Interfacing SAP R/3 Logistics with Lotus Notes in the ADAM project

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Keywords:
Enterprise Application Integration, MRP/ERP systems, Groupware, Data modeling.

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1 Integrated Enterprise Applications and ADAM

After the "Integrated Enterprise Applications" hype of the last decade which brought a proliferation of new concepts and applications like Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) systems or Data Warehouses, there still remains a strong demand for systems integration.\(^1\) Despite the expectations, and often due to a lack of resources to master the technical and organizational complexity, many of the so-called integrated solutions are today not able to cover all data processing requirements of an enterprise.

Dedicated applications may make sense in different ways: Whereas transaction oriented environments such as an SAP R/3 system mainly handle highly structured data in online processing and strictly specified processes, document-oriented groupware applications like Lotus Notes are best placed to support the handling of unstructured data in decentralized, flexible workgroup environments.\(^2\) Heterogeneous IT landscapes are (and will remain), despite their conceptual complexity and the need for interfacing, a reality for many enterprises in the years to come.

To cope with this outlook, a class of students in Information Engineering has been put to work on a systems integration problem. Taking a real-world situation in a large manufacturing company, technical and organizational solutions for an interconnection between an MRP/ERP and a groupware system had to be found, the two base systems involved being SAP R/3 on the one and Lotus Notes on the other side. The project code ADAM employed stands for "Automation of Data flow from sAles forecast to Materials requirement planning".\(^3\)

This report presents both the business and software engineering problems and depicts some of the technical peculiarities of the design and implementation of the ADAM solution. Not considered here are the issues of the development and project management activities in this particular project.\(^4\)

A word to the scope of the ADAM approach: The problems and solutions described in this report may apply to a large business community – it was found that 70% of the enterprises using SAP R/3 ERP solutions operate Lotus Notes applications as well.\(^5\)

\(^1\) Pender (2000).

\(^2\) Moser (1999), p. 43.

\(^3\) "Automatisierung des Datenflusses zwischen Absatzvorschau und Materialprognose", in German.

\(^4\) These issues are discussed in Röthlin (2001).

\(^5\) Rost (1999), p. 70.
2 The business problem and requirements behind ADAM

2.1 The overall business environment and its IT infrastructure

The project partner involved in this project is a leading supplier of power electronics products. These products are used in all kinds of industrial applications, mainly for power supply purposes. The partner’s operation base is Switzerland; the sales, engineering and production line organizations are concentrated on one industrial site, in order to facilitate the overall process control. For the ADAM project, and throughout this paper, the business case of the partner company defines the context of the IT solution.

In the mid-1990s, SAP’s R/3 system has been chosen as the general application for ERP. Finance and accounting, sales order handling, manufacturing, and specific parts of materials management are today heavily supported by SAP R/3.

On the other side, for collaborative tasks and internal communication, the Lotus Notes groupware application is used as a corporate standard. Hundreds of customized databases have been created to support specific communication and knowledge sharing needs of the diverse business units. Finally, office applications, e.g., spreadsheet processors like Microsoft Excel, have a major importance, especially when it comes to number handling, in order to prepare forecast statements, or for budgeting purposes.

2.2 The replenishment problem: Components, systems, and project assemblies

In order to be able to deliver requested goods to customers on time, the needed quantities of end products must either be (a) taken directly from stock (for standardized modules, i.e., "components"), (b) assembled in lots ("systems"), or (c) built to order ("projects").

As these three ways of delivery may coexist in a given business unit, a shared stock management system has been installed. This facility is called "sales stock", even if some of the modules stored are also built into standard or customer specific systems, i.e., first used for assembly (production) before being shipped as part of a system.

The quantities of components needed to assemble a system are specified with SAP R/3’s bills of materials (BOMs). Therefore, an exact description is available on how to derive components requirements if the systems requirements at the upper level are known. The components requirements planning has hence to take into account both the primary requirements (modules sales) and the derived contribution from systems assemblies.

Up to now, the forecast of the resulting components requirements was done using EXCEL spreadsheets. One of the goals of the ADAM project was the development of a combined approach, integrating historical data, BOM master data, and sales forecasts for
modules and systems, in order to calculate the components requirements in a collaborative application environment.

2.3 The materials management consolidation (as-is) process

Based on the forecast data generated by the different sales units, the central Materials Management office consolidates the materials requirements and enters the results manually into the SAP R/3 material management system. A sample screen of the outcome of this operation is shown in Figure 1 below: The required quantity of material *ES-1300-C* for month 03/2000 is 118 pcs.

![Figure 1: Manually entered materials requirements in SAP](image)

2.4 The sales information system (as-is)

The sales force operates globally, pursuing sales opportunities with in-house partners and local sales offices, or in collaboration with main contractors. For reporting purposes of the expected order intake, the sales project statistics are collected monthly, in order to give the management a consistent view on current sales activities.

Besides the financial interest behind this data, sales information is also needed to prepare the production and supply system. The information needed to set up such an extended sales statistics is straightforward: A corresponding data set consists typically of a

- Project Name
- System class identifier
- Number of systems contained in project
- Probability that project will be realized and corresponding order is won
- Delivery date
- Sales price.
Due to the collaborative character of the sales pursuit processes, Lotus Notes database applications are used to share common settings, e.g., customer reference or currency codes. Reported data can be collected and processed by all parties concerned, including staff concerned with reporting. Figure 2 shows a sample project list.

2.5 Business requirements for the (to-be) ADAM system

The main task of the system to be designed is to support Material Requirements Planning, based on input from the Sales Information Systems.

Figure 3 shows the hierarchy of requirements (projects, systems, and components) as introduced in section 2.2.
Two remarks concerning the input from the SAP system: In order to calculate the requirements for a component (based on the number of systems), the BOM quantities information must be known. Secondly, the materials specifications to be processed are based on the master data contained in the SAP information base. As there may be a lot of non relevant items, filter conditions have to be imposed to prevent undesired data to “congest” the internal ADAM database.

