Introduction

Microsoft Access can be an incredibly useful application, but it can also be very frustrating if you don't know how to make it do what you want it to do. In a perfect world, you'd have a guru around, 24/7 — someone who knows Access inside and out and is willing to guide you along the way, showing you handy little tricks and useful techniques that help you to get the results you need.

Well, I may not be there with you, but this book is the next best thing. I've gathered the really useful pieces of information that you need to create powerful queries, very easy-to-use forms, and reports that actually tell the story of what is going on inside your data. Along the way, I make sure to show you the special tricks and techniques that I use.

About This Book

Access Forms & Reports For Dummies is a hands-on guide that uses real-world examples to show you just what you need to know about Access and why you need to know it. You won't find a bunch of buzzwords and jargon. Rather, you do find the solid information you really need and can't find elsewhere about creating queries, forms, and reports. Yes, I do give you good, solid information about queries in addition to forms and reports because queries are an essential element that will help you create better forms and reports.

Access Forms & Reports For Dummies is also a reference that you can use as you like. If you have a specific problem you need to solve right now, you can jump directly to the related topic and skip around as much as you want. But if you really want to make Access work for you, I suggest that you read through the entire book because you will discover many things you don't already know.

Finally, *Access Forms & Reports For Dummies* is for users of pretty much any version of Access from Access 97 onwards. The basics of queries, forms, and reports haven't changed much, so you'll find this book extremely helpful no matter which version of Access you use.

Conventions Used in This Book

We've used a few conventions in this book to make it easier for you to spot special information. Here are those conventions:

- ✓ New terms are identified by using *italic*.

- ✓ Web sites addresses (URLs) are designated by using a `monospace` font.

- ✓ Any command you enter at a command prompt is shown in bold and usually set on a separate line. Setoff text in italic represents a placeholder. For example, the text might read:

  Enter the following expression, using your own name and dynamic report title:

  = "*Report title*"&[CurrentProject].[Name]

- ✓ Command arrows, which are typeset as ⇨, are used in a list of menus and options. For example, Tools⇨Options means to choose the Tools menu and then choose the Options command.

- ✓ Key combinations are shown with a plus sign, such as Ctrl+F2. This means you should hold down the Ctrl key while you press the F2 key.

- ✓ All Access properties and fields are set apart in `monospace` font, as well, like this: Use the `Input Mask` property of the Data tab to create an input mask.

- ✓ Wherever I instruct you to use a snippet of code, I set it apart like this:

```
INSERT INTO LIVEWINBID
SELECT [Auction 67].*
FROM [Auction 67];
```

What You Don't Have to Read

I always have a hard time telling people that they don't have to read certain parts of a book if they don't care to. You can find some really useful information hidden away in things like the text next to Technical Stuff icons, but I understand if you feel that there isn't room in your brain for one more bit of technical information. Maybe the best thing that I can recommend is that if you don't want to read the whole book now, start by reading what looks the most interesting and then, after you've discovered how much really cool stuff I include, go back and have a look at what you missed the first time. You'll be glad you did!

Icons Used in This Book

Access Forms & Reports For Dummies includes icons that point out special information. Here are the icons I use and what they mean:

This icon makes you seem like a real Access expert in no time. It highlights special tricks and shortcuts that make using Access even easier. Don't miss any of these!

This icon reminds you of important information that can be far too easy to forget and which can cause a lot of frustration when you do forget.

Be careful when you see this icon. It points out an area where you'll want to be extra cautious so that you don't cause yourself problems. It also tells you how to avoid the problems.

Technical Stuff is information for folks who want to know all the geeky details.

Real World Examples tell you about actual ways to apply your new Access techniques. Don't miss any of these because they're sure to give you a lot of ideas you can adapt and use.

From time to time I may direct you to another book that can be a good resource for you as you become a master of all things Access. This icon highlights those moments.

Foolish Assumptions

Making assumptions is always a gamble because assumptions can quickly come back to haunt you. That said, in writing this book I made some assumptions about you. This book is for you if:

✔ You have Access and want to know how to use it more effectively.

✔ You don't yet have Access, but are wondering if getting Access can help you organize all of that data you're currently trying to manipulate with Excel or some other spreadsheet.

✔ You have a bunch of data that you want to turn into useful information.

✔ You want to see how you can create more efficient Access reports and quit wasting so many trees.

✔ You would like to know how to use data from an external database without having to get down on your knees to beg permission every time you need to run a report.

✔ You have finally realized that you are a *5th Wave* cartoon addict and simply can't pass up the chance to see what is hidden in these pages.

How This Book Is Organized

Access Forms & Reports For Dummies has six parts. Each part is self-contained, but all the content is somewhat interconnected. That way you'll see the most useful information without a lot of boring repetition.

Part I: Accessing Both Ends: Getting Data in and Info Out

This part shows you the basics of queries, forms, and reports. You see how these pieces fit together and I make sure that you have the fundamentals down pat so that you have a good foundation for the rest of the topics.

Part II: Creating Effective Queries

Queries enable you to work with sets of data instead of simply dumping everything into the pot. This part shows you how to create effective queries that enable you to pick and choose what shows up in your forms and reports. You even see how you can step beyond simple queries by having a look underneath the fancy face that Access throws onto your queries.

Part III: Building Really Useful Forms

Forms make data entry and editing into a much easier task. This part shows you how to create forms that really are useful, and it tells you how to create forms that tackle data from more than one table at a time — for even greater efficiency.

Part IV: Designing Great Reports

With Access reports you can turn data into useful information. This part shows you how to create great reports that look good and that provide a wealth of understandable information.

Part V: Way Cool Advanced Queries, Forms, and Reports

Ordinary techniques are for ordinary people. This part takes you well beyond the ordinary and shows you how to get so much more from your queries, forms, and reports. This part also shows you some great tools you can use to make Access into an even more powerful partner for your database needs.

Part VI: The Part of Tens

This part tells you about some places on the Web where you can find even more information about Access. It concludes with some vital tips to remember as you work with Access.