

ACCESS <<<<<<<

By Patricia Cox

Happy New Budget Year

>>> Happy 2015 everyone! Thanks for sticking with me through the Master Budget Project. We completed the vast majority of the work that was done in Jason Porter and Teresa Stephenson's Excel Budget series. One thing we didn't address was how to bring data from other existing systems into our budget process each year. I have saved this until now so that we can also talk about reengineering your design when your data source changes or to suit your specific data issues, such as existing product numbers.

Delete Last Year's Data

Make a copy of the Access database you used for last year's budget. Change the file name to reflect the new budget year. Before you begin to load the new budget data, you'll want to remove the previous year's budget. You can accomplish this with a series of delete queries, one for each table. Use descriptive names that include the table name, such as "Empty Product Table," "Empty Cash Budget Table," and so forth. When you've created a query for each table, build a macro that runs them all and run it before you start to import new data. Save and name the macro so you can

use it each year. You can even add a button to run it on the data entry form if you don't want to search for it each time.

Importing Data

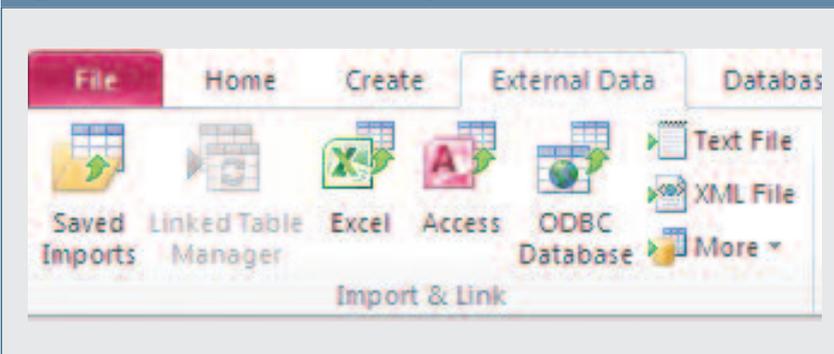
Now that the database is ready for new data, take a look at the data sources that you have for the various tables in the database. You may have bill of material information in another database that you could use to populate the Material table, or you may have parts data that can be used to populate the Parts table. This will prove very helpful if you have dozens or hundreds of products instead of the two we used in our project. You may also be able to import your beginning balance sheet from an existing accounting system. Many of those systems provide ways to export to Excel. Importing data from other files is much faster, easier, and potentially more accurate than reentering all the data manually. The External Data tab shows a number of different import options (see Figure 1).

The best strategy for importing data is to export the data from its original source into an Excel file that has the

fields listed in the same order as they appear in the Access table. Then you can either import the Excel file directly into an existing Access table or make a link to the spreadsheet and use an append query to get the data into the table. Either approach can be turned into a macro if you use the same file names each year. If you keep the file names generic and always keep them in the same location, you can create a macro that will work year after year. Also, you will want to keep the column headings in Excel the same year after year. By doing this, Access can "recognize" the data each time.

If your company uses a data warehouse—a system or software where data tables are stored in order to access for reporting and other uses—you can connect directly to tables in the data warehouse using an ODBC (Open Database Connectivity) connection and then create append queries to import data into the Access database. That will likely require working with your IT department to find out if a data warehouse is used in your organization and how to get access to it. It isn't difficult, but you have to know the names of the tables in the

Figure 1. Options for Importing Data



data warehouse. They should also be able to assign you Read Only privileges to the data so that you don't change anything in the data warehouse. Using ODBC is a fantastic option because you can then rerun your budget process as often as you need to as the budget data develops in your primary systems and update the database with changes that were made in products, expected sales, and so on.

One thing to look out for when importing data is when the format of the data coming from existing sources might conflict with the setup in the database. For example, the data type for the Product Number field in the Product table was set to AutoNumber so that we'd

have a unique identifier for every new product we add. If your existing system already has a defined style for product numbers, you'll want to change the data type in the Access table to match it—usually by setting it to Text or Number.

Import Macro

Once you have identified all of the data sources and created export files, be sure to give them descriptive names relatively similar to the tables they will populate, such as Product Import.xlsx for the Product table. Save the files in the same folder as the database file. Then create a new macro, adding the appropriate actions needed to import the files. Remember, you may have to click the Show All

Actions button when in Design view in order to find the actions you need. If you aren't certain what the action does, select it and a description will appear in the bottom of the window along with the arguments.

Final Touches

Once you've imported all the data that can be imported, use the forms on the Data Entry Menu and the data fields on the Reports Menu to update your data and complete the reports. You can input a variety of scenarios, print out the reports, and present them to management for consideration.

Next month we'll look at some alternatives that will make data entry easier if you have to do all of it manually. **SF**

Patricia Cox has taught Excel and Access to management accounting students and other college majors and has consulted with local area businesses to create database reporting systems since 1998. She also is a member of IMA's Madison Chapter. To send Patricia a question to address in the Access column, e-mail her at kathrynmann@tds.net.