
AIMMS Language Reference - Reading and Writing Spreadsheet Data

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Chapter 29

Reading and Writing Spreadsheet Data

While it is technically possible to exchange data with Excel through the READ and WRITE statements using the ODBC database connectivity interfaces (see Chapter 27), the Excel ODBC drivers have many limitations. Essential internal SQL statements like UPDATE and DELETE are not supported by these interfaces, effectively making the READ statement the only AIMMS statement which might be used in this setup. For this reason, we strongly recommend you not to use this setup, but to consider to use the spreadsheet functions, described in this chapter, instead. Please note that there are no ODBC drivers available for OpenOffice Calc, so the remarks above apply to the Excel case only.

Treating Excel as a database

On the other hand, *from within Excel*, it is possible to exchange data with an AIMMS model in a variety of list and tabular formats using the Excel add-in provided with AIMMS. The Excel add-in is described in full detail in the *Excel Add-In User's Guide*.

The Excel Add-In

From AIMMS version 3.12 FR1 on, it is also possible to communicate with OpenOffice Calc workbooks from within the AIMMS model (there is no equivalent of the Excel add-in for OpenOffice Calc). The function library is the same as used for the communication with Excel from within the AIMMS model. To use the functions with OpenOffice Calc workbooks instead of Excel workbooks, simply use the extension `.ods` in the `WorkbookName` argument of the functions.

The OpenOffice Calc function library

This chapter provides a brief description of an AIMMS function library that allows you programmatic access, *from within your model*, to the extensive data exchange capabilities provided by the Excel add-in.

This chapter

29.1 An example

To illustrate the functionality of the Excel add-in, the AIMMS distribution contains an example, which provides a simple Excel workbook that illustrates the use of the Excel add-in. In this example workbook, all the input and output data of a transport model in AIMMS is retained in the workbook and exchanged with AIMMS using the data exchange functionality provided by the Excel add-in. You can find the example in the *Examples* directory of your AIMMS installation.

The Excel transport example...

In this section, you will learn how the same data exchange could be accomplished from within your model using the spreadsheet function library of AIMMS. The source code illustrated in this section is contained in the AIMMS model accompanying the Excel Link example workbook. Thus, if you run this model in a stand-alone way from within AIMMS, the Excel Link example also serves as an example of the spreadsheet function library.

... started from within AIMMS

The input data of the transport model consists of:

- a set Depots with index d ,
- a set Customers with index c ,
- a parameter Supply(d),
- a parameter Demand(c), and
- a parameter UnitTransportCost(d, c).

Retrieving the input data

Using the spreadsheet function library, the following function calls retrieve all input data from the Excel workbook whose name is stored in the string parameter `WorkbookName`.

```
Spreadsheet::SetActiveSheet( WorkbookName, "Transport Model" );
Spreadsheet::RetrieveSet( WorkbookName, Depots, "DepotsRange" );
Spreadsheet::RetrieveSet( WorkbookName, Customers, "CustomersRange" );
Spreadsheet::RetrieveParameter( WorkbookName, Supply, "SupplyRange" );
Spreadsheet::RetrieveParameter( WorkbookName, Demand, "DemandRange" );
Spreadsheet::RetrieveTable( WorkbookName, UnitTransportCost,
    "UnitTransportRange", "DepotsRange", "CustomersRange" );
```

This sequence of function calls, with the exception of the first call, is the direct counterpart of the sequence of actions in the Excel workbook example used to pass the model data to the AIMMS model.

By calling the function `Spreadsheet::SetActiveSheet`, you indicate to AIMMS that all following calls operate on a single sheet, allowing you to omit the sheet name as an optional argument in subsequent calls. Through the functions

Explained

- `Spreadsheet::RetrieveSet`,
- `Spreadsheet::RetrieveParameter`, and
- `Spreadsheet::RetrieveTable`,

you indicate to AIMMS that the corresponding set and parameter data must be obtained from the specified named Excel ranges. The functionality of these functions is exactly the same as the functionality of the corresponding actions in the Excel add-in. Note that ranges can also be described using the standard A1 and R1C1 styles of Excel.

The input data of the transport model consists of:

- a variable `Transport(d,c)`, and
- a variable `TotalCost` containing the objective value of the optimization model.

