

09. Programming Databases

Cursors

- Cursors are means of iterating through result-set of a query (one by one).
- It works like a pointer to a query result-set.
- Primary reason for using cursors is to avoid memory overrun when the result contains a large number of rows.
- FOR loop that we have already seen iterating through a result-set, is basically using a cursor, implicitly; also referred as implicit cursor.
- Cursor definition is a comprehensive and provides more control over the way result-set is “navigated” and “accessed”.
- Cursor can be
 - Scrollable or Non-scrollable,
 - Updatable or Non-updatable
- **Scrollable Cursor:** if you can go back and forth in a resultset through the cursor, then it is scrollable cursor
- **Update Cursor:** if you can update the row being referred by the cursor, then it is “updatable cursor”
- In some procedural languages, by default cursors are read-only, and non-scrollable
- PL/PgSQL makes cursor updatable if possible, i.e. for simple (non-join, non-grouping) cursor queries.
- Default scrollable behavior is also query dependent.

Operations on Cursors

- Cursor has two components:
 - Cursor variable, and
 - Query associated with the cursor variables
- Declare a cursor variable
- Associate (bind) a query with cursor
- Open a cursor
- Fetch a row from the cursor
- Close a cursor

Three ways of creating cursor variables

- (1) Unbound
- (2) Bound
- (3) Parameteric

DECLARE

All access to cursors in PL/pgSQL goes through cursor variables, which are always of the special data type **refcursor**. One way to create a cursor variable is just to declare it as a variable of type **refcursor** (unbound cursor). Another way is to use the cursor declaration syntax, creates bound cursor

```
name [[NO] SCROLL] CURSOR [(arguments)] FOR/IS query;
```

SCROLL/NO SCROLL to specify if cursor is scrollable, that means, you can scroll back.

Cursor can have arguments, which are actually specified while opening it

Examples:

```
curs1 refcursor;      --unbound cursor
```

```
curs2 CURSOR FOR      -- bound cursor
SELECT * FROM employee;
```

```
curs3 CURSOR(pdno integer) IS      -- parametric cursor
SELECT * FROM employee WHERE dno = pdno;
```

- If you associate a query with cursors at declaration time itself, then it is bound cursor, otherwise it is unbound.
- You associate query with unbound at the time of opening it. You can associate another query with such cursor variables, once done with earlier query.

Opening Unbound Cursors – specify the query at opening time

```
OPEN unbound_cursor [ [ NO ] SCROLL ] FOR query;
```

An example: `OPEN curs1 FOR SELECT * FROM foo WHERE key = mykey;`

Where curs1 has been declared as following: `curs1 refcursor;`

Opening Unbound Cursors for dynamic queries

`OPEN FOR EXECUTE`: is the command for queries that are created at run-time.

General syntax: `OPEN unbound_cursor [[NO] SCROLL] FOR EXECUTE query_string;`

An example: `OPEN curs1 FOR EXECUTE 'SELECT * FROM ' || table_name;`

Opening a Bound Cursor

General Syntax: `OPEN bound_cursor [(argument_values)];`

Examples:

```
curs2 CURSOR FOR SELECT * FROM employee;
```

```
OPEN curs2;
```

```
curs3 CURSOR(pdno integer) IS SELECT * FROM employee WHERE dno = pdno;
```

```
OPEN curs3(5);    --open cursor for dno=5
```

Fetching a row from cursor

Fetching does collection of data into variables from cursor. General syntax is:

```
FETCH [direction {FROM|IN}] cursor INTO target;
```

Examples (should be self-explanatory)-

```
FETCH curs1 INTO rowvar; -- data of current row are read into a record type variable
```

```
FETCH curs2 INTO foo, bar, baz;
```

```
--assumingly current row has three attributes are collected into respective variables
```

```
FETCH LAST FROM curs3 INTO x, y; -- fetches data from last tuple
```

```
FETCH RELATIVE -2 FROM curs4 INTO x;
```

```
-- fetches data from row that is -2 away from current position
```

Navigating through cursor rows without reading

Has move command for his purpose. General syntax is

```
MOVE [ direction { FROM | IN } ] cursor;
```

- Only the difference with FETCH is, the move, just moves the cursor to new location, we do not collect the row data
- Example-

```
MOVE curs1;  
MOVE LAST FROM curs3;  
MOVE RELATIVE -2 FROM curs4;
```

Example ##:

```
--Call: select curs_emp(4);
CREATE or replace FUNCTION curs_emp(dno integer) RETURNS integer AS $$
DECLARE
    c CURSOR (pdno integer) IS SELECT fname, salary FROM employee WHERE dno = pdno;
    fname text;
    salary real;
BEGIN
    raise notice 'new run for dno=%', mdno;
    open c(mdno);
    LOOP
        FETCH c INTO fname, salary;
        EXIT WHEN NOT FOUND;
        raise notice '% %', fname, salary;
    END LOOP;
    CLOSE c;
    RETURN 1;
END $$ LANGUAGE plpgsql;
```

Below is procedure for computing rank for admissions

```
--select compute_rank();
create or replace function compute_rank() RETURNS integer AS $$
DECLARE
    m_rank integer := 1;
    scur CURSOR FOR SELECT * FROM applications ORDER BY marks DESC;
    srec applications%ROWTYPE;
BEGIN
    OPEN scur;
    LOOP
        FETCH scur INTO srec;
        EXIT WHEN NOT FOUND;
        UPDATE applications SET da_rank = m_rank WHERE appno = srec.appno;
        --can use CURRENT OF scur if cursor is updatable;
        m_rank := m_rank + 1;
    END LOOP;
    CLOSE scur;
    return 1;
END $$ LANGUAGE plpgsql;
```