



Creating Custom JSP Tag Libraries

Core Servlets & JSP book: www.coreservlets.com
More Servlets & JSP book: www.moreservlets.com
Servlet and JSP Training Courses: courses.coreservlets.com

Slides © Marty Hall, <http://www.coreservlets.com>, book © Sun Microsystems Press

2

Agenda

- **Components of a tag library**
- **Basic tags**
- **Tags that use attributes**
- **Tags that use body content**
- **Tags that optionally use body content**
- **Advanced tags**

3

Uses of JSP Constructs

Simple
Application



Complex
Application

- Scripting elements calling servlet code directly
- Scripting elements calling servlet code indirectly (by means of utility classes)
- Beans
- Custom tags
- Servlet/JSP combo (MVC), with beans and possibly custom tags

Components That Make Up a Tag Library

- **The Tag Handler Class**
 - Java code that says how to actually translate tag into code
 - Must implement javax.servlet.jsp.tagext.Tag interface
 - Usually extends TagSupport or BodyTagSupport
 - Goes in same directories as servlet class files and beans
- **The Tag Library Descriptor File**
 - XML file describing tag name, attributes, and implementing tag handler class
 - Goes with JSP file or at arbitrary URL
- **The JSP File**
 - Imports a tag library (referencing URL of descriptor file)
 - Defines tag prefix
 - Uses tags

Defining a Simple Tag Handler Class: Example

```
package coreservlets.tags;
import javax.servlet.jsp.*;
import javax.servlet.jsp.tagext.*;
import java.io.*;
import java.math.*;
import coreservlets.*;

public class SimplePrimeTag extends TagSupport {
    protected int len = 50;

    public int doStartTag() {
        try {
            JspWriter out = pageContext.getOut();
            BigInteger prime = Primes.nextPrime(Primes.random(len));
            out.print(prime); // Primes class defined in Section 7.3
        } catch (IOException ioe) {
            System.out.println("Error generating prime: " + ioe);
        }
        return(SKIP_BODY);
    }
}
```

6

Custom Tags

www.coreservlets.com

Defining a Simple Tag Library Descriptor

- **Start with XML header and DOCTYPE**
- **Top-level element is taglib**
- **Each tag defined by tag element with:**
 - **name**, whose body defines the base tag name.
In this case, I use `<name>simplePrime</name>`
 - **tagclass**, which gives the fully qualified class name of the tag handler. In this case, I use `<tagclass>coreservlets.tags.SimplePrimeTag</tagclass>`
 - **bodycontent**, which gives hints to development environments. Optional.
 - **info**, which gives a short description. Here, I use `<info>Outputs a random 50-digit prime.</info>`

7

Custom Tags

www.coreservlets.com

TLD File for SimplePrimeTag

```
<?xml version="1.0" encoding="ISO-8859-1" ?>
<!DOCTYPE taglib PUBLIC
  "-//Sun Microsystems, Inc.//DTD JSP Tag Library 1.1//EN"
  "http://java.sun.com/j2ee/dtds/web-jsptaglibrary_1_1.dtd">
<taglib>
  ... // A few standard items -- just copy these
  <tag>
    <name>simplePrime</name>
    <tagclass>coreservlets.tags.SimplePrimeTag</tagclass>
    <info>Outputs a random 50-digit prime.</info>
  </tag>
</taglib>
```

- **Don't memorize XML header and DOCTYPE; modify version from coreservlets.com**

Accessing Custom Tags From JSP Files

- **Import the tag library**
 - Specify location of TLD file
<%@ taglib uri="csajsp-taglib.tld" prefix="csajsp" %>
 - Define a tag prefix (namespace)
<%@ taglib uri="csajsp-taglib.tld" prefix="csajsp" %>
- **Use the tags**
 - <prefix:tagName />
 - Tag name comes from TLD file
 - Prefix comes from taglib directive
 - E.g., <csajsp:simplePrime />

