Regular Expression using User String

Asked 13 years, 10 months ago   Modified 13 years, 10 months ago

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I want to convert an incoming user string into a regular expression, and the incoming string may contain whitespace. Is there a way to ignore all whitespace within the string?

`java`

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Also, I'm already using Pattern.CASE_INSENSITIVE. Doesn't seem like I can use multiple flags? – robotchicken99 Feb 20, 2011 at 4:25

You can use multiple flags using the | (single bar) operator. like `Pattern.CASE_INSENSITIVE | Pattern.COMMENTS`. You can see more examples of this at this link – Zach L Feb 20, 2011 at 4:28 ✎
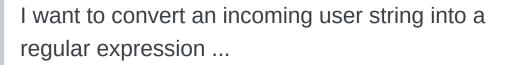
Ok thanks, I was using + instead. Bad mistake. – robotchicken99 Feb 20, 2011 at 4:29

4 Answers

Sorted by: Highest score (default) ⇅

@Zach L and @smas answered your real question

1

> I want to convert an incoming user string into a regular expression ...

I want to warn you to be cautious. It is easy to write a pathological regex that can consume vast amounts of CPU time for certain input strings. If you allow users to enter arbitrary regexes themselves, there is a risk that they will enter a pathological regex, either by accident, or with the intention of overloading your service ...

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answered Feb 20, 2011 at 4:19

Stephen C
718k ● 95 ● 844 ● 1.3k

This deserves some attention. We wouldn't want little Bobby Tables coming in! – corsiKa Feb 20, 2011 at 7:06

You may be interested in using the COMMENTS flag in the `Pattern` class, which:

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> Permits whitespace and comments in pattern. In this mode, whitespace is ignored, and embedded comments starting with # are ignored until the end of a line.

You can find more info on using flags with Patterns [here](#).

An alternative is to just remove the whitespace before compiling your regex by using either [String.replace](#) or [String.replaceAll](#).

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answered Feb 20, 2011 at 4:11

Zach L

16.3k ● 4 ● 39 ● 39

Maybe something like this will be good to you:

```
Pattern p = Pattern.compile("...", Pattern.COMMENTS)
```

Pattern.COMMENTS means:

> Permits whitespace and comments in pattern. In this mode, whitespace is ignored, and embedded comments starting with # are ignored until the end of a line.

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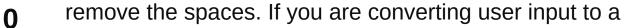
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answered Feb 20, 2011 at 4:14

lukastymo

26.8k ● 14 ● 55 ● 66

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Use a regular expression replacement (see http://forums.devx.com/showthread.php?t=145832) to remove the spaces. If you are converting user input to a regular expression, be very careful about escaping (it is like SQL is that users can put in metacharacters that will make your program misbehave); you can get information on proper escaping here.

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