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NGS Updates IBM i-Based BI Suite

by Alex Woodie

New Generation Software last week unveiled a new release of NGS-IQ, its suite of reporting and business intelligence tools for the IBM i server. The vendor has enhanced several aspects of the NGS-IQ suite with version 7.1, including better formatting of reports for mobile phones and tablets, new charting and drill-down capabilities, and a new query search feature that should make it easier for developers to find stuff they've already built in NGS-IQ.

NGS-IQ is a large suite of IBM i- and Windows-based BI and reporting software that's used by a reported 25,000 IBM i users around the world. The suite is aimed primarily at IBM i shops, and includes a range of sub-components that serve an array of BI needs, including ad hoc query, Web reporting and drill-down, OLAP, dashboarding, and KPIs.

With version 7.1, the Sacramento, California, company has added charts to Web reports. This is the first time that NGS has supported graphical charts in Web reports. NGS has also added hyperlinks to the charts, which allows users to execute queries on the IBM i server that drill down into the data behind the charts with a click of a button.

The capability to run a query with a click of a hyperlink plays heavily into the improved support for mobile devices and tablets with NGS-IQ 7.1. A user of just about any mobile phone or tablet on the market can access a graphical report just by clicking on the live hyperlink now presented in NGS-IQ reports, according to NGS director of marketing Bill Langston. "Users, whether they be on a tablet, smartphone, or their desktop PC, can run the queries, but the data and the security over who can access it is defined in the IBM i operating system," he tells *IT Jungle* via email.

This enables longtime NGS-IQ users, who perhaps started writing NGS-IQ queries on an AS/400 15 years ago, to display the results of those old but reliable queries on a newfangled Android device or an iPad, which is kind of neat when you think about it.

"It's exciting when long-time customers realize that in just a few clicks they can take a query they wrote years ago that produced a 5250 display or green-bar report and now transform it into a graphical HTML output that can be viewed on today's newest mobile technology," NGS president and CEO Bernard Gough says in a press release.

Another new feature in NGS-IQ 7.1 that will benefit organizations that have invested in the tool is the new Query Inventory Control function. This new capability, which is delivered in the NGS-IQ security management system, called SeQure, enables query developers to perform free-form text searches of query names, descriptions, and keywords to find existing queries that might be a good match or starting point for satisfying a new request, the company says.

In many cases, it makes more sense to reuse or modify an old query than to write a new one from scratch. "When someone has an idea for a new query, it's a huge time saver if you can quickly mine the inventory of previously written queries and find one that is very close to what you need. This also promotes consistency in how values are calculated, how tables are joined, and how reports look," Gough says.

NGS has also added a report in SeQure that enables a security officer to see all the IQ SeQure settings that are in place. The security officer also has a new option to secure who can create and modify our meta-data catalog. "We're always looking to give managers more granular ways to control who can use the various functions in our application," Langston says.

Email distribution of reports has also been bolstered in version 7.1. NGS now allows operators to enter email addresses, distribution lists, subject, and messages into the system when distribution jobs are being called from job schedulers or CL programs. This release also gives users the capability to attach files and reports stored on the IFS.

Version 7.1 also brings enhancements to IQ Client, the Windows-based query and report development environment. With this release, NGS has given query developers the capability to externally change the library and file names referenced in a query object to the IQ Client desktop development environment, NGS says. IQ Client users also gain the capability to display query definition reports from existing queries while designing another query, which can save keystrokes and eliminate guess work. NGS also includes a list of recently opened queries in the file menu.

NGS-IQ version 7.1 is available now. For more information, see the vendor's website at www.ngsi.com.