External Content Plugin for ILIAS

Plugin Version 1.5.4 for ILIAS 5.1

fred.neumann@fim.uni-erlangen.de, jesus.copado@fim.uni-erlangen.de

1. Basic description

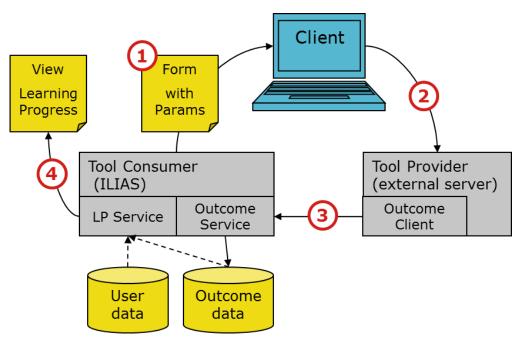
This plugin gives to ILIAS the capacity integrate external contents or tools in the platform, it can be used for multiple purposes, like embedding a video from a video server or access an external site with the possibility to pass authentication.

Administrators can define different types of contents and configure their connection with an XML description. A default configuration is provided for the **LTI 1.1** specification, see:

http://developers.imsglobal.org

Please note that the terms *Content* and *Tool* are treated equally in this description. However, *Tool* is now preferred because the plugin allows to connect whole external platforms.

The integration of external tools with LTI 1.1 works like follows:



- 1. ILIAS as a Tool Consumer (TC) launches the external tool by sending a form with hidden fields to the browser. It includes parameters for authentication, resource identification and selected user data. LTI expects these parameters signed with OAuth. The form action is the URL of the tool provider.
- 2. The browser calls the external Tool Provider (TP) with the parameters given by ILIAS. The TP checks the OAuth signature against a shared secret and provides the requested resource in its own session.
- 3. The TP can send an outcome value to ILIAS. This is done asynchronously from server to server by calling a URL provided with the launch.

4. ILIAS checks the outcome value against a threshold and sets the learning progress for the related user. This can be viewed by the lecturer or the learner and can be used for an aggregated learning progress of the upper course.

The plugin is not restricted to LTI. By defining your own types you can implement your own protocol of connecting external contents or tools with or without secure authentication.

1.1 Plugin Installation

- Copy the contents of the plugin folder to the following path in your ILIAS installation (create
 the necessary directories if not existing):
 Customizing/global/plugins/Services/Repository/RepositoryObject/ExternalContent
- Log in as Administrator, go to Administration > Plugins
- For the ExternalContent plugin click choose the actions *Update*. The needed database tables will be created and the plugin activated afterwards.

This plugin creates a new repository object type "External Content". Please do not forget to set the permissions of roles and role templates for this object type. This is not done by default!

1.2 Quick LTI configuration

- Click Configure for the External Content plugin.
- Click *Define a new type* in the table of content types.
- Enter a type name and choose a language version of the provided LTI type models.
- *Save* the new type.
- Check the *Settings* of the type, especially the privacy settings.
- Optionally upload *Icons* that are used for objects of this type.

1.3 Quick LTI usage

- Go to the *Repository*.
- Select Add New Item and choose External Content.
- Enter an object title and select the LTI content type.
- Save the new object.
- Edit the *Settings* of the object. At least you have to enter the *URL*, *Key* and *Secret* of the external tool.
- Optionally edit *Instructions* to be shown on the info page or upload specific *Icons* for this object.
- Move to the Learning Progress tab if you want to record a learning progress. Set the modus
 to "Active" and enter a passing threshold between 0 and 1 for the outcomes sent from the
 Tool provider.
- Move to the *Content* tab to test how this tool is presented to the users.
- Edit the Settings of the object and set it Online.

