseInt(req.params.id) - 1;  
  if (!widgets[indx])  
    res.send('There is no widget with id of ' + req.params.id);  
  else  
    res.render('widgets/show', {title : 'Show Widget', widget : widgets[indx]});  
};
```

Figure 8-2 demonstrates what the show widget page looks like, complete with *Delete Button* button at the bottom.

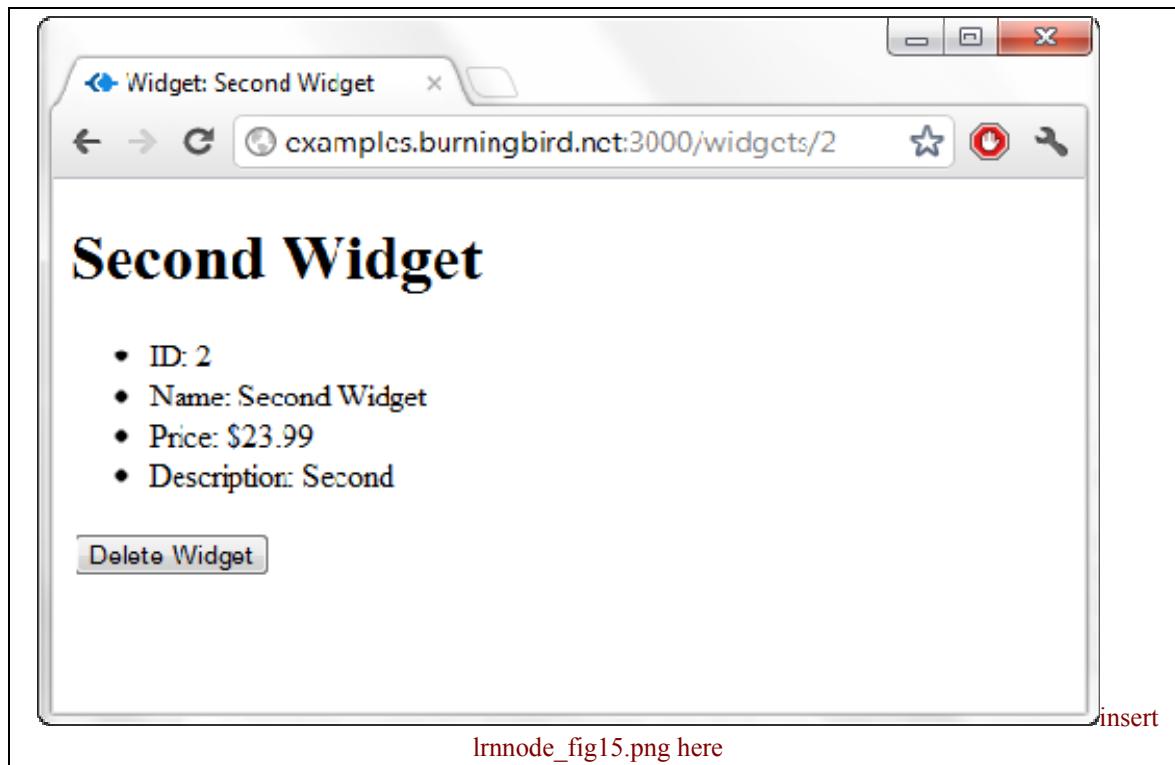


Figure 8-2. The show widget page with delete button

By now, you can see how simple it is to incorporate views into the application. The best thing of all about this system is that you can incorporate changes into the view templates without having to stop the application: it uses the changed template the next time the view is accessed.

One last view for the update widget, and we're done converting the Widget application into using the EJS template system.

Providing an Update Form and Processing a PUT Request

The form to edit the widget is exactly the same as the form to add a widget, except for the addition of one field: `_method`. In addition, the form is pre-populated with the data for the widget being edited, so we need to incorporate the template tags and appropriate values.

Example 8-6 contains the contents for the `edit.ejs` template file. Note the use of the template tags with the value fields in the input elements. Also notice the addition of the `_method` field.

Example 8-6. The Edit view template file, with data pre-populated

```
<!doctype html>
<html lang="en">
<head>
  <meta charset="utf-8" />
  <title><%= title %></title>
</head>
<body>
  <h1>Edit <%= widget.name %></h1>

  <form method="POST" action="/widgets/<%= widget.id %>">
    <input type="hidden" name="_method" value="put" />
    <input type="submit" name="submit" id="submit" value="Submit"/>
    <input type="reset" name="reset" id="reset" value="Reset"/>
  </form>
</body>
```

Figure 8-3 shows the page with a widget loaded. All you need to do is edit the field values, and then click Submit to submit the changes.

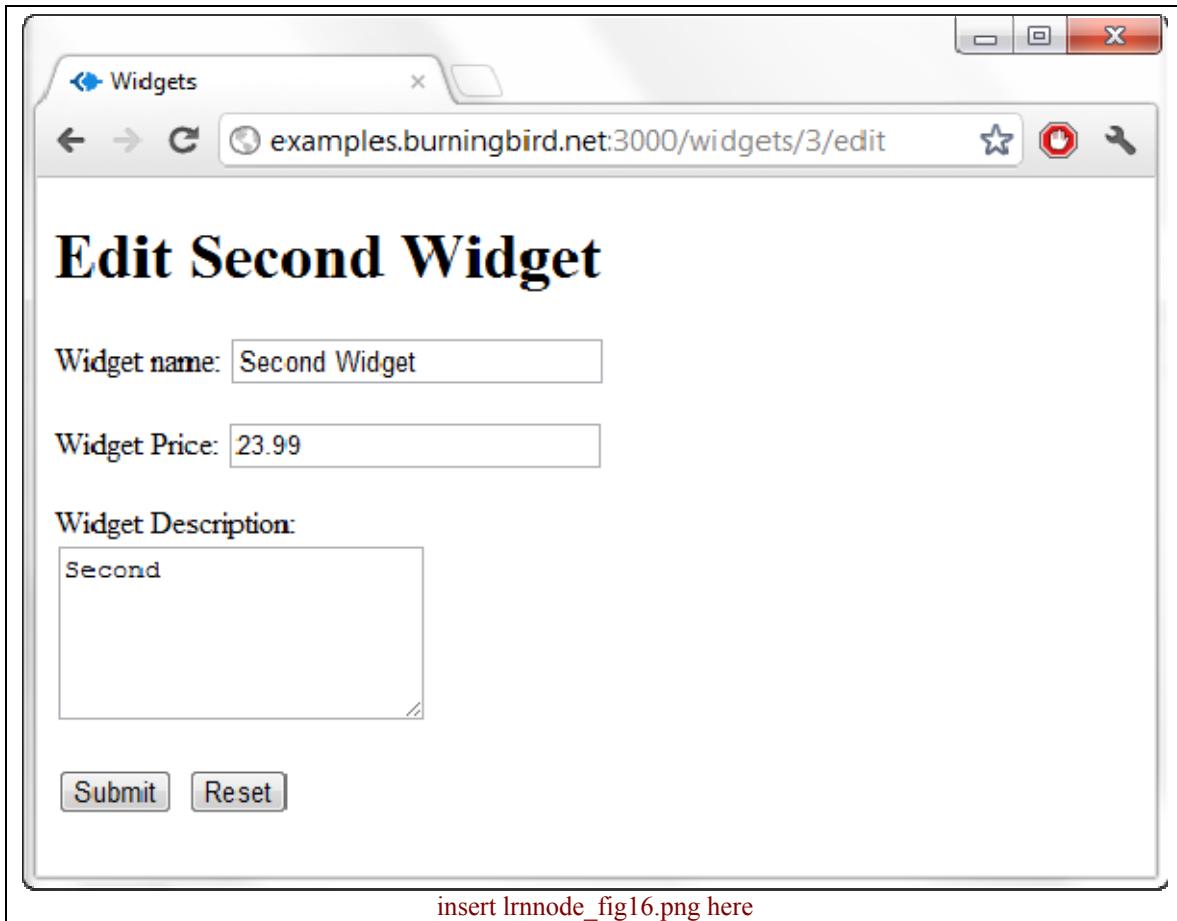


Figure 8-3. The edit widget view

The modification to the controller code is as simple as the other modifications have been. The widgets/edit view is accessed using `res.render`, and the widget object is passed as data:

```
// display edit form
exports.edit = function(req, res) {
  var indx = parseInt(req.params.id) - 1;
  res.render('widgets/edit', {title : 'Edit Widget', widget : widgets[indx]});
};
```

The code to process the update is very close to what we had in Chapter 7, except that instead of sending a message that the object is updated, we're using a view. We're not creating a new view, though. Instead, we're using the `widgets/added.ejs` view we used earlier. Since both just display the object's properties, and can take a title passed in as data, we can easily re-purpose the view, just by changing the title:

```
// update a widget
exports.update = function(req, res) {
  var indx = parseInt(req.params.id) - 1;
  widgets[indx] =
  { id : indx + 1,
    name : req.body.widgetname,
    price : parseFloat(req.body.widgetprice),
    desc : req.body.widgetdesc}
  console.log(widgets[indx]);
  res.render('widgets/added', {title: 'Widget Edited', widget : widgets[indx] })
};
```

Again, the view used doesn't impact on what route (URL) is shown, so it doesn't matter if we reuse a view. The ability to reuse a view can save a lot of work as the application increases in difficulty.

You've had a chance to see pieces of the controller code throughout these sections as we convert it to using templates. Example 8-7 is an entire copy of the changed file, which you can compare to Example 7-6 in Chapter 7, to see how easily views incorporate into the code, and how much work they can save us.

Example 8-7. The Widget Controller implemented with Views

```
var widgets = [
  { id : 1,
    name : "The Great Widget",
    price : 1000.00,
    desc: "A widget of great value"
  }
]

// index listing of widgets at /widgets/
exports.index = function(req, res) {
  res.render('widgets/index', {title : 'Widgets', widgets : widgets});
};

// display new widget form
exports.new = function(req, res) {
  var filePath = require('path').normalize(__dirname + '/../public/widgets/new.html');
  res.sendfile(filePath);
};

// add a widget
exports.create = function(req, res) {

  // generate widget id
  var indx = widgets.length + 1;

  // add widget
  widgets[widgets.length] =
  { id : indx,
    name : req.body.widgetname,
    price : parseFloat(req.body.widgetprice),
    desc : req.body.widgetdesc };

  //print out to console and confirm addition to user
  console.log(widgets[indx-1]);
  res.render('widgets/added', {title: 'Widget Added', widget : widgets[indx-1]});
};

// show a widget
exports.show = function(req, res) {
  var indx = parseInt(req.params.id) - 1;
  if (!widgets[indx])
    res.send('There is no widget with id of ' + req.params.id);
  else
    res.render('widgets/show', {title : 'Show Widget', widget : widgets[indx]});
};

// delete a widget
exports.destroy = function(req, res) {
  var indx = req.params.id - 1;
  delete widgets[indx];

  console.log('deleted ' + req.params.id);
  res.send('deleted ' + req.params.id);
};
```

```

// display edit form
exports.edit = function(req, res) {
  var idx = parseInt(req.params.id) - 1;
  res.render('widgets/edit', {title : 'Edit Widget', widget : widgets[idx]});
};

// update a widget
exports.update = function(req, res) {
  var idx = parseInt(req.params.id) - 1;
  widgets[idx] =
  { id : idx + 1,
    name : req.body.widgetname,
    price : parseFloat(req.body.widgetprice),
    desc : req.body.widgetdesc}
  console.log(widgets[idx]);
  res.render('widgets/added', {title: 'Widget Edited', widget : widgets[idx]})
};

```

This is the last time you'll see the controller code for this chapter. Yet we're about to make a profound change to the application: we're about to replace the template system.

The Jade Template System

Jade is the template system installed with Express by default. It is quite different from EJS: rather than embed the template tags directly into HTML, you use a simplified version of HTML

The Jade web site is at <http://jade-lang.com/>.

The Quick Nickel Tour of the Jade Syntax

In the Jade template system, HTML elements are given by their name, but you don't use any angle brackets. Nesting is indicated by indentation. So, rather than:

```

<html>
<head>
<title>This is the title</title>
</head>
<body>
<p>Say hi World</p>
</body>
</html>

```

You have:

```

html
  head
    title This is it
  body
    p Say Hi to the world

```

The contents of both the title and the paragraph elements are just included after the element name. There are no ending tags, they're assumed, and again, indentation triggers nesting. Another example is the following, which also makes use of both class name and identifier, as well as additional nesting:

```

  html
    head
      title This is it
    body
      div.content
        div#title
          p nested data

```

Which generates:

```
<html>
<head>
<title>This is it</title>
</head>
<body>
<div class="content">
<div id="title">
<p>nested data</p>
</div>
</div>
</body>
</html>
```

If you have large bodies of content, such as text for a paragraph, you can use the vertical bar to concatenate the text:

```
p
| some text
| more text
| and even more
```

Which becomes:

```
| <p>some text more text and even more</p>
```

Another approach is to end the paragraph element with a period (.) indicating that the block only contains text, and allowing us to omit the vertical bar:

```
p.
some text
more text
and even more
```

If we want to include HTML as the text, we can and it ends up being treated as HTML in the generated source:

```
body.
<h1>A header</h1>
<p>A paragraph</p>
```

Since we're working with forms, which make extensive use of attributes, a quick introduction to forms and form elements is in order. Attributes are included within parentheses following the element names. So the following Jade:

```
html
  head
    title This is it
  body
    form(method="POST"
      action="/widgets"
      enctype="application/x-www-form-urlencoded")
      input(type="text"
        name="widgetname"
        id="widgetname"
        size="25")
      input(type="text"
        name="widgetprice"
        id="widgetprice"
        size="25")
      input(type="submit"
        name="submit"
        id="submit")
```

```
|     value="Submit")
```

Generates the following HTML:

```
<html>
<head>
<title>This is it</title>
</head>
<body>
<form method="POST" action="/widgets"
      enctype="application/x-www-form-urlencoded">
<input type="text" name="widgetname" id="widgetname" size="25"/>
<input type="text" name="widgetprice" id="widgetprice" size="25"/>
<input type="submit" name="submit" id="submit" value="Submit"/>
</form>
</body>
</html>
```

This is a quick introduction to the Jade syntax. You'll have a chance to see how it compares to EJS when we convert the templates created earlier with EJS into Jade templates in the next few sections.

The Use of Block and Extend to Modularize the View Templates

I'm going to convert the Widget application into using Jade rather than EJS. The only change that needs to be made to the Widget application code is in app.js, to change the template engine:

```
|   app.set('view engine', 'jade');
```

No other change is necessary to the application.

All of the templates share the same page layout. The layout is rather plain, there are no sidebars, footers, or use of CSS. Because of the plain nature of the page we haven't minded duplicating the same layout markup in each view in the prior section on using EJS for templates. However, if we start to add more to the overall page structure, such as sidebars, and a header and footer, than having to maintain the same layout information in each file is going to get cumbersome. Not only is it wasteful to have to duplicate all of this information, making a single modification can become tedious and error prone.

So the first thing we're going to do is create a layout template that is going to be used by all the other templates.

Express 3.x completely changed its handling of views, including how it implements partial views and the use of layouts. You can use the Jade templates in this section with Express 2.x if you add the following in the configure method call:

```
app.set('view options', {layout: false});
```

Example 8-8 contains the complete *layout.jade* file. It uses the HTML5 `doctype`, adds a `head` element with `title` and `meta` elements, the `body` element, and then references a block called `content`. That's how you include blocks of content defined elsewhere in other template files.

Example 8-8. Simple layout template in Jade

```
doctype 5
html(lang="en")
  head
    title #{title}
    meta(charset="utf-8")
  body
    block content
```

Notice the use of the pound sign and curly brackets for the `title` (`#{}`). This is how we embed data passed to the template in Jade. The use of the identifier doesn't change from EJS, just the syntax.

To use the new layout template, each of the content templates starts off with:

```
| extends layout
```

The next section will show what each of the content template files have for the different Widget views.

The use of `extends` lets the template engine know where to find the layout template for the page view, while the use of the `block` instructs the template engine where to place the generated content.

You don't have to use `content` for the block name, and you can use more than one block. In addition, you can also include other template files if you want to break up the layout template even further. I modified the `layout.jade` file to include a header rather than the markup directly in the layout file:

```
doctype 5
html(lang="en")
  include header
  body
    block content
```

I then defined the header content in a file named `header.jade`, with the following:

```
head
  title #{title}
  meta(charset="utf-8")
```

Two things to note in the new `layout.jade` and `header.jade` code.

First, the `include` directive is relative. If you split the views into the following subdirectory structure:

```
/views
  /widgets
    layout.jade
  /standard
    header.jade
```

You'd use the following to include the header template in the layout file:

```
| include standard/header
```

The file doesn't have to be Jade, either—it could be HTML, in which case you'll need to use the file extension:

```
| include standard/header.html
```

Secondly, do not use indentation in the `header.jade` file. The indentation comes in from the parent file and doesn't need to be duplicated in the included template file. In fact, if you do so, your template will cause an error.

Now that we've defined the layout template, time to convert the EJS views into Jade.

Now is also the time you might consider swapping the static add widget form file for a dynamic one—so that it can also take advantage of the new layout template.

Converting the Widget Views into Jade Templates

The first view to convert from EJS to Jade is the `added.ejs` template, which provides feedback for the successful addition of a new widget. The template file is named `added.jade` (the name must be the same, though the extension different, to work with the existing controller code), and it makes use of the newly defined `layout.jade` file, as shown in Example 8-9.

Example 8-9. The added widget confirmation page converted to Jade

```
extends layout

block content
  h1 #{title} | #{widget.name}
  ul
```

```

|   li id: #{widget.id}
|   li Name: #{widget.name}
|   li Price: ${#{widget.price.toFixed()}}
|   li Desc: #{widget.desc}

```

Notice how we can still use the `toFixed` method to format the price output.

The block is named `content`, so it integrates with the expectations of black name set in the `layout.jade` file. The simplified HTML for an `h1` header, and an unordered list is integrated with the data passed from the controller, in this case the `widget` object.

Running the Widget application and adding a new widget generates the same HTML as generated with the EJS: a header and a list of widget properties for the newly added widget. All without changing any of the controller code.

The next template to convert is the index template that lists all of the widgets out in a table, with options to edit or delete the widget as table columns. We're going to try something a little different with this template. We're going to separate the table row generation for each widget apart from the over table generation.

First, we'll create the `row.jade` template. It assumes that the data is an object named `widget`, with the properties accessible off the object:

```

tr
  td #{widget.id}
  td #{widget.name}
  td ${#{widget.price.toFixed(2)}}
  td #{widget.desc}
  td
    a (href='/widgets/#{widget.id}/edit') Edit
  td
    a (href='/widgets/#{widget.id}') Delete

```

The links `must` be included in a separate line, otherwise we lose the nesting indication with the indentation.

The main `index.jade` file that includes the row template is shown in Example 8-10. This template introduces two new Jade constructs: a conditional test and iteration. The conditional is used to test for the `length` property on the `widgets` object, ensuring us we're dealing with an array. The iteration construct uses an abbreviated form of the `Array.forEach` method, where the array is traversed, and each instance assigned to the new variable, `widget`.

Example 8-10. The index template creating a table of widgets

```

extends layout

block content
  table
    caption Widgets
    if widgets.length
      tr
        th ID
        th Name
        th Price
        th Description
        th
        th
      each widget in widgets
        include row

```

A whole lot less work than having to manually enter all those angle brackets, especially with the table headers (`th`). The results of the Jade template are identical to those from the EJS template: an HTML table with widgets in each row, and the ability to edit or delete each widget.

The next two conversion are working with forms. First, we'll convert the edit template into one using Jade. The only real tricky part of the conversion is handling all the various attributes. Though you can separate

each by a space, I find it helps to list each on a separate line. This way you can see that you've properly included all the attributes, and easily double check their values. Example 8-11 contains the rather long template for the widget edit form.

Example 8-11. Jade template for the edit widget form

```
extends layout

block content
  h1 Edit #{widget.name}
  form(method="POST"
    action="/widgets/#{widget.id}"
    enctype="application/x-www-form-urlencoded")
    p Widget Name:
      input(type="text"
        name="widgetname"
        id="widgetname"
        size="25"
        value="#{widget.name}"
        required)
    p Widget Price:
      input(type="text"
        name="widgetprice"
        id="widgetprice"
        size="25"
        value="#{widget.price}"
        pattern="^\$?([0-9]{1,3},([0-9]{3},)*[0-9]{3}|[0-9]+)(.[0-9][0-9])?\$"
        required)
    p Widget Description:
      br
      textarea(name="widgetdesc"
        id="widgetdesc"
        cols="20"
        rows="5") #{widget.desc}
    p
      input(type="hidden"
        name="_method"
        id="_method"
        value="put")
      input(type="submit"
        name="submit"
        id="submit"
        value="Submit")
      input(type="reset"
        name="reset"
        id="reset"
        value="reset")
```

During the conversion of the show widget I noticed that the top of the page is basically a repeat of what is displayed in the *added.jade* template from Example 8-9: an unordered list with all of the widget's properties. Another opportunity to simplify!

I created a new template, *widget.jade*, that just displays the widget information as an unordered list:

```
ul
  li id: #{widget.id}
  li Name: #{widget.name}
  li Price: ${widget.price.toFixed(2)}
  li Desc: #{widget.desc}
```

I then modified the *added.jade* file from Example 8-9 to use this new template:

```
extends layout

block content
```

```
| h1 #{title} | #{widget.name}
| include widget
```

The new `show` widget template also makes use of the new `widget.jade` template, as demonstrated in Example 8-12.

Example 8-12. The new show widget template in Jade

```
extends layout

block content
  h1 #{widget.name}
  include widget
  form(method="POST"
    action="/widgets/#{widget.id}"
    enctype="application/x-www-form-urlencoded")
    input(type="hidden"
      name="_method"
      id="_method"
      value="delete")
    input(type="submit"
      name="submit"
      id="submit"
      value="Delete Widget")
```

You can see how modularizing the templates makes each that much cleaner, and easier to maintain.

With this new template we can now show and delete a specific widget...and that leads to a quirk in the application, where the Jade template differs from the EJS template.

In the Widgets application, when widgets are deleted, they are deleted *in-place*. This means the array element is basically set to null, so that the widget location in the array is maintained relative to its identifier. This in-place maintenance doesn't cause a problem when we add and delete widgets and display them in the index page in EJS, but it does cause a problem with Jade: we get an error about missing properties, because it doesn't filter out null array elements like the EJS template processing does.

This is trivially easy to fix. To the Jade markup in the `index.jade` file, as shown in Example 8-10, just add another conditional test to make sure the widget object exists (is not null):

```
extends layout

block content
  table
    caption Widgets
    if widgets.length
      tr
        th ID
        th Name
        th Price
        th Description
        th
        th
    each widget in widgets
      if widget
        include row
```

And now, all of the template views have been converted to Jade, and the application is complete. Well, until we add in the data portion in Chapter 11.

The application is complete, but not very attractive. Of course, it's a simple thing just to add a stylesheet into the header to modify the presentation of all the elements, but we'll briefly take a look at another approach, using Stylus.

Incorporating Stylus for Simplified CSS

It's a simple matter to include a stylesheet into any of the template files. In the Jade template file, we can add it to the `header.jade` file:

```
head
  title #{title}
  meta(charset="utf-8")
  link(type="text/css"
    rel="stylesheet"
    href="/stylesheets/main.css"
    media="all")
```

The stylesheet is now immediately available to all of our application views, because they all use the layout template, which uses this header.

Now we can definitely see the value of converting the static `new.html` file into a template view: making the change to the header doesn't impact on it, and it has to be manually edited.

If you've grown fond of the syntax for Jade, though, you can use a variation of this syntax for CSS by incorporating the use of Stylus into your application.

To use Stylus, first install it with npm:

```
| npm install stylus
```

Stylus is not like the Jade template system. It doesn't create dynamic CSS views. What it does is generate static stylesheets from a Stylus template the first time the template is accessed, or each time when the template is modified.

Read more about Stylus as <http://learnboost.github.com/stylus/docs/js.html>.

To incorporate Stylus into the Widgets application, we have to include the module within the main application file's (`app.js`) require section. Then we have to include the Stylus middleware along with the others in the configure method call, passing in an option with the source for the Stylus templates, and the destination where the compiled stylesheets are to be placed. Example 8-13 shows the newly modified `app.js` file with these changes. in bold text.

Example 8-13. Adding Stylus CSS template support to the Widget application

```
var express = require('express')
, routes = require('./routes')
, map = require('./maproutecontroller')
, http = require('http')
, stylus = require('stylus')
, app = express();

app.configure(function(){
  app.set('views', __dirname + '/views');
  app.set('view engine', 'jade');
  app.use(express.favicon());
  app.use(express.logger('dev'));
  app.use(express.staticCache({maxObjects: 100, maxLength: 512}));
app.use(stylus.middleware({
  src: __dirname + '/views'
  , dest: __dirname + '/public'
}));
  app.use(express.static(__dirname + '/public'));
  app.use(express.bodyParser());
  app.use(express.methodOverride());
  app.use(app.router);
  app.use(express.directory(__dirname + '/public'));
```

```

app.use(function(req, res, next) {
  throw new Error(req.url + ' not found');
});
app.use(function(err, req, res, next) {
  console.log(err);
  res.send(err.message);
});
});

app.configure('development', function() {
  app.use(express.errorHandler());
});

app.get('/', routes.index);

var prefixes = ['widgets'];

// map route to controller
prefixes.forEach(function(prefix) {
  map.mapRoute(app, prefix);
});

http.createServer(app).listen(3000);

console.log("Express server listening on port 3000");

```

The first time you access the Widget application after adding this change, you may notice a very brief hesitation. The reason why is that the Stylus module is generating the stylesheet when a new or modified stylesheet template is added, and the application is restarted. After the stylesheet has been generated, though, it's the generated copy that's served up—it isn't recompiled with every page access.

You will need to restart your Express application if you make changes to the stylesheet template.

The Stylus stylesheet templates all have the same extension: .styl. The source directory is set to views, but it expects the stylesheet templates to be in a stylesheets directory under views. When it generates the static stylesheets, it places them in a stylesheets directory under the destination directory (in this case, /public).

After working with Jade, the Stylus syntax should be very familiar. Again, each element that is being styled is listed, with the stylesheet setting indented following. The syntax strips away the need for curly brackets, colons, and semi-colons. For example, to change the background color for the web page to yellow, and the text color to red, use the following for the Stylus template:

```

body
  background-color yellow
  color red

```

If you want elements to share settings, list them on the same line with a comma between them, just like you would with CSS:

```

p, tr
  background-color yellow
  color red

```

Or you can list the elements on separate lines:

```

p
tr
  background-color yellow
  color red

```

If you want to use a pseudo class, such as :hover or :visited, use the following syntax

```

| textarea

```

```
input
background-color #fff
&:hover
background-color cyan
```

The ampersand (&) represents the parent selector. All combined, the following Stylus template

```
Combined, the following:
p, tr
background-color yellow
color red

textarea
input
background-color #fff
&:hover
background-color cyan
```

Generates the following static CSS file.

```
p,
tr {
background-color: #ff0;
color: #f00;
}
textarea,
input {
background-color: #fff;
}
textarea:hover,
input:hover {
background-color: #0ff;
}
```

There's more to working with Stylus, but I'll leave that to you as an off-book exercise. The Stylus web site provides a good set of documentation for the syntax. Before leaving this chapter, though, I'm going to create a Stylus stylesheet that enhances the presentation of the Widget application.

Specifically, I'm going to add a border and spacing to the HTML table element in the index widget listing page. I'm also going to change the font for the headers, and remove the bullet indicators for the unordered list. Small changes, but they'll be a start in refining the appearance of Widgets.

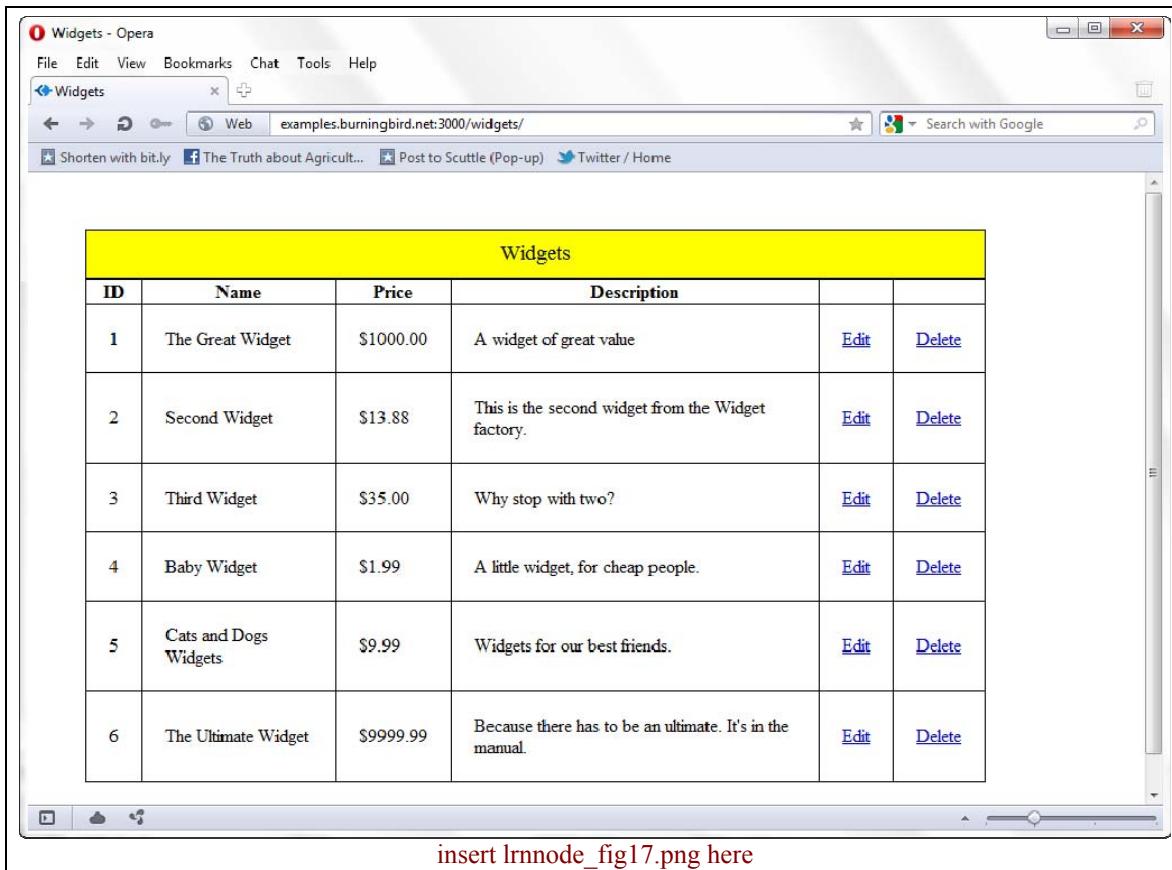
The new stylesheet template is shown in Example 8-14. It's not terribly big, and doesn't use any involved CSS. Basic stuff. But it does improve the overall appearance of the application, smooth it out a bit.

Example 8-14. Stylus template for Widget application

```
body
margin 50px
table
width 90%
border-collapse collapse
table, td, th, caption
border 1px solid black
td
padding 20px
caption
font-size larger
background-color yellow
padding 10px
h1
font 1.5em Georgia, serif
ul
list-style-type none
form
margin 20px
```

```
| padding 20px
```

Figure 8-4 shows the index page after several widgets have been added. Again, nothing fancy, but the data content is a lot easier to read with the new stylesheet.



The screenshot shows a web browser window titled "Widgets - Opera". The address bar displays "examples.burningbird.net:3000/widgets/". The main content area is a table with a yellow header row labeled "Widgets". The table has columns for "ID", "Name", "Price", "Description", "Edit", and "Delete". There are six rows of data:

ID	Name	Price	Description	Edit	Delete
1	The Great Widget	\$1000.00	A widget of great value	Edit	Delete
2	Second Widget	\$13.88	This is the second widget from the Widget factory.	Edit	Delete
3	Third Widget	\$35.00	Why stop with two?	Edit	Delete
4	Baby Widget	\$1.99	A little widget, for cheap people.	Edit	Delete
5	Cats and Dogs Widgets	\$9.99	Widgets for our best friends.	Edit	Delete
6	The Ultimate Widget	\$9999.99	Because there has to be an ultimate. It's in the manual.	Edit	Delete

Figure 8-4. Widget application index page with Stylus styling

Structured Data with Node + Redis

When it comes to data, there's relational databases and Everything Else, otherwise known as NoSQL. Among the NoSQL options, a type of structured data is based on key-value pairs, typically stored in memory for extremely fast access. The three most popular in-memory key-value stores are Memcached, Cassandra, and Redis. Happily for Node developers, there is Node support for all three stores.

Memcached is primarily used as a way of caching data queries for quick access in memory. It's also quite good with distributed computing, but has limited support for more complex data. It's useful for applications doing a lot of queries, but less amenable for applications doing a lot of writing as well as reading of data. Redis is the superior data store for the latter type of application. In addition, Redis can be persisted, and provides more flexibility than Memcached—especially in its support for different types of data. However, unlike Memcached, Redis only works on a single machine.

The same factors also come into play when comparing Redis and Cassandra. Again, Cassandra, like Memcached, has support for clusters. However, also like Memcached, it has limited data structure support. It's good for ad-hoc queries—a use that does not favor Redis. However, Redis is simple to use, uncomplicated, and typically faster than Cassandra.

For these reasons, and others, Redis has gained a greater following among Node developers, which is why I picked it over Memcached and Cassandra to cover in this chapter on key-value in-memory data stores.

The Redis site is at <http://redis.io/>. Read more on Memcached at <http://memcached.org/>, and Apache Cassandra at <http://cassandra.apache.org/>.

Getting Started with Node + Redis

There are several modules supporting Redis, including Redback, which provides a higher level interface, but in this chapter I'm focusing on just one: node_redis, or just redis, by Matt Ranney. I like redis because it provides a simple and elegant interface to directly access Redis commands, so you can leverage what you know about the data store with minimal intervention.

The node_redis Github page is at https://github.com/mranney/node_redis.

The redis module can be installed using npm:

```
| npm install redis
```

If you want to use hiredis with the redis module, install it using the following:

```
| npm install hiredis redis
```

I recommend using the hiredis library, as it's non-blocking and improves performance.

To use redis in your Node applications, you first include the module:

```
| var redis = require('redis');
```

Then you'll need to create a Redis client. The method used is `createClient`:

```
| var client = redis.createClient();
```

The `createClient` method can take three optional parameters: port, host, options. By default, the host is set to `127.0.0.1`, and the port is set to `6379`. The port is the one used by default for a Redis server, so these default settings should be fine if the Redis server is hosted on the same machine as the Node application.

The third parameter is an object that supports the following options:

- `parser`: Redis protocol reply parser, by default set to `hiredis`. You can also use `javascript`.
- `return_buffers`: defaults to false. If true, all replies are set as Node buffer objects rather than strings.
- `detect_buffers`: defaults to false. If true, replies sent as buffer objects if any input to original commands were buffers.
- `socket_nodelay`: defaults to true. Whether to call `setNoDelay` on TCP stream.
- `no_ready_check`: defaults to false. Set to true inhibits the "ready check" sent to server to check if it is ready for more commands.

Unless you have a really good reason, your best bet is to leave the options set to their default values.

Once you have a client connection to the Redis data store, you can send several commands up until you call the `client.quit` method call, which closes the connection to the Redis server. If you want to force a closure, you can use the `client.end` method, instead. However, the latter method doesn't wait for all replies to be parsed. The `client.end` method is a good method to call if your application is stuck, or you want to start over.

Issuing Redis commands through the client connection is a fairly intuitive process. All commands are exposed as methods on the client object, and command arguments are passed as parameters. Since this is Node, the last parameter is a callback function, which returns an error and whatever data or reply is given in response to the Redis command.

In the following code, the `client.hset` method is used to set a hash property:

```
| client.hset("hashid", "propname", "propvalue", function(err, reply) {  
    // do something with error or reply  
});
```

The `hset` command sets a value, so there's no return data, only the Redis acknowledgement. If you call a method that gets multiple values, such as `client.hvals`, the second parameter in the callback function will be an array—either an array of single strings, or an array of objects:

```
| client.hvals(obj.member, function (err, replies) {  
    if (err) {  
        return console.error("error response - " + err);  
    }  
  
    console.log(replies.length + " replies:");  
    replies.forEach(function (reply, i) {  
        console.log("    " + i + ": " + reply);  
    });  
});
```

Because the Node callback is so ubiquitous, and because so many of the Redis commands are operations that just reply with a confirmation of success, the redis module provides a `redis.print` method you can pass as last parameter:

```
| client.set("somekey", "somevalue", redis.print);
```

The `redis.print` method prints either the error or the reply to the console and returns.

Building a Game Leaderboard

One possible use for Redis is to create a game leaderboard. A leaderboard is a score keeping device provided for digital games on computers and handheld devices such as smart phones and tablets. A popular one is OpenFeint, which allows game players to create an online profile, and then store scores for various games. People can compete among friends, or compete for top score for any given game.

This is the type of application that can be served by a hybrid data solution. The profiles could be stored in a relational data store, but the scores themselves could be stored in a data store like Redis. The data needs for the scores are simple, and the score data is accessed and modified frequently, and by large numbers of users. One game developer for Facebook estimated they had 10,000 concurrent users, with 200,000 requests per minute during peak game times. However, the system to handle the requests doesn't have to be Herculean in nature, because the data isn't complex, and there transactional enforcement really isn't a necessity. Frankly, a relational or document database is overkill. A key/value data store like Redis is ideal.

The Redis hash and the sorted set are the most appropriate data structures for this type of application. The hash is ideal because the information about each score is more than just one or two fields. Typically, you'll store a member id, perhaps their name (to limit having to go back to the relational or document store that often), perhaps the game name if the system provides leaderboards for more than one game, the last date played, the score, and any other relevant information.

The sorted set is the best data structure for tracking just the scores and user name, and being able to quickly access the highest 10 or 100 scores.

To create the application that updates the Redis database, I converted the TCP client/server application I created in Chapter 3 to send data from the TCP client to the server, which then updates Redis. It wouldn't be unusual for a gaming application to store the data via TCP socket, rather than HTTP or other means.

The TCP client takes whatever we type at the command line and sends it to the server. The code is exactly the same as that shown in Example 3.3, so I won't repeat it. When I run the TCP client, unlike previous testing, instead of just sending through plain text messages, I send JSON representing the information being stored in the Redis database. An example is the following:

```
{"member" : 400, "first_name" : "Ada", "last_name" : "Lovelace", "score" : 53455,  
"date" : "10/10/1840"}
```

The server is modified to convert the data string it receives into a JavaScript object, and to access the individual members to store into a hash. The member identifier and score are also added to a sorted set, with the game score used as the set score. Example 9-1 shows the modified TCP server application.