Using simplePrime Tag

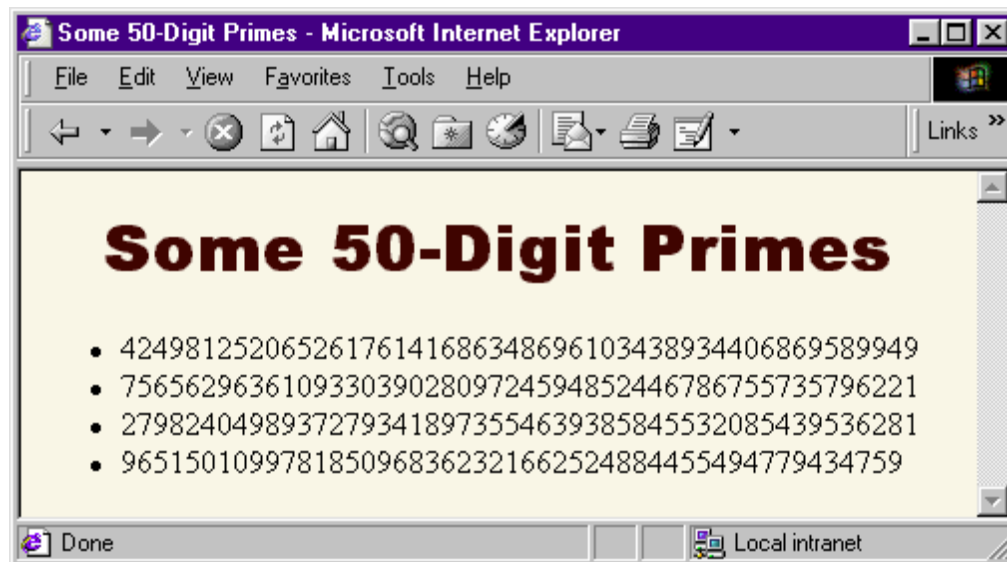
```
...
<BODY>
<H1>Some 50-Digit Primes</H1>

<%@ taglib uri="csajsp-taglib.tld" prefix="csajsp" %>

<UL>
  <LI><csajsp:simplePrime />
  <LI><csajsp:simplePrime />
  <LI><csajsp:simplePrime />
  <LI><csajsp:simplePrime />
</UL>

</BODY>
</HTML>
```

Using simplePrime Tag: Result



Assigning Attributes to Tags

- **Allowing tags like**
 - `<prefix:name`
 `attribute1="value1"`
 `attribute2="value2"`
 `...`
 `attributeN="valueN"`
 `>`
- **Tags are still standalone**
 - No body between start and end tags

Attributes: The Tag Handler Class

- **Use of an attribute called `attribute1` simply results in a call to a method called `setAttribute1`**
 - Attribute value is supplied to method as a String
- **Example**
 - To support

```
<prefix:tagName attribute1="Test" />
```

add the following to tag handler class:

```
public void setAttribute1(String value1) {  
    doSomethingWith(value1);  
}
```


Attributes: PrimeTag.java

```
package coreservlets.tags;

public class PrimeTag extends SimplePrimeTag {
    public void setLength(String length) {
        try {
            // len used by parent class
            len = Integer.parseInt(length);
        } catch (NumberFormatException nfe) {
            len = 50;
        }
    }
}
```

PrimeTag (Continued)

```
public void release() {
    len = 50;
}
}
```

- **Why release?**
 - Servers are permitted to reuse tag instances
 - No synchronization issues, since reuse occurs only after tag processing is totally finished.
 - Few current servers reuse tags, but you should plan ahead
 - Not needed if attribute is required. (Why not?)

Attributes: The Tag Library Descriptor File

- The `tag` element must contain a nested `attribute` element
- The `attribute` element has three further-nested elements
 - **name**, a required element that defines the case-sensitive attribute name. In this case, I use `<name>length</name>`
 - **required**, a required element that stipulates whether the attribute must always be supplied (true) or is optional (false). Here, to indicate that `length` is optional, I use `<required>>false</required>`
 - **rtexprvalue**, an optional attribute that indicates whether the attribute value can be a JSP expression like `<%= expression %>` (true) or whether it must be a fixed string (false). The default value is false.

