

# Databases

# Why Use (Relational) Databases in Astronomy?

- Much of astronomy, and especially survey astronomy, begins with collecting sets of well defined measurements on samples (or entire populations) of objects
- We organize and publish these measurements as astronomical catalogs
  - These are collections of tables
  - Used to be published as (big, thick!) books

**S T E L L A R U M**  
**I N E R R A N T I U M**  
**CATALOGUS BRITANNICUS,**  
 Ad Annum CHRISTI completum, 1689.  
*Ab Observationibus Grenovici in Observatorio Regio habitis,*  
 ASSIDUIS VIGILIIS, CURA ET STUDIO,  
**JOANNIS FLAMSTEEDII,**  
 ASTRONOMI REGII,  
 DEDUCTUS ET SUPPUTATUS.

FLAMSTEED.	Ordo		In Constellatione Arietis. 66.	Ascensio recta. 1690.	Distantia à Polo Boreo.	Longitudo. 1690.	Latitudo.	Varia Asc. R. pro 60' longit.	Varia D. à P. pro 60' longit.	Magnitudo.	
	Pol.	Tych.									
											STELLARUM
			G. M. S.	G. M. S.	Si. G. M. S.	G. M. S.	M. S.	M. S.			
1				20 46 0	69 17 15	O. 26 58 25	11 4 58 B	58 7 22	25	7.6	
2				21 25 45	71 15 25	26 48 15	9 1 26 B	57 52 22	19	7.6	
3				22 26 15	74 10 55	26 36 18	5 57 3 B	57 31 22	12	6	
4				22 51 15	74 36 55	26 49 4	5 23 59 B	57 28 22	07	7.6	
5	1	1	Quæ in Cornu duarum præcedens.	24 8 30	72 14 45	28 51 0	7 8 58 B	58 02 21	55	4	
6	2	2	Sequens & Borea est.	24 23 30	70 43 55	29 37 59	8 28 16 B	58 22 21	50	3	
7				24 39 45	67 57 45	I. 0 14 20	10 57 12 B	58 57 21	49	tel.	
8		6	In Service.	25 7 0	73 43 15	O. 29 10 57	5 26 12 B	57 54 21	44	6	
9			In Vertice.	25 11 0	67 56 25	I. 1 22 15	10 47 47 B	59 00 21	44	5	
10				26 32 30	65 35 5	3 26 14	12 31 52 B	59 45 21	28	6.7	
11				27 19 30	65 48 15	4 2 12	12 4 2 B	59 48 21	20	6	
12		17	Infra Lucidam.	27 19 30	68 51 5	2 55 8	9 13 29 B	59 10 21	21	6.5	
13	inf. 1	3	Infra. sup. Caput, Lucida Arietis.	27 26 30	68 1 45	3 19 18	9 57 12 B	59 22 21	20	2	
14				27 57 30	65 33 15	4 40 46	12 5 32 B	59 56 21	12	6	
15				28 22 30	71 58 45	2 43 49	5 56 58 B	58 36 21	08	6	
16				28 24 45	65 32 40	5 4 35	11 57 0 B	60 4 21	06	8	
17	3	4	In Rosiro duarum Boreæ.	28 52 30	70 16 25	3 46 50	7 22 45 B	59 2 21	02	6	
18				28 58 45	71 33 15	3 25 14	6 8 45 B	58 46 21	00	7	
19				29 1 30	76 12 15	1 49 50	1 46 25 B	57 47 21	00	6.7	
20				29 31 30	65 41 5	5 59 38	11 27 44 B	60 13 20	54	6	
21				29 31 30	66 25 20	5 43 40	10 46 20 B	60 1 20	53	7	
22	4	5	In Rosiro Australior.	30 14 0	71 33 30	4 32 25	5 43 39 B	58 56 20	45	6.5	
23				30 29 30	71 45 25	4 41 59	5 27 25 B	58 58 20	43	7	
24			In extremitate Pedis posterioris. *	32 1 30	80 48 55	3 0 49	3 33 31 A	57 1 20	23	6	
25				32 42 30	81 12 25	3 30 53	4 9 43 A	57 00 20	16	7	
26				33 20 0	71 33 0	7 19 13	4 44 7 B	59 18 20	5	6.7	
27				33 26 0	73 41 55	6 41 33	2 40 42 B	58 46 20	4	6.7	

**Left:** The first page of J. J. Lalande's edited and corrected version of John Flamsteed's star catalogue, published in 1783. The stars shown here belong to the constellation Aries. In the first column, Lalande numbered each star consecutively by constellation. These are the numbers that we now call Flamsteed numbers.

