Review

C++ strategies and tactics
Murray R., Addison Wesley Longman Publishing Co., Inc., Redwood City, CA, 1993. Type: Book (9780201563825)

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The explosive popularity of C++ is of course both a blessing and a curse. On the one hand, C++ is a powerful, popular, and well-supported object-oriented environment with an increasingly solid standard. On the other hand, it inherits all the problems of C and adds a layer of sometimes impenetrable syntax to implement object-oriented features.

> In the hands of an expert, C++ helps designers and programmers build systems that are modular, maintainable, and fast. To the novice, however, the size of the language can be intimidating. There are a lot of features in C++ and it takes some experience to learn which ones are appropriate for any situation.
>
> This book is intended to enhance and expedite that learning process. Most successful C++ programmers cannot recite chapter and verse from the language rules; instead, they have acquired a set of idioms and techniques that have worked well for them. Our goal is to help the C++ novice learn those idioms that have been most useful in practice. We also point out some of the most common pitfalls (p. xiii).

I can strongly recommend this book to the C++ programmer who would rather learn from the mistakes of others than from her or his own painful, hard-fought efforts. As such, it might be the most valuable investment a C++ programmer can make.

The book is organized around chapters dedicated to the large conceptual issues in C++ design and implementation: abstraction, classes, "handles" (smart pointers), inheritance, multiple inheritance, designing for inheritance, templates, reusability, exceptions, and migration from C. Murray offers advice on effective use of language features (such as *const* and virtual base classes), introduces the reader to the value of some lesser-known language features (such as function templates and *new* with arguments), and includes lessons in object-oriented design from the C++ perspective (such as the proper use of multiple inheritance and how good design can facilitate reusability). Short example programs are used throughout to illustrate the principles involved.

While Murray assumes that the reader knows C++ syntax, each chapter contains a multipage box concerned solely with a review of the syntax especially relevant to that chapter. In addition, each chapter concludes with a list reviewing the salient points and a set of questions. The book is typeset in \LaTeX and, while not beautiful, is quite readable. The index is adequate, and I found no glaring errors.

I would disagree slightly with Murray that this book is appropriate for the complete novice. A true novice would not have enough facility with the language to get the most from it. Instead, I would recommend the book to intermediate C++ programmers, who may have tried some class development on their own and need a book to move from simple exercises and textbook examples toward a set of useful programming idioms and techniques.

Reviewer: Cliff Joslyn Review #: CR116922

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