

dynamicField: My First "Official" jQuery Plugin

Posted At : January 12, 2010 1:48PM | Posted By : Matt Quackenbush

Related Categories: ColdFusion, jQuery

Anyone that knows me knows that I hate doing UI work. Why? Because I suck at it. Graphics, design, and layout are definitely not among my talents. Which is why I love [jQuery](#) so much. I can write a little bit of JavaScript - very little, in fact - add a plugin or two, and voila! I have a nice looking user interface for my application.

After using a few very handy form-related jQuery plugins and integrating them into my [cfUniForm library](#) , I decided it was time I go ahead and release a plugin of my own.

Awhile back I was building a form to handle one of my domain objects. Then I realized, "Oh, crap, I need to somehow model this one-to-many relationship in my form!" Off to Google and the jQuery plugin site I went. My search yielded... absolutely nothing. Hence dynamicField.js was born.

I will not bother with form code in this post, as there are samples on the [demo pages](#) , but I did want to offer up a little bit of server-side example code for those who happen to be using [CFML](#) .

For our example, let's use "Phone" as our dynamic field. We are going to use 'phone_' as the base name for our phone form fields, to which the plugin will automagically append a number to, representing the order of the provided phone numbers. So, for example, if there are three (3) phone numbers submitted, the plugin will create the following three fields:

```

.. <input name= "phone_1" id= "phone_1" type= "text" />
?. <input name= "phone_2" id= "phone_2" type= "text" />
?. <input name= "phone_3" id= "phone_3" type= "text" />

```

When the form is submitted, the FORM struct in ColdFusion will have three keys (phone_1, phone_2, and phone_3) in it which contain our phone numbers. Since our code does not know how many will be submitted, we need to handle that dynamically. By utilizing a helper method such as buildDynamicFieldList() shown below, we can quickly and easily grab a list of the matching fields that were submitted and process them.

```

.. <cffunction name= "buildDynamicFieldList"
?. hint= "Returns a list of dynamic form fields matching the provided base name"
?. returntype= "void" output= " false " access= "public" >
?. <cfargument name= "baseArgName"
?. hint= "The base argument name"
?. required= "yes" type= "string" />
?. <cfargument name= "args"
?. hint= "The arguments struct"
?. required= "no"
?. type= "struct" default= "#form#" />
?. <cfscript>
?. var rtn = "" ;
?. var doLoop = true ;
?. var i = 0;
?. while ( doLoop ) {
?. i++;
?. if ( structKeyExists(arguments.args,arguments.baseArgName & i) ) {
.. rtn = listAppend(rtn,arguments.args[arguments.baseArgName & i]);
?. } else {

```

```
}. doLoop = false ;  
}. }  
}. }  
}. return rtn;  
}. </cfscript>  
}. </cffunction>
```

Once you have your list, simply loop over them and do whatever it is you need to do. Here is a *very* basic example of grabbing a list and inserting the phone numbers into a database table.

```
.. <cfset thePhones = buildDynamicFieldList( "phone_" ) />  
}. <cfloop list= "#thePhones#" index= "thisPhone" >  
}. <cfquery datasource= "#application.dsn#" >  
}. INSERT INTO  
}. myTable (phone_number)  
}. VALUES  
}. ( <cfqueryparam cfsqltype= "cf_sql_varchar" value= "#thisPhone#" />);  
}. </cfquery>  
}. </cfloop>
```

Documentation & Download

Visit the [demo pages](#) for documentation and to download the dynamicField plugin.