
Preface

Apache: The Definitive Guide is principally about the Apache web server software. We explain what a web server is and how it works, but our assumption is that most of our readers have used the World Wide Web and understand in practical terms how it works, and that they are now thinking about running their own servers to offer material to the hungry masses.

This book takes the reader through the process of acquiring, compiling, installing, configuring, and modifying Apache. We exercise most of the package's functions by showing a set of example sites that take a reasonably typical web business—in our case, a postcard publisher—through a process of development and increasing complexity. However, we have deliberately not tried to make each site more complicated than the last. Most of the chapters refer to an illustrative site that is as simple as we could make it. Each site is pretty well self-contained so that the reader can refer to it while following the text without having to disentangle the meat there from extraneous vegetables. If desired, it is perfectly possible to install and run each site on a suitable system.

Perhaps it is worth saying what this book is *not*. It is not a manual, in the sense of formally documenting every command—such a manual exists on the Apache site and has been much improved with Version 1.3; we assume that if you want to use Apache, you will download it and keep it at hand. Rather, if the manual is a road-map that tells you how to get somewhere, this book tries to be a tourist guide that tells you why you might want to make the journey.

It also is *not* a book about HTML or creating web pages, or one about web security or even about running a web site. These are all complex subjects that should either be treated thoroughly or left alone. A compact, readable book that dealt *thoroughly* with all these topics would be most desirable.