DESIGNING EFFECTIVE DATABASE SYSTEMS BY REBECCA M. RIORDAN
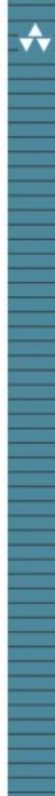

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Designing Effective Database Systems

REBECCA M. RIORDAN

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From the Back Cover

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One task at a time, the author illuminates every facet of database analysis and design for both traditional databases and the dimensional databases used for data warehousing, showing how to avoid common architectural pitfalls that complicate development and reduce extensibility. The book concludes with comprehensive, expert guidance on designing databases for maximum usability.

This book will teach you to

- Understand relational database models, structures, relationships, and data integrity principles
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- Learn from practice examples based on Microsoft's Northwind sample database

Riordan has helped thousands of professionals master database design and development, earning Microsoft's coveted MVP honor for her exceptional contributions. Nobody is more qualified to help you master database design and apply it in your real-world environment.

About the Author

Rebecca M. Riordan has more than fifteen years of experience designing and developing databases and other applications. She is a Microsoft MVP and a frequent speaker at conferences, including Microsoft TechEd. She is the author of many books, including Seeing Data: Designing User Interfaces for Database Systems Using .NET (Addison-Wesley, 2005). Her other highly respected books include Designing Relational Database Systems (1999), Microsoft SQL Server 2000 Programming Step by Step (2000), and ADO.NET Step by Step (2002), all published by Microsoft Press.

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Relational databases are tricky beasts. Other kinds of commercial software are infinitely easier to understand. Word processors are really just high-tech typewriters, and it's pretty clear that the backspace key beats that little jar of white stuff cold. Spreadsheets present a familiar enough paradigm, even to non-accountants, and email is close enough to the postal system for the model to be comprehensible.

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desktop, the analogy is a little tenuous, but the analogies are close enough; you can get there from here. But relational databases are completely artificial. They're like geometry: They can be used to build models of the real world, but they don't exist in the real world. When was the last time you poured some wine for you and your sweetie and went out on the front porch to watch the geometry frolic on the lake?

Now, I'm talking about databases here, not tables. Tables exist aplenty, from the telephone book to the dictionary. But relational databases? Nope. Uh-uh. You're not going to find them frolicking on the lake, either. The card files at the library, which contain author, title, and subject files, come close to being a database but they're still separate sets of data that are only correlated by the good graces of the local librarian.

This book is about designing database systems. My intention is to give you the knowledge you need to take a messy, complex, real-world situation and turn it into an effective database design. I assume that you have some development experience and generally know your way around a computer, but I don't assume that you have any background in databases.

After reading the book you still won't be able to watch the databases frolic on the lake, but if I've done my job well you'll be able to design and implement a relational model of the fish, the seagulls, and the effects of the plankton on them both.

The book is divided into four parts. Part I, "Relational Database Theory," covers the fundamental principles of the relational model. This is where the really ugly, theoretical stuff is. But don't worry; it will get easier. Part II, "Dimensional Database Theory," covers the same information for dimensional databases, a special type of relational database used for analysis. Part III, "Designing Database Systems," examines the analysis and design process—what you should do to get from the real world to a reliable database system design. Finally, Part IV, "Designing the User Interface," discusses the most important aspect of a database system from a user's point of view: the user interface.

Although we'll talk about implementation issues in the next few hundred pages, this isn't a "how to program" book. There are a few coding examples, but I've kept them to a minimum, and you should be able to follow them even if you've never seen a programming language before. The database examples are based on the Northwind sample database that comes with Microsoft Access. (The version of Northwind that comes with SQL Server is very similar.) By the time you're finished reading this book, you'll have picked up most of what you need to get started building database systems, and you'll be ready to turn to one of the sources listed in the Bibliography for the finer points of programming style. And you'll be confident that your data architecture is sound and unlikely to get you into trouble later in your project.