I photo.in

7757,301,1,74,186,6,8.12944435106658,26.6266172894736,17.04889,18.16535,0.01654805,0.02145229  
7757,301,1,74,187,6,8.12783867556709,26.627245975921,17.37402,17.92875,0.02894481,0.02568013  
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4288,301,1,39,682,3,24.5161170422305,-1.16579446393527,22.97032,24.3259,0.2672399,0.5240437  
4288,301,1,39,683,3,24.5179406515354,-1.1792069022485,22.62052,25.09109,0.1850479,0.6585805  
4288,301,1,39,684,6,24.5189463293148,-1.15915086108891,21.4247,23.04125,0.06608655,0.1968172  
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4136,301,1,61,936,3,36.4717583013136,-1.1378448207726,22.81683,23.88123,0.1742272,0.3260605  
4136,301,1,61,937,3,36.4717582434391,-1.13784497192974,22.81147,23.87586,0.1734457,0.3247895  
4288,301,1,40,311,3,24.6839203338022,-1.23631696217547,21.2002,21.67521,0.05694564,0.06316777  
4288,301,1,40,312,3,24.6840602692246,-1.21784918362007,20.30287,21.04976,0.02972161,0.04032911  
4288,301,1,40,313,6,24.6840216690377,-1.08292772289886,24.92263,25.72778,0.68427,0.5471938  
5598,301,1,61,792,3,351.787950113407,6.14573538435867,22.43574,23.83793,0.1125768,0.2867745  
5598,301,1,61,793,3,351.787950113434,6.14573538316393,22.43573,23.77753,0.1174541,0.2741905  
5598,301,1,61,794,6,351.787349107439,6.14481612145222,24.6701,24.8507,0.4675894,0.4849904  
2699,301,1,48,527,3,12.0760019016408,-3.32677418219699,22.18116,23.27577,0.126546,0.2270369  
2699,301,1,48,528,6,12.0770027529666,-3.32913243320258,22.12757,23.79366,0.1215217,0.3403472  
2699,301,1,48,529,3,12.0832728187538,-3.52539818226738,22.29741,23.32008,0.1377919,0.2253349  
94,301,1,38,279,6,340.524768659138,-0.843090883870374,20.75028,21.13888,0.04839022,0.04644739  
94,301,1,38,280,6,340.525793656628,-0.965210498356983,24.23321,26.07633,0.8058653,0.7702702  
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4288,301,1,76,767,3,30.0899962733195,-1.14314301954175,21.99419,23.78533,0.1094794,0.4162939  
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5598,301,1,31,1255,6,347.292868060286,6.00625252450757,24.6012,25.40155,0.5272257,0.4741055  
5598,301,1,31,1256,6,347.294399617648,6.00625252450757,24.6012,25.40155,0.5272257,0.4741055

1,231,051,050 rows (SDSS DR10, PhotoObjAll table)

~500 columns

# Why Databases for Astronomy, contd.

- There's the general challenge of organizing the collected data
  - Especially acute for large surveys
  - Can also be problematic even for small studies
- Publishing and sharing (subsets of) survey data
  - Large surveys publish billions of rows and hundreds of measurements for each observation. The catalogs are ~1-10s of TB range.
  - But not all science cases care about every kind of measurement
- The data in the catalogs is just a starting point for further work. That work can involve:
  - Statistically summarizing the properties of the data (counts, means, medians, etc.)
  - Selecting subsets of the objects or their measurements ("slicing and dicing")
  - Cross-correlating various properties (i.e., positional matching)
  - Transforming the data in various ways (e.g. from instrumental to calibrated magnitudes, accounting for reddening, etc.)
  - Identifying rare, interesting, or unusual objects
- Storing the data into a database is the industry standard way to solve these types of problems

# What Are Databases?

- Logically
  - Organized collections of data
  - Typically, a set of tables and their relationships (“relational databases”)
    - Terminology: for practical purposes, relation == table. For details, see [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Relation\\_%28database%29](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Relation_%28database%29)
  - A table is made up of rows and columns
    - Each row can be considered as an entry corresponding to some real-world object, listing its attributes
    - Columns define the attributes; each column has a well defined data type (e.g., integer, real, text, etc.)
- Physically
  - A collection of files written in special format, that are accessed and manipulated using a *Database Management System* (DBMS)

