the bookworm

by Peter H. Salus

Peter H. Salus is a member of the ACM, the Early English Text Society, and the Trollope Society, and is a life member of the American Oriental Society. He owns neither a dog nor a cat.

peter@netpedant.com

I've only a few books I want to talk about this month: it's not that the publishers have ceased production, but I just can't get very interested in CSS or in M$.

Incident Response

Incident response teams are the thing today. There's Lucas and Moeller, as well as Mandia and Prosise (reviewed in this issue of *;login:* by Anton Chuvakin).

Lucas and Moeller have turned out a small, first-rate book, easy to read yet full of solid information. They set out a number of the pieces needed for an incident response team and then proceed to assemble them in a clear fashion. They describe the kinds of incidents that require responses: internal and external, worms, viruses, intrusions, etc., in a lucid fashion. Even SYN floods are mentioned. The 50 pages of appendixes are exceptional: a sample incident report, the federal cybercrime laws, an FAQ, a table of domain name extensions, and a list of well-known port numbers are included. The bibliography is somewhat disappointing, but adequate.

Turing

Papadimitriou is an outstanding thinker where computational theory is concerned. I have several of his books. In *Turing* he has written a romance novel combined with a history of computational theory in the form of a series of lectures by Alan Turing and a dystopic image of the Internet.

It's a failure on every front, I'm afraid.

The fictitious news group periodically quoted at tedious length reads like no news group I've ever seen.

I look forward to reading Papadimitriou's next theoretical work.

Scheme

Nearly everyone who knows me knows that I like Scheme. It's the best of the descendants of Lisp. But it's over 25 years since Guy Steele and Gerry Sussman wrote their MIT AI memo (#452, January 1978), and many pages have been written about Scheme. Dybvig's third edition is both an introduction and a reference book. It's really very good and deserves a place on your bookshelf – but only after you read it.

Eric Raymond said that learning Lisp makes you a better programmer. Scheme is the right dialect to learn; and Dybvig's book is the way to learn it.

Lots o' Laughs

OK. So it's the New Year and you've read the latest User Friendly. Luckily, O'Reilly has come up with *The Best of the Joy of Tech*, so you won't have any trouble continuing to laugh at Nitrozac and Snaggy's view of the geek world. They manage to poke fun at nearly every trend.

Oh. You didn't know? The Joy of Tech is an online comic. Now they're in book form.

Buy an extra as a Valentine gift for your favorite geek.

BOOKS REVIEWED IN THIS COLUMN

THE EFFECTIVE INCIDENT RESPONSE TEAM
JULIE LUCAS AND BRIAN MOELLER
Boston: Addison-Wesley, 2004. Pp. 303.
ISBN 0-201-76175-0.

TURING
CHRISTOS H. PAPADIMITRIOU
Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2003. Pp. 284.
ISBN 0-262-16218-0.

THE SCHEME PROGRAMMING LANGUAGE, 3RD ED.
R. KENT DYBVIG
Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2003. Pp. 295.
ISBN 0-262-54148-3.

THE BEST OF THE JOY OF TECH
NITROZAC AND SNAGGY
Sebastopol, CA: O'Reilly, 2003. Pp. 192.
ISBN 0-596-00578-4.