

**DataPortal<sup>©</sup>**  
*by*  
**Connection Concepts**

***The Next Step in  
Sharing and Publishing  
Business Data  
over the Web***

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### **Introduction**

The World Wide Web (WWW or Web) standardized and simplified the exchange of electronic documents and generated a revolution in productivity and commerce. A similar revolution could result from the standardization and simplification of business data exchange. All components involved in a complete business process (e.g. an ordering system which may include inventory, shipping, billing, and receiving sub-systems) should be able to work together seamlessly, with effortless sharing of data, resulting in dramatic productivity gains and significant shifts in the way business systems operate.

Currently, business systems must conform to demanding and cumbersome Electronic Data Interchange (EDI) requirements, or programmers must develop transfer schemes on a case-by-case basis. XML is more general, but is inefficient and still requires a data conversion effort. There is no current standard for transferring business data without some development effort or prior knowledge of the data. Business processing has yet to experience a revolution in productivity comparable to that resulting from the introduction of the Web.

### **Connection Concepts' Solution – *DataPortal***

DataPortal is a new software solution that provides a standardized framework for exchanging business data immediately and without development effort or cost and provides a more flexible and efficient alternative to traditional EDI. While no formal universal standard of business data exists, many business system operations involve the transfer of data from one Relational Data Base Management System (RDBMS/Database) to another. Therefore, Database data can serve as a natural and common language (*lingua franca*) for business systems, making conversion to other forms (e.g. EDI, XML) unnecessary.

DataPortal transfers a Database over the Web in its entirety, including both structure and content, from a source Database to the destination Database without development or prior knowledge of the source Database (see Figure 1). Similar to the document-centric Web, DataPortal can be used to publish a complete Database residing in any supported, standards-compliant Database system. The published Database can be transferred, by an authorized client, to any other supported, standards-compliant target Database. The user requires only a DataPortal Web URL; no development effort or explicit software installation on the client is needed, if the DataPortal Applet client is used. Therefore, DataPortal provides the kind of effortless business data transfer that is required to reduce or even eliminate one of the barriers to the integration and automation of business systems and processes.

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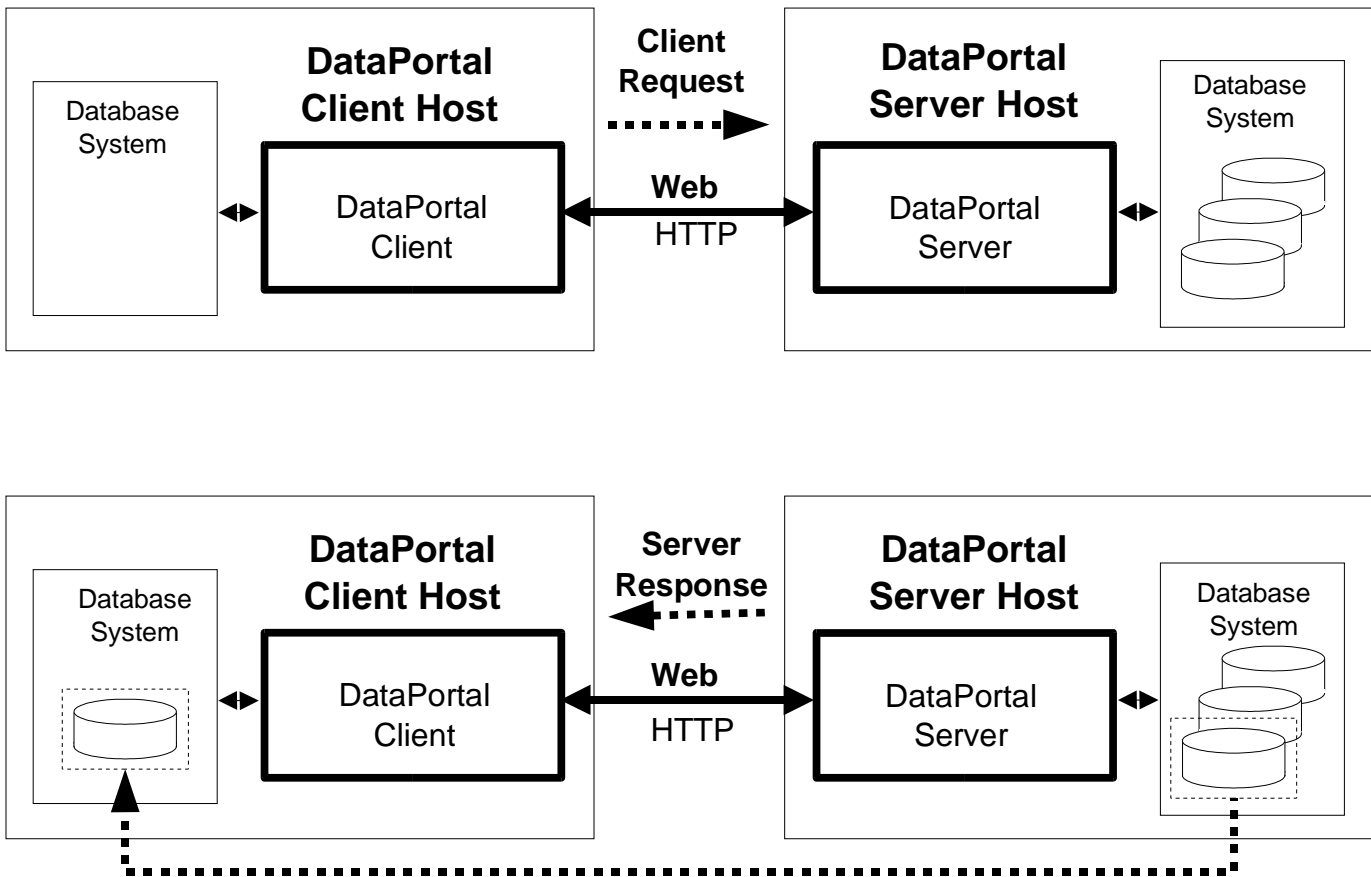


