

New books from O'Reilly

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Learning Windows Server 2003 by Jonathan Hassell **ISBN: 0-596-00624-1, 654 pages, \$44.95, £31.95, €40.**



In just the last five years, Microsoft's server operating systems have grown immensely in capability, complexity, and number of features. The rapid advance from Windows NT to Server 2003 is a real advantage for system administrators looking to keep pace with the changing needs of their organizations. But it's also a great source of frustration for those who have had to grapple with a constant stream of new concepts—such as directory services, universal groups, and client quarantining.

"Just when you've mastered one set of changes, another comes along and you're scrambling once again to get up to speed," comments Jonathan Hassell, an experienced system administrator, IT consultant, and author of "Learning Windows Server 2003" (O'Reilly).

The frustration doesn't end there, Hassell notes. The tech book market, once a great source of help for beleaguered system administrators coming to terms with new server concepts and services, has recently produced server tutorials that are as complex and bloated as the operating systems they describe: 1,200-page monstrosities with outdated references to "how things worked" in older versions of Windows NT.

Hassell's new book sets out to explain Windows Server 2003 with just enough theory to help readers grasp how different features and systems work in this particular version. At 600 pages, "Learning Windows Server 2003" documents the complexities of this server clearly with a focused, hands-on approach to installing, configuring, securing, and managing the OS, either as a stand-alone server or part of a multi-site, multi-server network. "I want them to come away with a firm understanding of what's happening under the hood without the sense that they're taking a graduate course in OS theory," Hassell explains. "Most of all, I want this to be a practical guide that helps them get their work done: 'here's how it works, here's how to do it.'"

Organizations still running Windows NT need to take a serious look at Server 2003, since Microsoft's support of the older server expired this past January. But what about those who adopted Windows 2000? As Hassell points out in his book, Server 2003 is more of an upgrade than a new product, but it offers many compelling improvements. In independent tests, Server 2003 outperformed Windows 2000 anywhere from 100-200% as a fileserver, a dynamic web application server, and for web page hosting—using the same hardware. Also, Server 2003 is built with more secure code, and offers the ability to work with tools such as Group Policy on Windows XP clients.

With Server 2003, Hassell contends, Microsoft has put together the right server for a world now dominated by enterprise networks and web-based server applications - one that finally offers a competitive solution to Unix in terms of cost, performance, and application development productivity.

"Learning Windows Server 2003" gives beginning to intermediate system administrators everything they need to get this server up and running quickly. They'll learn how to create and manage user accounts (with particular attention on Active Directory), manage access to system resources such as printers and files, and configure and manage Server 2003's abundance of major subsystems. The book goes into detail about:

- Windows file and print services
- Active Directory and LDAP standards
- IIS6 web server—why it's the most improved part of Server 2003
- Group Policy and other security tools
- Patch management
- NET Framework application server
- Windows Terminal Services (including their use in conjunction with Microsoft Office and the Small Business Edition)
- Various networking subsystems that ship with Server 2003

Hassell also includes an introduction to clustering services, and carefully documents the steps administrators should take to ensure the security of Server 2003 and its resources. For organizations with one or more internal computer networks planning—or at least considering—an upgrade to Microsoft's newest server, "Learning Windows Server 2003" is the most direct and reliable way to make the transition.

Chapter 10, "Windows Terminal Services," is available online at:<http://www.oreilly.com/catalog/lwsvr2003/chapter/index.html>

For more information about the book, including table of contents, index, author bio, and samples, see: <http://www.oreilly.com/catalog/lwsvr2003/index.html>

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Firefox Hacks by Nigel McFarlane

ISBN: 0-596-00928-3, 377 pages, \$24.95, £17.50, €22 .



From popup blocking and tabbed browsing to first-class security and privacy protection, the reasons listed under the heading “Why Use Firefox?” on Mozilla.org might lead you to ask, “Why use anythingelse?” Imagine a world with no more spyware, vastly reduced spam, built-in search, RSS integration, hassle-free downloading, and amazing customization possibilities. It’s a novel idea - a browser you can like and enjoy using.

”Firefox is the web browser that upholds the highest principles of the World Wide Web,” says Nigel McFarlane, author of “Firefox Hacks” (O’Reilly). “It supports and defines the Web as a good place to be -a place where all people can freely and safely participate, without having to tip their hat to anyone.” And he adds, “Those are fighting words.”

