
Preface

More than just a change in computer programming technology, Java is a societal change. Sure, it's a better way to do programming – and that's important – but there's much more to it than that. The big deal about Java is its universality. Historically, technologies don't reach their potential until their usage becomes nearly universal. Writing and reading didn't benefit the average person until Gutenberg's press made printed material inexpensive enough to be universally affordable. The telephone wasn't useful until a critical mass of people could be connected – and that had to wait for the technology to become inexpensive and usable.

A follow-on aspect of universality is that the technology needs to become demystified at some level. By that, I mean that the average person has to have a sufficient understanding of the behavior of the technology in order to feel comfortable using it. For example, almost everyone understands the behavior of a touch-tone phone when they dial a phone number using the keypad. This demystification usually means displacing some privileged class of people who used the technology when it wasn't understandable to the average person. The leap from the scribes of the Middle Ages to the programmers of today isn't really all that great. Java is currently both usable and universal enough that we can begin the process of making programming as universal a skill as writing.

Java also offers the benefits of object-oriented programming. This seemingly arcane subject is critically important to the future of software development. The good news is that object-oriented programming is better and easier than other programming models. Object-oriented software works much more like real life works, resulting in nothing but positives for the subsequent programs and the businesses that use them.

Finally, Java is the programming language of the Internet. Every computing environment needs a programming language, and for the Internet, that language is Java. As the Web becomes pervasive, more and more people will find a need to express answers to business problems on the Internet. And Java will, I believe, become the primary medium for expressing these answers to business problems in Internet-centric computing systems.

In this book, I explain what Java is and why I think it's important. I also explain the technology in business terms at a fundamental level and explain the effects of the technology on businesses. This is not a book for programmers. This is a book for business people who want to understand technology in order to make sound decisions about the use of that technology.

– KR
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