

What if?

Andrew Gregory gets lost in a world of made-up science.

We're huge fans of Randall Munroe's XKCD web comic here at Linux Voice Mansions. From Richard Stallman fighting off Microsoft assassins with a samurai sword to some simple advice about password strength, the comics are informative, witty and stylish.

Because of that, we were expecting *What If: Serious Scientific Answers to Absurd Hypothetical Questions* to be informative, witty and stylish also, and by golly, it is. The hypothetical questions, all submitted by XKCD readers, are daft (sample: "In the movie 300 they shoot arrows seemingly blot out the sun. Is this possible, and how many arrows would it take?"), but all are answered seriously, and that's where the appeal is.

Sometimes the answers are daft too – we learn that in the time it takes the scientists on board the ISS to sing the Proclaimers' I'm Gonna Be (the last line of which is "just to be the man who walked 1,000 miles to fall down at your door"), they would have travelled, by extraordinary coincidence,

almost exactly 1,000 miles. It would have been a lot easier for Munroe to leave stuff like this out, but he obviously loves what he's doing, and this shines out of every page.

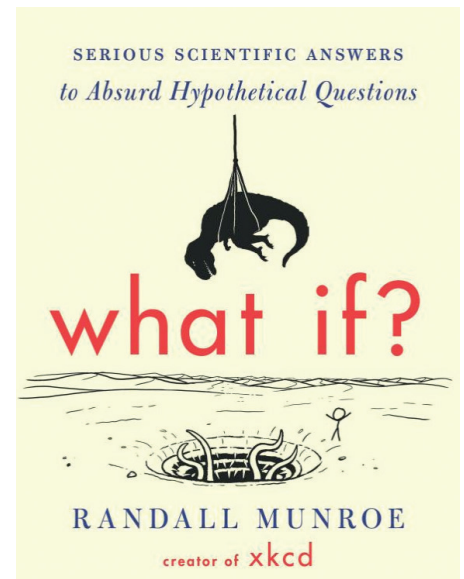
What If is perfect for the dreamers who got bored with science lessons at school and instead wanted to know the answers to questions that really matter: What would happen if the sun went out? What if the earth stopped spinning? Reading this book is like being a child again, asking question after question. It won't help you pass A-level chemistry, but it will make you want to know more (which is even better).

LINUX VOICE VERDICT

Author Randall Munroe
Publisher John Murray
ISBN 978-84854-957-9
Price £14.99

Bonkers, brilliant and beautiful. Buy it for the smartarse in your life.

★★★★★



The UK edition contains a foreword praising our ludicrous mish-mash of imperial and metric measurements: "Unit conversion errors have caused us to lose space probes once in a while. But isn't that a small price to pay for silliness?"

Consent of the networked

Ben Everard is not an IP address. He is a free human being.

When the web took off, it created a vacuum. It was an open space beyond the reach of any government. For a few glorious years the web was free. Then it became too popular. The corporations rolled in. Facebook, Google, Yahoo, Twitter and more now control the space where we spend our digital lives. They get to make the rules that we have to follow, but who elected them leaders of cyberspace? Did we unknowingly create monarchs of digital kingdoms when we signed up for their services? Should they be held to account for the rules they create?

These questions are becoming ever more important. *Consent of the Networked* examines what's happened to our basic rights in the digital realm by drawing on a history of web activism. MacKinnon looks at how the battle between corporations and governments over the control of the users is being fought, and how people are caught in

the middle with no representatives to push for our interests.

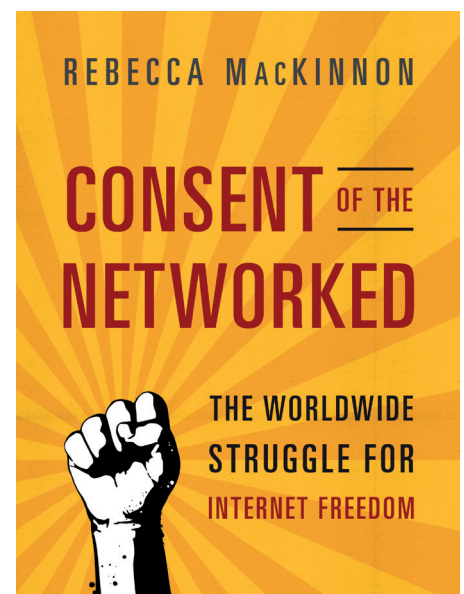
The solution she presents is good-old-fashioned activism. The same approach that forced companies to update their labour laws and environmental procedures, she claims, can be used to make them respect our digital rights. This seems antiquated compared to the people who propose that digital freedoms can be secured with code, but MacKinnon presents a compelling argument for her case.

