

2. Introduction

The topic of this MiniBook is “OpenOffice.org Query functions and MS Access databases”

Who is the intended audience for this MiniBook?

Anyone who uses Microsoft Access and wants to use it in conjunction with OpenOffice.org.

They are the people who can list their information from their MS Access databases using the OpenOffice.org Query Designer¹. They now want to move on to the next level and start manipulating the fields to create new information based on the contents of the fields in their databases.

To satisfy this audience the aim of this MiniBook is to document the Scalar Functions available in OpenOffice.org Query Designer to create expressions using fields from MS Access XP (2002) databases using the ODBC driver.

Whilst other information is discussed, we are limiting the real purpose of this MiniBook to Scalar Functions.

Scalar Functions are those functions which allow us to create an expression using fields from an MS Access database.

This MiniBook is not a tutorial on the use of the Query Designer. It does not cover any other type of data source such as Text, Spreadsheet or MySQL. It only applies to MS Access databases.

The MiniBook should be considered more of a reference on the Scalar Functions available. Plenty of examples are provided to help illustrate how the scalar functions are used.

This MiniBook assumes a reasonable level of background knowledge. It assumes:

- You already know how to establish a data source for an MS Access database using ODBC
- You already know how to create, edit and save a query in OpenOffice.org.
- You already know how to use the results of queries on your documents, spreadsheets and reports.
- We don't display many screen images as we expect you are used to seeing the query screen.

¹ Query Designer is not an official OpenOffice.org term. We have introduced the term as we feel it describes concisely the facility provided in OpenOffice.org.

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- We do cover all the scalar functions that we have uncovered such as string, numeric and date/time functions for use with an MS Access database using the ODBC driver.
- We do cover aggregate functions such as sum and group.
- We do not cover to any real extent using SQL statements directly. This Minibook is largely for users using the friendly graphical interface. We do however mention functions which can only be used directly in SQL statements.
- We assume that you want to use OpenOffice.org Query Designer as your preferred Query Designer because for example, you do not have access to the full MS Access product or you may only have the Microsoft Access runtime.
- We do cover filtering of records because we have found these to differ for MS Access databases than is explained in the online help for OpenOffice.org.

We have endeavoured to limit the scope of this MiniBook to using Query functions with MS Access databases and not cover all the aspects of using OpenOffice.org with MS Access databases.

By limiting the scope of this MiniBook to just OpenOffice.org Query functions with MS Access databases (plus a little bit more), we have been able to more quickly bring to the market this MiniBook which we believe others will find useful.

Everyone's computing environment is different. Different environments may produce different results. A new version of software may fix a problem or break something else. The following is the computer environment that we are used in the writing of this MiniBook:

Client machine:

Windows XP Home Edition 2002

OpenOffice.org 1.1.0

MS Access XP full version

MS Access ODBC driver version 4.00.6019.00

The majority of testing was done on a shared server and accessed using a driver letter.

MS Jet dll (msjet40.dll) version 4.00.4431.4

Shared server

Windows XP Professional Version 2002 acting as a peer to peer shared machine.

Finally we would like to share with you how we compiled this information. Through trial and error and a considerable amount of investigation we documented the use of Scaler Functions in queries.

Using MS Access based data without a document such as this MiniBook only provides the tip of the iceberg in terms of functionality. This document opens up an exciting range of possibilities and hope that you agree with us

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No book is ever perfect and constructive feedback is always welcome.

Should you find errors or omissions, or simply want to send us a comment, please feel free to do so.

We have enjoyed producing this MiniBook and regularly refer to the book ourselves. We hope others find it as useful as we have.