

Preface

"We'd like to pretend that "Fredrik" is a role, but even hundreds of volunteers couldn't possibly keep up. No, "Fredrik" is the result of crossing an http server with a spam filter with an emacs whatsit and some other stuff besides"

Gordon McMillan, June 1998

The Python 2.0 distribution comes with an extensive standard library, comprising over 200 modules. This book provides a brief description of each module, plus one or more sample scripts showing how to use it. All in all, this book contains 360 sample scripts.

About this Book

"Those people who have nothing better to do than post on the Internet all day long are rarely the ones who have the most insights"

Jacob Nielsen, December 1998

Since I first stumbled upon Python some five years ago, I've spent hundreds of hours answering questions on the **comp.lang.python** newsgroup. Maybe someone found a module that might be exactly what he wanted, but he couldn't really figure out how to use it. Maybe someone had picked the wrong module for the task. Or maybe someone tried to reinvent the wheel. Often, a short sample script could be much more helpful than a pointer to the reference documentation.

After posting a couple of scripts each week, for a number of years, you end up with a rather large collection of potentially useful scripts. What you'll find in this book are the best parts from over 3,000 newsgroup messages. You'll also find hundreds of new scripts added to make sure every little nook and cranny of the standard library has been fully covered.

I've worked hard to make the scripts easy to understand and adaptable. I've intentionally kept the annotations as short as possible. If you want more background, there's plenty of reference material shipped with most Python distributions. In this book, the emphasis is on the code.

Comments, suggestions, and bug reports are welcome. Send them to fredrik@pythonware.com. I read all mail as soon as it arrives, but it might take a while until I get around to answer.

For updates, addenda, and other information related to this book, point your favorite web browser to <http://www.pythonware.com/people/fredrik/librarybook.htm>

What about Tkinter?

This book covers the entire standard library, except the (optional) Tkinter user interface library. There are several reasons for this, mostly related to time, space, and the fact that I'm working on several other Tkinter documentation projects.

For current status on these projects, see <http://www.pythonware.com/people/fredrik/tkinterbook.htm>

Production details

This book was written in DocBook SGML. I used a variety of tools, including Secret Labs' PythonWorks, and Excrosoft Documentor, James Clark's Jade DSSSL processor, and Norm Walsh's DocBook stylesheets. And a bunch of Python scripts, of course.

Thanks to my referees: Tim Peters, Guido van Rossum, David Ascher, Mark Lutz, and Rael Dornfest, and the PythonWare crew: Matthew Ellis, Håkan Karlsson, and Rune Uhlin.

Thanks to Lenny Muellner, who turned my SGML files into the book you see before you, and to Christien Shanreaw, who pulled all the different text and code files together for the book and the CD-ROM.

About the Examples

Unless otherwise noted, all examples run under Python 1.5.2 and Python 2.0. I've tried not to depend on internal details, and I expect most scripts to work with upcoming 2.x versions as well.

The examples have been tested on Windows, Solaris, and Linux. Except for a few scripts that depend on platform specific modules, the examples should work right out of the box on most other platforms as well. (If you find something that doesn't work as expected, let me know!)

All code is copyrighted. Of course, you're free to use one or more modules in your own programs, just don't forget where you got them.

Most script files are named after the module they're using, followed by the string "**-example-**" and a unique "serial number". Note that the scripts sometimes appear out of order; it's done this way on purpose, to match the filenames used in an earlier version of this book, (*the eff-bot guide to*) *The Standard Python Library*.

You'll find copies of all scripts on the CD provided with this book. For updates and more information, see <http://www.pythonware.com/people/fredrik/librarybook.htm>.