Craig S. Mullins
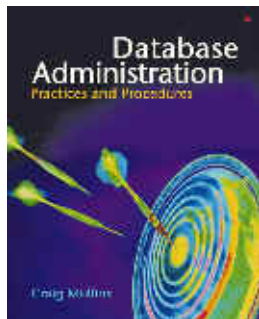
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The DBA Corner
by Craig S. Mullins

Recommended Additions to the DBA Bookshelf

I am a voracious reader, especially of technology books. With that in mind, we will use this month's installment of the DBA Corner to review several new and interesting database books.

Database In Depth

The first book I want to discuss is C. J. Date's new tome, Database In Depth: Relational Theory for Practitioners (O'Reilly: ISBN 0-596-10012-4). If you work in the field of database management then it is likely that you are familiar with the

writings of Mr. Date. He was a colleague of Ted Codd's (the inventor of the relational model) and has been the top proponent and influencer of advances in relational database technology for years now.

This new book represents the latest thinking on the fundamental principles of relational database systems. The book is concise, and to the point. If Date's other voluminous books intimidate you, this book's 208 pages should be easier to handle.

In Date's own words, "Database In Depth" explains the basic principles of relational theory in a way not tainted by the quirks and peculiarities of existing products. It is important that practitioners possess such fundamental knowledge in order to build practical database implementations.

An additional benefit of the book is the way that Date helps to dispel many of the misconceptions held by folks about the relational model.

Don't be wary of theory – this book should be required reading for all DBAs.

Inescapable Data

The next book on the DBA bookshelf is [Inescapable Data](#) by Chris Stakutis and John Webster (IBM Press: ISBN 0-13-185215-9). The basic premise of this book is that data is ubiquitous. In other words, it surrounds us and the manner in which it is acquired, used, and managed has broad implications for the future.

The authors paint a very thought-provoking picture of the power of data and information to cause sweeping change in society. Not just data itself, but the technological capacity to handle the data in terms of communications, networking, and automation will make data (more accurately, information) an inescapable

component shaping our everyday existence. Particular compelling, is the authors' coverage in Chapter 3 of the fundamental components shaping inescapable data (including RFID, pervasive computing, wireless technology, etc.).

The book offers many examples showing how "data everywhere" will impact us. It touches upon a broad spectrum of topics to be impacted including work life, home life, medicine, government, sports, and more. And the predictions offered by the authors based on their research are interesting indeed.

SQL Programming Style

Our final book is the latest offering by the grand master of SQL, Joe Celko. The book, SQL Programming Style (Morgan Kaufmann: ISBN 0-12-088797-5), offers guidance on how to write standard SQL . Celko was a member of the ANSI SQL standards committee for ten years, and is highly qualified to write such a text.

Celko has written other books on SQL, so what makes this one different? Well, the stated purposed of this book is three-fold: to help programmers write standard SQL without a dialect, to provide shop standards for internal SQL coding, and to provide programmers with mental tools to approach new problems. The book succeeds on all counts.

Of particular help is Chapter 10, in which the author extols the virtues of thinking in SQL. One of the biggest problems encountered by many SQL programmers is trying to make the set-at-a-time operations of SQL mimic their previous record-at-a-time programming style.

Summary

New database books are published all the time. Some are good, some are not. These three books offer refreshing perspectives and novel coverage of database management topics that should be of interest to all DBAs. Consider taking a look at them for yourself.

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