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- Build custom interfaces for all users

Laurie Ulrich Fuller
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Access[®] 2013

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**by Laurie Ulrich Fuller
and Ken Cook**



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Contents at a Glance

.....

<i>Introduction</i>	1
<i>Part I: Getting Started with Access 2013</i>	9
Chapter 1: Access 2013 Basic Training	11
Chapter 2: Navigating the Access Workspace	33
Chapter 3: Database Basics	55
<i>Part II: Setting the Table</i>	73
Chapter 4: Table Tune Ups	75
Chapter 5: Remodeling Your Data	91
Chapter 6: Types, Masks, and Triggers	109
<i>Part III: Data Management Mania</i>	131
Chapter 7: A Form for All Reasons	133
Chapter 8: Importing and Exporting Data	147
Chapter 9: Automatic Data Editing	159
Chapter 10: Access and the Web	171
<i>Part IV: Ask Your Data, and Ye Shall Receive Answers</i>	193
Chapter 11: Finding, Filtering, and Sorting Your Data — Fast	195
Chapter 12: I Was Just Asking . . . for Answers	211
Chapter 13: I Want These AND Those OR Them	237
Chapter 14: Number Crunching with the Total Row	245
Chapter 15: Express Yourself with Formulas	257
Chapter 16: Take Charge with Action Queries	271
<i>Part V: Simple and Snazzy Reporting</i>	281
Chapter 17: Fast and Furious Automatic Reporting	283
Chapter 18: Professionally Designed Reports Made Easy	305
Chapter 19: Headers and Footers and Groups, Oh My!	331
Chapter 20: Magical Mass Mailings	353

<i>Part VI: More Power to You</i>	361
Chapter 21: Analyze This!	363
Chapter 22: Steer Users in the Right Direction with Navigation Forms	375
<i>Part VII: The Part of Tens</i>	383
Chapter 23: Ten Common Problems	385
Chapter 24: Ten Uncommon Tips	397
<i>Appendix: Getting Help</i>	405
<i>Index</i>	413

Table of Contents

.....

<i>Introduction</i>	1
About This Book	1
Conventions Used in This Book	2
What You Don't Have to Read	2
Foolish Assumptions	3
How This Book Is Organized	3
Part I: Getting Started with Access 2013	4
Part II: Setting the Table	4
Part III: Data Management Mania	4
Part IV: Ask Your Data, and Ye Shall Receive Answers	5
Part V: Simple and Snazzy Reporting	5
Part VI: More Power to You	5
Part VII: The Part of Tens	6
Appendix: Getting Help	6
Icons Used in This Book	6
Where to Go from Here	7

Part 1: Getting Started with Access 2013..... **9**

Chapter 1: Access 2013 Basic Training	11
What Is Access Good For, Anyway?	12
Building big databases	12
Building apps	13
Creating databases with multiple tables	13
Databases with user forms	16
Databases that require special reporting	18
What's New in Access 2013?	21
New features	22
Reach out with SharePoint	23
How Access Works and How You Work with It	24
Opening Access	25
Selecting a starting point	26
Now What?	30



