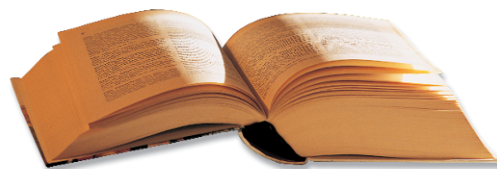


# Book Reviews

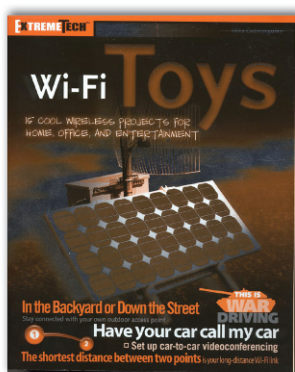


## Wi-Fi Toys

From the ExtremeTech collection of books, this manual is a collection of fifteen different electronic projects that are all linked because they use some form of wireless hardware. Unfortunately, on closer examination, the first four projects turn out to be guides on how to build different antennas for your wireless activities. Don't be put off by this though.

These first hundred pages are useful in that they provide the basic knowledge for using radio signals. The paper-clip antenna walk through is the most fascinating.

Throughout the text, photographs are used to show you what your own project should be aiming for. It is possible to skip this section, but luckily, there are enough formulas and tables to capture



some of that physics experimentation class and draw your curiosity in.

The second section of the book deals with war driving. The first so-called project is fitting out your car to allow you to take part. The next two projects concern Windows software. The first is about taking readings while the last is how to draw a map of your results.

Finally we get to some real wireless projects. We are taught how to convert a standard access point into something

that can survive outside. This is followed by what I originally thought was a theoretical project on making a solar powered repeater. Not much use for those of us in cloudy environments, but

the style is useful in explaining not just how but why.

Creating a free wireless hotspot involved Red Hat 9.x so all is not wasted. Finally this section goes on to describe WiFi games.

The final section has four real projects. How to turn your TiVo into WiFi, Long distance Wireless links, Car to car video conferencing and a wireless picture frame.

Fifteen projects it isn't. A useful checklist of things to consider by someone who has actually done them, it is.

Long distance WiFi links and free access hotspots make the book useful. The rest is either a nice physics refresher or pleasant – this is what we did – information. ■

**Mike Outmesguine**

**408 pages**

**Wiley Publishing, 0-7645-5894-3**

**£16.99, US\$ 24.99, EUR 21.80**

## Learning PHP5

The book clearly points out that it is intended as an introduction to PHP5 and is not designed to temper your skills and increase your earning power as a web builder. Any PHP4 programmer will find little in the way of useful information as classes are not covered in great depth.

If you are, however, considering PHP as a means to building interactive websites for fun and profit, then this book is a no nonsense guide that delivers each snippet of information in small bite-sized chunks. This makes learning quite fast and does not give the reader time to be bored.

After the customary first chapter, which describes what PHP is and what its benefits are, the book follows a standard layout, with each chapter covering a major topic. The chapters include discussions of topics such as functions and databases, with small exercises at the end to allow you to test yourself on

whether you really understood the information.

The first half of the book deals with the basics, and as such it is necessary to read these thoroughly. The second half has a more practical feel such as cookies and parsing documents.

The chapter on storing information in databases does deserve a special mention. This chapter is informative, and takes the time to explain good database management techniques. The database topic is especially important in discussions of PHP to prevent a novice programmer from making fundamental errors that will later on

lead to downfall. PearDB is used as the abstraction layer and MySQL as the engine.

As with many books, the final chapter hints at what is technically possible with the language and is designed to fire your imagination as well as enthusiasm.

For the novice PHP5 programmer, the book lends itself to a gentle but competent guide that perhaps leads the reader to the author's, PHP Cookbook, also by O'Reilly. For anyone else, the book misses some opportunities to convert PHP4 users and explain a little more on what makes good PHP coding. ■

**David Sklar**

**368 pages**

**O'Reilly, 0-596-00560-1**

**£20.95, US\$ 29.95, EUR 29.00**



## OpenOffice.org Writer

Similar to the author's previous *Taming OpenOffice.org Writer 1.1*, this book is a succinct, useful guide to getting the most from your favourite free alternative to Microsoft Word.

The book is aimed at anyone who has used a word processor, but does seem to focus on technical and professional writers. The section on moving over from Microsoft Word is actually left to the end of the book, and shows that the application is not just an alternative but as good if not better.

The book starts with a section on configuring and adjusting OpenOffice to suit your personal needs rather than relying on the default configuration. Each step is explained in detail with useful tips highlighted.

As you would expect, actual usage is explained along with page layout and styles in enough detail to make this a valuable read. Using master and subdocuments are useful techniques to learn

if you spend any amount of time in front of a word processor and these are adequately covered, although the section on using fields did tend to stumble and felt a little disjointed.

Creating indexes and bibliographies, can be a chore at the best of times, but the section handling this topic, provided useful pointers to make it quicker, although still a chore.

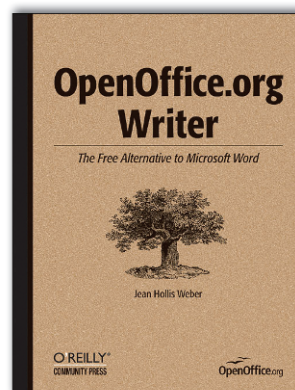
This book is about word processing and not just text editing and as such it lends considerable weight to options such as tables, templates and graphics.

The ten pages at the end on tips and tricks is worth rereading a few times as they will help to speed up the time you spend controlling your tasks, letting you

concentrate on getting the words right, which after all is the important thing.

I was very surprised with the depth of knowledge that the author put into this book. It was not just a rewrite of the online manual or a step through of the menu functions. I would recommend this for anyone who uses the OpenOffice.org suite and I can only hope that the author considers adding the

missing suite applications as future volumes. ■



**Jean Hollis Weber**  
**234 pages, incl. CD-ROM**  
**O'Reilly, 0-596-00826-0**  
**£17.50, US\$ 24.95, EUR 24.00**



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