16

Custom Tags

www.coreservlets.com

TLD File for PrimeTag

```
...
<taglib>
  <tag>
    <name>prime</name>
    <tagclass>coreservlets.tags.PrimeTag</tagclass>
    <info>Outputs a random N-digit prime.</info>
    <attribute>
      <name>length</name>
      <required>>false</required>
    </attribute>
  </tag>
</taglib>
```

17

Custom Tags

www.coreservlets.com

Using prime Tag

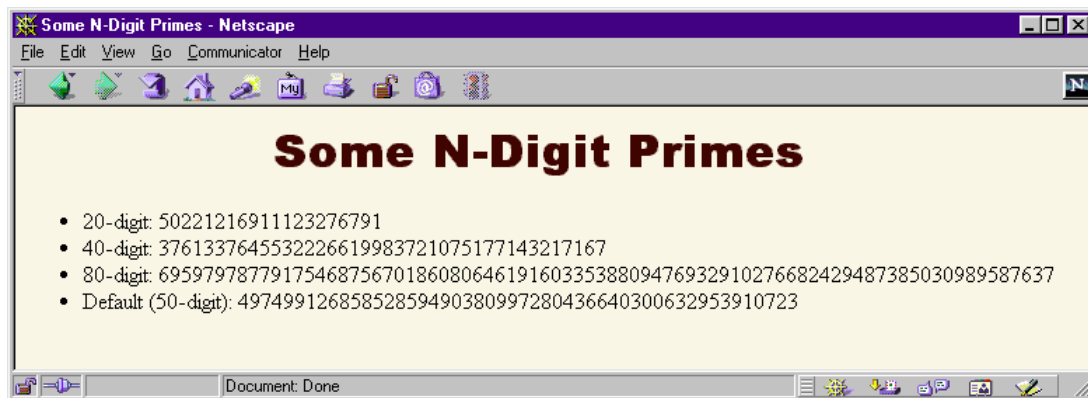
```
...
<BODY>
<H1>Some N-Digit Primes</H1>

<%@ taglib uri="csajsp-taglib.tld" prefix="csajsp" %>

<UL>
  <LI>20-digit: <csajsp:prime length="20" />
  <LI>40-digit: <csajsp:prime length="40" />
  <LI>80-digit: <csajsp:prime length="80" />
  <LI>Default (50-digit): <csajsp:prime />
</UL>

</BODY>
</HTML>
```

Using prime Tag: Result



Including the Tag Body

- **Simplest tags**
 - `<prefix:tagName />`
- **Tags with attributes**
 - `<prefix:tagName att1="val1" ... />`
- **Now**
 - `<prefix:tagName>`
JSP Content
`</prefix:tagName>`
 - `<prefix:tagName att1="val1" ... >`
JSP Content
`</prefix:tagName>`

Using Tag Body: The Tag Handler Class

- **doStartTag**
 - Usually returns `EVAL_BODY_INCLUDE` instead of `SKIP_BODY`
- **doEndTag**
 - Define this method if you want to take action after handling the body
 - Return `EVAL_PAGE`

Using Tag Body: HeadingTag.java

```
package coreservlets.tags;
import javax.servlet.jsp.*;
import javax.servlet.jsp.tagext.*;
import java.io.*;

public class HeadingTag extends TagSupport {
    private String bgColor; // The one required attribute
    private String color = null;
    ...

    public void setBgColor(String bgColor) {
        this.bgColor = bgColor;
    }

    public void setColor(String color) {
        this.color = color;
    }
    ...
}
```

Using Tag Body: HeadingTag.java (Continued)

```
public int doStartTag() {
    try {
        JspWriter out = pageContext.getOut();
        out.print("<TABLE BORDER=" + border +
            " BGCOLOR=\"" + bgColor + "\"" +
            " ALIGN=\"" + align + "\"");
        if (width != null) {
            out.print(" WIDTH=\"" + width + "\"");
        }
        ...
    } catch (IOException ioe) {
        System.out.println("Error in HeadingTag: " + ioe);
    }
    return(EVAL_BODY_INCLUDE); // Include tag body
}
```

Using Tag Body: HeadingTag.java (cont)

```
public int doEndTag() {
    try {
        JspWriter out = pageContext.getOut();
        out.print("</SPAN></TABLE>");
    } catch(IOException ioe) {
        System.out.println("Error in HeadingTag: " + ioe);
    }
    return(EVAL_PAGE); // Continue with rest of JSP page
}
```

Using Tag Body: The Tag Library Descriptor File

- **Only difference is bodycontent element**
 - Should be JSP instead of empty:

```
<tag>
  <name>...</name>
  <tagclass>...</tagclass>
  <bodycontent>JSP</bodycontent>
  <info>...</info>
</tag>
```
- **Purpose is primarily for development environments**
 - Advanced IDEs may have drag-and-drop support for custom tags
 - Defined as optional in JSP specification
- **I will omit in my examples**

