



Bitemporal Data: Theory and Practice

Tom Johnston

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Bitemporal data has always been important. But it was not until 2011 that the ISO released a SQL standard that supported it. Currently, among major DBMS vendors, Oracle, IBM and Teradata now provide at least some bitemporal functionality in their flagship products. But to use these products effectively, someone in your IT organization needs to know more than how to code bitemporal SQL statements. Perhaps, in your organization, that person is you.

To correctly interpret business requests for temporal data, to correctly specify requirements to your IT development staff, and to correctly design bitemporal databases and applications, someone in your enterprise needs a deep understanding of both the theory and the practice of managing bitemporal data. Someone also needs to understand what the future may bring in the way of additional temporal functionality, so their enterprise can plan for it. Perhaps, in your organization, that person is you.

This is the book that will show the do-it-yourself IT professional how to design and build bitemporal databases and how to write bitemporal transactions and queries, and will show those who will direct the use of vendor-provided bitemporal DBMSs exactly what is going on "under the covers" of that software.

- Explains the business value of bitemporal data in terms of the information that can be provided by bitemporal tables and not by any other form of temporal data, including history tables, version tables, snapshot tables, or slowly-changing dimensions.
- Provides an integrated account of the mathematics, logic, ontology and semantics of relational theory and relational databases, in terms of which current relational theory and practice can be seen as unnecessarily constrained to the management of nontemporal and incompletely temporal data.
- Explains how bitemporal tables can provide the time-variance and nonvolatility hitherto lacking in Inmon historical data warehouses.
- Explains how bitemporal dimensions can replace slowly-changing dimensions in Kimball star schemas, and why they should do so.
- Describes several extensions to the current theory and practice of bitemporal data, including the use of episodes, "whenever" temporal transactions and queries, and future transaction time.
- Points out a basic error in the ISO's bitemporal SQL standard, and warns practitioners against the use of that faulty functionality. Recommends six extensions to the ISO standard which will increase the business value of bitemporal data.
- Points towards a tritemporal future for bitemporal data, in which an Aristotelian ontology and a speech-act semantics support the direct management of the statements inscribed in the rows of relational tables, and add the ability to track the provenance of database content to existing bitemporal databases.

This book also provides the background needed to become a business ontologist, and explains why an IT data management person, deeply familiar with corporate databases, is best suited to play that role. Perhaps, in your organization, that person is you.

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