A note on English usage: As you'll discover as you read this book, I'm a stickler for terminology. But that said, I don't think syntax ought to draw attention to itself. If an author writes "he or she" or (heavens forefend) "s/he," I'm busy thinking about gender politics and no longer paying attention to the text. If I read "the data are," I'm just as likely to be thinking about the nature of the English language as whatever the author is trying to say.

Now, the pronoun issue is fairly simple to work around. You'll find a great many repetitions of "the user" in this text. But the adoption of Latin terms into English is a more complex issue, particularly in a book about data.

For the record, I had a classical education, and I'm perfectly aware that in Latin, "data" is a plural noun, and ought to take a plural verb. I'm also aware that in the field of statistics, one still refers to a "datum," a single data point. But this isn't statistics, and I'm not writing in Latin. In English, we have a long history of adopting plural Latin nouns as corporate nouns, and in American English, those nouns take a singular verb.

It's what we do when we speak, and it's what I've done in the text.

We say "the data is reliable" not "the data are reliable." (I have actually heard "the datums are reliable," but that's just sad.) This usage has been adopted by several influential publications, and I have adopted it here. Not because I don't know how Latin works, but because I've carefully considered the issue and decided to write American English as I, as a well-educated native American English speaker, speak it. Now ain't that just about enough on the subject?

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- Sales Rank: #3002698 in Books
- Published on: 2005-01-20
- Released on: 2005-01-10
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 9.00" h x 1.00" w x 7.00" l, 1.59 pounds
- Binding: Paperback
- 384 pages

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Most helpful customer reviews

34 of 34 people found the following review helpful.
Provides one with a good vantage of core components in designing an effective database
By derazz
This book gives you a points-to-points look-in on various core aspects ie: component parts & pieces, which earmark & characterizes the design of an effective database system

i'd say, this is a good (first,introductory db design book). it will endow you with the vision or skills to look at/objectively qualify ,the items you need to take into consideration all along the way to designing an effective database system from the beginning of the db design lifecycle to its watershed

This book is...

- Is a good, first birds-eye view of core aspects of the database design terrain from 5,000 feet.

- It's like circling at a high altitude of the database terrain first, whilst still practically clearly seeing the individual trees from the forest.

Its a 319 page read . the detail level is just about right to serve as a quick review of items to consider.

If its sorta your first dip into data & database design , its a good place to start but i'd recommend you take this book, couple it & digest it together with a read of :"Database Design" by Sams; ISBN:0672317583 -(a terrific book!) subsequently after ;

and you'll have a really good,full 20:20 vision of the database system design domain/aspect.

digesting these together gives you a brilliant foundation.

Value: The second book(ie: the Sams book), will patch-up on areas like relationships & give you more meat

on all the core checklist of items to objectively consider straight away, if say tomorrow you found yourself commencing with/starting a db design effort. it's a better cookbook.

Riordan's book then would seem a very nice starter/introduction

At this new knowledge point/vantage, you are now equipped with a greater, squarer view of the terrain at some 7,000 feet. ie: at this point, if you were interested in doing the sql-server design exam: 70-229, or the Oracle fundamentals I equivalent: 1Z0-031, everything would make so much more sense re: triggers, sprocs, functions, cursors, Business rules + Constraints, RAID Backup , Indexing, Views, the SQL angle etc. if you pick up an ExamCram2 book + Transcender, Testking or whatever you select as your exam study guide of preference, you'll be able to finally see & understand how things -(aspects of the puzzle), actually all fit together and be able to translate almost effortlessly from conceptual design aspects to the necessary logical design-blueprint , to the physical implementation aspects.

