



---

## **Tools: “Form”ulating a Simple Solution to Editing Chores** **- John Porter (VCR)**

As recent workshops and Databits articles have demonstrated, Xforms is a powerful system for creating new web forms. However, sometimes there is the need for simple one-off forms for database tables or the need to enhance existing forms. I recently came across two exceptionally easy-to-use tools that can help.

The first tool is phpMyEdit (<http://www.phpMyEdit.org>) is billed as an "Instant MySQL Table Editor and PHP Code Generator". The "instant" is maybe overstated, but it's not too far off. It comes as two PHP program files (and some associated directories) that can be placed into your web space. The first, phpMyEditSetup.php, when accessed by your web browser, provides a web form for specifying the MySQL table which you'd like to develop an editing interface to. It then generates PHP code for editing that MySQL table and displays the resulting PHP code in your browser, for pasting into a text file (hereafter called the PHP Form) for upload to the web server. The second file phpMyEdit.class.php is called by the new PHP Form to provide the underlying functionality.

The generated PHP Form file contains a wealth of configuration options that allow you to specify what access (View, Add, Change, Copy, Delete) a form user will be granted. Individual fields can also be customized for access control.

The documentation of phpMyEdit is reasonably good, with one real drawback. The options are set by assigning values, or arrays of values, to specific variables. However, the syntax used in the manual won't work as shown because in the PHP Form file the options tend to be nested (often with arrays of arrays), but the examples are just for setting single options. However, with a reasonably small amount of playing around, I was able to figure out that adding `'options'='LAFV'`, to the array of options associated with a field was what it

took to set List, Add, Filter and View capabilities to that field.

The second tool addresses a different problem - upgrading existing TEXTAREA tags in HTML forms with decent editing capabilities. The trick here, is that for my forms I want an editor that will allow users to easily edit text, but I don't want them to be using a large number of formatting commands that might be incompatible with subsequent uses (e.g., conversion to DOCBOOK for use in EML documents).

The "Loki-editor" (<http://code.google.com/p/loki-editor/>) is contained in a JAVASCRIPT file. You simply add two script tags to your web form (one to give the web address of the loki.js file, the other to fire off Loki-editor with the appropriate options), and when the form is viewed, all (or selected - depending on the options) text input boxes are replaced with an attractive and functional (but not overly fancy) text editor. The editor allows text formatting (e.g., **bold** and italics), but not adding tables etc. that might later prove to be a problem. The editor also adds paragraph markers whenever a user double-spaces between lines - a very handy feature!