

Creating a WSS Site List in Sharpoint Portal Server 2003

June 2004

Eric A. Shupps

Sharepoint Portal Server (SPS) 2003 includes a pre-defined Sites area which lists all the Windows Sharepoint Services (WSS) sites associated with the portal. Users can click on the Sites area to see the site listing and administrators can add a site listing web part to other SPS areas. Unfortunately, this list is not available within the WSS sites themselves. Many portal administrators would like to have a site list displayed in the left navigation area (which is not accessible via the browser editor) on both the SPS home page and on each WSS home page. While this task is a relatively simple one for an ASP programmer, most portal administrators do not have sufficient programming skills to get the job done. Fortunately, the task is not as difficult as it first appears and the required functionality can be achieved without any programming knowledge.

Creating the site list is comprised of several tasks: 1) Modifying the basic layout of the left navigation area, 2) Using a custom query to retrieve information from the database, and 3) Creating a data view web part. The steps to achieve each task are described below.

Modifying the Navigation Layout

- 1) Open the page where you wish to insert the new web part in Frontpage 2003 (earlier versions of Frontpage are not fully compatible with SPS 2003). From the **File** menu, select **Edit with Microsoft Office Frontpage**.

Note: If Frontpage is not set as your default HTML editor in Internet Explorer, you can change this setting by opening the **Programs** tab under **Tools > Internet Options** and selecting 'Microsoft Office Frontpage' in the HTML Editor drop-down list.

- 1) Switch to Code View by clicking on the **Code** button on the bottom navigation menu in Frontpage.
- 2) Locate the following block of code (depending upon your site configuration, it should exist somewhere in the first 50 or so lines)

```
<td id="onetidWatermark" class="ms-navwatermark" dir="ltr"> <!--[if
gte vml 1]><v:shapetype id="_x0000_t136" coordsize="21600,21600"
o:spt="136" adj="10800" path="m@7,l@8,m@5,21600l@6,21600e">
```

- 3) Insert the following text immediately before the first <td> tag in the above code:

```
<!--
```

- 4) Scroll down about 30 lines and locate the following text:

```
<![endif]-->
```

- 5) Delete the --> characters.

- 6) On the same or possibly next line, find the following text:

```
<td width="126" style="padding-right: 2px;">
```

- 7) Insert a closing comment tag --> before the <td in the above line and change the width="126" value to "100%".

This procedure will remove the vertical Sharepoint Portal Server text from the navigation bar and expand the column to the full width of the table cell. Most importantly, by placing your comment tags in the right location your site list will inherit the style sheet of the page, including the correct fonts and colors to match the rest of the standard text.

Alternatively, you may remove the vertical text in the visual editor by simply selecting and deleting it; however, because of the way the underlying code is written, this method will cause your new site list to inherit a different style, resulting in text that does not match the remainder of the page. To correct this, you will need to select a new style from the formatting toolbar in Frontpage after creating the new data view web part (the correct style is 'ms-navframe').

Creating a Custom Database Query

Creation of the site list requires the site ID, Title, and URL to be retrieved from the database. In Sharepoint, this information is contained in two tables: Sites and Webs. In order to extract the correct data, the tables must first be combined on a unique field, such as Site ID, then the data stored in a temporary table, view, procedure or directly in memory.

- 1) If you have administrative access to the Sharepoint database, you can create a stored procedure to retrieve the information needed to create the site list; if not, ask your database administrator to create the procedure for you. For performance and security reasons, stored procedures are the preferred way of performing custom queries against multiple tables. To create a new stored procedure which combines information in the Sites and Webs tables to produce a list of WSS sites, perform the following steps in SQL 2000 Enterprise Manager:

- a) Expand the <site_name>_SITE database.

- b) Right-click on the Stored Procedures node and select **New Stored Procedure**.

- c) Erase the default text and insert the following code into the editor, replacing <procedure_name> with the name you assigned to the new stored procedure:

```
CREATE PROCEDURE dbo.<procedure_name>
AS
SELECT
    Sites.FullUrl,
    Sites.Id,
    Webs.Title
FROM Sites
JOIN Webs on Sites.ID = Webs.SiteId
WHERE Webs.ParentWebID IS NULL AND Webs.WebTemplate='1' AND
Webs.CachedNavDirty != '131071'
ORDER BY Webs.Title
GO
```

Note: The WHERE parameters in the SQL statement are used to filter out other types of sites, such as personal and deleted sites, which should not appear in a list of active WSS sites. The first parameter, `Webs.ParentWebID IS NULL`, ensures that only top-level sites are displayed; to show all the subsites below the WSS site level, omit this parameter. The second, `Webs.WebTemplate='1'`, filters out personal sites (created using the My Site option in SPS), which also have a NULL ParentWebID. The final parameter, `Webs.CachedNavDirty != '131071'`, prevents deleted sites, which are removed from SPS but not from the database, from being displayed. Depending upon your Sharepoint configuration, you may need to modify these parameters to return the appropriate results.

- 2) Configure the Sharepoint database to allow update queries, which will give you access to the new stored procedure from a data view web part. Click on **Site Settings**, then, under **General Settings**, click on **Go to Sharepoint Portal Server central administration**. Click the **Windows Sharepoint Services** link in the left navigation bar. Scroll down to the bottom of the page and click on **Configure data retrieval service settings**. On the Data Retrieval Service Settings page, check the box labeled 'Enable update query support'. Choose **OK** and return to the main portal.

Creating a Data View Web Part

- 2) From the **View** menu in Frontpage 2003, select **Task Pane** (Ctrl+F1).

- 3) Open the Task pane menu by clicking on the down arrow and select **Data Source Catalog**.
- 4) Expand **Database Connections** and click **Add to Catalog**.
- 5) Enter your database connection parameters, including database server name (or IP address) and authentication credentials. You may need to get this information from your database administrator. Depending upon the security requirements within your organization, it may also be necessary for the database administrator to create an account that has Owner permissions to the Sharepoint databases instead of using your Windows credentials or the default 'sa' account.
- 6) Under **Select Database and Table, View or Stored Procedure**, select the **<site_name>_SITE** database.
- 7) Scroll through the list and select the new stored procedure you (or the database administrator) created.
- 8) Click **Finish**. The table will now be displayed under Database Connections.
- 9) In Frontpage design view, position your cursor in the left navigation bar where you wish the new site list to appear. Create a new Web Part Zone by selecting **Data > Insert Web Part Zone** from the menu.
- 10) Select **Insert Data View** from the drop-down menu for the **<connection_name>** database connection.
- 11) Format the data view web part as needed. To create the list structure and display each item as a link, perform the following steps (if you chose to remove the vertical text by deleting it in the visual editor, first select the new web part and choose **ms-navframe** from the **Style** drop-down in the **Formatting** toolbar):
 - a) Remove all columns and rows except the **Title** data cell.
 - b) Select **Style** from the web part options menu and choose a format, such as **Plain list of titles...** from the available formatting options.
 - c) Select a cell. From the Insert menu choose **Hyperlink**.
 - d) Click the **Parameters** button.
 - e) Under **Path**, click **Insert Field Value**.
 - f) Select **XSL:FullUrl** from the list (the exact text may vary depending upon your configuration – the correct field will have FullUrl somewhere within the string).

- g) Click **OK** twice to close the Insert Hyperlink dialogs. The Title text should now change to a hyperlink.
- 12) Save the page to the Sharepoint server by selecting **File > Save** from the Frontpage menu.
- 13) View the new page within your web browser. Modify the web part as necessary to change the title, adjust the height, set frame parameters, etc.