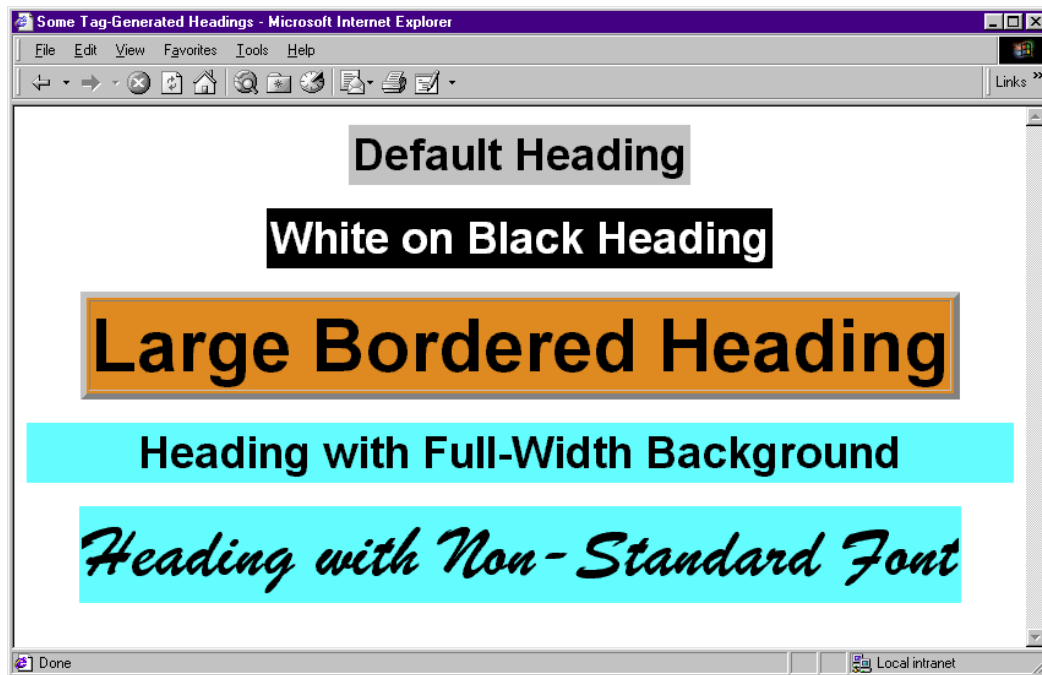
TLD File for HeadingTag

```
...
<taglib>
  <tag>
    <name>heading</name>
    <tagclass>coreservlets.tags.HeadingTag</tagclass>
    <info>Outputs a 1-cell table used as a heading.</info>
    <attribute>
      <name>bgColor</name>
      <required>true</required> <!-- bgColor is required -->
    </attribute>
    <attribute>
      <name>color</name>
      <required>>false</required>
    </attribute>
    ...
  </tag>
</taglib>
```

Using heading Tag

```
<%@ taglib uri="csajsp-taglib.tld" prefix="csajsp" %>
<csajsp:heading bgColor="#C0C0C0">
Default Heading
</csajsp:heading>
<P>
<csajsp:heading bgColor="BLACK" color="WHITE">
White on Black Heading
</csajsp:heading>
<P>
<csajsp:heading bgColor="#EF8429" fontSize="60" border="5">
Large Bordered Heading
</csajsp:heading>
<P>
<csajsp:heading bgColor="CYAN" width="100%">
Heading with Full-Width Background
</csajsp:heading>
...
```

Using heading Tag: Result



28

Custom Tags

www.coreservlets.com

Optional Tag Bodies

- **First examples had no tag bodies**
 - doStartTag returned SKIP_BODY
- **Most recent examples always included tag bodies**
 - doStartTag returned EVAL_BODY_INCLUDE
- **Now: decide whether or not to include tag body at request time**
 - Have doStartTag return either SKIP_BODY or EVAL_BODY_INCLUDE depending on values of request time information

29

Custom Tags

www.coreservlets.com

Optional Tag Bodies: DebugTag.java

```
package coreservlets.tags;
import javax.servlet.jsp.*;
import javax.servlet.jsp.tagext.*;
import java.io.*;
import javax.servlet.*;

public class DebugTag extends TagSupport {
    public int doStartTag() {
        ServletRequest request =
            pageContext.getRequest();
        String debugFlag = request.getParameter("debug");
        if ((debugFlag != null) &&
            (!debugFlag.equalsIgnoreCase("false"))) {
            return(EVAL_BODY_INCLUDE);
        } else {
            return(SKIP_BODY);
        }
    }
}
```

