DatabaseBlocks: Wizards for Rapid CF App. Dev.

Charles Arehart
Systemanage
carehart@systemanage.com

Fig Leaf ColdFusion User Group, December 1999

Last Edited: 8/9/2001 11:40:36 PM

Topics

- Common App Dev Needs
- Allaire Studio Wizards Available
- DatabaseBlocks
  - what it is, what it does, how to use it
  - extra features, coming features
  - support and assistance

Common App Dev Needs

- Most every app needs...
  - interfaces for viewing/editing records
  - means to list records
- Even if just for admin interfaces
  - public interfaces need more customization
- Challenge is building them from scratch every time
- Demonstration: Fast Track Solution

Allaire Studio Wizards Available

- Studio has wizards for:
  - drill down
  - record viewing
  - data entry
  - and more
- Demonstration

Allaire Studio Wizards (cont.)

- What they're missing
  - bugs in certain instances
  - support for related tables in edits
  - more customizable interface elements
  - next N interfaces
  - sort features
  - drill up as well as drill down
  - to name a few

DatabaseBlocks: What It Is

- Supplement to those Allaire Wizards
- Same basic interface for creating code
  - dialogue to describe application to be built for a table or related tables
  - CFML code is generated as a result
- Much improved results
  - better interface, more features
- Costs less than an hour of an average developer's time!
  - giving it a tremendous cost/benefit ratio

DatabaseBlocks:
What It Does

- Builds typically needed add/view/edit interfaces, in a drill-down style display
- Adds many features missing from Studio wizards
  - some you may not have thought of yourself

- Demonstration: Running the tutorial app

DatabaseBlocks:
How To Use It

- Uses same design approach as Studio Wizards
- Available under File>New as DatabaseBlocks tab
  - added to Studio interface when installed

- Demonstration: building the tutorial app

DatabaseBlocks:
Extra Features

- Themes
- Hidden field validation (float, int, date)
- Queries are cached in next-n interface
- Stored procedures can be used
- Supports any database defined to CF (Oracle, SQL Server, DB2, Access, etc,)
- Works in Studio 4.0 as well as 4.5

DatabaseBlocks: Coming Features

- Cascading Style Sheets
- Support for custom Javascript validation
- 1.2 is next release
- 2.0 coming after that with lots more
- They're very open to new feature suggestions (may be added in days)

DatabaseBlocks: Recommendations

- Read the docs first!
  - arranged as demos and tutorials
  - will prevent many common problems
  - can't just "run it". Trust them (and me!)
- Should be able to work with it in a couple hours
  - will get even better with a few more hours with greater understanding

DatabaseBlocks: Support and Assistance

- Documentation:
  - built-in help in Studio and in PDF
    - install, demonstration, tutorial, how it works, how do I?, troubleshooting, large demo database
- Complete App Provided and Documented
  - the tutorial application we saw comes pre-built
  - demonstration doc leads through review of this
  - tutorial doc leads through creating this

DatabaseBlocks:
Support and Assistance (cont.)

- Support at Web Site:
  - troubleshooting wizard, demos, knowledge base, faqs
  - track open incidents
  - fee-based premium support available

Conclusion

Key Features

- Useful interface features
  - add/view/edit/delete, search, sort, list, goto
  - use of icons for add/view/edit/delete
  - control over colors, themes
  - control over add/edit/delete options
  - support for alternate keys
  - crystal reports integration
  - incorporates javascript, redirection

Key Features (cont.)

- Support for related tables
  - drill up/drill down
  - "filtered select" value lookup feature
  - data intergrity contraint errors displayed
- Performance Features
  - caches records for "next n" interfaces
  - uses custom tag architecture
  - works with very large databases

Key Features (cont.)

- Wizard driven code generator
  - source code is exposed
  - royalty free
- Result for a table is a single template for search/drill-down/view/edit
  - Allaire's Studio Wizards create several different files, that are not even integrated with each other
- Great Support
  - docs and web site

Best Feature: It's Cheap!

- All this and more for just …
  - $79
  - includes minor updates and discounts on upgrades
  - licensed to developer not machine
    - can be used on all of developer's machines

Where to Learn More

- *WWW.COMMERCEBLOCKS.COM*
  - see "databaseblocks" link
  - take the online tour for more detailed walkthrough
  - no trial version available, unfortunately
    - but hey, what's $79!
    - some have felt the tutorial app (with company, employee, and sales order mgt) itself is worth it