

Dull As Databases? Hardly

Databases have perennially suffered from a lack of perceived glamour, often written off as dull or old fashioned. Indeed, the recent surge in the use of apps, cloud computing and virtualisation may appear, at least superficially, to eliminate the need for databases, but in truth, the real-time environment in which we work and socialise are more than ever before powered by the database and will continue to be long into the future.

The fundamental use of a database is to organise information and allow access to it in different ways, at different times, by different people. Every app, website and piece of distributed data is, in fact, a form of database, providing a service and archiving data.

The database has come a long way since its original incarnation. Long gone are the card index style flat file systems of old; these days databases can be vast, flexible and completely adaptable to the needs of the user. Developments in the look, feel and use of the database have advanced dramatically with new formats and improvements being made daily. From one-man bands to SMEs to the largest private and public organisations, databases underpin daily operations, albeit usually invisibly.

Databases are now used by consumers as well as businesses, and are completely portable and adaptable to personal preference. The real evidence of this adaptability is the fact that most consumers don't even realise they are using a database. What's more, this will only continue, so long as database developers stay flexible and abreast of new technologies and trends. Databases for the iPhone and iPad being perfect examples of this – a database, first launched 20 years ago, running on the very latest technology and being given a very enthusiastic reception in the market. Dull? Old fashioned? Neither.

Indeed, the fundamental running of the global economy, worldwide social networks and information sharing are all made possible by the use of databases and any real change in this structure is inconceivable.

*Tony Speakman
Regional manager Northern Europe, FileMaker Ltd.
September 20th, 2010.*