
Session variables not passing through

Posted by empirebattles - 2009/12/19 10:47

Hello,
I have begun using the PHP Pages component, and all works well, until i attempt to pass my \$_SESSION variables outside of joomla to a normal php page.

To discover/test this, i made a basic page through this component, and set the variable

```
session_start();  
$_SESSION='testable';
```

then, on another page, that was not run through joomla, i had the variable echoed back to me:

```
session_start();  
echo $_SESSION;
```

The echo on the separate page returned nothing, while an echo i did on another php page run through joomla returned/echoed 'testable'. Is this a bug, or part of the functionality of this component?

Any more information you need, i will be more than happy to provide.

thank you

Re:Session variables not passing through

Posted by admin - 2009/12/19 16:30

You'll need to use the session handler that Joomla uses. Joomla saves session data to the database by default, but PHP uses files by default. So you're accessing the wrong medium for the data.

Here is how to load Joomla in a standalone app, which is probably the easiest way. The important part is the path to Joomla, which must be set in JPATH_BASE.

```
// Set flag that this is a parent file  
define( '_JEXEC', 1 );  
  
// replace this with your Joomla path  
define( 'JPATH_BASE', '/path/to/joomla/' );  
  
define( 'DS', DIRECTORY_SEPARATOR );  
  
require_once ( JPATH_BASE .DS.'includes'.DS.'defines.php' );  
require_once ( JPATH_BASE .DS.'includes'.DS.'framework.php' );  
  
$App =& JFactory::getApplication('site');  
  
// now you can use Joomla functions  
  
// session  
$Session =& JFactory::getSession();  
  
// $Session->set('example', 'remember me');  
// $Session->get('example');  
  
// or directly via  
$_SESSION;  
  
// $_SESSION = 'remember me';  
// $_SESSION;  
  
// user - a good alternative (see JUser::setParam())  
$User =& JFactory::getUser();  
  
//$User->setParam('example', 'remember me');  
//$User->getParam('example');
```

You can also just load the session files in `libraries/joomla/session/` if you don't want the overhead of the whole Joomla framework (about 3 Mb). A bit more involved.

The other thing is the domain must be the same so cookies can be read. Even `www.example.com` is not the same as `example.com` in this case.

You can set the session cookies to be read across sub domains, but I would not recommend it as it is not a secure practice (It opens XSS from any subdomain). See:
<http://www.php.net/manual/en/session.configuration.php#ini.session.cookie-domain>

Re:Session variables not passing through

Posted by empirebattles - 2009/12/19 17:53

well, it may be easier to explain slightly what i'm aiming to do. I have several session variables that are established (with `$_SESSION`) through joomla. Then i have a transitional/loading page which variables are re-assigned, and then the user is directed to a page that is NOT joomla (but the session variables are still required to proceed)... I'm not all that in-depth into joomla, so i'll try to figure this out as i type... :) I will assume that my site is simply 'example.com', and joomla is installed on the root directory.

with that on a `.php` page, it returns an error message:

```
Restricted accessRestricted access
Fatal error: Class 'JFactory' not found in /*directory of file* on line 15
```

Again, i'm not all that familiar with joomla structure, so this is probably a simple fix.
Thanks again

Re:Session variables not passing through

Posted by admin - 2009/12/20 01:33

You need the correct path to your Joomla installation and place it in

```
define('JPATH_BASE', '');
```

If you don't know the absolute path, use a path relative to your application.

eg:

```
/var/html/joomla/
/var/html/myapp/
```

Then Joomla would be in:

```
define('JPATH_BASE', '../joomla/');
```

relative to `/var/html/myapp/`

Re:Session variables not passing through

Posted by empirebattles - 2009/12/20 05:43

Ah... so its the root directory from the server path. I see now.

So, assuming my name on the server was user 'examp', the path i used was:

```
define('JPATH_BASE','/home/examp/public_html/');
```

It worked perfectly :)

Thank you for your support

edit. Now, if i understand this correctly, this changes where the `$_SESSION` variables are being received from (the Joomla database instead of the server files). Is it possible to change back to normal server session files within the same script? (by somehow changing the directory back to the server files).

Basically, set `$holdvar=$_SESSION;` and then down the page, be able to set `$_SESSION=$holdvar;`, essentially passing the session variables into 'open water', so that the Joomla framework doesn't have to be opened every time i want to call those variables. (as a work around right now, i am using cookies, but those are far too easy to edit).

Re:Session variables not passing through

Posted by admin - 2009/12/20 14:00

All the Joomla session data is in the database. So if you revert to files, there is nothing to read there.

You can however bypass having to load the full Joomla framework. To do that you have to just include the Joomla session handler in `libraries/joomla/session/` and assign this as the session handler for your session.

I won't go into that as it is quite time consuming and would involve a lot of code/debugging on your part.

Re:Session variables not passing through

Posted by empirebattles - 2009/12/20 18:16

yeah.... i could imagine.

I have a feeling that what i'm trying to do is impossible:

Read from BOTH Joomla session values, and the normal server session files, in the same php script. At first i thought to change the `session_save_path`, but that obviously wouldn't work since Joomla handles sessions via databases... for example:

I only need the Joomla session values right before passing them over to the 'server side', and then i never need to touch Joomla again. right now, i have it so that there is a page that sets a `cookie=$_SESSION;`, and then it redirects to another page, and then `$_SESSION=` the cookie that was previously set.

It was the only thing i could think of to work around this, but like i said, cookies are too open to vulnerabilities

Re:Session variables not passing through

Posted by admin - 2009/12/20 19:30

It is not impossible, just needs a bit of experimenting. I've don't know if you can change the session handler mid session. I'd assume you can close the session `session_write_close()`, then restart it again with `session_start()` and use the filesystem.

Then just rewrite all the data from Joomla into the new session.

eg:

```
// after the Joomla stuff

// copy the session
$session = $_SESSION;

session_write_close();
session_start();

foreach($session as $name=>$value) $_SESSION = $value;
```

Re:Session variables not passing through

Posted by empirebattles - 2009/12/20 20:30

yeah... i thought about doin that, and when i tried it, it gave me
Fatal error: session_start() : Failed to initialize storage module: user (path: /tmp) in *path of file and line #*

which lead me to the conclusion that the session couldn't be re-declared half way down the page....i'm still playin around with it, but i keep getting the failed to initialize storage module error.

Re:Session variables not passing through

Posted by admin - 2009/12/20 21:32

Looks like you can't change the session module after you have written to it. The module is either user or files. User is when you set a session_save_handler() or custom functions to handle the session. Files is when the default PHP session handler writes it to files.

However, you can change the session_save_handler() mid way to use your own custom handler.