```
Example 9-1. TCP Server that updates the Redis data store  
var net = require('net');  
var redis = require('redis');  
  
var server = net.createServer(function(conn) {  
    console.log('connected');  
  
    // create Redis client  
    var client = redis.createClient();  
  
    client.on('error', function(err) {  
        console.log('Error ' + err);  
    });  
  
    // fifth database is game score database  
    client.select(5);  
    conn.on('data', function(data) {  
        console.log(data + ' from ' + conn.remoteAddress + ' ' +  
        conn.remotePort);  
    });  
});
```

```

try {
    var obj = JSON.parse(data);

    // add or overwrite score
    client.hset(obj.member, "first_name", obj.first_name, redis.print);
    client.hset(obj.member, "last_name", obj.last_name, redis.print);
    client.hset(obj.member, "score", obj.score, redis.print);
    client.hset(obj.member, "date", obj.date, redis.print);

    // add to scores for Zowie!
    client.zadd("Zowie!", parseInt(obj.score), obj.member);
} catch(err) {
    console.log(err);
}
});

conn.on('close', function() {
    console.log('client closed connection');
    client.quit();
});

}).listen(8124);

console.log('listening on port 8124');

```

The Redis connection is established when the server is created, and closed when the server is closed. The object conversion and persistence of the data to Redis is enclosed in exception handling to prevent the server from failing if we fat finger the input.

As mentioned earlier, two different data stores are being updated: the individual's score information (including their name, score, and date) are stored in a hash, and the member's identifier and score in a sorted set. The member's identifier is used as the key in the hash, while the game score is used as the score for the member identifier in the sorted set. The critical component to making the application work is the member identifier appearing in both data stores.

The next part of the application is a way of displaying the top five score holders of our fictional game (named Zowie! in this exercise). In a sorted set, you can retrieve a range of data by score using the Redis `zrange` command. However, this function returns the range of values sorted from lowest to highest, which is opposite of what we want. What we want is to return the five highest scores, sorted by highest number, first. The Redis command to use `zrevrange`.

To display the top five game players, this time I'll create an HTTP server that will return the results as a simple table list. In order to ensure a relatively decent display, I'm going to use the Jade template system, but instead of using it with the Express framework—since the gaming application isn't based on Express—I'm just going to use Jade by itself.

To use Jade outside of express, you read in the primary template file, and then call the `compile` method, passing in the template file string, and options. The only option I'm providing is `filename`, because in the template file I'm using the include directive, and this requires `filename`. I'm actually using the template filename and location, but you'll want to use any filename that returns a directory location relative to the files included in the Jade template.

As for the template, itself, Example 9-2 has the contents of the Jade file. Note that I'm using the `include` directive to embed the CSS directly in the file. Since I'm not utilizing a static file server in this application, the application can't serve up the CSS file if I just embed a link to the CSS file. Also note the use of the pipe () with the `style` opening and ending tags, which are in HTML rather than using Jade syntax. That's because Jade does not process the include file if it's listed within a `style` tag.

Example 9-2. Jade template file for displaying the five highest scores

```

doctype 5
html(lang="en")
    head

```

```

title Zowie! Top Scores
meta(charset="utf-8")
| <style type="text/css">
include main.css
| </style>
body
table
caption Zowie! Top Scorers!
tr
th Score
th Name
th Date
if scores.length
each score in scores
if score
tr
td #{score.score}
td #{score.first_name} #{score.last_name}
td #{score.date}

```

To render the template, the application reads in the template file (using a synchronous file read, since this only occurs once, when the application is first started), and then uses it to compile a template function:

```

var layout = require('fs').readFileSync(__dirname + '/score.jade', 'utf8');
var fn = jade.compile(layout, {filename: __dirname + '/score.jade'});

```

The compiled Jade function can then be used any time I want to render the HTML from the template, passing in whatever data the template is expecting:

```

var str = fn({scores : result});
res.end(str);

```

This will all make sense when we see the complete server application, but for now, let's return to the Redis part of the application.

The Top Scores application is using two Redis calls: `zrevrange` to get a range of scores, and then to `hgetall` to get all the hash fields for each member listed in the top scores. And this is where things get a little tricky.

You can easily combine results from multiple tables when you're using a relational database, but the same doesn't hold when accessing data from a key/value data store such as Redis. It's doable, but then, since this is a Node application, we have the extra complexity of each Redis call being asynchronous.

This is where a library such as Async comes in handy. I covered Async in Chapter 5, and demonstrated a couple of the Async methods (`waterfall` and `parallel`). One method I didn't demonstrate was `series`, which is the ideal function for our use. The Redis functions need to be called in order, so the data is returned in order, but each interim step doesn't need to have the data from previous steps. The Async `parallel` functionality would run all the calls at once, which is fine, but then the results from each are returned in a random order—not guaranteed to return highest score first. The `waterfall` functionality isn't necessary, because each step doesn't need data from the previous step. The Async `series` functionality ensures each Redis `hgetall` call is made in sequence and the data is returned in sequence, but each functional step doesn't care about the others.

So we now have a way for the Redis commands to get called in order and ensure the data is returned in proper sequence, but the code to do so is clumsy: we have to add a separate step in Async series for each `hgetall` Redis call and return the result once for each score returned. Working with five values isn't a problem, but what if we want to return ten? A hundred? Having to manually code each Redis call into the Async series is going to become more than tedious—the code is error prone, and difficult to maintain.

What the Scores application does is loop through the array of values returned from the `zrevrange` Redis call, passing each value as parameter to a function named `makeCallbackFunc`. All this helper function does is return a callback function that invokes Redis `hgetall`, using the parameter to get the data for a

specific member, and then call the callback function as the last line of its callback—a requirement for being able to chain results when using Async. The callback function returned from `makeCallbackFunc` is pushed onto an array, and it's this array that gets sent as parameter to the Async `series` method. Additionally, since the Redis module returns the `hgetall` result as an object, and the Async `series` function inserts each object into an array as it finishes, when all of this functionality is complete, I can just take the final result and pass it into the template engine to generate the text to return to the server.

Example 9-3 is the complete code for the Top Scores server application. Though it sounds like a lot of work, there isn't that much code, thanks to the elegance and usability of both the Redis and Async modules.

Example 9-3. The game top score service

```
var http = require('http');
var async = require('async');
var redis = require('redis');
var jade = require('jade');

// set up Jade template
var layout = require('fs').readFileSync(__dirname + '/score.jade', 'utf8');
var fn = jade.compile(layout, {filename: __dirname + '/score.jade'});

// start Redis client
var client = redis.createClient();

// select fifth database
client.select(5);

// helper function
function makeCallbackFunc(member) {
    return function(callback) {
        client.hgetall(member, function(err, obj) {
            callback(err, obj);
        });
    };
}
http.createServer(function(req,res) {

    // first filter out icon request
    if (req.url === '/favicon.ico') {
        res.writeHead(200, {'Content-Type': 'image/x-icon'});
        res.end();
        return;
    }

    // get scores, reverse order, top five only
    client.zrevrange('Zowie!',0,4, function(err,result) {
        var scores;
        if (err) {
            console.log(err);
            res.end('Top scores not currently available, please check back');
            return;
        }

        // create array of callback functions for Async.series call
        var callFunctions = new Array();

        // process results with makeCallbackFunc, push newly returned
        // callback into array
        for (var i = 0; i < result.length; i++) {
            callFunctions.push(makeCallbackFunc(result[i]));
        }

        // using Async series to process each callback in turn and return
    })
})
```

```

// end result as array of objects
async.series(
  callFunctions,
  function (err, result) {
    if (err) {
      console.log(err);
      res.end('Scores not available');
      return;
    }

    // pass object array to template engine
    var str = fn({scores : result});
    res.end(str);
  });
}).listen(3000);

console.log('Server running on 3000/');

```

Before the HTTP server is created, I set up the Jade template function and also establish a running client to the Redis data store. When a new request is made of the server, I filter out all requests for the favicon.ico (no need to call Redis for a favicon.ico request), and then access the top five scores using `zrevrange`. Once the application has the scores, it uses the Async `series` method to process the Redis hash requests, one at a time and in sequence so it can get an ordered result back. This resulting array is passed to the Jade template engine.

Figure 9-1 shows the application after I've added in several different scores for different folks.

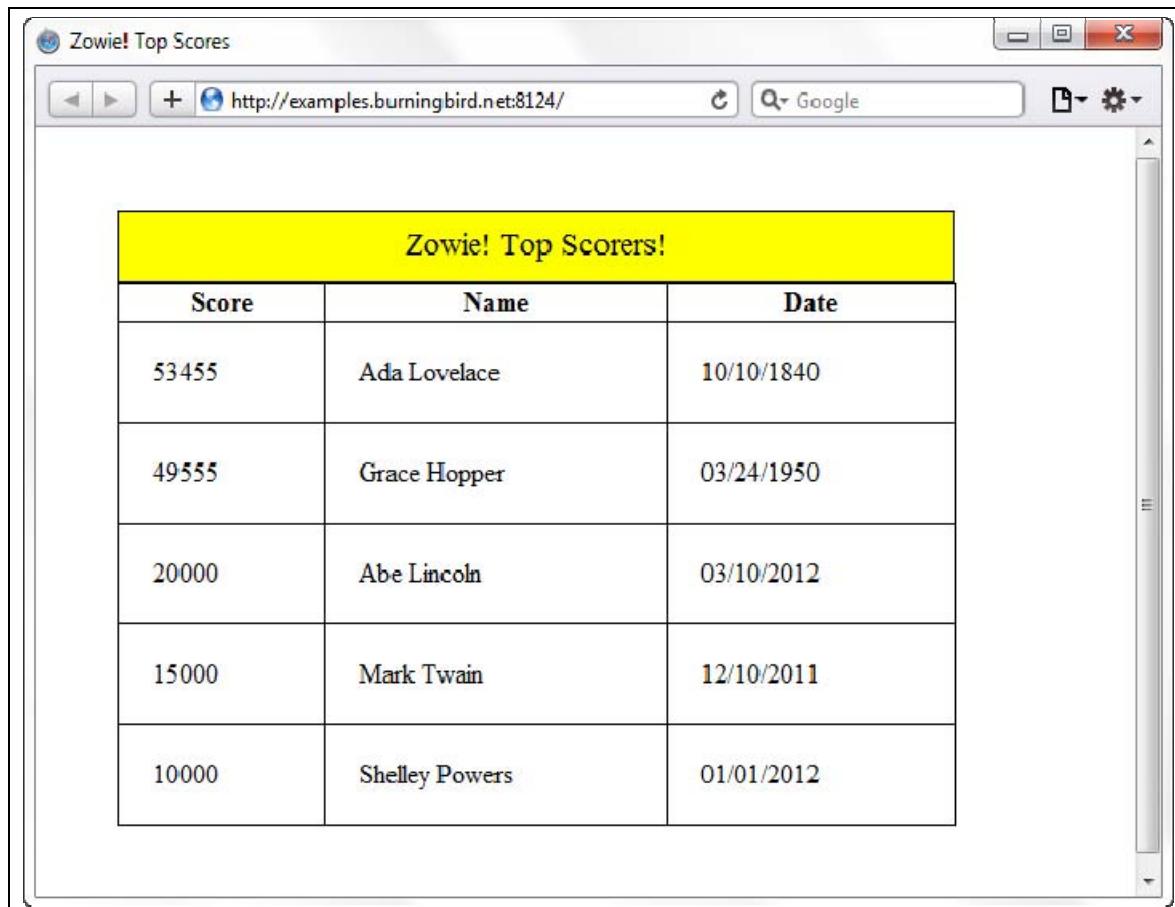


Figure 9-1. The Zowie! game top scorers

Creating a Message Queue

A message queue is an application that takes, as input, some form of communication, which is then stored into a queue. The messages are stored until they're retrieved by the message receiver. The messages are then popped off the queue and sent to the receiver (either one at a time, or in bulk). The communication is asynchronous, because the application that stores the messages doesn't require the receiver be connected, and the receiver doesn't really require that the message storing application be connected either.

Redis is an ideal storage medium for this type of application. Not only is Redis the perfect data store, its list data structure is also the ideal structure for this type of application. As the messages are received by the application that stores them, they're pushed on to the end of the message queue. As the messages are retrieved by the application that receives them, they're popped off the front of the message queue.

For the message queue demonstration, I created a Node application that's going to access the web log files for several different subdomains. The application uses a Node child process and the Unix tail -f command to access recent entries for the different log files. From these log entries, the application uses two RegExp objects: one to extract out the resource accessed, and the second to test whether the resource is an image file. If the accessed resource is an image file, it sends the resource URL in a TCP message to the message queue application.

All the message queue application does is listen for incoming messages on port 3000, and stores whatever is set to the sever into a Redis data store. It also records the incoming data to the console.

The third part of the demonstration application is a web server that lists for requests on port 8124. With each request, it accesses the Redis database and pops off the front entry in the image data store, returning it via the response object. If the Redis database returns a null for the image resource, it prints out a message that the application has reached the end of the message queue.

The first part of the application, which processes the web log entries, is shown in Example 9-4. The Unix tail command is a way of displaying the last few lines of a text file (or piped data). When used with the -f flag, the utility displays a few lines of the file and then sits, listening for new file entries. When one occurs, it returns the new line. The tail -f command can be used on several different files at the same time, and manages the content by labeling where the data comes from each time it comes from a different source. The application isn't concerned about which access log is generating the latest tail response—it just wants the log entry.

Once the application has the log entry, it performs a couple of regular expression matches on the data to look for image resource access (files with a .jpg, .gif, .svg, and .png extension). Once found, it sends the resource URL to the message queue application (a TCP server).

Example 9-4. Node application that processes web log entries, and sends image resource requests to message queue

```
var spawn = require('child_process').spawn;
var net = require('net');

var client = new net.Socket();
client.setEncoding('utf8');

// connect to TCP server
client.connect ('3000','examples.burningbird.net', function() {
    console.log('connected to server');
});

// start child process
var logs = spawn('tail', ['-f',
    '/home/main/logs/access.log',
    '/home/tech/logs/access.log',
    '/home/shelleypowers/logs/access.log',
    '/home/green/logs/access.log',
    '/home/puppies/logs/access.log']);

```

```

// process child process data
logs.stdout.setEncoding('utf8');
logs.stdout.on('data', function(data) {

    // resource URL
    var re = /GET\s(\S+)\sHTTP/g;

    // graphics test
    var re2 = /\.gif|\.png|\.jpg|\.svg/;

    // extract URL, test for graphics
    // store in Redis if found
    var parts = re.exec(data);
    console.log(parts[1]);
    var tst = re2.test(parts[1]);
    if (tst) {
        client.write(parts[1]);
    }
});
logs.stderr.on('data', function(data) {
    console.log('stderr: ' + data);
});

logs.on('exit', function(code) {
    console.log('child process exited with code ' + code);
    client.end();
});

```

Typical console log entries for this application are given in the following block of code, with the entries of interest (the image file accesses) in bold text:

```

/robots.txt
/weblog
/writings/fiction?page=10
/images/kite.jpg
/node/145
/culture/book-reviews/silkworm
/feed/atom/
/images/visitmologo.jpg
/images/canvas.png
/sites/default/files/paws.png
/feeds/atom.xml

```

Example 9-5 contains the code for the message queue. It's a simple application that starts a TCP server and listens for incoming messages. When it receives a message, it extracts the data from the message and stores it in the Redis database. The application uses the Redis rpush command to push the data on the end of the images list (highlighted in the code).

Example 9-5. Message queue that takes incoming messages, pushes them onto a Redis list

```

var net = require('net');
var redis = require('redis');

var server = net.createServer(function(conn) {
    console.log('connected');

    // create Redis client
    var client = redis.createClient();

    client.on('error', function(err) {
        console.log('Error ' + err);
    });

    // sixth database is image queue

```

```

client.select(6);
// listen for incoming data
conn.on('data', function(data) {
    console.log(data + ' from ' + conn.remoteAddress + ' ' +
    conn.remotePort);

    // store data
    client.rpush('images',data);
});

}).listen(3000);
server.on('close', function(err) {
    client.quit();
});

console.log('listening on port 3000');

```

The message queue application console log entries would typically look like the following.

```

listening on port 3000
connected
/images/venus.png from 173.255.206.103 39519
/images/kite.jpg from 173.255.206.103 39519
/images/visitmologo.jpg from 173.255.206.103 39519
/images/canvas.png from 173.255.206.103 39519
/sites/default/files/paws.png from 173.255.206.103 39519

```

The last piece of the message queue demonstration application is the HTTP server that listens on port 8124 for requests, shown in Example 9-6. As the HTTP server receives each request it accesses the Redis database, pops off the next entry in the images list and prints it out in the response. If there are no more entries in the list (Redis returns null as a reply), it prints out a message that the message queue is empty.

Example 9-6. HTTP Server that pops off messages from the Redis list and returns to the user

```

var redis = require("redis"),
    http = require('http');

var messageServer = http.createServer();

// listen for incoming request
messageServer.on('request', function (req, res) {

    // first filter out icon request
    if (req.url === '/favicon.ico') {
        res.writeHead(200, {'Content-Type': 'image/x-icon'});
        res.end();
        return;
    }

    // create Redis client
    var client = redis.createClient();

    client.on('error', function (err) {
        console.log('Error ' + err);
    });

    // set database to 1
    client.select(6);

    client.lpop('images', function(err, reply) {
        if(err) {
            return console.error('error response ' + err);
        }
    });
});

```

```

        // if data
        if (reply) {
            res.write(reply + '\n');
        } else {
            res.write('End of queue\n');
        }
        res.end();
    });
    client.quit();
});

messageServer.listen(8124);

console.log('listening on 8124');

```

Accessing the HTTP server application with a web browser returns an URL for the image resource on each request (browser refresh), until the message queue is empty.

When to Create the Redis Client

In the chapter examples, sometimes I create a Redis client and persist it for the life of the application, other times I create a Redis client and release it as soon as the Redis command is finished. So when is it better to create a persistent Redis connection, as compared to creating a connection and releasing it immediately?

Good question.

To test the impact of the two different approaches, I created a TCP server that listened for requests and stored a simple hash in the Redis database. I then created another application, as a TCP client, that did nothing more than send an object in a TCP message to the server.

I used the Apache Bench application to run several concurrent iterations of the client and tested how long it took for each run. I ran the first batch with the Redis client connection persisted for the life of the server, and ran the second batch where the client connection was created for each request and immediately released.

What I expected to find was that the application that persisted the client connection was faster, and I was right...to a point. About half way through the test with the persistent connection, the application dramatically slowed down for a brief period of time, and then resumed its relatively fast pace.

Of course, what most likely happened is that the queued requests for the Redis database eventually blocked the Node application, at least temporarily, until the queue was freed up. I didn't run into this same situation when opening and closing the connections with each request because the extra overhead required for this process slowed the application just enough so that it didn't hit the upper end of concurrent users.

I'll have more on this test, as well as other tests with Apache Bench and other performance and debugging tools in Chapter 14 and Chapter 16.

Adding a Stats Middleware to an Express Application

The creator of Redis originally intended to use the technology to create a statistics application. It's an ideal use for Redis: a simple data store, quickly and frequently written, and providing the ability to summarize an activity.

In this section, we're going to use Redis as a way of adding statistics for the Widget application we started in earlier chapters. It's not a full featured statistical application, such as awstats, but it does two different things: it collects a set of all IP addresses that have accessed pages from the Widget application, and counts the number of times different resources have been accessed. In order to create this functionality, the

application makes use of a Redis set and the ability to increment numeric strings. The application also uses the Redis transaction control, multi, in order to get the two separate collections of data at the same time.

The first part of the application is to add new middleware that records access information to the Redis database. The middleware function uses a Redis set and the `sadd` method to add each IP address, because a set ensures that an existing value isn't recorded twice. We're collecting a set of IP addresses for visitors, but we're not keeping track each time the visitor accesses a resource. The function is also using one of the Redis incremental functions, but not `incr`, which increments a string. It uses `hincrby`, because the resource URL and its associated access counter are stored as a hash.

Example 9-7 displays the code for the middleware, located in a file named `stats.js`. The second Redis database is used for the application, the IPs are stored in a set identified by `ip`, and the URL/access counter hash is stored in a hash identified by `myurls`.

```
Example 9-7. The Redis stats middleware  
var redis = require('redis');  
  
module.exports = function getStats() {  
  
    return function getStats(req, res, next) {  
        // create Redis client  
        var client = redis.createClient();  
  
        client.on('error', function (err) {  
            console.log('Error ' + err);  
        });  
  
        // set database to 2  
        client.select(2);  
  
        // add IP to set  
        client.sadd('ip', req.socket.remoteAddress);  
  
        // increment resource count  
        client.hincrby('myurls', req.url, 1);  
  
        client.quit();  
        next();  
    }  
}
```

The statistics interface is accessed at the top-level domain, so we'll add the code for the router to the `index.js` file in the routes subdirectory. First, we need to add the route to the main application file, just after the route for the top-level index:

```
app.get('/', routes.index);  
  
app.get('/stats', routes.stats);
```

The controller code for the statistic application makes use of the Redis transaction control, accessible via the `multi` function call. Two sets of data are accessed: the set of unique IP addresses, returned by `smembers`, and the URL/count hash, returned with `hgetall`. Both functions are invoked, in sequence, when the `exec` method is called, and both sets of returned data are appended as array elements in the `exec` function's callback method, as shown in Example 9-8. Once the data is retrieved, it's passed in a `render` call to a new view, named `stats`. The new functionality for the `index.js` file is in bold text.

```
Example 9-8. The routes index file with the new controller code for the statistics application  
var redis = require('redis');  
  
// home page  
exports.index = function(req, res){  
    res.render('index', { title: 'Express' });  
}
```

```

};

// stats
exports.stats = function(req, res) {

  var client = redis.createClient();

  client.select(2);

  // Redis transaction to gather data
  client.multi()
    .smembers('ip')
    .hgetall('myurls')
    .exec(function(err, results) {
      var ips = results[0];
      var urls = results[1];
      res.render('stats', { title: 'Stats', ips: ips, urls: urls });
      client.quit();
    });
}

```

I mentioned that that `multi` and `exec` are Redis transaction control commands. These aren't the same type of transaction controls you're probably used to with a relational database. All the `multi` command does is collect a set of Redis commands that are then processed sequentially when the `exec` command is given. Where this type of functionality is useful in the Node world is it provides a way of getting multiple collections of data that are all returned at the exact same time—no nested callback functions or having to use something like Step or Async to get all the data at once.

Having said that, also don't let the fact that the Redis commands are seemingly chained together fool you into thinking that the data from one command is then available in the next, as can happen with JavaScript functions that are chained together. No, each Redis command is processed in isolation and the data is just added as an array element in the result, and everything is returned at once.

There's no locking the data down during the transaction, either., as you'd also expect with a relational database transaction So any changes to the Redis database during the query can impact on the results.

The last piece of the application is the view, created as a Jade template. The template is very simple: the IP addresses in an unordered list, and the URL/counter statistics, displayed in a table. The Jade `for...in` syntax is used to loop through the IP array, while the `each...in` syntax is used to access the property names and values of the object that's returned with the Redis `hgetall`. The template is shown in Example 9-9.

Example 9-9. The Jade Template for the Stats application

```

extends layout

block content
  h1= title

  h2 Visitor IP Addresses
  ul
    for ip in ips
      li=ip

  table
    caption Page Visits
    each val, key in urls
      tr
        td #{key}
        td #{val}

```

Figure 9-1 shows the statistics page after several Widget application resource pages have been accessed from a couple of different IP addresses.

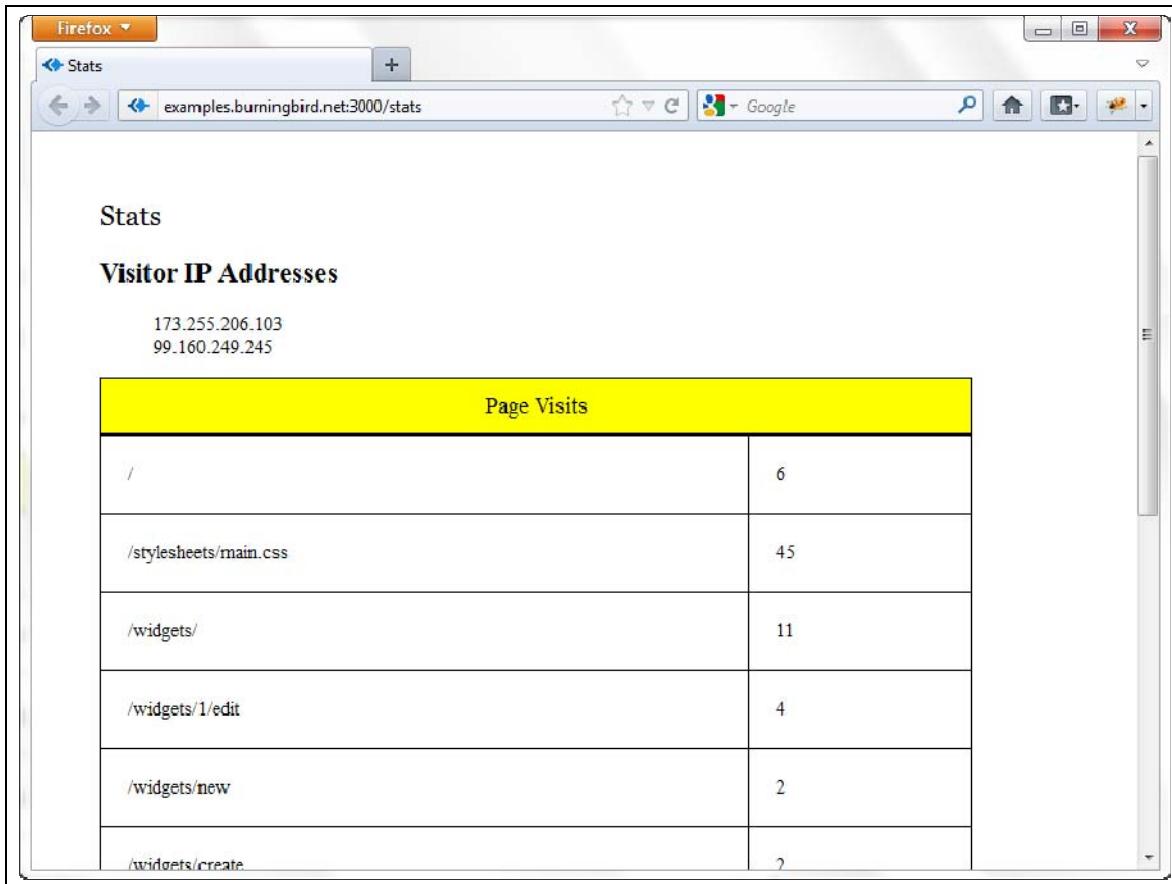


Figure 9-1. The Statistics page enabled by Redis

We don't have to first create the hash when using `hincrby`. If the hash key doesn't exist, Redis creates it automatically and sets the value to 0 before the value is incremented. The only time the functionality fails is if the field already exists and the value in the field isn't a numeric string (can't be incremented).

Another approach to incrementing a counter for each resource is to use Redis strings, and set the resource URL to be the key:

```
| client.incr(url);
```

However, this approach means we have to get all the keys (the URLs), and then get the counters for each URL. We can't necessarily accomplish all of this using `multi`, and because of the asynchronous nature of accessing the data, we'll then end up having to use nested callbacks or some other approach to pull all this data together.

There's no need to go through all of this extra effort when we have built in functionality via the Redis hash and the `hincrby` command.

10

Node and MongoDB: Document Centric Data

Chapter 9 covered one popular NoSQL database structure (key-value pairs via Redis), and this chapter covers another: document centric data stores via MongoDB.

Where MongoDB differs from relational database systems, such as MySQL, is in its support for storing structured data as documents, rather than implementing the more traditional tables. These documents are encoded as BSON, a binary form of JSON, which probably explains its popularity among JavaScript developers. Instead of a table row, you have a BSON document; instead of a table, you have a collection.

MongoDB isn't the only document centric database. Other popular versions of this type of data store are CouchDB by Apache, SimpleDB by Amazon, RavenDB, and even the venerable Lotus Notes. There is some Node support of varying degrees for most modern document data stores, but MongoDB and CouchDB have the most. I decided to cover MongoDB rather CouchDB for the same reasons I picked Express over other frameworks: I feel it's easier for a person with no exposure to the secondary technology (in this case, the data store) to be able to grasp the Node examples more quickly without having to focus overmuch on the non-Node technology. With MongoDB, we can query the data directly, where with CouchDB, we work with the concept of views. This higher level of abstraction does require more up-front time. In my opinion, a person can hit the ground running faster with MongoDB than CouchDB.

There are several modules that work with MongoDB, but I'm going to focus on two: the MongoDB Native Node.js Driver, a driver written in JavaScript, and Mongoose, an object modeling tool providing ORM (Object Relational Mapping) support.

Though I won't get into too many details about how MongoDB works in this chapter, you should be able to follow the examples even if you have not worked with the database system previously. More on MongoDB, including installation help, at <http://www.mongodb.org/>.

The MongoDB Native Node.js Driver

The MongoDB Native Node.js Driver module is a native MongoDB driver for Node. Using it to issue MongoDB instructions is little different than issuing these same instructions into the MongoDB client interface.

The node-mongodb-native Github page is at <https://github.com/mongodb/node-mongodb-native>, and documentation is at <http://mongodb.github.com/node-mongodb-native/>.

After you have installed MongoDB following the instructions outlined at the MongoDB web site, and started a database, install the MongoDB Native Node.js Driver with npm:

```
| npm install mongodb
```

Before trying out any of the examples in the next several sections, make sure MongoDB is installed locally, and is running.

If you're already using MongoDB, make sure to back up your data before trying out the examples in this chapter.

Getting Started with mongodb

To use the MongoDB driver, you first have to require the module:

```
| var mongodb = require('mongodb');
```

To establish a connection to MongoDB, use the `mongodb.Server` object constructor:

```
| var server = new mongodb.Server('localhost', :27017, {auto_reconnect: true});
```

All communication with the MongoDB database occur over TCP. The Server constructor accepts the host and port as the first two parameters, in this case, the default localhost and port 27017. The third parameter is a set of options. In the code, the `auto_reconnect` option is set to true, which means the driver attempts to re-establish a connection if it's lost. Another option is `poolSize`, which determines how many TCP connections are maintained in parallel.

The MongoDB uses one thread per connection, which is why the database creators recommend developers use connection pooling.

Once you have a connection to MongoDB, you can create a database or connect to an existing database. To create a database, use the `mongodb.Db` object constructor:

```
| var db = new mongodb.Db('mydb', server);
```

The first parameter is the database name, and the second is the MongoDB server connection. A third parameter is an object with a set of options. The default option values are sufficient for the work we're doing in this chapter, and the MongoDB driver documentation covers the different values, so I'll skip repeating them in this chapter.

If you've not worked with MongoDB in the past, you may notice that the code doesn't have to provide username and password authentication. By default, MongoDB runs without authentication. When authentication is off, then the database has to run in a trusted environment. This means that MongoDB typically only allows connections from trusted hosts, typically the localhost address, only.

Defining, Creating, and Dropping a MongoDB Collection

MongoDB collections are fundamentally equivalent to relational database tables, except without anything that even closely resembles a relational database table.

When you define a MongoDB collection, you can specify if you want a collection object to actually be created at the time you specify it, or create it only after the first row is added. Using the MongoDB driver, the difference between the two is demonstrated in the following code, where the first statement doesn't create the actual collection, and the second does:

```
| db.collection('mycollection', function(err, collection{});  
| db.createCollection('mycollection', function(err, collection{});
```

You can pass an optional second parameter to both methods, `{safe : true}`, which instructs the driver to issue an error if the collection does not exist when used with `db.collection`, and an error if the collection already exists if used with `db.createCollection`:

```
| db.collection('mycollection', {safe : true}, function (err, collection{});
```

```
| db.createCollection('mycollection', {safe : true}, function(err, collection{});
```

If you use `db.createCollection` on an existing collection, you'll just get access to the collection—the driver won't overwrite the existing collection. Both methods return a collection object in the callback function, which you can then use to add, modify, or retrieve document data.

If you want to completely drop the collection, use `db.dropCollection`:

```
| db.dropCollection('mycollection', function(err, result){});
```

Note that all of these methods are asynchronous, and are dependent on nested callbacks if you want to process the commands sequentially. In the next section, where we add data to the new collection, you'll get a better idea of what this means.

Adding Data to a Collection

Before getting into the mechanics of adding data to a collection, and looking at fully operational examples, I wanted to take a moment to discuss data types. Most specifically, I want to repeat what the MongoDB Driver mentions about data types, because the use of JavaScript has led to some interesting negotiations between the driver and the MongoDB.

Table 10-1 shows the conversions between the data types supported by MongoDB and the JavaScript equivalents. Note that most conversions occur cleanly—no potentially unexpected effects. Some, though, do require some behind the scenes finagling, which you should be aware of. Others are provided by the MongoDB Native Node.js Driver, but don't have an equivalent value in MongoDB. The driver converts the data we provide into data the MongoDB can accept.

Table 10-1. Node.js MongoDB Driver to MongoDB data type mapping

MongoDB type	JavaScript Type	Notes/Examples
JSON array	Array [1,2,3]	[1,2,3]
string	String	utf8 encoded
boolean	Boolean	true or false
integer	Number	MongoDB supports 32 and 64 bit numbers; JavaScript Numbers are 64 bit floats. Driver attempts to fit value into 32 bit; if fails, promotes to 64 bit; if this fails promotes to Long class
integer	Long class	The Long class provides full 64 bit integer support
float	Number	
float	Double class	Special class representing float value

Date	Date	
Regular express	RegExp	
null	null	
Object	Object	
object id	ObjectID class	Special class that holds a MongoDB document identifier
binary data	Binary class	Class to store binary data
	Code class	Class to store JavaScript function and score for method to run in
	DbRef class	Class to store reference to another document
	Symbol class	Specify a symbol (not specific to JavaScript, for languages that use symbols)

Now, back to demonstrating how to work with a MongoDB database from Node.

Once you have a reference to a collection you can add documents to it. The data is structured as JSON, so you can create a JSON object and then insert it directly into the collection.

To demonstrate all of the code to this point, in addition to adding data to a collection, Example 10-1 creates a first collection (named Widgets) in the MongoDB and then adds two documents. Since you might want to run the example a couple of times, it first removes the collection documents using the `remove` method, first. The `remove` method takes three optional parameters:

- Selector for the document(s). If none provided, all documents are removed.
- An optional safe mode indicator, `safe {true | {w:n, wtimeout:n} | {fsync:true}, default:false}`
- A callback function (required if safe mode indicator is set to true)

In the example, the application is using a safe remove, passing in null for the first parameter (as parameter placeholder, ensuring all documents are removed), and providing a callback function. Once the documents are removed, the application inserts two new documents, with the second insert using safe mode. The application prints to the console the result of the second insert

The `insert` method also takes three parameters: the document or documents being inserted, an options parameter, and the callback function. You can insert multiple documents by enclosing them in an array. The options for `insert` are:

- `safe mode: safe {true | {w:n, wtimeout:n} | {fsync:true}, default:false}`
- `keepGoing: set to true to have application continue if one of the documents generates an error`
- `serializeFunctions: serialize functions on the document`

The method calls are asynchronous, which means that there's no guarantee the first document is inserted before the second. However, it shouldn't be a problem with the widget application—at least not in this example. Later in the chapter, we'll look more closely at some of the challenges working asynchronously with database applications.

Example 10-1. Creating/opening database, removing all documents, and adding two new documents

```
var mongodb = require('mongodb');

var server = new mongodb.Server('localhost', 27017, {auto_reconnect: true});
var db = new mongodb.Db('exampleDb', server);

// open database connection
db.open(function(err, db) {
    if(!err) {

        // access or create widgets collection
        db.collection('widgets', function(err, collection) {

            // remove all widgets documents
            collection.remove(null,{safe : true}, function(err, result) {
                if (!err) {
                    console.log('result of remove ' + result);

                    // create two records
                    var widget1 = {title : 'First Great widget',
                                  desc : 'greatest widget of all',
                                  price : 14.99};
                    var widget2 = {title : 'Second Great widget',
                                  desc : 'second greatest widget of all',
                                  price : 29.99};

                    collection.insert(widget1);

                    collection.insert(widget2, {safe : true}, function(err, result) {
                        if(err) {
                            console.log(err);
                        } else {
                            console.log(result);

                            //close database
                            db.close();
                        }
                    });
                }
            });
        });
    }
});
```

The output to the console after the insert is:

```
[ { title: 'First Great widget',
  desc: 'greatest widget of all',
  price: 14.99,
  _id: 4f7b835deb9a0f5147000001 },
{ title: 'Second Great widget',
  desc: 'second greatest widget of all',
  price: 29.99,
  _id: 4f7b835deb9a0f5147000002 } ]
```

The MongoDB generates a unique system identifier for each document. You can access documents with this identifier at a future time, but you're better off adding a more meaningful identifier for each document that can be determined easily by context of use.

As mentioned earlier, we can insert multiple documents at the same time by providing an array of documents, rather than a single document. The following code demonstrates how both Widget records can be inserted in the same command. The code also incorporates an application identifier with the `id` field.

