

# Introduction to Data Access and Storage

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Session 04

# Advanced Techniques:

NULL Management

Windowed Functions

String Manipulation

UNION & UNION ALL

INTERSECT & EXCEPT

# Advanced Techniques:

**NULL Management**

Windowed Functions

String Manipulation

UNION & UNION ALL

INTERSECT & EXCEPT

# NULL Management

IFNULL and COALESCE

NULLIF

# NULL Management

IFNULL and COALESCE

NULLIF

# IFNULL/ISNULL (flavour dependent) and COALESCE

- `IFNULL` (sqlite) or `ISNULL` (most others) allows us to return a replacement value for NULLs
  - Replacement values can be another column, a calculated value, or static
    - e.g. when col1 is NULL, it is replaced with values from col2
      - values from col2 are only present if col1 is NULL
      - if col2 is NULL, then NULL will be returned
- `COALESCE` does this as well, but behaves slightly differently
  - `COALESCE` allows you to replace NULLs from replacement values themselves
    - e.g. when col1 is NULL, it's replaced with col2; when col2 is NULL, it's replaced with col3, etc
  - `IFNULL` has to be wrapped around another (set of) `IFNULL` function(s) in order to mimic this behaviour
- Both are acceptable, `IFNULL` may be faster in some cases, though this isn't totally clear
  - `IFNULL` is also less flexible for mixed data types

# IFNULL/ISNULL (flavour dependent) and COALESCE

([IFNULL](#) & [COALESCE](#) live coding)

# NULL Management

IFNULL

NULLIF

# NULLIF

- NULLIF is a useful, although perhaps uncommon, means of evaluating if two arguments are equal to one another:
  - `NULLIF(5,5) AS [same], NULLIF(5,7) AS [different]`
  - It can be generally viewed as equivalent to:
    - `CASE WHEN parameter_1 = parameter_2 THEN NULL ELSE expr1 END`
- NULLIF is particularly useful when embedded within aggregations
  - Consider checking whether employees received a bonus:
    - `SELECT COUNT(NULLIF(Bonus, 0)) FROM Employees`
  - While these may also be possible within CASE statements, the readability is improved
- Because it is NULL producing, it can be useful in combination with COALESCE
  - Consider comparing average budgets from year to year:
    - `SELECT AVG(COALESCE(NULLIF(current_year, previous_year), 0.00)) FROM budgets`
- NULLIF can also help capture empty strings and turn them into NULLs
  - `NULLIF(col_with_blanks, '')`

# NULLIF

([NULLIF](#) live coding)

# Advanced Techniques:

NULL Management

Windowed Functions

String Manipulation

UNION & UNION ALL

INTERSECT & EXCEPT

# Windowed Functions

Purpose

OVER

PARTITION BY

ROW\_NUMBER()

Other Windowed Functions

# Windowed Functions

Purpose

OVER

PARTITION BY

ROW\_NUMBER()

Other Windowed Functions

# Purpose

- Windowed Functions allow us to create groupings within groupings ("partitions")
- Allow for greater complexity than simple SQL
  - In Session 3, we mentioned briefly a rolling total, e.g. a **SUM** and a **COUNT**; windowed functions allow us to return these types of results
- Often used with a subquery
  - One of the most common techniques is creating a row number **ROW\_NUMBER()** per group
    - When combined with **ORDER BY**, the associated row number will be the *highest* or *lowest* per grouping
    - This allows you to select the min or max by setting the row number = 1 in the "outer" query (i.e. not the "inner" subquery)

The diagram illustrates a nested SQL query structure. The outermost query is labeled "outer" query. It contains a subquery, indicated by a dashed box labeled "inner" query. The subquery itself is also labeled "outer" query at its bottom. The code is as follows:

```
1 •   SELECT * FROM          "outer" query
2   (
3     SELECT
4       vi.vendor_id,
5       vi.market_date,
6       vi.product_id,
7       vi.original_price,
8       ROW_NUMBER() OVER (PARTITION BY vendor_id ORDER BY original_price DESC) AS price_rank
9     FROM farmers_market.vendor_inventory vi
10    ORDER BY vi.vendor_id
11  ) x
12  WHERE x.price_rank = 1      "outer" query
```

# Windowed Functions

Purpose

OVER

PARTITION BY

ROW\_NUMBER()

