
Subject: Re: Question about using database like access or dbase?

Posted by [Randall Skelton](#) on Wed, 01 Aug 2001 17:11:38 GMT

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Karsten,

You mention that you want to read the 'database files' which seems a little puzzling. While databases do at some level have 'files' you typically don't read them directly. Rather, you use an interface (like the Open DataBase Connectivity (ODBC) protocol) to query the database which is either running locally on your computer or on some network server. Assuming you had an ODBC compliant database, you could then use the `$$IDL DataMiner$$` and use it to access your data directly from IDL.

http://www.rsinc.com/idl/idl_dataminer.cfm

With all that being said, I don't think that either Excel or Access are capable of running as an ODBC server. Nevertheless, you have a few different options:

Option 1: You could use Access or Excel to export your data to an ODBC server (like the Microsoft SQL server, Postgresql, MySQL or Oracle) and then you could use the `$$IDL DataMiner$$`. This is relatively quick and painless, but may prove expensive if you don't own the SQL database and/or the `$$IDL DataMiner$$`.

Option 2: Both Microsoft Excel and Access support database communication using the Dynamic Data Exchange (DDE) protocol (a protocol for communication between Windows programs). You could use the Microsoft Developer studio to write a dynamically linked module (DLM) in C that communicates with Access/Excel via DDE. The simplest approach is to simply write a set of 'wrapping' or 'abstraction' functions that give you the low-level DDE programming capability in IDL. Microsoft has also been championing OLE data model for universal data access as THE way for application developers to access their data. Thus, instead of using the DDE interface, you could equivalently use the OLE interface. At a minimum, this type of approach will cost you \$30 USD for Ronn Kling's book on calling C from IDL (<http://www.kilvarock.com>) and 1-2 months in time, depending on your programming and database skills. (<http://www.microsoft.com/data/oledb/default.htm>)

Option 3: You could, as you suggest, try creating, reading, and writing the internal, proprietary Microsoft formats for Access and Excel. Microsoft doesn't release the details of their data formats so this would be extremely difficult. This costs you nothing up front, but I suspect it would take a significant amount of time to crack the Microsoft binary data format.

Option 4: Write some a VisualBasic or Excel macro that exports your data to an IDL readable format (csv ascii?) with a single mouse click and use the standard IDL read routines to load it as necessary.

Cheers,
Randall

On Wed, 1 Aug 2001, Karsten Schmidt wrote:

> Hello,
>
> i'm searching for information how to use database files like access or
> dbase under idl? I'm interesting on creating, reading and writing
> database file and also to use index-files. Is there anybody who can
> help me?
>
> Thank you for answer
>
> karsten schmidt
>
>

Subject: Re: Question about using database like access or dbase?
Posted by [Dick Jackson](#) on Thu, 02 Aug 2001 05:34:52 GMT
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Hi,

"Randall Skelton" <rhskelto@atm.ox.ac.uk> wrote:

> Assuming you had an ODBC compliant database, you could then use
> the \$\$IDL DataMiner\$\$ and use it to access your data directly from IDL.
>
> http://www.rsinc.com/idl/idl_dataminer.cfm
>
> With all that being said, I don't think that either Excel or Access are
> capable of running as an ODBC server.

Randall wrote a lot of good advice, but I'll just correct this point. It's been a while since I actually used it, but certainly Excel and Access *are* able to act as an ODBC servers. They work quite well with DataMiner, if this is the way you want to go. You just set up the ODBC Data Sources to point to the .xls or .mdb file, and DataMiner works as advertised.

I found Chapter 2 in the datamine.pdf to be a very helpful tutorial.

Cheers,

--

-Dick

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