

# Best Books of 2011

Adrian Kosmaczewski

2012-02-06

Just like in 2010, 2009, 2008 and 2007, here goes the traditional book of the year post for 2011! This year my reading list included design, history, and lots of JavaScript.

Here goes the list, in a completely arbitrary order of personal preference:

## **“Design for Hackers” by David Kadavy**

It all started, around August, with a conversation with Paul, my cousin from London, the founder of Zerofee; we were talking that while designers could easily find tutorials and documentation to learn about software development, it was much harder for developers to find material about design, at least to learn the basic concepts.

Somehow, David Kadavy must have heard us, and he came up the following month with this great book. I have recommended it to every one of my students since I read it; it is built like a computer book, with clear explanations, diagrams and lots of pictures; every concept is described in detail, including historical references and examples.

David provides a healthy introduction to design, going through subjects such as fonts, proportions, color theory, structure, grids, and much, much more.

I insist; this is a must read for any developer, particularly those who, like me, are self-taught and eager to expand their own possibilities.

## **“Steve Jobs”, by Walter Isaacson**

The day Steve Jobs passed away I was in South Africa, giving some trainings in Johannesburg, precisely about iOS. I remember waking up, opening my copy of Echofon in my iPhone, and seeing lots of tweets with just an apple sign on them.

I said to myself, as I started to scroll downwards, that this was it. I sat on the edge of the bed, realizing that it was the end of a huge chapter for the computer industry.

That very same morning, I gave an introduction to iOS to some developers, and of course there was a special thing to that training. Somehow there was a legacy of the guy in every NSObject that we allocated in memory.

Later that same month, I went to the USA and landed in Newark. While waiting for my connecting flight, I was dragging my feet in the terminal, and the corner of my eye saw the book in the shelves of a bookstore.

I read it in about 5 days. There had not been a book that hook me as much as this one in ages.

I will not go as far as saying that this was the book of the year. I won't add anything to what is already available online about it. It was, without any doubt, the most hyped book of the decade. And it is a surprisingly good one; not biased, very acid in some parts - I guess Jobs would not have liked reading some sections of it. I picture him throwing the book out of the window, outraged, while weeping at some chapters.

I admit, I've shed some tears in some parts. All in all, a very emotional piece, not to be missed.

### **“JavaScript Patterns”, by Stoyan Stefanov**

2011 was the year of the mobile web. Not only because some analyst said so, but because the demand for mobile web solutions from companies has increased dramatically in one year. Also because the capabilities of smartphones have grown in such a way that today, web apps are a viable choice for consumers.

This means, by all standards, that JavaScript regains a preeminence on the web; longtime a language that was bashed and forgotten, JavaScript reappears in front of many developers as the instrument by which the mobile web becomes a reality.

This book is a perfect way to rediscover JavaScript; to forget the pain of the past, to see that it is a wonderful language that, as Crockford would say, was hugely misunderstood.

By the way, readers should have read Crockford's “JavaScript: the Good Parts” before this book; Stefanov builds on top of that knowledge and provides the developer with a fresh bouquet of idioms and constructions that will be useful in every JavaScript project.

Finally, given the rise of Node.js in the past few years, reading it provides also with a solid background for the next wave of JavaScript frameworks hitting the market these days.

### **“Programming the Mobile Web”, by Maximiliano Firtman**

Maximiliano is a genius. The guy has pulled the complete bible, the absolute reference, for everything that has to do with mobile web development. The

book is a treasure of capabilities, comparisons, history, and nitty-gritty details about every possible mobile web browser in the planet.

How he does it, it's his great mystery. After publishing this book, he came up with the great Mobile HTML5 site which, if you haven't seen it yet, you should.

Even better, he's argie like I am, and I've had the opportunity of inviting him to Zürich last year, to hear him talk about jQuery Mobile. Which reminds me of...

### **“jQuery Mobile: Up and Running”, again by Maximiliano Firtman**

... his latest book; this time, Maximiliano tackled the hottest mobile framework of the moment. I've read the book in “early release” mode, prior to the final publication, and so far it looks very promising.

In this book, Maximiliano explains the core concepts of jQuery Mobile, the semantics and the capabilities of the framework, clearly explaining its strengths as well as its weaknesses.

I have learnt a lot about jQuery Mobile through this book, so I strongly recommend it to anyone interested in the subject.

### **“Mobile Design for iPhone and iPad”, by Smashing Magazine**

A very nice and concise eBook by the great people of Smashing Magazine, with great tips and tricks about how to create UIs for the new generation of touch-screen devices. I've learnt a lot with this book.

### **“iPad at Work”, by Apple**

Finally, a nice free eBook by Apple, very useful for explaining the iPad and its multiple capabilities to business people; I am personally seeing more and more iPads in enterprise contexts, so I think that this is an important (and small) title to read.