Session V-QUER

Stonefield Query: The Next Generation of Reporting

Doug Hennig

Overview

Are you being inundated with requests from the users of your applications to create new reports or tweak existing ones? Let them do it themselves! Presenting Stonefield Query Developer's Edition. Stonefield Query allows you to create a customized ad-hoc report writer for any application. It can query on any data, including VFP, SQL Server, Oracle, Access, and MySQL. In this session, Doug Hennig shows how Stonefield Query works from an end-user perspective, then goes through creating a customized version for your database.

Introduction

Stonefield Query is a true end-user query and report writing tool. Unlike generic report writers, Stonefield Query can be customized specifically for your own database. With its user-friendly design, Stonefield Query makes report writing a snap for even the most inexperienced user. Elegant and persuasive reports are easy to create with a simple point and click that converts your data into easy-to-read reports.

Stonefield Query Developer's Edition allows you to create a version of Stonefield Query for any database. Simply use the Configuration Utility that comes with Stonefield Query Developer's Edition to create the data dictionary, configuration, and script files for your database, whether it's SQL Server, Oracle, Access, DB2, MySQL, Visual FoxPro, dBase, or any other ODBC or OLE DB-compliant database. Then deploy it to your users and let them start creating the ad-hoc reports they need in just six easy steps.

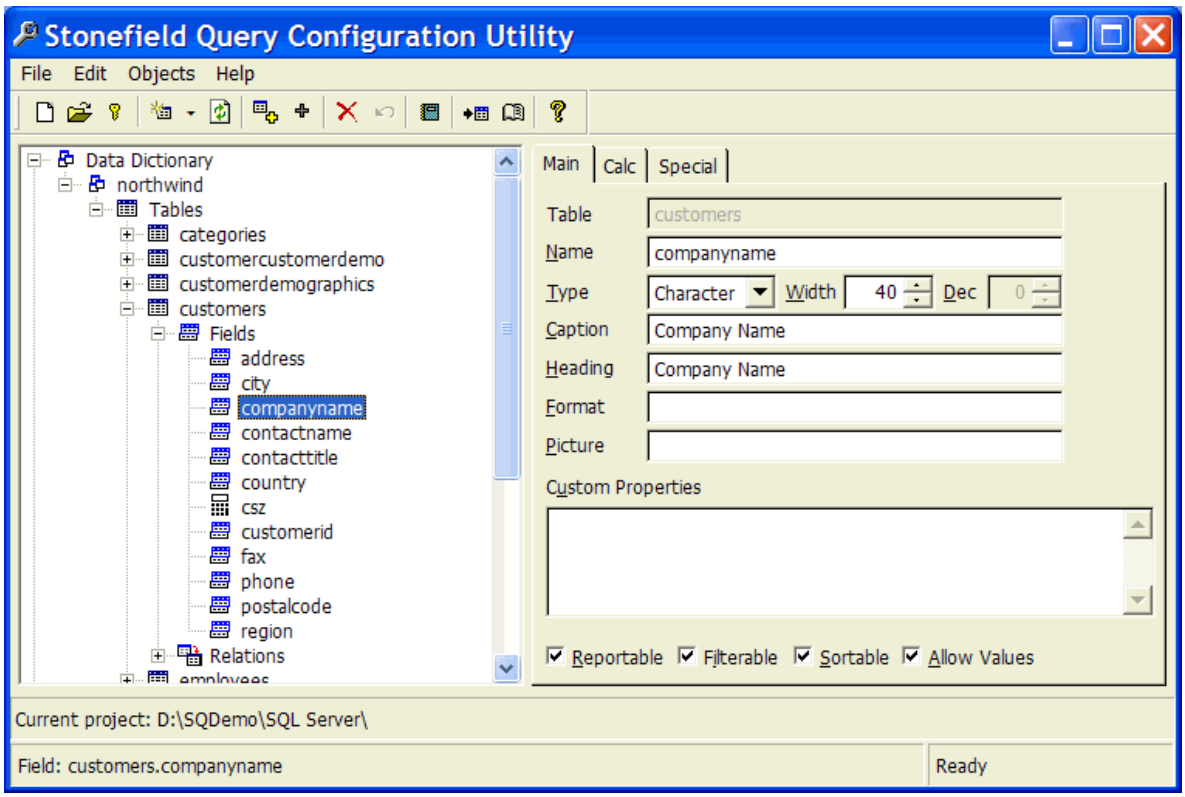
How it Works

There are two parts to Stonefield Query Developer's Edition: the easy-to-use end-user reporting application (Stonefield Query) and the Configuration Utility that a technical person (developer, consultant, IT person, etc.) uses to customize Stonefield Query for the application's database.

