The Definitive Guide to Pylons

James Gardner

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Dedicated to my brother, Ian,
and my parents, John and Maggie,
whom I love very much.

Contents at a Glance

About the Author xix
About the Technical Reviewer xxi
Acknowledgments xxiii
Source Code and Updates xxv

PART 1 Getting Started

CHAPTER 1 Introducing Pylons 3
CHAPTER 2 Installing Pylons 13
CHAPTER 3 Exploring Pylons 29
CHAPTER 4 Tracking Down and Handling Problems 55
CHAPTER 5 Using View Templates 63
CHAPTER 6 Working with Forms and Validators 91
CHAPTER 7 Introducing the Model and SQLAlchemy 127
CHAPTER 8 Starting the SimpleSite Tutorial 165

PART 2 Advanced Pylons

CHAPTER 9 URLs, Routing, and Dispatch 195
CHAPTER 10 Unicode 217
CHAPTER 11 Internationalization and Localization 227
CHAPTER 12 Testing 245
CHAPTER 13 Documentation 263
CHAPTER 14 SimpleSite Tutorial Part 2 279
CHAPTER 15 CSS, JavaScript, and Ajax 325

PART 3 Expert Pylons

CHAPTER 16 The Web Server Gateway Interface (WSGI) 369

CHAPTER 17 Pylons' Internal Architecture 389

CHAPTER 18 Authentication and Authorization 415

CHAPTER 19 SimpleSite Tutorial Part 3 433

CHAPTER 20 Logging 471

CHAPTER 21 Deployment 487

APPENDIX Licenses 503

INDEX 513

Contents

About the Author xix
About the Technical Reviewer xxi
Acknowledgments xxiii
Source Code and Updates xxv

PART 1 Getting Started

CHAPTER 1 Introducing Pylons 3

The Old Way: CGI Scripts 3
The Pylons Way 5
Model View Controller Architecture 5
Convention Over Configuration 6
Loose Coupling and Clean Separation 7
Other Features 7
The Python Language 8
Python 3.0 8
The Pylons Community 9
Pylons Components 9
What's Coming Up 10
Summary 11

CHAPTER 2 Installing Pylons 13

Quick Start to Installation for the Impatient 13
Installation in Detail 14
Using the Python Package Index 14
Setting Up a Virtual Python Environment 14
Working with Easy Install 16
Installing Pylons 17
Understanding Eggs 18

Advanced Topics 18
Activating and Deactivating a Virtual Python Environment 18
Setting Virtualenv Options 19
Choosing Package Versions with Easy Install 19
Installing with a Proxy Server 20
Troubleshooting Easy Install 21
Working on the Bleeding Edge 22
Platform-Specific Notes 22
Linux and BSD 23
Mac OS X 24
Windows 24
Summary 28

CHAPTER 3 **Exploring Pylons** 29

Exploring Pylons' Dependencies 29
Creating a Pylons Project 31
Serving a Pylons Application 33
Configuration Files 33
The Paste HTTP Server 34
Static Files 35
A Word About IP Addresses, Hosts, and Security 36
Exploring a Pylons Project's Directory Structure 36
Creating a Controller and Modifying the Routes 38
Understanding How HTTP Works 39
Exploring the Environment 42
Understanding the Pylons Request and Response 44
Request 44
Response 46
Understanding Pylons Globals 46
Helpers 48
Context Object 49
App Globals Object 50
Configuring Pylons 51
Controller Imports 52
Summary 53

CHAPTER 4 **Tracking Down and Handling Problems** 55

Using the Pylons Interactive Debugger 55
Production Use 59
E-mail Options 59
Summary 61

CHAPTER 5 Using View Templates 63

Using the Template Context c Global 65
Basic Template Syntax 66
Default Pylons Template Variables 69
Mako Runtime Built-Ins 70
Separation of Logic and View 72
Security Considerations and WebHelpers 73
Writing Your Own Helpers 74
Applying Filters in Templates 75
Structuring Template Code 76
Using <%def> Blocks 76
The Mako Cache 77
Capturing Output 79
Namespaces 80
The body() Def 81
Template Inheritance Chains 81
Simple Inheritance 82
Next Namespace 83
Parent Namespace 85
Behind the Scenes 85
Caching 87
Alternative Template Languages 88
Multiple Template Languages 89
Working with Your Own Templating Language 90
Summary 90

CHAPTER 6 Working with Forms and Validators 91

The Basics 91
POST vs. GET 93
The Resubmitted Data Problem 95
Building Forms with Helpers 96
Uploading Files 98
Handling Forms Manually 101
Introducing FormEncode 103
Configuring Validators 107
Using HTML Fill 108
Error Message Formatting 110
Render Arguments 110
Doing Validation the Quick Way 111
Using Custom Validators 112