2. Configuration

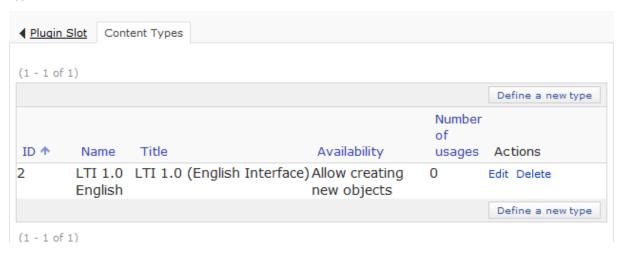
The plugin allows ILIAS administrators to support different types of external contents or tools. The ILIAS authors (e.g. lecturers) can create repository objects based on these types.

Each type has its own definition of how contents or tools of this type are called, what parameters are fixed for this type (e.g. the address of a video server), what parameters have to be defined by the ILIAS authors (e.g. the id of a video) and what user data are provided to the external server. All data can be encrypted in different ways.

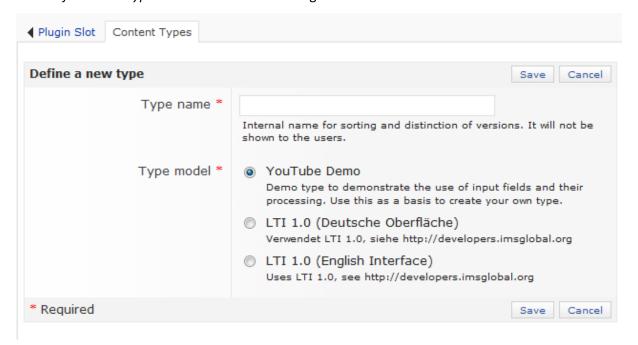
2.1 Create a new type

If you are logged as administrator, go to Administration menu, and choose Plugins.

Choose the action "Configure" for the External Content plugin. You see a list of available content types:



Click *Define a new type* to create a new one. You get a creation form:



Enter an internal type name. This name is only displayed in the administration and can be used to distinguish separate versions of a type. It is not shown to the users.

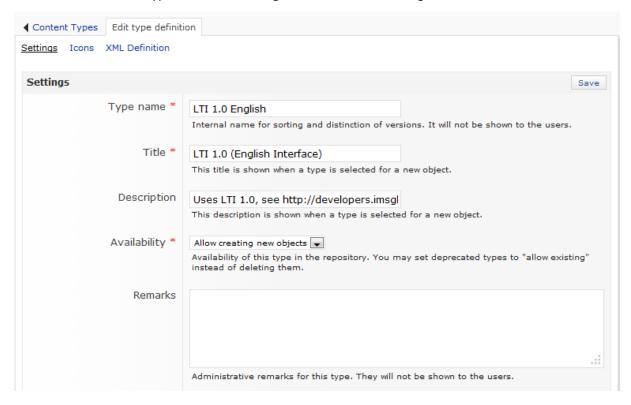
Choose a type model. The models are predefined configurations of types. You may completely change the configuration of your type by editing its XML definitions, but the models are a proven starting point.

Save the new type. This brings you to its *Editing* (see below). You may want to adjust some settings but normally you can start using the type without further configuration.

2.2 Edit a type

2.2.1 Type settings

The editing of a type is directly shown when a new type is created. You can also open it with an action from the list of types. The first editing screen shows its settings:



Some settings are common for all types:

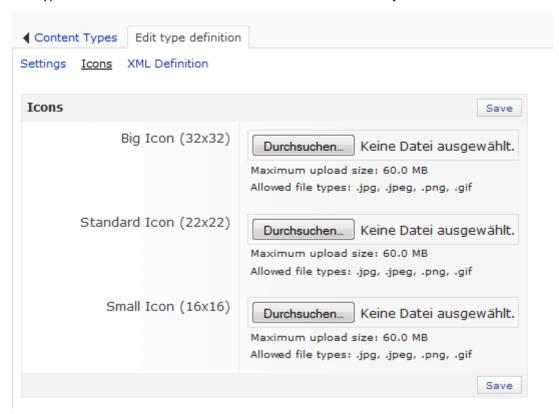
- Type name: internal name for sorting and distinction of versions. It will not be shown to the
- Title: this title is shown when a type is selected for a new object.
- Description: this description is shown when a type is selected for a new object.
- Availability: availability of this type in the repository. You may set deprecated types to "Allow existing objects" instead of deleting them.
- Remarks: administrative remarks for this type. They will not be shown to the users.