And that which you understand... you won't forget

After digesting the Riordan book followed by the Sams book, you are now ready for intermediate to proficient level. 10,000 to 12,000 feet - design proficiency.

as a 3rd level book , i'd recommend you move on to reading the following 4 (ordered here by: most-entailed to least-entailed):

(1.) Database Modelling Essentials; ISBN:0126445516 ;

Value:(brings you a solid handle on building a database model to support a businesses activities)

(2.) Database Solutions; ISBN:0321173503 ;

Value: (clarity in cruising comfortably between d relational model and a good, solid, logical design...[a great book])

(3.) Database Design for Mere Mortals; ISBN: 0201752840 ;

Value: (great for reviewing Table Relationships -(setting-up joins) and reading the ERD -[Entity Relationship Diagrams])

AND

(4.) Databases Demystified; ISBN:0072253649 ;

Value: (great for stepping you linearly through the database lifecycle again, with good explanations about what you should be sure you are doing & obtaining from each stage/step of the lifecycle)..ie: that which will be expected of you at each step/stage chunk

To cap things up, Read :

- "Beginning Relational database design" ; ISBN:1590594630 ;

Value: (pulls all your data modelling personal resource skills together and reconstitutes them for you by

casting you in a role where you practice modelling a complete system from scratch ie: -[from gathering the requirements specification, to the end of the detailed conceptual database design effort for the system]);

And you'll have all the core skills you need to build/design one mean database, enterprise-oriented or otherwise or reverse-engineer one.

if you are already in the thick of a project and are really pressed to find a db design solution -[(logical) + (implementation in SQL code)] right now, maybe consider buying or looking into purchasing the pricey: "Data Model Resource CD_ROM" ;ISBN:0471388289;

Value: it boasts a library of proven: tried and tested Universal Data Models, for all Enterprise types.

So, all you'll need do is adapt or borrow a design solution/model or architecture that applies closely to what you're trying to accomplish modelling for your database project ,and adapt & implement it as a solution for the database system you are designing. it's Magic!

Though i rated d Riordan book 4 stars for the depth of its content matter, the book rates more like a 4.5 for sheer readability & clarity of explanations for such an often notoriously complex technical subject area.

I'd talk about core books that translate to laying-out a solid physical database implementation & tuning for performance, but thats gonna have to wait till maybe a future book review

cheers.

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18 of 18 people found the following review helpful.
Excellent Information for Anyone
By Jase T. Wolfe
Realistically, software developers are not the only only people who utilize databases. Any person who professionally works with computers deals with databases whether they know it or not. The database may not be a physical entity like a SQL or JET file, but something more subtle or conceptual such as your computers file system, the registry, the Active Directory, etc. The ability to understand and leverage databases is of great benefit to all IT professionals, and this book is a great place to start.

Despite what the title implies, the focus of this book is not in developing any specific database system or learning a specific development platform, but rather to intellectually understand what makes a database a database, how a database should be structured, the steps needed to design an efficient database for the situation, how to pull data from the database in a meaningful way, and even the steps to take to develop the user interface. This is accomplished by walking you thru each concept and building on the information gained prior. Information is provided as clearly as it can be for the topic, and there is no shortage of visual aids.

The fact that the author uses two Microsoft products (SQL and Access) to demonstrate concepts is more out of convenience than anything else. Both products install with an excellent relational database example (Northwind Database) which is used as the foundation for the concept demonstrations. As the focus of this book is informational a not hands-on lesson driven, and as database design and query structures are universal and not vendor-specific, readers using other database providers will have no difficulty following along and will find the presentation of equal value. Conceptually, however, it would have been nice to utilize an open-

source and free database system, and provide demonstration databases as a download.

Without a doubt, this is one of the best titles for learning database design and systems development. Concepts are clearly presented, easily understood and real-world applications demonstrated. Any person with an interest in databases can find value in this book and walk away with the ability to utilize the information gained.

9 of 9 people found the following review helpful.
understanding modelling diagrams
By W Boudville
Relational databases have a well developed theory underpinning them. Often described in formal maths language that can be offputting to a newcomer without that background. The merit of Riordan's book is to show that you can often understand and design such databases, without recourse to such formalisms, which greatly expands the potential audience for the book.

