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Professional Xsl (Programmer To Programmer)



Synopsis

Professional XSL takes an applied, tutorial-style approach to teaching the core fundamentals of the XSLT, XPath and XSL-FO specifications. You'll learn how to create well structured and modularized stylesheets to generate your required output, how to change, filter, and sort data, and how to incorporate other content for presentation purposes. XML is now the established standard for platform-neutral data storage and exchange, separating content from presentation. Its popularity is due to the flexibility of the language and the ability to reuse the data in a variety of ways. XSL is a key technology for working with XML, and is comprised of two parts: XSLT is the official language for transforming XML from one format to another, whether for restructuring/selectively processing the data or presenting the data for display; XSL-FO is a proposed vocabulary for incorporating information concerning how the document should be arranged for presentation. A related standard, XPath, is the language for addressing specific parts of an XML document.

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Customer Reviews

This book has 10 authors and it shows. The highlights for me were chapter 4 & 5, which outline some very interesting advanced techniques, and chapter 8, which has a detailed performance tuning case study. I was disappointed in their treatment of XSL-FO in chapter 9. It's difficult to write about a moving target, but I thought Eliotte Rusty Harold's XML Bible did a much better job, and his second edition will be out shortly. I was also disappointed that the authors didn't address grouping

problems (Muenchian grouping, etc.). Overall, the book does seem to target the MSXML platform and goes into a lot of depth with that product, though other products are covered. The book does concentrate on portable XSL and discusses the uses and shortcomings of proprietary extensions. Overall, Professional XSL is a good reference, more so if you concentrate on Microsoft platforms, but you'll probably want to supplement it with additional reference material.

To be fair, this is not an easy subject. However, they give a short chapter on XPath, and then thrust you into XSLT. That would not be bad IF, during their weak XSLT explanations they would also explain the XPath in their examples. Not only are the explanations weak, but the writing style of the authors is not clear and intuitive. Don't get me wrong, they do explain them, but not clearly. I have been reading Wrox books for several years now, I have always learned a lot from them, but I have to say this is the absolute worst Wrox book I have ever read. I would suggest finding a different book. Sorry Wrox, I normally very much enjoy your books.

I'm a developer currently working on a large-scale multi-platform project, which uses XML and XSL extensively. The book seems to cover all aspects of XSL in great depth, with plenty of code to illustrate how to apply the techniques the authors introduce. As a programmer used to more traditional procedural languages, I hadn't realised the paradigm shift that working with XSL entails, but this book has kick-started my enthusiasm for XSL, and has shown me what it can really do. The stylesheets I'm writing now are going down very well at work, and one in particular completes its transformation almost 50 times quicker than the code we had previously (no exaggeration)! I'd have to disagree with one of the previous reviewers who says it is concerned solely with MSXML!! Although it does cover this technology in one chapter, this isn't a surprise as the book tries to cover all aspects of the XSL field. Most of the book is concerned with platform-agnostic tools and techniques, based on the current W3C standards. We use a lot of Java in my company, especially as servlets, and this book was pretty indispensable when I was trying to get my stylesheet to work in tandem with servlets and JSP. The one gripe I have is that the book is rather skimpy on Formatting Objects, and if that's your thing you might be disappointed. Nevertheless, I'd recommend this book to anyone seriously working with XSL, and although it's not a book for novices, it's an excellent reference that you'll keep coming back to.

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