

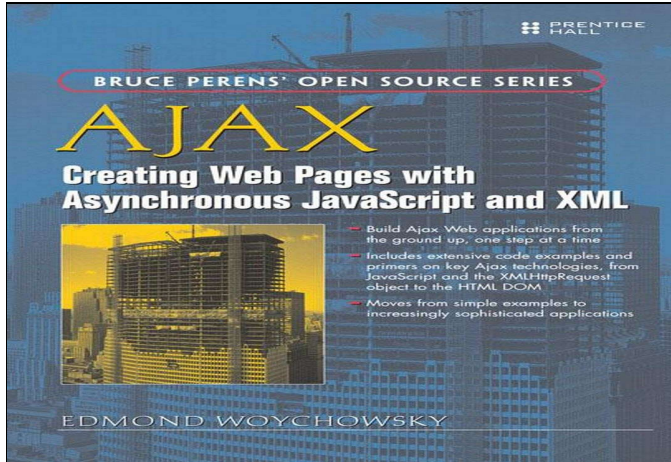


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## Book review: AJAX: Creating Web Pages with Asynchronous JavaScript and XML by Edmond Woychowsky

By Alan Berg

AJAX is the broadest of broad acronyms for a series of technologies that enable fashionably dynamic Web 2.0 applications. Edmond Woychowsky's valid, technically correct and humorous book *AJAX: Creating Web Pages with Asynchronous JavaScript and XML*, published by Prentice Hall, plots a careful and viable path through the underlying complexity and smoke.



The book's cover

I found the content well-rounded and, appropriately, the book explores one of the many viable learning paths to a fully functioning whole. The path correctly leads to the primary objective of understanding the main forms and structures within the AJAX edifice. However, it is a little bit light on the server side of the asynchronous communication dance.

**The book correctly leads to the primary objective of understanding the main forms and structures within the AJAX edifice**

My first impression of the book was that the book radiated Edmonds warm humor, which thoroughly permeated every paragraph. Personally, I found that the humor added to the value of the book and did not detract, but you will have to judge this subjective aspect for yourselves.

## The contents

Within the 432 pages, lie 16 chapters that range through the fully laden plethora of basic concepts required for effective use of AJAX. Concepts such as the use of JavaScript, XSLT, XPath, CSS and of course the details of XMLHttpRequest. Edmond Woychowsky even found time to outline a basic start to Ruby, which is, as a

market leading technology, a massive subject in itself to fully detail.

My favorite chapter of the book was chapter Eight “Ajax Using XML and XMLHttpRequest” and in particular the description of XML data islands where data is stored hidden as a cache or to be used on demand. In addition, the brief mentioning of the use of stored procedures within the confines of the MySQL database is an obvious and helpful effort saver.

What offends me about the technologies, which the author describes well, is the need for awareness of the cross browser issues. Why do we need to program for Internet Explorer and then for the rest of the world? How many man centuries have we as developers wasted in this non-compatible hard to debug subtle script enabled browser zoo? Internet Explorer was born an ugly inflated zeppelin indeed.

**How many man centuries have we as developers wasted in this non-compatible hard to debug script enabled browser zoo—Internet Explorer?**

## Who’s this book for?

This broad tome is for those of you that wish to understand the basic concepts behind one of many viable paths to enlightenment with AJAX. The author has more thoughtfully focused on the client-side than the server-side. I can therefore conclude that this fine book from the Bruce Peren’s Open Source Series is more inclined to the website developer that wishes to improve the interactivity of the GUI and is looking for a conceptual handle hold. That is, rather than the hard-core programmer, who wishes to weld their local infrastructure with server side coding into something more reactive to user demand.

## Relevance to free software

Interactive web applications that mimic the quality experience of rich client widget sets bring promise to online desktop applications without the slowness of response of more traditional CGI, ASP, Servlet only methodologies. Free software web applications that take advantage of this new paradigm will have a significant competitive advantage.

The book focuses on getting the job done with: JavaScript, with a strong nod to cross browser compatibility; MYSQL and stored procedures, with a smidgen of PHP; and also a mention of XML, XPath, CSS, XSLT, DOM. Therefore, most of the book is pure on the subject of free software with an unavoidable, yet mild, bias to the leading browser Internet Explorer.

## Pros

There is room in the marketplace for numerous AJAX books all explaining different approaches to enlighten. This book examples one such valid vector. Further, I liked the consistent use of humor throughout the book; however, that is my personal and obviously subjective taste.

## Cons

If evil gremlins with smelly armpits and pestilent skin complexions or, worse still, well dressed lawyers forced yours truly to choose only one book, which must include heavyweight content on both server side programming, and client side I would find this book light on the necessary theory behind server side coding,

but only then.

Title Ajax: Creating Web Pages with Asynchronous JavaScript and XML  
Author Edmond Woychowsky  
Publisher Prentice Hall  
ISBN 0132272679  
Year 2006  
Pages 432  
CD included No  
FS Oriented 9  
Over all score 8

### **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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