Book Reviews

An Excellent Internet Tutorial

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By Tyrone Adams and Sharon Scollard
488 pages
US$75.20
Addison-Wesley, 2006

Most books for Internet beginners assume that you’re a complete “outsider”—that is, that you don’t care about some of the more technical details and that excluding them is the best approach. This has resulted in some quite understandable books, often full of images. Other books, such as those addressed to Web developers, are quite technical and therefore unhelpful for someone who has no experience at all. I can safely say that Internet Effectively: A Beginner’s Guide to the World Wide Web by Tyrone Adams and Sharon Scollard can take you from absolute zero to a fairly advanced level of Internet literacy.

Some parts read almost like a novel. Adams and Scollard’s historical and contextual research is remarkable and accurate. For example, they explain the distinction between the Internet and the World Wide Web and show the relationship between the two. Because of this, I would have liked it if they had included something about the history of Java and JavaScript (which are related through Sun Microsystems), but at least they explain briefly what these programming languages are good for.

Even readers experienced in emailing and e-commerce (among other subjects) will find useful tips. For example, the authors explain what the data gibberish in email headers means and how to configure different email programs. They explain e-commerce reasonably well, referring you to the Web itself for explanations of some topics.

If you’d like to become a Web developer, the book includes four introductory chapters about designing information for publication on the Web. These chapters introduce such topics as HTML, CSS, HTML editors, and working with graphics and multimedia. However, I think the graphics part is a bit misleading by mentioning Macromedia Fireworks for working with images. Adobe Photoshop is far more popular among Web developers, and I think it would have been more helpful for Adams and Scollard to discuss this program, which you get for free when you buy some scanners, digital cameras, or even computers. Granted, they might have more experience with Macromedia Fireworks, but I would have liked it if they had at least mentioned some other leading bitmap-graphic editors, such as GIMP (the Gnu Image Manipulation Program), Corel, and of course Photoshop. In fact, Photoshop recently acquired Fireworks, so it’s questionable whether the book should have discussed a program that eventually might not be available. Discussion of uploading images to the Internet from digital devices is almost absent; the authors seem to assume that you already have the images available on your computer. They briefly mention some digital imaging-related issues, such as contrast.

At the end of the book are three specialized chapters for philosophers and law-enforcement professionals, covering such topics as the Internet’s impact on traditional media and the Internet and the law. Adams and Scollard mention related issues (such as spyware and netiquette) throughout the book. If you’re not a US citizen, these chapters will probably give you a rough idea what to look for in
your own country. The explanations of subjects such as copyright and patents are general enough to "export" to your location.

The book has end-of-chapter questions and hands-on exercises so you can use it as a textbook. The authors promise that if you’re a qualified instructor, you can request additional material, but Addison-Wesley (to date) hasn’t answered my query. So, I can’t say anything about that material’s adequacy, although I could quite arbitrarily assume that it preserves the book’s quality. Maybe the authors should specify how you can prove that you’re a "qualified instructor" (which, by the way, I am).

Whatever your level of Internet literacy, you’ll find this book helpful in making your online connection work for you the way you want it to. The authors explain their reasoning well and refer you to the proper places to get further information about topics you want to study in more depth. The book is a good buy for almost anyone, but if you’re a teacher, you might be disappointed in the lack of proper information about how to obtain the additional material.

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Related Links

- *IEEE Internet Computing*
- "Twelve Billion Bargaining Chips: The Web Side of the Net Neutrality Debate," *IEEE Internet Computing*
- "The Shortest Path to the Future Web," *IEEE Internet Computing*

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