Table 1 summarizes the business requirements for the ADAM system:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ID</th>
<th>Business Requirement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>B.1</td>
<td>Simplification, stabilization, and improvement of the process of materials requirements forecasting, with the purpose of better inventory management and supplier integration. The transparency, security, and traceability of the overall process is to be improved, while the process data integrity has to be increased.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B.2</td>
<td>Standardization of the handling and the tools used in forecasting.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B.3</td>
<td>Secure know how (often hidden in dispersed spreadsheets' formulae) on forecasting.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B.4</td>
<td>What-if simulation facility.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B.5</td>
<td>Traceability of information flow.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B.6</td>
<td>Secure and stable interface management between systems involved.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B.7</td>
<td>Broad user accessibility with distributed roles and standard protection procedures.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B.8</td>
<td>Feedback loop for confirmation of imported sales data, done by sales responsible, after “snapshot” import.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1: Business Requirements

2.6 Technical requirements for the ADAM system

Besides the business issues behind the new forecasting system, the IT infrastructure also imposes specific requirements for software development (Table 2).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ID</th>
<th>Technical Requirements</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>T.1</td>
<td>Standardization of GUI (buttons, menus), adherence to corporate style guide.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T.2</td>
<td>Solution is to be implemented on existing platforms (SAP R/3, Lotus Notes). No modifications or extensions should be made in SAP R/3 (no ABAP programming).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T.3</td>
<td>Software design ready for operation under Lotus Notes 4.6, SAP R/3 3.0E and 4.6B.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T.4</td>
<td>Access security concept, using Lotus Notes security components.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2: Technical requirements
3 Technical background

3.1 SAP R/3

3.1.1 The SAP R/3 package

As Ovanesyan (1999) describes, “SAP R/3 is a self-sufficient, real-time, multi-user, client-server and multi-platform modular ERP information system that emulates virtually every aspect of a modern enterprise. SAP R/3 allows a certain degree of customization while enforcing a variety of strict data integrity driven rules. It has its own internal programming language (ABAP/4) and uses a variety of database back-ends (SQL Server, Oracle, Informix, etc.). SAP R/3 implemented event-chains and data objects well before event driven programming became a reality.”

3.1.2 Client-Server model

The R/3 architecture is based on a software-oriented, multi-tier, client/server principle. Although SAP can be implemented in a centralized (one-tier) configuration, it usually utilizes a distributed architecture, depending on customer requirements. The three levels implemented by SAP are the presentation, application, and database layers.

In the classical tree-tier R/3 configuration, users are entering and retrieving data in a dialog with the presentation clients (SAP GUI). The data entered is passed to the application engine, which is responsible for one of the most distinctive functions of the R/3 system: To guarantee the business- and object-related data integrity of the system. The application layer maintains the dialog with the user via the presentation layer, on one side, and on the other, forwards the validated data to the database system.

Figure 4 shows that, besides the classical direct user access through the SAP GUI, alternative forms of interaction are possible. In the example, an application "ExtApp 1" may insert data into tables dTab2, dTab4, dTab5, and dTab6, using the "Application process 2", which enforces the same integrity rules on incoming data as the "Application process 1" imposes on data entered through the SAP GUI.

---

3.1.3 Interfacing SAP R/3 with external systems

SAP offers several interfaces for connecting R/3 to external systems, and on different levels; Moser (1999) depicts an overview of the different possibilities. Technologies like EDI or IDoc communication primitives were, because of their high complexity and message based character, somewhat out of the reach of this project, whereas OLE's stability still raised concerns. In the context of this paper we will therefore examine only the details of the RFC and the BAPI technology, which are currently the most used approaches for the ADAM type of application integration.

3.1.3.1 RFC technology

RFCs (Remote Function Calls) are used for communications between two independent SAP systems, or for communications between an SAP system and a non-SAP system, such as an external application. They can also be used for communications between SAP function modules on the same system. From a technical point of view, RFCs are using the TCP/IP protocol stack in client/server, or SNA LU6.2 in mainframe environments. The communication between two systems can be managed synchronously or asynchronously. An external (client) program has to first set up a connection through the local RFC software, then sends its function execution request, and terminates the session with a close command.

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9 SAP (1999).
To support developers of external applications for R/3, SAP ships an RFC Software Development Kit (RFCSDK) together with its GUI software. This SDK contains libraries and interfaces for various programming languages, including C, C++, JAVA, and OLE-enabled environments.

On the SAP application side, the RFC function modules are ABAP scripts, which may be called either from other ABAP programs or external applications. Figure 5 shows the implementation of the RFC function RFC_CUSTOMER_GET.

![Figure 5: Implementation of the RFC function RFC_CUSTOMER_GET](image)

### 3.1.3.2 BAPI technology

SAP has recently introduced object-oriented technology in the R/3 system by making R/3 processes and data available in the form of SAP Business Objects (BO). These software components cover a broad range of R/3 business data that can be accessed through stable and standardized interface methods, which are called Business Application Programming Interfaces (BAPIs).\(^{12}\)

The Business Objects contain in their kernel information on how to access the data needed within the SAP data model. The data "insert" or "update" operations on Business Objects are strictly protected by object-related (internal) constraints and business rules which determine the allowable range of values the stored data may take.

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\(^{11}\) SAP (2000a).

