



AppleScript in a Nutshell

By Bruce W. Perry

O'Reilly Press, \$29.95 (retail)

ISBN #1-56592-841-5

Reviewed by Andrew Jones

Although you may not know it, your computer includes a very powerful and easy to learn scripting language called AppleScript. AppleScript is an easy way to automate tasks in some of your favorite applications using an English-like syntax language. Since it's initial release in System 7.5, Apple has built and increasing amount of AppleScript support into the MacOS and many of the so called "I applications" (iTunes, iPhoto, iDVD). Many third party developers have also built in support for AppleScript in their applications (Adobe Photoshop comes to mind). So what's the big deal and how do you write AppleScripts? That is the goal of O'Reilly's AppleScript in a Nutshell book.

Being a nutshell book, AppleScript in a Nutshell is designed to be more of a reference than a tutorial-style book. As a result, the book—which is divided into five sections—can be a little dry and technical. The first section is the only part of the book that provides a gentle overview of using AppleScript. Section two gets into the technical details of operators, variables, and flow control. The remaining three sections apply the stuff in the earlier sections to scripting MacOS 9 applications, MacOS 9 control panels and extensions, and MacOS X applications.

The author does a nice job of covering both MacOS 9 as well as MacOS X. However, now that I spend 100% of my time in MacOS X, I would have enjoyed more focus given to scripting Apple's cool new operating system. A great way to learn any scripting language or programming language is by playing around with examples, and this book has plenty. Short example scripts are plentiful and are well explained by the author, making it easy to understand new commands. A nice touch was the list of URL's in appendix B for additional information on AppleScript.

Overall, I rate this book high for it's technical content and good use of examples. It's not the easiest book to use if your new to programming, but if you are an experienced programmer who just needs a quick reference to learn the syntax and capabilities of AppleScript, then this is the book for you.

For those that want to learn more about AppleScript, check out <http://www.apple.com/applescript/>

Rating: Four out of Five stars

+lots of examples, good writing, covers MacOS 9 and X

-more MacOS X coverage