

Who needs XML Databases?

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Summary of the Panel

Last year VLDB held a panel on “The Future Home of Data”. XML databases were one of the main contenders. Indeed, an explosive number of applications are migrating to XML. These applications span a wide variety of domains, including ERP, content management, publishing tools, financial research repositories, and more. Some applications use XML as a convenient way to share information, whereas others use XML as a solution for long-term storage. Regardless, the common denominator for all applications is the need for a standard repository infrastructure to speed up the development process, improve quality and stability, and reduce development costs.

The software market has responded with different solutions to this need. Some solutions rely on extended relational or object-oriented database systems, and others on enhanced information retrieval systems. Still others use the latest and greatest native XML databases. The solutions offered by the different vendors are still rather “fuzzy”. The standards for Query language and data model are still under development. Furthermore, there are no widely accepted performance benchmarks.

However, the lack of consensus on benchmarks and standards does not deter the development labs or the marketing departments of RDBMS vendors and a score of start-ups from capitalizing on the need for XML. In the race to be the XML database of choice, new versions of RDBMS, Object Oriented databases, and native XML databases, all with dozens of new features, are released every week.

Our goal in this panel is to address the following questions:

- Who really needs an XML database and for what purposes?
- Are there such things as XML applications? Is there a killer application that must have an XML database?
- Does the lack of common data model and standard for query language hold us back? If so, who should develop it?
- Ten years ago, object-oriented database systems tried to conquer the database market and failed. Is the past going to be replayed with native XML databases?
- Five years from now, which percentage of XML data will be stored in extensions of relational database systems, which percentage in variants of information retrieval systems, and which percentage in brave new native XML databases?

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The panelists are: Nelson Mattos (IBM SVL, USA), Harald Schöning (Software AG, Germany), Guido Moerkotte (Universität Mannheim, Germany), Amir Milo (Xyleme, France), David DeWitt (University of Wisconsin, USA), Ravi Murthy (Oracle, USA).