Creating a Custom Connection string

We have already learned how to connect to an online database using a Data Source Name (DSN, see Creating a Data Source Name).

This method of connecting to a database is simple and reliable, but it requires access to the web server. Unfortunately this is not always possible. Your ISP is unlikely to let you have access at that level. This means that you will need to either pay your ISP to configure the DSN or if you are using ASP or ASP.Net, use the Custom Connection String Method.

There are a number of different sections of a custom connection string

**Provider** – this section defines which database provider installed on the web-server you will use. Different providers require different syntax (ie different commands). The sections below are relevant to the MSDASQL provider. Other examples of providers are: Microsoft.Jet.OLEDB.4.0, and SQLOLEDB.

**Driver** – The driver tells the provider the type of database the web page will be reading. In this course we have been using Microsoft Access, but it could also be Microsoft Text if your database is a text based database.

**DBQ** – This is the tricky part. You must get this right, and this is often where mistakes are made. DBQ is the absolute path to your database. The absolute path begins with the drive of the web server that the database resides on, and then includes the complete path from the root directory. You may need to get this information from you web administrator or ISP, as some of the path is not always visible to the user connected through the network/internet. For example with CIT20 the path appears to the internet user to be “/student/0123456”, but this is not the absolute path. Starting at the root directory it is “C:/home/student/0123456” where 0123456 is the student id.

**UID** – If the database needs to have data updated via a dynamic web page then often the connection string will need the user ID of a user with permissions to update data. For browsing purposes, this can often be left blank.

**PWD** – If you include a user ID, then you will also need to include the password. Do be aware that anyone who can read your code will be able to see your password.

A sample Connection String

"Provider=MSDASQL; Driver=(Microsoft Access Driver (*.mdb));DBQ=C:\Home\student\0123456\MyDB.mdb;UID=0123456;PWD=xxx;"
Configuring Dreamweaver to use a Custom Connection String

1. Open a new ASP page by clicking on ‘File’ and selecting ‘New…’

2. As with other projects in this course select ‘Dynamic Page’ and ‘ASP VBScript’, and click ‘Create’.

3. From under the ‘Application’ panel group, click on the ‘Databases’ tab and then click on the ‘+’ button and select ‘Custom Connection String’

4. In the dialogue box that pops up, give the connection a meaningful name and type in your connection string.

   e.g.

   "Provider=MSDASQL; Driver={Microsoft Access Driver (*.mdb)};
   DBQ=C:\Home\student\Rhys\2004\BiblioXP.mdb;UID=;PWD="

   (Note: it should be all typed in on the one line with no breaks)
5. Click on Test. If there are no errors it should tell you that the ‘Connection was made successfully’.

6. If you get this error

![An unidentified error has occurred.](image1)

It may mean that you have not typed in the provider name correctly.

This error

![Data source name not found and no default driver specified](image2)

May mean that you have not typed in your string correctly. You may have mistyped the driver name or left of one of the ‘=’ signs.
The following error means that you have not typed in the correct path to your database.

7. If your connection was successful you should be able to expand your connection to see the tables and fields.