
Visual Mining, Inc.

Using NetCharts™ with PHP and Flat Files

A Programmers Guide to Scripting with PHP and NetCharts

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1. Scope

This document provides web page designers with detailed information on the capabilities of NetCharts when used with PHP. A companion document, *The Visual Mining CDL Reference Guide*, provides additional useful information on designing chart templates to be used with NetCharts.

Note to our customers:

Thank you for evaluating and/or purchasing NetCharts. We sincerely believe that the charts produced by NetCharts are among the most robust online charts available.

Please direct any questions or comments on this product to support@visualmining.com.

—The Visual Mining Team



2. Introduction

The purpose of this document is to provide web designers familiar with PHP an example of using NetCharts with PHP. An example will be given that: runs the sample PHP script that is provided, and explains the script and how NetCharts and PHP interact with each other.

3. NetCharts PHP Example

Using NetCharts with PHP

This example uses PHP scripting commands to extract data from a flat file data source (`regionalsales.dat`), populate variables with the data, and build an HTML page that contains a NetCharts applet that uses this data. This paper provides a brief overview of how to use PHP to interact with flat files, how to construct an HTML page containing a NetCharts applet, and how to populate that applet using NetCharts `<param>` tags and PHP variables.

Setting up a Flat File Data Source

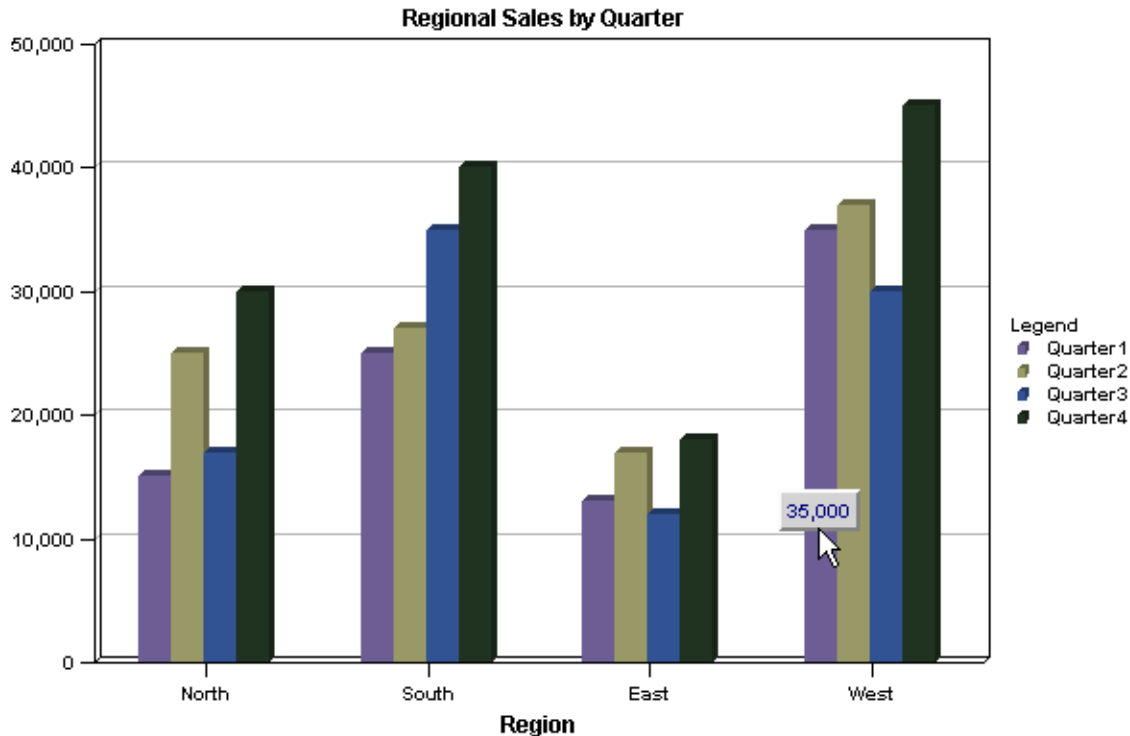
The installation of NetCharts 4.0 should have added a small flat file to the host machine. It can be found under the installation directory of NetCharts. The default installation is `c:\program files\visual mining\netcharts 4.0\netcharts`. `Regionalsales.dat` can be found in the `\examples` directory.