```
// create two records
var widget1 = {id: 1, title : 'First Great widget',
               desc : 'greatest widget of all',
               price : 14.99};
var widget2 = {id: 2, title : 'Second Great widget',
               desc : 'second greatest widget of all',
               price : 29.99};

collection.insert([widget1,widget2], {safe : true},
                  function(err, result) {
    if(err) {
        console.log(err);
    } else {
        console.log(result);

        // close database
        db.close();
    }
});
```

If you do batch your document inserts, you'll need to set the `keepGoing` option to true if you want to keep inserting documents even if one of the insertions fails. By default, the application stops if an insert fails.

Querying the Data

There are four methods of finding data in the MongoDB Native Node.js Driver:

- `find`: returns a cursor with all the documents returned by the query
- `findOne`: returns a cursor with the first document found that matches the query
- `findAndRemove`: finds a document and then removes it
- `findAndModify`: finds a document and then performs an action (such as remove or upsert)

In this section, I'll demonstrate `collection.find` and `collection.findOne`, and reserve the other two methods for the next section on data updates.

Both `collection.find` and `collection.findOne` support three arguments: the query, options, and a callback. The options object and the callback are optional, and the list of possible options to use with both methods is quite extensive. Table 10-2 shows all the options, their default setting, and a description of each.

Table 10-2. Find Options

option	default value	description
limit	Number, default of 0	Limits number of documents returned (0 is no limit)
sort	Array of indexes	Set to sort documents returning from query
fields	Object	Fields to return in query - use property name and value of 1 to include, or 0 to exclude, <code>{prop' : 1}</code> or <code>{'prop' : 0}</code> , but not both

skip	Number, default of 0	Skip n documents (useful for pagination)
hint	Object	Tell database to use specific indexes, {'_id' : 1}
explain	Boolean, default is false	Explain the query instead of returning data
snapshot	Boolean, default is false	Snapshot query (MongoDB <i>journaling</i> must be enabled)
timeout	Boolean, default is false	Cursor can time out
tailable	Boolean, default is false	Cursor is <i>tailable</i> (only on capped collections, allowing resumption of retrieval, similar to Unix tail command)
batchSize	Number, default is 0	<code>batchSize</code> for the <code>getMoreCommand</code> when iterating over results
returnKey	Boolean, default is false	Only return the index key
maxScan	Number	Limit the number of items that can be scanned
min	Number	Set index bounds
max	Number	Set index bounds
showDiskLoc	Boolean, default is false	Show disk location of results
comment	String	Add comment to query for profiler logs
raw	Boolean, default is false	Return BSON results as Raw Buffer documents
read	Boolean, default is false	Direct the query to a secondary server

The options provide for a great deal of flexibility with queries, though most queries will most likely only need a few of the options. I'll cover some of the options in the examples, but I recommend you try the others with your example MongoDB installation.

The simplest query for all documents in the collection is to use the find method without any parameters. You immediately convert the results to an array using toArray, passing in a callback function that takes an error and an array of documents. Example 10-2 shows the application that performs this functionality.

Example 10-2. Inserting four documents and then retrieving them with the find method

```
var mongodb = require('mongodb');

var server = new mongodb.Server('localhost', 27017, {auto_reconnect: true});
var db = new mongodb.Db('exampleDb', server);
```

```

// open database connection
db.open(function(err, db) {
  if(!err) {

    // access or create widgets collection
    db.collection('widgets', function(err, collection) {

      // remove all widgets documents
      collection.remove(null,{safe : true}, function(err, result) {
        if (!err) {
          // create four records
          var widget1 = {id: 1, title : 'First Great widget',
                        desc : 'greatest widget of all',
                        price : 14.99, type: 'A'};
          var widget2 = {id: 2, title : 'Second Great widget',
                        desc : 'second greatest widget of all',
                        price : 29.99, type: 'A'};
          var widget3 = {id: 3, title: 'third widget', desc: 'third widget',
                        price : 45.00, type: 'B'};
          var widget4 = {id: 4, title: 'fourth widget', desc: 'fourth widget',
                        price: 60.00, type: 'B'};

          collection.insert([widget1,widget2,widget3,widget4], {safe : true},
                           function(err, result) {
            if(err) {
              console.log(err);
            } else {

              // return all documents
              collection.find().toArray(function(err, docs) {
                console.log(docs);

                //close database
                db.close();
              });
            }
          });
        }
      });
    });
  });
});

```

The result printed out to the console shows all four newly added documents, with their system generated identifiers:

```

[ { id: 1,
  title: 'First Great widget',
  desc: 'greatest widget of all',
  price: 14.99,
  type: 'A',
  _id: 4f7b9fba65fcab3949000001 },
{ id: 2,
  title: 'Second Great widget',
  desc: 'second greatest widget of all',
  price: 29.99,
  type: 'A',
  _id: 4f7b9fba65fcab3949000002 },
{ id: 3,
  title: 'third widget',
  desc: 'third widget',
  price: 45,
  type: 'B',
  _id: 4f7b9fba65fcab3949000003 },

```

```

{ id: 4,
  title: 'fourth widget',
  desc: 'fourth widget',
  price: 60,
  type: 'B',
  _id: 4f7b9fba65fcab3949000004 } ]

```

Rather than return all of the documents, we can provide a selector. In the following code, we're querying all documents that have a type of 'A', and returning all the fields but the type field:

```

// return all documents
collection.find({type:'A'}, {fields:{type:0}}).toArray(function(err, docs) {
  if(err) {
    console.log(err);
  } else {
    console.log(docs);

    //close database
    db.close();
  }
});

```

The result of this query is:

```

[ { id: 1,
  title: 'First Great widget',
  desc: 'greatest widget of all',
  price: 14.99,
  _id: 4f7ba035c4d2204c49000001 },
{ id: 2,
  title: 'Second Great widget',
  desc: 'second greatest widget of all',
  price: 29.99,
  _id: 4f7ba035c4d2204c49000002 } ]

```

We can also access only one document using `findOne`. The result of this query does not have to be converted to an array, and can be accessed directly. In the following, the document with an id of 1 is queried, and only the title is returned:

```

// return one document
collection.findOne({id:1}, {fields:{title:1}}, function(err, doc) {
  if (err) {
    console.log(err);
  } else {
    console.log(doc);

    //close database
    db.close();
  }
});

```

The result from this query is:

```
| { title: 'First Great widget', _id: 4f7ba0fcbbfede06649000001 }
```

The system generated identifier is always returned with the query results.

Even if I modified the query to return all documents with a type of 'A' (there are two), only one is returned with the `collection.findOne` method. Changing the `limit` in the options object won't make a difference: the method always returns one document if the query is successful.

Updates, Upserts, and Find and Remove

The MongoDB Native Node.js Driver supports several different methods that either modify or remove an existing document—or both, in the case of one method:

- **update**: either updates or upserts (adds if doesn't exist) a document
- **remove**: remove a document
- **findAndModify**: find and modify or remove a document (returning the modified or removed document)
- **findAndRemove**: find and remove a document (returning the removed document)

The basic difference between update/remove and **findAndModify/findAndRemove** is the latter set of methods returns the impacted document.

The functionality to use these methods is little different than what we saw with the inserts. You'll have to open a database connection, get a reference to the collection you're interested in, and then perform whichever of the operations.

If the MongoDB currently contains the following document:

```
{ id : 4,
  title: 'fourth widget',
  desc: 'fourth widget',
  price: 60.00,
  type: 'B'}
```

And you want to modify the **title** you can use the **update** method to do so, as shown in Example 10-3. You can supply all of the fields, and the MongoDB does a replacement of the document, but you're better off using one of the MongoDB modifiers, such as **\$set**. The **\$set** modifier instructs the database to just modify whatever fields are passed as properties to the modifier.

Example 10-3. Updating a MongoDB document

```
var mongodb = require('mongodb');

var server = new mongodb.Server('localhost', 27017, {auto_reconnect: true});
var db = new mongodb.Db('WidgetDB', server);

// open database connection
db.open(function(err, db) {
  if(!err) {

    // access or create widgets collection
    db.collection('widgets',function(err, collection) {

      //update
      collection.update({id:4},
        {$set : {title: 'Super Bad Widget'}},
        {safe: true}, function(err, result) {
          if (err) {
            console.log(err);
          } else {
            console.log(result);
            // query for updated record
            collection.findOne({id:4}, function(err, doc) {
              if(!err) {
                console.log(doc);

                //close database
                db.close();
              }
            });
          }
        });
    });
  });
});
```

The resulting document now displays the modified fields.

You can use \$set with multiple fields.

There are other modifiers that provide another atomic data updates of interest:

- \$inc - increment a field's value by a specified amount
- \$set - set a field, as demonstrated
- \$unset - delete a field
- \$push - appends value to array if field is an array (converts to array if it wasn't)
- \$pushAll - appends several values to an array
- \$addToSet - adds to an array only if field is an array
- \$pull - removes value from array
- \$pullAll - removes several values from array
- \$rename - renames a field
- \$bit - bitwise operation

So why don't we just remove the document and insert a new one, rather than use a modifier? Because though we had to provide all of the user defined fields, we don't have to provide the system generated identifier. This value remains constant with the update. If the system generated identifier is stored as a field in another document, say a parent document, removing the document will leave the reference to the original document orphaned in the parent.

Though I don't cover in this chapter, the MongoDB web site has documentation on the concept of trees (complex parent/child data structures) stored in the database.

More importantly, the use of modifiers ensures the action is performed *in-place*, providing some security that one person's update won't overwrite another person's update.

Though we used none in the example, the update method takes four options:

- safe for a safe update
- upsert, a boolean set to true if an insert should be made if the document doesn't exist (default is false)
- multi, a boolean set to true if all documents that match the selection criteria should be updated
- serializeFunction, to serialize functions on the document

If you're unsure whether a document already exists in the database, set the `upsert` option to `true`.

Example 10-3 did a find on the modified record to ensure the changes took effect. A better approach would be to use `findAndModify`. The parameters are close to what's used with the update, with the addition of a sort array as second parameter. If multiple documents are returned, updates are performed in sort order:

```
//update
collection.findAndModify({id:4}, [[ti]],
  {$set : {title: 'Super Widget', desc: 'A really great widget'}},
  {new: true}, function(err, doc) {
  if (err) {
    console.log(err);
  } else {
    console.log(doc);
  }
  db.close();
});
```

The `findAndModify` method can be used to remove a document if you use the `remove` option. If you do, no document is returned in the callback function. You can also use the `remove` and the `findAndRemove` methods to remove the document. Earlier examples have used `remove`, without a

selector, to remove all the document before doing an insert. To remove an individual document, provide a selector:

```
collection.remove({id:4},  
  {safe: true}, function(err, result) {  
    if (err) {  
      console.log(err);  
    } else {  
      console.log(result);  
    }  
}
```

The result is the number of documents removed (in this case, 1). To see the document being removed, use `findAndRemove`:

```
collection.findAndRemove({id:3}, [['id',1]],  
  function(err, doc) {  
    if (err) {  
      console.log(err);  
    } else {  
      console.log(doc);  
    }  
}
```

I've covered the basic CRUD (Create Read Update Delete) operations you can perform from a Node application with the Native driver, but there are considerable more capabilities, including working with capped collections and the use of indexes, the other MongoDB modifiers, sharding (partitioning data across machines), and so on. The Native driver documentation covers all of these, and provides good examples.

I want to introduce you to a Node module that provides ODM (Object Document Model) capability, but first, I want to take a moment to address the issues of asynchronous applications and data store access.

Challenges of Asynchronous Data Access

One of the challenges with asynchronous development and data access is the level of nesting necessary to ensure one operation is finished before starting another. In the last several sections, you had a chance to see how quickly the callback functions nest, just by performing a few simple operations—access the MongoDB, get a reference to a collection, perform an operation, and verify it took place.

The MongoDB Native Node.js Driver documentation contains instances where the example developers used a timer to make sure a previous function was finished before performing the next. You're not going to want to use this approach. To avoid the problems with heavily nested callback functions, you can either use named functions, or you can use one of the asynchronous modules, such as Step and Async, in order to work around the callback nesting issue.

The best approach of all is to ensure you're doing the minimum functional necessary in each method that is updating the MongoDB database. If you're having a hard time preventing nested callbacks and the application is difficult to convert using a module like Async, chances are, you are doing too much and you need to look for opportunities to break a complex multiple database operation function down into manageable units.

Asynchronous programming rewards simplicity. More on creating simple database actions in the next section, on using a Node MongoDB ODM module.

Implementing a Widget Model with Mongoose

The MongoDB Native Node.js Driver provides a binding to the MongoDB, but doesn't provide a higher level abstraction. For this, you'll need to use an ODM (Object-Document Mapping), like Mongoose.

The Mongoose web site is at <http://mongoosejs.com/>.

To use Mongoose, install it with npm:

```
npm install mongoose
```

Instead of issuing commands directly against a MongoDB database, you define objects using the Mongoose Schema object, and then sync it with the database using the Mongoose model object:

```
var Widget = new Schema({
  sn : {type: String, require: true, trim: true, unique: true},
  name : {type: String, required: true, trim: true},
  desc : String,
  price : Number
});

var widget = mongoose.model('Widget', Widget);
```

When the object is defined, information is provided that controls what happens to that document field at a later time. In the code just provided, a Widget object is defined with four explicit fields, three of type String, one of type Number. The sn and name fields are both required and trimmed, and the sn field must be unique in the document database.

The collection isn't made at this point, and won't be until at least one document is created. When it is created, though, it's named widgets—the Widget object name is lowercased, and pluralized.

Anytime you need to access the collection, you make the same call to the `mongoose.model`, it's not used just when the model is first created.

This code is the first step in adding the final component to the Model-View-Controller (MVC) Widget implementation started in earlier chapters. In the next couple of sections, we'll finish the conversion from an in-memory data store, to MongoDB. First, though, we need to do a little refactoring on the Widget application.

Refactoring the Widget Factory

Refactoring is the process of restructuring existing code in such a way to clean up the cruft behind the scenes with minimal or no impact on the user interface. Since we're converting the Widget application over to a MongoDB database, now is a good time to see what other changes we want to make.

Currently, the filesystem structure for the Widget application is:

```
/application directory
  /routes - home directory controller
  /controllers - object controllers
  /public - static files
    /widgets
  /views - template files
    /widgets
```

The routes subdirectory provides top-level (non-business object) functionality. The name isn't very meaningful, so I renamed it to `main`. This necessitated some minor modifications to the primary `app.js` file:

```
// top level
app.get('/', main.index);

app.get('/stats', main.stats);
```

Next, I added a new subdirectory named `models`. The MongoDB model definitions are stored in this subdirectory, as the controller code is in the controllers subdirectory. The directory structure now looks like the following:

```
/application directory
  /main - home directory controller
  /controllers - object controllers
  /public - static files
    /widgets
  /models
```

```
| /views - template files  
|   /widgets
```

The next change to the application is related to the structure of the data. Currently, the application's primary key is an id field, system generated but accessible by the user via the routing system. To show a widget you'd use a URL like the following:

```
| http://localhost:3000/widgets/1
```

This isn't an uncommon approach. The popular Content Management System (CMS) Drupal uses this approach for accessing Drupal nodes (stories) and users, unless a person uses a URL redirection module:

```
| http://burningbird.net/node/78
```

The problem is that MongoDB generates an identifier for each object, and uses a format that makes it unattractive for routing. There is a workaround, which requires creating a third collection that contains an identifier, and then using it to take the place of the identifier, but the approach is ugly, counter to MongoDB's underlying structure, and not especially doable with Mongoose.

The Widget `title` field is unique, but has spaces and characters that make it unattractive as a routing URL. Instead, we define a new field, `sn`, which is the new serial number for the product. When a new Widget is created, the user assigns whatever serial number they want for the product, and the serial number is used when we access the widget at a later time. If the widget serial number is `1A1A`, its accessed with:

```
| http://localhost:3000/widgets/1A1A
```

The new data structure, from an application point of view, is:

```
| sn: string  
| title: string  
| desc: string  
| price: number
```

This modification necessitates some change to the user interface, but they're worthwhile. The Jade templates also need to be changed, but the change is minor: basically replacing references to `id` with references to `sn`, and adding a field for serial number to any form.

Rather than duplicate all the code again to show minor changes, the book examples available at O'Reilly (check Preface for location), contain all of the new Widget application files in the `chap12` subdirectory.

The more significant change is to the controller code in the `widget.js` file. The changes to this file, and others related to adding a MongoDB backend, are covered in the next section.

Adding the MongoDB Backend

The first necessary change is to add a connection to the MongoDB database. It's added to the primary `app.js` file, so the connection persists for the life of the application.

First, Mongoose is included into the file:

```
| , mongoose = require('mongoose')
```

Then the database connection is made:

```
| // MongoDB  
| mongoose.connect('mongodb://127.0.0.1/WidgetDB');  
  
| mongoose.connection.on('open', function() {  
|   console.log('Connected to Mongoose');  
| });
```

Notice the URI for the MongoDB. The specific database is passed as the last part of the URI.

This change, and the earlier mentioned change converting routes to main are all the changes necessary to [app.js](#).

The next change is to [maproutecontroller.js](#). The routes that reference `id` must be changed to now reference `sn`. The modified routes are shown in the following code block:

```
// show
app.get(prefix + '/:sn', prefixObj.show);

// edit
app.get(prefix + '/:sn/edit', prefixObj.edit);

// update
app.put(prefix + '/:sn', prefixObj.update);

// destroy
app.del(prefix + '/:sn', prefixObj.destroy);
```

If we don't make this change, the controller code expects a `sn` as parameter, but is getting `id`, instead.

The next code is an addition, not a modification. In the models subdirectory, a new file is created, named [widget.js](#). This is where the Widget model is defined. To make the model accessible outside the file, it's exported, as shown in Example 10-4.

Example 10-4. The new Widget model definition

```
var mongoose = require('mongoose');

var Schema = mongoose.Schema
    , ObjectId = Schema.ObjectId;

// create Widget model
var Widget = new Schema({
    sn : {type: String, require: true, trim: true, unique: true},
    name : {type: String, required: true, trim: true},
    desc : String,
    price : Number
});

module.exports = mongoose.model('Widget', Widget);
```

The last change is to the Widget controller code. We're swapping out the in-memory datastore for MongoDB, using a Mongoose model. Though the change is significant from a processing perspective, the code modification isn't very extensive. A few tweaks, as much having to do with changing `id` to `sn`, than anything else. Example 10-5 contains the complete code for the Widget controller code.

Example 10-5. The newly modified Widget controller code

```
var Widget = require('../models/widget.js');

// index listing of widgets at /widgets/
exports.index = function(req, res) {
    Widget.find({}, function(err, docs) {
        console.log(docs);
        res.render('widgets/index', {title : 'Widgets', widgets : docs});
    });
};

// display new widget form
exports.new = function(req, res) {
    console.log(req.url);
    var filePath = require('path').normalize(__dirname + "/../public/widgets/new.html");
    res.sendfile(filePath);
};
```

```

// add a widget
exports.create = function(req, res) {

    var widget = {
        sn : req.body.widgetsn,
        name : req.body.widgetname,
        price : parseFloat(req.body.widgetprice),
        desc: req.body.widgetdesc};

    var widgetObj = new Widget(widget);

    widgetObj.save(function(err, data) {
        if (err) {
            res.send(err);
        } else {
            console.log(data);
            res.render('widgets/added', {title: 'Widget Added', widget: widget});
        }
    });
};

// show a widget
exports.show = function(req, res) {
    var sn = req.params.sn;
    Widget.findOne({sn : sn}, function(err, doc) {
        if (err)
            res.send('There is no widget with sn of ' + sn);
        else
            res.render('widgets/show', {title : 'Show Widget', widget : doc});
    });
};

// delete a widget
exports.destroy = function(req, res) {
    var sn = req.params.sn;

    Widget.remove({sn : sn}, function(err) {
        if (err)
            res.send('There is no widget with sn of ' + sn);
        else {
            console.log('deleted ' + sn);
            res.send('deleted ' + sn);
        }
    });
};

// display edit form
exports.edit = function(req, res) {
    var sn = req.params.sn;
    Widget.findOne({sn : sn}, function(err, doc) {
        console.log(doc);
        if(err)
            res.send('There is no widget with sn of ' + sn);
        else
            res.render('widgets/edit', {title : 'Edit Widget', widget : doc});
    });
};

// update a widget
exports.update = function(req, res) {
    var sn = req.params.sn;
    var widget = {
        sn : req.body.widgetsn,

```

```
    name : req.body.widgetname,
    price : parseFloat(req.body.widgetprice),
    desc : req.body.widgetdesc};

Widget.update({sn : sn}, widget, function(err) {
  if (err)
    res.send('Problem occurred with update' + err)
  else
    res.render('widgets/added', {title: 'Widget Edited', widget : widget})
});
};
```

Now the Widget application's data is persisted to a database, rather than disappearing every time the application is shut down. And the entire application is set up in such a way that we can add support for new data entities with minimal impact on the stable components of the application.

11

The Node Relational Database Bindings

In traditional web development, relational databases are the most popular means of data storage. Node, perhaps because of the type of applications it attracts, or perhaps because it attracts users that fit outside the traditional web development box, doesn't follow this pattern: there is a lot more support for data structures such as Redis and MongoDB than there is for relational databases.

There are some relational data modules we can use in your Node applications, but they may not be as complete as we're used to with database bindings in languages such as PHP and Python. In my opinion, the Node modules for relational database are not yet production ready.

On the plus side, the modules that do support relational databases are quite simple to use. In this chapter I'm going to demonstrate two different approaches to integrating a relational database, MySQL, into Node applications. One approach uses mysql (node-mysql), which is a JavaScript MySQL client that is quite popular. The other approach uses db-mysql, which is part of the new node-db initiative to create a common framework for database engines from Node applications. The db-mysql module is written in C++.

Neither of the modules mentioned currently support transactions, but mysql-series has added this type of functionality to node-mysql. I'll provide a quick demonstration on this, and also provide a brief introduction to Sequelize, an ORM (Object-Relational Mapper) that works with MySQL.

There are a variety of relational databases, including SQL Server, Oracle, and SQLite. I'm focusing on MySQL because there are installations available for Windows and Unix environments, it's free for non-commercial use, and it's the most commonly used database with applications most of us have used. It's also the relational database with the most support in Node.

The test database used in the chapter is named nodetest2, and it contains one table with the following structure:

```
| id - int(11), primary key, not null, autoincrement  
| title - varchar(255), unique key, not null  
| text - text, nulls allowed  
| created - datetime, nulls allowed
```

Getting Started with db-mysql

The db-mysql Node module is a native module, and does require installation of the MySQL client libraries on your system. Once your environment is set up, you can install db-mysql with:

```
| npm install db-mysql
```

The db-mysql provides two classes to interact with the MySQL database. The first is the database class, which you use to `connect` and `disconnect` from the database and do a query. The query class is what's returned from the database `query` method. You can use the query class to create a query either through chained methods representing each component of the query, or directly using a query string—db-mysql is very flexible.

Why Use Chained Methods Over Direct Query?

The chained methods that db-mysql provides are interesting but also more than a little cumbersome. So why would we use the chained methods or just using the direct query string?

One reason provided by the db-mysql developers is because the chained methods hide slight variations required by different database systems. The db-mysql driver is only one of the Node.js relational database bindings. Another is offered for db-drizzel, for the Drizzel database.

This could be handy if you're creating an application for use by others who may be using different relational database systems. However, if your application is focused at a specific database system, you may find it a lot simpler just to use the straight query.

Results, including any error, are passed in the last callback function for any method. You can use nested callbacks to chain actions together, or use the `eventEmitter` event handling in order to process both errors and database command result.

When creating the database connection to a MySQL database, you can pass several options that when creating the database instance that influence its behavior. You'll need to provide, at minimum, either a hostname and possibly a port or a socket, and a user, password, and database name:

```
var db = new mysql.Database({
  hostname: 'localhost',
  user: 'username',
  password: 'userpass',
  database: 'databasename'
});
```

You can also provide any number of other options supported by the MySQL database, including providing a socket rather than a hostname. These options are detailed in the db-mysql documentation, as well as in the MySQL documentation.

Two Query Techniques: Query String or Chained Methods

To demonstrate the db-mysql flexibility, Example 11-1 has an application that connects to a database and runs the same query twice: the first using the query classes *chained methods*, the second using a string query. The first query processes the result of the query in a nested callback function, while the second query tests for the success and error events and responds accordingly. In both cases, the result is returned in the `rows` object, which returns an array of objects representing each row of data.

Example 11-1. Demonstrating db-mysql's flexibility by showing two different query styles

```
var mysql = require('db-mysql');

// define database connection
var db = new mysql.Database({
  hostname: 'localhost',
  user: 'username',
  password: 'userpass',
  database: 'databasename'
});

// connect
db.connect();

db.on('error', function(error) {
  console.log("CONNECTION ERROR: " + error);
})
```

```

});;

// database connected
db.on('ready', function(server) {

    // query using chained methods and nested callback
    this.query()
        .select('*')
        .from('nodetest2')
        .where('id = 1')
        .execute(function(error, rows, columns) {
            if (error) {
                return console.log('ERROR: ' + error);
            }
            console.log(rows);
            console.log(columns);
        });

    // query using direct query string and event
    var qry = this.query();

    qry.execute('select * from nodetest2 where id = 1');

    qry.on('success', function(rows, columns) {
        console.log(rows); // print out returned rows
        console.log(columns); // print out returns columns
    });
    qry.on('error', function(error) {
        console.log('Error: ' + error);
    });
});
);

```

The database object emits a `ready` event once the database is connected, or `error` if there's a problem with making the connection. The server object passed as parameter for the callback function with the ready event contains the following properties:

- `hostname`: the database host name
- `user`: the user used for the database connection
- `database`: the database connected to
- `version`: server software version

The first query in the examples makes use of the query class chained methods that form each component of the query. The chained methods you can use for a SQL query are:

- `select`: contains the query's selection criteria, such as a list of column names or asterisk (*) for all columns, or can contain the select string
- `from`: contains an array of table names, or the string used in the from statement
- `join`: a join clause, consisting of an options object looking for type of join, table to join with, alias for table (if any), joining conditions (if any), and whether to escape the table and alias names (defaults to true)
- `where`: conditional statement, which may contain placeholders and other chained methods representing the and an or conditions
- `order`: to append an ORDER BY clause
- `limit`: to append a LIMIT clause
- `add`: to add a generic clause, such as a UNION

The chained methods provide a more database neutral approach to performing the same SQL statements. Right now, the Node.js Database drivers support MySQL (`db-mysql`), and Drizzle (`db-drizzle`). The chained

methods handle any variations between the two. The chained methods also automatically handle any escaping of the data in the SQL statement that's necessary for safe usage. Otherwise, you'll have to use the `query.escape` method to properly escape the SQL.

The query object emits a `success` event if the query is successful, or an `error`, if not. It also emits an `each` event for each row returned from the query. If the `success` event is for a query that returns rows, the callback function gets both a `rows` and a `columns` object. Each row is an array, with each array element containing an object, where each property is the column name, and each property value, the column value. The `columns` object represents the columns that are part of the result, and each column object contains the column `name` and `type`. If the test table in the example has a table with columns of `id`, `title`, `text`, and `created`, the row object would look like:

```
{ id: 1,
  title: 'this is a nice title',
  text: 'this is a nice text',
  created: Mon, 16 Aug 2010 09:00:23 GMT }
```

The `columns` object would look like:

```
[ { name: 'id', type: 2 },
  { name: 'title', type: 0 },
  { name: 'text', type: 1 },
  { name: 'created', type: 6 } ]
```

If the success event is for a query that performs an update, delete, or insert, the success event passed a `result` object in the callback function. I'll cover this object in more detail in the next section.

Though the queries are each handled using different approaches, both have to be implemented within the database's `success` event callback function. Since `db-mysql` is Node functionality, the methods are asynchronous. If you tried to do one of the queries outside of the database connect callback function, it wouldn't succeed because the database connection won't be established at that point.

Updating the Database with Direct Queries

The `db-mysql` module provides two different ways to update the data in the relational database: a direct query, or using chained methods. We'll first look at just using a direct query.

When using a direct query, you can use the same SQL you'd use in a MySQL client:

```
| qry.execute('update nodetest2 set title = "This is a better title" where id = 1');
```

Or you can make use of placeholders:

```
| qry.execute('update nodetest2 set title = ? where id = ?', ["This was a better title", 1]);
```

Placeholders can be used either with a direct query string, or with the chained methods. Placeholders are a way of creating the query string ahead of time, and then just passing in whatever values are needed. The placeholders are represented by question marks (?) in the string, and each value is given as an array element in the second parameter to the method.

The result of whatever is the operation being performed on the database is reflected in the parameter returned in the callback for the success event. In example 10-2, a new row is inserted into the test database. Note that it makes use of the MySQL NOW function to set the created field with the current date and time. When using a MySQL function, you'll need to place it directly into the query string—you can't use a placeholder.

Example 10-2. Using placeholders in the query string

```
var mysql = require('db-mysql');

// define database connection
var db = new mysql.Database({
  hostname: 'localhost',
  user: 'username',
```

```

        password: 'userpass',
        database: 'databasenm'
    });

// connect
db.connect();

db.on('error', function(error) {
    console.log("CONNECTION ERROR: " + error);
});

// database connected
db.on('ready', function(server) {

    // query using direct query string and event
    var qry = this.query();

    qry.execute('insert into nodetest2 (title, text, created) values(?, ?, NOW())',
        ['Third Entry', 'Third entry in series']);

    qry.on('success', function(result) {
        console.log(result);
    });

    qry.on('error', function(error) {
        console.log('Error: ' + error);
    });
});

```

The result of running this application is the addition of the new row in the test database, and the following result returned from the application:

```
| { id: 3, affected: 1, warning: 0 }
```

The `id` is the generated identifier for the table row; the `affected` property shows the number of rows impacted by the change (1 row), and the `warning` displays how many warnings the query generated for the rows (in this case, no warnings).

Record updates and deletions are handled in the same manner: either use the exact syntax you'd use in a MySQL client, or use placeholders. Example 10-3 adds a new record to the test database, updates the title, and then deletes the same record. You'll notice I created a different query object for each query. Though you can run the same query multiple times, each query does have its own arguments—including the number of arguments it expects each time the query is run. I used four replacement values in the insert, but if I tried to use only two in the update, I'd get an error. The application also makes use of nested callbacks rather than event capturing.

Example 10-3. Inserting, updating, and deleting a record using nested callbacks

```

var mysql = require('db-mysql');

// define database connection
var db = new mysql.Database({
    hostname: 'localhost',
    user: 'username',
    password: 'password',
    database: 'databasenm'
});

// connect
db.connect();

db.on('error', function(error) {
    console.log("CONNECTION ERROR: " + error);
});

```

```

// database connected
db.on('ready', function(server) {

    // query using direct query string and nested callbacks
    var qry = this.query();

    qry.execute('insert into nodetest2 (title, text, created) values(?, ?, NOW())',
        ['Fourth Entry', 'Fourth entry in series'], function(err, result) {
            if (err) {
                console.log(err);
            } else {
                console.log(result);

                var qry2 = db.query();
                qry2.execute('update nodetest2 set title = ? where id = ?',
                    ['Better title', 4], function(err, result) {
                        if (err) {
                            console.log(err);
                        } else {
                            console.log(result);
                            var qry3 = db.query();
                            qry3.execute('delete from nodetest2 where id = ?', [4],
                                function(err, result) {
                                    if (err) {
                                        console.log(err);
                                    } else {
                                        console.log(result);
                                    }
                                });
                        }
                    });
            }
        });
});
});

```

One thing else you might notice from the example is there's no way to rollback previous SQL statements if an error occurs in any of them. At this time, there is no transaction management in db-mysql. If you need to ensure database consistency, you'll need to provide it yourself, in your application. You can do this by checking for an error after each SQL statement is executed, and then reversing previous successful operation(s). It's not an ideal situation, though, and you'll have to be careful about the use of any auto-incrementing.

Transaction support of a kind is supported in another module, mysql-queues, covered a little later in the chapter.

Updating the Database with Chained Methods

The db-mysql methods to insert, update, and delete a record are `insert`, `update`, and `delete`, respectively. Both the `update` and `delete` chained methods can also make use of the `where` method, which can also make use of the conditional chained methods of `and` and `or`. The `update` method can also use another chained method, `set`, to set values for the SQL statement.

To demonstrate the differences between using chained methods to update the database, as compared to the direct SQL statements in Example 10-3, Example 10-4 duplicates the same functionality as the previous example but uses chained methods, instead, for the insert and update methods. It does not use the chained method for the delete, because at the time this book was written, the delete method did not work correctly.

Example 10-4. Using chained methods to insert a new record and then update it

```
var mysql = require('db-mysql');
```

```

// define database connection
var db = new mysql.Database({
  hostname: 'localhost',
  user: 'username',
  password: 'password',
  database: 'databasenm'
});

// connect
db.connect();

db.on('error', function(error) {
  console.log("CONNECTION ERROR: " + error);
});

// database connected
db.on('ready', function(server) {

  // query using direct query string and nested callbacks
  var qry = this.query();
  qry.insert('nodetest2',['title','text','created'],
    ['Fourth Entry', 'Fourth entry in series', 'NOW()'])
  .execute(function(err,result) {
    if (err) {
      console.log(err);
    } else {
      console.log(result);

      var qry2 = db.query();
      qry2.update('nodetest2')
        .set({title: 'Better title'})
        .where('id = ?', [4])
        .execute(function(err, result) {
          if(err) {
            console.log(err);
          } else {
            console.log(result);
          }
        });
    }
  });
});

```

I'm not overfond of the chained methods, though I think they're handy, especially if bringing in the data from a form or other application.

Native JavaScript MySQL Access with node-mysql

Unlike db-mysql, you don't need to install specialized MySQL client software to work with node-mysql. You just need to install the module, and you're good to go:

```
| npm install mysql
```

The native driver is quite simple to use. You create a client connection to the MySQL database, select the database to use, and use this same client to do all database operations via the query method. A callback function can be passed as the last parameter in the query method, and provides information related to the last operation. If no callback function is used, you can listen for events to determine when processes are finished.

Basic CRUD with node-mysql

As just stated, the node-mysql API is extremely simple: create the client, set the database, and send SQL statements as queries on the client. The callback functions are optional, and there is some minimal event support. When using a callback, the parameters are typically an error and a result, though in the case of a SELECT query, the callback also has a `fields` parameter.

Example 10-5 demonstrates how to use node-mysql to connect to the Widget database, create a new record, update it, and delete it. This example, as simple as it is, does demonstrate all the functionality that node-mysql supports.

Example 10-5. Demonstration of CRUD with node-mysql

```
var mysql = require('mysql');

var client = mysql.createClient({
  user: 'username',
  password: 'password'
});

client.query('USE nodetest2');

// create
client.query('INSERT INTO nodetest2 ' +
  'SET title = ?, text = ?, created = NOW()', [
  'A seventh item', 'This is a seventh item'], function(err, result) {
  if (err) {
    console.log(err);
  } else {
    var id = result.insertId;
    console.log(result.insertId);

    // update
    client.query('UPDATE nodetest2 SET ' +
      'title = ? WHERE ID = ?', ['New title', id], function (err, result) {
      if (err) {
        console.log(err);
      } else {
        console.log(result.affectedRows);

        // delete
        client.query('DELETE FROM nodetest2 WHERE id = ?',
          [id], function(err, result) {
            if(err) {
              console.log(err);
            } else {

              console.log(result.affectedRows);

              // named function rather than nested callback
              getData();
            }
          });
        });
      });
  });

// retrieve data
function getData() {
  client.query('SELECT * FROM nodetest2 ORDER BY id', function(err, result,fields) {
    if(err) {
      console.log(err);
    }
  });
}
```

```

    } else {
      console.log(result);
      console.log(fields);
    }
    client.end();
  });
}

```

The query results are what we'd expect: an array of objects, each representing one row from the table. The following is an example of the output, representing the first returned row:

```

[ { id: 1,
  title: 'This was a better title',
  text: 'this is a nice text',
  created: Mon, 16 Aug 2010 15:00:23 GMT },
  ...
]

```

The fields parameters also matches our expectations, though the format can differ from other modules. Rather than an array of objects, what's returned is an object, where each table field is an object property, and its value is an object representing information about the field. I won't duplicate the entire output, but the following is the information returned for the first field, id:

```

{ id:
  { length: 53,
    received: 53,
    number: 2,
    type: 4,
    catalog: 'def',
    db: 'nodetest2',
    table: 'nodetest2',
    originalTable: 'nodetest2',
    name: 'id',
    originalName: 'id',
    charsetNumber: 63,
    fieldLength: 11,
    fieldType: 3,
    flags: 16899,
    decimals: 0 }, ...
}

```

The module doesn't support multiple SQL statements concatenated onto each other, and it doesn't support transactions. The only way to get a close approximation to transaction support is with mysql-queues, discussed next.

MySQL Transactions with mysql-queues

The mysql-queues module wraps the node-mysql module and provides support for multiple queries as well as database transaction support. Its use may be a little odd, especially since it provides asynchronous support without seeming to provide asynchronous support.

Typically to ensure that asynchronous functions have finished, you'd use nested callbacks, named functions, or a module like Async. In Example 10-6, though, mysql-queues controls the flow of execution, ensuring that the SQL statements that are queued via the use of the queue are finished before the final SELECT is processed. The SQL Statements are completed in order: insert, then update, and then the final retrieve.

Example 10-6. Using a queue to control the flow of SQL statement execution

```

var mysql = require('mysql');
var queues = require('mysql-queues');

// connect to database
var client = mysql.createClient({
  user: 'username',
  password: 'password'
})

```

```

});;

client.query('USE nodetest2');

//associated queues with query
// using debug
queues(client, true);

// create queue
q = client.createQueue();

// do insert
q.query('INSERT INTO nodetest2 (title, text, created) ' +
    'values(?, ?, NOW())',
    ['Title for 8', 'Text for 8']);

// update
q.query('UPDATE nodetest2 SET title = ? WHERE title = ?',
    ['New Title for 8', 'Title for 8']);

q.execute();

// select won't work until previous queries finished
client.query('SELECT * FROM nodetest2 ORDER BY ID', function(err, result, fields) {
    if (err) {
        console.log(err);
    } else {

        // should show all records, including newest
        console.log(result);
        client.end();
    }
});

```

If you want transactional support, you'll need to start a transaction, rather than a queue. And you'll need to use a rollback when an error occurs, and a commit when you're finished with the transaction. Again, once you call execute on the transaction, any queries following the method call are queued until the transaction is finished. Example 10-7 contains the same application in Example 10-6, but this time using a transaction.

Example 10-7. Using a transaction to provide greater control over SQL updates

```

var mysql = require('mysql');
var queues = require('mysql-queues');

// connect to database
var client = mysql.createClient({
    user: 'username',
    password: 'password'
});

client.query('USE nodetest2');

//associated queues with query
// using debug
queues(client, true);

// create transaction
var trans = client.startTransaction();
// do insert
trans.query('INSERT INTO nodetest2 (title, text, created) ' +
    'values(?, ?, NOW())',
    ['Title for 8', 'Text for 8'], function(err,info) {

    if (err) {

```

```

        trans.rollback();
    } else {
        console.log(info);

        // update
        trans.query('UPDATE nodetest2 SET title = ? WHERE title = ?',
            ['Better Title for 8','Title for 8'], function(err,info) {
            if(err) {
                trans.rollback();
            } else {
                console.log(info);
                trans.commit();
            }
        });
    });
trans.execute();

// select won't work until transaction finished
client.query('SELECT * FROM nodetest2 ORDER BY ID', function(err, result, fields) {
    if (err) {
        console.log(err);
    } else {

        // should show all records, including newest
        console.log(result);
        client.end();
    }
});

```

The mysql-queues adds two important components to the node-mysql module:

- Support for multiple queries without having to use a nested callback
- Transaction support

If you're going to use node-mysql, I strongly recommend you incorporate the use of mysql-queues.

ORM Support with Sequelize

The modules in the previous sections provide a database binding for MySQL, but they don't provide a higher level of abstraction. The Sequelize module provides a higher level of abstraction with an ORM (Object Relational Mapping), though it doesn't currently support transactions.

Defining a Model

To use Sequelize, you define the model, which is a mapping between the database table(s) and JavaScript objects. In our examples previously, we worked with a simple table, nodetest2, with the following structure:

```

id - int(11), primary key, not null
title - varchar(255), unique key, not null
text - text, nulls allowed,
created - datetime, nulls allowed

```

You create the model using the appropriate database and flags for each field:

```

// define model
var Nodetest2 = sequelize.define('nodetest2',
    {id : {type: Sequelize.INTEGER, primaryKey: true},
     title : {type: Sequelize.STRING, allowNull: false, unique: true},
     text : Sequelize.TEXT,
     created : Sequelize.DATE
}

```

```
|});
```

The supported data types and their mappings are:

- Sequelize.STRING => VARCHAR(255)
- Sequelize.TEXT => TEXT
- Sequelize.INTEGER => INTEGER
- Sequelize.DATE => DATETIME
- Sequelize.FLOAT => FLOAT
- Sequelize.BOOLEAN => TINYINT(1)

The options you can use to further refine the fields are:

- type - data type of field
- allowNull - false to allow nulls, true by default
- unique - true to prevent duplicate values, false by default
- primaryKey - true to set primary key
- autoIncrement - true to automatically increment field

The likelihood is your application and database are new, so once you define the model, you need to sync it with the database to create the database table:

```
// sync
Nodetest2.sync().error(function(err) {
  console.log(err);
});
```

When you do, and examine the table in the database, you'll find that the table and the model are different because of changes Sequelize makes to the table. For one, it's now called nodetest2s, and for another, there are two new table fields:

```
id - int(11), primary key, autoincrement
title - varchar(255), unique key, nulls not allowed
text - text, nulls allowed
created - datetime, nulls allowed
createdAt - datetime, nulls not allowed
updatedAt - datetime, nulls not allowed
```

These are changes that Sequelize makes and there's no way to prevent it from making them. You'll want to adjust your expectations accordingly. For one, you'll want to drop the column `created`, since you no longer need it. You can do this using Sequelize by deleting the field from the class, and then running the sync again:

```
// define model
var Nodetest2 = sequelize.define('nodetest2',
  {id : {type: Sequelize.INTEGER, primaryKey: true},
   title : {type: Sequelize.STRING, allowNull: false, unique: true},
   text : Sequelize.TEXT,
  });

// sync
Nodetest2.sync().error(function(err) {
  console.log(err);
});
```

Now you have a JavaScript object representing the model that also maps to a relational database table. Next, you need to add some data to the table.

CRUD, ORM Style

The differences between using a MySQL database binding, and using an ORM continue. You don't insert a database row when using an ORM, you build a new object instance, and save it. The same when you update: you don't update via SQL, you either modify a property directly or you use the updateAttributes, passing in an object with the changed properties. With both, you still save the changes. And you don't delete a row from a database, you access an object instance and then destroy it.

To see how all these work together, Example 10-8 creates the Model, syncs with the database (which will create the table if it doesn't exist), and then creates a new instance and saves it. After the new instance is created, it's updated, twice. All the objects are retrieved and the contents displayed, before the recently added object instance is destroyed.

