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Learning XML, Second Edition

Creating Self-Describing Data

2nd Edition
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Learning
XML

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Erik T. Ray

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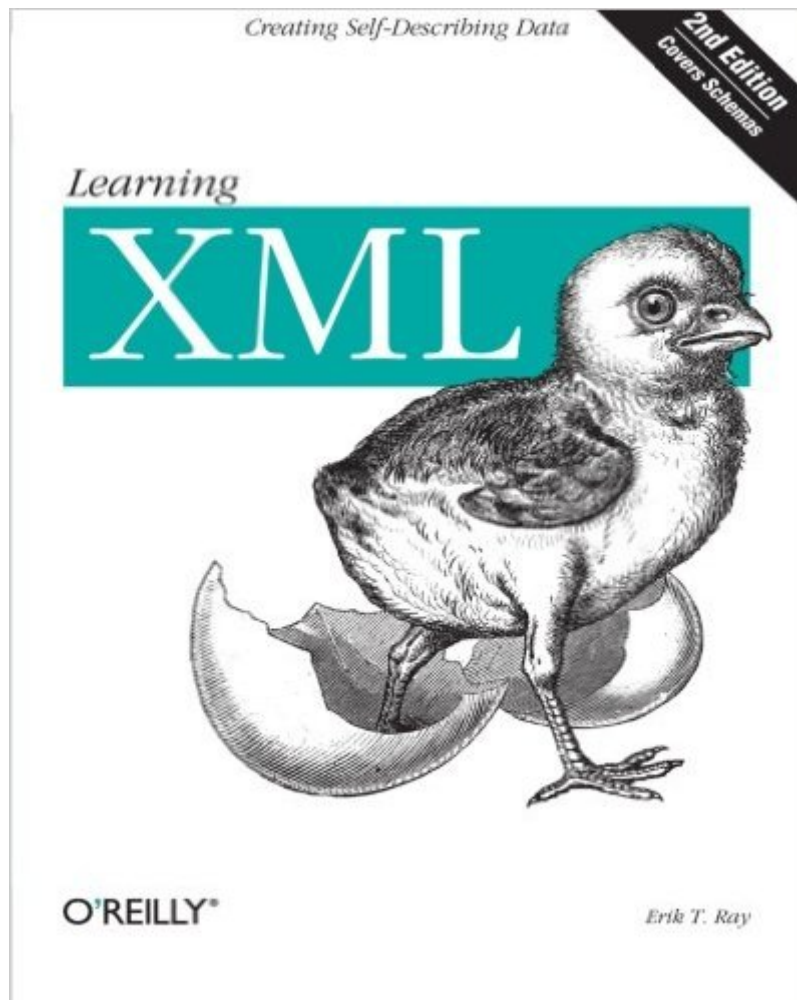
Synopsis

This second edition of the bestselling Learning XML provides web developers with a concise but grounded understanding of XML (the Extensible Markup Language) and its potential-- not just a whirlwind tour of XML.The author explains the important and relevant XML technologies and their capabilities clearly and succinctly with plenty of real-life projects and useful examples. He outlines the elements of markup--demystifying concepts such as attributes, entities, and namespaces--and provides enough depth and examples to get started. Learning XML is a reliable source for anyone who needs to know XML, but doesn't want to waste time wading through hundreds of web sites or 800 pages of bloated text.For writers producing XML documents, this book clarifies files and the process of creating them with the appropriate structure and format. Designers will learn what parts of XML are most helpful to their team and will get started on creating Document Type Definitions. For programmers, the book makes syntax and structures clear. Learning XML also discusses the stylesheets needed for viewing documents in the next generation of browsers, databases, and other devices.Learning XML illustrates the core XML concepts and language syntax, in addition to important related tools such as the CSS and XSL styling languages and the XLink and XPointer specifications for creating rich link structures. It includes information about three schema languages for validation: W3C Schema, Schematron, and RELAX-NG, which are gaining widespread support from people who need to validate documents but aren't satisfied with DTDs. Also new in this edition is a chapter on XSL-FO, a powerful formatting language for XML. If you need to wade through the acronym soup of XML and start to really use this powerful tool, Learning XML, will give you the roadmap you need.