Chapter 2: Navigating the Access Workspace 33

Diving Right In 35

Working with Onscreen Tools in Access 38

 Clicking tabs 40

 Using buttons 41

 The File tab and Quick Access tools 42

 Accessing panes, panels, and context-sensitive tools 43

Customizing the Access Workspace 44

 Repositioning the Quick Access toolbar 45

 Adding buttons to the Quick Access toolbar 46

 Removing buttons from the Quick Access toolbar 48

 Minimizing the Ribbon 48

 Working with ScreenTips 50

Mousing Around 53

Navigating Access with the Alt Key 53

Chapter 3: Database Basics 55

Database Lingo 55

 Data, no matter how you pronounce it 56

 Fields of dreams (or data) 56

 Records 57

 Tables 57

 The database 57

Field Types and Uses 58

Choosing Between Flat and Relational Databases 62

 Isolationist tables 63

 Tables that mix and mingle 63

Building a Database 65

Adding and Removing Tables 68

 One more, please 69

 Oops, I didn't mean to do that 70

Part II: Setting the Table 73

Chapter 4: Table Tune Ups 75

The Primary Key to Success 75

 The lowdown on primary keys 76

 Creating a primary key 77

Making Tables Get Along 79

 Rules of relationships 79

 Relationship types 79

Building Table Relationships 81

 The Relationships window 82

 Table relationships 83

Indexing for Faster Queries 86

 Create your own index 87

 Adding and removing indexes 90

Chapter 5: Remodeling Your Data	91
Opening a Table for Editing.....	92
Inserting Records and Fields.....	95
Adding a record	95
Inserting a field.....	96
Deleting a field.....	100
Modifying Field Content.....	101
Name-Calling	102
Renaming fields	103
Renaming a table.....	105
Turn Uh-Oh! into Yee-Hah!.....	106
Chapter 6: Types, Masks, and Triggers	109
Access Table Settings	109
Field Data Formats.....	112
Text fields	112
Number and currency fields.....	115
Date/time fields	117
Yes/No fields.....	118
Gaining Control of Data Entry.....	120
You really need to put a mask on those fields	120
To require or not to require.....	126
Making your data toe the line with validation	127
Give Your Fingers a Mini Vacation by Default	129
Part III: Data Management Mania	131
Chapter 7: A Form for All Reasons	133
Generating Forms	133
Keeping it simple: Form tools.....	135
Granting most wishes: the Form Wizard.....	136
Customizing Form Parts	140
Taking the Layout view	141
The theme's the thing	142
Managing form controls.....	143
Chapter 8: Importing and Exporting Data	147
Retrieving Data from Other Sources	148
Translating file formats	148
Importing and linking	151
Hit the Road, Data.....	156
Export formats	156
Exporting table or query data.....	156

Chapter 9: Automatic Data Editing	159
Please Read This First!.....	159
Creating Consistent Corrections	161
Using Queries to Automate the Editing Process	164
Looking for duplicate records.....	165
Running the Find Duplicates Query Wizard	165
Chapter 10: Access and the Web	171
How Access Works with the Web.....	171
Understanding Office 365	172
Meet the Custom Web App.....	173
Click! Using Hyperlinks in Your Access Database	175
Adding a Hyperlink field to your table.....	176
Typing your hyperlinks.....	177
Fine-tuning your hyperlinks.....	179
Testing links	180
Embedding Web Content into Your Access Forms	181
Adding hyperlinks to your form.....	182
Publishing Your Data to the Web	187
Publishing your Access tables	188

***Part IV: Ask Your Data, and
Ye Shall Receive Answers*** **193**

Chapter 11: Finding, Filtering, and Sorting Your Data — Fast	195
Using the Find Command	196
Finding anything fast	196
Shifting Find into high gear.....	198
Sorting from A to Z or Z to A.....	200
Sorting by a single field.....	201
Sorting on more than one field.....	201
Fast and Furious Filtering	202
Filtering by a field's content.....	202
Filter by selection	204
Filter by Form.....	205
Unfiltering in a form.....	208
Filter by excluding selection	209

Chapter 12: I Was Just Asking . . . for Answers	211
Simple (Yet Potent) Filter and Sort Tools	212
Filter things first	213
Fact-finding with fun, fast filtering	215
Here's the "advanced" part	216
Select Queries	222
Solid relationships are the key to getting it all (from your tables)	223
Running the Query Wizard	223
Getting Your Feet Wet with Ad Hoc Queries	229
Adding the finishing touches	232
Saving the query	234
Running your query	236
Chapter 13: I Want These AND Those OR Them	237
Working with AND and/or OR	237
Data from here to there	239
Using multiple levels of AND	241
Establishing criteria with OR	241
Combining AND with OR and OR with AND	243
Chapter 14: Number Crunching with the Total Row	245
Kissing That Calculator Goodbye via the Total Row	245
Adding the Total Row to Your Queries	247
Giving the Total Row a Workout	248
Putting It Together with Group By	248
Well, that certainly sums it up	250
Counting, the easy way	252
Narrowing the results with Where	253
Creating Your Own Top-Ten List	254
Choosing the Right Field for the Summary Instruction	255
Chapter 15: Express Yourself with Formulas	257
A Simple Calculation	258
Complex Calculations	260
Calculate 'til you drop!	260
Using one calculation in another	261
Using parameter queries to ask for help	263
"Adding" words with text formulas	264
Hooray for the Expression Builder	265

Chapter 16: Take Charge with Action Queries	271
Easy Update.....	272
Add Records in a Flash	276
Quick Cleanup.....	279

