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Application Software

Application software is the term used to describe software that is created to execute specific orientated tasks on a processing platform. Almost all of these applications are solely created to help the user perform tasks that would normally be either impossible to do without or greatly simplify and enhance their abilities in the desired field. I will look at a few of the major fields contained in this overarching term. I will discuss some of the uses, advantages, drawbacks and validity of these different fields.

Firstly I will examine the server applications. The key word is ‘server’. A server is computer running software that fulfils requests from the client. The server serves the client application by either retrieving data from a database or performing procedures to data before sending the final data to the application as requested. Usually the server and client are connected via a network, in rare cases it is done otherwise.

In theory any computer can be a server. In the example of file sharing, even though the computer is not a server it has the capabilities to share files to other computers on a network (internet) and thus it takes on the task of a server. Servers usually form the link between a computer and data and shares the data with the computer as requested.

Server applications are software packages that run on servers to help perform specialised tasks. In terms of a website this can be an application used to process data and help host dynamic pages. This is a light duty; most servers’ applications run on robust server hardware and use equally robust software to ensure secure, stable and fast processing. A major advantage of using servers in businesses is the security provided by having your precious data in a centrally located server and not on a serves providers’ server. The ease of access and configuration of data and software also adds more appeal to the idea of server based applications.

The ideal business situation will make use of a server to host the whole of the businesses internal network and data management. Servers can greatly improve data sharing and database access. Use this in tandem with databases and desktop applications would be an ideal situation in practise. Adding a web application would be perfect for any business.

Web applications on the other hand are on the opposite side of the spectrum compared to server applications in the sense that web applications are dependent on a server to do the processing and the web application will handle the visual rendering of the data. This dependency on a server to do the bulk of the processing is called a thin client. The web application will send requests for data to the server and do minimal processing saving time and maintenance on the web application. This is also a great advantage because this makes editing a web application easy since you need not change the whole servers processing as well as the web application when changes need to be made to the web application.

Using a web application is ideal for hosting an online shop or even a financial application, or similar software, where files are read in and out of a database and all the processing is done on the servers’ side. The visual display of data can be greatly enhanced for a user’s ease. Making this a light and yet versatile and powerful tool when used in the right situation.

The next fairly new application field is mobile applications. This new field has taken the world by storm in the last decade. It is based on small low-powered handheld devices, these ranges from mobile phones to personal digital assistants (PDA’s). These applications are downloaded and installed on the device and allows it to either perform processing on the device or uses server-side /client-side processing to provide an application experience within a web browser.

Mobile applications have grown to become very useful tools users and developers. The mobility and ease of access anywhere and at anytime is something that we have never had before. This is an exciting field to enter. Businesses make good use of this for various reasons; social networks are also very dependent on their users’ ability to access their services via their mobiles.

The final application type I will look at is an overarching term called scripting applications or desktop applications. These are applications designed to be used on a computer/laptop/MAC. These include anything from GUI, Spreadsheet, Text-processing and powerful design applications. These vary greatly in function, but this is the most widely used area since it basically encompasses the most fields. We use these applications daily on our computers; it can also be used in conjunction with some of the other applications discussed.

The possibilities are endless with these applications and the demand will never cease. I suspect that when I finish honours chances are I will either be working on an applications of this sort or on a web application. Custom software application design is very dependent on this type of programming.

Having learned about all these different application types it is evident that the computer field is brimming with possibility and ways to meet every need. Choosing the correct type will be the hardest I suspect, but it also fills me with great expectation and excitement.