

Book Review: Borland's Official No-Nonsense Guide to Delphi 2 by Michelle M. Manning

This book was especially written for the novice user who may have problems with Borland's Delphi 2 manuals. It is based on "what, why and how" information for a long list of topics, given in the inside of the front cover. Unfortunately, this list seems to be unsorted (or at least is not sorted in any logical way I could detect). Opening up the book gives a better overview of the topics, since each topic has its own chapter. There are 47 chapters in 7 parts, followed by two appendices. Each chapter contains information on the "what, why and how" about that specific topic, followed by an "essential summary". No chapter is more than 15 pages, with an average of 7 pages, which is an indication of the relative depth of the coverage for each topic: not very deep, but good enough for an introduction.

Part I covers installation and using the on-line help and documentation. Part II looks at the IDE, with every possible action and option outlined and explained (if only by a line or two). This is in fact regular User Manual style information.

Part III, *Building Projects*, includes topics on using the VCL, manipulating components, properties and property editors, events, menu designing and the object repository. It also includes information on compiler and run-time errors and debugging and optimising your code.

Part IV contains 9 chapters on Object Pascal, with topics such as the object model, access specifiers, routines, units, 32-bit data types, long strings, file I/O, memory, multi-threading and exception handling. The last few topics are generally considered to be for non-beginners, but Michelle is able to explain the "what, why and how" in a way that gives even the beginner a reasonably good understanding without going too deep or too advanced.

Part V, *Application Development*, includes topics such as context-sensitive help, merging menus, OLE automation, DLLs, OBJs and version control. I found some errors in the DLL chapter that may prevent beginners from actually writing operational DLLs with Delphi 2 (change export to stdcall to fix the errors).

Part VI offers an introduction in Delphi 2 database applications, with topics such as the Database Form Expert, Database Explorer,

ReportSmith and issues like creating tables, connecting to databases and using aliases. Part VII, *Deploying Applications*, describes how to distribute and install your application using InstallShield Express Lite. The two appendices are about VCL Objects (Components and Controls) and the Delphi 2 extra utilities that are included (such as DCC32, BRC32, BRCC32, DBD32, KWGEN, HELPINST, etc).

The book does not come with a disk or CD-ROM, probably because the few code examples are rarely more than a few lines. All the topics are explained clearly; if you are a beginner with Delphi 2 and don't want to read the manual, this could be a useful book. If you have not yet bought Delphi 2 and want an overview of its capabilities, again this might be a good choice. Be prepared, though, to purchase another 'intermediate' level book fairly soon to help you progress beyond the beginner stage.

Scores out of 5:

Technical contents	3
Quality of writing	4
Value for money	4
Overall assessment	4

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