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Book review: Java 6 Platform Revealed by John Zukowski

Mustang is coming

By [Alan Berg](#)

Java SE 6 otherwise known as Mustang is coming and probably much sooner than many 1.4 programmers think. As a programmer or an Architect, do you really know the details of the differences between 1.5 and 1.6? Java 6 Platform Revealed by John Zukowski is the first book I have read on this subject area. The book is short, clear and to the point.



The book's cover

Zukowski's book is easy to read, direct and to the point. Not a thick book, weighing in at 240 pages, the book captures the essential details with relevant code examples. I can only imagine writing such a corpus given the velocity of change of the development version of Java required a great deal of patience from the writer and not a little lateral thinking. My first impression of the book, as a Java programmer myself, is that it brings order to a potentially chaotic information set. Moreover, this is done in such a relaxed way that you are actually blissfully ignorant of the difficulty to accumulate the information direct from source yourself. Therefore, this is a book fitting purpose. But you can expect such accurate focus from an author that has been working with Java since 1995 and has already written numerous books on the subject.

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The contents

Composed of ten chapters spanning from a cursory inspection of the framework to explanations of what is new with Web services, Scripting Engines, Swing, JDBC 4.0 and I/O. New knowledge is imparted accurately and efficiently. Being involved in building Service Orientated Architecture, I found the discussion of client

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side web services and the javax, jws package (p147) handy for future reference. Though Mustang doesn't do much to the server side, the client side is truly catered for. Personally, the most fun code example was the manipulation of the new desktop object allowing files to be opened with native applications (p8) a near second was the manipulation of the system tray. For Java programmers moving from version 1.4 to 1.6 the explanation of Assertions in chapter ten is prerequisite reading. Annotations among other purposes leave hints for the compiler. This feature, if used properly with static analysis of code, can only push forward the ever-improving quality of structured coding.

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Who's this book for?

This book is for the forward thinking programmers and Architects that wish to make contact with the Java 6 platform as early in its lifetime as is possible. Perhaps it's also for programmers that have caught themselves in an Enterprise entropy field not quite managing to move from 1.4 to 1.5 and therefore thinking of missing a version and going directly to 1.6. And yes there are a lot of you out there!

Relevance to free software

Although some at Sun have been heavily hinting for an extended period that the Java language itself will be open sourced. And there has been great movement to allow a less restrictive license for deployment on Linux. The language still is not totally without restrictions. I hope this fact has changed by the time you have read this review. However, that said there are a large series of free software platform agnostic applications built on Java. I see the Swing GUI being applied more and more. Therefore, good Java programmers are important for the biodiversity of technologies competing in the free software sphere. Java being a virtual machine in theory allows code to be written once and run on all platforms. Thus code escapes proprietary operating systems and at the same time does not exclude.

Pros

A practical book focused on the main differences between the 1.5 and 1.6 API which allows programmers a quick overview of the new feature sets. The code examples are small and well targeted. The content is on time for the early birds. Further, it is difficult to find at the time of writing this review such a consistent explanation of the whole.

Cons

The book is the first one out there in the wild for the Java 6. Some issues in the Mustang feature set may change slightly outdating parts of the content quickly. Further, the book is relatively thin at 240 pages. Therefore, one would expect follow on in the form of a more detailed second edition. If you wait a couple of months thicker books should arrive.

Title	Java 6 Platform Revealed
Author	John Zukowski
Publisher	Apress

Book review: Java 6 Platform Revealed by John Zukowski

ISBN 1590596609
Year 2006
Pages 240
CD included No
FS Oriented 8
Over all score 8

In short

Biography

[Alan Berg](/user/8) (/user/8" title="View user profile.):

Alan Berg Bsc. MSc. PGCE, has been a lead developer at the Central Computer Services at the University of Amsterdam for the last eight years. In his spare time, he writes computer articles. He has a degree, two masters and a teaching qualification. In previous incarnations, he was a technical writer, an Internet/Linux course writer, and a science teacher. He likes to get his hands dirty with the building and gluing of systems. He remains agile by playing computer games with his kids who (sadly) consistently beat him physically, mentally and morally.

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