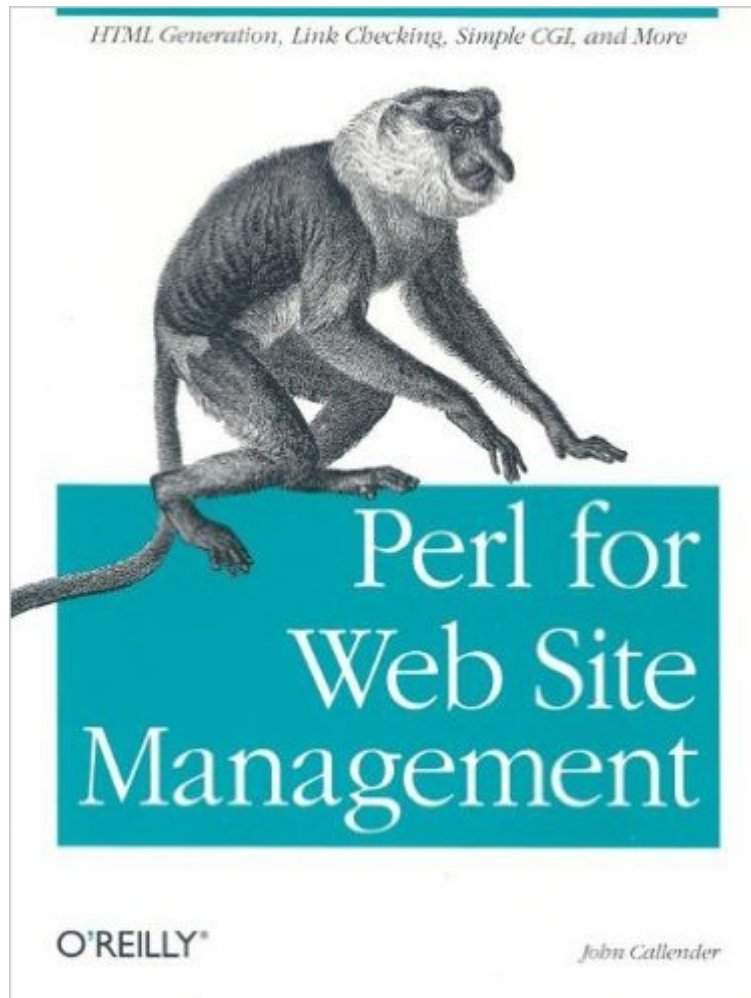


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Perl For Web Site Management



Synopsis

Checking links, batch editing HTML files, tracking users, and writing CGI scripts--these are the often tedious daily tasks that can be done much more easily with Perl, the scripting language that runs on almost all computing platforms. If you're more interested in streamlining your web activities than in learning a new programming language, Perl for Web Site Management is for you: it's not so much about learning Perl as it is about using Perl to do common web chores more efficiently. The secret is that, although becoming a Perl expert may be hard, most Perl scripts are relatively simple. Using Perl and other open source tools, you'll learn how to:

- Incorporate a simple search engine
- Write a simple CGI gateway
- Convert multiple text files into HTML
- Monitor log files
- Track users as they navigate your site

Even if you don't have any programming background, this book will get you quickly past Perl's seemingly forbidding barrier of chops and chomps, execs and elsifs. You'll be able to put an end to using clunky tools, editing files tediously by hand, or relying on programmers and system administrators to do "the hard stuff" for you. Sure, you might learn a little bit about programming as well, and perhaps something about the role of open source tools on the Web. But the purpose of Perl for Web Site Management isn't to educate you--it's to empower you. Whether you're a developer, a designer, or simply a dabbler on the Web, this book is the plain-English, hands-on introduction to Perl you've been waiting for.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

First things first. This isn't the book that I thought it was going to be. I was expecting to read a book

that taught experienced programmers some Perl tricks that made it easier to manage a web site - something like a companion piece to O'Reilly's Perl for System Administration by David Blank-Edelman. Turns out that's not what this book is at all. Instead, it's an introduction to Perl for someone who runs a web site and decides that they need to take their computer knowledge to the next level and learn some programming skills. Callender calls these people "accidental programmers" and he is very understanding of their needs having been one himself only a few years ago. So immediately this book has a completely different target audience to the majority of O'Reilly's Perl books. It's competing against all the brightly coloured books with titles like Perl for Morons or Learn Perl in 30 Seconds. These books are, almost without exception, written by people with minimal Perl knowledge, so it should come as no surprise that Callender's book is vastly superior to all of them. The first major advantage that this book has is that it doesn't simply try to sell Perl as "the CGI language". Callender is at pains to point out that Perl can be useful for any number of other tasks involved in running a web site. Very early on we are looking at updating the links in an HTML file using regular expressions (and there's even a discussion on the fragility of this approach and pointers to better solutions using CPAN modules). A little later on we are looking at writing reports on web site hits by parsing the access logs. This is the kind of work that Perl excels at - the fact that you can use the same language to write CGI programs as well should be seen as a bonus.

As a very experienced programmer, and familiar with Perl already, but not CGI programming, I found this book to be useful for its coverage of the necessary aspects in preparing and managing a website. Callender provides a good example, he writes well, and covers a lot of material in the 21 chapters. The text correctly guides you through much of the arcana of developing CGIs with Perl. I will keep the book nearby as I prepare my own web site. However, throughout the time I was reading the book, I had a deep suspicion that the self-described target audience of "Accidental programmer" would find this book far too fast paced or insufficient in background material. I got a sense that this book preaches to the already-converted. True beginners or non-programmer web developers should first work through introductory texts such as "Learning Perl". Also, almost no discussion of debugging beyond a few early pages. An approach to debug some of the ambitious scripts presented would be useful. The basic treatment through most of the chapters is to present a scenario, provide an initial script, then discuss the elements line by line. Then improve on it, and present the new, more detailed script. This method of exposition struck me as very repetitious, with lots of pages filled with similar looking scripts--each one with the statement: "Like all the examples in

this book, you can download it from the book's web site, ...". My opinion of how best to use the book is to identify a task that is similar to an example in the book, and try to work through it on your own.

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