JavaScript For The World Wide Web. (4TH Ed.)
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This fourth edition of a popular book on JavaScript was published near the end of 2001. There are seventeen chapters and four appendices, as well as a useful introduction and an extensive index. The style of the book is excellent. The chapters are of optimal lengths. It is a practical book illustrated with code examples and figures, and with accompanying step by step explanation that guides some one with no previous knowledge of JavaScript through most of its useful features. Despite having the feel of a cookbook, it does give necessary background information to enable a full understanding of how one might use JavaScript in real web applications. The book is very handy, being lightweight (430 pages) and is very easy to use. More side-bars could have been used to clarify issues like plug-ins, applets, etc. However, limiting excessive use of side-bars has made the book much more readable.

The book starts with an introduction that explains its purpose, and the way the authors intended it to be used for writing JavaScript for the commonly used web browsers. All the JavaScript code examples in the book is available from the book web-site, and work well. The description of JavaScript and its usage is clear and simple. Early chapters deal well with script placement, commenting, showing alert boxes, displaying user prompts, redirecting user, checking presence of browser plug-ins, and using loops and functions. Graphics animations using rollovers and cycling banners are also discussed well. There is a detailed discussion of the effective use of JavaScript with frames. To the uninitiated this may turn out to be somewhat overwhelming and a bit confusing. May be a general explanation of the basic issues involved could have avoided the seemingly excessive reliance on illustrative scripts. Use of JavaScript for manipulating browser windows is described clearly. JavaScripts for validating client forms before being stored in the server are well illustrated. Particularly clear is the explanation of select-and-go (JavaScript enhanced) menus. Use of Regular Expressions in JavaScripts to validate forms more effectively is well demonstrated. There is a whole chapter that explains how to use JavaScript to make dynamic pages that improve performance and that customise client location, date and time. Also fully explained is the use of event handlers in JavaScript for windows, mouse movements, keyboards and forms. Problems specific to older versions of web browsers and to different windows platforms are carefully discussed. An adequate description of the use of Cookies in JavaScript is also given. An explanation of Cascading Style Sheets (CCS) precedes its use in JavaScript for Dynamic HTML (DHTML). Use of JavaScript in the design of User Interface is discussed. Use of external JavaScript files (.js) to minimise the code for the whole web site is included. Bookmarklets, that make the browser smarter, e.g., changing a page's background colour, providing word lookups, etc. are also explained. Also included are the use of Visual Tools (GoLive, Dreamweaver, and Fireworks) that generate JavaScripts for various effects without the need to code them in the script. Common errors in JavaScripts, their identification, debugging and avoidance in the first place form the discussion of the final chapter. Appendix A describes the history of JavaScript, its various versions and which versions work with which browsers. Appendix B classifies JavaScript reserved words. Appendix C lists the Cascading Style Sheet (CSS2) Reference. Appendix D summarises main sources for further information on JavaScript.

Some minor improvements could be made here and there. For example, the explanation of browser plug-ins on page 3, and the discussion of Java applet could have been clearer. Another example is the lack of clarity in the discussion of user prompts on page 20.

On the whole, the authors have done an excellent job, and the book should form a good basis for learning almost every feature of JavaScript from the point of view of using them in most common web applications.

Star Rating: 4