

Preface

As the title suggests, this book is for those who want to learn how to program Microsoft Excel Version 8 (for Office 97) and Version 9 (for Office 2000).

We should begin by addressing the question, "Why would anyone want to program Microsoft Excel?" The answer is simple: to get more power out of this formidable application. As you will see, there are many things that you can do at the programming level that you cannot do at the user-interface level—that is, with the menus and dialog boxes of Excel. [Chapter 1](#) provides some concrete examples of this.

This book provides an introduction to programming the Excel object model using Visual Basic for Applications (VBA). However, it is not intended to be an encyclopedia of Excel programming. The goal here is to acquaint you with the main points of Excel programming—enough so that you can continue your education (as we all do) on your own. The goal is that after reading this book you should not need to rely on any source other than the Excel VBA Help file or a good Excel VBA reference book and a nice object browser (such as my Enhanced Object Browser, a coupon for which is included in the back of this book).

It has been my experience that introductory programming books (and, sadly, most trade computer books) tend to do a great deal of handholding. They cover concepts at a very slow pace by padding them heavily with overblown examples and irrelevant anecdotes that only the author could conceivably find amusing, making it difficult to ferret out the facts. Frankly, I find such unprofessionalism incredibly infuriating. In my opinion, it does the reader a great disservice to take perhaps 400 pages of information and pad it with another 600 pages of junk.

There is no doubt in my mind that we need more professionalism from our authors, but it is not easy to find writers who have both the knowledge to write about a subject and the training (or talent) to do so in a pedagogical manner. (I should hasten to add that there are a number of excellent authors in this area—it's just that there are not nearly enough of them.) Moreover, publishers tend to encourage the creation of 1000-plus page tomes because of the general feeling among the publishers that a book must be physically wide enough to stand out on the bookshelf! I shudder to think that this might, in fact, be true. (I am happy to say that O'Reilly has not succumbed to this opinion.)

By contrast, *Writing Excel Macros with VBA* is not a book in which you will find much handholding (nor will you find much handholding in any of my books). The book proceeds at a relatively rapid pace from a general introduction to programming through an examination of the Visual Basic for Applications programming language to an overview of the Excel object model. Given the enormity of the subject, not everything is covered, nor should it be. Nevertheless, the essentials of both the VBA language and the Excel object model are covered so that, when you have finished the book, you will know enough about Excel VBA to begin creating effective working programs.

I have tried to put my experience as a professor (about 20 years) and my experience writing books (about 30 of them) to work here to create a true learning tool for my readers. Hopefully, this is a book that can be read, perhaps more than once, and can also serve as a useful reference.

Preface to the Second Edition