Mitch Meyer

Assignment 9.1

DetailsView and FormView in ASP.NET

ASP.Net provides the DetailsView and FormView controls as a way to display the data from a single item of a data source. Both of these functions provide a developer the means to display the details of an item selected by a user. The decision on which function to use depends mostly on how much control over the format of the information the developer desires. With the DetailsView control, information is displayed in an automatically generated table, but with the FormView control, data is formatted using templates giving the developer much more control.

The purpose of both of these functions is to give the user control over the data of a single row in from a data source. The control displays the information stored in the database and provides access to controls to edit, delete, or insert a new database item. This functionality is not automatic and needs to be configured by the developer in order to function properly. The DetailsView control has many attributes and child elements that can be used to configure what data from the database will be displayed and how that information will be formatted. It is also formatted as a table, so it is recommended to use the built in format elements instead of using a CSS sheet to format the table. DetailsView also supports paging. When the “AllowPaging” attribute is set to true, the DetailsView form shows arrows at the bottom allowing the user to move from one database item to the next. This function is not recommended for data sources containing more than a few dozen items though as this type of paging would become cumbersome.

The DetailsView form can be used to generate command buttons that allow the user to make changes to information stored on the database. A developer can assign attributes to the DetailsView form to create delete, edit, and insert functionality such as “AutoGenerateDeleteButton=”true””. These buttons will be automatically generated but the developer has no control over the appearance of the buttons using these attributes. Customized command buttons can also be created in DetailsView by using the Add Field dialog box provided by Visual Studios.

FormView controls is also used to display a single item from a data source but provides much more flexibility when it comes to formatting and layout options. The FormView uses templates to render all of the fields as a single row by default. This gives the developer complete control to format the information within that row. To edit the templates for a FormView, just select Edit Templates from the smart tag menu and this will place the FormView control in template-editing mode. This provides a selection of different premade templates that can be played with to achieve desired results. Since FormView does not use tables to display data, CSS sheets are commonly used to format the data displayed in a FormView row.

FormView also provides functionality for adding, deleting, or editing data stored in the database through the use of command buttons. The command buttons are made available through the selection of a specific template. FormView has a read only template that does not allow the user to make changes to the data displayed in the form. This would probably be the best template for non-administrative users. There are also EditItem and InsertItem templates that provide the same functionality as the command buttons generated in the DetailsView form. The major downside to these templates is that any formatting done on one template has to be redone for any other templates used.