Creating a Virtual Directory in IIS

It's nice to have a web page that has a short URL or domain name. If pages are located deep within folders in the web structure, the URLs can become very long. There may come a time that you would like a special page or section with a shorter URL. Creating a Virtual Directory in IIS may be the answer.

Virtual Directory Creation.

To create a Virtual Directory in IIS, first run the Internet Information Services program located in the Administrative Tools. Highlight the base web page, right click on the website, highlight New, and left click Virtual Directory… as shown in Figure 1.
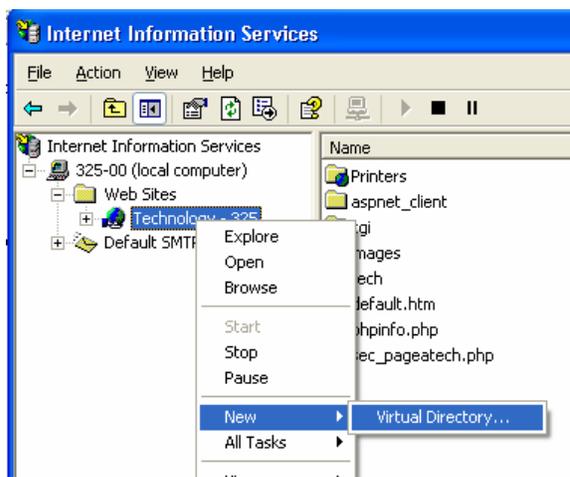
Figure 1. Virtual Directory creation.

The ellipsis mark on the Virtual Directory option always designates that another form or wizard will be shown after selection. The first screen of the Virtual Directory wizard is shown in Figure 2.

Figure 2. Virtual Directory Creation Wizard Welcome Screen.

The next step is choosing a Virtual Directory Alias which will be the name that the user types along with the base URL to visit this directory. Figure 3 shows the Alias text box.

Figure 3. Virtual Directory Alias screen.

For the purpose of this document we will be creating a virtual directory called Testing. Type the directory name in the alias box as shown in Figure 4.
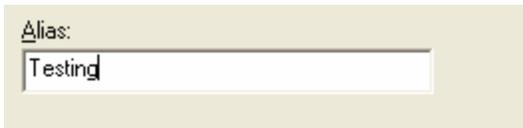
Figure 4. Entering a Virtual Directory Name.

Click Next. The next option screen is the to locate the folder where this virtual directory will be based. Click Browse to bring up the 'Browse for Folder' dialog. Select the folder and click OK. I have chosen a newly created folder off my D: drive called testing. This is shown in Figure 5.

Figure 5. Selecting the folder.

After selecting the folder name, this path and folder will be returned to the Virtual Directory Creation Wizard Alias screen. Click Next. Access Permissions is the next option screen. There are five selectable options on this page. It is shown in Figure 6.

Figure 6. Access Permissions screen.

Generally defaults are fine here. If you need something different check or uncheck the available options and choose Next. If everything goes well, you should see the following type of success screen as shown in Figure 7. Click Finish.

Figure 7. Virtual Directory created successfully.

The wizard will disappear and you should now notice a new item under the basic web page with a unique icon next to your Virtual Directory name. The icon looks similar to an open box with a document coming out of it. An enlargement of this is shown in Figure 8.
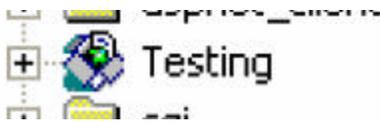
Figure 8. A unique icon for Virtual Directories.

Once the Virtual Directory has been established the properties must be set, including default page and access properties. To view these, right click on the Virtual Directory name and choose properties. After examining the Virtual Directory tab, click the Documents tab. The default document is default.htm. Because this is a fictitious directory and webpage, I do not have content available to copy into this folder, I will create a default.htm document. The default screen is shown in Figure 9.
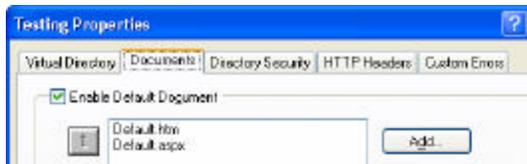
Figure 9. Documents tab default screen.

If I had content with an index page, I would click the Add button and choose my default index page, instead of sticking with the defaults. Because of this I will be creating a default.htm webpage in Notepad. Figure 10 shows the completed html file.
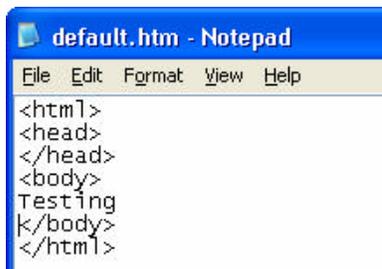
Figure 10. A complete default.htm webpage.

Save your file in the Virtual Directory path root and you may now test your new Virtual Directory by typing the URL in your favorite web browser. An example is shown below in Figure 11.
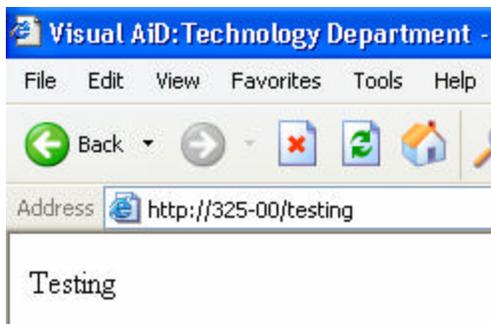
Figure 11. Successful Virtual Directory creation and execution.

Success! Content can now be added to the actual folder located on the server. You are basically done, but I will describe how to delete this folder if the Virtual Directory is no longer needed or was temporary.

Removal of a Virtual Directory.

Removal of a Virtual Directory is basically a two step process. First if Internet Information Services is not running, execute it. Highlight the Virtual Directory and right click on it. Figure 12 shows this first step.
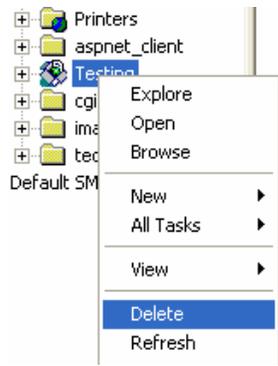
Figure 12. Deleting the Virtual Directory.

Choose Delete. You will be prompted for confirmation. Step 1 complete. Step 2 would involve clearing up the local directory. Save content files for backup if necessary and delete the folder. Removal is complete.

Creating a Virtual Directory is a good way to separate documents that do not belong in the main webpage or information that is going to be displayed only for a short time. As I have shown, creation and deletion is easy and could provide your visitors a quick shortcut to a special section of webpages.

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Date: October 5, 2004