\(^{12}\) Moser (1999), p. 54.
Techniques for accessing BAPIs include COM/DCOM (from Microsoft), RFC, or JAVA. The following code excerpt taken from a sample Visual Basic application program shows the ease of use of BAPIs in conjunction with the SAP ActiveX control:

```vba
'Create a BAPI ActiveX control object
Set oBAPICtrl = CreateObject("SAP.BAPI.1")

'Create a local instance of the SAP Business Object "SalesOrder"
Set boOrder = oBAPICtrl.GetSAPObject("SalesOrder")

'Now call the method of the created object
instanceboOrder.CreateFromData OrderHeaderIn:=oHeader, _
OrderPartners:=oPartners, _
OrderItemsIn:=oItemsIn, _
Return:=oReturn

'Clean up by releasing the SAP Business Object and freeing the BAPI ActiveX Control object
```

*Code Fragment 1: Accessing BAPI code from Visual Basic*

### 3.1.4 Comparison and selection of RFC and BAPI technologies

Table 3 gives an overview of distinctive features of the RFC and BAPI technologies.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ISO/OSI level classification</th>
<th>RFC</th>
<th>BAPI</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Presentation layer</td>
<td>Application layer</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Implementation in SAP R/3 core</th>
<th>RFC</th>
<th>BAPI</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ABAP function</td>
<td>ABAP function</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lotus Script library provided for Notes</th>
<th>RFC</th>
<th>BAPI</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes (SAP LSX)</td>
<td>Yes (SAP LSX)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Accessibility to SAP materials master data (on plant level)</th>
<th>RFC</th>
<th>BAPI</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes: Through direct table read</td>
<td>No BAPI available</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 3: Comparison of RFC and BAPI technologies*

Due to the lack of "out of the box" functionality provided by the current (3.0E and 4.6B) functionality, the BAPI solution could not been considered for the ADAM project. Large companies like, e.g., Swisscom, are building their own BAPIs for certain applications.

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14 SAP (2000b).
16 Radding (1999).
Adding BAPIs always means "adding ABAP coding", which would change the R/3 applications portfolio and as such contradict requirement T.2 in Table 2.

3.2 Lotus Notes

3.2.1 Product idea

The Lotus Notes family is the leading application suite in the groupware market. More than 50 million seats installed worldwide make it the premier application in collaborative office authoring tools.\textsuperscript{17}

The Notes concept is based on \textit{distributed document databases} that help users to create and share information within organizations. Documents may be created, displayed, and modified using forms and views. Notes documents are collections of data items, bundled with type and format information, and a layout presentation (form). Among the different data types provided, Rich Text fields are the most powerful elements, providing hypertext functionality: they may contain formatted text, links to other Notes objects (documents, views, or databases), or internet resources. For multiple users working in parallel on a given Notes document, the server software ensures secure operation by using an "intelligent" conflict resolution mechanism. Each database is protected by a specific, role-based access scheme that allows individuals or groups to access documents.

Its offline (disconnected operation) capability, the multi-level security concepts, and the Web-enabled Domino server make Lotus Notes a one-fits-all instrument for intra- and extra-organizational communication.

3.2.2 System components\textsuperscript{18}

The Notes/Domino family contains the following components:

\textit{Domino Server:} The Domino Server administrates shared databases and handles both the internal and external (Internet) communication. Besides the server operation with Notes clients, a Domino server is able to run POP3, SMTP, and other Internet protocols. When running as a HTTP server, it is both able to dispatch Notes database contents to a browser client or to deliver Notes contents to an external Web server.

\textit{Notes clients:} A Notes client may access both Notes databases and web contents. For the Server administration and the design of Notes databases, specialized client applications are provided (Domino Administrator and Domino Designer, respectively).

\textsuperscript{17} Hase (2000).
\textsuperscript{18} Fricke (1999).
Web clients: When using the Domino server as a Web engine, most of the Notes database content may be accessed via a Web browser (yet, Web access was not a criteria for the ADAM software).

Notes standard applications: E-mail will remain one of the most commonly used features of any groupware application. Notes handles E-mails the same way as any Notes document, stores them in a user-specific (mail) database, and supports the usage of standard elements like graphics, tables, or hyperlinks to other Notes database items.

Much of the same applies to the Task Management and Calendar functions, that are both closely integrated with the E-mail application.

### 3.2.3 Application programming for Lotus Notes

Notes provides users with several programming languages for developing customized applications. Besides the recently introduced, Internet-driven languages like Java and JavaScript, Notes automation may be implemented using:

- (Notes) Formula language (@Functions),
- (Notes) Command language (@Commands), and
- LotusScript

The Formula and Command languages are especially helpful and straightforward for adding GUI functionality (to open documents, trigger import procedures, etc.), and have been heavily used in the ADAM user interface development. LotusScript is a fully fledged, object-oriented programming environment, also supported by other Lotus products, including a full-text editor with syntax highlight, debugger, and data logging functionality.

LotusScript is an embedded, Basic scripting language with a powerful set of language extensions that support object-oriented application development. The interface to Notes is through predefined object classes. Notes compiles and loads user scripts at runtime, if needed, and automatically includes Notes class definitions.

The most important aspects of LotusScript are:

- It is a superset of the Basic language, thus easy to learn for Visual Basic programmers.
- Cross-platform capability: LotusScript code runs unaltered on several platforms, such as Windows, MacOS, or UNIX systems.

19 Lotus (1999b).
21 Lotus (1999b).
• Object-oriented and event-driven: LotusScript code can use object classes provided by other Lotus (or external) libraries. LotusScript classes support single inheritance, constructors/destructors and method overriding. This functionality allows users to take advantage of object-oriented programming, and to rapidly prototype their own custom business objects. Scripts may be connected to events, typically those triggered by user interaction with the GUI, such as "button pressed" actions.

• Library functionality: Scripts can be grouped into libraries and referenced to with the `use` directive.

• LotusScript Extensions (LSX): LotusScript allows users to create their own classes and objects, called LotusScript extensions (LSXs). Specialized scripts from third party providers are available.

### 3.2.4 Interfacing Lotus Notes with ERP systems

After years of development efforts on both SAP and Lotus sides, a multitude of integration tools is today available.\(^{22}\)

From the R/3 report extraction tool ("Lotus Connection for R/3") or the high level, high performance data integration engines like the "Lotus Enterprise Integrator" (LEI) down to E-mail and Workflow interconnection tools, solutions are offered for all desired levels of integration.

