## Linux on the Mainframe
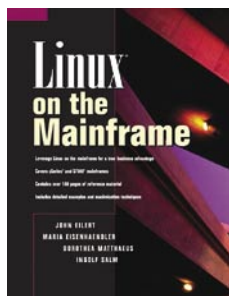
John Eilert, Maria Eisenhaendler,
Dorothea Matthaeus, and Ingolf Salm
Prentice Hall Professional Technical Reference, 2003,
$49.99, ISBN: 0131014153

It has been the conventional wisdom for some time that it is more cost effective to use many smaller servers rather than one large centralized mainframe. The arguments in favor of this view are, essentially, that expansion is cheaper and that one is not locked into a single vendor for hardware and software. It is the thesis of this book that, with the advent of implementations of Linux for the mainframe, this conventional wisdom is no longer correct. Indeed, using a mainframe may make greater economic sense.

Two running examples are used to illustrate the benefits of Linux on the mainframe. One, "ISPCompany," is a traditional Internet service provider (ISP), to which all the above benefits apply. The other, "StoreCompany," is a chain of department stores.

The book has 26 chapters, divided into six parts, and appendices. Part 1 introduces Linux on the mainframe. Part 2, "Planning for Linux," sets out the potential advantages of Linux on the mainframe. Part 3 seeks to answer the question, "Is Linux on the mainframe for me?" The reprise of virtualization in this part says little that did not appear earlier. Part 4, "Making the Most of Linux on the Mainframe," is devoted to systems management issues. It emphasizes the importance of properly establishing a policy prior to implementing one. Part 5 describes how applications can be run using Linux in the mainframe environment. In Part 6, which is titled "Reference," the authors gather material that they considered "too good to pass up," but the inclusion of it in the body of the text would have disturbed the flow. Appendices describe the example companies in more detail. There is a welcome and extensive glossary, and suggested further readings and references.

A final question is, "What is the intended audience for this book?" Because the parts are meant to be somewhat independent, the text contains a significant amount of repetition. A manager 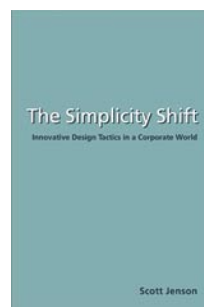will find much of the technical detail superfluous, whereas a more technically oriented reader will find it difficult to select just the appropriate technical parts. As alluded to earlier, the economic aspects of the proposed strategy are somewhat slighted, but perhaps the reader who needs this information already knows how to find it. Overall, the book is interesting because it presents a new view of a problem that questions the generally accepted solution.—*J. P. E. Hodgson*

## The Simplicity Shift: Innovative Design Tactics in a Corporate World

Scott Jenson
Cambridge University Press, 2002, $25, ISBN: 052152749X
This book is about abstraction—the suppression of irrelevant details to enhance understanding—in the context of creating usable consumer electronics products. The author knows very well what he is talking about; he worked on the Apple human interface guidelines. The advice given in the book may be applied to varied products and services, and not just for consumer electronics.

The conversational writing style and the excellent instructive examples make the book appealing not only to technology experts, but also to managers and to consumers of products and services who sometimes (or often) wonder why it is so difficult to use something. Jenson shows why and how product concerns should be separated between presentation, task, and infrastructure layers, and why quick fixes of the presentation layer often cannot save an excessively complex product. Furthermore, the author emphasizes the need for explicit shared assumptions in team decision making. These assumptions have to be exposed, and appropriate questions generated so that different answers to key questions provided by different teams would be explicitly dealt with. This will result in a short, explicit "design manifesto."

The book convincingly demonstrates that the design process may and should be managed strategically, and that "strong product design culture is neither complicated nor expensive to start." The simple approaches and pencil-and-paper-based tools proposed by the author show how to do just that.—*H. I. Kilov*  Q

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