

DB2 Web Query Product Preview: Frequently Asked Questions

1. What was announced?

On April 10, 2007, IBM announced plans to deliver a Web-based query and report writing product that offers enhanced capabilities over the IBM Query for iSeries (also commonly known as Query/400) product.

The new product, IBM™ DB2 Web Query for System i, will include the Query for iSeries technology to assist customers in their transition to DB2 Web Query, while offering a more modernized, Java™ based solution for a more robust, extensible, and productive reporting solution. DB2 Web Query will provide reporting and graphing assistants and a WYSIWYG report "painter." Customers will be able to modernize existing Query for iSeries reports while providing a foundation for building more complex business intelligence applications such as OLAP, data mining, dash boarding, or data warehouse implementations.

2. What are some of the capabilities of this new product?

DB2 Web Query will provide capabilities to query or build reports against data stored in DB2 for i5/OS databases through the latest browser based user interface technologies. Build new reports with ease through Power Painter or Report and Graph Assistant components. Simplify the management of reports by leveraging parameterized reporting. Deliver data to end users in many different formats, including spreadsheets, PDF, HTML or through the Java based thin client interface browser support.

DB2 Web Query will offer features to import Query/400 definitions and enhance their look and functionality with Power Painter or Graph Assistant. Add OLAP-like slicing and dicing to the reports, or view reports in disconnected mode for the end user on the go. Interface to all data in i5/OS through either DB2 or Open Query File native adapters that automatically identify the files to be accessed and import the metadata into DB2 Web Query.

3. We are happy with our Query/400 reports. Is there really any reason to move to this new product?

There are several reasons you might want to consider using this new technology:

- Query/400 does not leverage the latest query optimization technology in DB2 for i5/OS (called SQE). DB2 Web Query will offer the ability for the queries to use the query optimization features that have been put into DB2 for i5/OS over the last few years. DB2 Web Query will leverage the improved performance, automation, and monitoring capabilities of SQE.
- The parameterized reporting feature of this new product could substantially reduce the number of reports that have to be maintained individually, reducing the backlog of report writing requests.
- Today's requests for information demand that the data be delivered in many different formats and on a request, scheduled, or alert basis. Information must be provided via easy to interpret graphical representations, dashboards, scorecards, or dumped into spreadsheets. Query/400 is very limited in its ability to meet these demands.

4. Do I have to convert or stop using Query/400?

No. Current plans are to include the Query/400 technology with the new web based product.

5. How do I migrate Query/400 reports into DB2 Web Query?

Migration of queries is accomplished via an automated facility that allows you to select the query or queries you wish to translate and produces the new Web Query report ready to run or to be brought into one of the new end user query components for customization.

Details on how to web enable Query/400 reports will be available at a later date through IBM Redbooks®. Please check <http://www.ibm.com/systems/i/db2> for the latest information on availability.

6. Why a web based query and report writing function....wouldn't a Windows based solution be more robust?

The product is based on the latest Web 2.0 and AJAX web technologies, allowing you the functionality and usability usually associated with a Windows environment, but now available to browser based applications. The zero footprint solution reduces complexity and costs, and allows any enterprise browser to be leveraged as the user interface. The AJAX framework allows sophisticated report building capabilities including modeless and modal dialogs, menus, multiple coordinated windows, partial screen updates, and more.

A web based solution offers the following benefits:

- Lower installation costs
- Lower maintenance costs
- Easy, incremental upgrades to existing applications
- User administration savings
- Simpler, and more controlled document backup and archiving
- Simpler, and more controlled security and compliance administration
- Software updates controlled on the server making them available to all users concurrently

7. What additional features are available with the IBM DB2 Web Query for System i product?

IBM plans to offer additional features for:

- Disconnected Analysis that allows users to take reports with them on the road
- On Line Analytical Processing (OLAP) views for slicing and dicing data within a report
- Building advanced parameterized reporting, integrating existing SQL Queries and enhancing metadata with a Developers Workbench

Additionally, several components are available from Information Builders to allow DB2 Web Query to be extended in other ways, such as:

- Integration with most popular ERP systems (for example, an Oracle/JDE adapter which provides "data dictionary" and security awareness, so the query product can evaluate the data properly while honoring application security and integrity rules).
- Adapters to query most popular database management systems , such as DB2 9, Oracle, or Microsoft® SQLServer™
- Application Programming Interface (API) support to i5/OS based cubing or data mining products (specifically, SPSS' ESSBASE/400 and Clementine products)
- Support for information distribution applications via a publish/subscribe reporting paradigm
- Building of a data mart or data warehouse with a light weight Extract Transformation and Load product

8. Will I need to download data to a PC Server or install a Windows server to sit between the client and the System i server?