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Customer Reviews

By page 177 I realized that I was never going to touch a keyboard while reading this book. I can't speak for everyone, but when I pick up a book expecting to learn the topic, I need theory, reference, examples and structured "assignments". This title offers the first three, but I never get to apply what I am learning hands-on in a graduated fashion. When I am finished, I have little more than the ability to recognize the components of XML. Just because you can recognize all the foods in a grocery store, and know the origins of all the spices on your spice rack, doesn't mean you can cook; the same principal applies here. I am fully aware that XML is comprised of many different elements, and many of the XML development environments are very expensive, but many are free and could have been used to teach the concept clearer.The title also has many errors, so the errata list on the publisher's web site is important. The book does not include any of the source code, so if you want that, you have to download it. Even then, it is not complete and file titles in the book do not always match the provided code file names.If you are looking for a hands-on book to learn XML, this isn't the title. If you know XML and are looking for a reference, again - not for you. However, if you are interested in it from more of an administrative overview position, then the title is worth the read. It can provide many answers and give a good base of information without the need to actually write any XML on your own.

SHORT: I highly recommend this book if you know HTML and have some exposure to CSS; it's a good intro book to XML, which is what it's intended to be. The end result is that you'll know enough to get started with more technical books, and where to go for available web resources.LONGER: The reasons that other people have given for not liking this book are some of the same reasons that I find it useful. I'm pretty well-versed in HTML and have some basic understanding of JavaScript and Cascading Style Sheets. This book goes into detail about both and gives comparisons and evolutions that involve XML. I'm about halfway through it at the moment, and it's giving me a clear, not-to-technical view of XML. The other books I have go straight into the code, telling me HOW but not really explaining the WHY of everything. That's what makes this book great to me. The first half deals with explanation and presentation, while the last half is more code-heavy. The two other books I have strive to be highly technical, but proved to be a bit overwhelming for me as a complete newbie to the subject of XML.

I am a C, Unix Shell, and Perl programmer. This means that I have a lot of interaction with XML.I'm not really interested in sitting down and learning XML because I wouldnt actually go and write it myself. There are plenty of perl modules (XML::Parser, XML::Twig, and so on) that will do that for me. However, I wanted to have some understanding of what XML actually was, and how to read it if I were presented in it.This book started very slow and very easily, and moved into some more advanced (if a little more dry) subject matter. The author uses witty, enjoyable examples, and is very clear at all times about what is being explained.I would recommend this to most programmers who want to just "know what XML is all about," as it isnt particularly technical (if you are just skimming), and its technical enough for people to get into if need be. It also covers most topics very thoroughly.Another gem from OReilly.

The book "Learning XML" by Eric T. Ray is a basic introduction to XML. It covers the markup elements, links, presentation, data type definition, transformations and programming for XML.The book is truly for the novice. The very basic concepts are introduced and illustrated in great detail. The text is written quite well, and the illustrations do help to understand the presented concepts and examples.The first chapters on the core concepts, the markup elements, links and presentation in XML describe all syntax elements using a graphical syntax illustration. The components of syntax elements are clearly labeled and referred to in the text. The application of all elements is further illustrated with simple examples that concentrate on the essence of the different markup elements.The chapter on DTDs is equally well written and DTD concepts and syntax elements are introduced in the same careful way as the markup elements in the first chapters. I would have expected more than 4 pages on XML schema. Yes, it's still a draft, but the basic behavior and structure are pretty well defined by now, and parsers accepting XML schema are available.The text has a couple of chapters and sections that disappointed me. The chapter on transformations isn't structured as well as the rest of the book and contains a 20 page long, undocumented and uncommented example of an XSLT transformation program. This example has not been written by the author, and that might be reason it is not explained in detail, but at least a few comments would have been nice.The last chapter on programming for XML is the most disappointing one. The elements of an XML processor are only introduced very briefly. The chapter does contain a Perl example of a XML syntax checker but I don't think that developing such low level functionality is the most important aspect of programming for XML. A more detailed coverage of the APIs SAX and DOM would probably have been more important.Overall, this is a good introduction for XML authors.

The basic concepts are presented out nicely and the illustrations are very helpful. The book is not a great reference if you plan to learn how to write programs for XML.

This is a very good introduction to XML. The author provides good background explanations for the topics that need it and uses many good analogies and examples. Unfortunately there are many errors. Some of them are serious and obscure enough to confuse the intended audience. Do your self a favor - buy this book then visit the errata page listed in the preface. Make sure to read both the confirmed and unconfirmed pages. The editors need to be taken outside and pelted with donuts.

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