There's scarcely an equation here. But you can understand the essence of different normal forms and what Boyce and Codd contributed to shoring up this field. Instead of equations, the author demonstrates what may be more intuitive to many of you - Modelling diagrams that show relationships in a visual form that is easy to grasp. You can see how a diagram can convey the essence of many relationships, and thus form the skeleton of a database. This visual understanding may be one of the most useful teaching results of the book.

Riordan uses Microsoft packages to demonstrate how to make example databases. Commendably, she writes broadly enough that you should be able to recast these examples in another database if you wish.

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—Patrick Birch, database and technical writing consultant "If you buy only one book on database design, make it this one. Riordan has a talent for explaining technical issues in simple language, without over simplifying."

—Brendan Reynolds, developer, Dataset IT Systems and Microsoft Access MVP "A book that will expertly guide you in how to develop a database for a client— and how to do it right the first time!"

—Kenneth D. Snell, Ph.D., ACCESS developer and Microsoft Access MVP "Riordan has produced a unique book that brings together a formal, yet commonsense, approach to relational database design...and then goes further! Many database designers will find immense value in the steps to developing practical data warehouse designs. If you are seeking a framework for designing transactional databases, or want to step out into the world of analytical databases, Riordan's book excels at bridging both worlds."

—Paul Irvine, vice president, engineering, Via Training "Riordan takes a complex subject and makes it easy. If you're over your head on a database design project, this book will help bail you out!"

—Mike Gunderloy, contributing editor, Application Development Trends "This book covers a wide range of database design and data modeling topics in a well-organized, easy to understand format."

—Amy Sticksel, Sticksel Data Systems, Inc. "In Designing Effective Database Systems, Riordan's style, wit, and attention to detail are outstanding."

—Sandra Daigle, Microsoft Access MVP The Software Developer's Step-by-Step Guide to Database Design

World-renowned expert Rebecca M. Riordan has written the definitive database design book for working developers who aren't database experts. No matter how messy or complex your data challenge, Designing

Effective Database Systems shows you how to design an effective, high-performance database to solve it.

Riordan begins by thoroughly demystifying the principles of relational design, making them accessible to every professional developer. Next, she offers the field's clearest introduction to dimensional database modeling—practical insight for designing today's increasingly important analytical applications.

One task at a time, the author illuminates every facet of database analysis and design for both traditional databases and the dimensional databases used for data warehousing, showing how to avoid common architectural pitfalls that complicate development and reduce extensibility. The book concludes with comprehensive, expert guidance on designing databases for maximum usability.

This book will teach you to

- Understand relational database models, structures, relationships, and data integrity principles
- Define database system goals, criteria, scope, and work processes
- Construct accurate conceptual models: relationships, entities, domain analysis, and normalization
- Build efficient, secure database schema
- Master the elements of online analytical processing (OLAP) design: fact tables, dimension tables, snowflaking, and more
- Architect and construct easy, efficient interfaces for querying and reporting
- Learn from practice examples based on Microsoft's Northwind sample database

Riordan has helped thousands of professionals master database design and development, earning Microsoft's coveted MVP honor for her exceptional contributions. Nobody is more qualified to help you master database design and apply it in your real-world environment.

About the Author

Rebecca M. Riordan has more than fifteen years of experience designing and developing databases and other applications. She is a Microsoft MVP and a frequent speaker at conferences, including Microsoft TechEd. She is the author of many books, including Seeing Data: Designing User Interfaces for Database Systems Using .NET (Addison-Wesley, 2005). Her other highly respected books include Designing Relational Database Systems (1999), Microsoft SQL Server 2000 Programming Step by Step (2000), and ADO.NET Step by Step (2002), all published by Microsoft Press.

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Relational databases are tricky beasts. Other kinds of commercial software are infinitely easier to understand. Word processors are really just high-tech typewriters, and it's pretty clear that the backspace key beats that little jar of white stuff cold. Spreadsheets present a familiar enough paradigm, even to non-accountants, and email is close enough to the postal system for the model to be comprehensible.

