

SQLThing

Position Statement and Product Overview

History

IBM shipped a product with Client Access for Windows 3.1, actually a Wall-Data product, that allowed the user to type in SQL queries and retrieve the results to a spreadsheet-based view. The data could then be copied to the Windows clipboard and placed into another Windows based application. Many users found this a useful feature. With the advent of Client Access for Windows 95/NT, this feature was dropped. It was missed....

During this time, I was converting some applications from Gupta's SQLBase to AS/400 DB/2. I constantly had to check and generate SQL statements for the applications, debug the statements and optimize them for the DB/2 environment. I needed to check the parameters of stored procedures, verify trigger effects and see the results of statements. I constantly had to hunt for my AS/400 QZDASOINIT job number.

SQLThing grew from my daily needs as a DB/2 Client Server programmer. It's primary objective was to allow for testing, debugging and optimizing SQL statement in a Windows MDI editing environment. In addition, import and export features were added to move data from platform to platform. After that, specialized help routines and wizards were added to assist with arcane syntax. Finally, I added the ability to check dependent data relationships and generate crosstab tables.

Every feature in SQLThing grew out of need.

Crosstabs were created so a user could access tabular data and place it, (easily), into MS Excel. Dependency checks were created so that I could generate data entry auditing rules from production data. Exports were created to support end users with Access databases. Importing was created to assist in warehousing and data conversion.

I find SQLThing to be invaluable. I use it at least 10 times per day, every day.

Current Situation

SQLThing version 2.5.41 is in a BETA release state. See the beta documentation for a list of all implemented features. SQLThing release 3.0 could be brought to market with the proposed feature set in 4 months. See the **Proposed 3.0 Release Features** section for a list items under development.

Product Description and Current Feature Set

SQLThing is a complete SQL testing and debugging system. It features an SQL editor window that allows users to edit and execute queries against any ODBC data source. It is optimized to take advantage of DB/2 400 but could be optimized for other DB/2 environments. It supports execution of single statements, or scripts. SQLThing will prompt for ODBC parameter markers with rudimentary type checking and allow the user to execute stored procedures.

SQLThing allows for the viewing of statement and procedure results in a spreadsheet window. Data can be copied from the spreadsheet viewer into the Windows Clipboard for sharing with other applications.

SQLThing supports ODBC parameters, the BIND construct and AS/400 stored procedures.

SQLThing has statement wizards and a "columns helper" window that assist the user in creation of DML and DDL statements.

SQLThing allows for the creation of crosstab queries into a spreadsheet view. Data can be graphed or copied to the Windows Clipboard object. A 3 dimensional crosstab/OLAP window is also supported with an embedded graphing engine.

SQLThing supports import from any ODBC source and the following ISAM drivers: Access, dBase, FoxPro, CSV, Excel, Tab Delimited and fixed length formats. SQLThing will attempt to use bulk loading if supported by the database driver. Import times vary from 20 to over 500 rows per second.

SQLThing exports data to any ODBC source and the Microsoft Access database format. SQLThing will attempt to use bulk insert if the database driver supports it. Export times vary between 20 to over 500 rows per second.

SQLThing allows the user complete control over the ODBC environment for full performance evaluation. Users can experiment with extended fetch, single fetch, packages, etc. Fetch times of over 2,500 records per second have been realized on client machines.

SQLThing has query wizards that assist the user in creating indexes, foreign keys, tables and primary keys.

SQLThing has dependency analysis features that allow users to generate IF THEN rules in English language or Visual Basic. It reports on frequency distributions, entropy and probability of data given the dependent variables(s). Several graph views of this data are also available.

Proposed 3.0 Release Features

The following are features currently in development and targeted for the next release of SQLThing.

- More data analysis features like decision trees and classification of large sets.
- More wizards for novice users including create view, select, insert, update, delete and alter table.
- SQL scripting/macro language engine.
- More extensive online help, (statement syntax charts, SQL function reference, etc)
- Ability to view the AS/400 job log directly from SQLThing.
- A graphical view of table and index relationships
- Inference/discovery of FK and dependent relationships between tables.
- The ability to traffic in database metadata.
- OLAP drilling engine based on the 3 dimensional crosstab viewer.

Program Requirements

SQLThing requires an ODBC driver, Windows 95 or NT. SQLThing has been tested with the Client Access ODBC driver and the HIT software AS/400 ODBC driver. SQLThing uses OLE ODBC class libraries that can be accessed by other programming environments. Most SQLThing features are implemented as Active X or OLE automation objects that will lend to program extension by end users.

The Market

Client Server Development has a world class tool which could take the AS/400 market by storm. The need for a well-rounded SQL tool is evident, and no vendors have stepped up with a low cost tool that includes the features of SQLThing. SQLThing could initially be aimed at DBA and programming users, but with the addition of a scripting engine and OLAP drilling could be marketed as an end user data extraction and manipulation tool.

It is felt that SQLThing would make a great addition to the feature set of Client Access. Client Access would then have a 32-bit import, export and data manipulation tool that runs under Windows 95 and NT environments.

Client Server Development is currently seeking strategic business partners.

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