Some types have specific settings. These are configured below the common ones. The LTI type, for example, allows specifying which personal data sent to the external tool.

Changing the settings of a type affects all existing objects of this type directly. Sometimes it is better to change the availability to "Allow existing objects" and create a new type with other settings. Use the internal type name and remarks to distinguish the versions of the type.

2.2.2 Type Icon

The second sub tab allows you to upload three Icons. These Icons are used for repository objects of this type instead of the common icon for all external content objects.



2.2.3 XML definition

The third sub tab shows the XML definition of a type. This screen is intended for experts only.

All specific input fields for the settings of the type and its objects are defined here. Templates and function fields define how these inputs are processed and how the external tool is launched.

2.3 Delete a type

The list of content types shows the number usages of each type. A type can be deleted if it has no usage. You can delete it by choosing the "delete" action and passing a confirmation screen.

2.4 Learning Progress

Since version 1.3 (ILIAS 4.4) and version 1.4 (ILIAS 5) the plugin is able to record and show the learning progress of users.

As a precondition it is necessary that the learning progress is globally by the ILIAS administrator at "Administration > Statistics and Learning Progress". An important option at this screen is "Anonymized". This determines whether teachers see the learning progress of single users or just a summary.

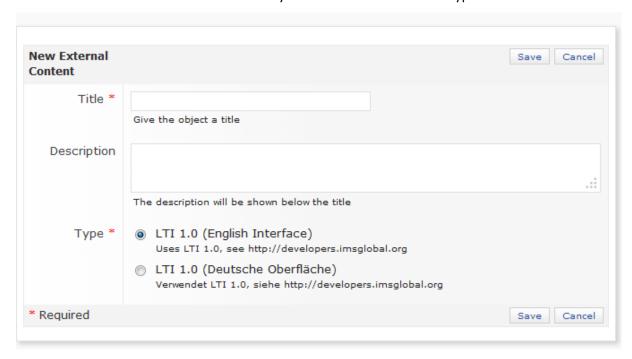
The ability to activate the learning progress for single objects is controlled by the permission "edit learning progress".

The ability to see the learning progress of users is controlled by the permission "read learning progress" (in ILIAS 5 or higher).

3. Usage

3.1 Create an Object

Go to the desired place in the repository and choose *Add New Item*. If the plugin is activated you can select *External Content*. On the create form you have to select a content type:

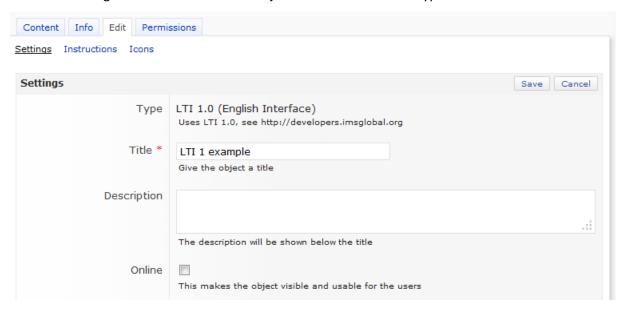


3.2 Edit an Object

The *Edit* tab of an external content object is available to all users with *write* permission. It has three sub tabs: *Settings, Instructions* and *Icons*.