# Examples

## Person

Login	LastName	FirstName
skol	Kovalevskaya	Sofia
mlom	Lomonosov	Mikhail
dmitri	Mendelev	Dmitri
ivan	Pavlov	Ivan

## Project

ProjectId	ProjectName
1214	Antigravity
1709	Teleportation
1737	Time Travel

## Experiment

ProjectId	ExperimentId	NumInvolved	ExperimentDate	Hours
1214	1	1	NULL	1.5
1214	2	1	1889-11-01	14.3
1709	1	3	1891-01-22	7.0
1709	2	1	1891-02-23	7.2
1737	1	1	1900-07-05	-1.0
1737	2	2	1900-07-05	-1.5

## Involved

ProjectId	ExperimentId	InvolvedId	Login
1214	1	1	mlom
1214	2	1	mlom
1709	1	1	dmitri
1709	1	2	skol
1709	1	3	ivan
1709	2	1	mlom
1737	1	1	skol
1737	2	1	skol
1737	2	2	ivan

*~ 2006*

<http://goo.gl/jWDlzy>

Table:

	run	ra	dec	mjdstart	mjndend	node	inclination	mu0	nu0
	Filter	Filter	Filter	Filter	Filter	Filter	Filter	Filter	Filter
1	94	336.4327791...	-1.04429400...	51075.23321...	51075.45501...	286.855205	0.009477	336.4326667...	-1.05150869...
2	109	396.2418087...	-1.25055686...	51078.39078...	51078.47494...	283.3917469...	0.008279	36.24187915...	-1.25818616...
3	125	350.4697426...	-1.25274979...	51081.25575...	51081.49528...	287.818732	0.007781	350.4696642...	-1.25966106...
4	211	402.5811092...	-1.26517002...	51115.307	51115.46205...	283.2197800...	0.007975	42.58119581...	-1.27212059...
5	240	375.1896778...	-1.26440348...	51132.185032	51132.24885...	290.578187	0.010103	15.18965685...	-1.27446183...
6	241	403.0295478...	-1.26513669...	51132.26214...	51132.30359...	266.7155050...	0.005148	43.02963017...	-1.26869244...
7	250	15.35717871...	-1.03608421...	51133.183	51133.36699...	62.095899	0.024055	15.35688309...	-1.01856644...
8	251	85.88000457...	-1.00945333...	51133.37808...	51133.40792...	11.252511	0.037496	85.87982628...	-1.04560781...
9	256	-8.28409345...	-1.05720709...	51134.11449...	51134.13357...	58.141704	0.024019	351.7157311...	-1.03519263...
10	259	368.3751608...	-1.04718589...	51134.16041...	51134.39053...	299.408811	0.007597	8.375110834...	-1.05427670...
11	273	371.5027215...	-1.25773504...	51136.164	51136.38085...	286.5415300...	0.008068	11.50270590...	-1.26577186...
12	287	396.4868469...	-1.15429721...	51138.22760...	51138.40424...	295.298232	0.007857	36.48687773...	-1.16200488...
13	297	61.15102149...	-1.15372111...	51139.293	51139.37260...	92.038416	0.040845	61.15032199...	-1.13275302...

< 1 - 14 of 765 >

```
mjuric@gallifrey:~/projects/class3$ ls -l *.db
-rw-r--r-- 1 mjuric staff 5271552 Jan 21 06:14 class3.db
miuric@gallifrey:~/projects/class3$
```

# When do you need a Database

- Multiple simultaneous changes to data (concurrency)
- Data changes on a regular basis
- Large data sets where you only need some observations/variables
- Share huge data set among many people
- Rapid queries with no analysis
- Web interfaces to data, especially dynamic data



# Becoming ubiquitous today

- Large surveys today typically make their data available as a remotely queryable relational database
  - A typical user does not need all the data, but just a subset. Keeping it in a database allows the scientist to ask for that (custom-made) subset.
    - N.b. still not all the way there (more later!)
- Examples:
  - SDSS, WISE, PanSTARRS (soon), Gaia (soon-ish)

