Foreword

What Ken Henderson wanted to do is to write the best possible book on real, practical programming in Transact-SQL available, bar none. He succeeded. Ken had most of these tricks in his head when he started this book. When you work for a living, you tend to pick things up. If you are smart, you save them, study them, and figure out why they worked and something else did not work. If you are a nice person, you write a book so someone else can benefit from your knowledge. It is very hard for a person new to a language to walk into a project knowing only the syntax and a few rules and write a complex program. Ever try to get along in a foreign country with only a dictionary and a pocket grammar book?

Okay, we now have a goal for this book. The next step is how to write so that someone can use it. Writing in the age of the Internet is really different from the days when Victor Hugo would stand by a writing desk and write great novels on one continuous strip of paper with a quill pen. Today, within the week that a book hits hardcopy, the author can expect some compulsive geek with an email connection to read it and find everything that the author left out or got wrong and every punctuation mark that the proofreader or typesetter missed. In short, you can be humiliated at the speed of light.

But this can work both ways. When you are writing your book, you can exploit this vast horde of people who have nothing better to do with their time than be your unpaid research staff!

Since I have a reputation for expertise in SQL standards and programming, I was one of the people he emailed and asked to look over the manuscript. Neat stuff and some tricks I had not seen before! Suddenly, we are swapping ideas and I am stealing—er, researching—my next book, too. Well, communication is a two way street, you know.

I think you will find this book to be an easy read with a lot of good ideas and code samples. While this is specifically a Transact-SQL book, you will find that many of the approaches and techniques will work with any SQL product. Enjoy!

—Joe Celko