Server-side Includes

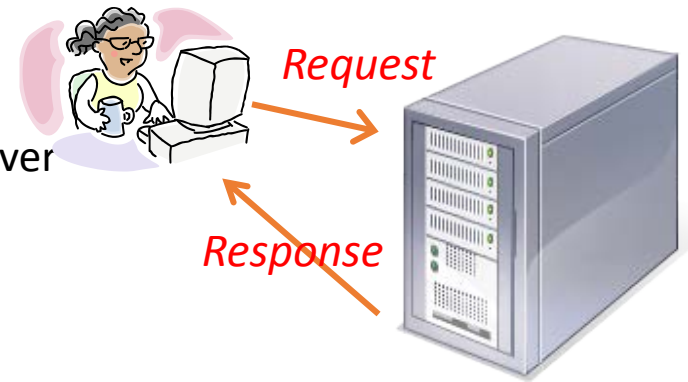Minimize HTML Code Duplication

What Is SSI?

- Server-side Includes (SSI) are a collection of commands you can use to reduce the amount of code you duplicate in webpages

- You can use scripts to: include another HTML file at a specific point in a file

- For example: include the HTML code for a common footer that appears on all pages.

How it works

The Web uses a client/server network architecture

• The normal process is:

1. The web browser (client) sends a *request* to the server
2. The server locates the requested HTML file
3. The server *responds* by sending the HTML code
   to the browser

Request

Response

• With server-side scripts, there is a slightly different process

1. The web browser (client) sends a *request* to the server
2. The server locates the requested HTML file
3. The web server reads the requested file
4. The web server locates and executes any SSI (scripted directives) found in the file
5. The web server replaces the directives in the file with the result of that directive's execution
6. The server completes the process by *responding* with new, generated HTML code and sends that to the browser

When Will the Server Look For scripts?

- The "trigger" that tells the server to search for and process scripts will vary from server to server

- We are using an Apache server with PHP on our web server

- Any file with the extension ".php" instead of ".html" will be processed

- The *include file* directive is used so we can specify the file path *relative to the current directory*.

- The file must be on the same server (usually)

"Including" - an Example

On the web server…

index.php	inc/more-content.inc

`<div>Just some regular HTML here</div>`
 	
`<?php include "inc/more-content.inc"; ?>`
 	
`<div>And then some more regular HTML, whatever</div>`
	`<div> Blah blah blah, more content here!</div>`

- For this code, the server would locate the file *more-content.inc* in the *inc* subdirectory

- The server would substitute the contents of *more-content.inc* for the PHP include directive

- The end-user using the web browser (the client) will never see the PHP code. Everything looks like normal HTML to the client

What shows up in the web browser…

index.php

`<div>Just some regular HTML here</div>`
 	
`<div> Blah blah blah, more content here!</div>`
 	
`<div>And then some more regular HTML, whatever</div>`