JACKIE's Forum

## Run SQL Script – Part II

Jackie Jansen

This is part two in the use of the "Run SQL Script" component within iSeries Navigator. Today we are going to concentrate on the SQL Assist feature. I am not going through every screen and every option available. My plan is to give you enough of an introduction so that you can follow through on your own. I have highlighted a couple of the "gotcha's" or tips that aren't intuitively obvious. As a reminder to start "Run SQL Script" navigate to the database area within iSeries Navigator, underneath "Databases" select your system name. "Run SQL Script" is one of the tasks now enabled either via the "Database tasks" panel or via a right mouse click.

The SQL Assist feature is basically an enhanced PC version of our green screen prompt (cmd key 4) functionality. With SQL Assist you choose the tables and columns you want to operate on, you get assistance building expressions such as SUM and CONCAT, and you can ask for prompts showing all the possible values in a column.

To access SQL Assist from the "Run SQL Scripts" window either use F4 or look under the Edit menu. Let's start by choosing the most common SQL statement, SELECT, on the right panel. When we do this, the left panel changes to show the main clauses within the SELECT statement. If you select more than one table you will see a JOIN button. If you have defined foreign and primary keys for your tables, when you click on the JOIN button the system will attempt to create the join for you. If you haven't specified primary and foreign

keys then you will need to define the join yourself. SQL Assist doesn't use column names or definitions to generate suggestions for a join.

The number one trick in the JOIN window is to use the standard windows control key to select two or more tables. This sounds obvious but when you only see two tables listed using the control key to select both of them doesn't seem to come naturally. Once you have chosen your tables the screens are fairly self explanatory.
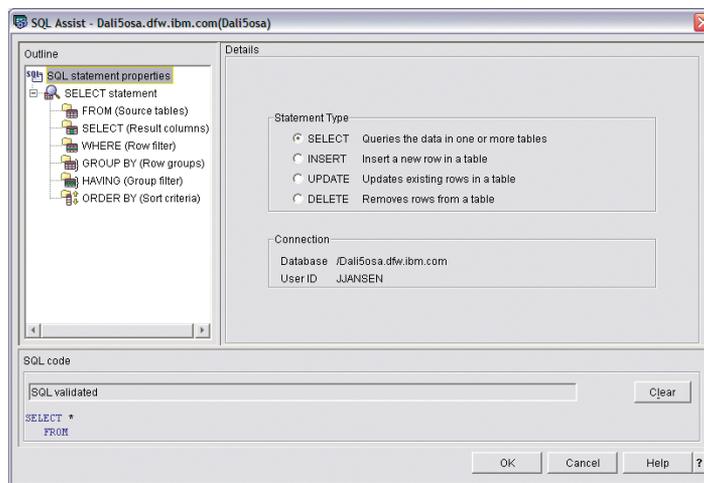
SQL Assist doesn't use tabs to guide you through the process. Once you have selected the tables you must select your next option from the left panel. In this case you would select the "Result Columns" option. If you don't select any columns the default is to return them all.

When you select a column the right panel will then display the column name and in the same row a field with three dots. If you click on the three dots you are taken to the expression builder where you can build an expression using logic and functions such as SUM and CONCAT.

An additional handy function is the capability, when you are filtering, to ask to see all the values in

a column. By default SQL Assist will show you the first 100 values although you can override this parameter.

The remaining statements INSERT, UPDATE and DELETE all work basically the same way.

One of the biggest tips to leave you with, is what to do when the generated SQL statement isn't exactly what you want. Speaking from experience, putting your cursor under the statement and pressing F4 doesn't import your statement back into SQL Assist. Highlighting the statement doesn't do what you would want either. Having more faith in our developers than this indicated, I called them and found out the "trick" in the current release. If you highlight your entire SQL statement in the "RUN SQL Script" window, excluding the semicolon, and then either press F4 or choose Edit/SQL Assist, your statement will be imported as you would expect. The trick here is to leave out the semicolon. According to the developers this is a short term usability issue.

Stay tuned for the exciting conclusion to "Run SQL Script Part 3" in next month's column.

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