Report Builder Limitations and CFR files

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We are all aware that the report builder application is a template generation tool. It's quite useful with a number of nifty features. One of the cool things about it is that you can define a report template using **dummy data** that can be replaced at run time. This allows you to run and test the display attributes and charts of your report using something simple like CFQUERYNEW( ) which you then replace with the actual query by passing it into the CFREPORT tag.

What I was hoping for however, was a template that produced a file format that we could unpack and examine. Our goal would not be to become report writers for our clients (isn't that really a content editors job?). Our goal is to produce tools where they can mine and access the data themselves. I would love to be able to allow a web based user to generate their own reports from a wizard. Indeed we have a system very much like this for Ms SQL that makes use of the various stored procs for data type introspection and allows a user to build 1 or more queries to use in a report.

The biggest flaw in our system is the rather limited template system we have. I was hoping to be able to replace "front-end" template with an auto-generated CFR file. However, Macromedia in a disappointing move, has chosen to encrypt the CFR files. effectively making them useless except as a limited time-saver for developers faced with handling report content. I suppose a DBA or Access programmer could pretty easily get up to speed on the report builder. But as far as I can see there is no way to make use of this file format programmatically.