



Improving FASTR Performance

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1. INTRODUCTION

Many JDE user sites often report or complain of perceived performance problems with FASTR reporting. These 'problems' fall into two categories:-

- From the user perspective the reports are required on a near to ASAP basis, or, the users have an expectation of a quicker report turnaround time
- From the IT perspective dealing with the general performance degradation and related symptoms when heavy FASTR processes are run during peak processing periods in a day.

This short paper attempts to look at both sides of the problem and offer some suggestions that should alleviate some if not many of the frustrations.

All references to JDE documentation relate to the A7.3 FASTR Reference guide. All specific references to FASTR screens etc relate to release A7.3 cum 12, however you should note that very few if any technical or enhancement changes have been made to FASTR since late release A6.2, "bug fixes" of course have been and are still being evaluated and applied

2. THE FASTR SYSTEM FLOW

Eliminating FASTR performance problems requires that the user have some understanding of what a FASTR version does once it is submitted and commences execution. The JDE FASTR reference Guide provides a description of the flow in the Overview section at pages 1-10 and 1-11. While not wishing to replicate JDE some description is needed in this paper. My description is meant to be a generalisation, those of you with a technical background should be aware that the intricate details are more complex (and the actual sequence of events might be slightly different).

The flow is comprised of three major phases:-

- Creating the workfile
- Processing row and cell calculations
- Creating the report and output to a spoolfile

The first phase involves using the selection and sequencing criteria from General Specifications and criteria from Column Specifications to extract data from three main files, Business Unit Master (F0006), Account Master (F0901), and, Account Balances (F0902). Other files are accessed at various stages but the three already mentioned are the most



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important. Note that the resultant workfile contains only that data which meets the selection criteria in the General Specifications.

This phase invariably involves the most processing effort from the system especially in a large volume site, for example one of my more recent clients has 3,950 Business Unit Master 281,300 Account Master and 8,124,000 Account Balance records. You might question why so much, but suffice to say that they need at least three years balance history and are a large public company spread across five geographic locations with four divisional boundaries together with a large number of business activities.

The second phase is invoked only if row specifications (and therefore possibly cell calculations) are present in the version being executed. FASTR then uses the data from the workfile (note it is not processing new records from any of the original input files) and applies the criteria from the row (and cell) specifications. Excessive use of row and cell specifications will have an impact on the time and resources needed to complete this phase.

The third and final phase produces the required report using the already processed data from the "workfile". This phase is usually the quickest and least demanding on the AS/400 system resources.

3. IMPROVEMENTS FROM THE USER PERSPECTIVE

3.1. BASIC FASTR DEFINITION

Bearing in mind that the workfile creation phase is normally the longest and most intensive part to processing in a FASTR report there are some basic steps that, if adopted, can improve performance.

3.1.1. Selection Criteria

Make sure that the selection criteria in your General Specifications are very specific to, or, tightly aligned with, what the report really requires. As a rule of thumb, *"if your report doesn't need it then make sure your selection criteria doesn't include it!"*

- Include specific selections of Ledger Type and Fiscal Year if your report covers only current or this year/last year AA and/or BA ledger types. You may need to alter any manual year-end task lists to include a step covering the changing of FASTR selection criteria. If you have five years of balance history and don't specifically select a year or years, then FASTR will have to read balance records for all years before checking against column specifications when creating the workfile.
- Select only those business units that your report requires. Maybe you should consider using BU Category Codes to make the selection specification an easier task.
- Select only those ranges of accounts that your report requires. If you are producing a balance sheet then don't include P&L accounts in your selection and vice versa.

3.1.2. Override Default Information

Check your override defaults to ensure you are not using a feature unnecessarily such as Balance Auditor or PC File Download. To check this you need to "page down" on the override defaults screen to see the settings on the second page. Often when creating a new FASTR version we tend to copy from an existing version, but often fail to check the second page. Similarly, we may use Balance Auditor for testing and problem resolution but forget to turn it

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