### 3.2.5 The LotusScript extension library for SAP R/3 (SAP LSX)

The LotusScript extension for R/3 enables Domino applications to both send and receive R/3 data, i.e., to read and/or update data in an SAP R/3 system.\(^{23}\) Data exchange can take place either synchronously or asynchronously via a Domino server agent invoked by the LSX. Calls can also be invoked from a client.\(^{24}\)

The LSX module places an object-oriented wrapper around SAP's Remote Function Call Software Development Kit (RFCSDK, see 3.1.3.1), which allows programmers to access the RFC and BAPI functionality of the SAP business objects. The SAP LSX object classes support the application development for Notes and Domino Web applications, but are too limited when it comes to E-mail and Workflow integration. The software product "LSX for SAP R/3" is available free of charge on the R/3 GUI CD, starting from Release 3.1G.\(^{25}\)

Specifically, the SAP LSX consists of two DLLs, that are either installed automatically with the SAP GUI or may be added manually with the Registry Editor (under WinNT/2000).

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\(^{22}\) Moser (1999), pp. 43-46.


\(^{24}\) Morris (1999).

3.2.5.1 Connecting a LotusScript application to SAP LSX
The connection to the SAP LSX functionality must be initialized by a \texttt{USELSX "*rfc"} statement. After this initialization, the entire SAP LSX object model is accessible.

3.2.5.2 The SAP LSX object model
The SAP LSX object model is shown in Figure 6.

![SAP LSX object model diagram](image)

**Figure 6: The SAP LSX object model\(^{26}\)**

The SAP LSX comprises three levels of functionality, of which only one will be used in the ADAM context:

- The "Transaction interface" allows the programmer to call SAP transactions, to set GUI screen fields to given values, and to evaluate the parameters returned by the calling program.

- The "Function base interface" covers the central RFC access, where parameters are passed to the called R/3 function (through "Exports"), and "Imports" are expected as return values from the RFC. Additionally, bulk data may be transferred using the "Tables" parameter which contains data transferred in rows and columns.

- A third possibility consists in using the "Object interface" which supports a classic object-oriented access: SAP Business Objects may be accessed directly, using their business object (BAPI) methods.

\(^{26}\) Lotus (1999a).
3.2.5.3 Characteristics of the “function base interface”

Table 4 describes the objects of the “function base interface”.  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class/Method/Property</th>
<th>Description of class and its main items</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>RfcServer</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Properties:</td>
<td>The RFC Server describes the basic session object needed to access an SAP R/3 system.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>.Destination</td>
<td>A successful logon sequence (i.e., execution of the RfcServer.Logon method) requires that the connection attributes are set, similarly to the SAP R/3 GUI login parameters.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>.HostName</td>
<td>The SAPVersion property returns the SAP R/3 server software version, after successful connection.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>.System</td>
<td>Several possibilities exist in order to .Load or .Save connection parameters from an .ini file.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>.GatewayHost</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>.GatewayService</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>.TraceLevel</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>.Client</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>.User</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>.Language</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>.Password</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>.Message</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>.SAPVersion</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methods:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>.Load</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>.Logoff</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>.Logon</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>.Save</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>RfcFunction</strong></td>
<td>The RfcFunction class is used to manage RFC functions and their context. When the function object is created, all appropriate Imports/Exports parameters (see RfcParameter class) as well as the Tables objects (see RfcTable class) will be created automatically. The Lotus Notes Exports parameters will be used as imports on the SAP side, and vice versa; the Tables property contains SAP table data. The Message item contains a message, if an error has occurred during the Call of the RFC function named Name.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Properties:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>.Exports</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>.Imports</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>.Message</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>.Name</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>.Parent</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>.Tables</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methods:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>.Call</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>RfcParameter</strong></td>
<td>The RfcParameter class is used to edit Import and Export parameters for RFC functions (see RfcFunction.Imports and RfcFunctionExports). The Clear method resets a Value to &quot;blank&quot; status.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Properties:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>.IsStructure</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>.Name</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>.Parent</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>.Type</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>.Value</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methods:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>.Clear</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

27 Lotus (1999a).
Section 3: Technical background

### Class/Method/Property

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class/Method/Property</th>
<th>Description of class and its main items</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>RfcTable</strong></td>
<td>The <em>RfcTable</em> object contains columns and rows. Depending on its functional context a table may serve as input or output for an RFC function to be executed. Whenever a new RFC function object is created, all tables required will be initialized automatically. The <em>SetCell</em> and <em>GetCell</em> methods allow to modify/read the content of a specified attribute (specified by its row and column indices) of the table object.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Properties:**
- .ColumnCount
- .ColumnName
- .Name
- .Parent
- .RowCount
- .Rows
- .SetCell
- .Table
- .Width

**Methods:**
- .GetCell

| **RfcRow**             | The row object supports the access of individual rows within an *RfcTable*. The row class is "auto-expanded" so that individual column values may be accessed directly by their column name with *GetCell*. |

**Methods:**
- .GetCell

---

**Table 4: Extract from the SAP LSX object model (function base interface)**

### 3.2.5.4 Sample code for system logon and RFC execution

The following code shows the usage of the SAP LSX for logging onto an SAP system:

```vba
Dim objServer as New RFCserver
' setting the connection parameters for SAP HCC installation
objServer.HostName = "sap.fancy.com"
objServer.System = "XON"
objServer.Client = "600"
objServer.User = "SMITH"
objServer.Language = "D"
objServer.Password = "JOHN"

' logon ...
If objServer.Logon() <> True Then
    MsgBox "Logon error", 0, objServer.Message
End If
```

**Code fragment 2: Logon to the SAP system**

The next example shows a sequence on how to prepare and execute an RFC (without logon/logoff handling):

```vba
Dim objServer As RfcServer
Dim RfcCustomerGet As RfcFunction
Dim tblCustomer_t As RFCtable

' log on ...
Set RfcCustomerGet = New RfcFunction(objServer, "RFC_CUSTOMER_GET")
```
RfcCustomerGet.Exports("NAME1").Value = "+"
RfcCustomerGet.Exports("KUNNR").Value = "+"

If RfcCustomerGet.Call = True Then
   ' Bind the table object to the function's interface table
   ' "CUSTOMER_T" and scan all rows contained in the table
   Set tblCustomer_T = RfcCustomerGet.Tables("CUSTOMER_T")
   ' autoexpand feature:
   Set tblCustomer_T = RfcCustomerGet.CUSTOMER_T
   ForAll rowCustomer in tblCustomer_T
      MsgBox rowCustomer.KUNNR & "+ " & rowCustomer.NAME1
   End ForAll
   ' log off ...
End If

---

**Code fragment 3: Calling RFC_CUSTOMER_GET from LotusScript**

The task of this fragment is to display all customer entries present in the SAP database, one after the other. The example should be seen in conjunction with section 3.1.3.1, where the structure of the corresponding (ABAP) RFC program is shown (Figure 5).

