

The IBM Multimedia Handbook: Complete Guide to Hardware and Software Applications

by Steve Floyd

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REVIEWED BY

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Floyd introduces his guide as a book for novices to multimedia. His guide goes beyond the basics to address the full scope of multimedia. For example, Seyer [2] discusses some of the same software packages as Floyd's guide, but the topic of Seyer's hypertext book is only one facet of multimedia. Also, Floyd's guide goes beyond the scope of a simple beginning project. His guide gives a more complete view of development than a developer's guide, such as Apple [1]. His guide also covers more than one multimedia package, such as Smith and Pallatto [3]. Smith and Pallatto's book concentrates on ToolBook.

Although the intent of the book is to educate end-users considering the leap into multimedia development, experienced developers may find the thoroughness of "The Development Cycle" section helpful. The "Development Cycle" chapter describes a development process that can be used for creating a major communications product.

The first part of the book discusses the idea of multimedia, and IBM hardware and software used in multimedia. These chapters introduce eleven products and their use. The software packages described include LinkWay, Storyboard Live!, AVC, ToolBook, Hollywood, M-Motion, and ActionMedia. PS/2 and OS/2 appear frequently in the discussion of multimedia software. This heavy use of PS/2 and OS/2 leaves the reader wondering if the author considered only IBM licensed products and excluded IBM compatible products.

Surprisingly, the coverage of "Media Technologies" (hardware) is more generic than the discussion of software packages. The hardware discussion covers graphics resolution, CD-ROM, videodisc, touch screen, and audio capture. Floyd's discussions of the components include both basic description of what the component is, and more sophisticated material on standards and techniques.

The heart of this guide is not the discussion of hardware and software, as helpful as it might be. The heart of the book is "The Development Cycle." Floyd presents the development cycle from an executive producer's (or project architect's) point of view. The executive producer's view of the development cycle gives both a manager's and a

developer's perspective. He describes the development process using multiple disciplines. He sets forth, in detail, the process he uses in his professional multimedia development company. Although the novice may not be developing such a large scale production, the myriad of view points and development concerns are beneficial knowledge. Particularly, Floyd's emphasis on analysis, planning, and documentation will ring true with anyone involved in software development or maintenance.

No area of development is neglected. The description of the development cycle covers everything from dealing with the client and developing budgets to hints for visualizing a navigational design. The emphasis is on design and production of a product for communicating with the user. This emphasis stresses the multi-discipline nature of multimedia development and the pivotal importance of the end-user.

The terminology used in "The Development Cycle" chapter is flavored by Floyd's video production background. Software programmers are called "authors," and project architects are called "programmers." Once the reader confronts the terminology, the completeness of the development process described should be appreciated by anyone contemplating a multimedia project.

Although the advice given in this guide is not based on academic rigor, Floyd's experience provides an important reality check about the complexity of multimedia projects. Were I an executive, I would make the chapter on "The Development Cycle" mandatory reading for anyone who mentioned multimedia to me.

REFERENCES

- [1] Apple Computer, Inc. HyperCard Stack Design Guidelines. Menlo Park, California: Addison-Wesley Publishing Company, Inc, 1989.
- [2] Seyer, Philip. Understanding Hypertext: Concepts and Applications. Blue Ridge, Pennsylvania: Windcrest Books, 1991.
- [3] Smith, Gina and John Pallatto. Building Applications with ToolBook. New York: Brady Publishing, 1991.