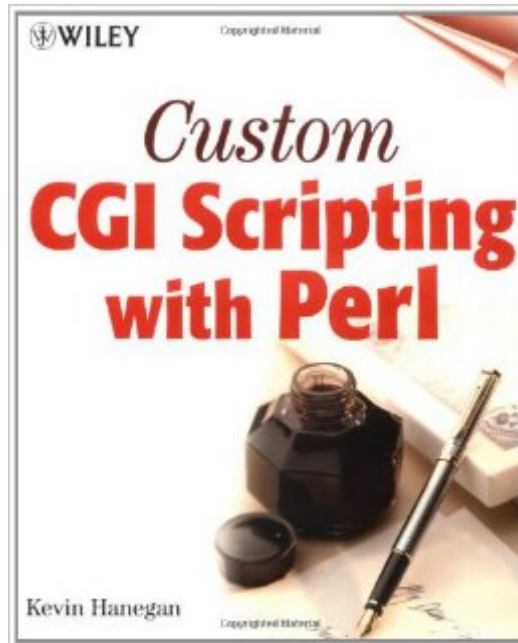


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# Custom CGI Scripting With Perl



## Synopsis

The only one-stop resource for Web developers and programmers This book is an indispensable resource for Web developers and programmers who program CGI applications in Perl. It is designed to function as both a comprehensive reference to the fundamentals and a hands-on tutorial with detailed examples on creating and customizing CGI applications for the Web. Readers learn how to set up a server for integrating CGI scripts, how to work with HTTP variables, and other important CGI basics. They get a complete review of all the Perl syntax needed to create CGI programs and learn how to upload and test scripts and how to use libraries effectively.

## Book Information

Paperback: 304 pages

Publisher: Wiley; 1 edition (January 23, 2001)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0471395978

ISBN-13: 978-0471395973

Product Dimensions: 7.6 x 0.7 x 9.3 inches

Shipping Weight: 1.2 pounds

Average Customer Review: 4.1 out of 5 stars [See all reviews](#) (16 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #1,617,391 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #121 in [Books > Computers & Technology > Programming > Languages & Tools > Perl](#) #1124 in [Books > Computers & Technology > Programming > Web Programming > JavaScript](#) #1872 in [Books > Textbooks > Computer Science > Networking](#)

## Customer Reviews

PRO: I like this book a lot because it has an easy to follow writing style. It also has a defined scope, and shows how to integrate Perl and cgi to add dynamics to your site. It shows just enough Perl to get the job done. It has a lot of small examples and 3 complete applications. Examples are clear and go from the simple to the more advanced. CON: I think the book is targeted at beginners.

Experienced programmers only need half of the current text. Also the author needs to much space to tell me again and again how good Perl actually is for the development of small to mid-sized web sites. I know that already, I bought the book, didn't I?! There are only 3 complete applications in the book, an e-mail response form, a guestbook and the use of flat file databases. The first two are very (too?) simple. I had an e-mail response form Perl-script running on my web site without any book! I also missed some "advanced" topics, like setting and retrieving cookies (or can't this be done with

Perl?), retaining state at the browser site (e.g. by using variables in the URL?) and making my whole site dynamically generated from some (database) files. The author somewhere mentions "defensive programming", but most examples focus on "getting the job done" instead of showing sound software engineering principles (e.g. using subroutines without explicit return values).**BOTTOM LINE:** a very useful book if you are new to programming, a still a useful book if you know programming, but don't know Perl. I do think you need another book to learn how to make really interesting dynamic websites. I only don't know which book, yet.

I don't know if the author of this book was using a different type of perl or what, but I have had to troubleshoot a lot of his code. I have read only three chapters so far, and I've had to get people to help me figure out what was wrong with the code the author has written on three different code examples. I do think this is a good book, though. From one point of view, this is a great learning process. You get to know the code pretty dang well when you have to study it sometimes as long as an hour before you figure out what was wrong with it.

Kevin Hanegan's Custom CGI Scripting with Perl brings a pragmatic tutorial approach to Web programming. This book is geared towards beginning- and intermediate-level programmers who want to learn one of the most powerful programming languages for Web development. Hanegan divides his book into four parts: "Getting Started," "Building Blocks," "Advanced Perl," and "Putting It All Together." Each chapter delivers the essential elements of programming in a familiar classroom format: objectives, tutorial, key points, exercises, and summary. The book's supporting Web site includes code samples from the book, Perl resource links, discussions, and links to necessary applications for Web development with Perl. Custom CGI Scripting with Perl begins by giving you an overview of the CGI framework and the necessary background information to understand how it works with the Web, such as the HTTP protocol, client requests, and server responses. (It also has the integrity to reveal CGI's limitations.) Finally, Hanegan discusses the pros and cons of hosting your own site, what hardware you need, what the best Web applications are, and which platforms to run them on. The "Getting Started" chapters give a concise explanation of the different Perl variable types, operators, statements, conditions, looping logic, and subroutines. Subsequent chapters cover more complicated areas, such as pattern matching, file I/O, and form processing (including an e-mail response system). Code samples are well described throughout the book. This is important because it helps you understand what you are doing, not just how to do it. For those of you who work with content-heavy sites or who need skills for good content management, Hanegan covers data

manipulation from all angles—from flat-file databases to the basics of SQL and the Database Independent Module—to work with dynamic database-driven content. He also explains how relational databases work and gives code samples for basic SQL queries. He shows how Perl's built-in functions can make supposed complicated tasks pleasant. Later in the book he gives fundamental information on DDL (data definition language) statements, DML (data modeling language) statements, and other vital acronyms. Most importantly, he covers advanced techniques such as debugging and handling errors—wise skills that any professional developer should know. Custom CGI Scripting with Perl successfully reveals how Perl is involved with all aspects, not just isolated areas, of Web development.

I'm a new novice to Perl Scripting, and I have found this book invaluable. I work at a library, and found this book on our new book shelf. It helped so much, that I decided to buy it. It gives great explanations without bogging you down. The appendixes are fantastic, I especially like the Perl Quick Reference in the back. I use it when I'm not sure about usage. I have programmed for many years in many languages, and I have found that this is a great reference tool. I like it much better than the other book, I bought. I found so much more in this Perl book than in others. I highly recommend this book for anyone who is learning Perl, or knows it better than me, which are most people.

The overall idea of Kevin Hanegan's book is a good one. An appreciation of CGI Scripting using Perl from the basics up to a couple of real world examples is exactly what anyone new to authoring CGI scripts would want from such a book. Unfortunately, the text seems to have been written in one go and never checked as the litany of glaring errors, most noticeably in the examples, testify. I was fortunate to be coming at the book from a background in Unix and 'C', so some of the mistakes were glaringly obvious but a complete beginner would struggle to get the building blocks together to be able to make a real go of it. I used this as my first port of call into Perl scripting but soon found myself using resources on the web as I stopped trusting what was written on the pages. Perhaps there is a second edition with the errors corrected, unfortunately, I haven't got it.

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