30

Custom Tags

www.coreservlets.com

TLD File for DebugTag

```
...
<taglib>
  <tag>
    <name>debug</name>
    <tagclass>coreservlets.tags.DebugTag</tagclass>
    <info>
      Includes body only if debug param is set.
    </info>
  </tag>
</taglib>
```

31

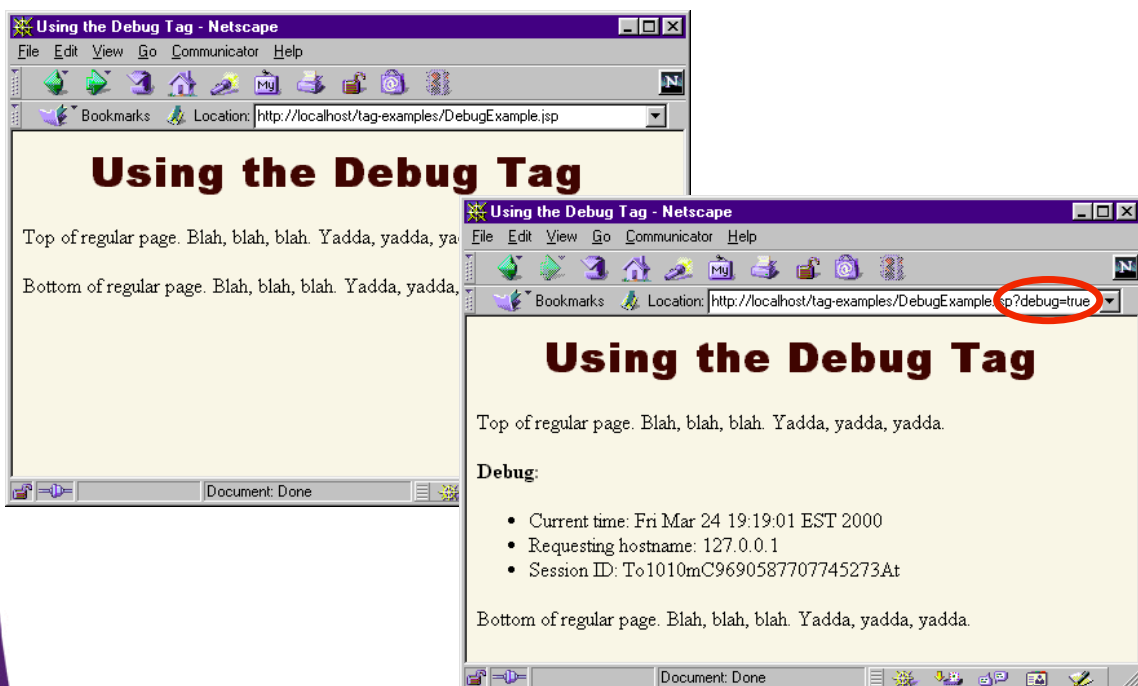
Custom Tags

www.coreservlets.com

Using debug Tag

```
<%@ taglib uri="csajsp-taglib.tld" prefix="csajsp" %>
Top of regular page. Blah, blah, blah.
Yadda, yadda, yadda.
<P>
<csajsp:debug>
<B>Debug:</B>
<UL>
  <LI>Current time: <%= new java.util.Date() %>
  <LI>Requesting hostname: <%= request.getRemoteHost()%>
  <LI>Session ID: <%= session.getId() %>
</UL>
</csajsp:debug>
<P>
Bottom of regular page. Blah, blah, blah.
Yadda, yadda, yadda.
```

Using debug Tag: Results



Manipulating the Tag Body

- **No tag body**
 - `<prefix:tagName />`
 - `<prefix:tagName att1="val1" ... />`
- **Previous uses of tag body**
 - `<prefix:tagName>JSP Content</prefix:tagName>`
 - `<prefix:tagName att1="val1" ... >`
JSP Content
`</prefix:tagName>`
 - Content inserted verbatim
- **Now**
 - Same JSP syntax for using a tag body
 - Java code can read/modify/replace tag body