```
Example 10-8. CRUD using Sequelize  
var Sequelize = require('sequelize');  
  
var sequelize = new Sequelize('nodetest2',  
    'username', 'password',  
    { logging: false});  
  
// define model  
var Nodetest2 = sequelize.define('nodetest2',  
    {id : {type: Sequelize.INTEGER, primaryKey: true},  
     title : {type: Sequelize.STRING, allowNull: false, unique: true},  
     text : Sequelize.TEXT,  
    });  
  
// sync  
Nodetest2.sync().error(function(err) {  
    console.log(err);  
});  
  
var test = Nodetest2.build(  
    { title: 'New object',  
      text: 'Newest object in the data store'});  
// save record  
test.save().success(function() {  
  
    // first update  
    Nodetest2.find({where : {title: 'New object'}}).success(function(test) {  
        test.title = 'New object title';  
        test.save().error(function(err) {  
            console.log(err);  
        });  
        test.save().success(function() {  
  
            // second update  
            Nodetest2.find(  
                {where : {title: 'New object title'}}).success(function(test) {  
                    test.updateAttributes(  
                        {title: 'An even better title'}).success(function() {});  
                    test.save().success(function() {  
  
                        // find all  
                        Nodetest2.findAll().success(function(tests) {  
                            console.log(tests);  
  
                            // find new object and destroy  
                            Nodetest2.find({ where: {title: 'An even better title'}}).  
                                success(function(test) {  
                                    test.destroy().on('success', function(info) {  
                                        console.log(info);  
                                    });  
                                });  
                        });  
                    });  
                });  
            });  
        });  
    });  
});  
  
// find all  
Nodetest2.findAll().success(function(tests) {  
    console.log(tests);  
});  
  
// find new object and destroy  
Nodetest2.find({ where: {title: 'An even better title'}}).  
    success(function(test) {  
        test.destroy().on('success', function(info) {  
            console.log(info);  
        });  
    });  
});
```

```
        console.log(info);
    });
});
});
```

When printing out the results of the `findAll`, you might be surprised at how much data you're getting back. Yes, you can access the properties directly from the returned value, first by accessing the array entry, and then accessing the value:

```
tests[0].id; // returns identifier
```

But the other data associated with this new object completes the demonstrations that you're not in the world of relational database bindings anymore. An example of one returned object is the following:

```
[ { attributes: [ 'id', 'title', 'text', 'createdAt', 'updatedAt' ],
  validators: {},
  __factory:
  { options: [Object],
    name: 'nodetest2',
    tableName: 'nodetest2s',
    rawAttributes: [Object],
    daoFactoryManager: [Object],
    associations: {},
    validate: {},
    autoIncrementField: 'id' },
  options:
  { underscored: false,
    hasPrimaryKeys: false,
    timestamps: true,
    paranoid: false,
    instanceMethods: {},
    classMethods: {},
    validate: {},
    freezeTableName: false,
    id: 'INTEGER NOT NULL auto_increment PRIMARY KEY',
    title: 'VARCHAR(255) NOT NULL UNIQUE',
    text: 'TEXT',
    createdAt: 'DATETIME NOT NULL',
    updatedAt: 'DATETIME NOT NULL' },
  id: 14,
  title: 'A second object',
  text: 'second',
  createdAt: Sun, 08 Apr 2012 20:58:54 GMT,
  updatedAt: Sun, 08 Apr 2012 20:58:54 GMT,
  isNewRecord: false },...]
```

Adding Several Objects Easily

The asynchronous nature of Sequelize is definitely obvious from Example 10-8. Normally the issue of nested callbacks won't be a problem because you won't be performing so many operations in a row—except if you're adding several new object instances. Then you can run into problems with the nested callbacks.

Luckily, Sequelize provides a simple way of chaining queries so that you can do something such as creating many new object instances, and saving them all at once. The module provides a `chainer` helper where you can add EventEmitter tasks (such as a query), one after the other, and they won't be executed until you call `run`. Then the results of all operations are returned, either as a success or an error.

Example 10-9 demonstrates the chainer helper by adding three new object instances and then running a findAll one the database when the instances have been successfully saved.

```
Example 10-9. Using a chainer to simplify adding multiple object instances
var Sequelize = require('sequelize');

var sequelize = new Sequelize('nodetest2',
    'username', 'password',
    { logging: false});

// define model
var Nodetest2 = sequelize.define('nodetest2',
    {id : {type: Sequelize.INTEGER, primaryKey: true},
     title : {type: Sequelize.STRING, allowNull: false, unique: true},
     text : Sequelize.TEXT,
    });

// sync
Nodetest2.sync().error(function(err) {
    console.log(err);
});
var chainer = new Sequelize.Utils.QueryChainer;
chainer.add(Nodetest2.create({title: 'A second object',text: 'second'}))
    .add(Nodetest2.create({title: 'A third object', text: 'third'}));

chainer.run()
    .error(function(errors) {
        console.log(errors);
    })
    .success(function() {
        Nodetest2.findAll().success(function(tests) {
            console.log(tests);
        });
    });
});
```

Much simpler, and much easier to read, too. Plus the approach makes it simpler to work with a user interface, or a MVC application.

There is much more about Sequelize at the module's documentation web site, including how to deal with associated objects (relations between tables).

Issues Related to Going from Relational To ORM

When working with an Object Relational Mapping, there are certain assumptions about the data structure. One is that if the model object is named something like Widget, the database table is widgets. Another is an assumption that the table contains information about when a row is added, or updated. However, many ORMs also know that both assumptions may not be met by an existing database system being converted from using a straight database binding to using an ORM.

One real issue with Sequelize is that it pluralizes the table names, no matter what you do. So if you define a model for the table, it wants to pluralize the model name for the table name. Even when you provide a table name, it wants to pluralize it. This isn't an issue when you don't have the database table, because a call to sync automatically creates the table. This is an issue, though, if you're using an existing relational database. This is enough of an issue that I strongly recommend against using the module with anything other than a brand new application.

12

Graphics and HTML5 Video

Node provides several opportunities to work with various forms of graphics applications and libraries. Since it's a server technology, your applications can make use of any server-based graphics software, such as ImageMagick or GD. However, since it's also based on the same JavaScript engine that runs the Chrome browser, you can work with client-side graphics applications, such as Canvas and WebGL, too.

Node also has some support for serving up audio and video files via the new HTML5 media capabilities present in all modern browsers. Though we have limited capabilities with directly working with video and audio, we can serve files of both types, as we've seen in previous chapters. We can also make use of server-based technologies, such as FFmpeg.

No chapter on web graphics would be complete without mentioning PDFs at least once. Happily for those of us who make use of PDF documents in our web sites, we have access to a very nice PDF generation Node module, as well as access to various helpful PDF tools and libraries installed on the server.

I'm not going to exhaustively cover every form of graphics or media implementation and management capability from Node. For one, I'm not familiar with all of them, and for another, some of the support is still very primitive, or the technologies can be extremely resource intensive. Instead I'm focusing on more stable technologies that make sense for a Node application: basic photo manipulation with ImageMagick, HTML5 video, working with and creating PDFs, and creating/streaming images created with Canvas.

Creating and Working with PDFs

Operating systems, versions of HTML, and development technologies may come and go, but one constant is the ubiquitous PDF. Regardless of the type of application or service you're creating, there's a good chance you'll need to provide PDF documents. And as Doctor Who would say, PDFs are cool.

You have a couple of options for working with PDFs from a Node application. One approach is to use a Node child process to access an operating system tool, such as the PDF Toolkit or wkhtmltopdf directly on Linux. Another approach is to use a module, such as the popular PDFKit. Or you can use always use both.

Accessing PDF Tools with Child Processes

Though there are few command line tools to manipulate PDFs in the Windows world, there are several available for Linux and OS X. Fortunately, two I've worked with, PDF Toolkit and wkhtmltopdf, can be installed and accessed in all three environments.

Page snapshots with wkhtmltopdf

The wkhtmltopdf utility is a way of converting HTML into a PDF file, using the webkit rendering engine. It's a particularly handy way of taking a snapshot of a web site, graphics and all. Some sites provide the ability to generate a PDF of content, but frequently do so by stripping out all the graphics. The wkhtmltopdf preserves the appearance of the page.

There are installation versions of the utility for the Mac and Windows, and you can also download the source code for building in a Unix environment. If you're running the application on your server, you'll need to do some tweaks, first, because of its X Windows dependency.

In my system (Ubuntu), once I downloaded and installed wkhtmltopdf (using apt-get), I also had to install supporting libraries:

```
| apt-get install openssl build-essential xorg libssl-dev
```

Then I had to install a tool (xvfb) that allows wkhtmltopdf to run headless in a virtual X server:

```
| apt-get install xvfb
```

Next, I created a shell script named wkhtmltopdf.sh, to wrap the wkhtmltopdf in xvfb. It contains one line:

```
| xvfb-run -a -s "-screen 0 640x480x16" wkhtmltopdf $*
```

The shell script is moved to `/usr/bin`, and permissions are changed with `chmod a+x`. Now I can access the tool on my Linux server, where I develop my Node applications.

The wkhtmltopdf tool supports a large number of options, but I'm going to demonstrate how to use the tool simply from a Node application. On the command line, the following takes a URL to a remote web page and then generates a PDF using all default settings (using the shell script version):

```
| wkhtmltopdf.sh http://remoteweb.com/page1.html page1.pdf
```

To implement this in Node, we need to use a child process. To make it extensible, the application should also take the name of the input file, as well as output file. The entire application is in Example 12-1.

Example 12-1. Simple Node application that wraps wkhtmltopdf

```
var spawn = require('child_process').spawn;

// command line arguments
var url = process.argv[2];
var output = process.argv[3];

if (url && output) {
    var wkhtmltopdf = spawn('wkhtmltopdf.sh', [url, output]);

    wkhtmltopdf.stdout.setEncoding('utf8');
    wkhtmltopdf.stdout.on('data', function (data) {
        console.log(data);
    });

    wkhtmltopdf.stderr.on('data', function (data) {
        console.log('stderr: ' + data);
    });

    wkhtmltopdf.on('exit', function (code) {
        console.log('child process exited with code ' + code);
    });
} else {
    console.log('You need to provide a URL and output file name');
}
```

You typically wouldn't use wkhtmltopdf in a Node application by itself, but it can be a handy addition to any web site or application that wants to provide a way to create a persistent PDF of a web page.

Accessing data about a PDF file with PDF Toolkit

The PDF Toolkit, or pdftk, provides functionality to split apart(burst) a PDF document or merge several documents into one. It can also be used to fill a PDF form, apply a watermark, rotate a PDF document, apply or remove compression, or uncompress a PDF stream for editing. There are installers for both Mac and Windows, and simple to follow instructions for installing in most flavors of Unix.

PDF Toolkit can be accessed via Node child processes. As an example, the following code creates a child process that invokes the PDF Toolkit's `dump_data` command, to discover information about a PDF, such as how many pages the document contains:

```
var spawn = require('child_process').spawn;

var pdftk = spawn('pdftk', [__dirname + '/pdfs/omg.pdf', 'dump_data']);

pdftk.stdout.on('data', function (data) {

    // convert results to an object
    var arry = data.toString().split('\n');
    var obj = {};
    arry.forEach(function(line) {
        var tmp = line.split(':');
        obj[tmp[0]] = tmp[1];
    });

    // print out number of pages
    console.log(obj['NumberOfPages']);
});

pdftk.stderr.on('data', function (data) {
    console.log('stderr: ' + data);
});

pdftk.on('exit', function (code) {
    console.log('child process exited with code ' + code);
});
```

The PDF Toolkit `data_dump` returns results similar to the following:

```
stdout: InfoKey: Creator
InfoValue: PrintServer150&#0;
InfoKey: Title
InfoValue: &#0;
InfoKey: Producer
InfoValue: Corel PDF Engine Version 15.0.0.431
InfoKey: ModDate
InfoValue: D:20110914223152Z
InfoKey: CreationDate
InfoValue: D:20110914223152Z
PdfID0: 7fbe73224e44cb152328ed693290b51a
PdfID1: 7fbe73224e44cb152328ed693290b51a
NumberOfPages: 3
```

The format is easily converted into an object for easier access of the individual properties.

PDF Toolkit is a reasonably responsive tool, but you'll want to use caution holding up a web response waiting for it to finish. To demonstrate how to access PDF Toolkit from a Node web application, and how to deal with the expected lag time working a computationally expensive graphics application can cause, we'll build a simple PDF Uploader.

Creating a PDF Uploader and Dealing with Graphics Lag Time

The ability of PDF Toolkit to burst a PDF or merge several PDFs into one is functionality that can be helpful at a web site that allows users to upload and download PDF documents, and then provides individual access of each PDF page. Think of Google Docs, or a web site such as Scribd, which allows PDF sharing.

The components to this type of application are:

- A form to select which PDF tool to upload
- A web service to receive the PDF document and then initiate the PDF processing
- A child process wrapper around PDF Toolkit to burst the PDF document into separate pages
- A response to the user providing links to the uploaded document and access to the individual pages

The component that bursts the PDF must first create a location for the pages and then determine what the pages will be named before it can perform the splitting action. This will require accessing the Node file system module to create the directory for the split files. Since larger files can take some time, rather than hold the web response waiting for the PDF Toolkit to finish, an email is sent to the user with URLs for the newly uploaded files. This requires the use of a module we've not used in previous chapters, Emailjs. The Emailjs module can be installed via npm:

```
| npm install emailjs
```

The form to upload the PDF is basic, needing little explanation. It uses a file input field in addition to a field for the person's name and email address, and sets the method to POST and the action to the web service. Since we're uploading a file, the `enctype` field must be set to `multipart/form-data`. The finished form page can be seen in Example 12-2.

Example 12-2. Form to upload a PDF file

```
<!doctype html>
<html lang="en">
<head>
    <meta charset="utf-8" />
    <title>Upload PDF</title>
    <script>
        window.onload=function() {
            document.getElementById('upload').onsubmit=function() {
                document.getElementById('submit').disabled=true;
            };
        }
    </script>
</head>
<body>
    <form id="upload" method="POST" action="http://examples.burningbird.net:8124"
        enctype="multipart/form-data">
        <p><label for="username">User Name:</label>
            <input id="username" name="username" type="text" size="20" required /></p>
        <p><label for="email">Email:</label>
            <input id="email" name="email" type="text" size="20" required /></p>
        <p><label for="pdffile">PDF File:</label>
            <input type="file" name="pdffile" id="pdffile" required /></p>
        <p>
        <input type="submit" name="submit" id="submit" value="Submit"/>
        </p>
    </form>
</body>
```

We have a chance to brush up on our client-side JavaScript skills by disabling the submit button when the form is submitted. The form makes use of the HTML5 `required` attribute, which ensures the proper data is provided.

Older browsers don't support the `required` attribute. You can still use it if you use an HTML5 shim.

The web service application that processes both the request for the form and the PDF upload uses the Connect middleware, this time without the Express framework. We just don't need the framework for this simple application.

In the service, the Connect static middleware is used to serve up static files, and the directory middleware is used to pretty print out a directory listing when a directory is accessed. The only other functionality that's needed is the process to parse out both the PDF file and the form data from the upload. The application uses the Connect `parseBody` method, which is capable of processing any type of posted data.

```
connect()
  .use(connect.bodyParser({uploadDir: __dirname + '/pdfs'}))
  .use(connect.static(__dirname + '/public'))
  .use(connect.directory(__dirname + '/public'))
  .listen(8124);
```

The data is then made available to a custom middleware named `upload`, which handles both the data and the PDF—invoking a custom module to process the PDF file. The `bodyParser` middleware makes the `username` and `email` available on the `request.body` object, and the uploaded file on the `request.files` object. If a file is uploaded, it's uploaded as an object named `pdffile` because that's the name of the file upload field. You'll need an additional test on the file `type` to ensure that the file uploaded is a PDF.

Example 12-3 has the complete code for the PDF Service application.

```
Example 12-3. PDF Upload Web service application

var connect = require('connect');
var pdfprocess = require('./pdfprocess');

// if POST
// upload file, kick off PDF burst, respond with ack
function upload(req, res, next){
  if ('POST' != req.method) return next();

  res.setHeader('Content-Type', 'text/html');
  if (req.files.pdffile && req.files.pdffile.type === 'application/pdf') {
    res.write('<p>Thanks ' + req.body.username +
      ' for uploading ' + req.files.pdffile.name + '</p>');
    res.end("<p>You'll receive an email with file links when processed.</p>");

    // post upload processing
    pdfprocess.processFile(req.body.username, req.body.email,
      req.files.pdffile.path, req.files.pdffile.name);
  } else {
    res.end('The file you uploaded was not a PDF');
  }
}

// in order
// static files
// POST - upload file
// otherwise, directory listing
connect()
  .use(connect.bodyParser({uploadDir: __dirname + '/pdfs'}))
  .use(connect.static(__dirname + '/public'))
  .use(upload)
  .use(connect.directory(__dirname + '/public'))
  .listen(8124);

console.log('Server started on port 8124');
```

The custom module `pdfprocess` is where the application performs the following steps to process the PDF file:

- A directory is created for the user under the public pdfs subdirectory if none exists
- A timestamp value is used with the file to create a unique name for the current uploaded PDF
- The timestamp is used with the PDF file name to create a new subdirectory for the PDFs under the user's subdirectory
- The PDF is moved from the temporary upload directory to this new directory, and renamed the original PDF file name
- The PDF Toolkit burst operation is performed on this file, with all the individual PDFs placed in the PDF's directory
- An email is sent to the user providing a URL/link where they can access the new directory containing the original uploaded PDF, and the individual PDF pages

The file system functionality is provided by the Node File System module, the email functionality by Emailjs, and the PDF Toolkit functionality is managed in a child process. There is no data returned from this child process, so the only events captured are child process `exit` and `error` events. Example 12-4 contains the code for this final piece of the application.

Example 12-4. Module to process PDF file and send user email with location of processed files

```
var fs = require('fs');
var spawn = require('child_process').spawn;
var emailjs = require('emailjs');

module.exports.processFile = function(username, email, path, filename) {

    // first, create user directory if doesn't exist
    fs.mkdir(__dirname + '/public/users/' + username, function(err) {

        // next create file directory if doesn't exist
        var dt = Date.now();

        // url for message later
        var url = 'http://examples.burningbird.net:8124/users/' +
            username + '/' + dt + filename;

        // directory for file
        var dir = __dirname + '/public/users/' + username + '/' +
            dt + filename;

        fs.mkdir(dir, function(err) {
            if (err)
                return console.log(err);

            // now, rename file to new location
            var newfile = dir + '/' + filename;

            fs.rename(path, newfile, function(err) {
                if (err)
                    return console.log(err);

                //burst pdf
                var pdftk = spawn('pdftk', [newfile, 'burst', 'output',
                    dir + '/page_%02d.pdf' ]);

                pdftk.on('exit', function (code) {
                    console.log('child process ended with ' + code);
                    if (code != 0)
                        return;
                });
            });
        });
    });
};
```

```

        console.log('sending email');
        // send email

        var server = emailjs.server.connect({
            user : 'gmail.account.name',
            password : 'gmail.account.passwod',
            host : 'smtp.gmail.com',
            port : 587,
            tls : true
        });

        var headers = {
            text : 'You can find your split PDF at ' + url,
            from : 'shelleyp@burningbird.net',
            to : email,
            subject: 'split pdf'
        };

        var message = emailjs.message.create(headers);

        message.attach({data:"<p>You can find your split PDF at " +
            "<a href='" + url + "'>" + url + "</a></p>",
            alternative: true});

        server.send(message, function(err, message) {
            console.log(err || message);
        });
        pdftk.kill();
    });

    pdftk.stderr.on('data', function (data) {
        console.log('stderr: ' + data);
    });

    });
});
});
}

```

The actual child process call to PDF Toolkit is in bold text in the code. The command line syntax used is the following:

```
| pdftk filename.pdf burst output /home/location/page_%02d.pdf
```

The file name is given first, then the operation, and then an output directive. The operation is, as mentioned earlier, the burst operation, which splits the PDF into separate pages. The output directive instructs the PDF Toolkit to place the newly split PDF pages in a specific directory, and provides formatting for the page names—the first page would be *page_01.pdf*, the second *page_02.pdf*, and so on. I could have used Node's `process.chdir` to change the process to the directory, but it really wasn't necessary since the PDF Toolkit operation can be made to place the files in a specified directory.

The email is sent using the Gmail SMTP server, which utilizes TLS (Transport Security Layer), over port 587, sent with a given Gmail username and password. You could, of course use your own SMTP server. The message is sent both in plain text, and with a given HTML formatted attachment (for those folks who use an email reader capable of processing HTML).

The end result of the application is a link sent to the user that takes them to the directory where the uploaded PDF and the split pages can be found. The Connect `directory` middleware ensures that the contents of the directory are attractively displayed. Figure 12-1 shows the results of uploading one very large PDF file on global warming.

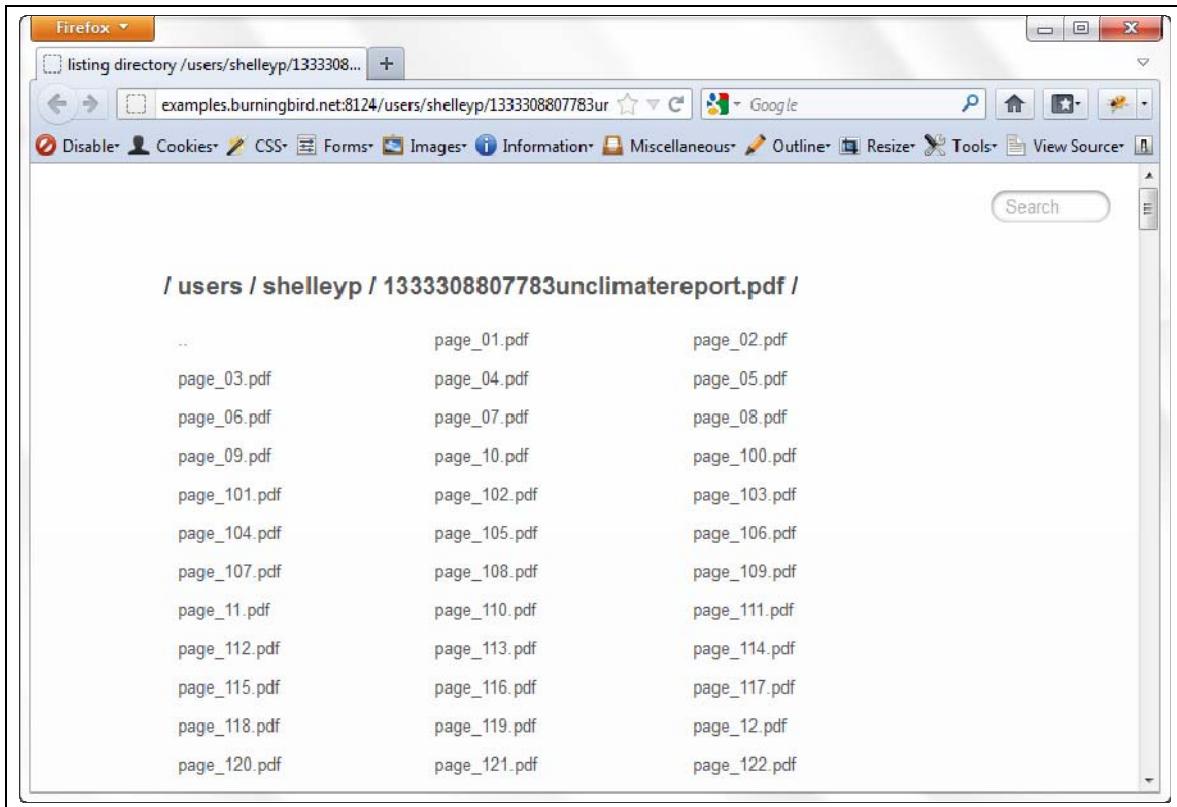


Figure 12-1. End result of running PDF Toolkit burst on large uploaded PDF

By using this approach—providing acknowledgment to the user in an email—the user doesn't have to wait around (and the Node service isn't hung up waiting on), the PDF processing.

Of course, the user still has to spend time uploading the PDF file—this application doesn't touch on the issues associated with large file uploads.

Creating PDFs with pdfkit

If using a child process and command line tools isn't for you, or if you need to be able to create a PDF, as well as manipulate existing PDFs, there are Node modules that provide PDF capability—chief among them, PDFKit.

PDFKit is written in Coffeescript, but you don't have to use Coffeescript to use the module, as the API is exposed to JavaScript. The module provides functionality to create a PDF document, add pages to it, text, graphics, and can embed images. Future additions to the module should add other functionality, such as PDF outlines, gradients, tables, and other nice features.

To install PDFKit, using npm:

```
| npm install pdfkit
```

In your application, you start by creating a new PDF document:

```
| var doc = new PDFDocument();
```

You can then add a font, a new web page, graphics, all with the exposed API. The API methods can all be chained, to simplify development.

To demonstrate how to use the module from JavaScript, I converted one of the Coffeescript examples the module developer created into JavaScript. From the top, after the PDF document is created, a TrueType

font is added to the document, the font size is set to 25 pixels, and text is drawn at X, Y coordinates of 100,100:

```
doc.font('fonts/GoodDog-webfont.ttf')
  .fontSize(25)
  .text('Some text with an embedded font!', 100, 100);
```

The application then adds a new PDF page, again changes the font size to 25 pixels, and draws new text at 100,100:

```
doc.addPage()
  .fontSize(25)
  .text('Here is some vector graphics...', 100, 100);
```

The document coordinate system is saved, and the vector graphics functionality is used to draw a red triangle:

```
doc.save()
  .moveTo(100, 150)
  .lineTo(100, 250)
  .lineTo(200, 250)
  .fill("#FF3300");
```

The next section of code scales the coordinate system to 0.6, translates the origin, draws a path in the shape of a star, fills it with red coloring, and then restores the document back to the original coordinate system and scale:

```
doc.scale(0.6)
  .translate(470, -380)
  .path('M 250,75 L 323,301 131,161 369,161 177,301 z')
  .fill('red', 'even-odd')
  .restore();
```

If you've worked with other vector graphics systems, such as Canvas, much of this should seem similar. If you haven't, then you might want to check out the canvas examples later in the book and then return to this examples.

Another page is added, the fill color is changed to blue, and a link is added to the page. The document is then written out to a file named *output.pdf*.

```
doc.addPage()
  .fillColor("blue")
  .text('Here is a link!', 100, 100)
  .underline(100, 100, 160, 27, {color: "#0000FF"})
  .link(100, 100, 160, 27, 'http://google.com/');

doc.write('output.pdf');
```

It's tedious to create a PDF document manually. However, the PDFKit API can be easily programmed to take content from a data store, and generate a PDF on the fly. It could also be used to generate a PDF document of web content, on demand, or to provide a persistent snapshot of data.

Be aware, though, that many of the module's methods are not asynchronous. You'll most likely be blocking as you're building the PDF, so plan accordingly.

Accessing ImageMagick from a Child Process

ImageMagick is a powerful command line graphics tool available in the Mac, Windows, and Unix environments. It can be used to crop or resize an image, to access image metadata, animate a sequence of images, and add any number of special effects. It's also very memory intensive, and depending on the size of the image and what you're doing with the image, can take a noticeable amount of time.

There are ImageMagick Node modules. One of the first is `imagemagick`, which provides a wrapper for ImageMagick functionality. However, it hasn't been updated for some time. Another module is `gm`, which

provides a set of predefined functions that work with ImageMagick in the background. You may find, though, that it's just as simple to work with ImageMagick, directly. All you need to work with ImageMagick directly from a Node application is for ImageMagick to be installed, and a Node child process.

ImageMagick provides several different tools you can use to perform different functions:

`animate`

animate a sequence over an X server

`compare`

provides a mathematical and visual annotation of differences between an image and a reconstruction of the image after modification

`composite`

overlap one image over another

`conjure`

execute scripts written in the Magick Scripting Language

`convert`

convert an image using any number of possible conversions such as cropping, resizing, or adding an effect

`display`

display an image on an X server

`identify`

describe format and other characteristics of an image file or several image files

`import`

create a screenshot of any visible window on an X server and save to a file

`mogrify`

modify an image in place (resize, crop, dither, etc, and save effects in existing image)

`montage`

create a composite image from several

`stream`

stream an image to storage, one pixel at a time

Several of the tools are related to an X server and make little sense from a Node application perspective. However, the `convert`, `mogrify`, `montage`, `identify`, and `stream` tools can have interesting uses in a Node application. In this section and next, I'm going to focus on one: `convert`.

Though I'm focusing on `convert`, be aware that everything I write in this section also applies to `mogrify`, except that `mogrify` overwrites the original file.

The `convert` tool is the ImageMagick work horse. With it you can perform some pretty amazing transformations on an image, and then save the results to a separate file. You can provide an adaptive blur, sharpen the image, annotate the image with text, position it on a backdrop, crop it, resize it, and even replace every pixel in the image with its color complement. There is little you can do with an image that ImageMagick doesn't support. Of course, not every operation is equal, especially if you're concerned about how long it can take to perform the operation. Some of the image conversions occur quickly, others can take considerable time.

To demonstrate how to use convert from a Node application, Example 12-5 has a self-contained, small application that takes an image file on the command line and scales it so it fits into a space no more than 150 pixels wide. The image is also transformed into a PNG, regardless of the original image type.

The command line version of this process is:

```
| convert photo.jpg -resize '150' photo.jpg.png
```

We'll need to capture four command arguments in the array for the child process: the original photo, the `-resize` flag, the value for the `resize` flag, and the name of the new image.

Example 12-5. Node application to use child process to run ImageMagick convert tool to scale an image

```
var spawn = require('child_process').spawn;

// get photo
var photo = process.argv[2];

// conversion array
var opts = [
photo,
'-resize',
'150',
photo + ".png"];

// convert
var im = spawn('convert', opts);

im.stderr.on('data', function (data) {
  console.log('stderr: ' + data);
});

im.on('exit', function (code) {
  if (code === 0)
    console.log('photo has been converted and is accessible at '
                + photo + '.png');
});
```

The ImageMagick convert tool processing the image silently, so there is no child process `data` event to process. The only events we're interested in are the `error`, and the `exit`, when the image processing is finished.

Where an application like ImageMagick can get tricky is when you're interested in doing a much more involved process. One of the more popular effects people have applied to images using ImageMagick is the Polaroid effect: rotating the image slightly around its center, adding a border, and a shadow to make the image look like a Polaroid image. The effect is now so popular there's a predefined setting for it, but prior to this new setting, we'd have to use a command similar to the following (from the ImageMagick usage examples):

```
convert thumbnail.gif \
  -bordercolor white -border 6 \
  -bordercolor grey60 -border 1 \
  -background none -rotate 6 \
  -background black \(+clone -shadow 60x4+4+4\) +swap \
  -background none -flatten \
  polaroid.png
```

This is a lot of arguments, and the arguments are in a format you may not have seen previously. So how does this get converted into a child process arguments array?

Minutely.

What looks like a single argument on the command like `\(+clone -shadow 60x4+4+4\)` is anything but to the Node child process. Example 12-6 is a variation of the conversion tool in Example 12-5, except now a

Polaroid effect is being applied, rather than the image being scaled. Pay particular attention to the line in bold text.

```
Example 12-6. Applying a Polaroid effect to a photo using ImageMagick from a Node application
var spawn = require('child_process').spawn;

// get photo
var photo = process.argv[2];

// conversion array
var opts = [
photo,
"-bordercolor", "snow",
"-border", "6",
"-background", "grey60",
"-background", "none",
"-rotate", "6",
"-background", "black",
"(", "+clone", "-shadow", "60x4+4+4", ")",
"+swap",
"-background", "none",
"-flatten",
photo + ".png"];

var im = spawn('convert', opts);
```

The highlighted code in the example demonstrates how what appears to be a single argument on the command line becomes five arguments to the child process. The end result of running the application is shown in Figure 12-2.



Figure 2-2. Result of running Node application to apply a Polaroid effect to a photo

It's unlikely you'll use the Node application with an ImageMagick child process directly on the command line. After all, you can just run ImageMagick's tools directly. However, you can use the combined child process/ImageMagick tool to run several different conversions on a single image, or to provide services from a web site, such as allowing a person to resize a photo to use as avatar, or adding annotation to uploaded images at a shared resource site.

The key to creating a web application that uses ImageMagick is the same key we applied with the PDF demonstration applications earlier in the chapter: if the process is going to be slow (especially with a larger number of concurrent users) you need to consider providing functionality that allows the individual to

upload the image file and then provide a link to the finished project (either at a site, or sending the link in an email), rather than block, waiting for everything to finish.

The code in Examples 12-3 and 12-4 can be adapted to apply the Polaroid effect to any uploaded image. In particular, Example 12-3 can be converted into a module that can be used for the same pattern of use: a file process that creates a new subdirectory for an uploaded file, runs a process, and depositing resulting files in the same directory.

Properly Serving HTML5 Video with HTTP

In Chapter 6 I created a simple HTTP server that served static files, as well as providing some basic directory and 404 handling. One of the web pages I tested with the server was a web page that included an embedded HTML5 video. The web page also had a custom toolbar that allowed the user to click anywhere on a timeline bar to start the video at an intermediate position.

The HTML5 video application worked with the Connect module's static web server, but not the homemade web server. The reason is the homemade web server didn't handle the concept of HTTP ranges. HTTP servers such as Apache and IIS have support for ranges, as does the Connect model. In this section, we'll add support for Ranges to the minimal web server created in Example 6-2 in Chapter 6.

Support for Ranges extends beyond serving HTML5 video. They can also be used to download larger files.

Ranges are an HTTP header that provides a start and end position for loading a resource, such as a video file. The steps we need to take to add support for HTTP ranges are:

- Signal willingness to accept range requests with response header `Accept-Ranges: bytes`
- Look for a Range request in request header
- If a Range request is found, parse out the start and end values
- Validate that start and end values are numbers, and that neither exceeds the length of the resource being accessed
- If no end value is provided, set it to the resource length; if no start, set it to zero(0)
- Create a Content-Range response header consisting of start, end, and resource length values
- Create a Content-Length response header with a value calculated from subtracting the start value from the end value
- Change the status code from 200 to 206 (Partial)
- Pass an object consisting of the start and end values to the `createReadStream` method

When a web client accesses a resource from a web server, the web server can signal to the client that it supports ranges, and provide a range unit, with the following header:

```
| Accept-Ranges: bytes
```

The first modification necessary for the minimal web server is add the new header:

```
| res.setHeader('Accept-Ranges', 'bytes');
```

The client will then send through Range requests of the following format:

```
| bytes=startnum-endnum
```

Where the `startnum/endnum` values are the starting and end numbers for the range. Several of these requests can be sent during playback. To demonstrate, the following are actual range requests sent from web page with the HTML5 video, after starting the video, and then clicking around on the timeline during playback:

```
| bytes=0-
| bytes=7751445-53195861
```

```

bytes=18414853-53195861
bytes=15596601-18415615
bytes=29172188-53195861
bytes=39327650-53195861
bytes=4987620-7751679
bytes=17251881-18415615
bytes=17845749-18415615
bytes=24307069-29172735
bytes=33073712-39327743
bytes=52468462-53195861
bytes=35020844-39327743
bytes=42247622-52468735

```

The next addition to the minimal web server is to check to see if a Range request has been sent, and if so, to parse out the start and end values. The code to check for a Range request is:

```
| if (req.headers.range) { ... }
```

To parse the Range start and end values, I created a function, `processRange`, that splits the string on the dash (-) and then extracts the numbers out of the returned two strings. The function also double checks to ensure a start value is provided and is a number, and isn't beyond the file length (returning a status code 416, Requested Range not Satisfiable, if it is). It also checks to ensure the end value is a number, and sets it to the video length if the value isn't provided. An object containing both start and end is returned by the function:

```

function processRange(res, ranges, len) {
    var start, end;

    // extract start and stop range
    var rangearray = ranges.split('-');

    start = parseInt(rangearray[0].substr(6));
    end = parseInt(rangearray[1]);

    if (isNaN(start)) start = 0;
    if (isNaN(end)) end = len -1;

    // start beyond end of file length
    if (start > len - 1) {
        res.setHeader('Content-Range', 'bytes */' + len);
        res.writeHead(416);
        res.end();
    }

    // end can't be beyond file length
    if (end > len - 1)
        end = len - 1;
    return {start:start, end:end};
}

```

The next component of the functionality is to prepare a Content-Range response header, providing the start and end values for the range, as well as the length of the resource, in the following format:

```
| Content-Range bytes 44040192-44062881/44062882
```

The content length (`Content-Length`) response is also prepared which is calculated as the end value minus the start value. In addition, the HTTP status code is set to 206, for Partial Content.

Lastly, the start and end values are also sent as an option to the `createReadStream` method call. This ensures that the stream is properly repositioned for streaming.

Example 12-7 pulls all of these pieces together into a modified minimal web server that can now serve HTML5 video (or other resource) ranges.

Example 12-7. The minimal web server, now with support for Ranges

```
var http = require('http'),
    url = require('url'),
    fs   = require('fs'),
    mime = require('mime');

function processRange(res, ranges, len) {

    var start, end;

    // extract start and stop range
    var rangearray = ranges.split('-');

    start = parseInt(rangearray[0].substr(6));
    end = parseInt(rangearray[1]);

    if (isNaN(start)) start = 0;
    if (isNaN(end)) end = len -1;

    // start beyond end of file length
    if (start > len - 1) {
        res.setHeader('Content-Range', 'bytes */' + len);
        res.writeHead(416);
        res.end();
    }

    // end can't be beyond file length
    if (end > len - 1)
        end = len - 1;

    return {start:start, end:end};
}

http.createServer(function (req, res) {

    pathname = __dirname + '/public' + req.url;

    fs.stat(pathname, function(err, stats) {
        if (err) {
            res.writeHead(404);
            res.write('Bad request 404\n');
            res.end();
        } else if (stats.isFile()) {

            var opt={};

            // assume no range
            res.statusCode = 200;

            var len = stats.size;

            // we have a Range request
            if (req.headers.range) {
                opt = processRange(res,req.headers.range,len);

                // adjust length
                len = opt.end - opt.start + 1;

