# BOOK REVIEWS

BY JAMES PYLES

Tomcat: The Definitive Guide, Second Edition

Like the other entries in the "Definitive Guide" series from O'Reilly, this book on Tomcat should go below the surface and search the depths for this technology's hidden treasures. The subtitle, "Vital Information for Tomcat Programmers & Administrators," promises as much. If you have to ask what Tomcat is, put the book down and go learn some basic Java. Better yet, go to *http://tomcat. apache.org* and start from the beginning before digging into the details.
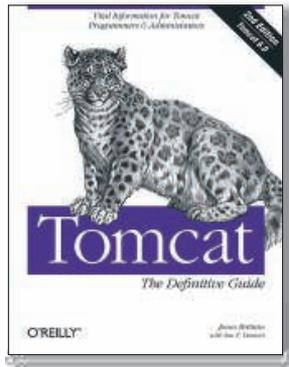
Although you can freely download Tomcat, you might not learn enough about this application to make full use of its capacities. *Tomcat: The Definitive Guide* is designed to put everything you need to know in one spot for easy ac-cess. However, the authors say this book isn't necessarily for Java developers – at least not exclusively. Other qualified readers include system or network admins who might need to get a small web site up and could benefit from using Tomcat. Experience working with Apache also helps, because this isn't a book for beginners.

Chapter 1 refers the reader to "Appendix A: In-stalling Java," and warns not to disregard the instruc-tion. This safety net is for everyone who isn't an experienced Java and Tomcat developer and who would be in over their heads trying to build and use their own Tomcat binaries.

I discovered that this book really is the "definitive guide" on Tomcat. If you op-erate at administrator level (developer or otherwise), you're going to love it. This text fills in just about any gaps in your Tomcat knowledge base, and you'll probably start solving any outstanding issues you have working with Tomcat. If your Tomcat knowledge is only so-so, you'll be able to pick up what you need to know without much effort.

Although Linux and Unix are associ-ated with Tomcat and Apache, readers working with other platforms, such as Windows and Mac, won't be left out.

If you've got a Servlet/JSP text that has been dying for a companion, *Tomcat: The Definitive Guide* can save the day.

Jason Brittain and Ian F. Darwin
Paperback, 494 Pages
O'Reilly, 2007
ISBN-10: 0596101066
ISBN-13: 978-0596101060
UK£ 24.99, US$ 39.99, EUR 31.95

X Power Tools

X Power Tools explores the potentials and realities of the X Window System (also called X11 or X), a system that is inseparable from the realm of Unix and Linux. If you think of X as just the open source flavor of a Microsoft Windows GUI, think again. What is X Window? It's the graphical interface desktop be-hind Unix and Linux systems, and there would be no Gnome or KDE without it.

X Power Tools teaches readers X, pro-vides the "tools" to manipulate the ap-pearance and performance of the inter-face, includes information about the ap-plications that work with X Window, and explains how the system works both locally and remotely.

To dig a little deeper, it is really about both the server and client side of X. The X Window System is a service, just like any other, running on a computer that feeds a client, and both of these components are required for X Window to work.

Despite having only 270 pages, this text knows how to fill in the gaps in under-standing X. All the power tools con-tained within the book's pages fit to-gether seamlessly and are organized for easy access. One interesting "assign-ment" tucked away near the end of the book is in the "Special Considerations" section, called "Building a Kiosk." If you have no interest in this project, you should consider that the skill sets you learn in the rest of the book are now put to use. Everything – from explaining what a kiosk is to choosing the right hardware and setting up X, and more – is contained here.
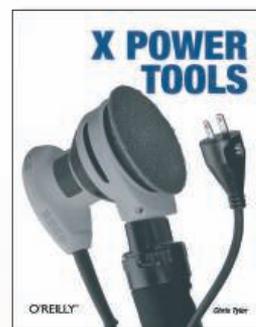
Congratulations to Chris Tyler for creating a really great book. Readers wanting to understand and use the open source X Window Sys-tem should grab a copy of *X Power Tools*.

Chris Tyler
Paperback, 270 Pages
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The Book of Wireless: A Painless Guide to Wi-Fi and Broadband Wireless, Second Edition

A few years ago, I picked up a copy of the first edition of *The Book of Wireless* at my local library and was impressed. In the new edition, Ross provides the current buzz and substance in the world of wireless, including Wi-Fi, with an emphasis on wireless Internet, advances in WPA and VPN with wireless, public wireless surfing, and VoIP over wireless. Even wireless phones and smartphones have a section.

The book covers the usual platforms – Windows, Mac OS X, Unix, and Linux – so you don't need to feel left out in the cold, no matter which one you use.

The beginning chapters do an excellent job of covering the basics. In fact, Chapter 1, Introduction to Networking, introduces basic networking and Chapter 2 introduces wireless networking. The specifics of Wi-Fi are covered next, followed by general wireless management and how wireless works on the operating system of your choice.
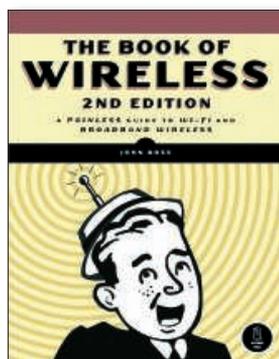
A lot of this was covered in the book's first edition, but no subsequent edition would be complete without the necessary foundation on which to build the rest of the content.

If you want to install and administer your own wireless access point, you can find out how to do it here. Point-to-point links, wireless security, and connecting to public wireless networks are also discussed.

The chapters on wireless broadband are especially interesting, including the discussion of using broadband for telephone calls. Wireless for the handheld is a technology that has arrived with a vengeance, allowing users a variety of ways to communicate, all with a single, palm-sized device.

Finally, Ross provides the perfect ending to his book with a tips and troubleshooting chapter, which explains everything from what to do if your computer doesn't detect your network adapter, connects to the wrong network, or drops its connection, to extending the life of your battery or improving performance with an external antenna.

I wasn't disappointed with the newest edition of this book, and I don't think you will be, either. If you want a book that's informative, easy to read, and fun, pick up a copy of *The Book of Wireless*.

John Ross
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