Part V: Simple and Snazzy Reporting **281**

Chapter 17: Fast and Furious Automatic Reporting	283
Quick and Not-So-Dirty Automatic Reporting.....	284
Creating a quick, one-table report.....	284
Starting the Report Wizard.....	290
Previewing Your Report	295
Zooming in and out and all around	296
Pop goes the menu	297
Beauty Is Only Skin (Report) Deep.....	299
The Print Options tab.....	299
The Page tab.....	301
The Columns tab.....	302

Chapter 18: Professionally Designed Reports Made Easy	305
Report Repairs	306
Report Organization.....	308
Structural devices.....	308
Page breaks.....	310
Formatting Stuff	312
Adding color	313
Relocation, relocation, relocation	315
One size does not fit all.....	317
Spaced-out controls.....	318
Borderline beauty	319
Tweaking your text	323
Sneaking a Peek.....	325
Getting a Themes Makeover.....	326
Adding More Design Elements	327
Drawing lines	328
Pretty as a picture	328

Chapter 19: Headers and Footers and Groups, Oh My!	331
A Place for Everything and Everything in Its Place.....	332
Layout basics.....	332
Sections.....	334
Grouping your records.....	337
So you want more?.....	339

Customizing Properties	340
Controlling report and page headings	343
Adjusting individual sections	345
Itemized adjustments	346
Chapter 20: Magical Mass Mailings.	353
Massive Mailings with the Label Wizard	353
 Part VI: More Power to You	 361
Chapter 21: Analyze This!	363
From Flat File to Relational Tables with Table Analyzer	364
Record Database Object Information with the Database Documenter	368
Improve Database Performance Without Steroids.....	372
Chapter 22: Steer Users in the Right Direction with Navigation Forms	375
The Comings and Goings of a Navigation Form.....	375
Am I in the Right Place? Testing Navigation Forms	378
Maintaining the Navigation Form	379
Edit a Navigation form item.....	380
Delete a Navigation Form tab item	380
Move a Navigation form item	380
Displaying the Navigation Form at Startup	381
 Part VII: The Part of Tens.....	 383
Chapter 23: Ten Common Problems	385
That's Just Not Normal	385
You Type 73.725, but It Changes to 74.....	386
The Words They Are A-Changing	387
Was There and Now It's Gone.....	388
Undo	388
Search for the missing record.....	388
Backup recovery.....	389
You Run a Query, but the Results Aren't What You Expect	389
The Dreaded Parameter Dialog Box.....	391
The Slowest Database in Town.....	391
Your Database File Is as Big as a Whale	393
You Get a Mess When Importing Your Spreadsheet.....	394
We're Sorry; Your Database File Is Corrupt	394

Chapter 24: Ten Uncommon Tips	397
Document Everything as Though One Day	
You'll be Questioned by the FBI.....	398
Keep Your Fields as Small as Possible.....	399
Use Number Fields for Real Numbers.....	400
Validate Your Data	400
Use Understandable Names to Keep Things Simple.....	400
Delete with Great Caution	401
Backup, Backup, Backup	401
Think, Think, and Think Again.....	402
Get Organized and Stay Organized.....	402
There's No Shame in Asking for Help.....	402
Appendix: Getting Help	405
Asking Access for Help	406
Installed Help files.....	406
Asking the right questions.....	406
Online Help	408
Office.com	409
Search engines and other sites	410
Who's Our Next Caller?.....	410
Voice calls.....	411
TDD/TT calls.....	412
Index	413

Introduction



Welcome! Thank you for picking up this book. We assume you've done so because you're hoping it will explain how to use Microsoft Access 2013. And of course, as the authors, we believe this was a wise decision. We're quite certain that this is the best book for you to use to understand Access 2013 — but not just because we wrote it. Rather, we base this belief on the fact that both of us have been teaching and using Access for a very long time, and we know how to share what we know with our students. That's right, you're now one of our students — at least that's how we feel about you as our reader. Doesn't that make you feel all warm and fuzzy? We hope so.

Of course, being a normal human being, you probably have work to do, and you're probably juggling a whole lot of information. This means you need to use Access. You need it to organize your data. You need it to store all the information that's currently spilling out of notebooks, file drawers, your pockets, your glove compartment, your smart phone, your brain, everywhere. You need it so you can produce reports that make you look like the genius you are. You need it so you can create cool forms that will help your staff enter all the data you've got stacked on their desks — and in a way that lets you know the data was entered properly so that it's accurate and useful. You need Access so you can find little bits of data out of the huge pool of information you need to store. So that's it. You just need it.