# Personal Research: Databases vs. Files

- The “old way”:
  - store data tables as text files
  - write interpreters to read/write each format
  - write filters to select data that I want
  - write matching algorithms when I need to search multiple files (or make large franken-tables)
  - data and code are co-dependant and generally hard to keep in sync

# Personal Research: Databases vs. Files

- The “new way”
  - one database
  - multiple tables
  - read/write translation is done by the db
  - matching tables is done by the db
  - selecting/filtering data is done by the db
  - db and code are no longer locked together

# Interacting with Databases: Database Management Systems (DBMS)

- As mentioned before, a database can logically be thought of as a set of tables. Physically (on disk) it's stored as one or more files. They're written in a special format that cannot be directly read or written.
- A *Database Management System (DBMS)* is needed to read and write it
  - A software product tool that allows us to read or write data in databases
  - It allows us to query for and retrieve (a potentially transformed) subset of data from one or more tables
- Note: the on-disk format is DBMS-specific

# Common DBMS

- SQLite
  - <http://sqlite.org>
  - Easy to use, simple, reasonably fast, free
  - Comes with Anaconda, included in Python
  - The database is a single file
  - No need for special accounts, permissions, or servers
  - GUI: <http://sqlitebrowser.org>
  - Downsides:
    - Poor multi-user support
    - Does not scale well (won't scale to tens or hundreds of millions of rows)



# Common DBMS

- MariaDB (also, MySQL)
  - <http://mariadb.org>
  - Free, secure, scalable
  - Widely used and well supported
    - Comes in nearly all Linux distributions
    - There's no question that hasn't already been asked on StackOverflow ☺
  - Client/server architecture
  - More advanced features compared to SQLite
  - Can handle tables with billions of rows
  - MariaDB vs MySQL: use MariaDB
  - Will be used by LSST to serve its petabyte-scale dataset
  - Disadvantages:
    - Steeper learning curve, more initial setup



# Common DBMS

- PostgreSQL
  - <http://postgresql.org>
  - Free, secure
  - Similar to MySQL in terms of functionality
  - Some features are more advanced, performance can be better
  - Smaller community (though still widely used), steeper learning curve



# Common DBMS

- MS SQL Server
  - Not free, but performant and scalable
  - Used by the SDSS archive
- Oracle Database
  - The “industry standard” for mission critical databases
  - (Very) expensive
- *Typically, there's no need to use a commercial solution today, except in very specialized circumstances – the free/open source databases work well enough*
- *In this course, we will generally use sqlite (and a different solution called LSD; more later)*



# Non-Traditional DBMS

- “NoSQL” databases
- Databases for storing less structured or unstructured data (e.g., web pages)
- Very fast, very scalable (>petabytes of data), do not require fixed table schemas, avoid joins
- Examples: MongoDB, Couchbase, Riak, Cassandra, Redis, CouchDB, HBase, ...
- Disadvantages:
  - More difficult to work with and primitive compared to relational databases
  - Less expressive query languages, require programming for most tasks

# Using a Database: SQL

- **SQL**, or **Structured Query Language** is a special-purpose programming language designed for handling data managed by relational database management systems
- It is a language that virtually all databases “speak”
  - Allows one to ask for subsets of data, join tables, modify the outputs, as well as add and delete data in the database
  - Note: there are dialects and small differences from database to database

# Get sqlitebrowser

- <http://sqlitebrowser.org>

DB Browser  
for SQLite

The Official home of the DB Browser for  
SQLite

# SQL Basics

- CREATE
  - Creating tables
- INSERT/DELETE
  - Adding and deleting rows
- SELECT
  - Selecting a subset of data
  - Joining (combining) data from different tables
- More information: <http://robots.thoughtbot.com/back-to-basics-sql>

# Creating a (sqlite) Database

- The details of database creation and data import are DBMS specific, but the general idea is similar:
  1. Create the database itself
  2. Create the tables within the database
  3. Import the data

# The “mini SDSS” Database

- Sample data:
  - See notebooks/databases/\* in the class git repository
  - I extracted a random sample of ~50,000 objects from SDSS DR10 PhotoObjAll table. This is the catalog of all sources that the SDSS has detected and measured. The result is in sample.csv.
  - I also have a list of SDSS “runs” (observations) with details about each run (runs.txt)
  - I will import these two into a sqlite database

