OpenOffice.org – a Sweet New Suite

By Jeff Ash

Wouldn't it be great to be able to deploy a set of office applications across the entire company that worked on a variety of operating systems such as Windows, Mac, Linux, Solaris, and FreeBSD? And what if it could also access data stored in BASIS DBMS files? Oh, and one more thing – what if the entire application set was absolutely free?

OpenOffice.org (OOo) is a "multi-platform and multi-lingual" office suite and an open-source project. Compatible with all other major office suites, the product is free to download, use, and distribute. Version 2.0, still in beta, provides several powerful applications including *Writer* (word processor), *Impress* (presentation program), *Draw* (vector Drawing tool), *Calc* (spreadsheet), *Base* (database), and *Math* (mathematical function creator). OOo seamlessly integrates all of the applications while delivering the most consistent user experience. Each application saves documents in a choice of OpenDocument format or proprietary formats such as Microsoft Word, Excel, or PowerPoint. Since OOo builds in Java support, it easily interfaces with the BBj® JDBC Driver.

This new office suite provides unlimited possibilities for BBx® generation users who run many applications on a variety of platforms, even within the same company. For example, a company using the BBj JDBC Driver can use the powerful formulas and Calculations available in *Calc* to analyze the raw data contained in their BASIS database. They could use *Writer* to produce form letters automatically customized for each customer on a mailing list. *Base* gives end users the ability to view the raw data in their database, write their own simple data presentation
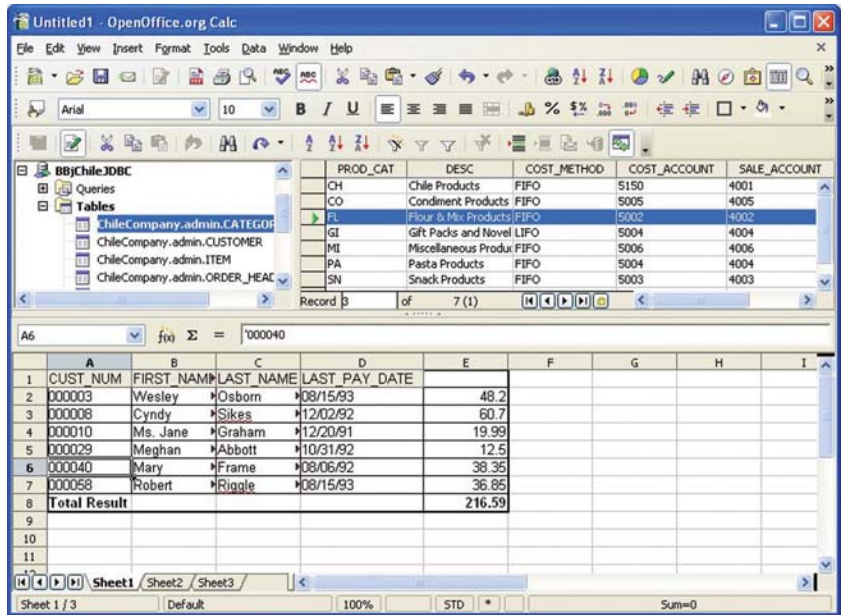

Figure 1. *Calc* spreadsheet generated from the Chile Company database

applications that interact with a BASIS database, or to generate professional-looking complex reports.

To illustrate this point, **Figure 1** shows a spreadsheet generated with *Calc* using a pivot table connected to the BASIS Chile Company demo database. Creating this spreadsheet took mere seconds using the Pivot Table wizard in OOo. This example includes a list of customers with their current balance due and the total due of all customers.

