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PHP Solutions: Dynamic Web Design Made Easy



Synopsis

This is the second edition of David Power's highly-respected PHP Solutions: Dynamic Web Design Made Easy. This new edition has been updated by David to incorporate changes to PHP since the first edition and to offer the latest techniques--a classic guide modernized for 21st century PHP techniques, innovations, and best practices. You want to make your websites more dynamic by adding a feedback form, creating a private area where members can upload images that are automatically resized, or perhaps storing all your content in a database. The problem is, you're not a programmer and the thought of writing code sends a chill up your spine. Or maybe you've dabbled a bit in PHP and MySQL, but you can't get past baby steps. If this describes you, then you've just found the right book. PHP and the MySQL database are deservedly the most popular combination for creating dynamic websites. They're free, easy to use, and provided by many web hosting companies in their standard packages. Unfortunately, most PHP books either expect you to be an expert already or force you to go through endless exercises of little practical value. In contrast, this book gives you real value right away through a series of practical examples that you can incorporate directly into your sites, optimizing performance and adding functionality such as file uploading, email feedback forms, image galleries, content management systems, and much more. Each solution is created with not only functionality in mind, but also visual design. But this book doesn't just provide a collection of ready-made scripts: each PHP Solution builds on what's gone before, teaching you the basics of PHP and database design quickly and painlessly. By the end of the book, you'll have the confidence to start writing your own scripts or--if you prefer to leave that task to others--to adapt existing scripts to your own requirements. Right from the start, you're shown how easy it is to protect your sites by adopting secure coding practices.

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Customer Reviews

I was going to hold off on reviewing this book until I had actually made it all the way through to the end but after spending hours (5 or 6 maybe?) debugging an error in the code from Ch. 09, I decided maybe it was time to voice my opinion. I come from a programming background but I'm new to all things "web development". I went through the Head First HTML/CSS book and thought it was great. Decided to give the Head First PHP a try and was disappointed with it and so abandoned it half way through. Decided to give this one a try because of all the good reviews. My first impression was that I liked the actual layout of the book and the teaching style much better than the Head First book. For the most part, the authors explanation of what each line of code is doing is excellent. The sequence of topics being covered seemed strange to me. You dive right in to the deep end which I found a little unsettling at first. There were a few instances where the author puts a line or two of some cryptic code and says something along the lines of "don't stress about this code and what it means...just know that it needs to be there and does what it needs to do" which I found a little strange because he was so detailed in his explanations in most other parts. What I have found to be the most frustrating part of this book though, are the amount of errors found in the example code. I'm on page 256 of Ch. 09 and I've found no less than 6 or 7 errors in the code thus far that ARE NOT listed on the errata page on the books website. I've submitted the found errors to the publisher but I have yet to see them on the added to the errata list. Quite frankly, I'm pretty surprised that nobody else has mentioned this in any of their reviews?

I'm about to start a new PHP project for our university website and was going to do it with the first edition of Dave Powers's PHP Solutions at my elbow. Now it will be the second edition. I have other PHP books and may dip into them a bit, but this is the one that will see me through. It seems that Powers came to computer guru-dom from a career in broadcast journalism, and it shows in his ability to present exactly the information I need in exactly the way I need it. I'm a fairly experienced user-developer, but not a technical person. Powers is a wizard and at the same time a first-rate "host" to the reader. He understands the difference between making an explanation ALMOST confusion-free and getting it just right. His writing style pleasantly engages you on grown-up terms, with no static of jokiness to cut through. As for content, PHP Solutions is, as the title declares, a

solution-oriented approach to getting things done with PHP, not a ground-up tutorial or a dictionary-like reference. But I find that the challenges and solutions Powers has assembled amount to an important part of what I want to get done on a project. You can learn PHP basics anywhere (although Powers gives you a refresher in those, too) and then, when it comes to putting a particular capability into your website, turn to this book for the solution. For example, when I look at the code I wrote for my course-management system to display a list of students' reports with short extracts in screens of ten students each, I find the following comment:// `*** Prepare for paging through query results, displaying a specified number//of records on the page and inserting a record-navigation system above and//below the records.`

I worked for years as a programmer, and am proficient in numerous languages, but a PHP noob. A current project requires me to work with PHP, and I bought this thinking it would be a good way to spin up on a new-to-me language. The author is taking a "practical" approach to introducing the language. The good news is that his code is not all super-simplified examples, he shows some of the complexity of real world applications, and codes appropriate protections against malicious users and hackers. He basically develops a simple web site throughout the book, adding increasingly complex behaviors and features. This Sounds great in theory. From a practical standpoint, it means that if you're trying to read the book rather than "coding along at home" the examples become impossibly large. Rather than using simple examples to illustrate things like database interaction or object-oriented features, the examples end up being a complex mish-mash of files discussed at various points in the book. In the author's defense, if I had the time to work, slowly and methodically through each page, editing the sample code and seeing it in action, I would doubtless learn the essentials of the language. Sadly, like too many code monkeys, I'm under the gun and need to spin up on the details of the language quickly. I was hoping for a book that would explain PHP, preferably in a semi-organized fashion. Where are the super-globals populated, and which ones can I rely on the server actually populating? What built-in functions are available? What are the most common errors and "gotchas" in PHP programming?

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