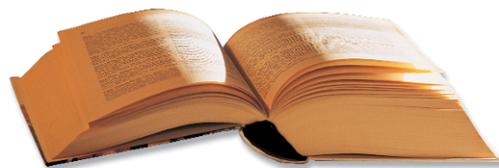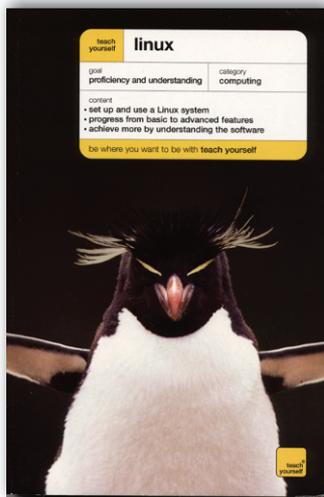# Book Reviews

Teach Yourself Linux

You know a subject has reached the mainstream, when it has a Teach Yourself guide written for it. Teach Yourself Linux fits in the Teach Yourself series and covers Linux in a clear and concise fashion. Teach Yourself Linux is probably the best basic introduction to Linux that I have seen.

It covers all the necessary areas without getting bogged down in unnecessary detail, such as the history. The aim of the book is to get the reader to load and run a version of Linux, and it does just exactly that, with no waffle.

It picks Red Hat 9.0 as its basic distribution and the worked examples all follow this, but Suse commands are also shown as alternatives. Knoppix is also briefly covered, in case you want to try out Linux without affecting your hard disk.

Some sections are marked as optional, these include areas such as the command line, for the benefit of people who just want to get a system up and running without having to do anything technical. Later sections cover Open Office, the Internet and networking with Microsoft systems as well as many other useful topics. There is even a short chapter on certification and career development.

My favorite chapter was probably the one on embedded Linux, as it is seldom that a basic introduction does more than just mention embedded software. Whereas this book gives ideas for programming and exercises to do as well as links to the sites for relevant distributions.

The book concluded with a short but clear glossary, but as it is written with so little jargon there is little need to refer to it most of the time.

I have always been a great fan of the Teach Yourself format, having run through various topics from economics to the guitar, and I was pleased to find that this latest edition is as straightforward and easy to use as normal, and I hope that it will encourage the acceptance of Linux by the general public and encourage more people to give it a go. ∎

Robert Billing
226 pages
Hodder & Stoughton Educational, 0-340-81204-4
£8.99, US$ 11.95, EUR 14.04
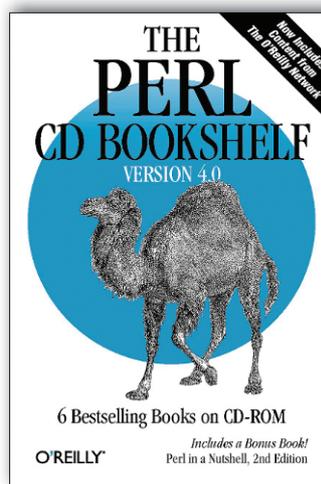
The Perl CD Bookshelf v4.0

This is the latest addition to O'Reilly's CD bookshelf series and contains six titles: Perl in a Nutshell (2nd edition), Learning Perl (3rd edition), Programming Perl (3rd edition), Perl cookbook (2nd edition), Learning Perl Objects – References and Modules, and Mastering Regular Expressions (2nd edition). The last of these titles is included in PDF format while the rest are HTML files.

The CD is designed to be accessed by any Java enabled web browser and includes a master index to the whole of the library as well as individual indexes for each title. The package includes a "bonus book" – a printed hard copy of the Perl in a Nutshell – presumably so that the CD bookshelf does not get lost on the shelving in a bookstore.

The CD also contains some pages from the O'Reilly Network that are related to the books. In total just under 70MBytes are used on the disk of which around 20MBytes are for Java search engine. If you took out the double versions of the PDF files this could be reduced a little further. As much as I like reading paper books, the HTML files become useful because of the searchable nature. Rather than reinventing the wheel for each problem, you can now run a quick search and get on with life.

Most of the book titles had been updates to Perl 5.8. Previous versions of the bookshelf contained Advanced Perl Programming and Learning Perl on Win32, rather than the Mastering and Objects titles.

Overall, I think that having reference works available on CD in a searchable format is very useful and if you are likely to be buying four or more of the featured books it is quite good value for the money. However, it can seem expensive if you have already gone out and bought some of them – as many users probably have. ∎

Various
737 pages plus 1 CD
O'Reilly, 0-596-00622-5
£76.88, US$ 99.95, EUR,95.00