



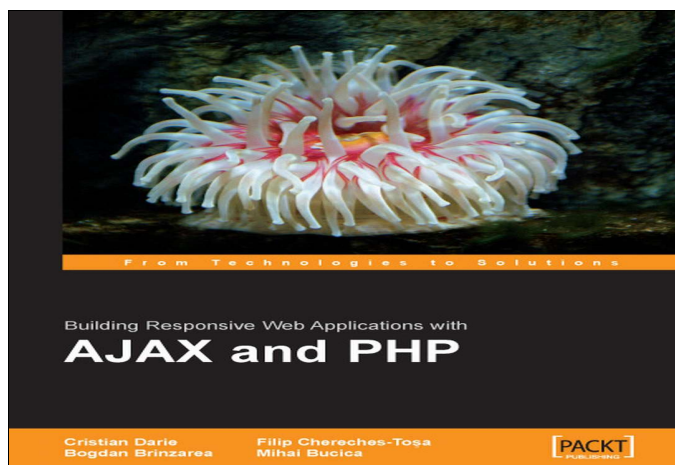
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Book review: AJAX and PHP: Building Responsive Web Applications by Christian Darie, Bogdan Brinzarea, Flip Chereches-Tosa

Truly dynamic content

By Alan Berg

The big unstoppable trendy Web 2.0 train is at full steam, allegedly knocking down the walls of conventional website buildings. Sure, the technologies used may date back to the beginning of the century (wow that sounds like a long time ago!). However, thanks to the publicity and dare I say hype, we are now sitting at the beginning of the second internet bubble. AJAX and PHP by the authors Christian Darie, Bogdan Brinzarea, Flip Chereches-Tosa and Mihai Bucica deals with the underlying fundamental enabling technologies that are fuzzily named AJAX in a succinct, pragmatic and laser sharp vector.



The book's cover

First impressions can be deceptive. However, in this case, luckily not—Ajax and PHP is an excellent read for content creators and programmers of conventional websites that use PHP as their server side language. The content of the book deals with all the salient points for building a more dynamic, active and interesting web content. That is by applying asynchronous updates to partially refill parts of a webpage. The underlying techniques have the potential to create a responsive interaction for the end user that was only previous possible with thick desktop applications. Productivity enhancers such as auto-completion, spell checking, responsive and secure partial server side form validation are not only viable, but relatively straightforward to build.

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The contents

Being 275 pages in size and containing ten chapters of totally relevant content, this tome (like all that I have read from [PACKT publishing](#)) is a no-messing-about, get-to-the-point and teach-you-what-you-need type of book. Chapters 1-3 communicate the core knowledge that is required to understand the basics of the relevant technologies. The browser specific details between Internet Explorer and virtually the rest of the universe are systematically detailed. A tour of the important highlights is provided in a compact and appropriate velocity. DOM, CSS, asynchronous, synchronous server side calls, JavaScript tricks, the need for proxying and queuing are accurately detailed.

Chapters 3-10 explain by example various potentials such as form validation, chatting, auto completion, realtime charting with SVG, RSS readers, dragging and dropping.

Note: For extra online resources you may visit Christian Darie's related [site](#).

These days there are numerous AJAX frameworks that are available free. Most of which hide the horrible finicky details away. However, like learning to fly an airplane or drive a car, to be effective you'll require the prerequisite background knowledge. And that is pragmatically delivered via detailed examples contained within the pages.

If forced to choose, little details like using JavaScript with CSS and the bread and butter work associated with form validation are my favorite sections. From long and sometimes painful experience, I particularly agree with the advice: *Always validate user input on the server*.

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Who's this book for?

This book is for developers that wish to understand AJAX from the bottom up or those who wish to build dynamic web content via modern technologies including PHP.

Relevance to free software

AJAX is in the center of the nebulous Web 2.0 movement. Over the coming few years many traditional commercial desktop applications will either be replaced or subsumed by an interactive web interface, many not. For a website creator to remain competitive during this phase or dare I say fashion requires the knowledge contained within AJAX and PHP Building Responsive Web Applications.

Pros

If you want to understand how AJAX works or how to build a dynamic website with PHP, this by-example book will help. Further, for your viewing pleasure there is a [demo site](#) running live with all the examples mentioned, thus reading listings becomes fun.

Cons

There are not many cons to this book. It does what it needs to do accurately. If I really wanted to nitpick, then I could say that, if you are looking for a book for creating dynamic content quickly, then you should look for a book that covers specific AJAX frameworks that hide all the details and do all the work for you. The only problem for you then is, if something fails then, you'll be working in the dark. At that point, this book's content will give you the psychological handle bars you need to problem solve.

Title	AJAX and PHP: Building Responsive Web Applications
Author(s)	Cristian Darie, Bogdan Brinzarea, Filip Chereches-Tosa, Mihai Bucica
Publisher	<u>PACKT</u>
ISBN	1904811825
Year	2006
Pages	275
CD included	No
FS Oriented	8
Over all score	9

In short

Biography

[Alan Berg](#) (/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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