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## **Book review: Building Online Communities with phpBB 2 by Stoyan Stefanov, Jeremy Rogers, and Mike Lothar**

By Jeremy Turner

Before the World Wide Web, many people discussed topics on a bulletin board server, or BBS. The main drawback is that many of these BBSes were not connected together, so a user would only be able to converse and leave messages for other users on that same BBS. The Internet, and also the WWW, have enabled users from around the globe to meet in an online community to discuss common topics, anything from animals, computers, music or anything else that anyone would want to discuss. Building Online Communities with phpBB 2, a book written by Stoyan Stefanov, Jeremy Rodgers, and Mike Lothar and published by Packt Publishing, does an excellent job of teaching the reader to install, configure, and maintain an online community bulletin board using the extremely popular and free phpBB software.



The book's cover

The book is solidly written from cover to cover, and is an excellent choice for someone looking to setup an online community with phpBB. The book's typeface is an easy-to-read serif font, while code examples appear to be more of a style like Bitstream Vera Sans Mono, one of my favorites for looking at code. Many screen shots fill the pages, which is a great help when setting up custom themes, or changing the default look of the phpBB installation. Tips, notes, and suggestions appear in the text with text boxes which really help them stand out.

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## The contents

*Building Online Communities with phpBB 2* weighs in at 343 pages, and encompasses eight chapters along with four appendices. The book guides the reader all the way from pre-installation checklists (do you have a web server, database server, and PHP installed?) to more advanced topics such as programming your own phpBB templates. Topics along the way include customizing and administering the forum, creating templates and modifications, and even making programming changes to the phpBB software itself. The appendices give handy references on the directory structure, resources, cheatsheets, and even a very nice set of database structure tables with comments.

I also found that the book includes more than simply the mechanics of putting together an online community. In the forum administration chapter, the authors included a section on how to handle flamewars and members who are there just to anger other users. Managing an online community usually entails handling the human element of the Internet.

## Who is this book for?

This book is useful for anyone who needs to setup or maintain a phpBB installation. The book is geared more for a beginner to intermediate level, with a good deal of discussion about the basics of phpBB. A lot of intermediate topics are covered as well, such as creating mods and templates.

## Relevance to free software

phpBB is another example of a fine LAMP project, integrating some core free software components into a nice package. As such, *Building Online Communities with phpBB 2* promotes these same free software ideals. Although phpBB can be run with non-free software components (like IIS, SQL Server, or even Access), the text describes the installation using the free software alternatives.

## Pros

It is short, yet comprehensive in getting started with phpBB. The book is great for beginners to intermediate, but also includes some handy references that more advanced users would love.

## Cons

More experienced phpBB users may need to skip to the middle and end topics in this book. Beginners may want to simply download templates and not bother with creating their own.

Title	Building Online Communities with phpBB 2
Authors	Stoyan Stefanov, Jeremy Rogers, and Mike Lothar
Publisher	<u>Packt Publishing</u>
ISBN	1904811132
Year	2006
Pages	343
CD included	No

Book review: Building Online Communities with phpBB 2 by Stoyan Stefanov, Jeremy Rogers, and Mike Lothar

FS Oriented 10

Over all score 9

**In short**

## **Biography**

Jeremy Turner (/user/21" title="View user profile.): Jeremy Turner enjoys freelance writing when given the opportunity. He often plays system administrator, hardware technician, programmer, web designer, and all-around nice guy. You contact him by visiting his web site (<http://linuxwebguy.com/>).

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