About This Book

With all the power that Access has (and that it therefore gives *you*), there comes a small price: complexity. Access isn't one of those applications you can just sit down and use “right out of the box.” It's not scarily difficult or anything, but there's a lot going on — and you need some guidance, some help, and some direction to really use it and make it bend to your will. And that's where this book — a “reference for the rest of us” — comes in.

So you've picked up this book. Hang on to it. Clutch it to your chest and run gleefully from the store, or click the Add to Shopping Cart button and sit back with an expression of satisfaction and accomplishment on your face, because you've done a smart thing. When you get home, or when the book arrives in person (or by download to your hand-held device), start reading — whether you begin with Chapter 1 or whether you dive in and start with a particular feature or area of interest that's been giving you fits. Just read, and then go put Access to work for you.

Conventions Used in This Book

As you work with Access 2013, you're going to need to tell it to do things. You'll also find that, at times, Access has questions for you, usually in response to you asking it to do something. This book will show you how to talk to Access, and how Access will talk to you. To show the difference between the two sides of that conversation, we format the commands as follows:

This is something you type into the computer.

```
This is how the computer responds to your command.
```

Because Access *is* a Windows program, you don't just type, type, type — you also mouse around quite a bit. Here are the mouse movements necessary to make Access (and any other Windows program) work:

- ✓ **Click:** Position the tip of the mouse pointer (the end of the arrow) on the menu item, button, check box, or whatever else you happen to be aiming at, and then quickly press and release the left mouse button.
- ✓ **Double-click:** Position the mouse pointer as though you're going to click, but fool it at the last minute by clicking twice in rapid succession.
- ✓ **Click and drag (highlight):** Put the tip of the mouse pointer at the place you want to start highlighting, and then press and hold the left mouse button. While holding down the mouse button, drag the pointer across whatever you want to highlight. When you reach the end of what you're highlighting, release the mouse button.
- ✓ **Right-click:** Right-clicking works just like clicking, except you're exercising the right instead of the left mouse button.

What You Don't Have to Read

Now that we've told you that you should read the book, we're telling you that you don't have to read *all* of it. Confused? That's understandable, but don't be. This section of the Introduction exists to put your mind at ease so that you won't worry about having to digest every syllable of this book in order to make sense of Access. And more than just being a required section of the Introduction, the heading is true. You don't have to read the whole book.

You should read the chapters that pertain to things you don't know, but you can skip the stuff you do know or that you're fairly sure you don't need to know. If the situation changes and you eventually *do* need to know something, you can go back and read that part later. See? Easy.

If you only use Access at work, and you're using an Access database that some über-geek in your IT department created, chances are you can't tinker with it. Therefore, if you only need to know about using an existing Access database (or unless you have designs on that IT geek's job), you can skip the chapters on designing databases.

Of course, it's pretty useful to know what's happening "behind the scenes," but you don't have to read those chapters if you don't want to. We think you'll find them interesting, and they'll help you understand why certain things work the way they do in the database you use, but it's entirely up to you.

Foolish Assumptions

You need to know only a few things about your computer and Windows to get the most out of *Access 2013 For Dummies*. In the following pages, we presume that you . . .

- ✔ Know the basics of Windows 7 and Windows 8 — how to open programs, save your files, create folders, find your files once you've saved them, print, and do basic stuff like that.
- ✔ Have some goals that Access will help you reach. You
 - want to build your own databases
 - and/or*
 - want to work with databases that other people have created.
- ✔ Want to use and create queries, reports, and an occasional form.
- ✔ Have Windows 7 or 8.
 - If your computer uses Windows 98, 2000, or Vista, you can't run Access 2013.



How This Book Is Organized

So, do you feel ready to dive in? Energized and excited to learn Access? Great. Check out this breakdown of the parts in this book so you know what's coming and can figure out if there's a section you need to look at first. Each part covers a general aspect of Access, and then each part's individual chapters dig into the details.

Part I: Getting Started with Access 2013

In this first part of the book, you'll find out what Access is, what it isn't, how it works, and how you open it up and start using it. You'll find out how to navigate and master the Access workspace — and people who've used previous versions of Access find out about all the new features and tools that are part of Access 2013.