Solving the Repeating Fields Problem 115
Creating the Form 116
Summary 126

CHAPTER 7 **Introducing the Model and SQLAlchemy** 127

Storing Data in the Filesystem 127
Storing Data in Amazon S3 129
Exploring Database Approaches 130
Object Databases 131
XML Databases 131
Relational Database Management Systems 132
Object-Relational Mappers 132
Setting Up SQLAlchemy 133
Installing the DB-API Driver 134
Installing SQLAlchemy 135
Creating a Database 135
Exploring SQLAlchemy's Architecture 135
Engine API 136
Metadata and Type APIs 138
SQL Expression API 141
Exploring the Object-Relational API 146
Object-Relational Principles 146
More Metadata 148
Classes and Mappers 150
Understanding the Session 152
Exploring the Session 153
Queries 157
Working with Objects 159
Declarative API 160
Maintaining Performance 162
Summary 163

CHAPTER 8 **Starting the SimpleSite Tutorial** 165

Getting Started with SimpleSite 166
Exploring the Template Structure 168
Using SQLAlchemy in Pylons 170
Configuring the Engine 171
Creating the Model 171
Creating the Database Tables 173
Querying Data 175
Understanding the Role of the Base Controller 176
Using a SQLAlchemy Session in Pylons 177

Updating the Controller to Support Editing Pages 177
view() 178
new() 178
create() 180
edit() and save() 183
list() 185
delete() 185
Updating the Footer 186
Using Pagination 186
Formatting Dates and Times 189
Using Sessions and a Flash Message 190
Summary 192

PART 2 Advanced Pylons

CHAPTER 9 URLs, Routing, and Dispatch 195

Pylons Routing in Detail 196
Pylons Dispatch 198
Routes in Detail 199
Route Parts 199
Default Variables 201
Generating URLs 202
Named Routes 203
Static Named Routes 204
Internal Static Routes 204
Choosing Good URLs 204
Unnecessary Routes Features 207
Route Minimization 207
Route Memory 207
Implicit Defaults 209
Best Practice 209
Advanced URL Routing 211
Requirements 211
Conditions 212
Filter Functions 215
Summary 216

CHAPTER 10 Unicode 217

A Brief History 217
Introducing Unicode 218

Unicode in Python 2 219
Unicode Literals 219
Handling Errors 220
Decoding Unicode 221
Encoding Unicode 222
Python Source Code Encoding 222
Unicode and Files 223
Unicode Considerations in Pylons Programming 224
Request Parameters 224
Templating 225
Output Encoding 225
Databases 225
A Complete Request Cycle 226
Summary 226

CHAPTER 11 Internationalization and Localization 227

Understanding the Process 228
Marking Strings for Internationalization 228
Extracting Messages and Handling Translations 229
Seeing It in Action 229
Using Babel 230
Supporting Multiple Languages 232
Updating the Catalog 234
Translations Within Templates 235
Babel Extractors 236
Setting the Language in the Config File 237
Using a Session to Store the User's Language 238
Advanced Internationalization Techniques 239
Fallback Languages 239
Lazy Translations 240
Plural Forms 241
Search Engine Considerations 243
Summary 243

CHAPTER 12 Testing 245

Types of Testing and the Development Process 246
Unit Testing with nose 247
Introducing nose 247
Search Locations 251

Functional Testing 252
How Does the Test Setup Work? 254
Testing the save() Action 257
Testing Your Own Objects 260
Interactive Shell 261
Summary 262

CHAPTER 13 **Documentation** 263

Python's Documentation Tools 263
Comments 263
Docstrings 264
The Built-In help() Function 265
Doctests 266
Introducing reStructuredText 268
Introducing Sphinx 270
Using Sphinx 270
Documenting Python Source Code 273
Automatically Generating Documentation 276
Syntax Highlighting 277
Summary 278

CHAPTER 14 **SimpleSite Tutorial Part 2** 279

Comments System: One-to-Many Mappings 279
Planning the Controller 280
Modifying the Routes 280
Creating the Controller 281
Updating the Controller to Handle Comments 282
Setting the Page ID Automatically 285
Updating the Page View 288
Handling Deleted Pages 289
Tags: Many-to-Many Mappings 290
Creating the tag Controller 291
Constraining Tag Names 293
Adding Tags to Pages 295
Deleting Tags and Pages 298
Creating a Navigation Hierarchy 299
Using Inheritance in SQLAlchemy 299
Setting Up Initial Data 301
Creating the Controllers 303
The Page Controller 311

Changing the Routing 313
Adding the Navigation Elements 319
Adding Some Style 321
Summary 323

