

Smart Access

Solutions for Microsoft® Access™ Developers

Breadcrumbs, or How I Learned to Love the Switchboard

Andrew Wrigley



Andrew Wrigley shows how to design a “Breadcrumb” control that will enhance your users’ experience whenever they need to navigate a hierarchical structure (and bitterly regrets his lack of documentation...).

FOR those of you who think that you don’t know what a Breadcrumb control is: You already do. Breadcrumbs are all over the Internet. **Figure 1** (on page 4) shows a typical example.

Familiar, isn’t it? Breadcrumbs show you where you are in navigating through a series of Web pages organized into a hierarchical structure. Breadcrumbs show how you got to the current page and how to retrace your steps. The bonus associated with this UI feature is that Breadcrumbs are also familiar to your users. Access has no such inbuilt control, but I’ll show you how to implement one—and do it with an architecture that makes it easy for you to reuse Breadcrumbs in just about any navigational situation (whenever your users need to browse a hierarchical data structure).

The intricacies (and hacks!) in the code prevent a complete discussion, so I’ll concentrate on the design issues and thinking that allow the control to be easily reused. The code itself was written when I was still a novice and could be easily optimized, but as a proof of concept it works exceptionally well. The sample download for this article shows how to use the Breadcrumb to revamp the dreary old Switchboard form into a user-friendly gem. Feel free to incorporate the code from the download into your applications.

The architecture

To promote code reuse, I packaged the core functionality into layers (modules,

Continues on page 4

September 2005

Volume 13, Number 9

- 1 Breadcrumbs, or How I Learned to Love the Switchboard**
Andrew Wrigley
- 2 Editorial: Eyewitness Testimony**
Peter Vogel
- 8 Logging Access Startup Details and Version Control**
Garry Robinson
- 13 Displaying Hierarchical Data in a TreeView**
Glenn Lloyd
- 16 Access Answers: More Favorites**
Doug Steele
- 20 September 2005 Downloads**