### 3.3 Data access through direct table data retrieval

After due consideration, the ADAM project team decided in an early stage that the interfacing had to be implemented using the SAP LSX approach, which is, for the time being, the most popular approach.29

For security reasons, the direction of data flow goes only in the direction "SAP R/3 towards Lotus Notes", i.e., the applications developed are allowed read only accesses on R/3 tables and evaluate them with Lotus scripts. This access mode is equivalent to the ABAP Query tool intended for SAP "power user" report programming.30

Besides the session control functions (opening and closing connections to the R/3 system), the only RFC function used is the **RFC_READ_TABLE**. Appendix A shows the corresponding ABAP program code.

The **RFC_READ_TABLE** function allows external access to R/3 tables via RFC.31

基本上，函数块执行一个Open SQL语句在R/3数据库，32基于输入数据由调用应用程序提供的：

---

28 Lotus (1999c).
30 SAP (1999).
31 SAP (2000a). Transaction code SE84; function block RFC_READ_TABLE.
RFC_READ_TABLE may retrieve both structure information and data content of tables residing in the SAP R/3 repository. The output of the function is passed through the DATA parameter, which carries a reference to a complex table. Each row of the (single column) table DATA corresponds to a row of the R/3 table, while the column values are returned as strings, separated by a delimiting character.

The FIELDS parameter contains the list of table attributes to be retrieved. The OPTIONS parameter specifies the SQL "where" conditions, which may contain SQL wildcard operators (%, _, etc.). The amount of data returned per row is limited to 512 bytes.

RFC_READ_TABLE forwards the OPTIONS without any checking to ABAP/4-SQL; on syntax violation, the function returns an EXCEPTION.

---

4 The ADAM concept and the SAP interfaces

4.1 ADAM physical system layout

In order to fulfill the requirement B.7 in Table 2, the functionality of the entire system has been distributed over more than one physical Notes databases:

- **ADAM.nsf** is the central data store, which contains all imported material and sales data, as well as the simulation and requirements calculations results. The sales staff ("SalesResponsible") and any other interested person ("Viewer") may be granted read access, the ADAM super user ("Operator") will have execution, change, and delete permission.

- **ADAM-A.nsf** is the system archive (for performance reasons a large number of documents generated during operation may regularly be moved to an archive).

- **ADAM-X.nsf** finally performs the SAP data import. This database contains configuration documents for the data import and the import scripts.

Figure 7 shows the ADAM Notes databases, the three user access roles described, and the SAP LSX integration. The SAP LSX library is to be installed on the PC of the Operator only, all other users may access ADAM data without this software component.

![Figure 7: ADAM database solution overview](image)

4.2 Logical system architecture

During the system analysis, the ADAM application has conceptually been divided in three subsystems (see Table 5). The Material unit cares for the components and quantities needed for material forecast and provides the ADAM system operator with historical data about components consumption and the current state of the requirements plan.
The Sales module consists of several interfaces to sales reporting systems, in order to provide snapshots of projects, systems, and components sales forecasts managed by the front end units.

The actual simulation and calculation tasks are performed by the ADAM Engine which uses the materials master/historical data on the one and the sales forecast on the other side to build a consolidated, per component requirements forecast.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subsystem</th>
<th>Tasks</th>
<th>Specific documents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ADAM Material</td>
<td>• Set up the import options and filters for components</td>
<td>• Configuration settings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Import of components (material) master data</td>
<td>• Components data</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Import of supplier information, related to components procurement</td>
<td>• Supplier info</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• System code to parts list matching.</td>
<td>• Matching documents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Import of bill of materials (BOM) components</td>
<td>• BOM structure information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Import of currently planned requirements of components</td>
<td>• Requirements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Import of components' consumption and replenishment history.</td>
<td>• Materials movements trace</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ADAM Sales</td>
<td>• Define sources for sales input</td>
<td>• Source configuration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Import of sales information: Projects, systems, and components sales</td>
<td>• Projects, systems, and components sales</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ADAM Engine</td>
<td>• Calculus of materials requirements plan</td>
<td>• Forecast data</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5: The ADAM subsystems, their tasks and related documents

4.3 ADAM Material subsystem architecture

As the results of the requirements consolidation remain in the ADAM system and will not automatically be forwarded to the SAP R/3 database, the only R/3 interface is located in the ADAM Material module. The five interfaces created for this purpose are displayed on Figure 8 ("SAP / AM1" through "SAP / AM5").
Section 4: The ADAM concept and the SAP interfaces

The stores shown in this Data Flow Diagram represent Notes views displaying documents, the elliptic process elements stand for LotusScript procedures (the "processors").

4.4 Details of the SAP interface concept

4.4.1 The ADAM software support modules

Two functional units, one for managing the session information and the other for supporting SAP queries, have been built on top of the SAP LSX library (see Figure 9). They free the ADAM applications from individually handling session objects and support the management of several queries in parallel.
4.4.2 The SAP Connection Manager

To support ADAM applications with opening and shutting down connections with the SAP processor, a function module named SAP Connection Manager has been created. The two functions implemented, `SAPOpenConnection` and `SAPCloseConnection`, encapsulate the `RFCServer` object handling provided by the SAP LSX module. Figure 10 shows the call sequencing through the different interface levels.

![Figure 10: Sequence diagram for the SAP Connection Manager functions](image)

4.4.3 The SAP Query Manager (SAPtabQuery wrapper)

To facilitate the management of variables and RFC method calls needed every time an SAP table has to be accessed, a specialized object class `SAPtabQuery` has been developed, which encapsulates the functionality and data structures needed for data retrieval (see Appendix C).

