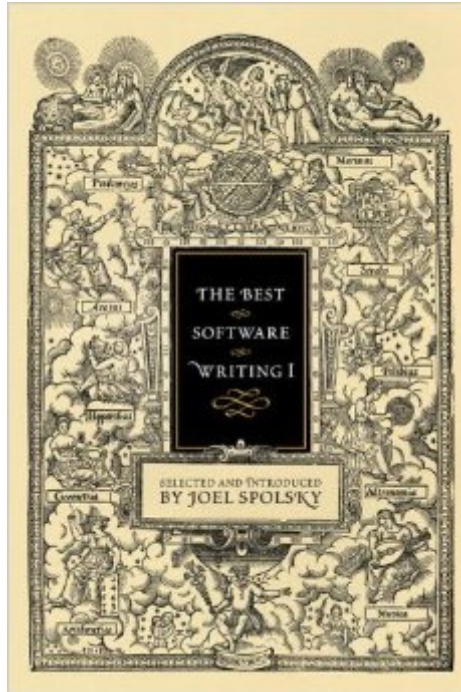


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The Best Software Writing I: Selected And Introduced By Joel Spolsky



Synopsis

It's nice having a collection of high-quality writing related to software and the business in one place instead of trawling the Web for it. Meryl K. Evans, meryl. ...an entertaining read with a number of enlightening insights into what I do for a living... The whole book is fantastic though, and you should absolutely pick it up...in dead tree form. This is a book worth checking out, even if you're not a software developer. With a nod to both the serious and funny sides of technical writing, *The Best Software Writing I: Selected and Introduced by Joel Spolsky* is an entertaining read and a guide to the technical writing literati. *The Best Software Writing* contains writings from: Ken Arnold Leon Bambrick Michael Bean Rory Blyth Adam Bosworth danah boyd Raymond Chen Kevin Cheng and Tom Chi Cory Doctorow ea_spouse Bruce Eckel Paul Ford Paul Graham John Gruber Gregor Hohpe Ron Jeffries Eric Johnson Eric Lippert Michael Lopp Larry Osterman Mary Poppendieck Rick Schaut Aaron Swart Clay Shirky Eric Sink why the lucky stiff

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Customer Reviews

I recently received a copy of *The Best Software Writing I* by Joel Spolsky. As with his other book, it's an entertaining read with a number of enlightening insights into what I do for a living...Joel Spolsky has gathered a number of blog entries, essays, and speeches that showcase (in his opinion) the best writings by software professionals. He feels (and I have to agree) that most programmers and developers will avoid writing at all cost, and as a result are not very good at it. You end up with either indecipherable ramblings or dry monotone typing that is akin to enduring some form of

medieval torture. And I confess... I probably have strayed into both those areas a few too many times for the sanity of my readers. But by showcasing techno-geeks that can write coherently and with a touch of humor and entertainment, Spolsky hopes to raise the overall level of writing competency in the industry. I don't know if he'll be successful, but it definitely can't hurt...Because the writings cover a wide range of topics, there's something for everyone. Or conversely, not everything will appeal to every reader. "Style Is Substance" by Ken Arnold is (for me) a great piece that advocates making programming style a built-in element of a language. Think of the time you'll save by killing off all style wars up front. The cartoon piece "Excel As A Database" will cause all developers to think Rory Blyth must work somewhere in their company with their users. And "A Quick (And Hopefully Painless) Ride Through Ruby (With Cartoon Foxes)" will, although rather strange, give you more information about Ruby in a shorter period of time than you ever thought possible. On the other hand, "A Group Is Its Own Worst Enemy" by Clay Shirky was something I seemed to have to slog through.

Having been in process management in a software organization for over ten years, I've seen too many articles and books on the topic that worked better than Valium for putting me to sleep especially since they have no side effects. Many say Joel Spolsky is one of the best writers on the topic of software. However, in this book he stands aside and lets others demonstrate that he isn't the only one who can write about software in English and captivate you. Joel on Software (his Web site slash blog) fans won't be disappointed in the selection of authors as they deal with the concepts he writes about on his site. Some readers may be expecting a book solely on software development. Even Spolsky's writings goes beyond this. Some folks might be disappointed that most of the articles, blog entries, speeches, and essays are available somewhere on the Web. I only recognize a few of the authors and their articles, so I would've never known about the others had I not found this book. The essays cover a gamut of development-related topics. They include coding style, outsourcing programmers, dealing with Excel as a database, using social software (Friendster, LinkedIn, Tribe, and all that) and the things that are right and wrong with these shared spaces, emerging digital rights, and defining the two-phase commit process a la Starbucks. Even a couple of them are nothing but comics. The one on Windows search makes me laugh. The book also contains business-related essays that address a few problems affecting many companies -- namely team compensation and forced overtime which often spills over the weekend. Spolsky introduces every essay and includes notes clarifying abbreviations, names, or terms that aren't widely known.

This is a collection of 29 essays about software development, selected and introduced by Joel Spolsky (of Joel on Software fame). I've been a regular reader of Joel's site for many years, and many of the themes Joel has been writing about (social software, outsourcing, the dangers of measuring the performance of individuals using simple bug metrics, and sales and marketing of software) are reflected in the included essays. Many of the authors have already published books of their own (Bruce Eckel, Paul Graham, Mary Poppendieck and Ron Jeffries come to mind), but regardless of whether they've been published before or not, the writing is consistently good. This isn't surprising, since according to the back cover, the goal of the book is to show-case good writing, and since Joel himself is a very good writer. I had read a few of the essays before the book was published (and in the case of "Great Hackers" by Paul Graham, I had actually listen to it, thanks to ITConversations), but most of them were new to me. They cover a lot of different angles on software development, from how to format your code, to forced overtime. The best essays in my opinion are "The Pitfalls of Outsourcing Programmers" (a short but well argued piece on why outsourcing many times isn't such a good idea), "Strong Typing vs. Strong Testing" (on the benefits of automatic unit tests) and "Style is Substance" (why not standardizing on one coding style - why not indeed). Actually, as I look through the contents to pick which essays I liked the most, it is hard to choose. Many of them are really good.

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