CHAPTER 15 CSS, JavaScript, and Ajax 325

Adding YUI to Your Project 325
Resetting the Browser CSS 326
Fonts 327
Grids 328
    Template Preset Grids 329
    Nested Grids 331
    Special Nested Grids 331
Updating SimpleSite to Use CSS Grids 332
Introducing Firebug 336
Introducing JavaScript 338
JavaScript Essentials 339
    Operators of Interest 340
    Types 341
    Functions 343
    Function Scope and Closures 343
    Objects 344
    this 345
    Namespaces 346
    Inheritance 347
    Prototypes 348
    JavaScript in HTML 349
The Document Object Model 349
    Navigating the DOM 351
    Manipulating the DOM 352
The Event Model 352
    Same Origin Policy 354
    Browser Detection vs. Feature Detection 354
Adding Animation to the SimpleSite Flash Message 354
Ajax 356
    Debugging Ajax Requests 360
    JSON 361
Reducing Page Load Time 365
Summary 366

PART 3 Expert Pylons

CHAPTER 16 The Web Server Gateway Interface (WSGI) 369

Introducing WSGI 369
WSGI Applications 370
WSGI in Pylons Controllers 372
WSGI Servers 374
WSGI Middleware 378
Writing WSGI Middleware 379
Modifying the Environment 380
Changing the Status and Headers 381
Handling Errors 381
Altering the Response 383
Testing the Gzip Middleware 387
Summary 388

CHAPTER 17 Pylons' Internal Architecture 389

A Bit of History 389
Egg Entry Points 391
Entry Points and websetup.py 391
The Pylons Config File 392
Default Config Options 393
Constructing a Server 393
Constructing an Application 394
Composite Applications 395
Pipelines and Filters 396
Understanding Factories 397
Alternative Ways of Specifying Factories 400
Configuration Inheritance 400
Accessing the Pylons WSGI Application and Other Objects Programmatically 401
Accessing the Server, Application, and Filters 401
Accessing Configuration Options 402
Creating a Pylons Application with Paste Deploy 402
The Pylons Middleware Stack 403
Application State vs. Request State 404

Creating an Application 405
Loading the Pylons Environment 405
The PylonsApp Instance 406
The Middleware Chain 406
Handling a Request 407
The Cascade 408
The Registry Manager, StackedObjectProxy, and Pylons Globals 409
Returning to the Middleware Chain 410
The Role of PylonsApp 410
The Role of WSGIController 411
Handling the Response 411
abort(), redirect_to(), and HTTPException 412
Exception Handling 412
Error Documents 412
Streaming Content 412
Returning Unicode from an Action 413
Summary 413

CHAPTER 18 **Authentication and Authorization** 415

Private Data 415
A Homegrown Solution 416
AuthKit 417
Authentication Middleware 418
Authorization and Permissions 421
The Authorization Decorator 421
The Authorization Middleware 422
The Authorization Function 423
Protecting a Controller 424
Groups, Roles, and Permissions 424
User Management API 426
Cookie Options 427
Alternative Methods 427
Functional Testing 428
General Security Considerations 429
Secure Sockets Layer 429
Encrypted Passwords 431
Summary 432

CHAPTER 19 SimpleSite Tutorial Part 3 433

Authentication and Authorization 433
Setting Up the Middleware 433
Adjusting websetup.py 434
Protecting Controller Actions 436
Changing Templates Based on Permissions 438
Signing In and Signing Out 439
Styling the Sign-in Screen 441
Protecting the Rest of the Actions 443
Using the AuthKit User Management API 445
Error Documents 445
Customizing the Error Documents for SimpleSite 447
Adding a WYSIWYG Interface 449
Configuring the setup.py File 452
Choosing a Version Number 453
Configuring Dependencies 453
Extra Dependencies 454
Extra Dependency Links 455
Specifying Metadata 455
Customizing the Long Description 456
Customizing the Production Config File Template 457
Packaging a Pylons Project for Distribution 459
Building an Egg File 459
Publishing an Egg on the Python Package Index 460
Making SimpleSite into a Paste Project Template 462
Introducing Project Template Variables 465
Using Project Template Variables 466
Completing the Cycle 468
Summary 469

CHAPTER 20 Logging 471

Getting Started with Pylons Logging 471
Understanding the logging Module 472
Understanding Log Levels 473
Logging Variables 474
Logging in Templates 474
Introducing Logging Configuration 475
Logger Sections 475
Handler Sections 476
Formatter Sections 476

Redirecting Log Output Using Handlers . . . 477
Logging to a File . . . 478
Logging to wsgi.errors . . . 479
Configuring Which Messages Are Logged . . . 480
Controlling Propagation with Loggers . . . 480
Using Propagation to Filter Messages . . . 482
Summarizing Propagation Options . . . 483
Capturing Log Output from Other Software . . . 483
Capturing SQLAlchemy Log Messages Using Propagation . . . 483
Capturing AuthKit Messages Using a Handler . . . 484
Production Configuration . . . 485
Summary . . . 485