3.2.1 Settings

The basic settings of an external content objects are common for all types:

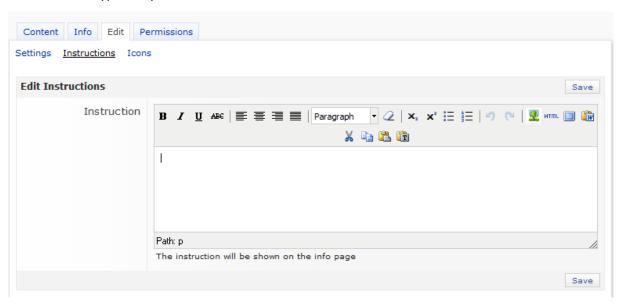


- The *type* just shown and cannot be changed after an object is created.
- Title and Description work like in all ILIAS objects.

• Online makes the object available for all users that have visible and read permission.

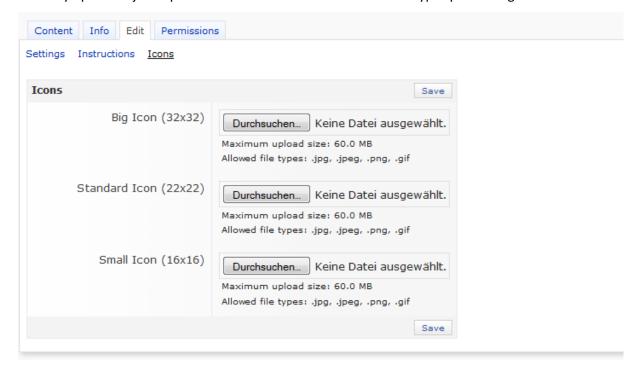
3.2.2 Instruction

Instructions are a free text, probably rich text input. They are displayed on the info tab of the object. Some content types may also include the instructions on the content tab.



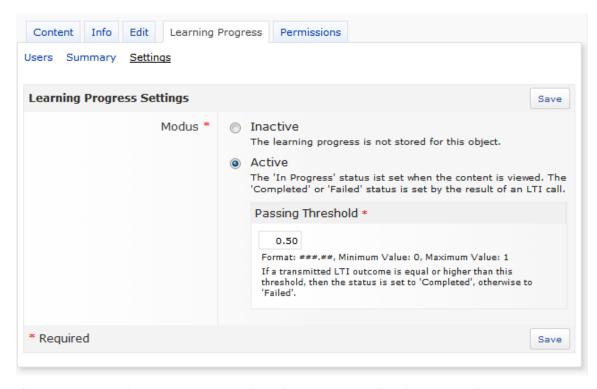
3.2.3 Icons

You may upload objects specific icons that are used instead of the type specific or general ones:



3.3 Activate Learning Progress

If the learning progress is enabled in ILIAS and the user has the permission "edit learning progress" on an ExternalContent object, then a *Learning Progress* tab is shown. The *Settings* sub tab allows activating learning progress for the specific object. It is not activated by default!



If activated, a user's status will change from "Not Attempted" to "In Progress" when viewing the content the first time. Other values are only set if the external tool calls the learning outcome service of the plugin according to the LTI 1.1 specification. This call sends a value between 0 and 1. This value is compared to a threshold which can be entered in the learning progress settings. The status is set to "Completed" if it is equal or higher, otherwise to "Failed".

4. Type Definition

The type models that can be chosen when a new type is created are just predefined types. You may change the behavior of a type or create a complete different type by editing the type definition in XML.

The following code shows the basic structure of an XML definition for external content types:

4.1 Main elements

4.1.1 Interface

A type definition must exactly have one <interface> as its root element.

The only attribute type defines how an external content is embedded:

- "link": By a hyperlink with href generated from the type template.
- "page": As an own HTML page, generated from the type template.
- "embed": HTML code embedded to an ILIAS page and generated from the type template.

4.1.2 Title

The <title> element corresponds to the title on the settings screen and is automatically updated when the title is changed there. This title is shown for the type selection when new objects are created.