Other Windowed Functions

# OVER

- Syntax for windowed function always requires the `OVER` clause
  - `{desired_windowed_function} OVER (ORDER BY [a column])`
- The `ORDER BY` clause is required
- Think of the `OVER` clause as applying the function of your choice
  - e.g. create row numbers based on the ordering of this column
  - e.g. rank these values from highest to lowest

# Windowed Functions

Purpose

OVER

PARTITION BY

ROW\_NUMBER()

Other Windowed Functions

# PARTITION BY

- Within an `OVER` clause, we can optionally use `PARTITION BY` to create groupings for the function to be applied to
  - `{desired_windowed_function} OVER (PARTITION BY [a column] ORDER BY [a column])`
- Now, the function is being applied to different groups
  - e.g. rank these values from highest to lowest within these groups
    - The ranking will restart for each group
    - Think of this like the Olympics: the top three competitors for each event get gold, silver, and bronze – the `PARTITION BY` is the event, the `ORDER BY` is the time `ASC` or points `DESC` that determine the outcome of the event
- Both the `PARTITION BY` and `ORDER BY` arguments can take more than one column
  - e.g. life expectancy by country by continent



# Windowed Functions

Purpose

OVER

PARTITION BY

**ROW\_NUMBER()**

Other Windowed Functions

# ROW\_NUMBER()

- `ROW_NUMBER()` is the simplest windowed function, but also one of the most useful
  - There are no mathematical functions being applied, just an incremental value by group
  - Determining the top (or bottom) per group is often done through `ROW_NUMBER()`
- `ROW_NUMBER()` might feel a bit like ranking `RANK()`...but it's not quite
  - **What is the difference between `ROW_NUMBER()` and `RANK()`?**  Think, Pair, Share

# Windowed Functions

Purpose

OVER

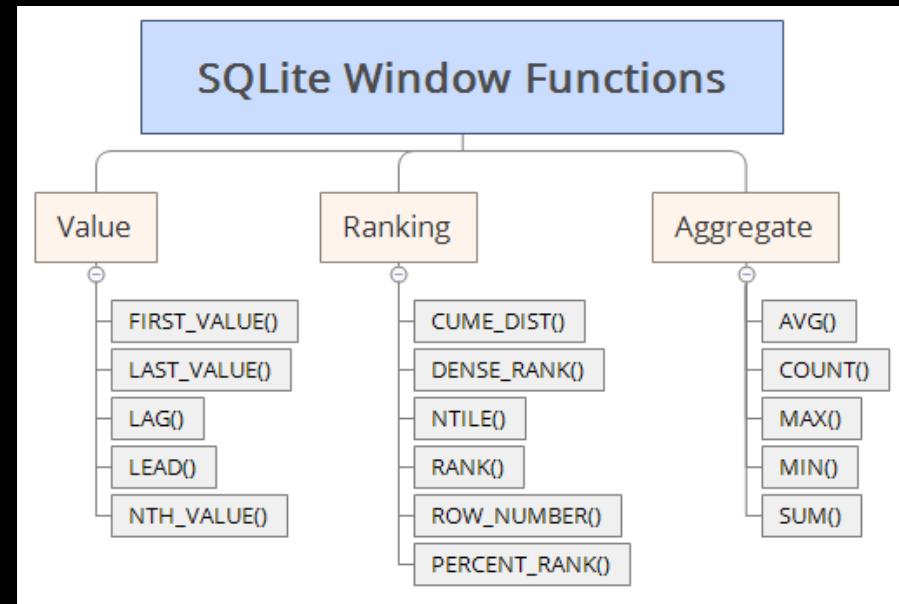
PARTITION BY

ROW\_NUMBER

Other Windowed Functions

# Other Windowed Functions

- SQL supports quite a few other windowed functions
- `NTILE` for example will assign rows to buckets (4: quartile, 5: quintile, 10: decile, etc)
  - As such, the `NTILE` function requires an argument passed to it
    - `NTILE(4) OVER (PARTITION BY...ORDER BY...)`
- `LAG` and `LEAD` allow us to create an offset of another column
  - e.g. show a `previous_year_total` next to a `current_year_total` for easy comparison
- Knowing how and why to use these can make querying a lot easier



# Windowed Functions

(Windowed Functions live coding)



# Advanced Techniques:

NULL Management

Windowed Functions

String Manipulation

UNION & UNION ALL

INTERSECT & EXCEPT

# String Manipulation

LTRIM & RTRIM

REPLACE

UPPER & LOWER

Concatenation

(...)