Running the Example

The example can be configured and run using the following steps:

1. Copy the `getSalesDataChartFF.php` and `regionalsales.dat` files to any subdirectory under the PHP-enabled Web Server. For instance, when using IIS or PWS, and enabling it to run PHP files, it could be in the `c:\inetpub\wwwroot` directory.
2. Make a copy of the NetCharts 4.0 `netcharts.jar` file under this same directory. The jar file can be found in the `\classes` directory under the NetCharts 4.0 installation directory. The default installation directory for NetCharts 4.0 is `c:\program files\visual mining\netcharts 4.0\netcharts\`.
3. Start a web browser and load the PHP page. For example, if the PHP page was installed as in steps 2 and 3 above, the URL would look like `http://localhost/getSalesDataChartFF.php`. This URL points to the root directory of the IIS or PWS web server running on the host machine.

When you load the page, you should see something similar to the following chart:



Looking at the Code

The basic sequence of events in using PHP to populate a NetCharts applet is as follows:

- Open the file
- Read file line by line, and parse the data into their respective variables
- Close the connection to the file
- Instantiate the applet and pass the variables in through the `NFParamScript` parameter.

The following code fragments demonstrate how this is accomplished.

The first section of code defines some variables, and opens the flat file. The first line of the file is read and ignored:

```
*/  
// assign filename here.  this file needs to be placed in the same  
// subdirectory as getSalesDataChartFF.php.  otherwise, you will  
// need to modify $filename to reflect the path of the data file  
// on the host machine.  
$filename = "regionalsales.dat";  
  
// open file; if not open, will return 'false' and quit.  
if (!$file=fopen($filename, "r"))  
{  
    echo ("Could not open file: $filename");  
}  
else  
{  
    $count = 0;  
  
    // reading first line to flush it from system.  
    $text = (fgets ($file,45));
```

3. NetCharts PHP Example

Next, the code loops through each line of the file. The resulting data is placed into strings. These strings contain the data in a comma-separated format, which NetCharts can understand. Ultimately, the data will look something like “5,10,15,20.” After all of the data is read in and parsed, the file is closed.

```
// looping through file, line by line, to extract data.
//   - column1 = label
//   - column2 = dataset1 (quarter1)
//   - column3 = dataset2 (quarter2)
//   - column4 = dataset3 (quarter3)
//   - column5 = dataset4 (quarter4)
while ($text = (fgets ($file,45)))
{
    // use split(..) to tokenize the string.
    $dataArray = split ("", $text);

    // first row, assign directly to variable
    if ($count == 0)
    {
        $labels = $dataArray[0];
        $ds1 = $dataArray[1];
        $ds2 = $dataArray[2];
        $ds3 = $dataArray[3];
        $ds4 = $dataArray[4];
    }
    // second+ time, append to variable, with comma
    else
    {
        $labels = $labels . "," . $dataArray[0];
        $ds1 = $ds1 . "," . $dataArray[1];
        $ds2 = $ds2 . "," . $dataArray[2];
        $ds3 = $ds3 . "," . $dataArray[3];
        $ds4 = $ds4 . "," . $dataArray[4];
    }
    $count++;
}

// close the file.
fclose($file);
}
```

The applet tag can now be constructed. NetCharts uses an applet parameter called NFPParamScript to pass in chart definition strings. A simple *name=value* format is used to construct complete chart definitions that can be processed by the NetCharts applet.

```
<applet name=Quarterly Sales
        code=NFBarChartApp.class
        codebase=/classes
        width=600 height=400>
<param name=NFPParamScript value='
#Populate the chart with all of the static template information;
ChartName           = "Basic Grouped BarChart";
DebugSet            = ALL;
ChartWidth          = 600;
ChartHeight         = 400;
Background          = (white,NONE,3,null,TILE,black);
...

```

The relevant parameters for this chart are DataSet1, DataSet2, DataSet3, DataSet4, and BarLabels:

3. NetCharts PHP Example

```
#Now populate the chart with the dynamic data extracted from the flat file;
DataSet1          = <?php echo($ds1);?>;
DataSet2          = <?php echo($ds2);?>;
DataSet3          = <?php echo($ds3);?>;
DataSet4          = <?php echo($ds4);?>;
BarLabels         = <?php echo($labels);?>;
```

When this PHP page runs, it will convert the variables into the strings created earlier. These strings will then be passed in to the applet, and the chart will be created.

For a complete code listing, go to </examples/getSalesDataChartFF.php>.

3. NetCharts PHP Example

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