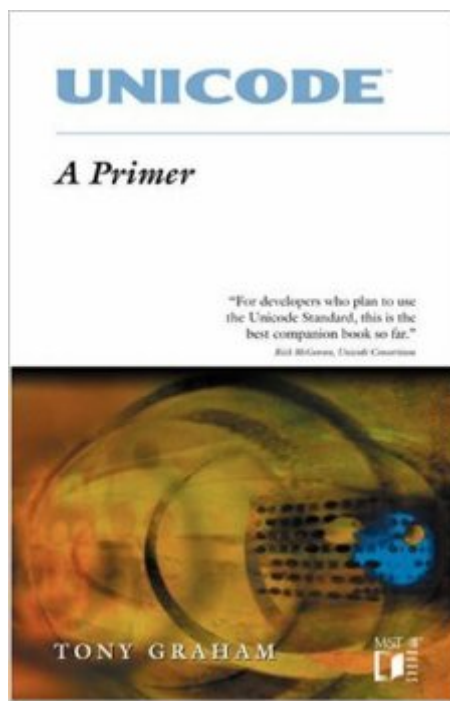


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# Unicode: A Primer



## Synopsis

Whether you're a Web developer or programmer, the Unicode Standard enables consistent handling of English text, Chinese and Japanese ideographs, Korean Hanjul characters, and most other major scripts of the world -- an increasingly important consideration in today's multilingual global marketplace. Filled with lucid explanations and examples, Unicode: A Primer describes the development of the standard through Version 3.0 and shows you how to apply Unicode in your own projects. From a detailed account of how Unicode works to detailed advice on how to use Unicode in Web development and programming, this incisive guide is just what you need to take advantage of this increasingly important standard.

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## Customer Reviews

Character encoding is not for the faint hearted. Unicode promises to end all that. If you are interested in fundamentals of Unicode, you'll be disappointed with "Unicode: A Primer". For instance, do you know how exactly your vi editor is able to display that russian character by talking to the xterm? My expectation in reading this book was to get an idea of what in the world are UCS-2, ISO-8859, ISO-10646, Unicode, UTF-8, etc...and what is the basic difference between them. So, I was actually interested in the author talking about these encoding standards in a low-level detailed manner. The material in the first five chapters, which form the introduction to Unicode, appears jumbled and quite hopelessly out of sequence. If one is used to reading in a widely accepted

manner of first defining things and then discussing them, one would be disappointed. It is only in Chapter 4, for instance, that the author defines UTF-7, UTF-16 etc - whereas these "terms" are frequently used in the preceding sections. But, if you don't care about the basics and would like to get into the details right away - there are parts of this book you'll find useful. Not completely satisfactory maybe, but at least useful. For instance, you get to explore the difference between the various standards - all in one book. And that's good. There are chapters on programming language, OS and XML/HTML which would be useful for programmers. For example, the book talks about how Perl, Java, C++, etc. (with some code too!) and databases support Unicode - how Windows 98 does not. So, if you are working on encoding and know what you want, you may actually find it here. But, contrary to what the title claims, this book doesn't do a great job being a primer. The back of the book states the Reader Level to be : Intermediate to Advanced. And that's fair.

I'm sad that I can't give this book 5 stars because the quality is there. I would have liked additional examples of programming for Unicode. Java is easy because Unicode is its native character set. But I work in C++, C, SQL, Perl and shell scripts too. A few pages dedicated to each of these (and perhaps some other languages in common use) would be of great help. Some of the issues I'd like to see addressed are: 1) The preferred data type(s) for representing Unicode characters in each language. 2) Library functions to avoid and alternatives to each. 3) Reading and writing common encodings (UTF-8 and UCS-16 are the big ones). 4) Conversion between Unicode and other character sets. The addition of this material in future edition would make this one of the most essential books on the shelf of anyone developing software for the international market. As it stands, it is still a fine book. If you are a programmer doing internationalization, it is worth owning.

If you are a computer professional and have to deal with web pages in various languages, you will need to know what Unicode is about. This book is a good first look at Unicode. While it does not go into nitty-gritty details, it gives a good overview of what it is about. Now I am no longer in complete darkness, thanks to this book. After this book, I will proceed to the official Unicode 3.0 hardcover reference.

This is a very good source of information about the Unicode standard. Being organized as a primer makes it much more useful for someone who doesn't know much about Unicode compared to the Unicode standard document. It discusses the Unicode standard in depth, dealing with topics like bidirectional text and CJK. It also discusses Unicode implementations in Operating Systems and its

support by programming languages.

This book is what I've been looking for---it explains the "why" and shows the "how" of the Unicode standard. The explanation is clear and I have no difficulty understanding the contents. It also offers helpful information of the support by programming languages (C, XML, Java, etc.), showing some program examples and also lets me know the support for Unicode 3.0 by the various operating systems. It is also helpful in mentioning the differences in the various versions. This is by far, the best book that sheds light on the Unicode standard. If you want to know what Unicode is about... This is the book !

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