In the battle for browser usage, Firefox’s victories have been swift, bloodless, and impressive. McFarlane calls it “the equivalent of D-Day for open source on the Windows desktop.” The browser is an open source software product made by the nonprofit Mozilla Foundation. With nearly 40 million downloads, Firefox has achieved significant inroads on the consumer desktop. “Its next battle is to make itself known on desktops in organizations,” notes McFarlane. “A fair amount of ‘Firefox Hacks’ is aimed at helping IT people come to grips with the technology.”

Casual users or IT professionals will find all the user-friendly tips, tools, and tricks they’ll need to make a productive switch to the popular browser. “Don’t expect a traditional web development book or a book on searching the Web,” McFarlane cautions. “This is quite a technical book about how Firefox is held together as a product. Like all books in the Hacks series, the more inquisitive or technically minded you are, the more you’ll get out of it.”

”Firefox Hacks” explains how to customize Firefox’s deployment, appearance, features, and functionality - delivering techniques, tools, and strategies for making the most out of Firefox’s flexibility. Readers will learn how to:

- Make Firefox look different with skins, extensions, and themes
- Integrate Firefox with other tools, and safely migrate Internet Explorer bookmarks, history, passwords, and other data
- Browse anonymously, turn off caching, stomp on cookies, or flush and clear absolutely everything
- Install, use, and customize extensions, widgets, toolbars, and plug-ins
- Increase security by stopping all secret network activity, fine-tuning ports and sockets, digitally signing content, dropping security blocks, and more
- Play with preferences, install fonts and character support, govern image and ad display, and otherwise tweak the standard browser window
- Power up web pages with XML, using Mozilla SOAP, XML-RPC, and WSDL services, as well as MathML, SVG content, Xpath, and XSL

”Firefox is more than just a TV screen for the Web,” says McFarlane. “It contains technical goodies of all kinds.” Users of all sorts -hackers, web designers, surfers, IT pros, and more - will find plenty of tweakable features that will make their web experience more rewarding. With ”Firefox Hacks,” a superior and safe browsing experience is only pages away.

Several sample hacks, including “Fix Web Servers to Support Firefox Content,” “Take Firefox with You,” and “Waste Time with Toys and Games,” are available online at: <http://www.oreilly.com/catalog/firefoxhks/chapter/index.html>

For more information about the book, including table of contents, index, author bio, and samples, see: <http://www.oreilly.com/catalog/firefoxhks/index.html>

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Programming C#, Fourth Edition by Jesse Liberty
ISBN: 0-596-00699-3, 644 pages, \$44.95, £31.95, €40.



"C# builds on the lessons learned from C (high performance), C++ (object-oriented structure), Java (garbage collection, high security), and Visual Basic (rapid development) to create a new language ideally suited for developing component-based, n-tier distributed web applications," says Jesse Liberty, author of the just-released fourth edition of "Programming C#" (O'Reilly). "C# 2.0, the language of choice for .NET 2005," he continues, "comes with updated tools and a powerful new development environment. It is the crowning achievement of Microsoft's R&D investment." And, he adds, "It's wicked cool."

For anyone who wants to understand the innovative programming language and write .NET applications with C#, this up-to-date tutorial covers C# 2.0, the .NET Framework 2.0, and Visual Studio 2005.

Liberty begins "Programming C#, Fourth Edition" with a quick but thorough tour of basic C# language syntax and introduces the keywords, concepts, and details that make C# and .NET an effective environment for building desktop and web-based applications, including:

- Classes and objects
- Inheritance and polymorphism
- Operator overloading
- Generics, collections, and iterators
- Structs and interfaces
- String handling and regular expressions
- Exceptions and bug handling
- Delegates and events

Liberty then launches into the stuff experienced programmers and web developers really want: how to write .NET programs. He shows readers how to use C# with three core application frameworks—ASP.NET, .NET Windows Forms, and ADO.NET—to build typical desktop and internet applications, including browser-oriented web applications and standards-based web services. He concludes with a section on tapping the rich functionality of the .NET Framework to manage deployment with assemblies, work with metadata, marshal objects across process and machine boundaries, work with threads, handle data streams, and integrate with legacy Windows APIs and COM objects.

