

Smart Access

Solutions for Microsoft® Access™ Developers

Data Modeling for the Access Newcomer, Part 1

Glenn Lloyd



Thorough, thoughtful, and accurate data modeling should be the starting point of detailed database design. But a surprising number of developers have little or no understanding of data modeling and shy away from what sounds like a non-profitable and time-consuming task. Glenn Lloyd looks at the typical design pitfalls that trap Access beginners and shows the basic techniques that ensure success.

MY call came from a community service organization that provides specialized services both locally and remotely across the vast expanse of Northern Ontario. They were unable to solve a problem with their Access database—a problem that was both embarrassing and damaging to their relations with their membership (and to the community at large). Several months earlier, one of their key members had died. Now, despite their best efforts, his widow and the other organizations with which he had been associated were still receiving their periodic mailings addressed to him. As I listened to the story, I realized that the problem indicated a faulty database design. The staff that had developed the database had no training or understanding of relational design principles and rationale. What they had known was how they wanted to see their data laid out in reports and had designed a data structure that matched those report layouts.

What made the problem embarrassing was *who* had died. The organization's membership is derived from local community organizations located in various centers across Northern Ontario. Board members can represent one or more of these community organizations. The member whose death triggered the problem was a prominent member of one of the communities and either officially or unofficially represented a number of the constituent organizations. This was a very visible mistake.







The original sin

One of the goals of the original database was to have targeted mailing lists so

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