

: *What is reporting software?*

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Reports organize data to create information that can be shared with others. For example, a quarterly financial report summarizes financial transactions that occurred during a 3 month period of time. A sales report summarizes sales activity by salesperson or by customer or perhaps by product for a specific period of time. Reporting software is used to generate reports from data sources.

Reports often include data tables, graphs and charts, and explanatory narrative. A typical report begins with an introduction/statement of purpose and ends with a conclusion. Reports should clearly specify the reporting period (beginning and end) and when the report was written. Reports often provide information to support decision making.

There are many reporting software packages. An example of open source reporting software is JasperReports. JasperReports is an open source reporting library that can be embedded into any Java application. BIRT includes a visual report designer in the Eclipse Integrated Development Environment (IDE). Commercial software includes: Cognos BI, Crystal Reports, Oracle Discoverer, Oracle Reports, QlikView and Tableau.

Reporting tells us about what has happened. We have a fascination with predicting the future. That is a mistake! Future actions should be guided by both what has happened and by what we think will happen. Neglecting the past is folly. The past should inform the future.

Reporting software remains important. We need to track the past to plan for the future.

References

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