

Foreword by Thierry D'hers

Six months ago, a major change happened in the SQL Server Reporting Services team. Brian Welcker, who had been a key figure of the team since its inception, decided to change course in his career. Brian Welcker is one of the reasons Reporting Services is where it is today. When Tom Casey (General Manager for SQL Server Business Intelligence Unit) and Jason Carlson (Reporting Service Product Unit Manager) approached me 6 months ago to offer me Brian's position, I was honored, excited, and scared at the same time. How does one step into Brian's shoes? But at the same time, how do you pass on such a great opportunity to work on one of the coolest and most successful products at Microsoft?

You see, SSRS is not just a reporting product; it is a platform, with pieces shipping in many different Microsoft products — from Microsoft Office SharePoint to Microsoft Visual Studio to the Microsoft Business Division suite of business-line applications. In less than 6 years, Microsoft Reporting Services has grown from a small incubation reporting server to a full product suite, with information worker client tools, DBA management and configuration tools, a scalable enterprise-ready server, developer controls, and Office add-ins. It is now a mature product that stands its ground very well against the competition.

With SQL Server 2008, Reporting Services is now in its third version — but it is not just the third version of the same code. We reached a point where the Reporting Services team realized that in order to break new ground in terms of usability, performance, and scale, some core pieces of the product had to be re-architected and rebuilt. We also decided to remove a major dependency on IIS, which required even more re-design. As a result, not only the server, but most of the tools also had to be majorly revamped and redesigned. The result is a brand new product that you will discover in this very detailed and thoroughly written book.

You might ask, "Why join a product group that is now mature and well built? Some could think not much else can be done." Really? That is never the case in software development. Reporting is an area in full swing and is evolving rapidly. The needs and expectations of users are changing, as is the role of traditional IT and its relationship with its user base. Report Builder and our SharePoint integration are a first step toward empowering more information workers to take an active role in authoring and collaborating with reports. There are so many things we can do, and so many ideas we have, to make information workers more efficient and more proficient with reports, while providing the right management and provisioning tools for IT to ensure data quality availability and consistency. The future is bright; the future is exciting; the future will be fast paced with a lot of momentum. I fully believe we are on the edge of entering the Reporting 2.0 phase . . . but that will be the topic of a future book.

For now, I leave you in the hands of Paul Turley and his team from Hitachi Consulting. Hitachi has been a very close partner to Microsoft for years and, most importantly, has always kept close ties with the Reporting Services R&D team. Since I joined the team, I don't think a week has gone by that I haven't interacted with Paul, Thiago, Bryan, and Ken. It has been a real pleasure and blessing to have them work on the product while it is still in development. As they were writing chapters of the book, they were testing every single feature, trying every API, playing with the tools, building samples.

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Not only did this allow us to have interesting conversations and gather very useful early feedback on our design, but as a result, Paul's team is almost a virtual extension of our test team. They know the product very intimately and have developed a level of expertise that is pretty unique in the industry at this time. So, I hope you enjoy reading this book as much as I have, and just as much as the rest of the Reporting Services R&D team have enjoyed helping Paul and his team write it.

—Thierry D'hers
Group Program Manager
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Thierry D'hers is the Group Program Manager for the SQL Server Reporting Services team. His group oversees the requirement gathering, features definition and design, as well as evangelization of the product. Prior to this position, Thierry occupied various roles on the SQL Server Analysis Services team and the Microsoft PerformancePoint team. Thierry has more than 18 years of experience in the BI software industry, and has been at the source of many products at Microsoft, and prior to that, with Hyperion Solutions. When he is not building teams and designing BI software, Thierry enjoys skiing, mountain climbing, and playing the guitar.