

## **Web Application Development with PHP 4.0**

**Tobias Ratschiller + Till Gerken**

New Riders 2000

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### **PHP Pocket Reference**

**Rasmus Lerdorf**

O'Reilly & Associates 2000

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A book review by [Danny Yee](http://dannyreviews.com/) © 2000 <http://dannyreviews.com/>

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*Web Application Development with PHP 4.0* is a book one can actually read: it contains no undigestible slabs of reference material or code (these are relegated to the accompanying CD). Coverage of a wide range of largely independent topics also makes it a great volume for browsing in. And as a system administrator who does only a little bit of programming, in a variety of languages, I appreciated its "broad overview" approach.

The opening chapter of *Web Application Development* is a very brief look at some general programming issues — code formatting, documentation, APIs — that are all too rarely mentioned in programming language books. The second chapter covers PHP "advanced syntax": lists and arrays, object-oriented programming, and a bit on polymorphism and self-modifying code. (I finally got a handle on PHP's slightly odd handling of lists from this.) And chapter three presents a development example, coding an IRC interface in PHP.

Chapters four through seven cover a large selection of topics: sessions and session-handling, security, usability, validating form data, CVS, COM and Java interfaces, database integration, authentication, templates, XML, and WDDX. Much of this is not at all PHP-specific. Of the thirty-two pages on XML, for example, the first twelve are a general introduction that is not at all language-specific (the remainder describe how to use the Expat and LibXML parsers built into PHP, with examples). And the material on CVS presents some PHP scripts for automating notifications, but is otherwise completely generic.

I found the last two chapters less interesting. Chapter eight contains three

case studies of organisations using PHP, but these are more sales pitch than substance (I really don't think it makes sense to be "marketing" PHP three hundred pages into a book on the language). The final chapter of *Web Application Development* is about modifying the C code at PHP's core. I skipped quickly over this and suspect the vast majority of readers will do the same.

The *PHP Pocket Reference* is right at the other end of the readable/reference continuum. It has two tiny discursive examples (of form handling and database integration) but otherwise is pretty solid: thirty pages introducing PHP syntax are followed by eighty pages of function prototypes with one sentence descriptions. And yes, it will fit into a (large) pocket. I have used the *Pocket Reference* occasionally, but I suspect only because it has been sitting next to my computer while I write this review — once it goes onto more distant shelves, using the online documentation will probably be faster.

August 2000

### External links:

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- buy from [Amazon.com](http://Amazon.com) or [Amazon.co.uk](http://Amazon.co.uk)

*PHP Pocket Reference*

- buy from [Amazon.com](http://Amazon.com) or [Amazon.co.uk](http://Amazon.co.uk)

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