BOOK REVIEWS

BY JAMES MOHR

Internet Annoyances

I spent my computer adolescence at a time when you could only get *good* computer books from O'Reilly. In fact, I remember when you could refer to a book as "the sed and awk book" or "the vi book" and everyone knew you were talking about a great O'Reilly book. I don't want to say that I was disappointed with *Internet Annoyances*, but it doesn't have me jumping up and down and doing handstands like so many other books from O'Reilly.

One of my biggest "Internet Annoyances" is the fact that so most Internet books assume you are using Windows and Internet Explorer. *Internet Annoyances* is no different in this regard. So, why am I reviewing it in a Linux magazine? Linux users also surf the Internet, and they encounter the same problems as Windows users. Although most of the book is geared toward fixing annoyances in Windows, I am confident that most

Linux users will be able to apply the information in this book to whatever applications they use on Linux. If you go beyond the "click this button" answers to what is *really* being done to address the problem, the book has a wealth of useful information.

Internet Annoyances is easy to understand and packed with tips and tricks about using the Internet. All modesty aside, I personally did not get much out of the book. This was either because I already knew how to deal with the "annoyance" (reading email headers to help fight spam) or because I don't use the product (Windows Messanger, ICQ, AOL).

On the other hand, if you are an Internet novice, you may find the book useful, despite the fact that it is directed primarily toward Windows users. There are a lot of issues that most novices (and

even some "experts") don't think about or don't even know, and *Internet Annoyances* presents these issues in an easy-to-understand format.

Internet Annoyances addresses a very wide range of topics, from working with favorites and bookmarks, to bandwidth theft, to using PayPal and Ebay. The annoyances discussed in the book are common enough that you have surely encountered many (if not most) of them. I did find the book thin on nut-n-bolt details, but it is worth a look if you are new to the Internet.

Preston Gralla
239 Pages
O'Reilly Media, Inc, 0-596-00735-3
£ 14.95, US$ 24.95, EUR 21.90

Beginning MySQL Database Design and Optimization: From Novice to Professional

Where was this book when I first started developing my web site? I definitely could have saved time and frustration had this book been available at the beginning. Although many parts of the book talk about things I probably will never use (at least on my current web site), it is loaded with tricks and tidbits to help you not only optimize your applications, but your MySQL database, as well.

One might be put off by the fact that the first third of the book covers MySQL "basics," like database
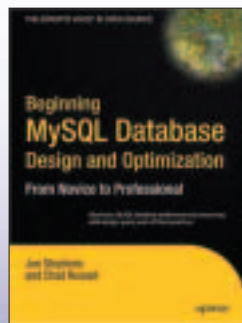
access, datatypes, and how keys and indexes work, but there is a lot of discussion of how these topics relate to the concepts of design and optimization. The introductory material can sometimes be very dry, but the authors did a great job of making it understandable and showing *why* it is important. At several points in the book, I discovered problems with my own database, and at a few points, I got confirmation that I had done something right.

The chapter on optimizing queries has a lot of useful information. It was perhaps too much of a "survey," with proportionally little you could really sink your

teeth into, but still, I learned a fair bit from the optimization chapter.

The book includes a whole chapter on programming MySQL (or better said, programming PHP to access MySQL). The chapter discusses how to access your database efficiently, as well as how to access the data more efficiently. Reading this chapter, I found a number of places in my own PHP code where I wasn't taking advantage of everything MySQL has to offer.

This is definitely a "must-have" book.

Jon Stephens and Chad Russell
500 pages
Apress, 1-59059-332-4
£ 28.50, US$ 44.99, EUR 41.90