

Epic Interview: A New Literary Genre in the Tech Section?

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Here's a simple recipe:

1. Contact the most important people in some field.
2. Sit down and ask a similar set of questions to each one of them.
3. Record all the interviews and then write them down.
4. Publish the resulting book, usually with great reviews (such as this one).

This does not constitute, by any means, a new genre; but it's certainly a fashionable one in your technical bookstore right now. At least Apress and O'Reilly have realized that this simple technique yields epic books.

I have already blogged about *Founders at Work*, thus it's worth mentioning that *Coders at Work* (which I'm reading right now) has just been released. Both books share a similar structure (as well as a similar cover), and both are highly recommendable, with interviews of David Heinemeier Hansson, Steve Wozniak and Paul Buchheit for the first, and Donald Knuth, Joe Armstrong and Brendan Eich for the second.

On the other side, O'Reilly is very well aware of the force conveyed by this kind of books: their “/Theory/In/Practice” series of books has some gems which, I think, are really worth reading:

“Beautiful Code” features interviews with Brian Kernighan, Charles Petzold and Yukihiro Matsumoto; “Beautiful Teams” (already my preferred book for 2009!) features Tim O'Reilly, Barry Boehm and Grady Booch; finally, “Masterminds” has great interviews with Bertrand Meyer, Bjarne Stroustrup, James Gosling, Brad Cox and Anders Hejlsberg.

I think that the names of the interviewees, in each of the five books, speak for themselves. In all of them, I have found inspiration, advice, tips, humour, awe and enlightenment. The good thing being that, in most cases, you don't need a Computer Science degree to read these books; it's just a matter of empathy and sociology. Our world is driven by software, and the stories behind its construction are not only interesting, they are also important to understand the

cost, the difficulty and the wonder that constitutes a piece of working software. These books are a way to approach the immense complexity of our society.

I really look forward to read more books of this kind! If I forgot to mention any other similar book, just leave the reference in the comments section below. I'd love to read your suggestions.