

acOS8 Web Server Cookbook - by Karl-Peter Gottschalk

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Apple has long been extraordinarily good at keeping secret many of its best technologies and applications. Perhaps that will change now that Steve Jobs is CEO (acting). One of its best kept secrets has been just how good, superlative even, Macs and the Mac OS are at serving up Web pages and other Internet documents. Some experts state that more Web pages are served by Macs than by Windows NTboxes, outnumbered only by UNIX machines.

Yet suggest to a hard-core techie audience that Macs are a good choice for the job and they will laugh you out of the room. Sad deluded souls.

Of course by choosing Mac over NT you avoid the colossal accumulated expense and outright sheer misery of trying to keep Gates' third rate "technology" running on a daily basis. I can personally attest to just how good Macs are for this purpose: a firm I worked for maintains a collection of Mac web servers around the world for their clients and they perform beautifully, always.

Then there is the little matter of security: Macs cannot be hacked whereas you can drive a truck through all the possible security breaches within Windows NT and UNIX.

Authors Hart and Bourne work at the San Diego Supercomputer Centre, where they have access to some of the best and biggest silicon and copper assemblages on the planet, and yet they choose to write a special edition of the Web Server Cookbook for the Mac OS. And that is version 8 of the OS, which since 8.5 is pretty damned good but wait until you clap eyes on Mac OS X in its server or client versions. You think 8.5 is good? Wait until next year.

It is not as if the authors are entering a crowded market however. Almost no generalist Web books even bother to mention the Mac OS as a web server and the couple of other books once released on the subejct are long out of date. It is not as if it is difficult or time-consuming setting and running a Mac as a Web server, thus demanding a vast and expensive series of books about it, as is the case with UNIX and Windows.

But decent information on how to use Macs as Web servers has been damned hard to come by, so Hart and Bourne have done us a real service with this book. Information is this book's strong point: there is a lot of it in here, and they cover all the alternatives from commercial and not-so-cheap software through shareware to freeware. If anything there may be little too much: when it comes to truly specialist subjects such as HTML authoring and CGI scripting you would do better searching for big tomes just on those subjects alone.

The Mac OS 8 Web Server Cookbook is a great introduction to its subject and will point you in all the right directions. Not to mention the fact that there is currently nothing else out there right now anyway!

Very highly recommended

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