4.1.3 Description

The <description> element corresponds to the description on the settings screen and is automatically updated when the description is changed there. This description is shown for the type selection when new objects are created.

4.1.4 Template

Depending on the interface type, the element <template> contains a CDATA section defining a URL or HTML code. Field names are included as placeholders in curly brackets {}. Example:

The field names should follow the conventions for naming variables (no special characters except "_"). These names refer either pre-defined fields (starting with "ILIAS") or name attributes of <field> elements (see below).

Placeholders of existing fields are replaced by the actual field values. For input fields, the values are taken from the type or object settings. For ILIAS fields the values may depend on the current user and context of an object. Template fields have their own template as a sub element which is processed recursively.

4.1.5 Metasource

<metasource> is optional, works like <template> and produces a URL to request meta data
from the external content. These have to be provides as an xml structure (see "Interface for meta
data") and are shown on the info page of the external object.

4.2 Fields

The element <fields> of an interface contains a couple of <field> elements that can be used in a template.

Field elements have the following common attributes:

- name is the field name and has to be unique. This name, enclosed in {} is used as a placeholder in templates.
- type is the field type. Each type has its own processing rules and additional attributes.
- encoding is the name or a list of encoding functions that should be applied to the field value before a placeholder for this field is replaced in an upper template. See section "Encodings" below.

The type attribute of a field specifies the purpose of a field. Some fields are shown on the settings screen of content types and objects. Others are just used for intermediate values in the template processing.

4.2.1 Input fields

Input fields are shown on the settings screens. The following attributes are common to all input fields:

- level defines where an input field is shown. "type" will show the field on the settings screen of a content type in the administration. "object" (default) will show the field on the settings screen of an object.
- parentfield defines the name of a field that should be the a parent of a nested input field
- parentvalue must be used in conjunction with parentfield and defines the value of a radio field option that should be the parent of a nested input field.
- default defines a value that should be used if the field has no input.
- required is set to "1" if an input is required.

Input fields can have the following sub elements:

- <title> defines the field title shown in the input form.
- <description> defines the info text shown below the input field.

Input fields can have the following values in their type attribute:

- "header" will show a section header. Only the title is used. All other properties are ignored.
- "description" will show non-editable text. Only the description is used. All other properties are ignored.
- "text" will show a single line text input field. The attribute size defines the length of the field.
- "textarea" will show a multiline text input field. The attributes rows and cols define the size of the field. The attribute richtext is set to "1" if a rich text editor should be used
- "password" will show a password input field.
- "checkbox" will show a checkbox. If it is checked, the value of the field will be "1".
- "radio" defines a group of radio options.

Input fields with type="radio" define their options with <option> sub elements. The attribute value of an option defines the value that is taken when an option is chosen. The sub element

<title> of an option defines the option title and the sub element <description> defines the description shown with the title.

An example from the LTI definition shows the use of radio options and nested inputs:

```
<field name="LAUNCH TARGET" type="radio" required="1" default="top">
  <title>Tool Presentation</title>
  <option value="iframe">
    <title>Embedded</title>
    <description>Show the tool embedded on the content page</description>
  </option>
  <option value="top">
    <title>Same Window</title>
    <description>Open the tool in the same window</description>
  </option>
  <option value="blank">
    <title>New Window</title>
    <description>Open the tool in a new browser window</description>
  </option>
</field>
<field name="LAUNCH WIDTH" parentfield="LAUNCH TARGET" parentvalue="iframe"</pre>
type="text">
  <title>Width</title>
</field>
<field name="LAUNCH HEIGHT" parentfield="LAUNCH TARGET"</pre>
parentvalue="iframe" type="text">
  <title>Height</title>
</field>
```

4.2.2 Template fields

Fields with type="template" are used to concatenate the string values of other fields and apply an encoding to the concatenation. This is for example useful to calculate an md5 hash and append it as a signature to a url.

