

Murach's JavaScript and DOM Scripting

By Ray Harris

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If you do websites, at some point, you will probably want to add some client-side functionality to one or more of your web pages. This could range from something simple like just setting the focus to an input field to more complicated operations like doing data validation before submitting the data back to the server. (Client-side refers to code executing on the end user's computer, as opposed to server-side which refers to the computer hosting the website.) To do such items requires the use of JavaScript. JavaScript is the programming language that all websites utilize for performing operations on the client.

Like some other books from Murach, this book utilizes what the publisher refers to as "paired-pages" layout. That is where the text of the book is on the left page, and the right page is for items related to the left page. This could be screen shots, code examples or code listings, or just additional information. This is the second book from Murach that I have read which utilized this layout, and I find this formatting technique to be very nice. It helps avoid the need to keep flipping back and forth between pages to refer to a screen shot or example that can occur in other books as you go between the text and the example.

The book, "Murach's JavaScript and DOM Scripting" by Ray Harris, is intended for people that want to learn JavaScript. Because JavaScript is so tightly associated with web pages, in addition to explaining JavaScript, Mr. Harris does cover some of the basics of HTML and CSS (the pieces which lay out the appearance of web pages) to help inexperienced people understand everything.

The book starts out with an overview of what is a web page, explaining HTML, CSS, and an overview of JavaScript, including how to include JavaScript into a web page. Then the author starts diving into the syntax of JavaScript. In addition to covering the basic concepts of the language, such as variables, control statements, loops and functions. Mr. Harris also writes about some of the techniques for use in debugging your JavaScript code utilizing FireFox. And while the IE debugging tools are more limited, those capabilities are discussed too.

In explaining the various features of JavaScript, Mr. Harris presents a number of sample programs, such as a sales tax calculator and future value calculator. As this is a book about JavaScript and not necessarily implementing a complete website, Mr. Harris intentionally does not utilize sample programs which include server-side aspects such as database operations. Instead, he keeps the samples simple and focused on the JavaScript.

As is stated in the book, this book's focus is the JavaScript programming language, and therefore does not include anything about either server-side programming, or AJAX, the technique used to implement rich web applications.

For a person interested in learning the fundamentals of programming in the JavaScript language, the book stays focused on that goal, and does a very nice job of explaining the language.