Writer can easily create, for example, a form letter that contains linked data from a BASIS database. As shown in

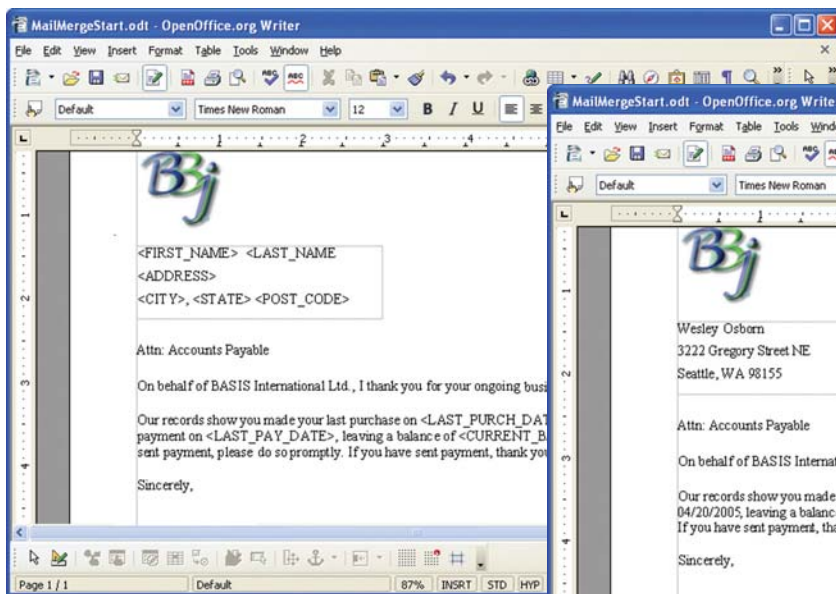**Figure 2.** *Writer* form letter containing the field name

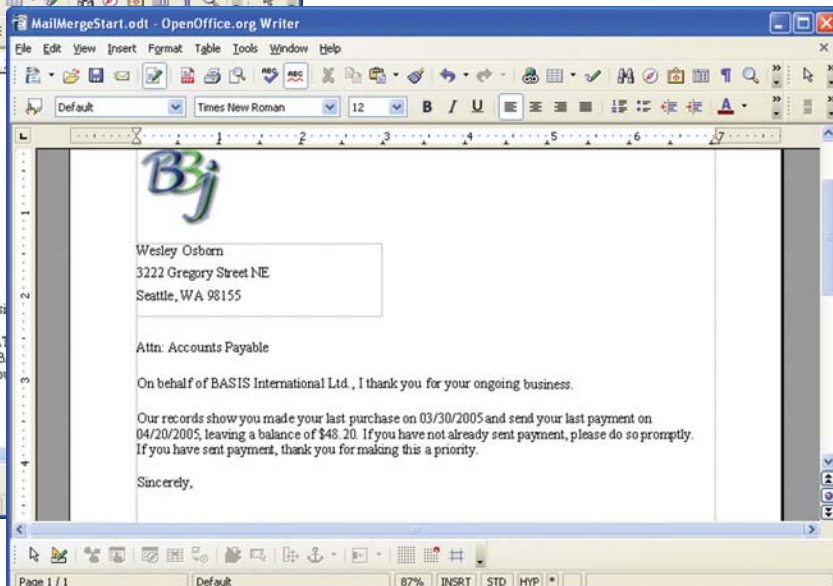**Figure 3.** A single letter with the merged data from the Chile Company database

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Figure 4. Sample form created in less than one minute with *Base* wizards

Figure 2, simply type the document and insert fields where necessary. The resulting letter with merged data from the database appears in **Figure 3**.

Similarly, *Base* provides access to the CATEGORY and ITEM tables and groups the information by category. Use wizards within *Base* to create fully functional forms; create a form like the sample in **Figure 4** in less than one minute of work.

These are only a few examples of the tremendous power available to users using the BBj JDBC Driver. The actual possibilities are endless.

Summary

A powerful suite of office applications is vital to almost every business. OOo provides a cost-effective platform independent way of meeting this vast need. BASIS continues its dedication to providing BBx customers a broad range of solutions to meet their spectrum of data access needs. The BBj JDBC Driver works very well with the OOo product and, therefore, opens up a world of possibilities to BASIS developers and end users. BASIS

Try OpenOffice.org with BBj, the newest generation of BBx, by downloading a copy today at www.openoffice.org.