Writing back the solution

These values can be stored in the given workbook using the following function calls.

```
Spreadsheet::SetActiveSheet( WorkbookName, "Transport Model" );
Spreadsheet::AssignParameter( WorkbookName, Transport, "TransportRange", sparse: 1 );
Spreadsheet::AssignValue( WorkbookName, TotalCost, "TotalCostRange" );
```

Again, these functions provide exactly the same functionality as the corresponding actions in the Excel add-in, and the sequence of function calls corresponds in a one-to-one fashion to the sequence of actions in the Excel workbook example to retrieve the solution back from AIMMS. Through the optional `sparse` argument of `Spreadsheet::AssignParameter` you can indicate whether zero values should be passed as 0.0 or as a blank.

Explained

The following function call illustrates how a macro contained in a workbook can be run from within your AIMMS model.

Running a macro

```
Spreadsheet::RunMacro( WorkbookName, "AssignRandomTransportCost" );
```

In the Excel Link example this macro is used to randomize the values of the range holding the values of `UnitTransportCost`. After re-retrieving the input data again and solving the model, this may result in a different optimal solution to the transport model.

29.2 Function overview

In this section you will find an overview of all the functions provided by the spreadsheet function library. The function library contains both

Function overview

- control functions, and
- data exchange functions.

All functions are described in full detail in the Function Reference.

From AIMMS 3.12 Feature Release 1 on, the first part of the function names has changed from `Excel...` to the more general `Spreadsheet::...`, to reflect the fact that the functions are not exclusively used to communicate with Excel anymore. When you want to work with an OpenOffice Calc workbook, the `WorkbookName` argument of the functions should end in `.ods` (which is the extension of Calc workbooks). Any other ending of this argument will result in AIMMS operating on an Excel workbook.

Function naming

The control functions listed in Table 29.1 allow you to perform actions such as opening and closing workbooks and worksheets, copying and printing ranges, and running macros contained in the workbook.

*Control
functions*

The control functions listed in Table 29.1 do not have a direct counterpart in the AIMMS Excel add-in. They represent a subset of common spreadsheet commands, which may be convenient when reading and writing data to an Excel or OpenOffice Calc workbook.

*Not in Excel
add-in*

Procedure	Description
Spreadsheet::CreateWorkbook	Creates a workbook
Spreadsheet::SaveWorkbook	Saves an opened workbook
Spreadsheet::CloseWorkbook	Closes an opened workbook
Spreadsheet::AddNewSheet	Adds a new sheet to a workbook
Spreadsheet::DeleteSheet	Delete a sheet from a workbook
Spreadsheet::SetActiveSheet	Sets the currently active sheet
Spreadsheet::Print	Prints a range from a workbook
Spreadsheet::ClearRange	Clears the specified range
Spreadsheet::CopyRange	Copies a source into a destination range
Spreadsheet::SetVisibility	Changes the visibility of a workbook
Spreadsheet::SetUpdateLinksBehavior	Sets the behavior w.r.t. linked workbooks
Spreadsheet::ColumnName	Returns the name of a numbered column
Spreadsheet::ColumnNumber	Returns the number of a named column
Spreadsheet::RunMacro	Runs the specified macro

Figure 29.1: Spreadsheet control functions

The functions listed in table 29.2 can be used to exchange set data, scalar values, one- and two-dimensional identifiers, and general multi-dimensional identifiers with tabular ranges in an Excel or Calc sheet. Each of these functions corresponds to an associated action in the Excel add-in.

*Data exchange
functions*

Function	Description
Spreadsheet::AssignSet Spreadsheet::RetrieveSet	Assigns set elements to specified range Fills set with elements from specified range
Spreadsheet::AssignValue Spreadsheet::RetrieveValue	Assigns scalar value to specified range Fills scalar parameter from specified range
Spreadsheet::AssignParameter Spreadsheet::RetrieveParameter	Assigns 1- or 2-dimensional parameter to range Fills 1- or 2-dimensional parameter from range
Spreadsheet::AssignTable Spreadsheet::RetrieveTable	Assigns multi-dimensional parameter to range Fills multi-dimensional parameter from range

Figure 29.2: Spreadsheet data exchange functions