

Book Review

Mastering Flash 4 Multimedia: A Review of **Flash 4 Bible**

Steven Champeon and David S. Fox. Copyright 1999 by IDG Books Worldwide. \$39.99 US (\$56.99 CN), softbound, 611 pages. ISBN: 0-7645-3356-8. Reader Level: Beginning to Advanced.



Review summary: ★★★★★☆

The "Bible" series aims to be the definitive source both for understanding products or subjects (like XML) and for day-to-day use as questions arise. These books are typically 2-3X the size of documentation you receive with vendor software. I've had mixed experiences with this series --some seem no more than paraphrases of vendor manuals with many screen shots, which are always helpful additions to the text but not by themselves sufficient reason for purchase.

I recently purchased Macromedia's Flash 4, and I received a review copy of this book shortly after my Flash purchase. I wrote this review as I actually used the Bible to build my first Flash production, something I call a web-delivered multimedia "Help Video."

The *Flash 4 Bible* does better than many in the "Bible" series by offering more than mere paraphrase. This Bible is especially useful for anyone wanting to go beyond simple Flash development as described in "Macromedia Flash 4 Using Flash" that you receive when purchasing the Flash 4 software. Like all in this series, this Bible is filled with tips, cautions, and useful examples. Furthermore, if you're interested in building Flash movies in unusual settings like stand-alone video animations for kiosks, this book shines. The engaging writing style even makes a difficult and potentially stifling subject --vector-based web multimedia-- fun to learn ("The eye dropper tool is an amazingly useful 'one trick pony.'")

I recommend this book to decide whether to invest in Flash itself or as a supplement to the Macromedia-supplied manual. If you've already purchased Flash 4, don't throw away the Macromedia manual however. The Macromedia manual provides some conceptual overview and introduction to Flash that the Bible does not provide. I was also surprised that as a beginner I found a significant technical error in the Flash 4 Bible. It says that you can import Windows AVI files, but you cannot. Moreover, unlike some other in the Bible series, as of this writing the Flash 4 Bible's companion site, <http://www.theflashbible.com/> is a disappointing work-in-progress, even though it is nearly a year old.

The book also contains a companion CD with Macromedia trial software (including Flash 4), templates, and examples from the book.

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