What Else Can You Use?

Don’t get us wrong—we love JsUnit, but you may want to consider some other options. The sharp folks at ThoughtWorks have released a test tool for Web applications called Selenium. Selenium was developed to test an internal ThoughtWorks browser-based application, but they were kind enough to donate the code to the open-source world so the rest of us could take advantage of it. Selenium runs in all the major browsers and can be used on the common operating systems. Like JsUnit, Selenium tests run right in the browser, which makes them excellent for testing system functionality and browser compatibility. For more information, see selenium.thoughtworks.com/index.html.

If you are using Java on your server side, you have a handful of other options. HttpUnit is written in Java and allows you to emulate the browser. With HttpUnit, you can simulate submitting a form, test the pages returned by requests, and check rudimentary JavaScript. Typically, you would combine HttpUnit with JUnit. HtmlUnit is similar to HttpUnit except it chooses to model the pages instead of the requests and responses of HttpUnit. HtmlUnit simulates the browser and works in conjunction with JUnit. One interesting feature of HttpUnit is its ability to emulate specific browsers, thereby allowing you to test any browser-specific logic you may have.

Building upon HttpUnit is the Java-based jWebUnit. Essentially, jWebUnit greatly simplifies navigation rules and provides some ready-made assertions. Once again, you would use this tool with JUnit. Moving beyond JUnit is the acceptance-testing framework FitNesse, written by some folks at Object Mentor. What makes FitNesse unique is that your customers can use it to define what your application should do. You (or your customer!) create tables of inputs and expected outcomes that are then run against your application. Like you would expect, successful tests are green, and failures are red. FitNesse is meant to be a complement to xUnit-based tests—using Object Mentor’s pithy language, xUnit makes sure you built the code right, while FitNesse makes sure you built the right code!

The moral of this short section is that you have a number of options in the testing arena. While we’ve highlighted free tools, proprietary options also exist, of course. At the end of the day, we recommend a blended approach that takes advantage of the various strengths of all these tools. Experiment with what we’ve touched on here, and search the Web for options that we didn’t cover—you’ll soon settle on the right approach for your team.

Summary

If you’re going to do Ajax, you’re going to use JavaScript. While tools and frameworks will certainly ease the pain of development, testing is still an important piece of the puzzle. Many of you have become “test infected” when it comes to your server-side code—now you have no excuse not to extend that approach to your JavaScript. We hope this brief introduction to JsUnit gives you the background you need to start using it on your team. Not only will it make your job as a developer easier, the quality of your code is bound to improve.

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7. What’s in a name? An old wives’ tale says the element Selenium cures mercury poisoning.