                // change status code to partial
                res.statusCode = 206;

                // set header
                var ctstr = 'bytes ' + opt.start + '-' +
                           opt.end + '/' + stats.size;
            }
        }
    });
});
```

```

        res.setHeader('Content-Range', ctstr);
    }

    console.log('len ' + len);
    res.setHeader('Content-Length', len);

    // content type
    var type = mime.lookup(pathname);
    res.setHeader('Content-Type', type);
    res.setHeader('Accept-Ranges', 'bytes');

    // create and pipe readable stream
    var file = fs.createReadStream(pathname, opt);
    file.on("open", function() {

        file.pipe(res);
    });
    file.on("error", function(err) {
        console.log(err);
    });

} else {
    res.writeHead(403);
    res.write('Directory access is forbidden');
    res.end();
}
});

}).listen(8124);
console.log('Server running at 8124/');

```

Modifying the minimal web server demonstrates that HTTP and other network functionality isn't necessarily complicated—just tedious. The key is to break down each task into separate tasks, and then add code to manage the task, one at a time (testing after each).

Now the web page (included in the examples) that allows the user to click around on a timeline works correctly.

Creating and Streaming Canvas Content

The canvas element has become a favorite of game developers, graphic artists, and statisticians because of the capability it provides for creating dynamic and interactive graphics in client web pages. The canvas element is also supported in a Node environment via modules, such as then one covered in this section: node-canvas, or just plain canvas. The node-canvas module is based on Cairo, a cross-platform vector graphics library that's long been popular with developers.

To use node-canvas, install it via npm:

```
| npm install canvas
```

All of the standard Canvas functionality you have in a client page is available via the node-canvas module. You create a Canvas object, then a context, do all your drawing in the context, and then either display the result, or save the result in a file as a JPEG or PNG.

Be aware that some of the functionality in node-canvas, such as working with an Image, requires a version of Cairo greater than version 1.10.

There are also a couple of additional methods available on the server, you wouldn't have on the client. These allow us to stream a Canvas object to a file (either as PNG or JPEG), persisting the results for later access (or serving in a web page). You can also convert the Canvas object to a data URI and including in a

`img` element in a generated HTML web page, or read an image from an external source (such as a file or a Redis database) and use directly in the Canvas object.

Jumping right in to demonstrate how to use the module, Example 12-8 creates a canvas drawing and then streams it to a PNG file for later access. The example uses a rotated graphic image from an example at the Mozilla Developer Network, and adds a border and shadow to it. Once finished, it's streamed to a PNG file, for later access.

Example 12-8. Creating a graphic using node-canvas and persisting the result to a PNG file

```
var Canvas = require('canvas');
var fs = require('fs');

// new canvas and context
var canvas = new Canvas(350, 350);
var ctx = canvas.getContext('2d');

// create filled rectangle with shadow
// save context for later restore
ctx.save();
ctx.shadowOffsetX = 10;
ctx.shadowOffsetY = 10;
ctx.shadowBlur = 5;
ctx.shadowColor='rgba(0,0,0,0.4)';

ctx.fillStyle = '#fff';
ctx.fillRect(30,30,300,300);

// done with shadow
ctx.restore();
ctx.strokeRect(30,30,300,300);

// MDN example: pretty graphic, inserted offset into
// previously created square
ctx.translate(125,125);
for (i=1;i<6;i++) {
    ctx.save();
    ctx.fillStyle = 'rgb('+(51*i)+','+(255-51*i)+',255)';
    for (j=0;j<i*6;j++) {
        ctx.rotate(Math.PI*2/(i*6));
        ctx.beginPath();
        ctx.arc(0,i*12.5,5,Math.PI*2,true);
        ctx.fill();
    }
    ctx.restore();
}
// stream to PNG file
var out = fs.createWriteStream(__dirname + '/shadow.png');
var stream = canvas.createPNGStream();

stream.on('data', function(chunk) {
    out.write(chunk);
});

stream.on('end', function() {
    console.log('saved png');
});
```

Once the Node application is run, access the `shadow.png` file from your favorite browser. Figure 12-3 shows the generated image.

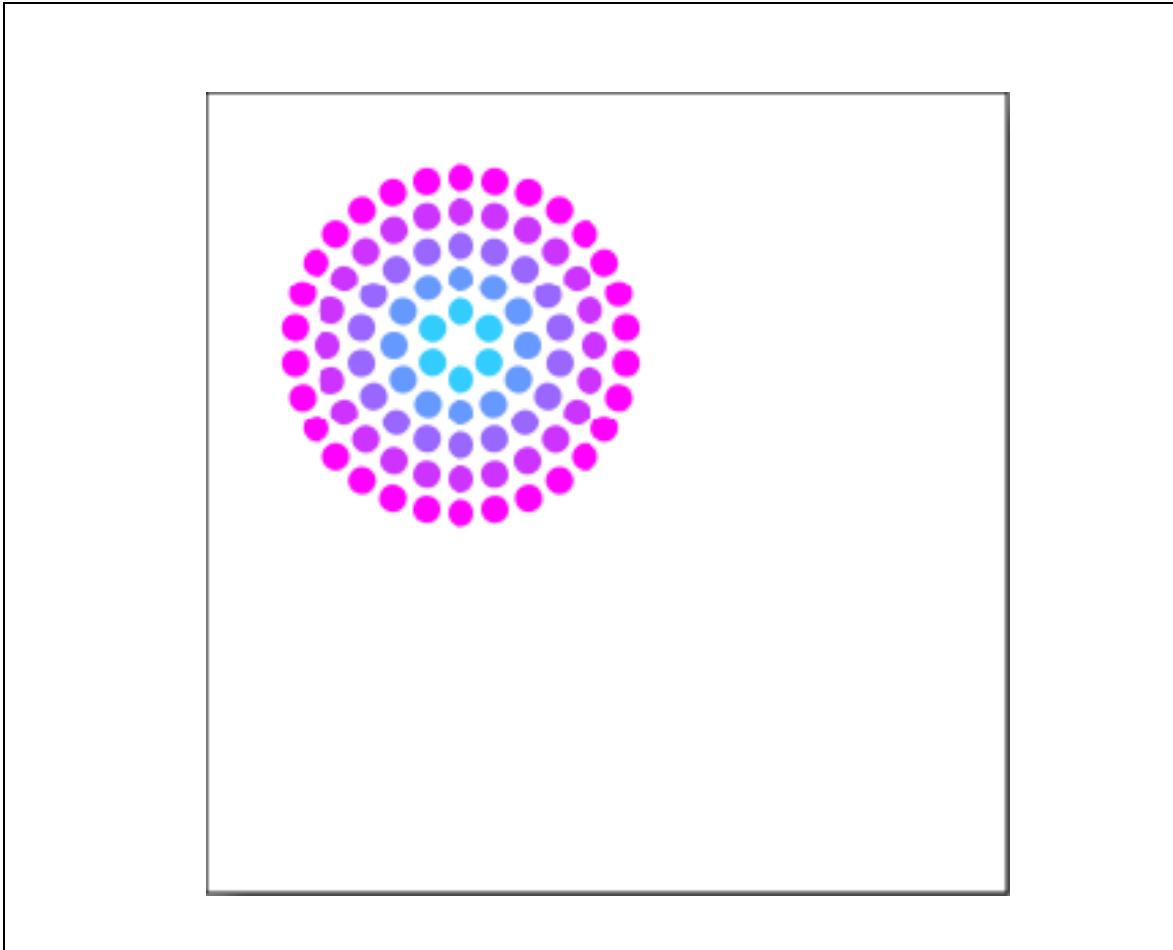


Figure 12-3. Image generated using node-canvas

You're not going to use the canvas object in a Node application as you would a canvas element in a web page. One of the examples included with node-canvas is a dynamic clock that requires constant HTTP refreshes. If you want an active clock in the client, you should use the canvas element in the client.

Where canvas makes sense on the server is as a way of providing a graphical representation of a server activity, such as a database query, data in a Redis database, a log file, or other data that originates on the server. By generating the graphic on the server, you not only can persist the graphic for multiple accesses, you can also limit how much data flows to the client by being able to process a graphic on the server, rather than send the data to the client, and creating the graphic then.

13

WebSockets and Socket.IO

In this chapter, we're working in both the client and server environments, because both are necessary when it comes to WebSockets and Socket.IO.

WebSockets is a relatively new web technology that enables bi-directional, realtime communication directly from within a client to a server application, and back again. The communication occurs over TCP, via sockets. The Socket.IO libraries provides the support necessary to implement this technology. Not only does it provide a module to use in your Node application, it provides a client-side JavaScript library to enable the client-side end of the communication channel. For an added bonus, it also works as an Express middleware.

In this chapter I'm going to introduce WebSockets more fully by demonstrating how Socket.IO works, both in the client and in the server.

WebSockets

Before jumping into using Socket.IO, I want to provide a quick overview WebSockets. To do that, I also need to provide an explanation of *bidirectional full duplex communication*.

The term *full duplex* is used to describe any form of data transmission that allows communication in both directions. And the term *bidirectional* means that both endpoints of a transmission can communicate, as compared to unidirectional communication, when one end of a data transmission is a sender and all other end points are receivers. WebSockets provide the capability for a web client, such as a browser, to open up bidirectional full duplex communication with a server application. And it does so without having to use HTTP, which adds unnecessary overhead to the communication process.

WebSockets are standardized as part of a specification called the WebSockets API at the W3C. The technology has had a bumpy start, because no sooner did some browsers begin implementing WebSockets in 2009, serious security concerns led the same browsers to either pull their implementation, or only enable it as an option.

The WebSocket protocol was revamped to address the security concerns, and at this time, support for the new protocol exists in recent releases of Firefox, Chrome, and IE, while Safari and Opera only support the older versions of the technology, or you must enable WebSockets in the configuration settings. In addition, most mobile browsers have only limited support, or only support the older WebSocket specification.

Socket.IO addresses the issue of uneven support for WebSockets by using several different mechanisms in order to enable the bidirectional communication. It attempts to use the following, in order:

- [WebSocket](#)

- **AJAX Long Polling**
- **AJAX Multipart Streaming**
- **Forever Iframe for IE**
- **JSONP Polling**

The key point to take away from this list is that Socket.IO supports bi-directional communication in most, if not all, browsers in use today—desktop and mobile. When I tested all of the applications in this chapter with the most common desktop browsers, I had the following results:

- Chrome 18 websocket
- Opera 11 xhr-polling (AJAX long polling)
- IE 9 htmlfile (Forever iFrame for IE)
- Firefox 11 websocket

Though technically WebSocket isn't the mechanism used with all browsers in the applications in this chapter, I'll be using WebSockets to describe the communication technique. It's shorter than repeating *bidirectional full duplex communication*.

An Introduction to Socket.IO

Before jumping into code that implements the WebSockets application, you'll need to install Socket.IO on your server. Use npm to install the module and supporting JavaScript library:

```
| npm install socket.io
```

A Socket.IO application requires two different components: a server, and a client application. In the examples in this section, the server application is a Node application, the client application is a JavaScript block in an HTML web page. Both are adaptions of example code provided at the Socket.IO web site.

A Simple Communication Example

The client/server application demonstrated in this section sets up a communication between client and server, sending a text string, back and forth between them, that is meant to be published to the web page. The client always echos the recent string to the server, which modifies the string and sends back to the client.

The client application creates a new WebSocket connection, using the Socket.IO client-side library, and listens for any events labeled *news*. When an event is received, the application takes the text sent with the event and outputs it to the web page. It also echos the text back to the server via an *echo* event. Example 13-1 shows the complete code for the client web page.

Example 13-1. Client HTML Page in Socket.IO application

```
<!doctype html>
<html lang="en">
<head>
  <meta charset="utf-8">
  <title>bi-directional communication</title>
  <script src="/socket.io/socket.io.js"></script>
  <script>
    var socket = io.connect('http://examples.burningbird.net:8124');
    socket.on('news', function (data) {
      var html = '<p>' + data.news + '</p>';
      document.getElementById("output").innerHTML=html;
      socket.emit('echo', { back: data.news });
    });
  </script>
```

```

</head>
<body>
<div id="output"></div>
</body>
</html>

```

The server application uses HTTP to listen for incoming requests, and serves up only one file: the client HTML file. When a new socket connection is made, it emits a message to the client with the text of *Counting...*, to an event labeled *news*.

When the server gets an *echo* event, it takes the text sent with the event, and appends a *counter* value to it. The *counter* is maintained in the page and incremented every time the echo event is transmitted. When the *counter* gets to 50, the server no longer transmits the data back to the client. Example 13-2 contains all the code for the server application.

Example 13-2. Server application in Socket.IO demonstration application

```

var app = require('http').createServer(handler)
, io = require('socket.io').listen(app)
, fs = require('fs')

var counter;

app.listen(8124);

function handler (req, res) {
  fs.readFile(__dirname + '/index.html',
  function (err, data) {
    if (err) {
      res.writeHead(500);
      return res.end('Error loading index.html');
    }
    counter = 1;
    res.writeHead(200);
    res.end(data);
  });
}
io.sockets.on('connection', function (socket) {
  socket.emit('news', { news: 'world' });
  socket.on('echo', function (data) {
    if (counter <= 50) {
      counter++;
      data.back+=counter;
      socket.emit('news', {news: data.back});
    }
  });
});

```

After the client application is loaded into the server, you can watch the counter update until it reaches the target end value. The web page doesn't have to be reloaded, and the user doesn't have to do anything special for the application to happen. The application exhibits the same behavior in all modern browsers, though the underlying technology that implements the effect differs by browser.

Both the news and echo events are custom events. The only socket events Socket.IO supports out of the box are *connection*, passed during initial connection, and the following events on the server socket:

- 'message' - emitted whenever a message sent using `socket.send` is received
- 'disconnect' - emitted when either client disconnects, or server disconnects

And the following events on the client socket:

- 'connect' - emitted when socket connection is made
- 'connecting' - emitted when socket connection is being attempted

- 'disconnect' - emitted when socket is disconnected
- 'connect_failed' - emitted when connection fails
- 'error' - emitted when an error occurs
- 'message' - emitted when message sent with socket.send is received
- 'reconnect_failed' - emitted when Socket.IO fails to re-establish connection if connection is dropped
- 'reconnect' - emitted when a connection is re-established when connection is dropped
- 'reconnecting' - emitted when attempting a reconnection after connection is dropped

If you want WebSocket behavior, rather than use the emit method, you can use the send method, and listen for message. For instance, on the server the application can use send to send the message to the client, and then listen for a response via the message event:

```
io.sockets.on('connection', function (socket) {
  socket.send("All the news that's fit to print");
  socket.on('message', function(msg) {
    console.log(msg);
  });
});
```

On the client, the application can also listen for the message event, and use send to communicate back:

```
socket.on('message', function (data) {
  var html = '<p>' + data + '</p>';
  document.getElementById("output").innerHTML=html;
  socket.send('OK, got the data');
});
```

This example uses send to manually acknowledge receipt of the message. If we want an automatic acknowledgment that the client received the event, we can pass a callback function in as last parameter of the emit method.

On the server, a callback function is passed as the last parameter of emit:

```
io.sockets.on('connection', function (socket) {
  socket.emit('news', { news: "All the news that's fit to print" },
    function(data) {
      console.log(data);
    });
});
```

In the client, we can then pass a message back, using this callback function:

```
socket.on('news', function (data, fn) {
  var html = '<p>' + data.news + '</p>';
  document.getElementById("output").innerHTML=html;
  fn('Got it! Thanks!');
});
```

The socket passed as parameter to the connection event handler is the unique connection between the server and the client, and persists as long as the connection persists. If the connection does terminate, Socket.IO attempts to reconnect.

WebSockets in an Asynchronous World

The application works...to a point. Where it fails is in not taking into account the asynchronous nature of Node. In the application, the counter used is one that's global to the application. If only one customer accesses the application at a time, it works fine. However, if two users access the application at the same time, you get odd results: one browser may end up with fewer numbers, the other more, and neither is likely to get an expected result. Add in more concurrent users, and the results are worse.

What we need is a way of attaching data that needs to persist beyond events to the socket, itself. Luckily we can do so, just by adding the data directly to the socket object that's created with each new connection. Example 13-3 is a modification of the code from Example 13-2, where the counter is now attached to the socket object, directly, rather than floating about as a global variable. The changed code is highlighted in the text.

```
Example 13-3. Modified server code incorporating use of data persistence with the individual sockets
var app = require('http').createServer(handler)
, io = require('socket.io').listen(app)
, fs = require('fs')

app.listen(8124);

function handler (req, res) {
  fs.readFile(__dirname + '/index.html',
  function (err, data) {
    if (err) {
      res.writeHead(500);
      return res.end('Error loading index.html');
    }
    res.writeHead(200);
    res.end(data);
  });
}
io.sockets.on('connection', function (socket) {
  socket.counter = 1;
  socket.emit('news', { news: 'Counting...' });

  socket.on('echo', function (data) {
    if (socket.counter <= 50) {
      data.back+=socket.counter;
      socket.counter++;
      socket.emit('news', {news: data.back});
    }
  });
});
```

Now you can have several concurrent users at the same time, and they each get the exact same communication. That socket object exists until the socket connection is closed and can't be re-established.

Each browser won't have *exactly* the same behavior. The counter could be faster or slower depending on the browser, because of the underlying mechanism used to manage the communication.

About that Client Code

For Socket.IO to work, the client side of the application must have access to the Socket.IO client-side JavaScript library. This library is included in the page with the following script element:

```
| <script src="/socket.io/socket.io.js"></script>
```

You may be wondering if you have to specifically place this code in the top level of your web server. Well, you don't.

In the server application, when the HTTP web server was created, it was passed to the Socket.IO's listen event:

```
| var app = require('http').createServer(handler)
, io = require('socket.io').listen(app)
```

What happens is that Socket.IO intercepts requests sent to the web server and listens for requests for:

```
| /socket.io/socket.io.js
```

Socket.IO does a clever bit of behind the scenes finagling that determines what's returned in the response. If the client supports WebSocket, the JavaScript file returned is one that uses WebSocket to implement the client connection. If the client doesn't support WebSocket, but does support Forever iFrame (IE 9), it returns that particular JavaScript client code, and so on.

Don't modify the relative URL used for a Socket.IO application, as your application won't work if you do.

Configuring Socket.IO

Socket.IO comes with several default settings that typically we don't need to change. In the examples in the last section, I didn't alter any of the default settings. If I wanted to, though, I could by using Socket.IO's `configure` method, which operates in a manner similar to what we've used with Express and Connect. You can even specify different configurations based on which environment the application is running.

Socket.IO contains a Wiki page that lists all of the options, and I don't want to repeat the rather extensive list here. Instead I want to demonstrate a couple you may want to consider modifying as you're learning to work with Socket.IO.

You can change the allowable transports by setting the `transports` option. By default, the allowable transports, in order of priority, are:

- `websocket`
- `htmlfile`
- `xhr-polling`
- `jsonp-polling`

Another transport option is Flash Socket, which is not enabled by default. If I add the following to Example 13-3, when I access the application with Opera and IE, the application uses Flash Socket, rather than Ajax long polling and Forever iFrame, respectively:

```
io.configure('development', function() {
  io.set('transports', [
    'websocket',
    'flashsocket',
    'htmlfile',
    'xhr-polling',
    'jsonp-polling']);
});
```

You can also define different configurations for different environments, such as production and development:

```
io.configure('production', function() {
  io.set('transports', [
    'websocket',
    'jsonp-polling']);

});

io.configure('development', function() {
  io.set('transports', [
    'websocket',
    'flashsocket',
    'htmlfile',
    'xhr-polling',
    'jsonp-polling']);

});
```

Another option controls the amount of detail output to the logger (you'll notice the logger output as debug statements to the console on the server). If you want to turn off the logger output, you can set the `log level` option to 1:

```
| io.configure('development', function() {  
|   io.set('log level', 1);  
});
```

Some of the options, such as `store`, which determines where client data is persisted, have additional requirements other than just setting an option in a configuration method call. However, other than setting `log level` and `transports`, the default settings should be sufficient as you're learning to work with Socket.IO.

Chat: The WebSockets Hello World

Every technology has its own version of Hello, World—the first application people typically create when learning the technology—and the Hello, World for WebSocket and Socket.IO seems to be a chat client. The Socket.IO Github site provides a chat client (as well as an IRC client) and searching on Socket.IO and "chat" lists several nice examples.

In this section, I'm going to demonstrate the code for a very simple chat client. It has no bells and whistles, and only uses Socket.IO and no other library (on the client or server), but it demonstrates how nicely Socket.IO facilitates an application that can be quite difficult to implement, otherwise.

The application makes use of a couple of new methods to handle communication. In the past examples, the applications used either `send` or `emit` to send a communication between client and server. This type of communication is restricted to the socket, and is visible only to the user receiving the message, no matter how many other people are connected to the server.

To broadcast to every person connected to the server, you can use the `emit` method on the Socket.IO framework object:

```
| io.sockets.emit();
```

Now, anyone who has a socket connection to the server gets the message.

You can also broadcast a message to every person but a specific individual, by issuing a broadcast emit on the socket of the person you don't want to see the message:

```
| socket.broadcast.emit();
```

In the simple chat application, when a new client is connected, the client application prompts for a name and then broadcasts to other connected clients that this person has now entered the chat room. The client application also provides a text field and button to send messages, and provides place where new messages from all participants are printed. Example 13-4 shows the client application code.

Example 13-4. Client Chat application

```
<!doctype html>  
<html lang="en">  
<head>  
  <meta charset="utf-8">  
  <title>bi-directional communication</title>  
  <script src="/socket.io/socket.io.js"></script>  
  <script>  
    var socket = io.connect('http://examples.burningbird.net:8124');  
    socket.on('connect', function() {  
      socket.emit('addme', prompt('Who are you?'));  
    });  
  
    socket.on('chat',function(username, data) {  
      var p = document.createElement('p');  
      p.innerHTML = username + ': ' + data;  
      document.getElementById('messages').appendChild(p);  
    });  
  </script>
```

```

        document.getElementById('output').appendChild(p);
    });
    window.addEventListener('load',function() {
        document.getElementById('sendtext').addEventListener('click',
            function() {
                var text = document.getElementById('data').value;
                socket.emit('sendchat', text);
            }, false);
    }, false);
</script>
</head>
<body>
<div id="output"></div>
<div id="send">
    <input type="text" id="data" size="100" /><br />
    <input type="button" id="sendtext" value="Send Text" />
</div>
</body>
</html>

```

Other than the addition of basic JavaScript functionality to capture the click event on the button, and the prompt to get the person's name, the functionality isn't much different than earlier examples.

In the server, the new person's username is attached as data to the socket. The server acknowledges the person directly, and then broadcasts the person's name to other chat room participants. When the server receives any new chat message, it attaches the username to the message, so everyone can see who sent it. Finally, when a client disconnects from chat room, another message is broadcast to all connected people that the person is no longer participating. Example 13-5 has the complete code for the server application.

Example 13-5. Server Chat application

```

var app = require('http').createServer(handler)
, io = require('socket.io').listen(app)
, fs = require('fs');

app.listen(8124);

function handler (req, res) {
    fs.readFile(__dirname + '/chat.html',
        function (err, data) {
            if (err) {
                res.writeHead(500);
                return res.end('Error loading chat.html');
            }
            res.writeHead(200);
            res.end(data);
        });
}

io.sockets.on('connection', function (socket) {

    socket.on('addme',function(username) {
        socket.username = username;
        socket.emit('chat', 'SERVER', 'You have connected');
        socket.broadcast.emit('chat', 'SERVER', username + ' is on deck');
    });

    socket.on('sendchat', function(data) {
        io.sockets.emit('chat', socket.username, data);
    });

    socket.on('disconnect', function() {
        io.sockets.emit('chat', 'SERVER', socket.username + ' has left the building');
    });
}

```

```
});
```

Figure 13-1 shows the results of the application when I tested it from four different browsers (Chrome, Firefox, Opera, and IE).

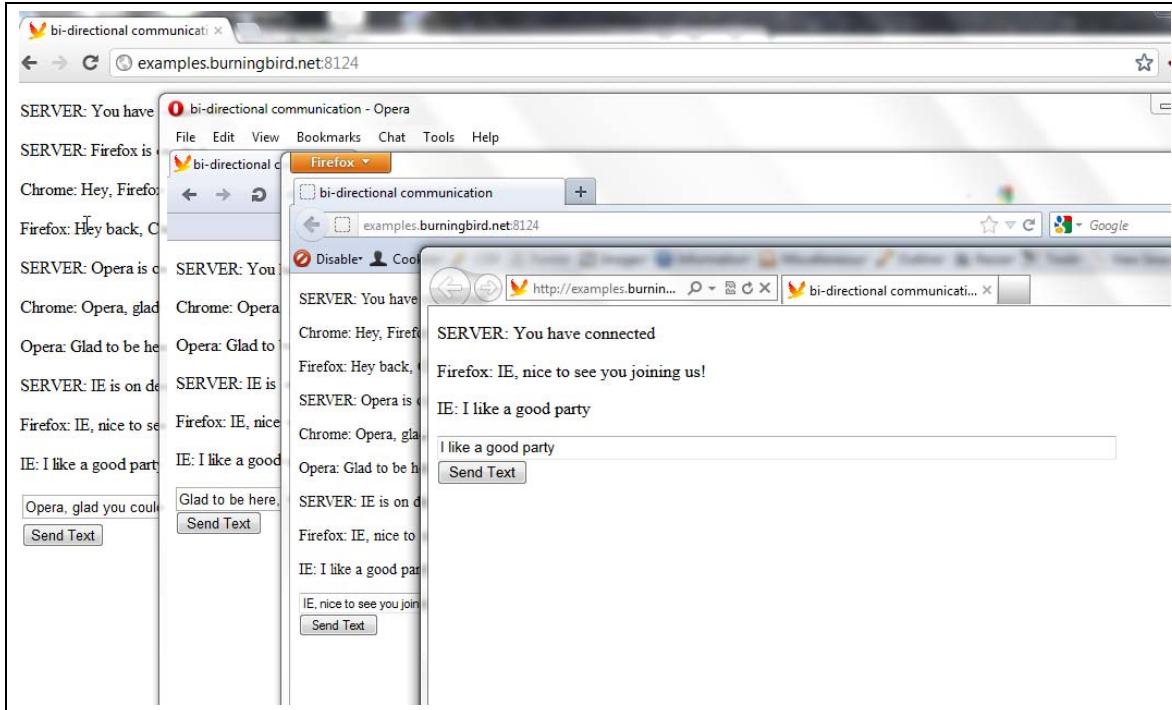


Figure 13-1. Trying out Chat application enabled by Socket.IO in several different browsers

An additional modification to the application could add a list of people currently connected, for newcomers to see who is in the room when they enter. This can be a global array, since it, unlike the username, is accessible by all clients. I'll leave this last bit of code to you, as an off-book exercise.

Using Socket.IO with Express

The examples to this point used Node's HTTP as the web server. You can also easily incorporate Express into a Socket.IO application (or Socket.IO into an Express application). The key to remember is that Socket.IO must be able to listen for requests before they're processed by Express.

Example 13-6 converts the server component of the chat application from the last section into using Express to handle all web service requests. The line in the code that's essential to the integration of Socket.IO and Express is emphasized. The actual communication components are not changed at all from the code in Example 13-5.

Example 13-6. Porting the Chat server to Express

```
var express = require('express'),
    sio = require('socket.io'),
    http = require('http'),
    app = express();

var server = http.createServer(app);

app.configure(function () {
  app.use(express.static(__dirname + '/public'));
  app.use(app.router);
```

```

});;

app.get('/', function (req, res) {
  res.send('hello');
});

var io = sio.listen(server);

server.listen(8124);

io.sockets.on('connection', function (socket) {

  socket.on('addme',function(username) {
    socket.username = username;
    socket.emit('chat', 'SERVER', 'You have connected');
    socket.broadcast.emit('chat', 'SERVER', username + ' is on deck');
  });

  socket.on('sendchat', function(data) {
    io.sockets.emit('chat', socket.username, data);
  });

  socket.on('disconnect', function() {
    io.sockets.emit('chat', 'SERVER', socket.username + ' has left the building');
  });
});

```

As the Express application is passed to the HTTP server, so to does the HTTP server then get passed to Socket.IO. All three completely separate modules work together to ensure that all requests—whether web service or chat—are handled properly.

Though the chat client is a static page, it would be a simple matter to incorporate a template. The only issue is ensuring the integrity of the scripting block where the client application code resides, and to include a link to the Socket.IO library.

14

Testing and Debugging Node Applications

In previous chapters, the only debugging aid used in the examples was printing information to the Console. For smaller and less complex applications, and while still in development, this is sufficient. However, as your application grows, and gets more complicated, you'll need to use other more sophisticated tools for debugging.

You're also going to want to incorporate more formal testing, including the use of tools that create tests that can be used by others to test your module or application in their environments.

Debugging

Frankly, `console.log` will always remain my favorite debugger of choice, but it's usefulness does degrade as your application increases in size and complexity. Once you've moved beyond a simple application, you're going to want to consider using more sophisticated debugging tools.

The Node.js Debugger

The V8 engine comes with a built-in debugger we can use with our Node applications, and Node provides a client that makes it simple to use. The place to start is by adding debugger statements into our code, any place where we want a break point:

```
// create the proxy that listens for all requests
httpProxy.createServer(function(req,res,proxy) {

    debugger;
    if (req.url.match(/^\/node\//))
        proxy.proxyRequest(req, res, {
            host: 'localhost',
            port: 8000
        });
    else
        proxy.proxyRequest(req,res, {
            host: 'localhost',
            port: 8124
        });
}).listen(9000);
```

We then run the application in debug mode:

```
| node debug app.js
```

In debug mode, the application stops at the beginning of the file. To go to the first breakpoint, type `cont`, or the abbreviation for `cont`, `c`. This causes the debugger to stop at the first breakpoint, or the application sits, waiting on whatever input from the user (such as a web request):

```
< debugger listening on port 5858
connecting... ok
break in app2.js:1
  1 var connect = require('connect'),
  2     http = require('http'),
  3     fs = require('fs'),
debug> cont (--> note it is just waiting at this point for a web request)
break in app2.js:11
  9 httpProxy.createServer(function(req,res,proxy) {
10
11   debugger;
12   if (req.url.match(/^\/node\/__))
13     proxy.proxyRequest(req, res, {
debug>
```

You have several options at this point. You can step through the code using the next (`n`) command, step into a function using `step` (`s`), or out of a function using `out` (`o`). In the following code, the debugger stops at the breakpoint, the next few lines are stepped over with `next` until line 13, which has a function call. I use `step` at this point to step into the function. I can then traverse the function code using `next`, and return to the application using `out`:

```
debug> cont
break in app2.js:11
  9 httpProxy.createServer(function(req,res,proxy) {
10
11   debugger;
12   if (req.url.match(/^\/node\/__))
13     proxy.proxyRequest(req, res, {
debug> next
break in app2.js:12
10
11   debugger;
12   if (req.url.match(/^\/node\/__))
13     proxy.proxyRequest(req, res, {
14       host: 'localhost',
debug> next
break in app2.js:13
11   debugger;
12   if (req.url.match(/^\/node\/__))
13     proxy.proxyRequest(req, res, {
14       host: 'localhost',
15       port: 8000
debug> step
break in /home/examples/public_html/node/node_modules/http-proxy/lib/node-http-proxy/routing-
proxy.js:144
142 //
143 RoutingProxy.prototype.proxyRequest = function (req, res, options) {
144   options = options || {};
145
146 //
debug> next
break in /home/examples/public_html/node/node_modules/http-proxy/lib/node-http-proxy/routing-
proxy.js:152
150   // arguments are supplied to `proxyRequest`.
151   //
152   if (this.proxyTable && !options.host) {
153     location = this.proxyTable.getProxyLocation(req);
154
debug> out
```

```

break in app2.js:22
20         port: 8124
21     });
22 }).listen(9000);
23
24 // add route for request for dynamic resource

```

You can also set a new breakpoint, either on the current line `setBreakpoint (sb)`, or the first line in a named function or script file:

```

break in app2.js:22
20         port: 8124
21     });
22 }).listen(9000);
23
24 // add route for request for dynamic resource
debug> sb()
17     else
18         proxy.proxyRequest(req,res, {
19             host: 'localhost',
20             port: 8124
21         });
*22 }).listen(9000);
23
24 // add route for request for dynamic resource
25 crossroads.addRoute('/node/{id}/', function(id) {
26     debugger;
27 });

```

You can also clear a breakpoint, with `clearBreakpoint (cb)`.

You can add an expression to a watch list, and list out current watches. You can also use REPL in order to examine variables:

```

break in app2.js:11
  9 httpProxy.createServer(function(req,res,proxy) {
10
11     debugger;
12     if (req.url.match(/^\/node\//))
13         proxy.proxyRequest(req, res, {
debug> repl
Press Ctrl + C to leave debug repl
> req.url
'/node/174'
debug>

```

The `backtrace` command is helpful for printing a *backtrace* of the current execution frame:

```

debug> backtrace
#0 app2.js:22:1
#1 exports.createServer.handler node-http-proxy.js:174:39

```

Any time you want to see what commands are available to you, type `help`:

```

debug> help
Commands: run (r), cont (c), next (n), step (s), out (o), backtrace (bt), setBreakpoint (sb),
clearBreakpoint (cb),
watch, unwatch, watchers, repl, restart, kill, list, scripts, breakpoints, version

```

The built-in debugger is very helpful, but sometimes you want a little bit more. You have other options, including access the V8 debugger directly, by using the `--debug` command line flag:

```
| node --debug app.js
```

This starts up a TCP connection to the debugger, and you enter the V8 debug commands at the prompt. An interesting option, but does require a great deal of understanding of how the V8 debugger works (and what the commands are).

Another option is to use another approach to debugging—debugging via a Webkit browser—through an application such as Node Inspector.

Client Side Debugging with Node Inspector

Node Inspector requires a little more set up to begin debugging, but the extra effort is worth it.

First, install Node Inspector globally, using npm:

```
| npm install -g node-inspector
```

To use the functionality, you'll first need to start the application using the V8 debugger flag:

```
| node --debug app.js
```

Then you'll need to start the Node Inspector, either in the background, or foreground:

```
| # node-inspector
```

When you start the application, you'll get the following message:

```
# node-inspector
  info  - socket.io started
  visit http://0.0.0.0:8080/debug?port=5858 to start debugging
```

Using a Webkit-based browser (Safari or Chrome), access the debugging page. My example is running on my server, so I use the following URL:

```
| http://examples.burningbird.net:8080/debug?port=5858
```

In the browser, the client-side debugger, part of the developer toolset, opens, and stops at the first breakpoint. Now you can use the tools you're probably already familiar with in your client-side JavaScript development efforts, such as stepping over a couple of lines of code, and examining an object's properties, as shown in Figure 14-1.

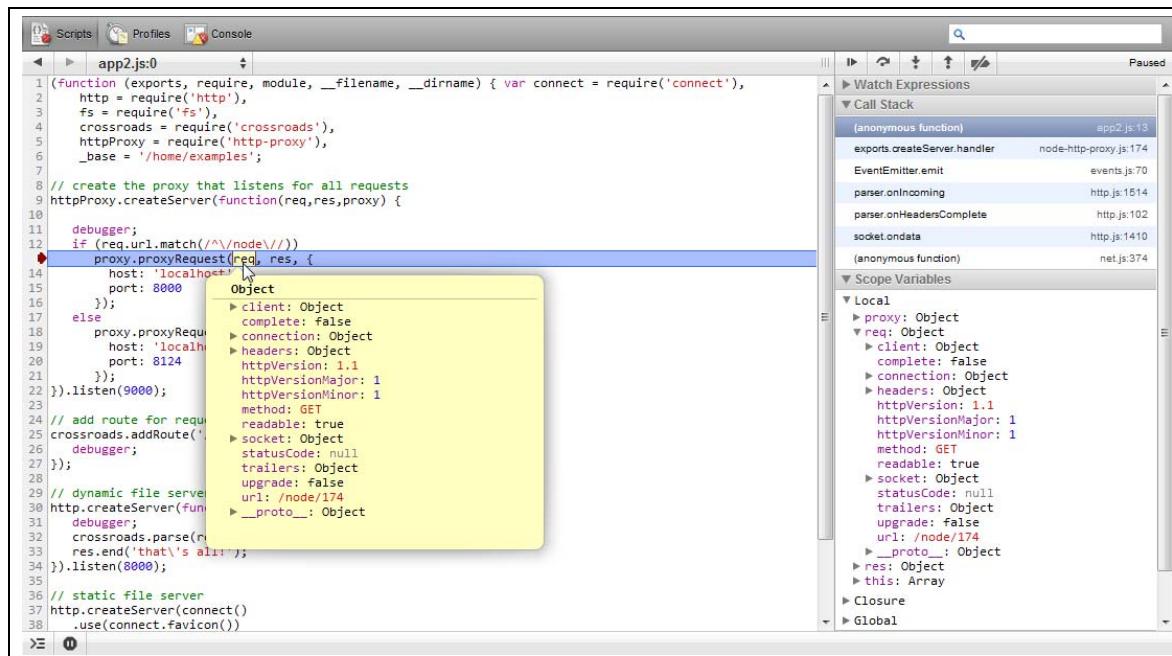


Figure 14-1. Running Node Inspector in Chrome on a Node application running on a remote server

Node Inspector is, by far, a superior approach to take to debug the server application. Command line is OK, but being able to see all the code at once, and being able to use a toolset we're familiar with, more than compensates for the little extra effort necessary to enable the Node Inspector setup.

If you eventually end up hosting your Node application in a cloud service, it will most usually provide its own form of development tools, including debuggers.

Unit Testing

Unit testing is a way of isolating out specific components of an application for testing, in such a way that only the component is tested, not any peripheral technology. Many of the tests that are provided in the tests subdirectory of Node modules are unit tests. The tests you find in the test subdirectory of the Node installation are all unit tests.

You can run a module's test scripts using npm. In the module subdirectory, type:

```
| npm test
```

This command runs a module test script if one is provided. When I ran the test script in the node-redis subdirectory (covered in Chapter 9), the resulting output displayed successful tests results, such as the portion displayed below:

```
Connected to 127.0.0.1:6379, Redis server version 2.4.11

Using reply parser hiredis
- flushdb: 1 ms
- multi_1: 3 ms
- multi_2: 9 ms
- multi_3: 2 ms
- multi_4: 1 ms
- multi_5: 0 ms
- multi_6: 7 ms
- eval_1: Skipping EVAL_1 because server version isn't new enough.
  0 ms
- watch_multi: 0 ms
```

Unit Testing with Assert

Assertion tests evaluate expressions, the end result of which is either a value of true or false. If you're testing the results of a method call that should be in array format, you test that the result is an array (first assertion). If the array contents should be a certain length, you perform a conditional test (`arr.length == 3`). One of the Node built-in modules facilitates this form of assertion testing: Assert. The node-redis module makes use of the Node Assert module for the tests.

The Asserts module is included in an application with the following:

```
| var assert = require('assert');
```

Looking into the `test.js` script found with the node-redis installation, we'll find the following test:

```
|   var name = "FLUSHDB";
|   client.select(test_db_num, require_string("OK", name));
```

It uses a function, `require_string`, which returns a function that uses the Assert module methods `assert.equal` and `assert.stringEqual`:

