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From Morgan Kaufmann

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The School of Niklaus Wirth



»The Art of Simplicity«

Edited by
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From Morgan Kaufmann : The School of Niklaus Wirth: The Art of Simplicity before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The School of Niklaus Wirth: The Art of Simplicity:

11 of 13 people found the following review helpful. Disappointing
By Aaron Keen
I purchased this book with the hope of gaining some insight into Niklaus Wirth as a person and an educator. Wirth has made many contributions to the computer science field, so I was hoping for tales from his students and close friends that would relate some of the man behind the magic. Instead the book reads very much like the proceedings of a technical conference (without a well-

defined topic). In fact, many of the essays only relate to the book in that the authors were students of Wirth (or really appreciated his accomplishments) and they thanked Wirth in the introduction and conclusion. I did find a number of the essays to be interesting but I imagine that I could have found a very similar technical paper by searching the ACM or IEEE libraries. There were few actual insights into Wirth as a person and little discussion of him as an educator. The overriding theme is, of course, that Wirth is a strong proponent of simplicity (it says as much in the title). However, the tie-ins to this theme in each essay usually amounted to simply stating that Wirth demanded simple solutions. A few essays did give some examples such as suggesting the use of simpler algorithms (that are good enough) in lieu of more complicated (and error-prone) but faster algorithms. However, a number of articles reported the number of lines of code and the number of different modules as proof of simplicity. The book wasn't bad but it wasn't what I was hoping for (what ever is?) or what I had expected. 8 of 8 people found the following review helpful. A Very Inspiring Book By Ryan Davis This is the first nerd-book that I've read in a _long_ time that I could call inspiring. It got me back to my roots of computer science and applying Occam's razor to everything I see, think, or do. I only gave this a 4 star because one of the chapters is not congruent with the goals of the book. Chalk that up to the ego of that author and ignore it. The rest is great. If you are an older generation software engineer and feel like you are drowning in the needless complexity of modern day languages like C++, perl, or java, then I think you owe it to yourself to give this book a try. If you are a newer generation software engineer and haven't seen what some of your predecessors were doing before and around the time of your birth, then you REALLY owe it to yourself to give this book a try. I was born the same month as Smalltalk. It's one of my favorite languages. When were YOU born? 7 of 8 people found the following review helpful. Almost really interesting By John Lacey This book is a disappointment, but it was very close to good. The articles are mostly anecdotes and project descriptions by Wirth's students. I, too, was expecting more direct descriptions of Wirth's teachings. The glimpses shown here were almost enough, but in the end, unsatisfying. I'm giving it three stars. If you will do anything to learn more about Wirth, you should certainly read this. For general programming insights of similar ilk other books, such as *The Practice of Programming* or Meyer's *Object-oriented Software Construction*, are better places to look.

Niklaus Wirth is one of the great pioneers of computer technology and winner of the ACM's A.M. Turing Award, the most prestigious award in computer science. He has made substantial contributions to the development of programming languages, compiler construction, programming methodology, and hardware design. While working at ERH Zurich, he developed the languages Pascal and Modula-2. He also designed an early high performance workstation, the Personal Computer Lilith, and most recently the language and operating system Oberon. While Wirth has often been praised for his excellent work as a language designer and engineer, he is also an outstanding educator - something for which he is not as well known. This book brings together prominent computer scientists to describe Wirth's contributions to education. With the exception of some of his colleagues such as Professors Dijkstra, Hoare, and Rechenberg, all of the contributors to this book are students of Wirth. The essays provide a wide range of contemporary views on modern programming practice and also illuminate the one persistent and pervasive quality found in all his work: his unequivocal demand for simple solutions. The authors and editors hope to pass on their enthusiasm for simple engineering solutions along with their feeling for a man to whom they are all so indebted.

From the Back Cover Niklaus Wirth is one of the great pioneers of computer technology and winner of the ACM's A.M. Turing Award, the most prestigious award in computer science. He has made substantial contributions to the development of programming languages, compiler construction, programming methodology, and hardware design. While working at ERH Zurich, he developed the languages Pascal and Modula-2. He also designed an early high performance workstation, the Personal Computer Lilith, and most recently the language and operating system Oberon. While Wirth has often been praised for his excellent work as a language designer and engineer, he is also an outstanding educator - something for which he is not as well known. This book brings together prominent computer scientists to describe Wirth's contributions to education. With the exception of some of his colleagues such as Professors Dijkstra, Hoare, and Rechenberg, all of the contributors to this book are students of Wirth. The essays provide a wide range of contemporary views on modern programming practice and also illuminate the one persistent and pervasive quality found in all his work: his unequivocal demand for simple solutions. The authors and editors hope to pass on their enthusiasm for simple engineering solutions along with their feeling for a man to whom they are all so indebted. About the Author Laacutetzloacutetz; Bouml;szouml;rmeacutenyi is a full professor of computer science at the University of Klagenfurt, Austria. His current main research area is distributed systems with emphasis on multi-media infrastructures. Laacutetzloacutetz; was born in Budapest, Hungary and studied at the Technical University of Budapest. He became acquainted with Niklaus Wirth in 1977, when he spent an academic year at the ETH in Zuuml;rich. Since then Laacutetzloacutetz; has returned as a visitor for longer stays at the ETH. He is the author of a textbook on introductory programming with Modula-3, the high-end successor of Modula-2. Jurg Gutknecht is an Associate Professor of Computer Science at ETH. He first met Niklaus Wirth in 1981 and joined his research team shortly thereafter. He helped Wirth with the Modula-2 compiler and later went on to develop the Oberon

operating system with Wirth from 1986-1989. Gustav Pomberger is a Professor at the University of Linz, Austria. He studied Electrical Engineering and Computer Science and received his Ph.D. in Technical Sciences in 1980. From 1992-1999 he was head of the C. Doppler Laboratory for Software Engineering. He has been a friend of Niklaus Wirth for over 15 years.