"Jesse Liberty has a habit of writing wonderful technical books. I've read several. His writing style is easy-to-read, clear, humorous and chatty and, at times just plain fun to read. 'Programming C#' is no exception...I would recommend it as a great starter book to any programmer who wants to discover what all the .NET hype is about." - Jeff Richards, Windowwatch

"'Programming C#' is close to being the perfect introduction to C#. The author has a nice style of writing that makes the book easy to read and understand. Although the author assumes that you have some familiarity with programming, he does not assume that you know C++ or Java and does not rely on you knowing either language...I highly recommend this book to anyone interested in learning the C# language even if that interest is purely academic." - Thomas Paul, JavaRanch.com

"I think this is probably the best book for both non-OO and OO programmers to pick up, who want to start learning C# and .NET application development. After reading this book...I finally have a proper understanding of the fundamentals of object-oriented programming. So for all those programmers who have been thinking about .NET for the last few years but just haven't gotten around to learning it, this book is probably the best place to start.- Nathanael Boehm, Canberra Macromedia Users Group

Other reviews of "Programming C#" can be found at: <http://www.oreilly.com/catalog/progcsharp3/reviews.html>

Chapter 12, "Delegates and Events," is available online at: <http://www.oreilly.com/catalog/progcsharp4/chapter/index.html>

For more information about the book, including table of contents, index, author bio, and samples, see: <http://www.oreilly.com/catalog/progcsharp4/index.html>

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Programming Flash Communication Server by Brian Lesser, Giacomo Guilizzoni, Joey Lott, Robert Reinhardt, and Justin Watkins

ISBN: 0-596-00504-0, 816 pages, \$49.95, £35.50, €45.



Macromedia's Flash Communication Server MX (FlashCom) offers real-time communication and streaming media capabilities to Flash applications. Together, Flash and FlashCom provide a rich set of tools for creating highly customized applications with features such as real-time, multi-user simulations; video conferencing and interactive chats; shared whiteboards and documents; instant polls; video-on-demand with closed captions and skinnable controls; and live event broadcasts with moderated questions and answers.

"I never cease being surprised by the adoption rates for each version of the Flash player," says Brian Lesser, FlashCom expert and coauthor of the new "Programming Flash Communication Server" (O'Reilly). More than 500 million users have Flash Player already installed, which means end users are already FlashCom ready.

However, developers may be hard pressed to deliver real-time video, audio, and data applications to those millions of end users with FlashCom. Why? "Programming with FlashCom is unlike creating standard n-tier web applications," Lesser explains. "And I don't think Macromedia appreciated what a challenge that represents for developers. Macromedia's documentation offers little guidance on how to build real-world applications. So that's really what 'Programming Flash Communication Server' is about: how to design and build a wide range of compelling applications with Flash and the Flash Communication Server."

As Lesser notes, "Communication applications that include live video, audio, and data make collaboration at a distance more immediate and effective." For example, working with FlashCom made it far easier and more enjoyable for five authors to collaborate in the writing of this book.

"FlashCom is gaining traction in a lot of different businesses, from collaborative applications to video streaming services," says coauthor Giacomo "Peldi" Guilizzoni. "This book will allow more and more developers to build engaging, multi-user applications and games using FlashCom." But he and his coauthors are quick to point out that "Programming Flash Communication Server" is not a reference book. "This is a teaching/best practices book," assures Guilizzoni.

From the basics to advanced features, the book delivers comprehensive, in-depth coverage of FlashCom with plenty of thorough, working examples for real-life application. "Programming Flash Communication Server" helps developers design large-scale, robust, and secure applications. This book shows readers how to:

- Avoid conflicts when multiple users update data in real time
- Manage contention for the same resources
- Minimize the effects of network latency
- Adapt to differences in client bandwidth
- Use and extend Macromedia's communication classes
- Design and develop custom components
- Create scaleable and secure applications

And, in this book, readers will find information they simply won't find anywhere else, says coauthor Joey Lott. "In researching many things for the book, we went directly to the engineers who wrote Flash Communication Server. Oftentimes, there was just one person who would know the ins and outs of a particular feature."

With FlashCom and "Programming Flash Communication Server," Lott observes, "companies and individuals can make much more interesting applications, integrating real-time communications as well as both the playback and recording of audio and video—the kinds of features and functionality that are quickly becoming must-haves for many web applications."

Chapter 1, "Introducing the Flash Server," is available online at: <http://www.oreilly.com/catalog/progflashcs/chapter/index.html>

For more information about the book, including table of contents, index, author bios, and samples, see: <http://www.oreilly.com/catalog/progflashcs/index.html>