```
|   function require_string(str, label) {
|     return function (err, results) {
|       assert.strictEqual(null, err, "result sent back unexpected error: " + err);
|       assert.equal(str, results, label + " " + str + " does not match " + results);
|       return true;
|     };
|   }
```

```
| }
```

The first test, `assert.strictEqual`, fails if the err returned in the Redis test isn't null. The second test using `assert.equal` fails if results are not equal to the expected string. Only if both tests are successful (neither tests fails) does the code fall through to the `return true` statement.

What was actually tested is whether the Redis select command succeeds. If an error occurs, the error is output. If the result of the selection isn't what's expected (a return value of "OK"), a message is output to that effect, including the test label where the test failed.

The Node application also make use of Assert module in its module unit tests. You can see this module in action in a test application such as `test-util.js`, which tests the Utilities module. The following code is the section that tests the `isArray` method:

```
// isArray
assert.equal(true, util.isArray([]));
assert.equal(true, util.isArray(Array()));
assert.equal(true, util.isArray(new Array()));
assert.equal(true, util.isArray(new Array(5)));
assert.equal(true, util.isArray(new Array('with', 'some', 'entries')));
assert.equal(true, util.isArray(context('Array')()));
assert.equal(false, util.isArray({}));
assert.equal(false, util.isArray({ push: function() {} }));
assert.equal(false, util.isArray(/regexp/));
assert.equal(false, util.isArray(new Error));
assert.equal(false, util.isArray(Object.create(Array.prototype)));
```

Both the `assert.equal` and the `assert.strictEqual` methods have two mandatory parameters: an expected response and an expression that evaluates to a response. In the earlier Redis test, the `assert.strictEqual` test expects a result of null for the err parameter. If this expectation fails, the test fails. In the `assert.equal isArray` test in the Node source, if the expression evaluates to true, and the expected response is true, the `assert.equal` method succeeds and produces no output—the result is silence.

If, however, the expression evaluates to a response other than what's expected, the `assert.equal` method does respond with an exception. If I take the first statement in the `isArray` test in the Node source, and modify it to:

```
| assert.equal(false, util.isArray([]));
```

Then the result is:

```
node.js:201
    throw e; // process.nextTick error, or 'error' event on first tick
^

AssertionError: false == true
  at Object.<anonymous> (/home/examples/public_html/node/chap14/testassert.js:5:8)
  at Module._compile (module.js:441:26)
  at Object..js (module.js:459:10)
  at Module.load (module.js:348:31)
  at Function._load (module.js:308:12)
  at Array.0 (module.js:479:10)
  at EventEmitter._tickCallback (node.js:192:40)
```

The `assert.equal` and `assert.strictEqual` methods also have a third optional parameter, a message that's displayed rather than the default in case of a failure:

```
| assert.equal(false, util.isArray([]), 'Test 1Ab failed');
```

This can be a useful way of identifying exactly which test failed if you're running several in a test script. You can see the use of a message (a label) in the node-redis test code:

```
|     assert.equal(str, results, label + " " + str + " does not match " + results);
```

The message is what's displayed when you catch the exception, and print out the message.

The following Assert module methods all take the same three parameters, though how the test value and expression relate to each other varies, as the name of the test demonstrates:

- `assert.equal` - fails if the expression results and given value are not equal
- `assert.strictEqual` - fails if the expression results and given value are not strictly equal
- `assert.notEqual` - fails if the expression results and given value are equal
- `assert.notStrictEqual` - fails if the expression results and given value are strictly equal
- `assert.deepEqual` - fails if expression results and given value are not equal
- `assert.notDeepEqual` - fails if the expression results and given value are equal

The latter two methods, `assert.deepEqual` and `assert.notDeepEqual`, work with complex objects, such as arrays or objects. The following succeeds with `assert.deepEqual`:

```
| assert.deepEqual([1,2,3],[1,2,3]);
```

It would not succeed with `assert.equal`.

The remaining assert methods take differing parameters. Calling `assert` as a method, passing in a value and a message, is equivalent to calling `assert.isEqual`, passing in true as first parameter, an expression, and a message. The following:

```
| var val = 3;
| assert(val == 3, 'Equal');
```

Is equivalent to:

```
| assert.equal(true, val == 3, 'Equal');
```

Another variation of the exact same method is `assert.ok`:

```
| assert.ok(val == 3, 'Equal');
```

The `assert.fail` method throws an exception. It takes four parameters: a value, an expression, a message, and an operator, which is used to separate the value and expression in the message when an exception is thrown. In the following code snippet:

```
| try {
|   var val = 3;
|   assert.fail(3, 4, 'Fails Not Equal', '==');
| } catch(e) {
|   console.log(e);
| }
```

The console message is:

```
{ name: 'AssertionError',
  message: 'Fails Not Equal',
  actual: 3,
  expected: 4,
  operator: '==' }
```

The `assert.ifError` function takes a value and throws an exception only if the value resolves to anything but `false`. As the Node documentation states, it's a good test for the error object as first parameter in a callback function:

```
| assert.ifError(err); //throws only if true value
```

The last assert methods are `assert throws` and `assert.doesNotThrow`. The first expects a block to get thrown, the second doesn't. Both methods take a block as first required parameter, and an optional error and message as second and third parameter. The error object can be a constructor, RegExp, or validation function. In the following code snippet, the error message is printed out because the error regular expression as second parameter doesn't match the error message:

```
| assert	throws(
```

```

    function() {
      throw new Error("Wrong value");
    },
    /something/
  )
} catch(e) {
  console.log(e.message);
}

```

One can create a lot of sophisticated tests using the Assert module. The one major limitation with the module, though, is the fact that you have to do a lot of wrapping of the tests so that the entire testing script doesn't fail if one test fails. That's where using a higher level unit testing framework, such as Nodeunit, comes in handy.

Unit Testing with Nodeunit

Nodeunit provides a way to script several tests. Once scripted, each test is run serially, and the results reported in a coordinated fashion. To use Nodeunit, you're going to want to install it globally with npm:

```
| npm install nodeunit -g
```

Nodeunit provides a way to easily run a series of tests without having to wrap everything in try/catch blocks. It supports all of the Assert module tests, and provides a couple of methods of its own in order to control the tests. Tests are organized as test cases, each of which are exported as an object method in the test script. Each test case gets a control object, typically named `test`. The first method call in the test case is to the test element's `expect` method, to tell Nodeunit how many tests to expect in the test case. The last method in the test case is to the test element's `done` method, to tell Nodeunit the test case is finished. Everything in-between compromises the actual test unit:

```

module.exports = {
  'Test 1' : function(test) {
    test.expect(3); // three tests
    ... // the tests
    test.done();
  },
  'Test 2' : function (test) {
    test.expect(1); // only one test
    ... // the test
    test.done();
  }
};

```

To run the tests, type nodunit, followed by the name of the test script:

```
| nodeunit thetest.js
```

Example 14-1 has a small but complete testing script with six assertions (tests). It consists of two test units, labeled as `Test 1` and `Test 2`. The first test unit runs four separate tests, while the second test unit runs two. The `expect` method call reflects the number of tests being run in the unit.

Example 14-1. Nodeunit test script, with two test units, running a total of six tests

```

var util = require('util');

module.exports = {
  'Test 1' : function(test) {
    test.expect(4);
    test.equal(true, util.isArray([]));
    test.equal(true, util.isArray(new Array(3)));
    test.equal(true, util.isArray([1,2,3]));
    test.notEqual(true, (1 > 2));
    test.done();
  },
  'Test 2' : function(test) {

```

```

        test.expect(2);
        test.deepEqual([1,2,3], [1,2,3]);
        test.ok('str' === 'str', 'equal');
        test.done();
    }
};


```

The result of running the Example 14-1 test script with Nodeunit is:

```

tester.js
Test 1
Test 2

OK: 6 assertions (3ms)


```

Symbols in front of the place (not shown in the listing because of typographical issues) indicate success or failure: a check for success, and x for failure. None of the tests in this script fails, so there's no error script or stack trace output.

For CoffeeScript fans, the newest version of Nodeunit supports CoffeeScript applications.
Install it with the following:

`npm install -g coffee-script`

Other Testing Frameworks

In addition to Nodeunit, covered in the last section, there are several other testing frameworks available for Node developers. Some of the tools are more simple to use than others, and each has its own advantages and disadvantages. I'm briefly covering three frameworks: Mocha, Jasmine, and Vows.

Mocha

Install Mocha with npm:

| `npm install mocha -g`

Mocha is considered the successor to another popular testing framework, Espresso.

Mocha works in both browsers and Node applications. It allows for asynchronous testing via the "done" function, though the function can be omitted for synchronous testing. Mocha can be used with any assertion library.

An example of a Mocha test would be the following, which makes use of the `should.js` assertion library:

```

should = require('should')
describe('MyTest', function() {
  describe('First', function() {
    it('sample test', function() {
      "Hello".should.equal("Hello");
    });
  });
});


```

The `should.js` library needs to be installed before running the test:

| `npm install should`

Then run the test with the following command line:

| `mocha testcase.js`

The test should succeed.

Jasmine

Jasmine is a BDD framework that can be used with many different technologies, including Node with the `node-jasmine` module. The `node-jasmine` module can be installed with npm:

```
| npm install jasmine-node -g
```

Note the module name: `jasmine-node`, rather than the format you're used to using, `node-modulename`.

The `jasmine-node` Github repository includes examples in the `specs` subdirectory. As with most other testing frameworks, the `Jasmine Node` module also accepts a "done" function as callback, in order to allow asynchronous testing.

There are some environmental requirements to using `jasmine-node`. First, the tests must be in a `specs` subdirectory. The `jasmine-node` module is a command line application, and you'll be able to specify the root directory, but it does expect the tests in `specs`.

Next, the tests must be named according to a specific format. If the test is written in JavaScript, the test file name must end in `.spec.js`. If the test is written in CoffeeScript, the name of the file must end in `.spec.coffee`. You can use subdirectories in the `specs` directory. When you run `jasmine-node`, it runs all tests in all directories.

To demonstrate, I created a simple test script that uses `Zombie` (discussed later), to make a request against a web server and access the page contents. I named the file `tst.spec.js`, and located it in the `specs` directory in my development environment:

```
var zombie = require('zombie');

describe('jasmine-node', function(){

  it("should respond with Hello, World!", function(done) {
    zombie.visit("http://examples.burningbird.net:8124",
      function(error, browser, status) {
        expect(browser.text()).toEqual("Hello, World!\n");
        done();
      });
  });
});
```

The web server is from Chapter 1, and all it does is return the `Hello, World!` message. Note the use of the newline character—the test will fail if you don't include it.

I ran the test with the following command line:

```
| jasmine-node --test-dir /home/examples/public_html/node
```

The result was the following output:

```
| Finished in 0.133 seconds
| 1 test, 1 assertion, 0 failures
```

A successful test.

If the script had been in CoffeeScript, I would have added the `--coffee` parameter:

```
| jasmine-node --test-dir /home/examples/public_html/node --coffee
```

Vows

`Vows` is another BDD testing framework, and has one advantage over others: more comprehensive documentation. Testing is comprised of testing suites, themselves made up of batches of sequentially executed tests. A batch consists of one or more contexts, executed in parallel, and each consisting of a topic, which is when we finally get to the executable code. The test within the code is known as a vow. Where `Vows` prides itself on being different from the other testing frameworks is by providing a clear separation between that which is being tested (topic), and the test (vow).

Lots of strange use of familiar words, so the best way to describe how a `Vows` test would work is to look at a simple example. First, though, we have to install `vows`:

```
| npm install vows
```

To try out Vows, I'm using the simple circle module I created earlier in the book, except edited to set precision:

```
var PI = Math.PI;

exports.area = function (r) {
    return (PI * r * r).toFixed(4);
};

exports.circumference = function (r) {
    return (2 * PI * r).toFixed(4);
};
```

I needed to change the precision on the result because I'm going to be doing an equality assertion test on the results in the Vows application.

In the Vows test application, the circle object is the topic, and the test of the area and circumference methods are the vows. Both are encapsulated as a Vows context. The suite is the overall test application, and the batch is the test instance (circle and two methods). Example 14-2 shows the entire test.

Example 14-2. Vows test application with one batch, one context, one topic, and two vows

```
var vows = require('vows'),
    assert = require('assert');

var circle = require('./circle');

var suite = vows.describe('Test Circle');

suite.addBatch({
    'An instance of Circle': {
        topic: circle,
        'should be able to calculate circumference': function (topic) {
            assert.equal (topic.circumference(3.0), 18.8496);
        },
        'should be able to calculate area': function(topic) {
            assert.equal (topic.area(3.0), 28.2743);
        }
    }
}).run();
```

Running the application with Node runs the test because of the attachment of the run method at the end of the `addBatch` method:

```
| node testvows.js
```

The results should be two successful tests:

```
| .. □ OK » 2 honored (0.003s)
```

The topic is always an asynchronous function or a value. Instead of using circle as the topic, I could have referenced the object methods, directly, as topics with a little help from function closures:

```
var vows = require('vows'),
    assert = require('assert');

var circle = require('./circle');

var suite = vows.describe('Test Circle');

suite.addBatch({
    'Testing Circle Circumference': {
        topic: function() { return circle.circumference; },
        'should be able to calculate circumference': function (topic) {
            assert.equal (topic(3.0), 18.8496);
        }
    }
});
```

```

},
'Testing Circle Area': {
    topic: function() { return circle.area; },
    'should be able to calculate area': function(topic) {
        assert.equal (topic(3.0), 28.2743);
    }
}
)).run();

```

In this version of the example, each context is the object given a title: *Testing Circle Circumference* and *Testing Circle Area*. Within each context, there's one topic and one vow.

You can incorporate multiple batches, each with multiple contexts, which can have multiple topics, and multiple vows.

Acceptance Testing

Acceptance testing differs from unit testing in that acceptance testing's primary purpose is to determine if the application meets user requirements. Unit tests ensures the application is robust, while acceptance tests ensures the application is useful.

Acceptance testing can be accomplished through the use of predefined scripts that users actually design and implement in a coordinated setting. Acceptance testing can also be automated, again by defining scripts, but scripts that are implemented by tools, not people. They don't completely satisfy all aspects of acceptance testing because they can't measure subjective perspectives ("This web page form is awkward to use"), nor can they find those difficult to find bugs that users always seem to drive out, but they can make sure program requirements are met.

Selenium Testing with Soda

If you want a higher level of sophistication in your testing, using actual browsers rather than emulators, and you're willing to pay for a subscription to a testing service, then you might want to check out Selenium, Sauce Labs, and the Node module, Soda.

Selenium came about via desire to provide a way to automate testing tools. Selenium consists of a core library, a Selenium Remote Control (RC), as well as a Selenium IDE. The Selenium IDE is a Firefox plugin, while the RC is a Java jar file. The first version of Selenium (Selenium 1) is based in JavaScript, which was also one of the problems with the toolsuite: whatever limitations JavaScript had, Selenium shared. Another effort to provide an automated test suit is WebDriver, a project that came about because of an interest in working around the limitations of Selenium.

Current effort is underway for Selenium 2 (Selenium WebDriver), which is a merge of Selenium 1 and WebDriver.

Sauce Labs provides a host for Selenium 1 testing. It provides a way of testing your application with various web browsers in various environments, such as Opera on Linux, or IE9 on Windows 7. It does have two major limitations: no Mac OS X support, and no mobile test environment. However, it is a way of testing an application with multiple versions of browsers, such as IE, which is difficult (if not impossible) if you only have one machine.

Sauce Labs provides various subscription plans, including a basic subscription plan for free for trying out their service. The basic plan allows for two concurrent users, and provides 200 OnDemand minutes a month and 45 Scout minutes a month—more than sufficient for a developer trying things out. The site is geared towards Ruby developers, but there is a Node module, Soda, you can use.

Soda provides a Node wrapper for Selenium testing. An example of using Soda, included in the module documentation, is:

```
var soda = require('soda');
```

```

var browser = soda.createClient({
  host: 'localhost'
, port: 4444
, url: 'http://www.google.com'
, browser: 'firefox'
});

browser.on('command', function(cmd, args) {
  console.log(' \x1b[33m%s\x1b[0m: %s', cmd, args.join(', '));
});

browser
  .chain
  .session()
  .open('/')
  .type('q', 'Hello World')
  .end(function(err) {
    browser.testComplete(function() {
      console.log('done');
      if(err) throw err;
    });
  });
});

```

The code is actually quite intuitive. First you create a browser object, specifying which browser to open, the name of the host and port, and what web site is being accessed. Start a new browser session, load a web page ('/'), and type a phrase into an input field with a given identifier of q. When finished, print "done" to the `console.log`, and throw any error that occurs.

To run a Soda application, you'll need to ensure Java is installed. Then, copy the Selenium RC Java jar file to your system and run it:

```
| java -jar selenium.jar
```

The application expects Firefox to be installed, since this is the browser specified in the application. I didn't have it on my Linux box, but did on my Windows laptop and was able to easily get the application running. It's rather fascinating but a little disconcerting to see windows pop up and suddenly disappear as the Selenium RC does its thing.

Another approach is to use Sauce Labs as a remote testing environment, specifying which browser to use for a given test. You'll need to create an account, first, and then find your account user name and API key. The username is plastered in the top tool bar, and the API key can be found under the Account tab, after clicking the [View my API Key](#) link. This is also the same place where you can track your remaining OnDemand and Scout minutes (the testing applications we're creating use OnDemand minutes).

To try the remote testing out, I created a simple test for a login form created in Chapter 15. The login form has two text fields and two buttons. The text fields are identified as `username` and `password`, and one of the buttons has a value of `Submit`. The test script is testing failure, not success, so the testing script (scenario) would be:

1. Access web application (<http://examples.burningbird.net:3000>)
2. Open login (/login)
3. Type Sally into user name field
4. Type badpassword into password field
5. The page should display Invalid Password

These are the steps encoded into Example 14-3.

Example 14-3. Test case for login form with bad password

```

var soda = require('soda');

var browser = soda.createSauceClient({

```

```

        'url': 'http://examples.burningbird.net:3000/'
    , 'username': 'your username'
    , 'access-key': 'your access key'
    , 'os': 'Linux'
    , 'browser': 'firefox'
    , 'browser-version': '3.'
    , 'max-duration': 300 // 5 minutes
});

// Log commands as they are fired
browser.on('command', function(cmd, args){
    console.log(' \x1b[33m%s\x1b[0m: %s', cmd, args.join(', '));
});

browser
    .chain
    .session()
    .setTimeout(8000)
    .open('/login')
    .waitForPageToLoad(5000)
    .type('username', 'Sally')
    .type('password', 'badpassword')
    .clickAndWait('//input[@value="Submit"]')
    .assertTextPresent('Invalid password')
    .end(function(err){
        browser.setContext('sauce:job-info={"passed": ' + (err === null) + '}', function(){
            browser.testComplete(function(){
                console.log(browser.jobUrl);
                console.log(browser.videoUrl);
                console.log(browser.logUrl);
                if (err) throw err;
            });
        });
    });
});

```

In the test application, a browser object is created with a given browser, browser version, and operating system, in this case, Firefox 3.x on Linux. Note the different browser client: `soda.createSauceClient`, not `soda.createClient`. The test should take no more than five minutes. The site accessed is <http://examples.burningbird.net:3000>, and I just explained where to get the user name and API key.

As each command is issued, it's logged We want to have a log so we can check responses, and look for failures and abnormalities:

```

// Log commands as they are fired
browser.on('command', function(cmd, args){
    console.log(' \x1b[33m%s\x1b[0m: %s', cmd, args.join(', '));
});

```

Lastly is the actual test. Typically the tests would have to be nested callbacks (since this is an asynchronous environment), but Soda provides a `chain getter` that greatly simplifies adding tests. The very first task is to start a new session, and then each separate item in the testing script is encoded. In the end, the application prints out the URLs for the job, log, and video of the test.

The output from running the application is:

```

setTimeout: 8000
open: /login
waitForPageToLoad: 5000
type: username, Sally
type: password, badpassword
clickAndWait: //input[@value="Submit"]
assertTextPresent: Invalid password
setContext: sauce:job-info={"passed": true}

```

```

testComplete:
https://saucelabs.com/jobs/d709199180674dc68ec6338f8b86f5d6
https://saucelabs.com/rest/shelleyjust/jobs/d709199180674dc68ec6338f8b86f5d6/
results/video.flv
https://saucelabs.com/rest/shelleyjust/jobs/d709199180674dc68ec6338f8b86f5d6/
results/selenium-server.log

```

You can access the results directly, or you can log into Sauce Labs and see the results of all your tests, as shown in Figure 14-1.

Figure 14-1. Results of running Soda test against Sauce Labs Selenium Core

Soda is a Selenium wrapper, so there's little documentation of the Selenium commands in the module. You'll need to find these at the Selenium web site, and extrapolate how they'd work with Soda.

[Access the Selenium web site at <http://seleniumhq.org/>.](http://seleniumhq.org/)

Tobi and Zombie: Emulating a Browser

Rather than using any specific browser, you can do acceptance testing with Node modules that emulate a browser. Both Tobi and Zombie provide this capability. The primary advantage to these modules is that you can run the applications in an environment that doesn't have a browser installed. In this section, In addition, Tobi incorporates jQuery, a library most JavaScript developers are familiar with.

In this section, I'll briefly demonstrate how Zombie can be used for acceptance testing.

First install Zombie using npm:

```
| npm install zombie
```

Zombie resembles Soda in that you create a browser, and then run tests that emulate the actions of a user at a browser. It even supports chained methods, to circumvent the issues with nested callbacks.

I converted the test case against the login form in Example 14-3 to Zombie, except this time the test uses the proper password, and tests for success (the user is redirected to the /admin page). Example 14-4 has the code for this acceptance test.

Example 14-4. Testing login form with Zombie

```

var Browser = require('zombie');
var assert = require('assert');

```

```

var browser = new Browser();

browser.visit('http://examples.burningbird.net:3000/login', function() {
  browser.
    fill('username', 'Sally').
    fill('password', 'apple').
    pressButton('Submit', function() {
      assert.equal(browser.location.pathname, '/admin');
    });
});

```

The test is silent, since the assert at the end is successful—the browser location is `/admin`, which is the page that should open if the login is successful—signaling a successful test.

Performance Testing: Benchmarks and Load Tests

A robust application that meets all the user's needs is going to have a short life if its performance is atrocious. We need the ability to performance test our Node applications, especially when we make tweaks as part of the process to improve performance. We can't just tweak the application and put it out for production use and let our users drive out performance issues.

Performance testing consists of benchmark testing and load testing. Benchmark, or comparison, testing is running multiple versions or variations of an application and then determining which is most better. It's an effective tool to use when you're tweaking an application to improve its efficiency and scalability. You create a standardized test, run it against the variations, and then analyze the results.

Loading testing, on the other hand, is basically stress testing your application. You're trying to see at what point your application begins to fail or bog down because of too many demands on resources, or too many concurrent users. You basically want to drive the application until it fails. Failure is a success with load testing.

There are existing tools that handle both kinds of performance testing, and a popular one is the ApacheBench. It's popular because it's available, by default, on any Unix-based server where Apache is installed—and few servers don't have Apache installed. It's also an easy to use, powerful little test tool. When I was trying to determine whether it's better to create a static database connection for reuse over creating a connection and discarding it with each use, I used ab to run tests. Doing this drove helped me determine that a static connection aids overall performance...to a point. After so many concurrent users, the advantages to a static connection diminish.

ApacheBench works against web applications, which means you provide a URL, rather than an application name. If we prefer a Node solution, or an application that can run applications, not just query web sites, there's another combination command line tool/module: Nodeload. It can interact with a stats module, can output graphics of results, and can provide real time monitoring. It also supports distributed load testing.

In the next couple of sections the test application are working with Redis, so if you haven't read Chapter 9 covering Node and Redis, you may want to do so, first.

Using ApacheBench for Benchmark Testing

ApacheBench is commonly called ab, and I'll use this name from this point. ab is a command line tool that allows us to specify the number of times an application is run, and by how many concurrent users. If we want to emulate 20 concurrent users accessing a web application a total of 100 times, we'd use a command like the following:

```
| ab -n 100 -c 20 http://somewebsite.com/
```

It's important to provide the final slash, as ab expects a full URL, including path.

ab provides a rather rich output of information. An example is the following, excluding the tool identification, from one test:

```
Concurrency Level:      10
Time taken for tests:  20.769 seconds
Complete requests:    15000
Failed requests:      0
Write errors:          0
Total transferred:   915000 bytes
HTML transferred:    345000 bytes
Requests per second: 722.22 [#/sec] (mean)
Time per request:    13.846 [ms] (mean)
Time per request:    1.385 [ms] (mean, across all concurrent requests)
Transfer rate:       43.02 [Kbytes/sec] received

Connection Times (ms)
                      min     mean[+/-sd] median     max
Connect:        0      0.1      0      4
Processing:     1     14.7     15.7    12     283
Waiting:        1     14.7     15.7    12     283
Total:          1     14.7     15.7    12     283

Percentage of the requests served within a certain time (ms)
 50%    12
 66%    14
 75%    15
 80%    16
 90%    18
 95%    20
 98%    24
 99%    40
100%   283 (longest request)
```

The test ran 15,000 times, with 10 concurrent users.

The lines I'm most interested in (in bold text) are those having to do with how long each test took, and the cumulative distribution at the end of the test (based on percentages). According to this output, the average time per request (the first value with this label) is 13.846 milliseconds. This is how long the average user could expect to wait for a response. The second line has to do with throughput, and probably not as useful value as the first.

The cumulative distribution provides a good look into the percentage of requests handled within a certain time frame. Again, this gives us a good idea of what we can expect for an average user: response times between 12 and 283 milliseconds, with the vast majority of responses handled in 20 milliseconds or less.

The last value I'm looking at is the Requests per second, with a value of 722.22. This value can give us a good idea of how well the application will scale, because it gives us an idea of the maximum requests per second—the upper boundaries of application access. However, you'll need to run the test at different times, and under different ancillary loads, especially if you're running the test on a system that serves other uses.

The application tested consists of a web server listening for requests. Each request triggers a query to a Redis data store. The application creates a persistent connection to the Redis data store that it maintains throughout the lifetime of the Node application. The test application is shown in Example 14-5.

Example 14-5. Simple Redis access application used to test persistent Redis connection

```
var redis = require("redis"),
    http = require('http');

// create Redis client
var client = redis.createClient();

client.on('error', function (err) {
    console.log('Error ' + err);
```

```

});;

// set database to 1
client.select(1);

var scoreServer = http.createServer();

// listen for incoming request
scoreServer.on('request', function (req, res) {

    console.time('test');

    req.addListener("end", function() {

        var obj = {
            member : 2366,
            game : 'debigame',
            first_name : 'Sally',
            last_name : 'Smith',
            email : 'sally@smith.com',
            score : 50000 };

        // add or overwrite score
        client.hset(obj.member, "game", obj.game, redis.print);
        client.hset(obj.member, "first_name", obj.first_name, redis.print);
        client.hset(obj.member, "last_name", obj.last_name, redis.print);
        client.hset(obj.member, "email", obj.email, redis.print);
        client.hset(obj.member, "score", obj.score, redis.print);

        client.hvals(obj.member, function (err, replies) {
            if (err) {
                return console.error("error response - " + err);
            }

            console.log(replies.length + " replies:");
            replies.forEach(function (reply, i) {
                console.log("    " + i + ": " + reply);
            });
        });

        res.end(obj.member + ' set score of ' + obj.score);
        console.timeEnd('test');
    });
});

scoreServer.listen(8124);

// HTTP server closes, close client connection
scoreServer.on('close', function() {
    client.quit();
});

console.log('listening on 8124');

```

I was curious about performance if I changed one parameter in the application: from maintaining a persistent connection to Redis, to grabbing a connection when the web service was accessed, and releasing it as soon as the request was finished. That led to the second version of the application, shown in Example 14-6. The changes from the first are in bold text.

Example 14-6. Modified application with non-persistent Redis connections

```

var redis = require("redis"),
    http = require('http');

```

```

var scoreServer = http.createServer();

// listen for incoming request
scoreServer.on('request', function (req, res) {
    console.time('test');

    // create Redis client
    var client = redis.createClient();

    client.on('error', function (err) {
        console.log('Error ' + err);
    });

    // set database to 1
    client.select(1);

    req.addListener("end", function() {

        var obj = {
            member : 2366,
            game : 'debiggame',
            first_name : 'Sally',
            last_name : 'Smith',
            email : 'sally@smith.com',
            score : 50000 };

        // add or overwrite score
        client.hset(obj.member, "game", obj.game, redis.print);
        client.hset(obj.member, "first_name", obj.first_name, redis.print);
        client.hset(obj.member, "last_name", obj.last_name, redis.print);
        client.hset(obj.member, "email", obj.email, redis.print);
        client.hset(obj.member, "score", obj.score, redis.print);

        client.hvals(obj.member, function (err, replies) {
            if (err) {
                return console.error("error response - " + err);
            }

            console.log(replies.length + " replies:");
            replies.forEach(function (reply, i) {
                console.log("    " + i + ": " + reply);
            });
        });

        res.end(obj.member + ' set score of ' + obj.score);
        client.quit();
        console.timeEnd('test');
    });
});

scoreServer.listen(8124);

console.log('listening on 8124');

```

I ran the ab test against this second application, and the relevant tests results are below:

```

Requests per second:      515.40 [#/sec]  (mean)
Time per request:         19.402 [ms]  (mean)
...
Percentage of the requests served within a certain time (ms)
 50%      18
 66%      20
 75%      21

```

80%	22
90%	24
95%	27
98%	33
99%	40
100%	341 (longest request)

The tests give us a fairly good idea that maintaining a persistent connection enhances performance. This is further born out, in rather dramatic fashion, with a second test.

When I ran the test 100,000 times, with 1000 concurrent users, the Node application that maintained a persistent connection to Redis finished the test, while the other option actually failed—too many concurrent users backed up at Redis and it started rejecting connections. Exactly 67,985 tests completed before the application went toes up.

Load Testing with Nodeload

Nodeload provides both a command line tool that performs the same type of testing as ab, except providing some nice graphics of the results. It also provides a module you can use to develop your own performance testing applications.

Another application also goes by Nodeload, and is responsible for building and delivering Git repositories as zip files. However, installing Nodeload with the following ensures you're accessing the correct Nodeload:

```
npm install nodeload -g
```

When Nodeload is installed globally you can access the command line version (*nl.js*) of the module application anywhere. The command line arguments it takes are similar to what we've used with ab:

```
| nl.js -c 10 -n 10000 -i 2 http://examples.burningbird.net:8124
```

The application accesses the web site 10000 times, emulating ten concurrent users. The *-i* flag alters how frequently the statistics are reported (every two seconds rather than the default ten seconds). The complete set of flags is given in the following list:

- *-n --number*: number of requests to make
- *-c --concurrency*: number of concurrent users
- *-t --time-limit*: time limit for the test
- *-m --method*: HTTP method to use
- *-d --data*: data to send with PUT or POST request
- *-r --request-generator*: path to module for getRequest function (if custom one provided)
- *-q --quiet*: suppress display of progress
- *-h --help*: help

What's fun about Nodeload is the live graphics that are displayed while the test is running. If you access port 8000 of the test server (<http://localhost:8000> or via domain), you can see a graphic display of the results, as they are happening. Figure 14-2 shows a snapshot of the display during one test.

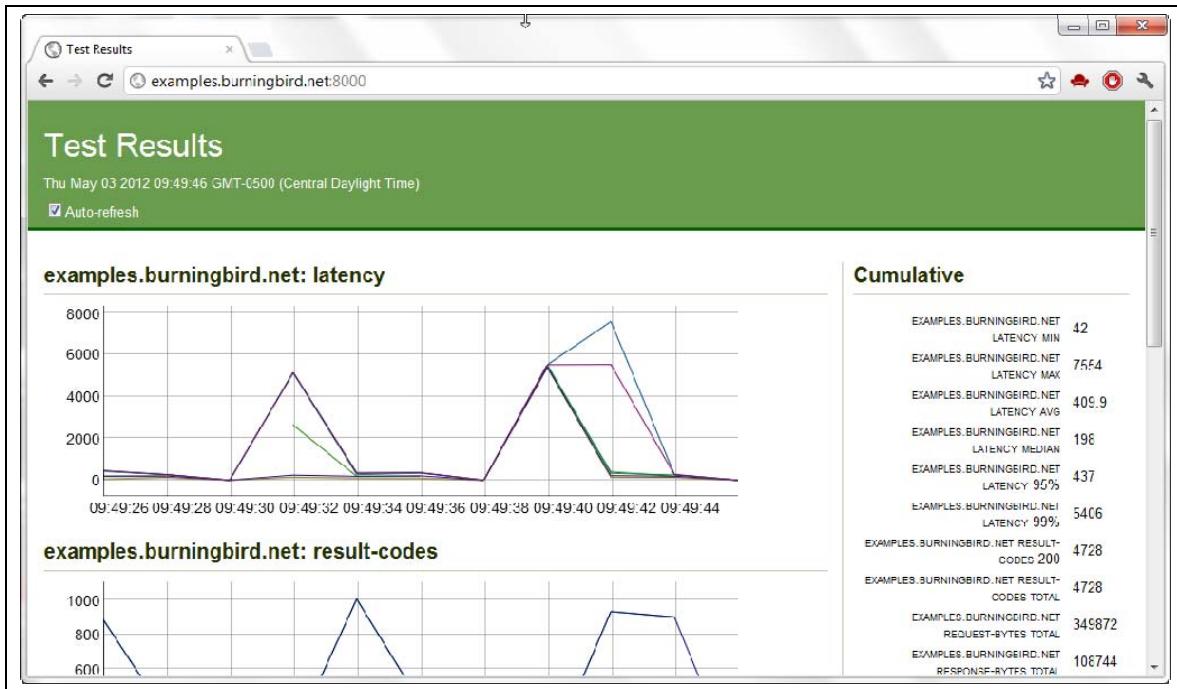


Figure 14-2. Live graphics of ongoing Nodeload test

The graphics file is also persisted for later access, as is a log file of the test results. At the end of the test, summary results are given that are very close to ab in nature. An example of one output is the following:

```

Server: examples.burningbird.net:8124
HTTP Method: GET
Document Path: /
Concurrency Level: 100
Number of requests: 10000
Body bytes transferred: 969977
Elapsed time (s): 19.59
Requests per second: 510.41
Mean time per request (ms): 192.74
Time per request standard deviation: 47.75

Percentages of requests served within a certain time (ms)
Min: 23
Avg: 192.7
50%: 191
95%: 261
99%: 372
Max: 452
  
```

If you want to provide your own custom test, you can use the Nodeload module to develop a testing application. The module provides live monitoring, graphics capability, statistics, as well as distributed testing capability.

I could not test any example code because of a major bug in the Nodeload module at the time this was written. Hopefully it will be fixed by the time you read this.

Refreshing Code with Nodemon

I wanted to introduce one more module before leaving this chapter: Nodemon. Though not technically related to either testing or debugging, it is a handy development tool.

First, install it with npm:

```
| npm install nodemon
```

Nodemon wraps your application. Instead of using Node to start the application, use Nodemon:

```
| nodemon app.js
```

Nodemon sits quietly monitoring the directory (and any contained directories) where you ran the application, checking for file changes. If it finds a change, it restarts the application so that it picks up the recent changes.

You can pass parameters to the application:

```
| nodemon app.js param1 param2
```

You can also use the module with CoffeeScript:

```
| nodemon someapp.coffee
```

If you want Nodemon to monitor some directory other than the current one, use the --watch flag:

```
| nodemon --watch dir1 --watch libs app.js
```

There are other flags, documented with the module.

Chapter 16 demonstrates how to use Nodemon with Forever, which restarts your application if for some reason, it shuts down.

15

Guards at the Gate

Security in Node applications goes beyond ensuring that people don't have access to the application server. Security can be complex, and even a little intimidating. Luckily, when it comes to Node applications, most of the components we need for security have already been created. We just need to plug them in, in the right place, and at the right time.

In this chapter I break down security into four major components: encryption, authentication and authorization, attack prevention, and sandboxing:

- Encryption ensures that data that's transmitted over the internet is safe, even if it is intercepted mid-route. The only receiver that can actually decrypt the data is the system that has the proper credentials (typically a key). Encryption is also used for data that must be stored confidentially.
- Authentication and authorization consists of the logins we get whenever we need to access protected areas of an application. Not only do these logins ensure that a person has access to a section of an application (authorization), they also ensure the person is who they say they are (authentication).
- Attack prevention involves ensuring that someone who is submitting data via a form isn't trying to tack on text that can attack the server, or the database you're using.
- Sandboxing is a way of barricading script so it doesn't have access to the system resources—it operates only within a limited context.

Encrypting Data

We send a lot of data over the internet. Most of it isn't anything essential: Twitter messages, web page accesses, comments to a weblog post. Much of the data, though, is private, including sending credit card data, confidential email, or login information to our servers. The only way to ensure these types of data transmissions are kept private, and aren't hacked in any way during transition, is to use encryption with the communication.

TSL/SSL Setup

Secure, tamper resistant communication between a client and a server occurs over SSL (Secure Sockets Layer), and its upgrade, TLS (Transport Layer Security). It provides the underlying encryption for HTTPS, which I cover in the next section. Before we can develop for HTTPS, we have to do some environment setup.

A TSL/SSL connection requires a handshake between client and server. During the handshake, the client (typically a browser) lets the server know what kind of security functions it supports. The server picks a

function, and then sends through an SSL certificate, which includes a public key. The client confirms the certificate and generates a random number using the server's key, sending it back to the server. The server then uses its private key to decrypt the number. This number is used to enable the secure communication.

For all this to work, you'll need to generate both the public and private key, as well as the certificate. For a production system, the certificate would be signed by a trusted authority, but for development purposes you can make use of a self-signed certificate. It generates a rather significant warning in the browser, but since the site isn't being accessed by users, this isn't going to be an issue.

The tool used to generate the necessary files is OpenSSL. If you're using Linux, it should already be installed. There's a binary installation for Windows, and Apple is pursuing its own Crypto library. In this section, I'm just covering setting up a Linux environment.

To start, type the following at the command line. The command generates the private key, encrypted with Triple-DES and stored in PEM format making it ASCII readable:

```
| openssl genrsa -des3 -out site.key 1024
```

You'll be prompted for a password, and you'll need it for the next task, creating a Certificate Signing Request (CSR).

When generating the CSR, you'll be prompted for the password you just created. You'll also be asked a lot of questions, including the country designation (such as US for United States), your state or province, city name, company name and organization, and email address. The question of most importance is the one asking for the Common Name. This is asking for the host name of the site: `burningbird.net`, or `yourcompany.com`. Provide the `hostname` where the application is being served. In my example code, I created a certificate for `examples.burningbird.net`.

