It is a common misconception that Eclipse projects are focused on simply providing great tools for developers. Actually, the expectations are far greater. Each Eclipse project is expected to provide both frameworks and extensible, exemplary tools. As anyone who has ever tried to write software with reuse and extensibility in mind knows, that is far more difficult than simply writing a tool.

"Exemplary" is one of those handy English words with two meanings. Both are intended in its use above. Eclipse projects are expected to provide tools that are exemplary in the sense that they provide an example of the use of the underlying frameworks. Eclipse tools are also intended to be exemplary in the sense that they are good and provide immediate utility to the developers who use them.

Since its inception, the BIRT project has worked hard to create both reusable frameworks and extensible tools. This book focuses primarily on how to extend BIRT and how to use BIRT in your own applications and products. As such, it illustrates BIRT's increasing maturity and value as an embedded reporting solution.

As Executive Director of the Eclipse Foundation, I'm pleased with the tremendous progress the BIRT team has made since the project's inception in September of 2004, and I'm equally pleased with the vibrant community that has already grown up around it. As you work with BIRT and the capabilities that are described in this book, I'd encourage you to communicate your successes back to the community, and perhaps consider contributing any interesting extensions you develop. The BIRT web site can be found here:

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http://www.eclipse.org/birt
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It includes pointers to the BIRT newsgroup, where you can communicate and share your results with other BIRT developers, and pointers to the Eclipse installation of Bugzilla, where you can contribute your extensions. If you like BIRT—and I am sure this book will help you learn to love it—please participate and contribute. After all, it is the strength of its community that is the true measure of any open source project's success.

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