You start by using the Configuration Utility to create a new Stonefield Query "project" (the set of data dictionary, configuration, and script files that make Stonefield Query specific for an application). Using the data dictionary "discovery" wizard, you can quickly load the data dictionary with the structures of your application's data. Stonefield Query can access pretty much any kind of database: SQL Server, Oracle, Access, DB2, MySQL, Visual FoxPro, dBase, Pervasive ... you name it. You then customize the data dictionary as necessary (for example, filling in descriptive captions for tables and fields).

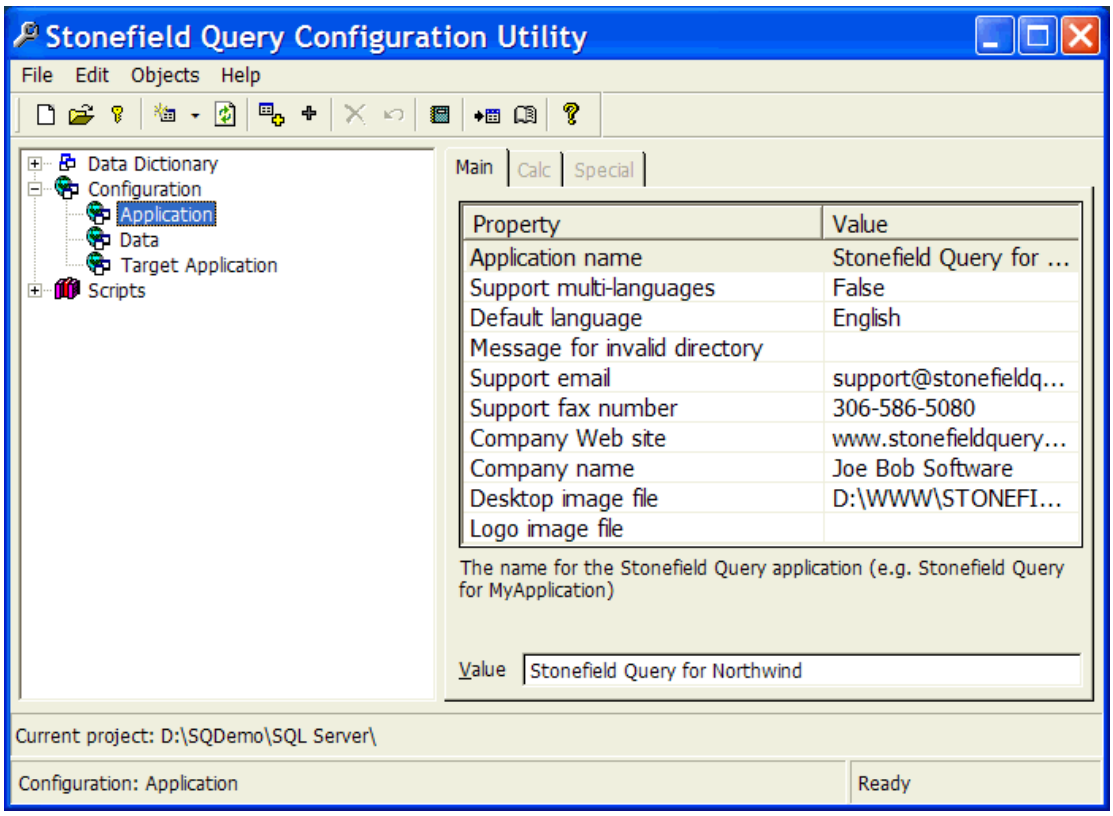
Customizing the Data Dictionary

You can define virtual (also known as calculated) fields. For example, most order entry systems don't store the extended price for a line item because that value can be derived (unit price multiplied by quantity). However, the user may want to show the extended price on a report or even do a query on all items with an extended price greater than $50.00. You simply add a field to the data dictionary and specify that the calculation expression is unit price multiplied by quantity. As far as the user knows, it's just another field they can report on. You can even define "enumerated" fields, where the range of values for the field is a predefined list, or that a field from a related table should be display when the user selects the linking (foreign key) field.



Make it Your Own

You can "private label" your Stonefield Query project so it's more closely associated with your company. You can change the name of the application to anything you wish (such as "The Northwind Company Report Writer"), specify what logo appears, what email, Web site, and fax number to use for support, etc. You can even create a customized help file so the documentation is consistent with the application.