```
| openssl req -new -key site.key -out site.csr
```

The private key wants a *passphrase*. The problem is, every time you start up the server, you'll have to provide this passphrase, and this becomes a problem. In the next step, you'll remove the passphrase from the key. First, rename the key:

```
| mv site.key site.key.org
```

Then type:

```
| openssl rsa -in site.key.org -out site.key
```

If you do remove the passphrase, make sure your server is secure by ensuring the file is only readable by root.

The next task is to generate the self-signing certificate. The following command creates one that's only good for 365 days:

```
| openssl x509 -req -days 365 -in site.csr -signkey site.key -out final.crt
```

Now you have all the components you need in order to use TLS/SSL, and HTTPS.

HTTPS

Web pages that ask for user login or credit card information had better be served as HTTPS, or we should give the site a pass. HTTPS is a variation of the HTTP protocol, except that it's also combined with SSL to ensure that the web site is who we think it is, that the data is encrypted during transit, and the data arrives intact and without any tampering.

Adding support for HTTPS is similar to adding support for HTTP, with the addition of an options object that provides the public encryption key, and the signed certificate. The default port for an HTTPS server differs, too: HTTP is served via port 80, by default, while HTTPS is served via port 443.

Example 13-1 demonstrates a very basic HTTPS server. It does little beyond sending a variation of our traditional Hello, World message to the browser.

Example 13-1. Creating a very simple HTTPS server

```

var fs = require("fs"),
    https = require("https");

var privateKey = fs.readFileSync('site.key').toString();
var certificate = fs.readFileSync('final.crt').toString();

var options = {
  key: privateKey,
  cert: certificate
};

https.createServer(options, function(req,res) {
  res.writeHead(200);
  res.end("Hello Secure World\n");
}).listen(443);

```

The public key and certificate are opened and their contents read synchronously. The data is attached to the options object, passed as the first parameter in the `https.createServer` method. The callback function for the same method is the one we're used to, with the server request and response object passed as parameters.

Accessing the page demonstrates what happens when we use a self-signed certificate, as shown in Figure 15-1. It's easy to see why a self-signed certificate should only be used during testing.

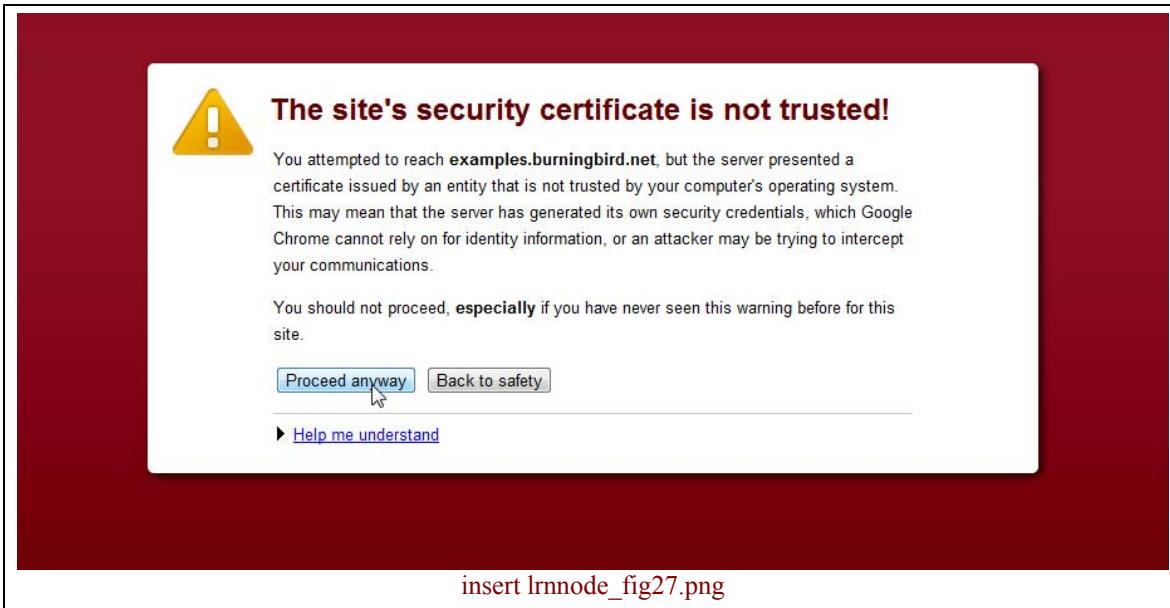
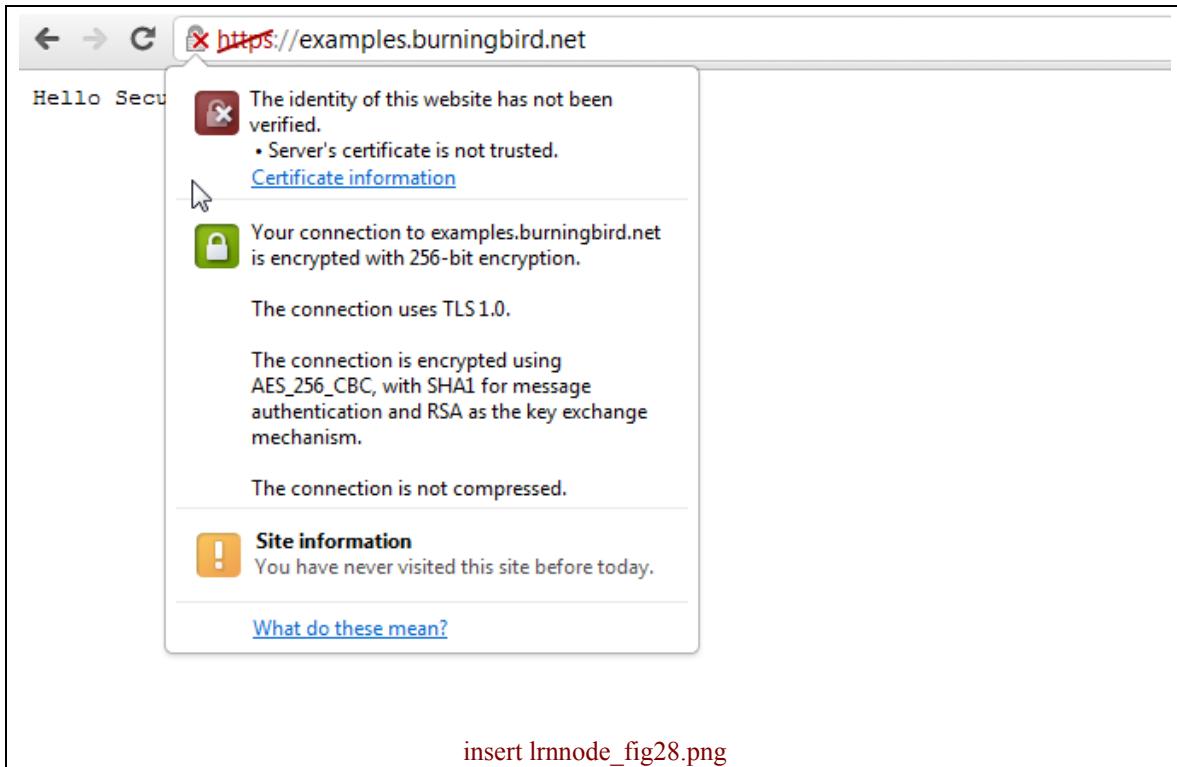


Figure 15-1. What happens when you use Chrome to access a web site using HTTPS using a self-signed server

The browser address bar demonstrates another way that the browser signals that the site's certificate can't be trusted, as shown in Figure 15-2. Rather than display a lock, demonstrating the site is being accessed via HTTPS, it displays a lock with a red 'x' showing that the certificate can't be trusted. Clicking the icon displays an information with window with more details about the certificate.



insert lrnnode_fig28.png

Figure 15-2. More information about the certificate displayed when clicking the "lock" icon

Encrypting communication isn't the only time we use encryption in a web application. We also use it to store user passwords and other sensitive data.

Safely Storing Passwords

Node provides a module used for encryption: Crypto. According to the module's documentation:

The crypto module requires OpenSSL to be available on the underlying platform. It offers a way of encapsulating secure credentials to be used as part of a secure HTTPS net or http connection.

It also offers a set of wrappers for OpenSSL's hash, hmac, cipher, decipher, sign and verify methods.

The functionality we're interested in, is the module's OpenSSL hash support.

One of the most common tasks a web application has to support is also one of the most vulnerable: storing a user's login information, including their password. It probably only took five minutes after the first user name and password were stored in plain text in a web application database before someone came along, cracked the site, got the login information, and had their merry way.

You do not store passwords in plain text. Luckily, you don't need to store passwords in plain text with Node's Crypto module.

You can use the Crypto module's `createHash` method to encrypt the password. An example is the following, which creates the hash using the sha1 algorithm, uses it to encode a password, and then extract the digest of the encrypted data, to store in the database:

```
var hashpassword = crypto.createHash('sha1')
    .update(password)
    .digest('hex');
```

The digest encoding is set to hexadecimal. By default, encoding is binary, and `base64` can also be used.

Many applications do use a hash for this purpose. However, there's a problem with storing plain hashed passwords in a database, and the problem goes by the innocuous name of *rainbow table*.

Without getting into too many details, a rainbow table is basically a table of precomputed hash values for every possible combination of characters. So, even if you have a password that you're sure can't be cracked—and let's be honest, most of us rarely do—chances are the sequence of characters has a place somewhere in a rainbow table, which makes it much simpler to determine what your password is.

The way around the rainbow table is with *salt*. No, not the crystalline variety: a unique generated value that is concatenated to the password before encryption. It can be a single value that is used with all the passwords, and stored securely on the server. A better option, though, is to generate a unique salt for each user password, and then store the salt with the password. True, it can also be stolen at the same time as the password, but it would still require that the person attempting to crack the password generate a rainbow table specifically for the one and only password—adding immensely to the complexity of cracking any individual password.

Example 13-2 is a simple application that takes a user name and a password passed as command line arguments, encrypts the password, and then stores both as a new user in a MySQL database table. The table is created using the following SQL:

```
CREATE TABLE user (userid INT NOT NULL AUTO_INCREMENT, PRIMARY KEY(userid), username VARCHAR(400) NOT NULL, password VARCHAR(400) NOT NULL);
```

The salt consists of a date value multiplied by a random number, rounded. It's concatenated to the password before the resulting string is encrypted. All the user data is then inserted into the MySQL user table.

```
Example 13-2. Using Crypto's createHash method and a salt to encrypt a password
var mysql = require('mysql'),
    crypto = require('crypto');

var client = mysql.createClient({
  user: 'username',
  password: 'password'
});

client.query('USE databasenm');

var username = process.argv[2];
var password = process.argv[3];

var salt = Math.round((new Date().valueOf() * Math.random()) + '');

var hashpassword = crypto.createHash('sha512')
  .update(salt + password)
  .digest('hex');

// create user record
client.query('INSERT INTO user ' +
  'SET username = ?, password = ?, salt = ?',
  [username, hashpassword, salt], function(err, result) {
  if (err) console.log(err);
  client.end();
});
```

The application to test a user name and password, in Example 13-3, queries the database for the password and salt based on the user name. It uses the salt to, again, encrypt the password. Once the password has been encrypted, it's compared to the password stored in the database. If the two don't match, the user isn't validated. If they match, then the user's in.

```
Example 13-3. Checking a user name and password that has been encrypted
var mysql = require('mysql'),
    crypto = require('crypto');
```

```

var client = mysql.createClient({
  user: 'username',
  password: 'password'
});

client.query('USE databaseName');

var username = process.argv[2];
var password = process.argv[3];

client.query('SELECT password, salt FROM user WHERE username = ?',
  [username], function(err, result, fields) {
  if (err) return console.log(err);

  var newhash = crypto.createHash('sha512')
    .update(result[0].salt + password)
    .digest('hex');

  if (result[0].password === newhash) {
    console.log("OK, you're cool");
  } else {
    console.log("Your password is wrong. Try again.");
  }
  client.end();
});

```

Trying out the application, I first pass in a user name of Michael, with a password of applefrk13*:

```
| node password.js Michael apple*frk13*
```

I then check the same user name and password:

```
| node check.js Michael apple*frk13*
```

I get back the expected result:

```
| OK, you're cool
```

Trying it again, but with a different password:

```
| node check.js Michael badstuff
```

And I, again, get back the expected result:

```
| Your password is wrong. Try again
```

Of course, we don't expect our users to log in via the command line. Neither do we always use a local password system to authenticate people.

Authentication/Authorization with Passport

Are you the person you say you are? Do you have the authority to do this action? Can this action cause harm? Answering these questions is the work of two different technical components: authentication and authorization.

Authentication is concerned with ensuring you are who you say you are. When Twitter attaches a verification flag to an account, it's saying that the person so flagged is the genuine article. Authorization, on the other hand, is related to ensuring you have access to only what you need to access. Of a dozen users at a Drupal site, half may only have the ability to post comments, five others can post articles and comments, but only one has control over everything. The site may not care who user Big Daddy is, only that the user Big Daddy can post comments and not delete posts.

It's not unusual for both authorization and authentication to be combined into the same function. Typically, when attempting to do some action, you're challenged to provide some means of authenticating who you

are. You're probably going to be asked to provide a user name and a password. Then, once you've proved who you are, your actions are further limited by the application: the person identified by your user name can only access certain pages, or perform certain operations.

Sometimes the authentication is done through a third party. An example of third party authentication is the use of OpenID. Rather than have your users create a user name and password at your site, you authenticate them with OpenID, and then give them application access.

Other times, both authentication and authorization occurs at a third party site. For instance, if an application wants to access a Twitter or Facebook account, either to post messages or to get information, the users have to authenticate with these sites, and then your application has to be authorized for the access. This authorization occurs via another strategy, OAuth.

The functionality for all of these scenarios can be met with the Passport module, and one or more Passport strategies.

Passport isn't the only module that provides authentication and authorization, but I found it to be the easiest to use.

Authorization/Authentication Strategies: OAuth, OpenID, Username/Password Verification

When you're accessing the administrative section of a Content Management System such as Drupal or an online site such as Amazon, you're using basic credential verification. You're supplying a user name and a password, both of which are verified by the site before you're given access. This is still the most widely implemented authorization/authentication strategy. And for the most part, it's an effective strategy.

Earlier in the chapter, I demonstrated how user passwords can be protected in the database. Even if the user system is compromised, the data thieves won't have access to your password in plain text. Of course, they could crack your password, but if you used a combination of letters, symbols, and numbers, in a relatively meaningless way, it would take a lot of time and CPU to crack the password.

You still need to have this authentication/authorization strategy in Node applications, and it's the most widely utilized option online, especially with store fronts. Now, though, you have two other strategies: OAuth and OpenID.

OAuth is a way of accessing data, such as a person's Twitter account data, without the person having to give direct access to the account password. It's a way of authorizing data access without the person's credentials having to be stored in various locations—increasing the likelihood of the person's credentials eventually being compromised. It also gives the user greater control, because they can usually rescind the authorization from their primary account at any time.

OAuth is involved almost exclusively with authorization: authorization of data access. OpenID is different, in that it's primary focus is on authentication, though authorization does come along for the ride.

OpenID is not as widely used as OAuth, and is primarily used in comment systems and in user registration at various media sites. One of the problems with comment systems is that people may say they're a person, but there's no way to verify they are who they say they are. With OpenID, a person can sign into a comment system, or register as a user, using OpenID, and the OpenID system ensures that the person authenticates, at least within the OpenID system.

OpenID is also a way of registering at different locations without having to create a different username and password with each. You just provide your OpenID, it's verified, the information the system needs is pulled from the OpenID provider, and you're done.

None of these three strategies preclude the use of the other two. Many applications incorporate support for all three: local credential verification for administrative tasks, OAuth to share data or post to sites such as Facebook and Twitter, and OpenID to allow user registration and comments.

There are several modules that can provide all forms of authentication and authorization, but I'm going to focus on one: Passport. Passport is middleware that works with both Connect and Express to provide both authentication and authorization. You can install it with npm:

```
| npm install passport
```

Passport utilizes strategies that are installed independently from the framework. All Passport strategies require the same basic steps:

- The strategy must be installed
- The strategy must be configured in the application
- As part of the configuration, the strategy incorporates a callback function, used to verify the user's credentials
- All strategies require additional work depending on the authority vetting the credentials: Facebook and Twitter require an account and account key, while the local strategy requires a database with user names and passwords.
- All strategies require a local data store that maps the authority's user name with an application user name.
- Persist the user login session using Passport provided functionality

In this chapter I'm looking at two Passport strategies: local authentication/authorization and authentication through Twitter using OAuth.

Working with the Local Passport Strategy

The Local Passport strategy module can be installed with npm:

```
| npm install passport-local
```

Passport is middleware, and must be instantiated like Middleware within the Express application. After including both the Passport and Passport-local modules:

```
var express = require('express');
var passport = require('passport');
var localStrategy = require('passport-local').Strategy;
```

Configure the Passport middleware:

```
var app = express();

app.configure(function() {
  ...
  app.use(passport.initialize());
  app.use(passport.session());
  ...
});
```

Then configure the local strategy. The format for configuring the local strategy is the same as that configuring all other strategies: a new instance of the strategy is passed to Passport via the `use` method, similar to the approach utilized by Express:

```
| passport.use(new localStrategy( function (user, password, done) { ... } )
```

The passport-local module expects that the user name and password are passed to the web application via a posted form, and that the values are contained in fields named `username` and `password`. If you want to use two other field names, pass them as an option when creating the new strategy instance:

```
var options =
  { usernameField : 'appuser',
    passwordField : 'userpass'
  };
passport.use(new localStrategy(options, function(user, password, done) { ... } )
```

The callback function passed to the strategy construction is called after the user name and password have been extracted from the request body. The function performs the actual authentication, returning an error, if an error occurs, a message that the user doesn't authenticate if they fail authentication, or the user object, if the user does authenticate.

Whenever a user tries to access a protected site, Passport is queried to see if the person is authorized. In the following code, when the person tries to access the restricted Admin page, a function named ensureAuthenticated is called to determine if the person is authorized:

```
| app.get('/admin', ensureAuthenticated, function(req, res) {
|   res.render('admin', { title: 'authenticate', user: req.user });
| });


```

The `ensureAuthenticated` function checks the result of the `req.isAuthenticated` method that Passport has added as an extension to the request object. If the response is `false`, the user is redirected back to the login page:

```
| function ensureAuthenticated(req, res, next) {
|   if (req.isAuthenticated()) { return next(); }
|   res.redirect('/login')
| }


```

To persist the login for the session, Passport provides two methods, `serializeUser` and `deserializeUser`. We have to provide the functionality in the callback function that is passed to these two methods. Basically, `passport.serializeUser` serializes the user's identifier, while `passport.deserializeUser` uses this identifier to find the user in whatever data store we're using, and return an object with all the user information:

```
| passport.serializeUser(function(user, done) {
|   done(null, user.id);
| });

| passport.deserializeUser(function(id, done) {
|   ...
| });


```

Serialization to the session isn't a requirement for Passport. If you don't want to serialize the user, don't include the `passport.session` middleware:

```
| app.use(passport.session());
```

If you do decide to serialize the user to the session (and you should, otherwise you'll have a very annoyed user), you must ensure that the `passport` middleware is included after the Express session middleware:

```
| app.use(express.cookieParser('keyboard cat'));
| app.use(express.session());
| app.use(passport.initialize());
| app.use(passport.session());
```

If you don't maintain the proper order, the user never authenticates.

The last chunk of functionality is handling what happens when the person doesn't validate. During the authentication, if a user's user name isn't found in the data store, an error message is generated. If the user name is found, but the password doesn't match what's stored, an error is generated. We need to communicate these error messages back to the user.

Passport uses the Express 2.x `req.flash` method to queue error messages for display back to the user. I didn't cover `req.flash` in earlier chapters because the functionality was deprecated in Express 3.x. However, to ensure that Passport works with Express 2.x and 3.x, the Passport developer created a new module, `connect-flash`, that adds this functionality back in.

The `connect-flash` module can be installed with npm:

```
| npm install connect-flash
```

Used in the application:

```
| var flash = require('connect-flash');
```

And then integrated as middleware with Express:

```
| app.use(flash());
```

Now, in the POST login route, if the user doesn't authenticate, they're redirected back to the login form, along with notification that an error occurred:

```
app.post('/login',
  passport.authenticate('local', { failureRedirect: '/login', failureFlash: true }),
  function(req, res) {
    res.redirect('/admin');
});
```

The error message(s)s generated via the authentication process can be passed on to the views engine using `req.flash` when the login form is rendered:

```
app.get('/login', function(req, res){
  var username = req.user ? req.user.username : '';
  res.render('login', { title: 'authenticate', username: username,
    message: req.flash('error') });
});
```

The views engine can then display the error message in addition to the login form elements, as this Jade template demonstrates:

```
extends layout

block content
  h1 Login
  if message
    p= message
  form(method="POST"
    action="/login"
    enctype="application/x-www-form-urlencoded")
    p Username:
      input(type="text"
        name="username"
        id="username"
        size="25"
        value="#{username}"
        required)
    p Password:
      input(type="password"
        name="password"
        id="password"
        size="25"
        required)
      input(type="submit"
        name="submit"
        id="submit"
        value="Submit")
      input(type="reset"
        name="reset"
        id="reset"
        value="reset")
```

To demonstrate all of these pieces, I incorporated the command line authentication application from Example 13-3 into an Express application, shown in Example 13-4, with authentication provided by Passport. The only routes the application supports are the login route for login form display and authentication, access to a restricted admin page, and the top-level index page.

The MySQL code from Example 13-3 is incorporated directly into the authentication routine (though normally this would be split out in a more formal application). Additional MySQL access code is used to find the user information given an identifier, when the user is deserialized.

Example 13-4. Combining password hash, MySQL user table, and Passport authentication into one Express application

```
// modules
var express = require('express')
, flash = require('connect-flash')
, passport = require('passport')
, LocalStrategy = require('passport-local').Strategy
, http = require('http');

var mysql = require('mysql')
, crypto = require('crypto');

// check user authentication

function ensureAuthenticated(req, res, next) {
  if (req.isAuthenticated()) { return next(); }
  res.redirect('/login')
}

// serialize user to session
passport.serializeUser(function(user, done) {
  done(null, user.id);
});

// find user in MySQL database
passport.deserializeUser(function(id, done) {

  var client = mysql.createClient({
    user : 'username',
    password: 'password'
  });

  client.query('USE databasenm');

  client.query('SELECT username, password FROM user WHERE userid = ?',
  [id], function(err, result, fields) {
    var user = {
      id : id,
      username : result[0].username,
      password : result[0].password};
    done(err, user);
    client.end();
  });
});

// configure local strategy
// authenticate user against MySQL user entry
passport.use(new LocalStrategy(
  function(username, password, done) {

    var client = mysql.createClient({
      user : 'username',
      password: 'password'
    });

    client.query('USE nodetest2');

    client.query('SELECT userid, password, salt FROM user WHERE username = ?',
    [username], function(err, result, fields) {
      if (err) { return done(err); }

      var user = result[0];
      if (!user) { return done(null, false); }

      var passwordHash = crypto.pbkdf2Sync(password, user.salt, 10000, 64);
      if (passwordHash === user.password) {
        done(null, user);
      } else {
        done(null, false);
      }
    });
  })
));
```

```

        [username], function(err, result, fields) {

            // database error
            if (err) {
                return done(err);

            // username not found
            } else if (result.length == 0) {
                return done(null, false, {message: 'Unknown user ' + username});

            // check password
            } else {
                var newhash = crypto.createHash('sha512')
                    .update(result[0].salt + password)
                    .digest('hex');

                // if passwords match
                if (result[0].password === newhash) {
                    var user = {id : result[0].userid,
                                username : username,
                                password : newhash };
                    return done(null, user);

                // else if passwords don't match
                } else {
                    return done(null, false, {message: 'Invalid password'});
                }
            }
            client.end();
        });
    });

var app = express();

app.configure(function(){
    app.set('views', __dirname + '/views');
    app.set('view engine', 'jade');
    app.use(express.favicon());
    app.use(express.logger('dev'));
    app.use(express.bodyParser());
    app.use(express.methodOverride());
    app.use(express.cookieParser('keyboard cat'));
    app.use(express.session());
    app.use(passport.initialize());
    app.use(passport.session());
    app.use(flash());
    app.use(app.router);
    app.use(express.static(__dirname + '/public'));
});

app.get('/', function(req, res){
    res.render('index', { title: 'authenticate', user: req.user });
});

app.get('/admin', ensureAuthenticated, function(req, res){
    res.render('admin', { title: 'authenticate', user: req.user });
});

app.get('/login', function(req, res){
    var username = req.user ? req.user.username : '';
    res.render('login', { title: 'authenticate', username: username,
                        message: req.flash('error') });
});

```

```

app.post('/login',
  passport.authenticate('local', { failureRedirect: '/login', failureFlash: true }),
  function(req, res) {
    res.redirect('/admin');
});

http.createServer(app).listen(3000);

console.log("Express server listening on port 3000");

```

Example 13-4 is a longer example than I normally like to include in a book, but in my opinion, stubbing in the data source portions of the example wouldn't give you a real feel for how the Passport component works with the password hashing component, discussed earlier.

Taking a closer look at the authentication method, once the application has queried for the user record given the user name, it invokes the callback function with the database error, if an error occurs. If not, but the user name isn't found, it invokes the callback function with the user name set to false, to signal that the user name wasn't found, and also provides an appropriate message. If the user is found, but the passwords don't match, the same thing happens: a value of false is returned for the user and a message generated.

Only when no database error occurred, the user exists in the user table, and the passwords are generated, is a user object created and returned via the callback function:

```

// database error
if (err) {
  return done(err);

// username not found
} else if (result.length == 0) {
  return done(null, false, {message: 'Unknown user ' + username});

// check password
} else {
  var newhash = crypto.createHash('sha512')
    .update(result[0].salt + password)
    .digest('hex');

  // if passwords match
  if (result[0].password === newhash) {
    var user = {id: result[0].userid,
                username: username,
                password: newhash};
    return done(null, user);

  // else if passwords don't match
  } else {
    return done(null, false, {message: 'Invalid password'});
  }
}

```

This user object is then serialized to the session, and the user is given access to the Admin page. They'll continue to have access without challenge to the Admin page as long as the session is alive.

The Twitter Passport Strategy (OAuth)

Rather than store user names and passwords locally, and perform our own authentication, we can use another service, such as Twitter. This is also a way to integrate a site more closely with Twitter (or Facebook or Google+ or other third part site).

Support for Passport authentication using Twitter comes about through the Passport-Twitter module. It can be installed with npm:

```
| npm install passport-twitter
```

To use OAuth to authenticate a user through Twitter, you need to set up a developer's account at Twitter, and get a Consumer Key and a Consumer Secret. These are used in the application to form part of the OAuth request.

Once you have your Consumer Key and Secret, use these, in addition to the callback URL, in creating the Twitter strategy:

```
passport.use(new TwitterStrategy(
  { consumerKey: TWITTER_CONSUMER_KEY,
    consumerSecret: TWITTER_CONSUMER_SECRET,
    callbackURL: "http://examples.burningbird.net:3000/auth/twitter/callback"},
  function(token, tokenSecret,profile,done) {
    findUser(profile.id, function(err,user) {
      console.log(user);
      if (err) return done(err);
      if (user) return done(null, user);
      createUser(profile, token, tokenSecret, function(err, user) {
        return done(err,user);
      });
    })
  })
);
```

Though Twitter provides authentication, you're still most likely going to need a way to store information about the user. In the Twitter strategy code block, notice that the callback function passed lists several parameters: token, tokenSecret, profile, and then the last callback function. The token and tokenSecret parameters are provided by Twitter when it responds to the request for authentication. The token and tokenSecret can then be used to interact with the individual's Twitter account: to re-publish recent tweets, or to tweet to their account, discover information about the person's lists and followers—the Twitter API exposes all the information the person themselves sees when they interact with Twitter directly.

The profile object, though, is the object we're interested in, in this chapter. It contains a wealth of information about the person: their Twitter screen name, full name, a description, location, their avatar image, how many followers they have, how many people they follow, number of tweets, and so on. It's this data that we're going to mine in order to store some relevant information about them in our local database. We're not storing a password: OAuth doesn't expose the individual's authentication information. No, we're just storing information we may want to use in our web applications to personalize the individual's experience at our sites.

When the person first authenticates, the application does a look up on their Twitter identifier in the local database. If found, an object is returned with the information stored about the person locally. If not found, a new database record is created for the person. Two functions are created for this functional: findUser and createUser. The findUser is also used when Passport deserializes the user from the session:

```
passport.deserializeUser(function(id, done) {
  findUser(id, function(err, user) {
    done(err,user);
  });
});
```

There is no longer a login page, because Twitter provides the login form. In the application, the only login provided is a link to authenticate via Twitter:

```
extends layout

block content
  h1= title
  p
    a(href='/auth/twitter') Login with Twitter
```

If the person isn't logged into Twitter, they're presented a login page, like the one shown in Figure 15-3.

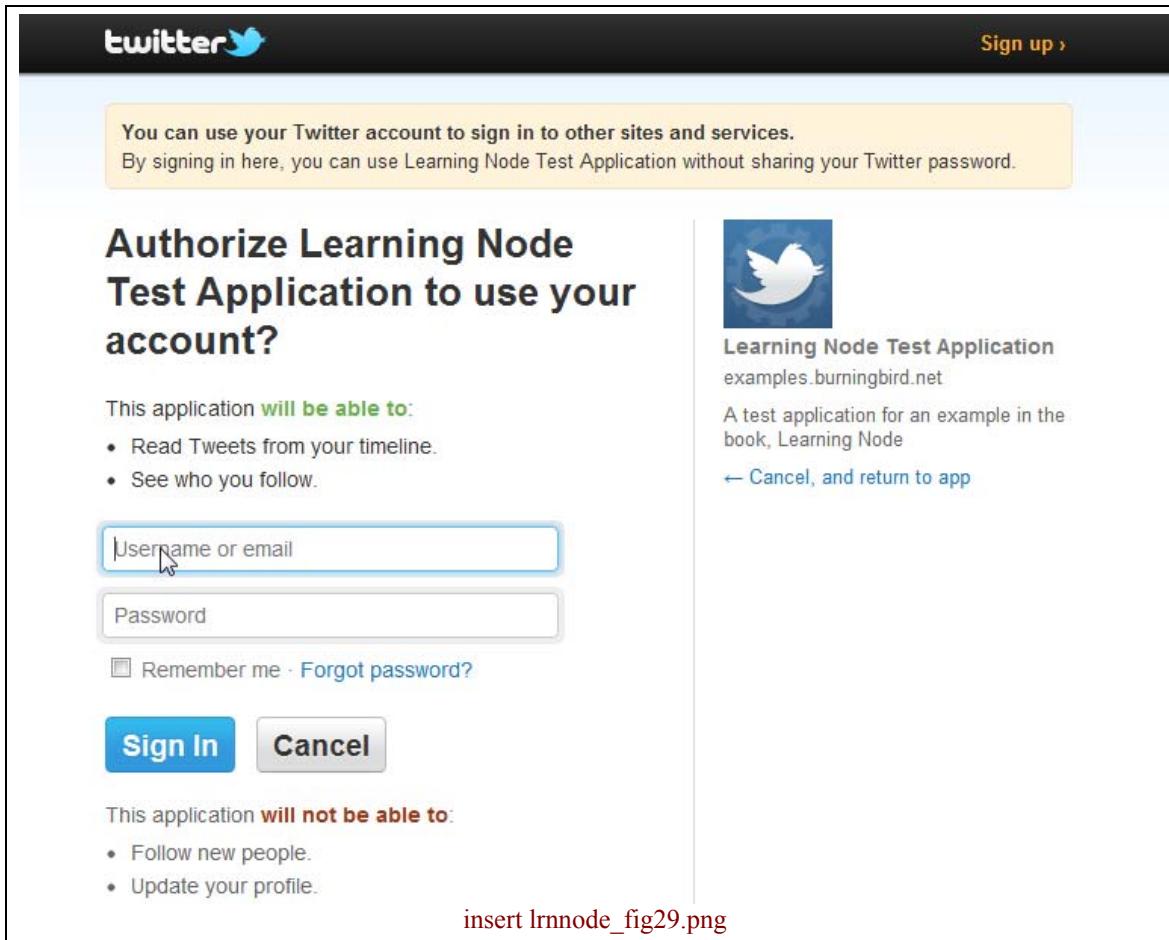


Figure 15-3. Twitter login and authorization page for Node application

Once logged in, the web page is then redirected back to the application, which then displays the administrative page for the user. Except that now, the page is personalized with data directly drawn from Twitter, including the person's display name and avatar:

```
extends layout

block content
    h1 #{title} Administration
    p Welcome to #{user.name}
    p
        img(src='#{user.img}', alt='avatar')
```

This data is some of the data that's stored when the person first authenticates. If you look into your Twitter account settings page, and then click through to the Apps, you'll see the application among those listed, as shown in Figure 15-4.

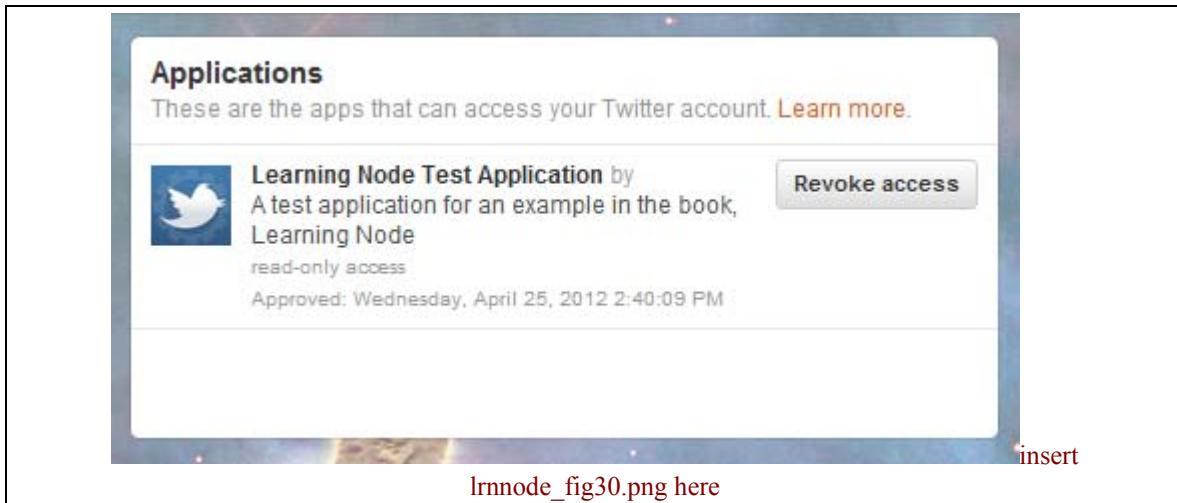


Figure 15-4. Twitter Apps Settings displaying entry for Node application

Example 13-5 has the complete application code for authenticating the user via Twitter and storing their data in a MySQL database. You can, of course, also store the data in MongoDB, or even Redis, if you persist your Redis data. The Crypto module is no longer needed, because we're no long storing passwords—a distinct advantage to authenticating via a third party service.

