

Re: Multi-Field Primary Key

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- *From:* "Rick Brandt" <rickbrandt2@xxxxxxxxxxxx>
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BruceM wrote:

So I'm the chump who's being duped by the slick-talking autonumber heretics, is that it?

I can find all sorts of arguments pro and con on any topic, so the existence of advocacy for one position or the other does nothing by itself to sway my views. Autonumber works fine for my purposes, but my point, which you ignored, was that even if I was to accept your position on "natural" keys, what is "natural" about a phone number? Unless you are sorting by phone number to find gaps or something like that the ordering of a phone number field is surely as arbitrary as an autonumber field.

Bruce there are two different philosophies at issue here.

Surrogate numeric keys (AutoNumber or otherwise) do solve a lot of technical problems for database and database application developers and many seasoned professionals who know what they are talking about use them and recommend them. However; they are not part of proper Relational Database Design Theory.

If you are discussing the construction of "proper" relational databases then surrogates will be argued against by the experts almost without exception. If you are discussing the practical pitfalls and solutions of building working databases then you will find a lot of people who make their living doing such things arguing for the use of surrogate keys.

These really are two different discussions, but often the boundaries get blurred during exchanges in these groups. I for one have no problem with the judicious use of surrogate keys and often use them myself. However; I avoid making statements like "All Primary Keys should be numeric surrogates" because their use is simply not warranted in every case and my preferences are not applicable in every case. I will point out their advantages when discussing databases with other developers, but I would not fault the decision of another developer not to use them.

Re: Multi-Field Primary Key

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