Part I

Introduction

SQL is a compact and powerful language for working with databases. Despite this compactness, it cannot be described simply in a few chapters. We would do the language no justice then. And that certainly applies to MySQL's SQL dialect, which has many, many possibilities. For this reason, we start this book with a number of introductory chapters that form the first part.

In Chapter 1, "Introduction to MySQL," we provide an overall description of SQL, including its background and history, and the history of MySQL. MySQL is *open source software;* in Section 1.8, we explain what that really means. We also describe a number of concepts in the relational model (the theory behind SQL).

This book contains many examples and exercises. So that you do not have to learn a new database for each example, we use the same database for most of these examples and exercises. This database forms the basis for the administration of an international tennis league. Chapter 2, "The Tennis Club Sample Database," describes the structure of this database. Look closely at this before you begin the exercises.

We strongly recommend that you use MySQL when doing the exercises and get some hands-on experience. For this, you have to download and install the software, and create the example database. Chapter 3, "Installing the Software," describes how to do that. Note that for several aspects, we refer to the web site of the book.

This part closes with Chapter 4, "SQL in a Nutshell," which reviews all the important SQL statements. After reading this part, you should have both a general idea of what SQL offers as a language and an overall impression of what this book discusses.