



Learning Unix for MacOS X
By Dave Taylor & Jerry Peek
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Reviewed by Andrew Jones

NOTE: You do not need to learn anything about UNIX to use MacOS X. Apple designed MacOS X from the beginning in such a way that the average user would never have to look at a terminal screen. The Terminal application is included for those individuals (like me) who are curious and want to learn more. With that being said, the UNIX underpinning of MacOS X offer amazing capabilities never before possible on the MacOS. This book gives the reader a quick glimpse at what's possible.

So you've moved to MacOS X recently and want to learn more about this thing people call UNIX. What is it? What can it do? How can it help you on a day-to-day basis? Those were the questions I had before I began reading O'Reilly's new MacOS X book, "Learning Unix for MacOS X." While it's not a very comprehensive or long book (only 124 pages), it does give the reader a quick introduction to several common UNIX tasks in an easy and friendly way.

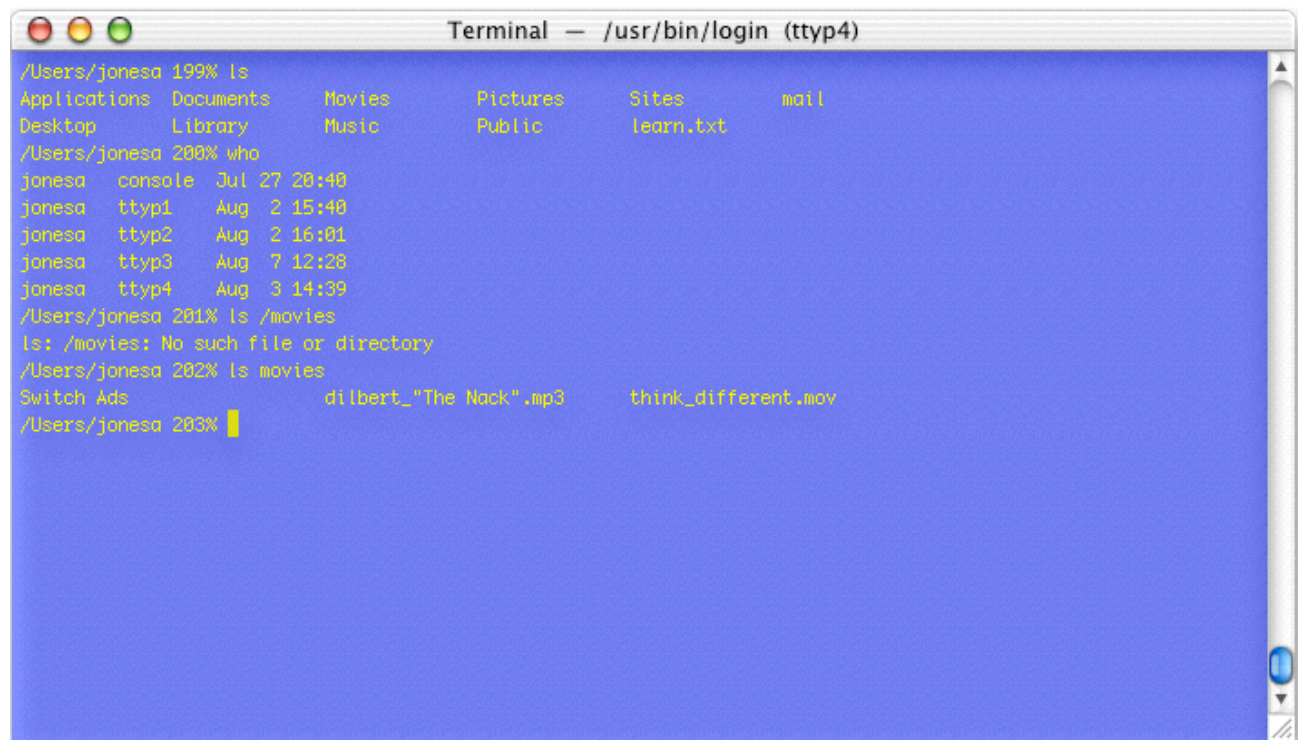


Figure 1: Terminal application window

The book starts off by familiarizing the reader with Terminal.app, the MacOS X user's primary method to access the heart of UNIX, the terminal command prompt (see Figure 1). After a quick overview of the Terminal application, the book jumps head first into the UNIX file system, discussing how to navigate through your hard drive, list and move files, change user permission on files and folders, and edit files with the powerful text editor vi. Then, the reader is told how he/she can customize the terminal environment, print from the terminal, connect to remote systems via the terminal, and use common internet tools for mail, web browsing, and irc chat from the terminal.

The authors do a good job of focusing on the basics in the book, leaving the more advanced topics to O'Reilly's more comprehensive titles. Plenty of screen captures are included in the book to help make sure the user is on the same page as the authors. In addition, short exercises and command examples are included where necessary, although I wanted more at times. While I came away wanting more from the book, I also felt that it did its job; it's not a comprehensive UNIX how-to. Rather it's a getting started book for MacOS X users who want to learn enough UNIX to get by during a dinner conversation.

Rating: Four out of Five stars

+provides a good quick overview of UNIX, to the point
-not enough exercises for new users, lacks detail in areas