

How good is PERL at searching ASCII files?

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Hi,

Please forgive my ignorance, I'm a C language developer but I've got some text manipulation that needs doing and I've heard many times that this is PERL's forte. That being said, I'd like to give it a try instead of writing a C# app to deal with this. Can PERL do the following relatively easy, or should I just spend 3 or 4 hours writing a C# algorithm?

The challenge I'm faced with is to search out all occurrences where a function named CONVERT() is being called with three parameters. It's a challenge because the function has several signatures and I need to segregate the three param calls from the two param calls. To make things even spicier, it's very possible that the parameters may also be function calls themselves. I think the best strategy becomes finding the pattern:

```
CONVERT(<something>,<something>,
```

The key elements being the string CONVERT, one open paren (followed by two commas at the same nesting level.

Of the following examples, I would want the first two in my results, the second two ignored:

yes:

~~~~~

```
1)
CONVERT(varchar(16), @variable, 1)
2)
convert (char(12),
(
SELECT date
FROM table1
WHERE id = @x
AND user IN ('raquel', 'marylin', 'jennifer')
), 7)
```

no:

~~~~~

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```
1)
convert(varchar(16), @variable)
2)
CONVERT (char(12),
(
SELECT date
FROM table2
WHERE id = @y
AND user IN ('huey', 'dewey', 'louie')
))
```

If anybody has a script that I can use to get started, I'd be very grateful to see it. I've got 1,500 flat files (ascii) that need parsing and a search on the string convert hits 10,000 times... my guess is that only 5% of those will be the three parameter version I need to isolate.

Much obliged,
John M
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