Designing with Web Standards (second edition)

Jeffrey Zeldman, Peachpit Press, 2006, \$44.99,
ISBN: 0321385551.

Jeffrey Zeldman has written an excellent update of his critically acclaimed book. This second edition covers the changes to Web browsers, Web development techniques, and the Web community's acceptance of Web standards in the four years since the first edition. One of the most significant

changes has been improved support for CSS (cascading style sheets) layout among all browsers.

Part 1 of the book addresses the importance of Web standards. Anyone who is already convinced of the value of using Web standards, and who doesn't need the information to convince others, can skip part 1 and go directly to part 2, the how-to of designing with Web standards.

Part 2 begins with a discussion about modern markup. XHTML is a reformulation of HTML using XML. The next chapter covers simple rules for converting from HTML to XHTML. The following chapter begins by walking the reader through an example of building a Web page using a hybrid layout. The example demonstrates how to use CSS to incorporate accessibility into the page, and by extension into the Web site as a whole.

Development of the example Web page is interrupted to cover CSS basics, after which Zeldman picks up with the example, using CSS to display the Web page without having to make changes to the page code.

A discussion of typography follows; it controls how text looks on the screen. Zeldman debunks many of the myths surrounding Web accessibility and provides tips for making Web sites more accessible. The final chapter brings together concepts learned earlier in the book and adds a few new techniques to create a CSS design. In the first edition of the book, many of the techniques were cutting edge. In the years between editions, many of these techniques have become part of Web development best practices.

I highly recommend this book for all Web professionals. Those just beginning their careers can learn the right way to build standards-compliant Web sites. Those who have been in the field for decades can learn current best practices that will make their jobs easier, while still meeting the requirements of their clients. —Will Wallace

Expert VB 2005 Business Objects (second edition)

Rockford Lhotka, Apress, 2006, \$59.99,
ISBN: 1590596315.

If you are looking for a good .NET companion framework, you should seriously consider CSLA (component-based scalable logical architecture). Rockford Lhotka designed it to ease the development of business objects that must be reused and deployed in a variety of distributed scenarios—for

example, two-tier architectures with desktop interfaces or three-tier architectures with Web interfaces. The result is a framework that provides built-in support for multilevel undo/redo, business rules, two-way data binding for both Windows and Web forms, object persistence, custom authentication, and integrated authorization.

This book reports on the CSLA framework. Its 12 chapters are well organized and easy to follow for the average .NET programmer; a few sections delve into some .NET intricacies that are necessary for implementing two-way data binding, for example, but Lhotka has managed to take the reader from the essential concepts to the intricacies so that they are easy to understand. Furthermore, readers who are not interested in the details may skip these sections safely.

The first chapter is an essay on distributed architectures in which the emphasis is on the distinction between logical and physical models and the mappings between them; this chapter explains the motivation for a framework such as CSLA, whose design goals and main features are presented in chapter 2. Chapters 3 through 5 deal with the implementation of the framework itself. The rest of the book reports on using the framework to implement a small, but not trivial, project management system to which the user can have access through a typical desktop application, Web page, or SOAP.

I must confess that I enjoyed evaluating this book, and I definitely recommend it to programmers who develop typical business applications and wish to take the .NET framework a step further. I also think that it is a valuable resource for information technology students since Lhotka's style of writing is didactic and the design of the framework is quite clean. For readers who prefer C#, another version is available. —Rafael Corchuelo

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