# #1. Create the tables

```
CREATE TABLE sources (
```

```
    run          INTEGER,  
    rerun        INTEGER,  
    camcol        INTEGER,  
    field         INTEGER,  
    obj           INTEGER,  
    type          INTEGER,  
    ra            REAL,  
    dec           REAL,  
    psfMag_r      REAL,  
    psfMag_g      REAL,  
    psfMgErr_r    REAL,  
    psfMagErr_g   REAL
```

```
);
```

```
CREATE TABLE runs (
```

```
    run          INTEGER,  
    ra            REAL,  
    dec           REAL,  
    mjdstart      REAL,  
    mjdend        REAL,  
    node          REAL,  
    inclination   REAL,  
    muo           REAL,  
    nuo           REAL
```

```
);
```

## #2. Prepare the input data

- Need to do some editing to remove the headers



## #2. Import

```
sqlite> .mode csv
```

```
sqlite> .separator " "
```

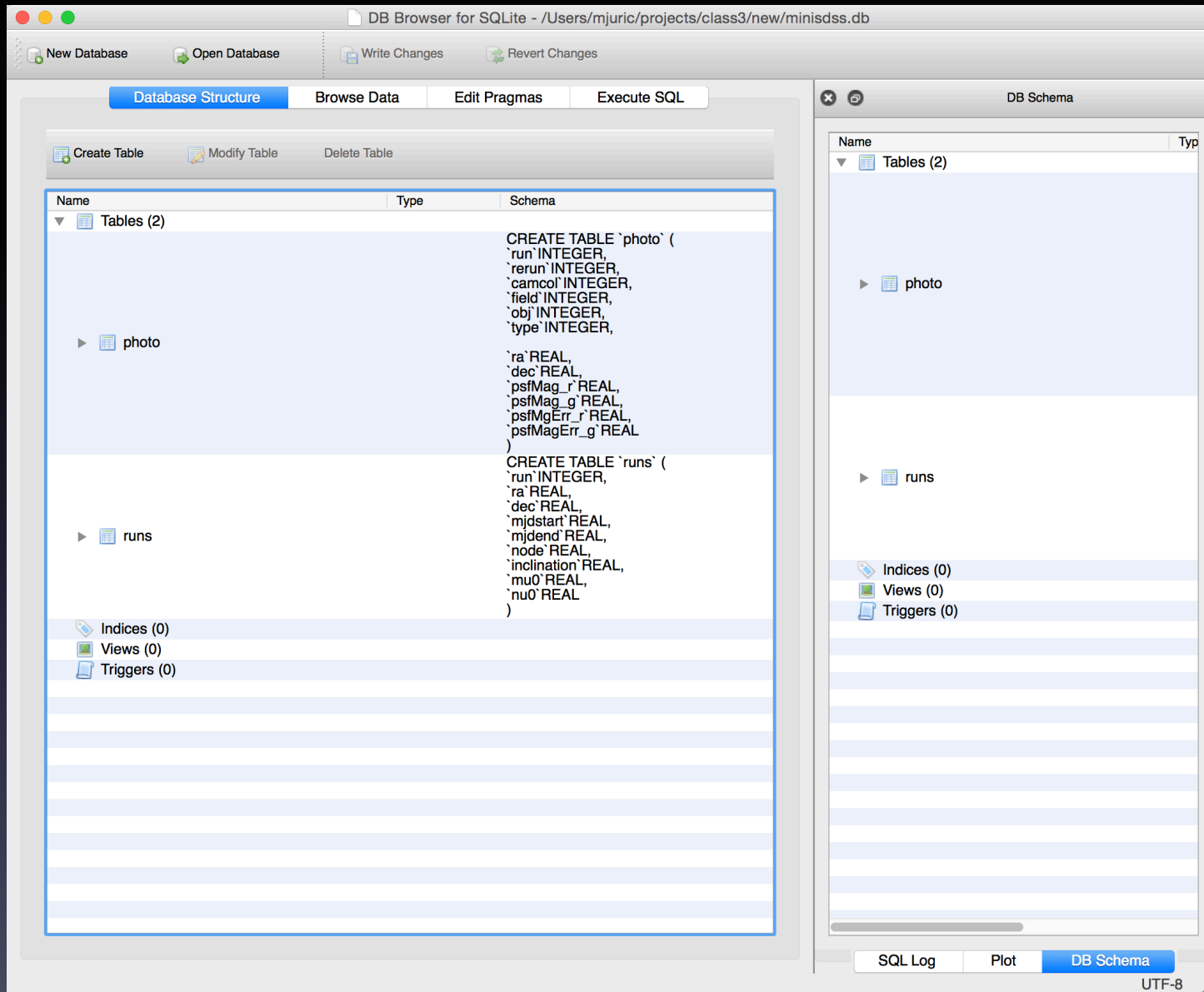
```
sqlite> .import runs.in runs
```

```
sqlite> .separator ","
```

```
sqlite> .import sample.in sources
```

```
sqlite> .quit
```