The following example shows the usage of `SAPtabQuery` object instances (code fragment 4; exception handling only partially shown).

```vba
'Demo function: Search materials master short text for material pMATNR
Function DemoMAKT (fMATNR as String, pMAKTX As String) as Integer
    Dim intRow As Integer
    Dim tResStr As String
    Dim tSAPtabQuery As SAPtabQuery

    'Create new SAPtabQuery object (constructor call)
    Set tSAPtabQuery = New SAPtabQuery("MAKT")
```

'Specify fields to be retrieved (MAKT-SPRAS, MAKT-MAKTX)
tSAPtabQuery.AppendFieldItem ("SPRAS")
tSAPtabQuery.AppendFieldItem ("MAKTX")

'Specify WHERE condition of selection
tSAPtabQuery.AppendOptionItem ("MATNR = ' & fMATNR & ')

'Now let RFC execute 'select SPRAS, MAKTX from MAKT where MATNR = "fMATNR"
If tSAPtabQuery.DoCall () = False Then
  '(error handling ...)
  SAPGetMAKTdet = False
Else
  'Process number of rows to be imported
  pMAKTX = ""
  SAPGetMAKTdet = True
  For intRow = 1 To tSAPtabQuery.GetRowCount()
    tResStr = tSAPtabQuery.GetResultItem (intRow, 1)
    If tResStr = "D" Then
      pMAKTX = tSAPtabQuery.GetResultItem (intRow, 2)
      Exit For
    End If
  Next
End If
End Function

---

**Code fragment 4: Application of the SAPtabQuery RFC function wrapper**

Upon execution of DoCall, the parameters previously collected by the tSAPtabQuery wrapper (during the New constructor, the AppendFieldItem and AppendOptionItem method calls) are passed to the RFC interface using the SAP LSX functions.

Figure 11 shows the data items of a sample tSAPtabQuery object instance *before* and *after* an RFC execution. Visibly, the DATA table now contains the result of the selection: a single cell with one column, containing 2 result strings separated by the delimiter ";". The method GetResultItem now extracts the string specified by the "virtual column index", in the code example the string found is "SCREW".
Section 4: The ADAM concept and the SAP interfaces

4.5 Example of data handling in ADAM

4.5.1 Design of documents containing imported data

The materials master data are read from the corresponding SAP table and processed in order to be stored in a Notes document in the ADAM database. The design of a part of such a document is shown in Figure 12 (excerpt from ADAM form "fmMat001"):

Example: After the import of values from the SAP table MARC through the different interfaces, the field MARC_DISPO (meaning "MRP Controller", of type "Text") may contain the value ‘101’, and will be stored together with other data retrieved from SAP R/3 in one document per material master (e.g., having the component ID 'xyz'). Figure 13 shows a more complete extract from such a materials master data document, after data import:
4.5.2 Import filter

The component data import may be controlled by the following filter document ("fmMat006"), in order to process only a selection of the entire SAP R/3 material data:

```
Select MATNR, WERKS, PSTAT, MMSTA, BESKZ, EISBE, LGPRO, LGFSB, BSTMI from MARC where MATNR like fMATNR and DISPO like fDISPO and EKGRP like fEKGRP and WERKS like fWERKS;
```

The value ‘P%’ (which contains a SQL wildcard, i.e. a placeholder for any material identification beginning with a "P") of the parameter "Material (MATNR)" will be passed as fMATNR value to the Open SQL queries specified in Appendix B.
5 SAP LSX: Observations and conclusions

5.1 The SAP LSX concept and software engineering

The SAP LSX low level interface using RFC technology fits perfectly into the requirements of the ADAM project: high data volume transfer capability in batch mode (peaks during materials master data import/synchronization), support for data storage in Notes documents, and a perfect integration in the Lotus Notes/LotusScript environment. Compared to extensive ABAP/4 programming on the SAP R/3 side, programming in LotusScript and using the SAP LSX library is certainly the easier and better alternative.

The debugging features of the SAP LSX offered for a mixed-platform application like the ADAM software are sufficient. The SAP ABAP debugging mode may automatically be launched with the execution of an SAP LSX-enabled script; the latter may be controlled step-by-step with the integrated Lotus Notes debugger. The SAP RFC trace collects profound information about the call data flow on the SAP LSX interface. Finally, the Lotus Notes standard logging services enable the programmer to implement checkpoints and quickly detect erroneous program states.

From a programmer’s view, the LotusScript programming language itself offers many interesting features that beneficially support the manipulation of complex data objects (or collections) like those returned by the SAP LSX functions.

5.2 Maturity and reliability

The SAP LSX solution has now been commercially available for several years. Against all fears, the stability and reliability of the LSX software (when used by LotusScript applications) is surprisingly high. Thousands of materials master data sets have been transferred without error in our ADAM test installation, without any visible destructive effect of the SAP LSX.

5.3 Sensibility to the evolution of software products

Due to the low-level character of the access software, and the fact that data models of large IT systems like SAP’s R/3 are forced to remain compatible for years, the ADAM software has been successfully used with different versions of R/3 (3.0E, 3.1H, and 4.6B), without any change in the data import routines. With forthcoming releases of the SAP R/3 and Lotus Notes applications, however, the ADAM software will have to undergo further testing.

5.4 Data access

In the era of the object oriented "paradigm" and technologies like BAPIs, a direct, table-focused data access may appear out-of-date. But, as mentioned earlier, and due to the lack of functionality of the "Material" BAPI, no standard Business Object could be used in the ADAM
project, and custom development of BAPIs was not a feasible alternative. BAPI development always means: extension of the current SAP R/3 application portfolio, i.e. ABAP programming, with all development risks and costly consequences for system maintenance.

The approach of retrieving data from SAP tables using the \texttt{RFC\_READ\_TABLE} is also very similar to the still "popular" and actively marketed \textit{ABAP Query} programming. Both methods suffer from the same "weaknesses": The application developer has to possess a \textit{profound} knowledge of the relevant sections of the SAP R/3 data model. The task of, e.g., finding the right table and joins to extract consolidated data for the monthly consumption of a material, may be regarded as a small “research” project! For non-German speaking people, the analysis of the data model and its attributes may be further hardened by the fact that attribute names are mainly abbreviated German terms.

