

MICROBOOK SERIES



Select2 and Laravel

by Ryan Tablada

Microbook: Select2 and Laravel

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To all my friends and family that put up with the lack of sleep that writing and developing 24/7 entails.

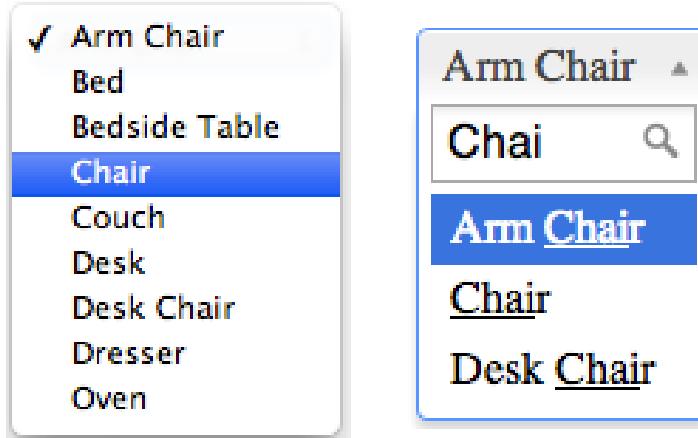
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Introduction

Ah, the simple drop down. It's an essential part of every web application. But, for years, we have been trying to make this simple HTML element better. From styling to features, we have fought with adjusting input styles, adding Javascript events, and more to our select fields. Some of this has been done well, other attempts break simple functionality such as skipping to a result based on the first characters of a name based on user input. This is a huge detriment to user flow as well as an attack on your site's accessibility.

This is where Select2 steps in. Select2 is one of the most popular select box Javascript libraries out there. At its heart, Select2 is a text search based search box that can act as a drop in replacement for your existing select inputs. For instance if you have a select option Chair, then a traditional select element will only scroll down to the first letter you type (things are made worse if your select options are not listed in alphabetical order). However, if you start typing chai Select2 will show you what you've typed, and give you results that include the string chai. So you may get back: Arm Chair, Chair, and Desk Chair.



Results from traditional select box and Select2 with the input `chai`

Not only does Select2, give you the ability to search results within a select drop down, but it also can power multi-select boxes and tag clouds. Select2 also gives the developer full control over styling results, the selected field, and more with traditional markup and CSS. Still this is doesn't cover one of Select2's greatest features: the ability to load in results via AJAX.

In large applications, it can be cumbersome and sometimes even impossible to send all of your selection options in the initial page load. This can slow down the user experience and in larger sites, it may exceed your user's browser's maximum response length if you send all 30,000 of your records as options for a single select box. On top of this, while JavaScript on the client can sort and filter string searches, it is no match for database queries and full-text searches which can be executed by the server. So, Select2 gives a simple API wrapping jQuery.ajax and allows us to grab results from an API request for our drop down.

The Server

For this book, we will be using Laravel to build out all of our server-side responses and to communicate with the database (in our project we will use SQLite). We will cover tips and tricks to using Laravel in a way that makes select boxes and setting up Select2 easier. However, all of our actions on the server side will be fairly simple. Anything that we do in Laravel can be easily accomplished with your MVC framework of choice or even raw code, so do not let the Laravel examples dissuade you.

If you would like to learn more about Laravel, you should be able to get up to speed by reading the documentation on the Laravel [website](http://laravel.com)¹. If you enjoy using Laravel and want to dig in further, I suggest reading Dayle Rees's book [Code Bright](https://leanpub.com/codebright)² and/or grabbing a membership to [Laracasts](https://laracasts.com)³.

¹<http://laravel.com>

²<https://leanpub.com/codebright>

³<https://laracasts.com>

Book Format

For the first section of this book, we will be covering various use cases of using Select2 and ways to clean up your code to make dealing with dropdowns easier.



The Javascript in the first section of our book will be included in a script tag. We are doing this for ease of writing and will use external .js files in our final project.

Our Project

This book will include a sample project using all of the various techniques covered in the main section of this book. Our goal will be to create a video sharing site where users can set a profile with a State drop down, link to Youtube videos, tag their videos, and create playlists of links.



This project is not currently finished but is under work.

Errata and Feedback

If you find any issues with the book (or you have feedback), feel free to post on the [feedback page⁴](#), or [email me⁵](mailto:ryan.tablada+selectbook@gmail.com).

⁴<https://leanpub.com/select2-l4/feedback>

⁵<mailto:ryan.tablada+selectbook@gmail.com>