# String Manipulation (continued)

SUBSTR

INSTR

LENGTH

CHAR & UNICODE

REGEXP

# String Manipulation

LTRIM & RTRIM

REPLACE

UPPER & LOWER

Concatenation

(...)

# LTRIM & RTRIM

- **LTRIM** and **RTRIM** serve two purposes in SQLite:
  - Their main function is to remove leading or trailing white spaces from strings
    - This is surprisingly common – many SQL databases are populated by human input, and this is a frequently overlooked input error
    - e.g. 'Thomas Rosenthal '
  - Alternatively, they act similarly to **REPLACE** (coming up next), but within their specific context:
    - **LTRIM** removes any specified set of characters from the *left*
    - **RTRIM** removes any specified set of characters from the *right*
      - The usefulness of this is going to be very case specific:
        - e.g. wanting to remove a prefix/suffix of an ID:
          - **LTRIM( "A189A" , 'A' )** would result in '189A'
          - **RTRIM( "A189A" , 'A' )** would result in 'A189'
          - **REPLACE** would remove both A's: '189'

# LTRIM & RTRIM

([LTRIM & RTRIM live coding](#))

# String Manipulation

LTRIM & RTRIM

REPLACE

UPPER & LOWER

Concatenation

(...)

# REPLACE

- **REPLACE** is likely going to be one of your most commonly used string manipulations
- It substitutes a character or set of characters with another
  - We specify which string (or set of strings within a column), what we want to replace, and the replacement value
    - e.g. `REPLACE('A is an excellent instructor', 'instructor', 'TA')` results in 'A is an excellent TA'
  - You can also replace a character with nothing, using an empty string: ''
    - e.g. `REPLACE('colour', 'u', '')` results in 'color'
- **REPLACE** statements can be strung together – the innermost function will be executed first
  - e.g. `REPLACE(REPLACE(REPLACE('A?lot-of,punctuation.', '.', ''), ',', ','), '-',''), '?','')` results in 'A lot of punctuation'

# REPLACE

(REPLACE live coding)

# String Manipulation

LTRIM & RTRIM

REPLACE

UPPER & LOWER

Concatenation

(...)

# UPPER & LOWER

- `UPPER` forces all string characters to be uppercase
- `LOWER` forces all string characters to be lowercase
- Both `UPPER` and `LOWER` are essential for filtering tables based on strings
  - It's always best to assume that there is some string variety
  - Sometimes a `LIKE` statement will not be an option

---

## annoying\_string\_column

WORD

Word

word

wOrD

DifferentWord

---

- We can always use `UPPER` or `LOWER` in a `WHERE` clause, even without using the commands in the `SELECT` statement

```
SELECT annoying_string_column  
FROM table  
WHERE LOWER(annoying_string_column) = 'word'
```

- *(This is also true for all of these string manipulations!)*

# UPPER & LOWER

(UPPER & LOWER live coding)

# String Manipulation

LTRIM & RTRIM

REPLACE

UPPER & LOWER

Concatenation

(...)

# Concatenation (sometimes CONCAT, flavour dependent )

- String concatenation combines two or more columns into a single column
- Concatenation can handle non-column values too
  - e.g. `first_name || ' ' || last_name` as `full_name`
  - Or `last_name || ', ' || first_name` AS `full_name`
- In SQLite, `CONCAT` is replaced by two vertical bar characters: `||`
  - Most other flavours use `CONCAT`
- By default, spaces are not included between columns
  - i.e. you need to add a blank space between quotes

# Concatenation

(Concatenation live coding)

# String Manipulation (continued)

SUBSTR

INSTR

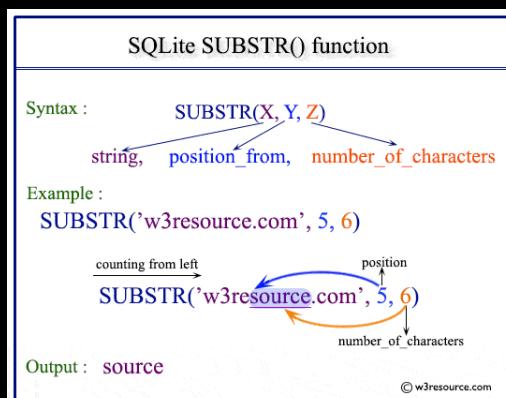
LENGTH

CHAR & UNICODE

REGEXP

# SUBSTR ("substring")

- SUBSTR specifies any section of a string to return, based on:
  - Which string (i.e. column)
  - Where to begin the section (i.e. the string position to start, as an integer)
  - The (optional) number of characters to return (i.e. how far to go, as an integer)
- SUBSTR replaces flavour specific functions like LEFT or RIGHT
  - By default SUBSTR counts from the left
    - e.g. `substr('a long string', 3, 4)` will return "long"
  - To count from the right, specify a negative number to start
    - e.g. `substr('a long string', -6, 6)` will return "string"



