

OfficeWriter Designer vs OfficeWriter Designer .NET

Overview

OfficeWriter Designer .NET was introduced in version 8.6.0 of OfficeWriter. It is a completely rewritten version of our Excel Designer add-in using more modern technologies than the existing OfficeWriter Designer. The OfficeWriter Designer .NET is written in .NET/C# using VSTO (Visual Studio Tools for Office). It has no dependence on COM or VBA. The new Designer .NET has better platform support (i.e. 64-bit Office) and is more robust. However, it does not yet support all of the features found in the original Designer. Additional functionality will be added to future releases of the Designer .NET.

Benefits of OfficeWriter Designer .NET

- Office 64-bit support
- No dependencies on COM/VBA
- More robust handling on modifications to queries in Visual Studio/Report Builder
- Better parameter support with the **View** functionality

Limitations of Designer .NET

- Does not update references to shared data sources when publishing to a new folder on the report server. It may be necessary to update shared data source file paths through Report Manager.
- Preserves SSRS formulas created in the old Designer, but does not provide a way to create or edit the formulas.
- OfficeWriter Designer .NET is only available in Excel
- Unable to retrieve or publish directly to/from a SharePoint report library
- No built-in query builder available. Queries must be built in Visual Studio or Report Builder.
- RDLs created from the MS Query integration in the old Designer are not supported

Details

Platform

Feature	OfficeWriter Designer .NET	OfficeWriter Designer
Office 2007	Excel 2007 (up through SP3)	Excel and Word 2007 SP2 or SP3
Office 2010	Excel 2010 (32-bit and 64-bit)	Excel and Word 2010 (32-bit only) SP1
Office 2013	Excel 2013 (32-bit and 64-bit)	Excel and Word 2013 (32-bit only)
System requirements	.NET 4.0 or higher Visual Studio 2010 Tools for Office runtime (VSTO)	Visual Basic for Applications (VBA) MS Query Latest Microsoft service pack Security Bulletain MS-012-060

SQL Server Reporting Services Version

Feature	OfficeWriter Designer .NET	OfficeWriter Designer
SSRS 2005	Not supported	RDLs created in VS 2005 supported.
SSRS 2008 (R2)	RDLs created in Visual Studio 2008/2010, Report Builder 3.0	RDLs created in Visual Studio 2008/2010, Report Builder 3.0
SSRS 2012	RDLs created in Visual Studio 2010/2012, Report Builder 3.0	RDLs created in Visual Studio 2010/2012, Report Builder 3.0

Basic Designer Functionality

Feature	OfficeWriter Designer .NET	OfficeWriter Designer
Open a report (server/disk)	Prevents users from opening multiple reports at once	Users can open multiple reports at once which may lead to corrupted reports.
Save a report (server/disk)	Defaults to XLSX. Remembers last-saved file format.	Defaults to XLS for each save. Does not remember last-saved file format.
View	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does not require an RDL to be open in the Designer .NET to view Supports selecting multiple values and cascading parameters in addition to basic parameters 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Requires an RDL to be open in the Designer to view a particular report Supports basic parameters
Import a template	Supported	Supported in Excel and Word
Report properties	Available in the toolbar	Can only be edited when saving to disk
Insert data place holders based on data sets	Supports inserting data markers (Excel)	Supports inserting data markers (Excel), merge fields (Word) and defining repeat blocks (Word)
Native query builder	Not currently supported	Available through MS Query integration

Report Robustness

Feature	OfficeWriter Designer .NET	OfficeWriter Designer
Modifying data sets in Visual Studio or Report Builder	Safe actions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Add or remove data sets Rename data sets 	Safe actions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Add new data sets
Modifying fields in queries in Visual Studio or Report Builder	Safe actions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Add or remove fields Rename fields 	Safe actions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Add new data sets

SQL Server Reporting Services RDL Features

Feature	OfficeWriter Designer .NET	OfficeWriter Designer
Shared data sources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fully supports RDLs that store absolute paths to shared data sources (i.e. RDLs created in Report Builder 3.0). When publishing RDLs that only contain the shared data source name (i.e. RDLs created in Visual Studio) to a new folder on the server, it may be necessary to update the reference to the shared data source through Report Manager. Unable to View reports created from shared data sources in Visual Studio. 	Correctly handles shared data sources with absolute and relative paths stored in the RDL
Report Models	Not currently supported	Supported
Formulas/expressions defined in Visual Studio or Report Builder	Not currently supported	Not currently supported. * OfficeWriter Designer provides a limited set of similar formulas that are exclusively visible in the Designer. See Backwards Compatibility for OfficeWriter Reporting Services formulas for more information.
SHAREPOINT		
Open from a report library	Not currently supported	SharePoint 2007 supported

Save to a report library	Not currently supported	SharePoint 2007 supported
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Backwards Compatibility with OfficeWriter Designer files

OfficeWriter Designer Feature	OfficeWriter Designer .NET Support
RDLs with OfficeWriter Reporting Services formulas	Formulas will be preserved. Reports that have formula data markers will still populate the formulas. Formulas are not accessible for adding, removing, or modifying in Designer .NET
RDLs with Word templates from OfficeWriter Designer	Fully backwards compatible.
RDLs with Excel templates from OfficeWriter Designer	Fully backwards compatible.
RDLs created from MS Query integration in the OfficeWriter Designer	Not currently supported.