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zData Perspectives

by Craig S. Mullins

[If You Ain't 8, You're Late.](#)

The purpose of this month's column is to look at the status of the DB2 for z/OS community. I thought it might be useful to examine what versions are available and will soon be available, and what it might mean for DB2 users. Of course, I'll do all of this from the perspective of my opinion only. After all, I don't work for IBM.

First of all, the most current version of DB2 is still Version 8. Although IBM has begun discussing DB2 9, there has been no announcement yet. The [beta announcement for DB2 9](#) was made on May 2, 2006.

When will it become GA? Well, according to Roger Miller at IBM, DB2 9 will go GA (and I quote) "When it's ready." And that makes sense, doesn't it? You wouldn't want to use it before it was ready!

So, when will it be ready? My guess is probably sometime before July 2007. But that is just a guess on my part. If you are interested in learning about DB2 9, I discussed the highlights of that release in the last issue of zJournal.

(Note: DB2 9 for z/OS went GA in March 2008, soon after this article went to press.)

OK, so what about the status of Version 8? Well, [V8 went GA almost three years ago](#) way back in March 2004. V8 is one of the biggest releases of DB2 for z/OS in the history of DB2. There are more lines of new code in V8 than there were total lines of code in V1 of DB2 back in 1985. So it is not an insignificant task to formulate a plan for migrating your DB2 subsystems to V8. Of course, if you haven't already, you'll have to do just that very soon. Why?

The end of marketing for V7, which means it is no longer sold by IBM, occurred on March 5, 2007. And although DB2 V7 is still serviced and supported by IBM, it will be withdrawn from service very soon. In early February 2007, IBM announced that DB2 V7 will go out of service on June 30, 2008. That is only about a year away. So if you have not yet developed your migration plan for DB2 V8, now is the time!

So, what is the status of the DB2 community today? Well, and remember, this is only my opinion, I'd say that for many users DB2 is

ahead of them. Many users are struggling to keep up and do not use, and even worse, do not understand all of the features and functionality that DB2 offers.

Oh, sure, there are some shops that have had V8 in production for years now and are eagerly awaiting the next version. But this is the exception rather than the rule. If you are still on V7, you are behind the curve, and should complete your migration planning for V8 as soon as possible.

But there are shops that have recently migrated to V8 that are still behind the curve. It has taken longer for DB2 shops to embrace V8 than for any previous version of DB2. In the past it never took almost three years for a new version or release of DB2 to become the primary operational version in the field.

My informal polling indicates that only recently has the production installed base for V8 reached 50 percent. I think there are two reasons for this. Number one, of course, is that IBM significantly re-engineered the “guts” of DB2. As such, users were cautious with their migration plans, and rightly so.

But I think there is another ancillary cause – the risk versus reward equation. Although V8 offers a lot of benefits in terms of scalability, new features and performance options, it comes at a price.

That price is planning to ensure that the transition is smooth. You need to worry about things like the new modes (CM, ENFM, NFM) introduced in V8, the fact that older COBOL compilers are no longer supported, the conversion of your catalog to Unicode, and managing

the REBIND process for all of your packages and plans. And don't forget to check on your Coded Character Set Identifiers (CCSIDs). There is the potential for data corruption if you have multiple CCSIDs within one encoding scheme. But, believe me, this short discussion is nowhere near an exhaustive list of the things you need to address as you migrate from V7 to V8.

The point is, many shops were (and some still are) operating "good enough" on V7 so there was no need to rock the boat by forcing a V8 migration. But now that we know when V7 will no longer be supported, the boat must be rocked. The time for a 100 percent installed base for V8 is nigh. If you haven't already, you should immediately start developing your DB2 V8 migration plans.

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