Template fields have just the basic attributes name, type and encoding. Additionally they have a sub element <template> that is processed like the main template of the interface: first all placeholders are replaced by the values of their corresponding fields. Then the encoding is applied.

4.2.3 Calculated fields

Fields with type="calculated" provide a more sophisticated processing of values than template fields. They have an attribute function that defines which calculation should be applied. The parameters for this function are defined as param> sub elements. Each parameter has a name attribute which should be unique for a calculated field.

The text value of a parameter can either be a fixed string or the placeholder of a single field. It is *not* a template which means that a concatenation of text and fields will not work within params.

A typical example is used in the LTI definition to set what kind of user id is sent based on the value of a radio input field:

```
<field name="LTI_USER_ID" type="calculated" function="selectByName">
  <param name="value">{SEND_USER_ID}</param>
  <param name="none"></param>
  <param name="coded">{ILIAS_USER_CODE}</param>
  <param name="numeric">{ILIAS_USER_ID}</param>
  <param name="login">{ILIAS_USER_ID}</param>
  <param name="login">{ILIAS_USER_LOGIN}</param>
  </field>
```

The radio input field is SEND_USER_ID which may have the values "none", "coded", "numeric" or "login". The function "selectByName" selects the value to be sent by comparing the value of the first parameter with the names of the other parameters. In case of "none", an empty string is returned. In the other cases the values of pre-defines ILIAS fields are returned.

Calculated fields can also have an encoding. If the calculation produces a scalar value then the encoding is applied to this value before it is used.

See the section Functions below in this manual for a list of available functions.

4.2.4 ILIAS fields

ILIAS_USER_ID

ILIAS fields are pre-defined values that can be used with {} placeholders but do not have a <field> definition in the type XML. The following ILIAS fields are available:

| ILIAS_REF_IDILIAS_TITLEILIAS_DESCRIPTIONILIAS_INSTRUCTIONS | Ref-Id of the object in the ILIAS repository title of the ILIAS object description of the ILIAS object instructions for the ILIAS object |
|--|---|
| ILIAS_CONTEXT_IDILIAS_CONTEXT_TYPEILIAS_CONTEXT_TITLE | Ref-Id of the surrounding course or group Object Type of the surrounding course or group Title of the surrounding course or group |
| ILIAS_REMOTE_ADDR ILIAS_TIME ILIAS_TIMESTAMP ILIAS_SESSION_ID ILIAS_TOKEN ILIAS_RESULT_ID | IP address of the browser current server time (yyyy-mm-dd hh:mm:ss) current server time (integer) ID of the php session Token used for callback authentication result id to be used calling the outcome service (for LTI 1.1) |
| ILIAS_CALLBACK_URLILIAS_EVENT_LOG_URLILIAS_RETURN_URLILIAS_RESULT_URL | URL to be called for callback authentication (not active) URL to be called for logging events (nut active) URL to return to the content object in ILIAS URL of the outcome service (for LTI 1.1) |

numerical ID of the user

ILIAS_USER_CODE unique anonymous code for the user

ILIAS_USER_LOGIN
 ILIAS_USER_FIRSTNAME
 ILIAS_USER_LASTNAME
 ILIAS_USER_LASTNAME
 ILIAS_USER_FULLNAME
 ILIAS_USER_EMAIL
 ILIAS_USER_IMAGE
 ILIAS_USER_IMAGE
 ILIAS_USER_LANG
 ICIAS_USER_LANG
 ICIAS_USER_

ILIAS_USER_WRITE_ACCESS 1 of the user has write access to the object, 0 otherwise

ILIAS_VERSION version number of the ILIAS installation
 ILIAS_CONTACT_EMAIL feedback recipient of the ILIAS client

• ILIAS_CLIENT_ID ID of the ILIAS client

• ILIAS HTTP PATH HTTP path of the ILIAS directory

ILIAS_LMS_URL
 base URL of the ILIAS installation (with client)

ILIAS_LMS_GUID Dotted concatenation of ILIAS client, path and domain
 ILIAS_LMS_NAME Short installation name or client name, if empty
 ILIAS_LMS_DESCRIPTION ILIAS header title or client description, if empty

4.3 Encodings

Encodings are named functions that take a string value as input and return a string value as output. They can be set as an attribute for all field types. When the field is used in a template or calculated function, then the encoding is applied to the field value before it is used. An encoding for a function field that returns an array will be applied to all array keys and values.