# SUBSTR

(SUBSTR live coding)

# String Manipulation (continued)

SUBSTR

INSTR

LENGTH

CHAR & UNICODE

REGEXP

# INSTR (CHARINDEX flavour dependent)

- INSTR provides the starting position or location of a specified string
- INSTR('The instructor is named Thomas', 'Thomas') will result in 25, because "Thomas" is the 25th through 30th character in our string
  - INSTR('The Instructor is named Thomas', 'Th') will result in 1 because "Th" arises in "The" before "Thomas"
- INSTR can help with splitting a text string on delimiters
  - By finding the distance between delimiters and extracting the appropriate characters with SUBSTR we can move through delimiters in text columns
  - The code gets a wild quite quickly:

```
SELECT
  SUBSTR('FirstWord, SecondWord, ThirdWord',0, INSTR('FirstWord, SecondWord, ThirdWord','','')) as FirstDelim
, SUBSTR('FirstWord, SecondWord, ThirdWord',
  INSTR('FirstWord, SecondWord, ThirdWord','','')+1,
  INSTR('FirstWord, SecondWord, ThirdWord','','')+1) as SecondDelim
, SUBSTR('FirstWord, SecondWord, ThirdWord',
  INSTR(
    (SUBSTR('FirstWord, SecondWord, ThirdWord',
    INSTR('FirstWord, SecondWord, ThirdWord','','')+1))
  ,',')+1
  INSTR('FirstWord, SecondWord, ThirdWord','','')+1) AS ThirdDelim
```

# INSTR

(INSTR live coding)

# String Manipulation (continued)

SUBSTR

INSTR

LENGTH

CHAR & UNICODE

REGEXP

# LENGTH

- LENGTH returns the number of characters in a given string (or set of strings in a column)
  - LENGTH also works on integers
- LENGTH is perhaps less of a string manipulation in and of itself, but is useful in debugging
  - Combined with MAX, LENGTH can be useful, especially when adding string length constraints to a column
  - Combined with SUBSTR, LENGTH can cut strings within a column by a dynamic value
- What happens when we apply `SELECT SUBSTR(CanadianMusicians, 0, LENGTH(CanadianMusicians)-6)` to the table below?

---

## CanadianMusicians

---

Neil Young

Leonard Cohen

Shania Twain

Michael Bublé

---

---

## CanadianMusicians

---

Neil

Leonard

Shania

Michael

---

# LENGTH

([LENGTH](#) live coding)

# String Manipulation (continued)

SUBSTR

INSTR

LENGTH

CHAR & UNICODE

REGEXP

# CHAR & UNICODE

## CHAR

- When provided an ASCII value, CHAR will return the appropriate character from the ASCII table
  - e.g. CHAR(98) will result in 'b'
- Pronunciation is split on "char":
  - "char" as in "*char*-broiled"
  - "char" as in "*car*"
  - "char" as in "*character*"
  - "char" as in "*care*"
- CHAR is hugely useful with REPLACE
  - Occasionally, line breaks affect SQL column validity, so REPLACE(lf\_column, CHAR(10), '') and/or REPLACE(cr\_column, CHAR(13), '') will be hugely useful
    - Where CHAR(10) is a linefeed "lf" and CHAR(13) is a carriage return "cr"
- CHAR can help with structure and control of strings as they flow into columns

# CHAR & UNICODE

## UNICODE (ASCII in some flavours)

- **UNICODE** provides the ASCII value of any given character
  - i.e. the opposite of **CHAR**
- The usage? I'm a bit unsure! Maybe faster than looking it up online?
  - e.g. **UNICODE( 'b' )** will result in '98'

# CHAR & UNICODE

(CHAR & UNICODE live coding)