Manipulating Tag Body: The Tag Handler Class

- **Extend BodyTagSupport**
 - TagSupport does not have enough infrastructure to support reading/manipulating the tag body
- **New method to override: doAfterBody**
 - Return SKIP_BODY when done
- **getBodyContent returns object of type BodyContent that has three key methods**
 - `getEnclosingWriter` -- returns the JspWriter being used by doStartTag and doEndTag
 - `getReader` -- returns a Reader that can read tag's body
 - `getString` -- returns a String containing entire tag body

Manipulating Tag Body: FilterTag.java

```
public class FilterTag extends BodyTagSupport {
    public int doAfterBody() {
        BodyContent body = getBodyContent();
        String filteredBody =
            // The filter method is defined in Section 3.6
            ServletUtilities.filter(body.getString());
        try {
            JspWriter out = body.getEnclosingWriter();
            out.print(filteredBody);
        } catch (IOException ioe) {
            System.out.println("Error in FilterTag: " + ioe);
        }
        // SKIP_BODY means I'm done. If I wanted to evaluate
        // and handle body again, I'd return EVAL_BODY_TAG.
        return(SKIP_BODY);
    }
}
```

Manipulating Tag Body: The Tag Library Descriptor File

- No new capabilities needed

```
<tag>
  <name>filter</name>
  <tagclass>coreservlets.tags.FilterTag</tagclass>
  <info>
    Replaces HTML-specific
    characters in body.
  </info>
</tag>
```

Using the filter Tag

```
...
<%@ taglib uri="csajsp-taglib.tld" prefix="csajsp" %>
<TABLE BORDER=1 ALIGN="CENTER">
<TR CLASS="COLORED"><TH>Example<TH>Result
<TR>
<TD><PRE><csajsp:filter>
<EM>Some emphasized text.</EM><BR>
<STRONG>Some strongly emphasized text.</STRONG><BR>
<CODE>Some code.</CODE><BR>
...
</csajsp:filter></PRE>

<TD>
<EM>Some emphasized text.</EM><BR>
<STRONG>Some strongly emphasized text.</STRONG><BR>
<CODE>Some code.</CODE><BR>
...
</TABLE>
```

38

www.coreservlets.com

Using the filter Tag: Results

HTML Logical Character Styles - Microsoft Internet Explorer

File Edit View Favorites Tools Help

HTML Logical Character Styles

Physical character styles (B, I, etc.) are rendered consistently in different browsers. Logical character styles, however, may be rendered differently by different browsers. Here's how your browser (Mozilla/4.0 (compatible; MSIE 5.0; Windows 98; DigExt)) renders the HTML 4.0 logical character styles:

Example	Result
<code>Some emphasized text.
</code>	<i>Some emphasized text.</i>
<code>Some strongly emphasized text.
</code>	Some strongly emphasized text.
<code><CODE>Some code.</CODE>
</code>	Some code.
<code><SAMP>Some sample text.</SAMP>
</code>	Some sample text.
<code><KBD>Some keyboard text.</KBD>
</code>	Some keyboard text.
<code><DFN>A term being defined.</DFN>
</code>	<i>A term being defined.</i>
<code><VAR>A variable.</VAR>
</code>	<i>A variable.</i>
<code><CITE>A citation or reference.</CITE></code>	<i>A citation or reference.</i>

Done Local intranet

39

Custom Tags

www.coreservlets.com

Advanced Custom Tags

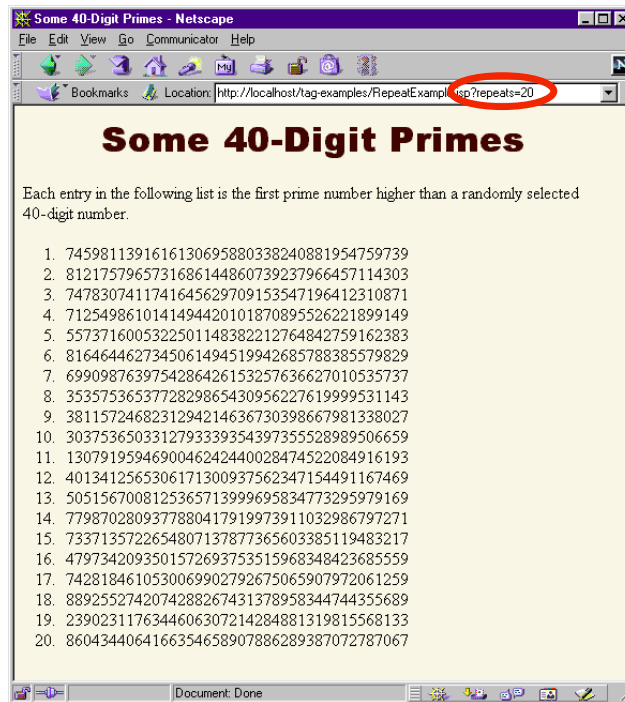
- **Manipulating the body multiple times**
 - Return EVAL_BODY_TAG from doAfterBody until last repetition
 - Use the TLD file to specify that JSP expressions are permitted as attribute values
- **Nested tags**
 - The handler for the inner tag uses findAncestorWithClass to get a reference to the enclosing tag handler
- **Details and examples of both are given in the book**