Many enterprise reporting tools on the market force you to move your data out of DB2, or require multiple servers to support various reporting functions. The IBM product is an i5/OS and thin client implementation, simplifying the whole reporting infrastructure for System i customers. Software upgrades are simplified, reliability can be increased, network traffic is reduced, and security and auditing may be simplified.

9. I have non DB2 data stored in other databases. Will I be able to use DB2 Web Query to query those databases?

With additional adapters as add-ons to DB2 Web Query, you'll be able to build a "federated" query that combines data from many different back end databases into a single DB2 Web Query report. Over two hundred adapters are available to connect to other database or ERP systems.

You'll also be able to combine data from multiple DB2 for i5/OS databases running on different servers or logical partitions, without requiring any additional adapters since the base product will ship with the DB2 for i5/OS adapter.

10. When will DB2 Web Query Product be available, and will it run on V5R2 or V5R3?

IBM will be announcing General Availability of this product at a later date but the plans are to make this product available in the 2nd half of 2007. Current plans are to only support DB2 Web Query for System i on V5R4.

11. Will I have to buy DB2 Web Query if I already own Query for iSeries?

Complete upgrade and pricing information will be announced closer to General Availability of the product, although a transition offering is expected to be a part of this.

12. Does DB2 Web Query provide OLAP functionality?

With the OLAP feature, the same technology for building relational reports can be enabled to build OLAP-like reports against data stored in DB2 for i5/OS (or against "federated" data sources with additional adapters). In addition, DB2 Web Query supports the ESSBASE/400 API, for those customers that choose to leverage that i5/OS based cubing technology from SPSS.

13. Can I use DB2 Web Query product to build a data warehouse?

This base product from IBM is designed as an end user reporting tool, that can be used effectively for operational or data warehouse reporting purposes. Additional tools (e.g., ETL) are available to build a data warehouse or data marts to support the enterprise reports built with the DB2 web query product.

14. There are several Query and Report Writing tools available for i5/OS. Which one is right for me?

Indeed, the System i Tools innovation program (http://www-304.ibm.com/jct09002c/partnerworld/wps/pub/systems/i/technical/iii/tools_roadmap?gcLang=en) lists several IBM and IBM Business Partner products that provide end user query, OLAP, ETL or other technologies normally associated with data warehousing or Business Intelligence. The right product fit for any particular situation will depend on any number of factors, including cost, product functionality, vendor support, complexity of implementation, language translations, and local resources.

The IBM product is intended to provide a Query/400 replacement product, with a foundation for BI applications that can be delivered worldwide using the latest web technologies.

15. What is the relationship with Information Builders?

IBM has an agreement with Information Builders to provide a customized version of their WebFocus product to IBM.

For more information, refer to: http://www.informationbuilders.com/cgi-shell/press/intpr/f_intpr.pl?intpr_code=03_14_07_IBM

16. I already own WebFocus. Is that a problem?

No, that should not be a problem at all. We would suggest you continue to work with Information Builders directly to support your Business Intelligence needs. Information Builders can supply you with information about how you can get the new adapter for Query for iSeries.

17. How does this compare to other products on the market?

While a comparison is too exhaustive for a FAQ format, there are several key differentiators that this product offers (some of these functions require additional adapters):

- Product Maturity - the WebFocus technology has been in the marketplace for over nine years.
- Audience. The product is not just for developers, but also for end users or any information consumer.
- Combine multiple data sources into a single report
- Web or desktop authoring vs. fat client only
- Full auditing capabilities including trace facilities
- Excel Support, e.g., automatic generation of excel pivot tables or hyperlinks for drill downs, formula retention and write back capability
- Over two hundred “native” data source adapters
- OLAP API Support (through additional adapters)
- Extract file generation

18. Will there be a beta program for the IBM product?

We were offering a limited Beta program but we have filled all available slots already due to the overwhelming response to this product preview. Thank you to everyone who offered their support in this program!

19. Where can I find out more info about this product?

More details will be coming soon. An IBM Redbooks is in process and is planned for availability closer to General Availability of the product. Please continue to check this website for additional updates (<http://www.ibm.com/systems/i/db2>), or contact your local IBM System i representative or IBM Business Partner for more information.