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DAL: DESCRIBE Statement and Accessing Data Dictionary (8/94)

Revised: 8/31/94
Security: Everyone

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Article Created: 21 August 1992
Article Reviewed/Updated: 31 August 1994

TOPIC ---

Is it possible to access the data dictionary information in a DB2 database from
DAL? We can query against our tables using third-party products like DataPrism
and ClearAccess. The problem is that we may not know what a "sale" means in
different tables.

For example, in one table a sale field might mean that the product had an
invoice filled out, but not shipped yet. In another table, sale might mean the
product was shipped, but money wasn't collected yet. Another table might define
sale as product shipped and money collected.

When we query against the database, we have to access the data dictionary to
determine the meaning of the fields. Without the ability to access the data
dictionary, users can query and get information that may not be what they were
expecting, based on the definition.

DISCUSSION ---

DAL provides information about the structure and organization of entities that
it manipulates through a special data-manipulation statement. Using the
DESCRIBE statement, the client application can determine the names and data
types of the entities stored in the database and any implicit relationships
among them. The client application can have DAL describe:

• The supported DBMS brands on a particular host system
• Available databases for a particular brand
• Currently open DBMS brands and databases
• The tables in a database
• The columns in a table
• The linksets in a database

The DESCRIBE statement generates a rowset containing the requested definition in

the same way as the SELECT statement creates rowsets.

The DESCRIBE COLUMNS statement is probably what you need, because it returns, among other fields, the column title and column remarks. For more information regarding the DESCRIBE statements, please refer to the DAL Programmer's Reference, available from APDA, part number M0877LL/B.

With a license agreement between Apple Computer and ITI (Independence Technologies, Inc.), ITI will market DAL products and provide all support to DAL customers. To locate ITI's address and phone number, use ITI as a search string.

Article Change History:
31 Aug 1994 - Added ITI information.

Support Information Services

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Tech Info Library Article Number:10624