# String Manipulation (continued)

SUBSTR

INSTR

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CHAR & UNICODE

REGEXP

# REGEXP (flavour dependent)

- REGEXP allows for string filtering based on regular expressions (regex)
- Situated within a WHERE clause, very similar to LIKE
- Can use either SQL's or regex's Boolean operators
  - e.g. WHERE austen\_books REGEXP '(sion|ice)\$'
  - Or WHERE austen\_books REGEXP 'sion\$' OR austen\_books REGEXP 'ice\$'

---

austen\_books

---

Sense & Sensibility

Pride & Prejudice

Mansfield Park

Emma

Persuasion

Northanger Abbey

---

---

austen\_books

---

Pride & Prejudice

Persuasion

---

# REGEXP (flavour dependent)

(Quick REGEXP live coding)

Some people, when confronted with a problem think: "I know, I'll use regular expressions." Now they have two problems.

Jamie Zawinski (probably)



# Advanced Techniques:

NULL Management

Windowed Functions

String Manipulation

**UNION & UNION ALL**

INTERSECT & EXCEPT

# UNION & UNION ALL

- `UNION` and `UNION ALL` combine the results of two or more queries vertically (i.e. row-wise)
- `UNION ALL` keeps duplicate values, whereas `UNION` removes them
  - The difference between the two is one of the most common interview questions!
- `UNION` and `UNION ALL` require both/all queries to have the same number of columns
  - You could `UNION` unrelated columns if you had a specific use-case for it
    - Column names will come from the first query
  - In situations where you don't have exactly the same columns, but still need to `UNION`, you can pass a `NULL` (or zero, or blank) column
    - Similarly, you can pass a string character to keep track of which data is associated to which query

```
SELECT number_of_chips, number_of_tacos, 0 AS number_of_burritos, 'lunch' AS meal  
FROM lunch
```

UNION

```
SELECT NULL as number_of_chips, number_of_tacos, number_of_burritos, 'dinner' AS meal  
FROM dinner
```

# UNION & UNION ALL

- If we recall SQLite's lack of support for `FULL OUTER JOINS`, `UNION ALL` will allow us to emulate one:

```
SELECT s1.quantity, s1.costume, s2.quantity
FROM store1 s1
LEFT JOIN store2 s2 ON s1.costume = s2.costume

UNION ALL

SELECT s1.quantity, s2.costume, s2.quantity
FROM store2 s2
LEFT JOIN store1 s1 ON s2.costume = s1.costume

WHERE s1.quantity IS NULL
```

# UNION & UNION ALL

([UNION](#) & [UNION ALL](#) live coding)



# Advanced Techniques:

NULL Management

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UNION & UNION ALL

INTERSECT & EXCEPT

# INTERSECT & EXCEPT

- Both `INTERSECT` and `EXCEPT` require both/all queries to have the same number of columns

## INTERSECT

- `INTERSECT` returns data in common with both/all `SELECT` statements
- Values returned will be distinct
- **What's the difference between `INTERSECT` and `INNER JOIN`?**

## EXCEPT

- `EXCEPT` returns the opposite of an `INTERSECT`
  - for whatever rows are returned by the first `SELECT` statement, `EXCEPT` will return rows that were *not* returned by the second `SELECT` statement
- The "direction" of `EXCEPT` matters a lot
  - `EXCEPT` is relative to the first `SELECT` statement, so changing which comes first will always change the results of the query

# INTERSECT & EXCEPT

Let's consider an example:

For the following `product` table,

| product      | product_id |
|--------------|------------|
| blue bike    | 1          |
| tiger onesie | 2          |
| house plant  | 3          |
| headphones   | 4          |

and `order` table,

| order_id | product_id |
|----------|------------|
| 1        | 1          |
| 2        | 1          |
| 3        | 1          |
| 4        | 4          |

`INTERSECT` will find all products with work orders

```
SELECT product_id FROM product  
INTERSECT  
SELECT product_id FROM orders
```

Resulting in product\_id's 1 & 4

`EXCEPT` will find all products *without* work orders

```
SELECT product_id FROM product  
EXCEPT  
SELECT product_id FROM orders
```

Resulting in product\_id's 2 & 3

*OR* all work orders *without* products

```
SELECT product_id FROM orders  
EXCEPT  
SELECT product_id FROM product
```

Resulting in nothing (because no orders have a product\_id that is not found in the product table)

# INTERSECT & EXCEPT

(INTERSECT & EXCEPT live coding)