```
Example 13-5. Complete application authenticating user via Twitter
var mysql = require('mysql');

var TWITTER_CONSUMER_KEY = "yourkey";
var TWITTER_CONSUMER_SECRET = "yoursecret";

var client = mysql.createClient({
  user : 'username',
  password : 'password'
});

client.query('USE nodetest2');

function findUser(id, callback) {
  var user;

  client.query('SELECT * FROM twitteruser WHERE id = ?',
    [id], function(err, result, fields) {
      if (err) return callback(err);
      user = result[0];
      console.log(user);
      return callback(null,user);
    });
}

function createUser(profile, token, tokenSecret, callback) {

  var qryString = 'INSERT INTO twitteruser ' +
    '(id, name, screenname, location, description, ' +
    'url, img, token, tokensecret)' +
    ' values (?,?,?,?,?,?,?,?,?)';

  client.query(qryString, [
    profile.id,
    profile.displayName,
    profile.username,
    profile._json.location,
    profile._json.description,
```

```

        profile._json.url,
        profile._json.profile_image_url,
        token,
        tokenSecret], function(err, result) {
            if (err) return callback(err);
            var user = {
                id : profile.id,
                name : profile.displayName,
                screenname : profile.screen_name,
                location : profile._json.location,
                description: profile._json.description,
                url : profile._json.url,
                img : profile._json.profile_image_url,
                token : token,
                tokensecret : tokenSecret};
                console.log(user);
                return callback(null,user);
            });
        });

function ensureAuthenticated(req, res, next) {
    if (req.isAuthenticated()) { return next(); }
    res.redirect('/auth/twitter')
}

passport.serializeUser(function(user, done) {
    done(null, user.id);
});

passport.deserializeUser(function(id, done) {
    findUser(id, function(err, user) {
        done(err,user);
    });
});

passport.use(new TwitterStrategy(
    { consumerKey: TWITTER_CONSUMER_KEY,
      consumerSecret: TWITTER_CONSUMER_SECRET,
      callbackURL: "http://examples.burningbird.net:3000/auth/twitter/callback"},

    function(token, tokenSecret,profile,done) {
        findUser(profile.id, function(err,user) {
            console.log(user);
            if (err) return done(err);
            if (user) return done(null, user);
            createUser(profile, token, tokenSecret, function(err, user) {
                return done(err,user);
            });
        })
    }
));
}

var app = express();

app.configure(function(){
    app.set('views', __dirname + '/views');
    app.set('view engine', 'jade');
    app.use(express.favicon());
    app.use(express.logger('dev'));
    app.use(express.bodyParser());
    app.use(express.methodOverride());
    app.use(express.cookieParser('keyboard cat'));
    app.use(express.session());
}

```

```

app.use(passport.initialize());
app.use(passport.session());
app.use(flash());
app.use(app.router);
app.use(express.static(__dirname + '/public'));
});

app.get('/', function(req, res){
  res.render('index', { title: 'authenticate', user: req.user });
});

app.get('/admin', ensureAuthenticated, function(req, res){
  res.render('admin', { title: 'authenticate', user: req.user });
});

app.get('/auth', function(req,res) {
  res.render('auth', { title: 'authenticate' });
});

app.get('/auth/twitter',
  passport.authenticate('twitter'),
  function(req, res){
});

app.get('/auth/twitter/callback',
  passport.authenticate('twitter', { failureRedirect: '/login' }),
  function(req, res) {
    res.redirect('/admin');
});

http.createServer(app).listen(3000);

console.log("Express server listening on port 3000");

```

The same steps you took with the Twitter Passport strategy can be used with other OAuth services. As an example, you can use the exact same code to authenticate the user with Facebook that you used with the Twitter application. The only difference is that you have to supply a Facebook key and secret, rather than the one Twitter provides. Because of the similarity in code and processing, many applications today let you authenticate with a variety of OAuth services.

Passport does its best to reformat the data returned by the different services so that the functionality to process the profile has to change very little. However, you'll need to investigate the profile returned by each service in order to determine what's consistently provided before deciding what you do, and don't, want to store.

Then there's the issue of the person revoking application access in the service. Of course, the only time this impacts on the web application is if the person decides to authenticate with another service. In which case, their new information is stored, and the application continues on its merry way. The only negative consequence is a now defunct database record containing the previous authentication information for the person, and it wouldn't be that much extra work to modify the application to generate an application specific identifier for the person, and update the record if they change authentication servers. I'll leave this for an off-book exercise. Now it's time to look at another aspect of application security: cleaning form data.

Protecting Applications/Preventing Attacks

As a JavaScript developer, you quickly learned about the hazards of accepting input from the user and passing it directly to an eval statement call. As a web developer, you also learned about the hazards of taking text from users and appending it directly as a where clause in a SQL statement.

Node applications have all the vulnerability of client-side JavaScript applications, as well as the additional vulnerabilities associated with server-side applications that use database systems, especially relational database systems.

To ensure your applications are safe, you need to provide good authorization and authentication systems, described in the last section. But you also need to prevent against injection attacks and other attempts to use openings in your system to gain access to your important, and confidential data.

Earlier, the login form accepted text directly from the user and pasted it directly into a SQL query. This isn't the wisest thing to do, because the person could attach text that can cause harm in a SQL database. For instance if the text is forming the data in a WHERE clause, and is appended directly to a WHERE clause string:

```
| var whereString = "WHERE name = " + name;
```

And the name string contains the following:

```
| 'johnsmith; drop table users'
```

You could have a problem.

The same occurs when processing text or JSON from the user or source in a JavaScript eval statement—the incoming string could be more harmful than helpful.

Both types of vulnerabilities demand that we scrub input before using it in circumstances that can cause harm. Both also require that we make use of tools and techniques to ensure the safest possible applications.

Don't use eval

One simple rule can make a difference in your JavaScript applications, regardless of whether they're Node or not: don't use `eval`. The `eval` function is the least restrictive most permissive component of JavaScript and we should view its use with fear and trepidation.

In most cases, we don't need to use `eval`. The one instance where we might be tempted to use it is when we're converting a JSON string into an object. However, a simple approach to protect against a JavaScript injection attack when converting a string into an object is to use `JSON.parse`, rather than `eval` to process incoming JSON. An `eval` statement isn't discriminatory about what's included in the text, while `JSON.parse` validates that the JSON is only JSON:

```
| var someObj = JSON.parse(jsonString);
```

Since Node is using the V8 engine, we know that we have access to the JSON object, so we don't have to worry about cross-browser workarounds.

Do Use Checkboxes, Radio Buttons, and Dropdown Selections

A second simple rule when developing web applications is to minimize the opportunities for writing free text in a web form. Provide dropdown selections and checkboxes or radio buttons over open text fields. Not only will you ensure safer data, you'll most likely ensure more consistent and reliable data, too.

Years ago I was cleaning up a database table where all the data came from a form that the client (aeronautical engineers) used. All the inputs in the form were text input type. One field required part identifiers, if this data was applicable. The "if applicable" part was the downfall to the application.

The engineers decided to use the field for "Notes and Whatever", because the form didn't have a "Notes or Whatever" field. I ended up finding data ranging from part identifiers to a reminder from one engineer about a lunch reservation with a vendor. It was entertaining reading, but not particularly helpful to the company. And extremely difficult to clean because part numbers from different vendors didn't share enough similarity so we could use regular expressions to clean the data up.

This is an example of unintentional harm. An example of intentional harm was described in the last section, where a SQL statement to drop a database table was attached to the user's login name.

If you must require free text from a user for fields, such as their user name when logging into a system, then you're going to want to scrub the data before using it in a data update or query.

Scrub Your Data and Introducing node-validator

If you must support text input fields, scrub the data before you use it. The node-mysql module provides a method, `client.escape`, that escapes the incoming text and protects against potential SQL injection attacks. You can also disable potential potentially destructive functionality. In Chapter 10 covering MongoDB, I mentioned how you can flag that a JavaScript function should be serialized when stored.

You can also use a validation tool that not only ensures incoming data is safe, but also consistent. One validation tool that stands out is node-validator.

Install node-validator using npm:

```
| npm install node-validator
```

The module exports two objects, check and sanitize:

```
| var check = require('validator').check,
|   sanitize = require('validator').sanitize;
```

You can check that the incoming data is of a consistent format for the use, such as checking to ensure incoming text is an email:

```
| try {
|   check(email).isEmail();
| } catch (err) {
|   console.log(err.message); // Invalid email
| }
```

The node-validator application throws an error whenever the data doesn't check out. If you want a better error message, you can provide it in as an optional second parameter in the check method:

```
| try {
|   check(email, "Please enter a proper email").isEmail();
| } catch (err) {
|   console.log(err.message); // Please enter a proper email
| }
```

The sanitize filter ensures that the string is sanitized according to whatever method you use:

```
| var newstr = sanitize(str).xss(); // prevent XSS attack
```

Example 13-6 uses both objects to check and sanitize three different strings.

Example 13-6. Checking out node-validator's methods

```
var check = require('validator').check,
    sanitize = require('validator').sanitize;

var email = 'shelleyp@burningbird.net';
var email2 = 'this is a test';

var str = '<SCRIPT SRC=http://ha.ckers.org/xss.js></SCRIPT>';
try {
  check(email).isEmail();
  check(email2).isEmail();
} catch (err) {
  console.log(err.message);
}

var newstr = sanitize(str).xss();
console.log(newstr);
```

The result of running this application is:

```
| Invalid email  
| [removed] [removed]
```

There's also Express middleware support for node-validator: express-validator. When you include this in your Express application:

```
var expressValidator = require('express-validator');  
...  
app.use(expressValidator);
```

You can access the `check`, `sanitize`, and other provided methods directly on the request object:

```
app.get('/somepage', function (req, res) {  
  ...  
  req.check('zip', 'Please enter zip code').isInt(6);  
  req.sanitize('newdata').xss();  
  ...  
});
```

You can also bind node-validator to the HTTP request object outside of Express following a [gist](#) (code pasted into Github and given a permalink) with the code linked in the node-validator documentation.

Sandboxed Code

The vm Node module provides a way to safely [sandbox](#) JavaScript. It provides access to a new V8 virtual machine in which you can run JavaScript passed as a parameter.

[Sandboxing typically means isolating code from anything it can use to do harm.](#)

There are a couple of approaches to using the vm. The first using `vm.createScript` with the script passed as parameter to the method. The vm compiles it and returns a script object representing the script:

```
var vm = require('vm');  
var script_obj = vm.createScript(js_text);
```

You can then run the script in a separate context, passing in any data the script might need as an optional object:

```
| script_obj.runInNewContext(sandbox);
```

Example 13-7 has a small but complete example of using vm to compile a JavaScript statement, utilizing two sandbox object properties, and creating a third.

Example 13-7. Simple example of using Node's vm to sandbox a script

```
var vm = require('vm');  
var util = require('util');  
  
var obj = { name: 'Shelley', domain: 'burningbird.net'};  
  
// compile script  
var script_obj = vm.createScript("var str = 'My name is ' + name + ' at ' + domain",  
                                'test.vm');  
  
// run in new context  
script_obj.runInNewContext(obj);  
  
// inspect sandbox object  
console.log(util.inspect(obj));
```

Running the application returns the following output:

```
{ name: 'Shelley',  
  domain: 'burningbird.net',  
  str: 'My name is Shelley at burningbird.net' }
```

The object passed to the new context is the point of connection between the calling application and the sandboxed script. The script has no other access to the parent context. If you tried to use a global object, such as `console`, in your sandboxed JavaScript, you'd get an error.

To demonstrate, Example 13-8 modifies the earlier example to load a script in from a file, and run it. The script being loaded is nothing but a variation of what we had, with the addition of a `console.log` request:

```
| var str = 'My name is ' + name + ' from ' + domain;
|   console.log(str);
```

The `vm.createScript` can't read in the file directly. The second (optional) parameter isn't an actual file, but a name used as a label in a stack trace—it's for debugging purposes only. We'll need to use the file system's `readFile` to read in the script file contents.

Example 13-8. Modification of code to use vm to sandbox script read in from a file

```
var vm = require('vm');
var util = require('util');
var fs = require('fs');

fs.readFile('suspicious.js', 'utf8', function(err, data) {
  if (err) return console.log(err);

  try {

    console.log(data);
    var obj = { name: 'Shelley', domain: 'burningbird.net'};

    // compile script
    var script_obj = vm.createScript(data, 'test.vm');

    // run in new context
    script_obj.runInNewContext(obj);

    // inspect sandbox object
    console.log(util.inspect(obj));
  } catch(e) {
    console.log(e);
  }
});
```

Running the application returns the following:

```
| [SyntaxError: Unexpected token :]
```

The error occurs because there is no `console` object within the virtual machine—it's a V8 virtual machine, not a Node virtual machine. And rightfully so, too. We've seen how we can implement any process with child processes in a Node application. We certainly don't want to expose that kind of power to sandboxed code.

We can run the script within a V8 context, which means it has access to the global object. Example 13-9 recreates the application from Example 13-8, except this time the `runInContext` method is used, with a context object passed to the method. The context object is seeded with the object that has the parameters the script is expecting. Printing out the inspection results on the object after the script execution, though, shows that the newly defined property, `str`, is no longer present. We need to inspect the context to see both the object as it exists in the current context and the sandbox context.

Example 13-9. Running the code in context, with context object passed to vm

```
var vm = require('vm');
var util = require('util');
var fs = require('fs');

fs.readFile('suspicious.js', 'utf8', function(err, data) {
```

```

if (err) return console.log(err);

try {

    var obj = { name: 'Shelley', domain: 'burningbird.net' };

    // compile script
    var script_obj = vm.createScript(data, 'test.vm');

    // create context
    var ctx = vm.createContext(obj);

    // run in new context
    script_obj.runInContext(ctx);

    // inspect object
    console.log(util.inspect(obj));

    // inspect context
    console.log(util.inspect(ctx));

} catch(e) {
    console.log(e);
}
});

```

The examples used a pre-compiled script block, which is handy if you're going to run the script multiple times. If you want to run it just once, though, you can access both the `runInContext` and `runInThisContext` method directly off the virtual machine. The difference is you have to pass in the script as the first parameter:

```

var obj = { name: 'Shelley', domain: 'burningbird.net' };

// create context
var ctx = vm.createContext(obj);

// run in new context
vm.runInContext(data,ctx,'test.vm');

// inspect context
console.log(util.inspect(ctx));

```

Again, when using a supplied context, the sandbox script does have access to a global object defined using `createContext`, seeded with any data the sandboxed code needs. And any resulting data can be pulled from this context after the script is run.

16

Scaling and Deploying Node Applications

At some point in time you're going to want to take your Node application from development and test to production. Depending on what your application does, and what services it provides (or needs) the process can either require a minimum of effort, or can be complex enough to require a rollout strategy.

In this chapter, I'm going to many of the possible combinations and issues related to production deployment of a Node application. Some require only minimal effort on your part, such as installing Forever to ensure your Node application runs, well, forever. Others, though, such as deploying your application to a cloud server, can take considerable time and advance planning.

Most of the concepts/technologies I cover in this chapter require a great deal more documentation in order to fully understand how to use the underlying technology (or service). Instead, I'm providing more of a review of what's available, and why you would be interested.

Deploying Your Node Application to Your Server

Taking your application from development to production isn't overly complicated, but you do need to prepare for the move, and make sure that your application is staged in such a way as to maximize its performance, while minimizing any potential down times.

Deploying a Node application encompasses several steps:

- Your application needs to be well tested, by users as well as developers
- You need to be able to deploy your application safely, and ensure well coordinated changes and fixes
- Your application needs to be secure
- You need to ensure your application restarts if something wrong happens
- You may need to integrate your Node applications with other servers, such as Apache
- It's important to monitor your application's performance, and be ready to adjust application parameters if the performance begins to degrade
- It's also important to take the fullest advantage of your server's resources

Chapter 14 covered unit, acceptance, and performance testing, and Chapter 15 covered security. In this section, we'll look at implementing the other necessary components of deploying a Node application to production on your own server.

Write that package.json File

Each Node module has a package.json file that contains information about the module, as well as code dependencies the module might have. I briefly touched on the package.json file with modules in Chapter 4. Now I want to take a closer look at this file, especially as it can be used to deploy your application.

As the name implies, package.json must be proper JSON. You can jump start the package.json process by running npm init, and answering the questions. When I ran npm init in Chapter 4, I didn't provide any dependencies, but most Node applications will have dependencies.

As a case in point, the Widget application that was built over several chapters in the book is an example of an application, albeit a small one, that we might consider deploying. What would its package.json look like?

I'm not covering all the possible data values in package.json, only those meaningful for a Node application.

To start, the application's basic information needs to be provided, including its name, version, and the primary author:

```
{
  "name": "WidgetFactory",
  "preferGlobal": "false",
  "version": "1.0.0",
  "author": "Shelley Powers <shelley.just@gmail.com> (http://burningbird.net)",
  "description": "World's best Widget Factory",
```

Note that the `name` property value cannot have any white space.

The author values could also be split out, as follows:

```
"author": { "name": "Shelley Powers",
            "email": "shelley.just@gmail.com",
            "url": "http://burningbird.net"},
```

Though it is simpler to use the single value format. If there are other contributors to the application, they can be listed out in an array with the "contributors" keyword, with each person identified in the same manner as the author.

If Widgets had a binary application, it could be listed with the bin property. An example of the use of bin is in the Nodeload (covered in Chapter 14) package.json:

```
"bin": {
  "nodeload.js": "./nodeload.js",
  "nl.js": "./nl.js"
},
```

What this setting tells me is that when the module is installed globally, I can run the Nodeload application just by typing `nl.js`.

Widgets doesn't have a command line tool. It also doesn't have any scripts, either. The `scripts` keyword identifies any scripts that are run during the package lifecycle. There are several events that can happen during the lifecycle, including `preinstall`, `install`, `publish`, `start`, `test`, `update`, and so on. If a person issues the following npm command in a Node application or module directory:

```
| npm test
```

The script `test.js` is run:

```
"scripts": {
  "test": "node ./test.js"
},
```

Any unit test script for Widgets should be included in `scripts`, in addition to any other script necessary for installation (such as scripts to set up the environment for the application). Though the Widget Factory doesn't have a start script, as yet, your application should, especially if it is going to be hosted in a cloud service (discussed later in the chapter).

If you don't provide a script for some values, npm provides defaults. For the start script, the default is to run the application with Node:

```
| node server.js
```

If the application has a `server.js` file in the root of the package.

The `repository` provides information about the tool used to manage the source code control for the application, and the `url` property provides the location of the source, if the source is published online:

```
"repository": {  
    "type": "git",  
    "url": "https://github.com/yourname/yourapp.git"  
},
```

This property isn't essential unless you're publishing your application source (though you can restrict source access to a specific group of people). One of the advantages of providing this information is that users can access your documentation with `npm docs`:

```
| npm docs packagename
```

On my Ubuntu system, I first set the browser configuration option to Lynx:

```
| npm config set browser lynx
```

Then opened the docs for Passport, the authentication module covered in Chapter 15:

```
| npm docs passport
```

The `repository` setting helps npm find the documentation.

One of the more important designations in the `package.json` file is what version of Node can your application run in. This is designated with the `engine` property. In the case of Widgets, it's only been tested in 0.6 of Node, so that's the only allowed engine:

```
"engines": {  
    "node": ">= 0.6.0 < 0.7.0"  
},
```

The Widgets application has several different dependencies, both from a development perspective, and a production and development perspective. These are listed individually—the former in `devDependencies`, the latter in `dependencies`. Each module dependency is listed, as property, and the version needed is the value:

```
"dependencies": {  
    "express": "3.0",  
    "jade": "*",  
    "stylus": "*",  
    "redis": "*",  
    "mongoose": "*"  
},  
"devDependencies": {  
    "nodeunit": "*"  
}
```

If there are any operating system or CPU dependencies, these can also be listed:

```
"cpu" : ["x64", "ia32"],  
"os": ["darwin", "linux"]
```

There are some publishing values, including the use of `private`, to ensure the application isn't accidentally published:

```
| "private": true,
```

And `publishConfig`, for setting npm configuration values.

By the time I'm done, the Widget Factory package.json file looks like that in Example 16-1.

Example 16-1. The package.json file for the Widget Factory

```
{
  "dependencies": {
    "express": "3.0",
    "jade": "*",
    "stylus": "*",
    "redis": "*",
    "mongoose": "*"
  },
  "devDependencies": {
    "nodeunit": "*"
  }
}
```

I can test the package.json file by copying the Widget Factory's code to a new location, and then type `npm install -d` and see if all the dependencies are installed, and the application runs.

Keeping Your Application Alive with Forever

You do the best you can with your application. You test it, thoroughly, and you add error handling so that errors are managed gracefully. Still, there can be the gotchas that come along you don't plan for, and which can take your application down. If this happens, you need to have a way of ensuring that your application can start again, even if you're not around to restart the application.

Forever is a tool that ensures your application restarts if it crashes. It's also a way of starting your application as a daemon that persists beyond the current terminal session. It can be used from the command line, or incorporated as part of the application. If you use it from the command line, you'll want to install Forever globally:

```
| npm install forever -g
```

Rather than start an application with Node, directly, start it with Forever:

```
| forever start -a -l forever.log -o out.log -e err.log httpserver.js
```

The above command starts a script, `httpserver.js`, and specifies the names for the Forever log, the output log, and the error log. It also instructs the application to append the log entries if the log files already exist.

If something happens to the script to cause it to crash, Forever restarts it. Forever is also a way of ensuring that a Node application continues running, even if you terminate the terminal window used to start the application.

Forever has both options and actions. The `start` value in the command line just shown is an example of an action. All available actions are:

- `start`: start a script
- `stop`: stop a script
- `stopall`: stop all scripts
- `restart`: restart the script
- `restartall`: restart all running Forever scripts
- `cleanlogs`: deletes all log entries
- `logs`: list all log files for all Forever processes
- `list`: lists all running scripts
- `config`: lists user configurations

- `set <key> <val>`: sets configuration key value
- `clear <key>`: clears configuration key value
- `logs <script|index>`: tails the logs for <script|index>
- `columns add <col>`: adds a column to the Forever list output
- `columns rm <col>`: removes a column from the Forever list output
- `columns set <cols>`: Set all columns for Forever list output

An example of the `list` output is the following, after starting `httpserver.js` as a Forever daemon:

```
| info:  Forever processes running
| data:    uid  command script          forever pid  logfile           uptime
| data: [0]  ZRYB node   httpserver.js  2854    2855 /home/examples/.forever/forever.log
| 0:0:9:38.72
```

There are also a significant number of options, including the log file settings just demonstrated, as well as having the script run silently (-s or --silent), turning on Forever's verbosity (-v or --verbose), setting the script's source directory (--sourceDir), and others, all of which can be found just by typing:

```
| forever --help
```

You can incorporate the use of Forever directly in your code, as demonstrated in the documentation for the application:

```
var forever = require('forever');

var child = new (forever.Monitor) ('your-filename.js', {
  max: 3,
  silent: true,
  options: []
});

child.on('exit', this.callback);
child.start();
```

Additionally, you can use Forever with Nodemon—not only to restart the application if it unexpectedly fails, but also to ensure the application is refreshed if the source is updated. What you need to do is wrap Nodemon within Forever, and specify the `--exitcrash` option, to ensure that if the application crashes, Nodemon exits cleanly, passing control to Forever:

```
| forever nodemon --exitcrash httpserver.js
```

If the application does crash, Forever starts Nodemon, which in turn starts the Node script, ensuring that not only is the running script refreshed if the source is changed, but also ensuring that an unexpected failure doesn't take your application offline.

I introduced Nodemon in Chapter 14.

Among the examples for Forever is one labeled initd-example. This provides the basis of a script that starts your application with Forever when the system is re-booted. You'll need to modify the script to suit your environment, and also move it to `/etc/init.d`, but once you've done so, even if the system is restarted, your application restarts without your intervention.

Using Node and Apache Together

All the examples in the book start as a port other than 80, the default web service port. Some start at port 3000, others at port 8124. In my system, I have to use another port because Apache processes web requests on port 80. People are not going to want to have to specify a port, though, when they access a web site. What we need is a way for Node applications to co-exist with another web service, be it Apache, Nginx, or other web server.

If the system is running Apache, and you don't have the ability to change the Apache port, you can use an .htaccess file to rewrite the web requests for Node, redirecting the applications to the proper port without the user being aware of the redirection:

```
<IfModule mod_rewrite.c>
    RewriteEngine on
    # Redirect a whole subdirectory:
    RewriteRule ^node/(.+) http://examples.burningbird.net:8124/$1 [P]
</IfModule>
```

If you have the permissions, you can also create a subdomain specifically for your Node application and have Apache proxy all requests to the Node application. This is an approach used in other environments of this type, such as running Apache and Tomcat together:

```
<VirtualHost someipaddress:80>
    ServerAdmin admin@server.com
    ServerName examples.burningbird.net
    ServerAlias www.examples.burningbird.net

    ProxyRequests off

    <Proxy *>
        Order deny,allow
        Allow from all
    </Proxy>

    <Location />
        ProxyPass http://localhost:8124/
        ProxyPassReverse http://localhost:8124/
    </Location>
</VirtualHost>
```

These will work, and the performance should be more than acceptable if you don't expect your Node application to be accessed frequently. The problem with both approaches, though, is that all requests are channeled through Apache, which spins off a process to handle each. The whole point of Node is to avoid this costly overhead.

Another approach to use if you expect your Node application to get heavy use, but one that's dependent on you having root control of your system, is to change the port for Apache by modifying the Apache ports.conf file and changing which port Apache listens to. From:

```
| Listen 80
```

To whatever is your preferred port, such as 78:

```
| Listen 78
```

Then use a Node proxy like http-proxy to listen for and proxy requests to the appropriate port. As an example, if Apache is to handle all requests to subdirectory public_html, and Node handles all requests to node, you could create a stand alone Proxy server that takes incoming requests and routes them accordingly:

```
var httpProxy = require('http-proxy');

var options = {
    router: {
        'burningbird.net/public_html' : '127.0.0.1:78',
        'burningbird.net/node' : '127.0.0.1:3000'
    }
};

var proxyServer = httpProxy.createServer(options);
```

```
| proxyServer.listen(80);
```

The user never sees any of the port magic that is happening behind scenes. The http-proxy module also works with WebSockets requests, as well as HTTPS.

Why continue to use Apache? Because applications such as Drupal and others make use of [.htaccess](#) files to control access to their contents. In addition, several subdomains at my site use [.htpasswd](#) to password-protect the contents. These are all examples of Apache constructs that have no equivalence in Node server applications.

We have a long established history with Apache. Tossing it aside in favor of Node applications is more complicated than just creating a static server using Express.

Performance Improvements

There are additional steps you can take to boost the performance of your Node application, depending on the resources your system has. Most are not trivial, and all are beyond the scope of this book.

If your system is multicore, and you're willing to use technology that's experimental, you can use Node clustering. The Node.js documentation contains an example of clustering, whereby each process is spawned on a different CPU, though all are listening for incoming requests on the same port.

In some future version of Node, we'll be able to automatically take advantage of a multicore environment, just by passing a parameter of --balance when starting the application.

You can also take advantage of a distributed computing architecture, utilizing a module such as hook.io.

There are tricks, and techniques, to improve your Node application's performance. Most will take a considerable amount of work. Or you can host your application on a cloud service, and take advantage of whatever performance improvements the host provides.

Deployment to a Cloud Service

An increasingly popular choice for running an application is deploying the application to a cloud service, rather than hosting the application on your own servers. The reasons for doing so are many and include:

- Enhanced security (it's like having your own personal security team)
- 24 hour monitoring (so you can go to bed)
- Immediate scalability (if your application suddenly peaks in popularity, your server doesn't crash)
- Cost (it frequently can be cheaper to host in a cloud service rather than your own server)
- Deployment tools (clouds provide tools that can simplify Node app deployment)
- Being cool (the only reason NOT to deploy your Node application to a cloud service)

Of course, there are disadvantages, too. One is necessary limitations on what you can do with your application. For instance, if your application wants to use an application like ImageMagick, most clouds won't have this installed, or allow you to install it. In addition, if your application is based in Node 6.x (or 8.x or whatever), the cloud service may only be set up for another version (such as 4.x).

It can also be cumbersome to set your application up on a cloud. Some cloud services provide tools such that deployment basically consists of typing in a location and pushing a button. Others, though, can require a great deal of preparation—preparation, I want to add, that may or may not be well documented.

In this last section, I'm going to briefly introduce some of the more commonly used cloud services that provide hosting for Node applications, and touch on any aspect that makes each unique from the others.

Deploying to Windows Azure via Cloud9 IDE

If your environment is Windows based, and you've used Windows functionality previously, such as developing applications with .NET, then you're definitely going to want to explore hosting a Node application in Windows Azure. To make it simpler to post Node applications to Azure, you can use the Cloud9 IDE in order to post a project.

The Cloud9 IDE is a web-based integrated development environment that can, among other things, interface with your Github account. When you open the application, you're presented with the project management interface, as shown in Figure 16-1.

The screenshot shows the Cloud9 IDE interface. On the left, there's a sidebar with 'Your Account' and 'CREATE NEW PROJECT' buttons, followed by a 'Quick Search' field and a 'MY PROJECTS' section containing links to 'nodemanual_org', 'nodemanual_org-examples', 'testing_only', and 'rssdtest'. Below this is a 'SHARED PROJECTS' section and a 'PROJECTS ON GITHUB' section. The main area is titled 'shelleyp / testing_only' and shows a 'START EDITING' button. It displays information about the project administrator ('Shelley Powers'), creation date ('Created April 15, 2012'), and a 'Project description' field. A 'MOST RECENT ACTIVITY' box shows 'shelleyp started this project' on '15-04-2012'. At the bottom, there's a 'Team members (1)' section showing a user icon.

Figure 16-1. Cloud9 IDE project management page

From the project management page, clicking on a project opens the project into a separate page, where you can select any of the project files for editing, as shown in Figure 16-1. You can clone an existing project in Github directly from the IDE.

The screenshot shows the Cloud9 IDE editor for the 'http.js' file. The left sidebar has 'Project Files' with a tree view showing 'nodemanual_org' with 'build', 'resources', 'src', 'tests', 'app.js', 'build.js', 'package.json', 'post-receive.sh', 'readme.md', and 'server.js'. The main editor area shows the code for 'http.js':

```
1  /**
2  * class http
3  *
4  * The HTTP interfaces in Node.js are designed to support many features of the protocol which have been
5  * abstracted away from the API. This makes it easier to implement a wide variety of clients and servers.
6  *
7  * HTTP message headers are represented by an object like this:
8  *
9  * {
10 *   'content-length': '123',
11 *   'content-type': 'text/plain',
12 *   'connection': 'keep-alive',
13 *   'accept': 'text/plain'
14 * }
15 *
16 * Keys are lowercased, and values are not modifiable.
17 *
18 *
19 * In order to support the full spectrum of possible HTTP applications, Node's HTTP API is very low-level.
20 *
21 * For more information, read [this article on how to create HTTP servers](..../nodejs_dev_guide/creating_serving_http_apps).
22 *
23 * #### Example: The famous hello world
24 *
25 * <script src='http://snippets.c9.io/github.com/c9/nodemanual.org-examples/nodejs_ref_guide/http/http.js'>
26 * </script>
27 */
```

The status bar at the bottom says 'Type "help" to get a list of commands.'

Figure 16-2. Cloud9 IDE project page editing page

You can add and edit files, and then run the application directly in the IDE. It also supports debugging.

The Cloud9 IDE is free to start working with an application, but you'll need to sign up for premium service if you want to deploy. It supports a variety of languages, though is primarily focused on HTML and Node applications. It also supports multiple repositories, including Github, Bitbucket, Mercurial Repositories, Git repositories, and FTP servers.

The Cloud9 IDE interface does simplify moving an application to Azure (other service—more on this a little later). If you have an Azure account, moving a Node application to Azure is as simple as clicking the Deploy button and providing information in the dialogs that open. You should be familiar with Azure, first. There is a 90 day free trial to try the service out before committing.

How much Azure costs is dependent on number of compute instances, how big the SQL Server database instance, blob storage amount, and bandwidth. The service also provides a decent set of documents to get you started, including a nice tutorial on creating an Express application on Azure.

I mentioned a few paragraphs back that Cloud9 IDE can deploy to multiple clouds. It supports three at this time:

- Windows Azure
- Heroku
- Joyent

I'll introduce you to the Joyent Development SmartMachine, and Heroku, next.

Joyent Development Smartmachine

Joyent SmartMachines are virtual machines running either Linux or Windows that come pre-built and optimized for running a Node application. The folks at Joyent also provide a Node.js Development SmartMachine that lets Node developers host an application in a cloud service without any charge. If you're reading to go production, then you can upgrade to the production environment.

Joyent provides a detailed how-to on getting started with a Node.js Development SmartMachine. It includes the following steps:

- Create a Joyent Cloud Account
- Create an SSH key if you don't already have one
- Update the `~/.ssh/config` file to reflect the unique port number for your machine
- Deploy the application to the SmartMachine with Git
- Application needs to have a `package.json` file, and identify a start script

Again, the Node.js Development SmartMachine is for development purposes, only.

So, what does the Joyent Development SmartMachine provide? Well, for a start, no upfront cost. This is actually a smart move—it gives developers a chance to try cloud hosting without significant cost.

Joyent also provides for simplified Git deployment to multiple machines at the same time, as well as npm support to manage application dependencies.

Heroku

I like cloud services where you don't have to pay anything in order to try it out, and a Heroku account is free, and instant. If you decide to use the service for your production system, it's configurable, just like Azure. The cloud server also has a very good set of documentation, and tools you can install in your development environment to simplify deploying the application to Heroku (if you're not using Cloud9 IDE).

The cloud service comes with pre-packaged add-ons you can add to your account, including support for one of my favorite data stores, Redis. The concept of the add-on in Heroku is very well managed, and many of the add-ons are also free while you're trying it out.

The Heroku documentation is some of the best among the cloud servers. And the development tools really simplify deployment. You create the application, write the package.json file listing out dependencies, declare a process type via a simple Procfile (which usually has something like web: node app.js) and then start the application with one of the tools supplied as part of the Heroku toolkit.

To deploy, commit the application to Git, and then deploy the application using Git. Simple. Uncomplicated.

Amazon EC2

Amazon EC2 has some history behind it now, which makes it an attractive option. It also doesn't impose a lot of requirements on the Node developer looking to host an application in this cloud service.

Setting up on Amazon EC2 is little different than setting up on a more traditional VPS. You specify your preferred operating system, update it with the necessary software to run Node, deploy the application using Git, and then use a tool like Forever to ensure the application persists.

The Amazon EC2 service provides a web site that can make it simple to set up the instance. It doesn't provide a free service like Joyent does, but the charges are reasonable—about 0.02 an hour while you're trying the service out.

If your application is using MongoDB, the MongoDB web site provides a very detailed Amazon EC2 setup.

Nodejitsu

Nodejitsu is currently in beta, and is providing beta accounts. Like many of the other excellent cloud services, it provides a way to try the service out for free.

Like Heroku, Nodejitsu provides a tool, jitsu, to simplify the deployment process. You can install it using npm. Log into Nodejitsu with jitsu, and deploy simply by just typing:

```
| jitsu deploy
```

The tool gets what it needs from the package.json file, and asks a couple of other minor questions, and then you're good to go.

Nodejitsu also provides its own web-based IDE, though I haven't had a chance to try it out. It does seem to be much simpler than Cloud9 IDE.

Appendix A

Node, Git, and Github

Git is a version control system, similar to what you have with CVS or Subversion. Where it differs from the other more conventional version control systems is how it maintains the source as you make modifications. A version control system like CVS stores version changes as differences from a base file. Git, on the other hand, stores snapshots of the code at a specific point in time. If a file isn't changed, it just links to the previous snapshot.

To begin using Git, you first need to install it on your system. There are binaries for Windows and the Mac OS X, as well as source code for various flavors of Unix. Installing it on my Linux (Ubuntu 10.04) server only required one command:

```
| sudo apt-get install git
```

All dependencies are automatically downloaded and installed.

The commands from this point on assume you're using a Unix-based terminal to enter commands. There is a graphical interface for Git on Windows. You'll need to follow the documentation that comes with the interface to set your system up, but the general procedures are the same in all environments.

Once Git is installed, it needs to be configured. You'll need to provide a Git user name and email address. These form the two components of the Commit Author, used to mark your efforts:

```
| git config --global user.name "your name"  
| git config --global user.email "your email"
```

Since you're going to be working with GitHub, the hosting service that houses most (if not all) Node modules, you're also going to need to set up a GitHub account. You can use whatever GitHub username you want—it doesn't have to match the user name you just specified (which should be your first and last name). You'll also need to generate an SSH key to provide Github, following the documentation outlined in the GitHub help documentation.

Most Git tutorials start you out by creating a simple repository (or "repo" to use common terminology) of your own work. Since we're mainly interested in Git with Node, I'll start you out by cloning an existing repository, rather than creating your own. Before you can clone the source, though, you must first *fork* (obtain a working snapshot) the repository at the GitHub web site by clicking the Fork button located in the upper right hand side of the repository's main GitHub web page, as shown in Figure A-1.

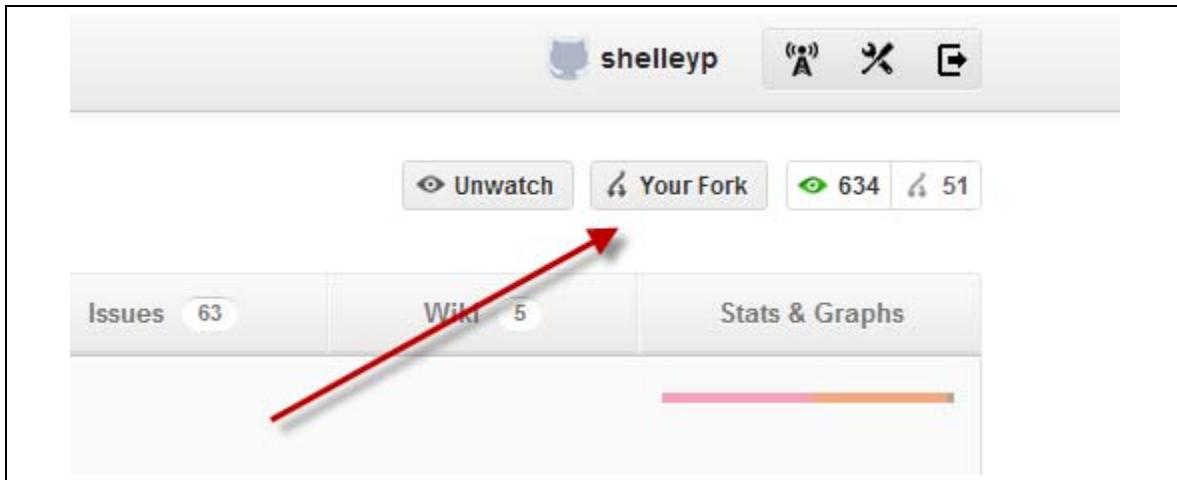


Figure A-1. Forking an existing Node module in GitHub

Then you can access the forked repository in your profile. You'll also access the Git URL in the newly forked repository web page. For instance, when I forked the node-canvas module (covered in Chapter 12), the URL was `git@github.com:shelleyp/node-canvas.git`. The command to clone the forked repository is `git clone` URL:

```
| git clone git@github.com:shelleyp/node-canvas.git
```

You can also clone over HTTP, though the GitHub folks don't recommend it. However, it is a good approach to use if you want a read-only copy of the repository source because you want examples and other material that may not be installed when you install the module with npm (or you want to access a copy of the module in work that hasn't been pushed out to npm yet).

Access the HTTP read-only URL from each repository's web page, such as the following for node-canvas:

```
| git clone https://github.com/username/node-whatever.git
```

You can also install a module by specifying a git URL:

```
npm install git://github.com/username/node-whatever.git
```

Now you have a copy of the node-canvas repository (or whatever repository you want to access). You can make changes in any of the source if you wish. As you make changes, you can commit them by issuing the command `git add`, to add new or changed files, and then `git commit`, to commit the changes:

```
| git add somefile.js  
| git commit -m 'note about what this change is'
```

If you want to see if the file is staged and ready for commit, you can type the `git status` command:

```
| git status
```

If you want to submit the changes to be included back as part of the original repository, you're going to issue a *pull request*. To issue a pull request, open your forked repository you want to issue the request on in your browser, and look for the button labeled **Pull Request**, as shown in Figure A-2.

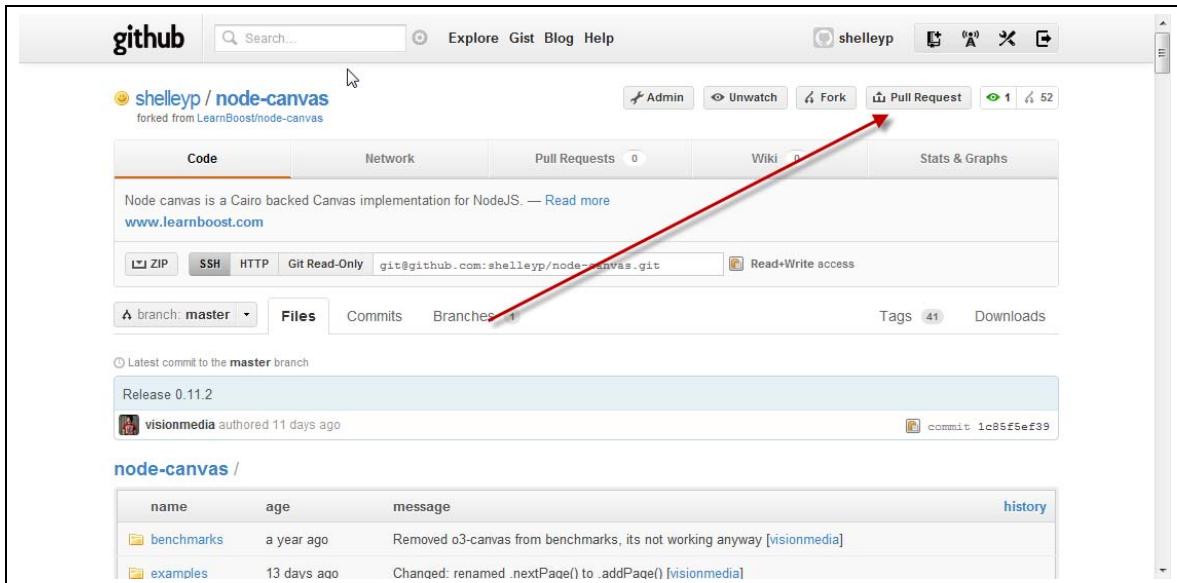


Figure A-2. Click the Pull Request button at GitHub to initiate a pull request

Clicking the Pull Request link opens up a Pull Request preview pane, where you can enter your name and a description of the change, as well as preview exactly what's going to be committed. You can change the commit range and destination repository at this time.

Once satisfied, send the request. This puts the item in the Pull Request queue for the Repository owner to merge. The Repository owner can review the change, have a discussion about the change, and if he or she decides to merge the request they can do so by either doing a fetch and merge of the change, a patch and apply, or auto merge.

[GitHub has documentation on how to merge in changes, as well as other aspects of using Git with the hosting site.](#)

If you create your own Node module and want to share it with people, that's when you're going to want to create a repository. You can do this through GitHub, too, by clicking the New Repository button from your main GitHub web page, and providing information about the module, including whether it is private or public.

Initialize an empty repository using the `git init` command:

```
mkdir ~/mybeautiful-module
cd ~/mybeautiful-module
git init
```

Provide a README for the repository, using your favorite text editor. This is the file that is displayed to people when they click "Read More" in a module page at GitHub. Once the file is created, add it, and commit it:

```
git add README
git commit -m 'readme commit'
```

To connect your repository to GitHub, you'll need to establish a remote repository for the module and push the commits to it:

```
git remote add origin git@github.com:username/MyBeautiful-Module.git
git push -u origin master
```

Once you've pushed your new module to GitHub, now you can have the fun of promoting it by ensuring it gets listed in the Node module listings, as well as the npm Registry.

This is a quick run through of documentation that you can find at the GitHub web site, under the Help link. And you can read more about Git commands at the Git source site. Links for both are listed in Appendix B.