CHAPTER 21 **Deployment** . . . 487

Choosing or Setting Up a Python Environment . . . 487
Using the System Python Environment . . . 488
Platform Packages or Easy Install? . . . 488
Using Buildout . . . 488
Setting Up a Virtual Python Environment . . . 489
Dealing with Activate . . . 490
Installing the Required Software into the Environment . . . 490
Creating a Config File for the Application . . . 491
Setting Up the Application Instance . . . 491
Serving the Application from the Installed Environment . . . 492
Deployment Options . . . 492
Embedding . . . 493
Proxying . . . 494
Using Apache to Proxy Requests to Pylons . . . 494
Setting Up Log Files . . . 496
Creating init Scripts . . . 496
Restarting Stopped Applications . . . 497
Embedding Pylons in Apache with mod_wsgi . . . 497
Setting Up a Virtual Host . . . 499
Troubleshooting . . . 501
Deployment on Windows . . . 502
Summary . . . 502

APPENDIX **Licenses** . . . 503

INDEX . . . 513

About the Author

JAMES GARDNER is an Oxford University graduate in physics; cofounder of the Pylons web framework; and founder of 3aims Ltd, a knowledge interaction technology consultancy based in London. The majority of his professional experience has been in the development and support of R&D systems for three different National Health Service organizations in the United Kingdom, and he also coded the popular "What Should I Read Next?" book recommendation service.

James has been writing computer programs since he was a small boy when he first got his hands on a Sinclair ZX Spectrum and was very proud to show his grandmother the flashing colored shapes he had managed to get to appear on a black background on the TV. The excitement and satisfaction of being able to create something extraordinary from a series of carefully ordered characters in a file and a little bit of logical thinking has never left him.

James is heavily involved in open source software, and in addition to his involvement in Pylons, he wrote the Python web modules AuthKit and FormBuild and has a keen interest in authentication and single sign-on systems such as OpenID. He is an advocate of building web applications with the Web Server Gateway Interface APIs that you'll learn about in this book.

While not traveling to London or Oxford, James enjoys nothing more than discussing ideas with challenging and like-minded individuals or sitting down with a cup of tea, a pile of blank paper, a pen, and an Internet connection to think about better ways to solve complex problems using web technology.

In his spare time, James enjoys everything to do with the outdoors from cycling to climbing and from astronomy to scuba diving. In fact, he recently went on a dive trip to the Farne Islands off the coast of Northumbria in the United Kingdom where he thoroughly enjoyed having his equipment nibbled by inquisitive seals. James is lucky enough to have traveled widely and enjoys meeting new people and learning about the different ways people see the world.

James' company's web site is at `http://3aims.com`, and he maintains a personal blog documenting his experiments with Python and Linux, amongst other things, at `http://jimmyg.org`.

About the Technical Reviewer

MICHAEL ORR is one of the Pylons developers and has been writing Python web applications on several frameworks for the past ten years. Michael is the release manager for the WebHelpers component in Pylons. Previously he was the editor of Linux Gazette, a web-based ezine. Mike lives in Seattle, and his other interests include MMA fight sports, languages, and vegetarian cooking.

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I'd like to thank Apress for sharing the vision for this book and allowing me to release it under an open source license so that it can be improved and built upon by the Pylons community, and I'd like to thank everyone at Apress who helped me with this book for their time and energy.

Thanks too have to go to Mike Orr, the technical reviewer. He did an excellent job of reviewing the first draft and pushed me toward making this book more about Pylons and less about the tools and techniques I use in my own web development projects, and that can only be a good thing for you, the reader.

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Source Code and Updates

This book contains many source code examples as well as the code for a complete hierarchical wiki application called SimpleSite. All the source code is available to download from the Apress web site at `http://www.apress.com` or from `http://pylonsbook.com`. The source code includes a `README.txt` file that outlines what each example demonstrates. The examples were all tested in early November 2008 with Pylons 0.9.7 and SQLAlchemy 0.5 release candidates.

This book is released under the GNU Free Documentation License (the same license used by Wikipedia), so I have also been able to publish the text online. You can find the online versions of the chapters at `http://pylonsbook.com`.

The Pylons community is always dynamic and constantly improving, so if you find a problem in the text or source code with the version of Pylons you are using, I encourage you to report it via the `http://pylonsbook.com` web site so that the online chapters can be updated. It is my hope that, with your help and the help of the Pylons community, this book will continue to be a useful resource for a long time to come. If you are interested in contributing to the online version of this book or in helping me review the updates or contributions that other readers send in, I'd love to hear from you. My address is `feedback@pylonsbook.com`.

I very much hope you enjoy the book and find it a useful resource to help you learn and fully understand Pylons. I'm sure you'll find working with Pylons very liberating, and I look forward to meeting you online if you choose to take part in the Pylons community to share your thoughts and ideas.