BOOK REVIEWS
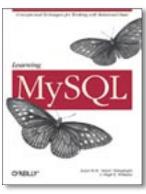
BY JAMES PYLES

Learning MySQL

Tahaghoghi's and Williams' book is comprehensive and focused. *Learning MySQL* teaches the reader how to install, configure, and use the MySQL open source database. It also introduces a number of related technologies, like Apache, PHP, and Perl.

The book is primarily written for readers who "don't know much about deploying and using an actual database-management system, or about developing applications that use a database". Readers should be familiar with the concept of databases and browser-side development, and be ready to transition to the next phase – working with databases.

The introductory chapters set the tone for the rest of the book. For example,

reading Chapter 2, Installing MySQL, was a marvel. The instructions were complete across all operating system platforms, installation methods, and even the various Linux distribution package handlers. LAMP and XAMPP were also included, and I couldn't find a weak spot in Tahaghoghi's and Williams' coverage.

After covering the basics of the SQL language, database structures, querying, and the like, "Advanced Topics" include backup and recovery, using an options file, and server configuration and man-

agement. Apache, PHP, and Perl are addressed in the latter portions of this text. These technologies are necessary for the reader to understand how MySQL interacts with web-development platforms and server-side programming languages to optimally provide services.

I recommend Tahaghoghi's and Williams' *Learning MySQL* as an introduction to database solutions, especially as applied to web development. Buy this book and you won't be disappointed.

Seyed M.M. (Saied) Tahaghoghi and Hugh Williams
Paperback; 618 pages
O'Reilly, 2006
ISBN-10: 0596008643
ISBN-13: 978-0596008642
£ 22.81, US$ 44.95, EUR 33.87

Linux Kernel in a Nutshell

The author states that the primary goal of the book is to bring all the documentation on Linux kernel development under one roof. His "secret" goal is to bring more people into Linux kernel development. No programming experience is necessary, but being familiar with using Linux, and especially experience with the shell, is helpful.
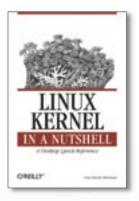
In short, you don't have to be a "Linux guru" to buy and use this book; you just have to want to get "under the hood". This book gives you a fantastic opportunity to customize your own Linux kernel to your tastes and requirements, which is something you'll never get the chance to do with a Microsoft Windows system. If you want to "roll your own" kernel, or at least understand what makes Linux "Linux", read on.

Kroah-Hartman gets right to work describing the tools that you'll need in

order to build and use the kernel, where to find them, and how to install them. With only 198 pages to work with (this is including the appendices), the text wastes no time and space on pleasantries (but then again, that's what the "In a Nutshell" series is all about). Despite the speed of this "tour", it covers everything you'll need to know about retrieving, configuring, building, and installing the kernel.

As I write this review, the latest stable version of the kernel is 2.6.19.1. The text focuses on the 2.6 version in general, so any subsequent advances in kernel development between the writing of the book and your reading it shouldn't be an obstacle.

The book is advertised as being "user-friendly" to non-programmers, but it's better if the reader has at least some familiarity with writing and compiling code. The Linux kernel is written mainly in the C language, which is widely known among programmers. Being familiar with basic programming will give the reader more confidence in using the material.

That said, you can't go wrong with adding *Linux Kernel in a Nutshell* to your library.
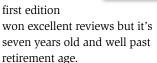
Greg Kroah-Hartman
Paperback; 198 pages
O'Reilly, 2006
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£ 18.04, US$ 34.99, EUR 26.74

The Book of JavaScript, 2nd Edition

The Book of JavaScript is supposed to take you from "knowing little or no programming to writing your own Java-Scripts". Packed with 528 pages of valuable information, in addition to a companion website, this book will help you do just that. Thau's first edition won excellent reviews but it's seven years old and well past retirement age.

This book is meant to be used in conjunction with the companion website, *http://www.bookofjavascript.com*. (The first edition's accompanying CD-ROM sometimes had issues playing well with anti-virus software.) The site provides information as well as demonstrations. For example, go to the homepage and see how many JavaScript features you can pick out. Use the drop-down menu to pick a chapter, then access the "Run it" or "Read it" options. These are supposed to let you either see JavaScript in action, or let you view the source code. Unfortunately, I found that the code would sometimes run even on the "Read it" pages. Another minor annoyance was that there aren't links from the "chapter pages" back to the homepage. Nevertheless, the information provided on the site is "value added".

The book offers a gentle introduction to JavaScript in conversational English. Some beginners books load the newbie up with too many technical terms too soon, losing the audience long before they actually learn anything. The *Book of JavaScript*, however, starts by describing terms such as variables, strings, and functions in a language that almost anyone can understand. Once the reader grasps these concepts, they are much more likely to retain and build on them. Another strength of this book is that it explains how to write source code right away and keeps the reader's interest by having him create practical projects, such as putting a clock on a webpage. The assignments at the end of each chapter give the reader more practice using what he's learned.

Small, numerical callouts link lines of JavaScript to text explanations on the same page. This directly connects the appearance of each line of JavaScript with what it does. The only issue I had with the callouts was that they were quite small, so it helps if you have good eyesight or a magnifying lens. Dave Thau's *The Book of JavaScript, 2nd Edition* is a worthy successor to the first edition. By the time the reader is finished with this text, he will be well experienced in the use of JavaScript. The book is current and introduces AJAX without making it the "bait" that is supposed to attract the reader to the text. There are plenty of fine publications written on JavaScript on the market, but I consider Thau's work among the best.