Databases are different. Other kinds of software have a real-world analogy. Sometimes, as in the Windows desktop, the analogy is a little tenuous, but the analogies are close enough; you can get there from here. But relational databases are completely artificial. They're like geometry: They can be used to build models of the

real world, but they don't exist in the real world. When was the last time you poured some wine for you and your sweetie and went out on the front porch to watch the geometry frolic on the lake?

Now, I'm talking about databases here, not tables. Tables exist aplenty, from the telephone book to the dictionary. But relational databases? Nope. Uh-uh. You're not going to find them frolicking on the lake, either. The card files at the library, which contain author, title, and subject files, come close to being a database but they're still separate sets of data that are only correlated by the good graces of the local librarian.

This book is about designing database systems. My intention is to give you the knowledge you need to take a messy, complex, real-world situation and turn it into an effective database design. I assume that you have some development experience and generally know your way around a computer, but I don't assume that you have any background in databases.

After reading the book you still won't be able to watch the databases frolic on the lake, but if I've done my job well you'll be able to design and implement a relational model of the fish, the seagulls, and the effects of the plankton on them both.

The book is divided into four parts. Part I, "Relational Database Theory," covers the fundamental principles of the relational model. This is where the really ugly, theoretical stuff is. But don't worry; it will get easier. Part II, "Dimensional Database Theory," covers the same information for dimensional databases, a special type of relational database used for analysis. Part III, "Designing Database Systems," examines the analysis and design process—what you should do to get from the real world to a reliable database system design. Finally, Part IV, "Designing the User Interface," discusses the most important aspect of a database system from a user's point of view: the user interface.

Although we'll talk about implementation issues in the next few hundred pages, this isn't a "how to program" book. There are a few coding examples, but I've kept them to a minimum, and you should be able to follow them even if you've never seen a programming language before. The database examples are based on the Northwind sample database that comes with Microsoft Access. (The version of Northwind that comes with SQL Server is very similar.) By the time you're finished reading this book, you'll have picked up most of what you need to get started building database systems, and you'll be ready to turn to one of the sources listed in the Bibliography for the finer points of programming style. And you'll be confident that your data architecture is sound and unlikely to get you into trouble later in your project.

A note on English usage: As you'll discover as you read this book, I'm a stickler for terminology. But that said, I don't think syntax ought to draw attention to itself. If an author writes "he or she" or (heavens forefend) "s/he," I'm busy thinking about gender politics and no longer paying attention to the text. If I read "the data are," I'm just as likely to be thinking about the nature of the English language as whatever the author is trying to say.

Now, the pronoun issue is fairly simple to work around. You'll find a great many repetitions of "the user" in this text. But the adoption of Latin terms into English is a more complex issue, particularly in a book about data.

For the record, I had a classical education, and I'm perfectly aware that in Latin, "data" is a plural noun, and ought to take a plural verb. I'm also aware that in the field of statistics, one still refers to a "datum," a single data point. But this isn't statistics, and I'm not writing in Latin. In English, we have a long history of adopting plural Latin nouns as corporate nouns, and in American English, those nouns take a singular verb. It's what we do when we speak, and it's what I've done in the text.

We say "the data is reliable" not "the data are reliable." (I have actually heard "the datums are reliable," but that's just sad.) This usage has been adopted by several influential publications, and I have adopted it here. Not because I don't know how Latin works, but because I've carefully considered the issue and decided to write American English as I, as a well-educated native American English speaker, speak it. Now ain't that just about enough on the subject?

Nonetheless, some individuals will seek for the best vendor publication to review as the very first referral. This is why; this Designing Effective Database Systems By Rebecca M. Riordan exists to fulfil your necessity. Some individuals like reading this book Designing Effective Database Systems By Rebecca M. Riordan because of this popular publication, however some love this as a result of favourite writer. Or, several also like reading this book <u>Designing Effective Database Systems By Rebecca M. Riordan</u> since they actually have to read this publication. It can be the one that truly enjoy reading.