Part I also takes you through the process of planning your database — deciding what to store, how to structure your database, and how to use some of Access 2013's very helpful tools for starting a database with templates — cookie-cutters, to use a fun and accurate metaphor — for a variety of common database designs. Be prepared to pick up some helpful jargon, as you discover a bit about a few specialized terms that you really need to know.

Part II: Setting the Table

Part II takes you a bit deeper, starting out with a chapter on setting up more than one table to store related data — and moving on with chapters on setting up relationships between those tables, customizing the way data is stored in your tables, and ways to control how data is entered into the tables in your database. You'll also find out about tools that create new data in your tables — based on existing data — automatically.

Part III: Data Management Mania

Here you find out all about *forms* — the customized interfaces you create to make it easier to enter, edit, and look at your database. You'll also discover cool ways to share your Access data with other programs and how to bring content from Word documents and Excel worksheets into Access to save time, reduce the likelihood of data-entry errors, and build consistency within all the work you do in Microsoft Office.

Speaking of saving time and building consistency, you'll also learn about the Application Parts feature, through which you can recycle parts of your existing databases to build new ones. You'll also find out about using Access tables on the web, how Office 365 makes use of “the cloud,” and how to publish your database to the Internet. Look out, world!

Part IV: Ask Your Data, and Ye Shall Receive Answers

In Part IV, you discover how to ask questions such as “How many customers do we have in Springfield?” and “How long has that weird guy in Accounting worked here?” Of course, you already know how to form and speak sentences that go up at the end (so people know you’re asking a question), but when you ask a question in Access, the pitch of your voice rarely makes any difference. You’ll need, therefore, to know how to sort, filter, and query your data to get at the information you’re storing in your Access database. You’ll also want to know more about Action Queries — and these, too, can be found in Part IV.

Part V: Simple and Snazzy Reporting

Reports are compilations of data from one or more tables in your database. That statement might sound a bit scary, because “compilations” has four syllables and you might not be sure what a table is yet. Have no fear, however, because Access provides some cool automatic tools that let you pick and choose what you want in your report, and then it goes and makes the report *for you*. How neat is that?

And if automatic reports aren’t good enough for you — if your job relies upon reports not only being informative but also attractive and attention-grabbing, Part V will be like opening a birthday present. Well, not really, but you’ll find out about how to set up reports that organize your information logically, how to make sure your reports include page numbers, headings and other information to help people make quick use of the report, and how to include graphics to produce a professional-looking publication, whether viewed onscreen or in print.

Part VI: More Power to You

Part VI gives more power in the form of the Access Analyzer, a tool that tunes up your database for better performance. It also gives you more power by showing you how to create a user interface that controls what people see, which tables they can edit, and how they work with your database overall.

Part VII: The Part of Tens

The format of these chapters is designed to give you a lot of information in a simple, digestible fashion so you can absorb it without realizing you're actually learning something. Sneaky, huh?

Appendix: Getting Help

This isn't really a whole part, but it's darn useful. Remember how your mom told you the only foolish question is the one you don't ask? In this appendix, you find out where to go to ask — namely, the online and built-in help resources that Access offers.

Note: We went to the trouble of typing up a ton of records in a few sample databases that are designed to show you the tricks of the Access trade. You can find all the samples at www.dummies.com/go/access2013fd.

Icons Used in This Book

When something in this book is particularly valuable, we go out of our way to make sure that it stands out. We use these cool icons to mark text that (for one reason or another) *really* needs your attention. Here's a quick preview of the ones waiting for you in this book and what they mean.



Tips are incredibly helpful words of wisdom that promise to save you time, energy, and the embarrassment of being caught swearing out loud while you think you're alone. Whenever you see a tip, take a second to check it out.



Some things are too important to forget, so the Remember icon points them out. These items are critical steps in a process — points that you don't want to miss.



Sometimes we give in to the techno-geek lurking inside us and slip some technical babble into the book. The Technical Stuff icon protects you from obscure details by making them easy to avoid. On the other hand, you may find them interesting. (Your inner techno-geek will rejoice.)



The Warning icon says it all: *Skipping this information may be hazardous to your data's health*. Pay attention to these icons and follow their instructions to keep your databases happy and intact.

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