open -a "DB Browser for SQLite" sdss.db



# SELECT Statement

- `SELECT ra, dec, psfMag_r FROM sources`
- `SELECT ra, dec, psfMag_r FROM sources WHERE psfMag_r < 21.5`
- `SELECT ra, dec, psfMag_r FROM sources WHERE psfMag_r < 21.5 LIMIT 5`
- `SELECT COUNT(psfMag_r), AVG(psfMag_r) FROM sources WHERE psfMag_r < 21.5`
- `SELECT COUNT(*), run FROM sources GROUP BY run`
- `SELECT COUNT(*), run FROM sources GROUP BY run ORDER BY run`
- `SELECT COUNT(*) as ct, run FROM sources GROUP BY run ORDER BY ct`

# NULL

- How do we mark missing data?
  - Typical way to do this is to designate a value as “magic”
  - E.g.,: -9999 in our example database
- Relational databases provide us with a special constant, a “NULL”
  - The meaning is always clear (i.e. – no data)
  - Plays well with aggregate functions
    - I.e., AVG(), COUNT() ignore null values

# UPDATE

- UPDATE sources

The table to update

SET psfMag\_r = NULL

Columns to update (and  
the values to use)

WHERE psfMag\_r = -9999.0

Selecting the subset of  
rows to update

# JOIN: Joining tables

- Example:
  - Each row in the 'sources' table has a 'run' entry – the ID of the SDSS run where this object was observed
  - Each entry in the 'runs' table has a 'mjdstart' entry, indicating the time when the observing for this run started
  - How can we find the mjdstart for each object? An algorithm for doing it by hand:
    - For each row in the sources table:
      - Read off the value of 'run'
      - Find the corresponding row in the 'runs' table
      - Read off the value of mjdstart

# JOIN: Joining tables

- SELECT

sources.ra, sources.dec, sources.run, mjdstart

FROM

sources

JOIN runs ON sources.run = runs.run

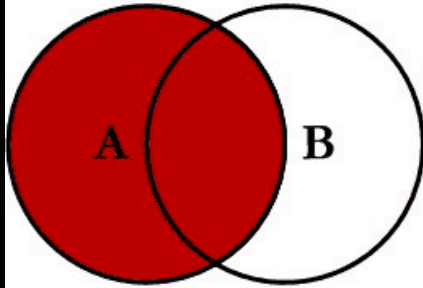
The columns we're interested in.

Those appearing in more than one table need to be prefixed by the table name.

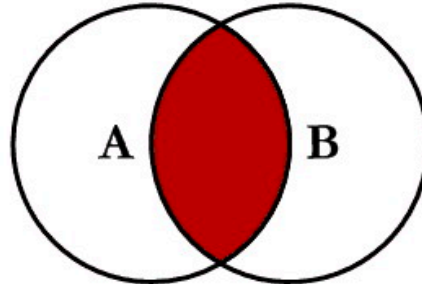
The table we're querying

Instructions how to join the runs table onto the sources table.

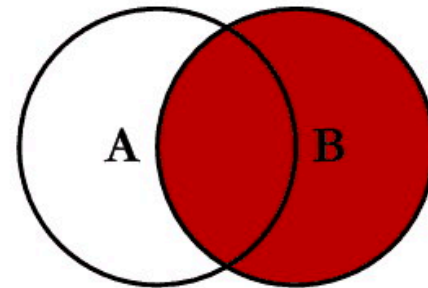
# SQL JOINS



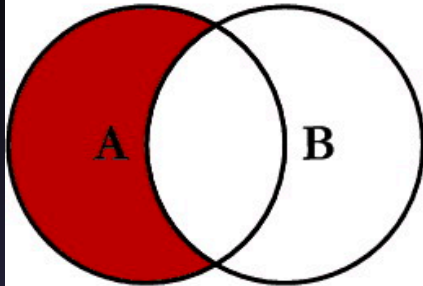
```
SELECT <select_list>
FROM TableA A
LEFT JOIN TableB B
ON A.Key = B.Key
```



