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# Introduction

This report uses a variety of specialized terminology and abbreviations. Explanations are defined in the Glossary.

# Database Technologies

## Relational Database Management Systems (RDBMS)

Inferred from the name, the RDBMS uses a structure based on the relational model proposed by E.F. Codd in 1970 (Connolly 2015 Part 2 – Chapter 4), to allow us to identify and access data attributes via table-based (Appendix B - Figure 1) relations using primary and foreign keys.

A screenshot of a computer

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Figure 1 Example RDBMS SQL Table Relations (W3Resource 2022)

They are designed to represent complex data schemas and minimize data redundancy through normalization whilst offering performant transactions using SQL[[1]](#endnote-1).

RDBMS vendors, such as *PostgreSQL, MySQL & SQLite* are amongst the most common databases used by professional developers, evidenced below.

A screenshot of a graph

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Figure 2 - Database Environments used by Professional Developers - Stack Overflow Survey 2023

An excellent reason to use an RDBMS’ is when your transactions must adhere to the ACID principles[[2]](#endnote-2) which most vendors support implicitly, and if your organisation has complex querying requirements.

A screenshot of a computer

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Figure 3 - ACID Principles

Any system that prefers reliable and consistent data storage with complex structure over performance will favour an RDBMS, such as:

* Banking systems
* Education sector systems
* Complex online stores

While RDMS’ advantages give them the number 1 spot in industry, their pros can be their greatest limitation for certain requirements:

* ACID inherently reduces performance, limiting their adoption by platforms like YouTube (Shivang, 2019).
* Unsuited for unstructured/semi-unstructured data such as JSON [[3]](#endnote-3)documents.
* Extreme complexity can lead to a poor representation of “real-world” entities & challenging schema updates (Connolly 2015, Part 2 – Chapter 9).

## NoSQL – Not Only SQL

### Hierarchical Databases:

As one of the most straightforward database types, data is presented in a tree-like [[4]](#endnote-4)form resembling a single JSON Object. Relationships form a unidirectional parent-child hierarchy, where each record uniquely links to a single parent (Appendix B - Figure 2).

A diagram of a network

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Figure 4 - Hierarchical Data Structure - MariaDB 2015

Due to their tree-like structure, they are highly performant for read/write actions. They have exceptional use cases where entities are only in explicitly hierarchical relationships, such as File Systems (MariaDB, 2015).

However, they cannot support multi-dimensional or many-to-many relationships, so they are limited in their ability.

### Document Database

Despite the nomenclature, these do not store entities like Spreadsheets or Word documents. Instead, it is structured formats like JSON, BSON[[5]](#endnote-5) or XML[[6]](#endnote-6) (Hoffer, 2019).

In document databases, each named, key-addressed record stores its data as a “value”. Unlike hierarchical databases, they facilitate many-to-many relationships by referencing another document’s key.

A close-up of a computer code

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Figure 5 Document Data Model Representation (Pore, 2018)

They are scalable, can handle complex data and have flexible schemas, however they lack proper structure and complex queries can be slow.

Some vendors include *MongoDB* & *Amazon DynamoDB,* they are great for CMS’[[7]](#endnote-7) where the values are highly varying.

Graph

Key-Value

Wide-Column

Object Oriented Databases

Time Series Databases

# Appendices

## Appendix A:

### Figure 1 – RDBMS Table

A simple representation of a table in a Relational Database Management System.

Adapted from “RDBMS Table Terminologies”, a blogpost by Wentz Wu. 8/07/2019.

### Figure 2 – Stack Overflow Database Environments Survey:

A chart displaying database environments used by professional developers (60,369 respondents). Answers are multiple choice to encapsulate total usage rather than the greatest usage of a specific vender.

Adapted from the 2023 Developer Survey by Stack Overflow.

### Figure 3 – ACID Principles:

A graphic showing an overview of the ACID Principles and their definitions.

Adapted from an independent blogpost by Dave Pinal. 9/12/2007.

### Figure 4 – Hierarchical Data Tree

A simple graphic showing the tree-like structure of hierarchical databases.

Adapted from an article from MariaDB. 06/06/2015.

### Figure 5 – Document Model Example

An image that represents a collection of documents within a document database. Records can contain different data as long as the overall structure is adhered to.

Adapted from an article from Akshay Pore, 16/2/2018.

## Appendix B:

### Figure 1 – RDBMS Table:

A diagram of a table

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A simple example of an RDBMS table and a visual representation of definitions associated with them.

Adapted from an example from W3Resource’s website. 19/08/2022.

### Figure 2 – Hierarchical Data Example:

A screenshot of a computer screen

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A visual representation of a Hierarchical data structure.

Organization is the Root of the hierarchy, with Departments & Employees as nested child entities. This demonstrates the limitation of the hierarchical data structure, as children can only have a single parent node.

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# Glossary

1. SQL – Structured Query Language

   The standard language of accessing and manipulating Relational Database Management Systems. [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. ACID Principles:

   Atomicity, Consistency, Isolation & Durability. A set of principles applied to database transactions to enhance the reliability of data, avoid stateful concurrency issues in transactions and eliminate data loss through critical outages. [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. JSON – JavaScript Object Notation

   A lightweight format of data often sent across HTTP requests back and forth between a browser and server. Heavily adopted due to the format matching that of Object-Oriented Programming Languages, such as C# and JavaScript, making serialization of data easy for communication. [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
4. Tree Structure

   A data structure that contains a single root node that can have a recursive number of child elements with only one parent. Called a “Tree” due to its triangular visual representation and because each child node can be referred to as a branch, where each branch has its own branches. [↑](#endnote-ref-4)
5. BSON – Binary JSON

   A binary representation of JSON, often storing metadata about the type & length of data. [↑](#endnote-ref-5)
6. XML – Extensible Markup Language

   A file format for storing, transmitting, and reconstructing arbitrary data. It defines a set of rules for encoding documents in a format that is both human-readable and machine-readable. (W3Schools, n.d.) [↑](#endnote-ref-6)
7. CMS – Content Management System

   A software system that creates, manages, and modifies digital content on a website or application. [↑](#endnote-ref-7)