Finally, once all relevant R/3 tables are found and the appropriate inner joins already in mind, the programmer has to face the fact that not all attributes of a table may qualify to be used in conditions of SQL "where"-clauses.

5.5 Conclusions

In the perspective of a (foreseeable) long-term coexistence of Groupware (like Lotus Notes) and ERP systems (e.g., SAP R/3), and an increasing demand for tighter integration of these applications on the users' desktops, the interest in solutions of the "ADAM style" will certainly persist.

The SAP LSX solution provides Lotus Notes programmers with a cost-efficient, pragmatic development tool that grants low-level access to a large part of the SAP R/3 database and functionality. Powerful, reliable, ERP-enabled applications can be developed and deployed with a very short lead time, using Lotus Notes.

Yet, in order to access advanced business data, a thorough understanding of the relevant parts of the huge and complex SAP data model is an absolute must for any developer.

It finally remains open to see if the promised functionality of Advanced Planning Systems (APS) on one side or comprehensive Enterprise Application Integration (EAI) solutions on the other will eventually make outmoded low-end point-to-point integration solutions as the one described here.
Appendix A: Documentation of RFC_READ_TABLE

A.1 ABAP/4 Code (taken from SAP R/3 repository)

```abap
FUNCTION RFC_READ_TABLE.
**----------------------------------------**
** I IMPORT NR             VALUE TABLE_STRUCTURE-IELDNAME   **
** VALUE TABLE_STRUCTURE-INTNAME   **
** VALUE DELIMITER LIKE TABLE_STRUCTURE-DDELEM DEFAULT SPACE **
** VALUE NO DATA LIKE TABLE_STRUCTURE-DDLEN DEFAULT 0 **
** VALUE NOἥATEN SOURCE FIELD LIKE TABLE_STRUCTURE-DECDAT **
** VALUE NOἥATEN SOURCE FIELD LIKE TABLE_STRUCTURE-DINTLEN **
** TABLES **
** OPTIONS STRUCTURE RFC_DB_OPT **
** FIELDS STRUCTURE RFC_DB_FLD **
** DATA STRUCTURE TABLE_STRUCTURE **
** * EXCEPT ONE **
** TABLE NOT AVAILABLE **
** TABLE WITHOUT DATA **
** OPTION NOT VALID **
** FIELDS NOT VALID **
** NOT AUTHORISED **
** DATA BUFFER EXCEEDED **
** ----------------------------------------**

CALL FUNCTION 'VI_AUTHORITY_TYP_CHECK' EXPORTING
  VI_ACTON = 'R'
  VI_QUERY_TABLE = QUERY_TABLE
EXCEPTIONS
  NO_AUTHORITY = 2
  NO_CLICEND = 1
  NO_DATA_FOUND = 4.

IF SY-SUBRC = 2 OR SY-SUBRC = 3.
  EXIT.
ENDF.


* read data from the database and copy relevant portions into DATA

DATA INCLUDE STRUCTURE DFBAB.
DATA END OF TABLE_STRUCTURE.
DATA TABLE_HEADER LIKE X030L.

CALL FUNCTION 'NAMETAB_GET' EXPORTING
  TABNAME = QUERY_TABLE
  CALL FUNCTION 'VIEW_AUTHORITY_CHECK' EXPORTING
  VIEW_NAME = QUERY_TABLE
  VIEW_ACTION = 'S'
  DATA STRUCTURE RFC_DB_FLD
  OPTIONS STRUCTURE RFC_DB_OPT.

* ENDFUNCTION.

FDATA DATA STRUCTURE (QUERY_TABLE) INTO WORK WHERE (OPTIONS).
SELECT * FROM (QUERY_TABLE) INTO WORK WHERE (OPTIONS).
```

See SAP (2000a).
### A.2 Import Parameters

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Default</th>
<th>Optional</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>QUERY_TABLE</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Name of table to be queried</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DELIMITER</td>
<td>SPACE</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>Delimiter for separation of column values</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NO_DATA</td>
<td>SPACE</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>If this value equals 'X', only the table structure will be retrieved</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ROWSKIPS</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>(not used)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ROWCOUNT</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>Maximum number of rows to be retrieved; if 0, unlimited</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### A.3 Export Parameters

Not used.

### A.4 Tables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>OPTIONS</td>
<td>Input: WHERE clause of SELECT statement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FIELDS</td>
<td>On Input: Names of fields to be read&lt;br&gt;On Output: Structure of table fields structure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DATA</td>
<td>Retrieved data</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Appendix B: ADAM SAP Interface – SAP table data extraction routines

