Book Review: AdvancED DOM Scripting

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The last few years have seen a huge shift towards building Rich Internet Applications, with technologies such as AJAX and DOM scripting to the fore. Unfortunately, the web is littered with bad examples. This book shows you how to do it properly.

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Now this book isn't for your JavaScript beginner. You don't have to be an expert, but it's not going to take you through the basics like loops and conditional statements. Instead, we have a masterclass on the finer points of DOM scripting, that shows you how to build truly great software.

The first chapter is on best practices, and is by far the most important. If you only read this chapter, then you'll have got your money's worth. This should be compulsory for every JavaScript developer. It shows how to write un-obtrusive code that degrades gracefully, and covers topics such as capability detection and event models. Despite the importance of this, I've never found anything as comprehensive on the web. You might find the odd blog post events, or a few paragraphs on best practices, but nothing as thorough as this.

Chapters two to five are like eating your greens: they're hard-going, but good for you. They provide you with a thorough discussion on OO programming in JavaScript, the DOM Core (and why you'll hate Internet Explorer), working with events and styles. It's all fundamental stuff, and without this knowledge, you'll struggle with subtle problems like browser compatibilty and object scopes.

Chapters 6, 8 and 12 are case studies (long examples), which are relatively interesting, but I don't know if I'll ever apply them to a real project.

Chapter 7 covers AJAX, but you won't find much here that isn't covered by other AJAX books. It's a useful introduction if you need to know the fundamentals. In my opinion, AJAX is only a small part of building RIAs, and it's the advanced UI you can build with libraries such as Ext JS, that really make the difference.

The remaining chapters introduce you to external libraries such as Prototype, script.aculo.us and the Yahoo YUI. They're a useful introduction, but only scrape the surface of what you can do with them. One of the biggest problems a developer has these days, is choosing which library to use. There are so many out there, and they're hard to compare without in-depth knowledge.

In summary, this is an excellent book. If you're serious about building RIAs properly, then you need to get this.

Author	Jeffrey Sambells with Aaron Gustafson
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