

PETER H. SALUS

the bookworm



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BOOKS REVIEWED IN THIS COLUMN

THE DESIGN AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE FREEBSD OPERATING SYSTEM

Marshall Kirk McKusick and George V. Neville-Neil
Boston, MA: Addison-Wesley, 2004.
Pp. 683. ISBN 0-201-70245-2.

OPEN SOURCE LICENSING

Lawrence Rosen
Boston, MA: Pearson Education, 2004.
Pp. 432. ISBN 0-131-48787-6.

THE SUCCESS OF OPEN SOURCE

Steven Weber
Cambridge, MA: Harvard U.P., 2004.
Pp. 312. ISBN 0-674-01292-5.

SUCCEEDING WITH OPEN SOURCE

Bernard Golden
Boston, MA: Addison-Wesley, 2004.
ISBN 0-321-26853-9.

ISLANDS IN THE CLICKSTREAM

Richard Thieme
Rockland, MA: Syngress, 2004. Pp. 336.
ISBN 1-931836-22-1.

THE SPAM LETTERS

Jonathan Land
San Francisco: No Starch, 2004.
Pp. 210. ISBN 1-59327-032-1.

RULING THE ROOT

Milton L. Mueller
Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2004.
Pp. 328. ISBN 0-262-63298-5.

A PRACTICAL GUIDE TO RED HAT LINUX, 2ND ED.

Mark G. Sobell
Boston, MA: Addison-Wesley, 2004.
Pp. 1200 + 4 CD-ROMs.
ISBN 0-13-147024-8.

This column is being written in July, and most of what I've been reading isn't "hard-core" techie stuff. But it's relevant to what we all do.

THE BEST

McKusick and Neville-Neil have produced the very best technical book I have looked at this year. Seriously.

The Design and Implementation of the 4.3 BSD UNIX Operating System from 1989 contained 471 pages. The 1996 . . . *4.4 BSD* . . . tome was 577 pages. *FreeBSD* has put on another 100 pages. Not at all an excessive rate of growth. But there has been a great growth in the information and its importance.

"But I don't run FreeBSD," I hear you moaning. Well, I think you need to understand what McKusick and Neville-Neil have to say if you're running any version of UNIX or Linux. This is especially true if you're running OS X, as Darwin, which is based on FreeBSD, lies at the Apple's core.

If you need to understand just how a kernel works, you need this book. McKusick and Neville-Neil have done the community a favor. It truly deserves to be a "best seller."

FREE/OPEN SOURCE

Rosen has brought us the first guide for managers and lawyers to the law of open source. It is definitely both thorough and interesting. But it is quite dry, and if you aren't a determined reader, you may well abandon this book part-way through. Where information is concerned, you will have missed out. But this is not an easy read.

The book concludes with a series of appendices that contain the texts of nearly a dozen licenses: BSD, MIT, Apache, Artistic, GPL, LGPL, MPL, CPL, OSL, and AFL. I wish there weren't so many variants.

Weber's book is of genuine importance. Dealing with the socio-political and economic bases of open source, Weber moves to a first-rate analysis of the business models of the companies that have participated in the movement.

If you are among the crowd reading Grolaw, you should read Rosen and study Weber. Though I've mentioned the former is dry, the latter is a really good read.

I didn't like Golden's book. In brief, it outlines the "Open Source Maturity Model," which is a "formalized method" for "assessing open source software."

SOME ESSAYS

For nearly a decade, Thieme has been writing brief pieces on creativity and imagination, the world of cyberspace, and networks. Some of the essays are very good; others leave me cold. But all have some merit. It's nice to see them put together—and as the essays are relatively brief, the book is well worth dipping into.

THE RETURN OF LAZLO TOTH

Those who remember Don Novello (a.k.a. Father Guido Sarducci; a.k.a. Lazlo Toth) will be delighted with Land's *Spam Letters*. *The Lazlo Toth Letters* have delighted me since 1977, and *The Spam Letters* will still be read in 27 years, too. Several made me laugh aloud. And it's under \$15!

REAPPEARANCES

Mueller's *Ruling the Root*, about ICANN and Internet governance, is now out in paperback. While I find it intellectually dishonest, it is still the only attempt at a history of a shameful activity (IMO).

Sobell's *Practical Guide to Red Hat Linux* is out in a second edition. It comes with a full 4-CD set of Fedora Core and Enterprise Linux.