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ID</th>
<th>SAP table</th>
<th>ADAM SAP Interface function</th>
<th>Function description</th>
<th>Open SQL command (simplified)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AM1</td>
<td>MARC</td>
<td>SAPUpdateMatMaster</td>
<td>Import plant-independent materials master data</td>
<td>Select MATNR, WERKS, PSTAT, MMSTA, BESKZ, EISBE, LGPRO, LGFSB, BSTMI from MARC where MATNR like fMATNR and DISPO like fDISPO and EKGRP like fEKGRP and WERKS like fWERKS;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LFA1</td>
<td>SAPGetLIEFdet</td>
<td></td>
<td>Get supplier name</td>
<td>Select NAME1 from LFA1 where LIFNR = fLIFNR;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LFB1</td>
<td>SAPGetLIEFdet</td>
<td></td>
<td>Get supplier mail address</td>
<td>Select INTAD from LFB1 where LIFNR = fLIFNR and BUKRS = fBUKRS;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MAKT</td>
<td>SAPGetMAKTdet</td>
<td></td>
<td>Get material short text</td>
<td>Select MAKTX from MAKT where MATNR = fMATNR and SPRAS = fSPRAS;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MBEW</td>
<td>SAPGetMBEWdet</td>
<td></td>
<td>Get material valuation data</td>
<td>Select VPRSV, VERPR, STPRS, KOSGR, SPERW, BWTAR from MBEW where MATNR = fMATNR and BWKEY = fBWKEY and BWTAR = fBWTAR;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MAPL</td>
<td>SAPGetMAPLdet</td>
<td></td>
<td>Check whether material is marked for deletion</td>
<td>Select LOEKZ from MAPL where MATNR = fMATNR and WERKS = fWERKS;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AM2</td>
<td>EINA</td>
<td>SAPGetLiefID</td>
<td>Get supplier code for material</td>
<td>Select LIFNR, RELIF from EINA where MATNR = fMATNR;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AM3</td>
<td>MAST</td>
<td>SAPGetPartsListID</td>
<td>Get existing PL identifier for material</td>
<td>Select STLNR, STLAL from MAST where MATNR = fMATNR and WERKS = fWERKS and STLAN = fSTLAN;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ID</td>
<td>SAP table</td>
<td>ADAM SAP Interface function</td>
<td>Function description</td>
<td>Open SQL command (simplified)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----</td>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>-----------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>STKO</td>
<td>SAPVerifySTKOdet</td>
<td>Check if PL head is released and valid</td>
<td>Select STKOZ, STLST from STKO where STLNR = fSTLNR and STLAL = fSTLAL;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>STZU</td>
<td>SAPVerifySTZUdet</td>
<td>Check if PL is configurable</td>
<td>Select KBAUS from STZU where STLNR = fSTLNR and STLTY = fSTLTY and STLAN = fSTLAN;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>STAS</td>
<td>SAPOpenPLComp</td>
<td>Get complete PL position ids</td>
<td>Select STLKN, LKENZ, STLTY, STLAL, AENNR from STAS where STLNR = fSTLNR and STLTY = fSTLTY and STLAL = fSTLAL and LKENZ = ' ';</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>STPO</td>
<td>SAPGetSTPOdet</td>
<td>Get PL position details</td>
<td>Select IDNRK, POSNR, MEINS, MENGE, SANFE, AENNR from STPO where STLNR = fSTLNR and STLTY = fSTLTY and STLKN = fSTLKN;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AM4</td>
<td>PBED</td>
<td>SAPGetPBEDdet</td>
<td>Get materials primary requirements plan</td>
<td>Select PLNMG, PDATU from PBED where BDZEI = fBDZEI;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AM5</td>
<td>S031</td>
<td>SAPGetMatHistory</td>
<td>Read historical materials movements (in and out)</td>
<td>Select MZUBB, WZUBBB, MAGBB, WAGBB, SPMON from S031 where MATNR = fMATNR and WERKS = fWERKS and LGORT = fLGORT;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix C: The SAPtabQuery function wrapper

Class SAPtabQuery
  objRfcReadTable As RFCFunction
  tblFields As RFCTable
  tblOptions As RFCTable
  tblData As RFCTable
  itmFieldNames As NotesItem
  itmFieldValues As NotesItem
  executed As Integer

'*** Constructor
Sub New (pSAPtab As String)
  'Declare RFC relevant objects
  Set objRfcReadTable = New RFCFunction (objServer, "RFC_READ_TABLE")

  'Assign the "Import" parameters of the function module.
  'Name of table to query
  objRfcReadTable.Exports("QUERY_TABLE").Value = pSAPtab
  'Set delimiter between column values
  objRfcReadTable.Exports("DELIMITER").Value = ";"
  'Query data, not structure information
  objRfcReadTable.Exports("NO_DATA").Value = " "
  objRfcReadTable.Exports("ROWSKIPS").Value = 0
  objRfcReadTable.Exports("ROWCOUNT").Value = 0
  'Set FIELDS table
  Set tblFields = objRfcReadTable.Tables("FIELDS")
  'Set OPTIONS table
  Set tblOptions = objRfcReadTable.Tables("OPTIONS")
  'Set table object to result table DATA
  Set tblData = objRfcReadTable.Tables("DATA")
  executed = False
  sepChar = ";"
  End If
End If
End Sub

'*** Set Field items
Sub AppendFieldItem (pField As String)
  Dim objRow As RfcRow
  Set objRow = tblFields.Rows.InsertRow()
  Call objRow.SetCell (1, pField)
End Sub

34 Exception handling not shown.
Appendices

### Set Options items

Sub AppendOptionItem (pField As String)
    Dim objRow As RfcRow
    Set objRow = tblOptions.Rows.InsertRow()
    Call objRow.SetCell(1, pField)
End Sub

### Execute RFC call

Function DoCall()
    If executed = False Then
        DoCall = objRfcReadTable.Call()
        If DoCall = False Then
            Call SAPCloseConnection()
            (... error handling ...)
        End If
    Else
        'double call = illegal !
    End If
    executed = True
End Function

### Get result message after RFC has been executed

Function GetMessage()
    GetMessage = objRfcReadTable.Message
End Function

### Get number of columns returned in the DATA table

Function GetColumnCount()
    GetColumnCount = tblData.columncount
End Function

### Get number of rows returned in the DATA table

Function GetRowCount()
    GetRowCount = tblData.Rows.Count
End Function

### Get result item out of DATA table

Function GetResultItem (pRow As Integer, pCol As Integer) As Variant
    tResStr = tblData.GetCell (pRow, 1)
    (... now follows code to find item pCol in ";"-separated string ...)
End Function

### Destructor (automatically managed by Lotus runtime system)

Sub Delete
End Sub
End Class
Abbreviations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ABAP (/4)</td>
<td>&quot;Advanced Business Application Programming”, SAP's proprietary 4th generation programming language.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ADAM</td>
<td>&quot;Automation of Data flow from sales forecast to Materials requirement planning” („Automatisierung des Datenflusses zwischen Absatzvorschau und Materialprognose”, in German)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BAPI</td>
<td>Business Application Programming Interface</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BOM</td>
<td>Bill of material</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ERP</td>
<td>Enterprise Resource Planning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DLL</td>
<td>Dynamic Link Library (software component)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LSX</td>
<td>LotusScript Extension</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MRP</td>
<td>Materials Requirement Planning</td>
</tr>
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<td>RFC</td>
<td>Remote Function Call</td>
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