LINUX VOICE VERDICT

Author Rebecca MacKinnon
Publisher Basic Books
ISBN 978-0465063758
Price £11.99

A call to arms for the networked generation, but it may have come too late.

★★★★★



Can the digital world be saved or has it been irrevocably taken over by governments and corporations? Answers on a postcard!

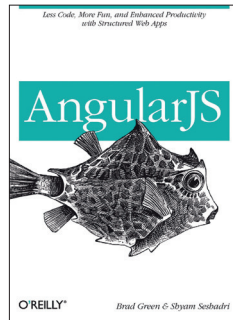
AngularJS

Ben Everard investigates yet another web app framework.

These days, it seems like everything is a web app. Email, calendars, even whole office suites run in browsers. There are myriad frameworks and libraries for managing this, and AngularJS is one of the latest.

This book, then, is an introduction to the world of Angular written for web developers. Readers are expected to already understand HTML, CSS, JavaScript and the DOM and be generally familiar with the process of creating a web app, so it's not great for someone embarking on their first project.

At just 175 pages, it's quite a thin book by O'Reilly standards, but it covers everything an experienced web developer needs to know to get started with AngularJS. It covers how AngularJS works, how to set up a development environment and integrating test cases. Everything is demonstrated with an example, and the book is chock-full of code. The book does move at a fast pace,



The thornback cowfish, native to the Western Indo-Pacific region is one of the most angular animals in nature.

which some readers will like, but others may find themselves wishing the authors dwelt a little more in areas, and gave fuller explanations of some things.

LINUX VOICE VERDICT

Author Brad Green & Syam Seshadri
Publisher O'Reilly
ISBN 978-1449344856
Price £15.99

A quick introduction into AngularJS for readers with web development experience.



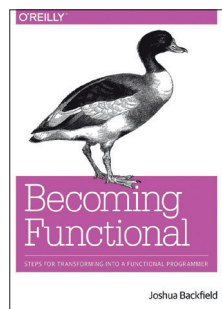
Becoming Functional

Graham Morrison's mother wished he'd only read this as a teenager.

Functional programming is often misunderstood. It's a little like trying to fathom object orientation when you've only ever written procedures. Even if you learn the concepts, it's still difficult to break the habits of a lifetime. But 'functional' is becoming more than just a Computer Science anachronism, and it's being used by lots of the Groovy and Scala cool kids.

This is a relatively small book that attempts to reprogram imperative programmers, turning us from monsters who think in return values into the heavenly apostles of Lambda and Closures. And it does this with a bit of role play. You've somehow landed a new job at a company, and despite knowing nothing about functional programming, it's your task to refactor all that nasty Java 7 into its functional equivalents.

This concept works quite well, and it does leave you with an impression of



Not a bad approach to functional programming, but we'd like to see more languages.

where functional programming might be most useful. But it wasn't enough to move us from our wicked procedural ways.

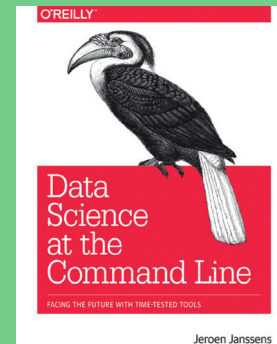
LINUX VOICE VERDICT

Author Joshua Backfield
Publisher O'Reilly
ISBN 978-1-449-36817-3
Price £19.50

We think O'Reilly should have put a unicorn on the cover instead.



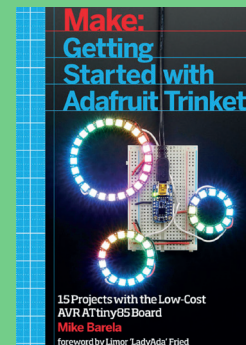
ALSO RELEASED...



Number crunching on the CLI.

Data Science at the Command Line

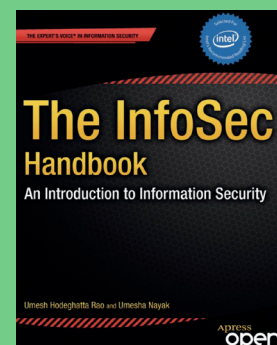
Over the last year or so we've started using the command line more and more, so we can understand its renewed interest. This is a book for data scientists, and it promises to teach you how to grab, process and explore data, all through the humble CLI.



Mike Barela is one of the Trinket documentation authors.

Getting Started with Adafruit Trinket

The Trinket is a low-cost alternative to the low-cost Arduino. That means it's even more ideal for projects that may go awry, and because it's also compatible with the Arduino, you can upgrade at any point. All that's needed is a handy guide to getting started...



The InfoSec Handbook

In the near future, we'd guess almost everything is going to have its own IP address. Which means that a career in information security is probably as close to a sure thing as betting on security mechanisms getting hacked. This book looks like a great place to start – and the ebook is completely free.