Manipulating the Body Multiple Times: the repeat Tag

```
<%@ taglib uri="csajsp-taglib.tld" prefix="csajsp" %>

<OL>
<!-- Repeats N times. A null reps value
      means repeat once. -->
<csajsp:repeat
      reps='<%= request.getParameter("repeats") %>''>
  <LI><csajsp:prime length="40" />
</csajsp:repeat>
</OL>
```


Using the repeat Tag: Results



42

Custom Tags

www.coreservlets.com

Nested Tags: the if Tag

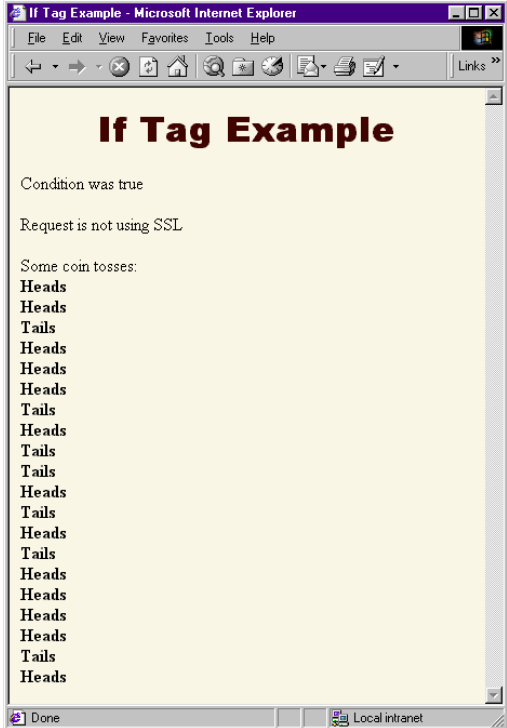
```
<%@ taglib uri="csajsp-taglib.tld" prefix="csajsp" %>
<csajsp:if>
  <csajsp:condition>true</csajsp:condition>
  <csajsp:then>Condition was true</csajsp:then>
  <csajsp:else>Condition was false</csajsp:else>
</csajsp:if>
...
Some coin tosses:<BR>
<csajsp:repeat reps="20">
  <csajsp:if>
    <csajsp:condition>
      <%= Math.random() > 0.5 %>
    </csajsp:condition>
    <csajsp:then><B>Heads</B><BR></csajsp:then>
    <csajsp:else><B>Tails</B><BR></csajsp:else>
  </csajsp:if>
</csajsp:repeat>
```

43

Custom Tags

www.coreservlets.com

Using the if Tag: Results



44 Custom Tags

www.coreservlets.com

Open Source Tag Libraries

<http://jakarta.apache.org/taglibs/>

- **JSP Standard Tag Library (JSTL)**
 - See <http://courses.coreservlets.com/Course-Materials/11-JSTL.pdf>
- **Internationalization (I18N)**
- **Database access**
- **Sending email**
- **JNDI**
- **Date/time**
- **Populating/validating form fields**
- **Perl regular expressions**
- **Extracting data from other Web pages**
- **XSL transformations**
- **Etc.**

Summary

- **For each custom tag, you need**
 - A tag handler class (usually extending TagSupport or BodyTagSupport)
 - An entry in a Tag Library Descriptor file
 - A JSP file that imports it, specifies prefix, and uses it
- **Simple tags**
 - Generate output in doStartTag, return SKIP_BODY
- **Attributes**
 - Define setAttribute*Name* method. Update TLD file
- **Body content**
 - doStartTag returns EVAL_BODY_INCLUDE
 - Add doEndTag method



Questions?

Core Servlets & JSP book: www.coreservlets.com
More Servlets & JSP book: www.moreservlets.com
Servlet and JSP Training Courses: courses.coreservlets.com