Figure 1) DataPortal Overview.

As a practical example, a set of orders can be generated by a business system and stored as records in its resident Database. The Database data can be published on a DataPortal server and the orders can be retrieved by DataPortal clients within partner business systems. As a result, the order information will reside on business partners' native Database systems available for immediate processing by the associated business systems. Order data can be submitted immediately, without a data conversion effort, to existing business partners. Similarly, new and prospective partners can start receiving orders without being concerned about time delays or investing in data conversion efforts.

DataPortal uses existing standards (e.g. JDBC, HTTP) to build a common framework for accessing Database data from major RDBMS systems and computer platforms. DataPortal discovers the complete structure of a source Database and distills it and its contents into an abstract representation in the form of a serial object stream sent over an HTTP or SSL channel. The serial data is received by a DataPortal client, which creates a new Database with the appropriate structure and populates it with data from the stream. The result is the creation of a snapshot copy of the source Database at a destination RDBMS chosen by the client.

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For ease of use and improved firewall penetration, DataPortal uses the standard Web HTTP or SSL protocols and the client may be a Java Applet. The user requires only a standard Java enabled Web browser, and the URL address of a DataPortal server (see Figure 2).

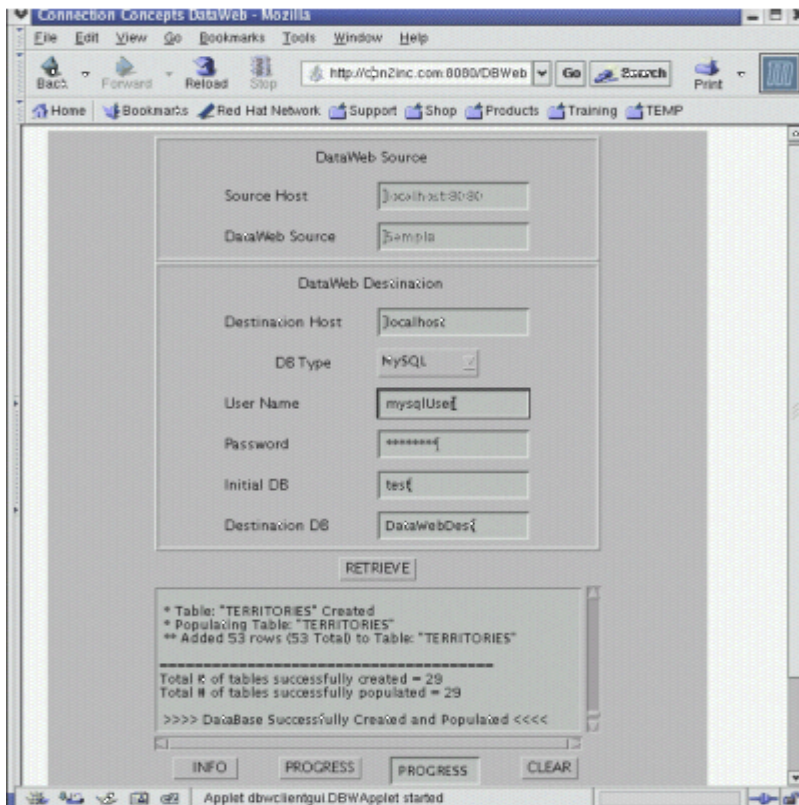


Figure 2) Web Browser / Applet User Interface

Additionally, a more feature-rich, standalone client application, which responds to HTTP/SSL requests, can be used for DataPortal transfers that are initiated programatically. All DataPortal clients may be required to provide authentication information before the server transfers the requested data. Multiple mechanisms to verify data integrity have been implemented.

DataPortal technology provides a standardized business data communication channel for an automated, integrated, and distributed business processing infrastructure that will contribute to the next generation of business computing.

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