Using Isapi rewrite to serve up non existing templates

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I was discussing some ideas for an application framework this morning with the team, and one of the issues we hit upon was having a common directory for templates, but serving them up as if they were from a different directory.

The idea is to have one instance of a reusable skinnable template, that appears to live on several sites.

IE all the content lives in "webroot/content/templateName.cfm", but is actually served up by many sites, IE "127.0.0.1/site1/template1.cfm", "127.0.0.1/site2/template1.cfm" ... etc

In this way they can be re skinned or adapted as needed, and they aren't database driven. The main stumbling block for the discussion was the need to actually create blank versions of each of the named templates, in each of the sites, as ColdFusion server would error on the request.

I spent twenty minutes trying to work it so that my Application.cfc's onRequest or onRequestStart method would intercept the request before it was actually made, but that just wasn't working. My other idea was to use the onMissingTemplate method, but the server is only running ColdFusion 7, so that was a no go (I figured I could catch the missing template request and just re path it, although I'd have to assess if that was really inefficient due to almost every page request logging as failed).

My eventual solution was Isapi rewrite. I am re writing all the requests to the same template, and just passing in the template variable. In that way I can request pages that don't actually exist, but they appear in the url.

Create an index.cfm template like this:

```
<h1>I am the index page</h1>
          <ul>
<li><a href="page1">Page 1</a></li>
<li><a href="page2">Page 2</a></li>
<li><a href="page3">Page 3</a></li>
<li><a href="page4">Page 4</a></li>
          </ul>

     <cfdump var="#url#">
<!--- write a handler to go get the url var passed in --->
```

For this example I am using the free version of Helicon's Isapi rewrite, you can get it here: [Link to Helicons Isapi re write](#)

In the example below I have altered the first page link to look like it is actually a .cfm template request, just in case you want the url string to have a .fileextension look to it.

```
# Helicon ISAPI_Rewrite configuration file
          # Version 3.1.0.68

          RewriteEngine on
          RewriteBase /mywebroot

       #no physical page testing
RewriteRule page1.cfm(/)? isapitest/index.cfm?p=page1
     RewriteRule page2(/)? /index.cfm?p=page2
     RewriteRule page3(/)? /index.cfm?p=page3
     RewriteRule page4(/)? /index.cfm?p=page4
```

So when you fire it up and test it you just see /page1, /page2 etc, and the pages don't actually exist.

I'm not experienced enough with Isapi rewrite to know if there is a downside to this, but bookmarking in a browser still works correctly, so I can't see an issues at present.