

Local Development Setup Pt 3: Virtual Directories in Apache

Posted At : July 23, 2007 10:02 AM | Posted By : Cutter

Related Categories: Apache, ColdFusion 8, Development, ColdFusion

In a previous post we touched upon the *Alias* statement in your *VirtualHost* directives. An *Alias* is a way of defining a virtual directory for your site. This is a pretty common practice in the web world. Your site code may be stored in your site's root (wwwroot) folder, but you may want to store your assets (images, video, stylesheets, etc.) outside your webroot. You might even want to store them on another server altogether. You'll want to access these items as if they're part of your site, like <http://username.companyname.loc/Images/mypic.jpg> or <http://username.companyname.loc/Media/myvideo.flv>.

Defining an *Alias* is easy, when dealing with your local file system. An *Alias* that points to a UNC path, in Windows, is another story. You have to use a UNC path because Apache will not allow you to utilize a mapped drive (it'll crash Apache, at least under 2.0). What took me a while to figure out was that you can not use Apache to control the directory access (as in permissions), you must do this through the user account access. You **can not** use the *Directory* Apache directives for access control. This also means that your Apache instance must run as the user who has access to the remote resource (I also setup CF instance to run as the same user).

I also discovered something else the hard way, Apache Aliases are case-specific. This means that you have to use double Aliases for each virtual directory that you define via an Alias. Remember, this is Windows, so code can go either way. You'll want to plan for either eventuality.

In our last post we defined a 'sites' instance, for the display of a mythical, templated application system. So, imagine that each site of that system would require it's own *VirtualHost* directive. Each one, though, would also be using shared media resources from the same location outside the webroot, like on a media server. For this, you can create another include in your Apache *conf* folder - *site_aliases.conf*, within which you could singularly define your remote virtual directories:

```
Alias /Images/ //remote-serv1/Inetpub/wwwroot/Images/

Alias /images/ //remote-serv1/Inetpub/wwwroot/Images/

Alias /Video/ //remote-serv1/Inetpub/wwwroot/Video/

Alias /video/ //remote-serv1/Inetpub/wwwroot/Video/

Alias /Styles/ //remote-serv1/Inetpub/wwwroot/Styles/
```

```
Alias /styles/ //remote-serv1/Inetpub/wwwroot/Styles/  
  
Alias /SiteSpecific/ //remote-serv1/Inetpub/wwwroot/SiteSpecific/  
  
Alias /sitespecific/ //remote-serv1/Inetpub/wwwroot/SiteSpecific/
```

Once you've defined these remote shared resources, you can then *Include* them in your site definitions in your *VirtualHost* directives:

```
<VirtualHost 127.0.0.1:80>  
  ServerAdmin username@companyname.com  
  # Root folder for thisdomain.com, in the 'sites' instance  
  DocumentRoot "C:\Documents and Settings\username\My Documents\wwwroot\siteroot"  
  ServerName *.thisdomain.loc  
  # SGB [072007]: shared Alias Include  
  Include conf/site_aliases.conf  
  ErrorLog logs/thisdomain.loc-error.log  
  CustomLog logs/thisdomain.loc-access.log common  
  # SGB [072007]: Add include for the 'sites' ColdFusion instance  
  Include conf/cf_sitesinstance.conf  
</VirtualHost>
```

Once you've restarted your Apache instance you will be able to access these resources as part of the domain.