

# Smart Access

Solutions for Microsoft® Access® Developers

## Building an Access Add-In with .NET

Russell Sinclair



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In Russell Sinclair's article in the March 2005 issue of *Smart Access*, he showed you how to create builder add-ins for Access. This month, he goes further and shows you the power of add-ins created outside of Access.

In the past few months, my time has been divided between an Access ADP product and an ASP.NET application developed in Visual Studio .NET. These environments provide very different tools for developing and working with SQL Server databases. In addition to these development tools, I often switch out to SQL Query Analyzer when I have some SQL that I feel I really need to code by hand. Constantly switching development environments can really show you where each product shines and where improvements can be made. In fact, no one of these products provides everything I need in order to complete any development task.

Fortunately, Microsoft provides the ability to extend many of its applications with your own functionality. In my previous article ("Constructing a SQL Parameter Add-In" in the March 2005 issue), I discussed creating a standard Access add-in. That add-in was simply an Access database with specialized code and some configuration tables. There's another type of add-in that you can create for Access and many other Microsoft products: a fully compiled add-in.

Compiled add-ins are specially coded DLLs that allow Access (among other products) to call the code in your DLL. Products that can be extended by add-ins include all Microsoft Office programs, Visual Studio .NET, and the VBA development environment itself. There may be other host applications available, depending on whether or not they implement the standard Microsoft Office add-in APIs.

Compiled add-ins have several benefits over standard Access add-ins. First of all, they can be shared among multiple applications. You can create a

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