Implementing Auto Refresh

We've already shown you how to implement the Auto Refresh pattern in Chapter 4; being able to refresh parts of the page automatically is useful. Take weather, news, or other information streams that change over time—repainting just the parts that change makes a lot more sense than refreshing the entire page for a few minor changes. Of course, this might not be terribly obvious to users who are trained to hit the refresh button, which is why Auto Refresh pattern is so often paired with FAT.

Auto Refresh offers a significant benefit beyond less work for your user: it also reduces the load on your server. Rather than having thousands of users constantly hitting the refresh button, you can set a specific polling period that should spread out the requests more evenly. (Figure 8-1 showed an example of the Auto Refresh pattern.)

Implementing a Partial Page Paint

We've talked about this point quite a bit, but one of the real strengths of Ajax is that you no longer need to repaint the entire page; instead, you can just modify what has changed. Clearly, you can use this in conjunction with the FAT and Auto Refresh patterns. In fact, this can be helpful for Web applications.