SuperForm

(Extract from CoRD 041 "A brief outline on existing data collection tools and new developments at Statistics Sweden", Hans Irebäck, 2001)

A framework and tool for the Microsoft platform

Statistics Sweden is developing a framework for web based application development with the Microsoft environment. The framework is built around the Windows DNA (Digital interNet Architecture). It includes techniques and tools such as HTML ASP/ASP+, COM+, ADO, Microsoft Transaction Server, SQL Server. The objective is to support the developer with a tool that will ease development, increase reuse of components and introduce a common standard throughout the organisation. To support the framework a tool (wizard) has been developed that automates many of the steps required getting started with a web project . The first training course with the wizard will be held in January 2001.

SuperForm

The traditional approach with HTML and different script languages has certain drawbacks. The lack of standards on the client side makes it difficult to develop applications that work with all common browsers. HTML has been used with such inventiveness that it makes web applications hard to maintain. It is therefore natural to search for new tools that let the user create advanced electronic questionnaires without low-level programming. The SuperForm software will be used in a recently started pilot project. The company with the same name develops the software in Sweden. SuperForm offers different type of fillers ranging from Windows application to the i3 Filler that gives anyone with a modern web browser access to intelligent electronic forms directly in the browser. The i3 Filler use a compact Java-applet distributed along with the electronic form. In the pilot project we will use SuperForm and the i3 Filler for developing an electronic form for the Intrastat survey. The target group is the respondents with a few items to report. One major concern to be studied is how the Java-applet will work with different firewalls. If the pilot project is successful there are several imaginable applications. For instance SuperForm could be used for non-recurrent surveys or surveys for which we don't now the length of life. In those cases it's not justifiable to invest a lot of money in application development.

The following description of the software comes from SuperForm's own web site.

One form - many platforms

Simply expressed, this means that first a form is constructed with SuperForm PRO. Then it is made accessible to the most common platforms to serve as many users as possible, by using SuperForm WIZARD that handles the publication automatically.

SuperForm DRAW is the first-stage tool in the SuperForm PRO-suite. It is in DRAW that the static graphic (the part that the user cannot manipulate) of the form is designed. Forms designed in DRAW can of course be printed as they are, but their primary use is to provide the framework for making the forms intelligent with SuperForm OBJECT. An important benefit of DRAW and OBJECT being separate programs is that is that two people can work with the same form applying their different special skills. For example: One person works on the static graphics in DRAW and the other adds the active fields in OBJECT. But of course there is also

the option of working with both DRAW and OBJECT in integration.

The SuperForm OBJECT module is used to embed intelligent fields of various kinds in the form graphic. The result is a form that, in itself, includes all the rules, calculations, help, variables and verifications needed, and is able to interact with other systems for data exchange. This means the user needs no previous experience to use the form. Instead of writing applications for each new form, OBJECT allows simple visual editing to make the forms intelligent. For instance, if the developer wishes to apply limitations such as min- and/or max values, no code is necessary, one simply enters the exact values in the field's property dialog. Or, another example, if one needs the form to add all values in a column of fields, they can be simply selected with the mouse and then added by clicking on the +- button in a calculation dialog. This kind of simple visual editing is all that is required for most controls, calculations, filling rules, instructions etc. No knowledge of programming is necessary to construct intelligent electronic forms.

SuperForm WIZARD

A Windows-based program that automatically generates form-based solutions: single forms, client-tailored Fillers with a number of forms, form archives, complete web sites with instructions, documentation and form archives making the forms available to anyone who has access to an Internet browser.

SuperForm WIZARD will help you with the following:
- Publish single forms for use by WEB-Filler or PRO-Filler.
- Publish SuperForm i3 Filler. Publishes a Java applet and a form in XML-code. Ready for publication over Intra/Internet.
- Publish a web-site with forms in several formats (i3 Filler, WEB-Filler and PRO-Filler ready for download, JPEG images for printing), documentation and help included.
- Automatically update SuperForm PRO via the Internet.

SuperForm WEB Filler

Lightweight form-filling software, works with Microsoft Windows 3.1, 95, 98, NT 4.0
SuperForm WEB Filler may be distributed freely.

SuperForm PRO Filler

Advanced form-filling software, primarily developed for use on intranet and local networks. The installation takes around 5 MB, but can increase if all database add-ons are included. SuperForm PRO Filler can be run under the following operating systems: Microsoft Windows 95, 98, NT 4.0, 2000.
SuperForm PRO Filler may be distributed freely.

SuperForm i3 Filler

Software that gives anyone with a modern web browser access to intelligent electronic forms directly in the browser. No client or plug-in program is necessary (the i3 Filler is an extremely compact Java-applet distributed along with the electronic form). The i3 Filler may be distributed freely.

References

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http://www.superform.se/