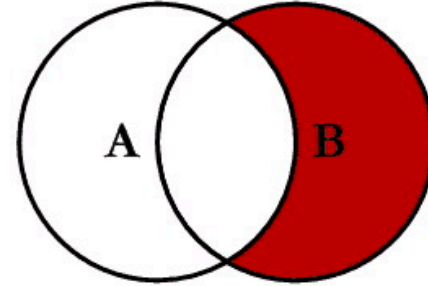
```
SELECT <select_list>
FROM TableA A
INNER JOIN TableB B
ON A.Key = B.Key
```



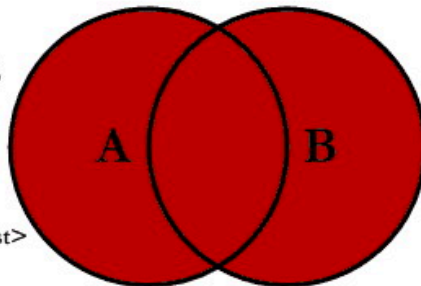
```
SELECT <select_list>
FROM TableA A
RIGHT JOIN TableB B
ON A.Key = B.Key
```



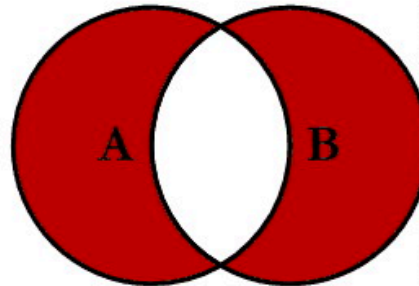
```
SELECT <select_list>
FROM TableA A
LEFT JOIN TableB B
ON A.Key = B.Key
WHERE B.Key IS NULL
```



```
SELECT <select_list>
FROM TableA A
RIGHT JOIN TableB B
ON A.Key = B.Key
WHERE A.Key IS NULL
```



```
SELECT <select_list>
FROM TableA A
FULL OUTER JOIN TableB B
ON A.Key = B.Key
```



```
SELECT <select_list>
FROM TableA A
FULL OUTER JOIN TableB B
ON A.Key = B.Key
WHERE A.Key IS NULL
OR B.Key IS NULL
```

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# Where does this get used

- SELECT

s.l, s.b

FROM

dbo.fGetNearbyObjEq(340, 30, 60) AS n

JOIN

Star AS s ON n.objID = s.objID

INTO mydb.small\_subset

*Note #1: This is SDSS SkyServer specific*

*Note #2: You'll find this useful for your homework*

# Doing all of this from Python

- Python can connect to a variety of databases
- SQLite module comes built into Python (sqlite3)
- We will also use a library called pandas (“Python Data Analysis Library”)
  - <http://pandas.pydata.org>
  - Pandas provides high-performance data structures for manipulating and analyzing tabular data

# More about SQL & Databases

- Interactive SQL tutorial
  - [http://sqlzoo.net/wiki/Main\\_Page](http://sqlzoo.net/wiki/Main_Page)
- Introduction to SQL (Stanford)
  - [https://class.stanford.edu/courses/DB/SQL/SelfPaced/courseware/ch-sql/seq-vid-introduction\\_to\\_sql/](https://class.stanford.edu/courses/DB/SQL/SelfPaced/courseware/ch-sql/seq-vid-introduction_to_sql/)
- Introduction to SQL (Phil Spector, Berkeley)
  - <https://www.stat.berkeley.edu/~spector/sql.pdf>
- Databases in depth: CSE444
  - <http://courses.cs.washington.edu/courses/cse444/>

# To Learn More

- Pandas
  - 10 minute tutorial: <http://pandas.pydata.org/pandas-docs/stable/10min.html>
  - 10 minute tutorial video: <http://vimeo.com/59324550>
  - Pandas Tutorials: <http://pandas.pydata.org/pandas-docs/stable/tutorials.html>

# For Your Homework

- Get an account on SDSS Catalog Access Server
  - <http://skyserver.sdss.org/casjobs/>