

JavaScript Bible, 3rd Edition - by Karl-Peter Gottschalk

Author: Danny Goodman

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There was a long time until a little while ago when I scoured the bookshelves for a half decent book about JavaScript, just one book, any book that would assist a non-programmer type like me get to grips with the language enough to make properly working DHTML web pages. Then one of the classics was reissued, written by one of the classic programming authors, and I am actually making headway at last.

The author is Danny Goodman, the much quoted author of tomes such as the The Complete Hypercard Handbook and Danny Goodman's AppleScript Handbook (now there is a book that we are way beyond desperate need of a reissue of!), and it is a blessing that IDG saw fit to commission this third edition so Goodman could cover JavaScript's version 1.2. By the way, anyone have spare copies of the aforementioned books on AppleScript and HyperCard? Two other technologies definitely worth extra study.

Authors like Goodman attract strong followings and stronger opinions for and against, and I have to say that after reading the JavaScript Bible I am in the former camp. As befits any Bible this is a damned thick book but one well organised, where Goodman immediately jumps into real and working scripts. This is not one of those programmer's books that bog you down in deep concepts before you can even begin to contemplate putting digits to keyboard and create something that works. You can use what Goodman has to teach.

Even better is the fact that the JavaScript Bible is a very complete and detailed reference book, well organised so that you will find yourself going back to it again and again to further refine your understanding, as I do each day. Goodman and his book do have their biases however. As a developer involved with JavaScript since Netscape was calling it LiveScript, his preference is for the original and possibly still the best rather than the version called JScript that Microsoft in their all too familiar fashion reverse engineered then staked their own proprietary claim on.

Maybe Goodman has a point, but as a web author who must create sites for users of either web browsers I have to hope that both software companies' future browsers will converge in their response to JavaScript, and the other DHTML components. Meanwhile my browser of first choice is still Netscape, despite the code bloat that plagues it and its competitor. What would you rather have: a human being or Frankenstein's rendition of one? The best JavaScript reference book, or a wannabe?

Very highly recommended.

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