The plugin defines a set of basic, commonly used encodings. They can be listed with comma separation for a combination. In this case they are applied from the left to the right, e.g.:

encoding="strip tags, singlequotes, no break, trim"

The following encodings are defined by the plugin:

plain does not modify the input
 url applies URL encoding
 base64 applies BASE64 encoding

dechex hexadecimal representation of numeric strings

md5 calculates an MD5 message digest

sha1 calculates an sha1 hashstrip_tags removes html tags

no_break converts line breaks to spaces

nl2br converts line breaks to
singlequotes
 doublequotes
 changes double quotes(") to single quotes (')
 changes single quotes(') to double quotes (")

trim removes white spaces from the beginning and the end
 htmlentities converts utf-8 special characters to their HTML entities

html entity decode converts HTML entities to their utf-8 characters

htmlspecialchars
 htmlspecialchars_decode
 htmlspecialchars_decode
 concerts < > & " to their HTML entities
 converts the HTML entities of < > & " back

Any other encoding refers to a user defined encoding function. If the encoding attribute is "ilMyEncoding" then the plugin will search for the following class file:

Customizing/global/encodings/class.ilMyEncoding.php

This class name must be ilMyEncoding and the class has to provide a static method encode() that takes a string as input and provides the encoded string as return value.

4.4 Functions

Functions are used by calculated fields with their function attribute. They get a list of named input parameters and return a calculated result. The data types of parameters and results are not fixed and depend on the semantics of a function.

The following functions are defined by the plugin:

4.4.1 createArray

This returns an associative array with the parameter names as keys and the parameter values as values. This function is needed for example in the LTI type to create the parameter array for signOAuth.

4.4.2 getBasename

This returns the basename of a URL.

4.4.3 signOAuth

This signs parameters according to the OAuth specification. The input parameters are:

url url to be signed

key used for the signature

secret shared secret used for the signature

callback callback URL, is "about:blank" in the LTI case
 sign method "HMAC SHA1", "PLAINTEXT" or "RSA SHA1"

http_method "POST" or "GET"

token is empty in the LTI case

data associative array of parameters to be signed

4.4.4 createHtmlInputFields

This creates a list of HTML input fields. The parameters are:

type "visible" or "hidden"data associative array of data

The keys of the data array are taken as field names and the values as field values. Note that no encoding is applied to the values before they are written into the html value attributes.

4.4.5 showValues

This generates a HTML output for debugging and shows the data as "key = value" lines. The parameters are:

data associative array of data

4.4.6 selectByName

Compares the value of one parameter with the names of the other parameters and returns the value of the found parameter. If no parameter matches, the value of a parameter with no name is returned. The compare parameter must have the name "value".

4.4.7 splitToArray

This takes a string as input and splits it to an array of key/value pairs. The parameters are:

source string that should be split
 key_delimiter delimiter for separating key and value, e.g. '='
 entry_delimiter delimiter for separating multiple key/value pairs, e.g. ';'

4.4.8 mergeArrays

This takes two key/value arrays as input and produces a merged array. Values of the second input array will overwrite those of the first, if the keys are identical. Other key/value pairs of the second array will be added. The parameters are:

base_array
 The array to get merged

merge_array
 The array to merge into the base array

See the section of calculated fields for an example.

5. Interface for Meta Data

The address called by <metasource> has to deliver the meta data of an external object as an XML structure with the following format:

The fields will be matched by the field names with the corresponding LOM attributes.