

Service Debuts for db4o Developers

db4objects offers expert pairing; adds one-line complex object retrieval in 7.0 beta

BY P.J. CONNOLLY

Although object databases have been around for what seems like forever, the rise of the mobile device may prove to be the technology's salvation. At least, that's how one company sees it.

Open source object database specialist db4objects announced in mid-November the beta release of version 7.0 of db4o, which introduces the Transparent Activation feature, a way for developers to retrieve complex data objects with a single line of code. This development release enables Transparent Activation for db4o and Java object collections, with plans to release a .NET version in December and have support for all collection types in early 2008, when a production release is sched-

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—Christof Wittig, CEO of db4objects



uled to emerge.

The new release minimizes memory use by automatically detecting the activation depth of a collection of objects, or object graph, and loading only the necessary data. Although it's been possible for developers to manually specify the activation depth of the objects they're using, this is time-consuming.

The company claims that its

scheme implements a "free-space" management system, designed specifically for cases where devices are repeatedly powered off without an orderly shutdown process, such as mobile phones and other handheld devices.

The company's also lit up about its new premium service, which it launched in mid-November as well. The db4o

Developer Network (dDN) Enterprise service is aimed at filling the requirements of cutting-edge Java and .NET projects while providing expert support for the company's technology.

At the heart of dDN Enterprise is XtremeConnect, which puts developers together with a db4o expert. This remote pairing allows debugging, joint design reviews and other tasks to take place in a virtual setting that the company calls unique. The service also includes access to ObjectManager Enterprise, db4o's new design tool aimed at corporate customers.

Company CEO Christof Wittig explained that the model for open source success calls for a services component, saying, "Red Hat and MySQL

have pioneered commercial open source business models, where commercial tools and services boost their customers' productivity and shorten time-to-market. db4objects takes it to the next level" by pairing up developers and experts via the XtremeConnect service.

The dDN Enterprise service runs US\$18,000 per named developer, annually; it includes credit for 40 hours of expert pairing, and an in-process redistribution license for 500 runtimes.

Object Manager Enterprise is the company's first commercial-only offering, and is available standalone or as a plug-in for Eclipse or Visual Studio. The GPL-licensed Object Manager 6 will continue to be available and be maintained by the db4o community. ■

MOSIS IGNITES PROJECT TO GIVE MDD BOOST

BY JEFF FEINMAN

A number of embedded heavyweights have gotten together to participate in the International Technology Education Association's (ITEA) MoSiS project for the higher adoption of model-driven development (MDD).

Nokia Siemens, Philips, Telefonica and Telvent are the main companies fueling MoSiS. ITEA's US\$30 million project aims to strengthen the position of MDD in the development and design of embedded software systems.

One of the main goals of MoSiS is to develop embedded MoSiS systems where software is crucial to the success of the system, and where different appearances of the system can be configured while still originating from one generic platform. MoSiS project officials claim there is a lack of modeling principles for extra-functional variability in the industry, which leads to incomplete models.

The MoSiS project will look to create a standardized MoSiS language for modeling and management of variability, best-practice processes for MDD of MoSiS systems, and open source

tool prototypes that support the MoSiS language and processes.

This project is important because the complexity and size of embedded systems are increasing, said Juha-Pekka Tolvanen, CEO of MetaCase, a company that recently joined the project. Tolvanen said that one of the main objectives of the MoSiS project is to produce working code in a fast and reliable manner for high-level models, instead of writing code character by character, which can be costly and error-prone.

"One of the expected deliverables of this project is that modelers can build a more general variability view that other companies can use, so that every company would not need to start from the beginning," Tolvanen said. "Usually modeling is used for functional parts, but some companies would like to model the nonfunctional system properties, like quality of service."

Tolvanen added that companies can use information from models of nonfunctional system properties to help automate development and generate code from that data.

MetaCase, which provides



MetaCase's Tolvanen sees value in modeling nonfunctional properties.

Domain Specific Modeling (DSM) tools, hopes to make code generators that produce embedded devices whose code has a small footprint. This will allow for automatic production of products from design models. DSM uses little memory, and MetaCase's flagship DSM product MetaEdit will build working languages for application domains to help push the MoSiS project.

"It helps us to improve our products," Tolvanen said, noting that MetaEdit was on track for a late November release. "We will focus on further enhancing the language design tools and code generation development [in the next release], and MoSiS gives us a good place to [do this]."

The MoSiS project is scheduled to continue for three years, concluding in June 2010. ■

Sybase Ships Natural Language for Mobiles

Promises user-friendly A2P access

BY P.J. CONNOLLY

It's no longer good enough for speech recognition applications to require that users conform to their logic. Free-form interaction is the next step, and Sybase's work in that direction is starting to pay off.

Sybase's mobile messaging and content delivery subsidiary Sybase 365 announced on Nov. 12 the immediate availability of Answers 365, a natural language service designed to allow users to interact with service providers' automated systems in their own words.

"Answers 365 makes A2P [application to person] applications accessible to mobile phone users in the same way that the graphical user interface made computers widely accessible during the rise of the PC," explained Marty Beard, Sybase 365's president. "Consumer adoption is always dependent on making a technology or service user-friendly."

Answers 365 starts with the Answers Anywhere platform

from Sybase iAnywhere, and pairs it with the mobile messaging infrastructure of Sybase 365 to create what the company calls a "unique" value-add service. Sybase 365 claims that Answers 365 can comprehend common misspellings, multi-part queries and synonyms, which if true might put it ahead of some human customer service representatives. Pricing for the service begins at US\$6,000 per month.

The company also announced that its iAnywhere subsidiary and Toyota InfoTechnology Center Co. have been awarded joint patents on techniques improving upon open conversational speech recognition interfaces. The two patents are "the result of years of effective, practical joint research between Sybase and Toyota ITC," explained Sybase iAnywhere senior director of engineering Babak Hodjat. The patents rely on Answers Anywhere to provide much of the back-end plumbing that supports free-form speech interfaces. ■