Flexible Data Access

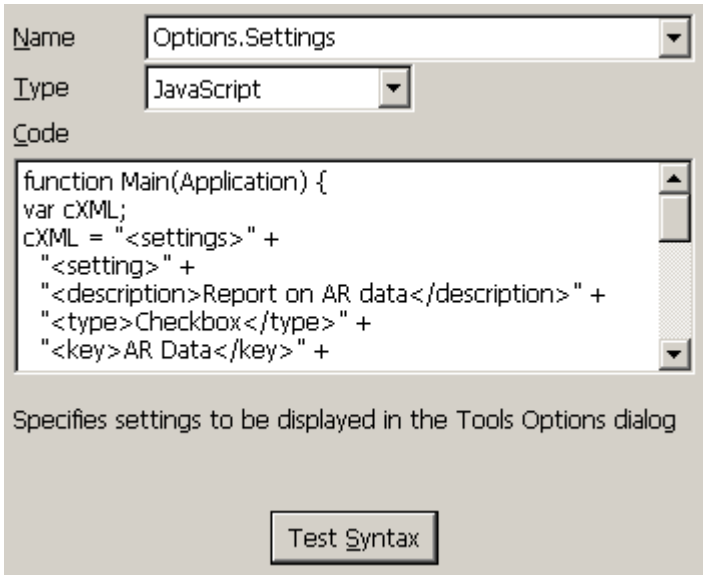
Stonefield Query supports accessing data any way you need it to. ODBC, OLE DB, Web Service, SQLXML, and native Visual FoxPro access are built in. However, you can also script your own data access to allow querying against non-traditional data stores such as APIs or even flat text files.

If you allow the user to query on multiple data sets (such as Test and Production data sets or Company A, Company B, and Company C data sets), different data sets can be stored in different database engines if necessary. For example, you may have a Test data set stored in Access but the Production data set is stored in SQL Server.

Stonefield Query supports joins across different data sources. For example, an accounting system's data might be stored in SQL Server but you want to link accounting data with customer relationship data stored in Oracle. All you have to do is define how the SQL Server and Oracle tables are related, and Stonefield Query will take care of the rest! The user doesn't have to know the data is stored in different systems; they just know they can select fields from the Accounts Receivable Customer table and the Contact History table and include information from both in the same report.

Scripting

Stonefield Query is highly scriptable. You can script how data should be accessed for a specific database or even a certain table. For example, you may want all access to SQL Server to be through stored procedures rather than SQL SELECT statements. You can also script Stonefield Query events, such as customizing its behavior at startup or shutdown, when the Options dialog is selected, and so forth. You can select which language to write scripts in—Visual FoxPro, VBScript, or JavaScript—depending on which you feel more comfortable using.



Licensing

Stonefield Query is licensed on a per-user basis. Each user who wants to create and/or run reports in Stonefield Query requires a license. Licensing is based on named users; you can only define as many user names as there are licenses.

There are three types of licenses. The Developer's Edition includes the Configuration Utility and is intended for someone who plans to build a customized version of Stonefield Query. The End-User Professional license has a complete set of reporting features, while the End-User Runtime license is a less expensive license that allows users to run reports but not create them.

Free Trial Version

A free trial version of Stonefield Query is available for download at http://www.stonefieldquery.com. This version is a time-limited, full-working copy of Stonefield Query, so you can use it to create a demo version of Stonefield Query for your application's database. Show your clients how easily they can create their own reports in just minutes, and you'll be a hero!

Contact Us

For more information about Stonefield Query, please visit our Web site at http://www.stonefieldquery.com or email sales@stonefieldquery.com for sales and licensing questions or support@stonefieldquery.com for technical questions.

Biography

Doug Hennig is a partner with Stonefield Systems Group Inc. and Stonefield Software Inc. He is the author of the award-winning Stonefield Database Toolkit (SDT), the award-winning Stonefield Query, and the MemberData Editor, Anchor Editor, and CursorAdapter and DataEnvironment builders that come with Microsoft Visual FoxPro. Doug is co-author of the "What's New in Visual FoxPro" series (the latest being "What's New in Nine") and "The Hacker's Guide to Visual FoxPro 7.0." He was the technical editor of "The Hacker's Guide to Visual FoxPro 6.0" and "The Fundamentals." All of these books are from Hentzenwerke Publishing (http://www.hentzenwerke.com). Doug formerly wrote the monthly "Reusable Tools" column in FoxTalk. He has spoken at every Microsoft FoxPro Developers Conference (DevCon) since 1997 and at user groups and developer conferences all over the world. He is one of the administrators for the VFPX VFP community extensions Web site (http://www.codeplex.com/Wiki/View/aspx?ProjectName=VFPX). He has been a Microsoft Most Valuable Professional (MVP) since 1996.

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