WAP: a beginner’s guide.

Dale Bulbrook.

Review by: Yannis Koutroulis

Introduction.

I have selected the book titled “WAP: A beginner’s Guide” instead of finding a book about the general architecture or other general ideas about wireless networks, due to my previous thorough exposure to the WAP literature and also due to my preference to applied and tested ideas/products instead of theoretical ideas that have not come to existence yet.

I have developed a dynamical WAP site for my undergraduate research and I have studied, in a more theoretical level, the performance and limitations of the Wireless Application Protocol, which gives me all the necessary knowledge to review a book WAP and wireless applications.

Another reason for selecting this book is WAP’s involvement in many aspects of our lives. I believe it is an excellent example of a wireless network, an implementation, a protocol stack and a commercial product.

Contents and structure.

The structure of the book is as follows. The first chapter serves as an introduction to WAP, it contains a definition, a brief history, a brief presentation of the architecture and an evaluation of WAP from the business perspective. Lastly it provides the reader with a prediction about WAP and the factors that will affect its further growth.

The next three chapters focus more on the user’s side instead of the developer’s side. They provide a thorough background of the importance, the differences of WAP but also the limitations we have to overcome. The book first provides the characteristics of good WAP applications, meaning what is important from the user’s point of view. Then it presents how WAP looks like, what does the user see and experience when he/she uses mobile applications. Here the book is quite objective presenting the important limitations of WAP, concerning especially the handheld devices resources, like processing capabilities, memory, display, screen and keyboard. Lastly the book provides briefly some tools to create applications like editors, emulators and even Integrated Development Environments.

The rest of the book presents technical issues, concerning WAP developers. Initially WML is discussed which is the easiest way to create a static WAP site as with HTML and WWW. As we go on the book presents more and more advanced techniques and applications, some of them are user interaction and WMLScript, and some state of the art implementations like M-commerce and telematics, which require some experience in WAP programming.
The last two chapters are more general. Chapter 13 is about the future and new wireless technologies that can be combined with WAP. The last chapter is an extended reference, providing an easy way to look up things instead of going over the text.

**Review.**

The presentation style of the book makes it easy for reading to all beginners in WAP programming. It is written in well-divided, short paragraphs, without mixing different topics and thus confusing the reader. It provides many examples of code and their visualization on a WAP enabled phone or an emulator. There also many points highlighted so that the reader will pay more attention.

I believe that the stronger advantage of this book is using a lot of examples and also having a well-defined structure, which follows a smooth course from basic issues to advanced ones.

One disadvantage of the present book is the lack of color, especially in the drawings and the pictures of WML decks. It makes reading the book a little monotonous, whereas some colored pictures could emphasize the interface and WAP capabilities.

Finally I believe that this book can be used as a beginners’ introduction to WAP, spreading from basic to advanced issues, but it can be used as a reference book for advanced users.

I would therefore suggest it to my classmates, whether they are experienced WAP programmers or absolute beginners.