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ABS Tech Note: DAL07 NULL Values in GROUP BY (6/92)

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TOPIC -----

This technical note describes differences in the way various DBMS brands handle NULL values when GROUP BY is specified in a query.

DISCUSSION -----

The GROUP BY clause groups together rows that have identical values in a grouping column (or columns) and produces a summary row of query results for each row group. When NULL values occur in the grouping column, the results of the query may differ from one DBMS brand to another. Some DBMS brands, such as ORACLE, consider two NULL values to be identical for GROUP BY purposes and collect all rows with a NULL grouping column value into a single row group. Other DBMS brands, such as Informix, treat two NULL values as different values for GROUP BY purposes (in the same way that two NULL values are not considered identical when compared in the WHERE clause). These DBMS brands generate a separate row group for each row with a NULL grouping column value.

DAL accepts the query results as returned by the DBMS, so these differences between the DBMS brands are visible through DAL. If your application uses a query with GROUP BY and the grouping columns can contain NULL values, you should experiment with your particular DBMS brand to see how it will group the rows containing the NULL values.

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