



TeraTech News

Tools for Programmers

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Lucy Mwinamo, Editor

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This month we cover:

- Rapid Development Review
- Audio Data Systems Project
- Visual Basic 7
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- Fusebox vs. Allaire Spectra
- Quote of the Month

Rapid Development Review

Author: Steve McConnell

Review by: Michael Smith, TeraTech

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This book is good for team ColdFusion projects on a short deadline, and what ColdFusion project is not rapid development! The sub-title "Taming Wild Software Schedules" sums it up. The book

covers both technical ideas, such as estimation, risk management and mini-milestones, and the psychology of both programmers and teams. The latter may be particularly useful regarding the high burnout, 12-hour-a-day work cycle of many ColdFusion programming teams. Keeping everyone motivated and working together as a team is often more important than technical programming tricks on a large project. The second half of the book, "Best Practices," is a cookbook of 36 techniques for project leaders designed to Stop overruns and control those out-of-control, large ColdFusion projects. I have been developing for over 20 years, and nearly all of McConnell's tips ring true. The book is not about ColdFusion per se; it concerns any Rapid Development language.

Audio Data Systems Project

ACASI (Audio Computer-Assisted Self Interview) is a self-administered survey program written in Visual Basic. It displays and plays questions, answers, and instructions in a pre-programmed order; and stores the results in a database for subsequent analysis. In the telephone version the respondent either presses keys on a touch-tone telephone keypad or speaks into the phone to answer the questions. In the first instance, the answers are saved in a Microsoft® Access database and in the second, they are recorded as wave sound files. In recording the answers, two question types are available, namely, Record and Timed Record. Using Record, the answer is recorded until the respondent presses the pound key, or if not pressed, at the end of a specified time period. Timed Record does not respond to the pound key but automatically terminates when the period ends. In the telephone version, the numeric information is stored in an Access database and the recorded voice is saved as a wave file. ACASI comes bundled with two tools: **Survey Builder** and **Wave Player**. Wave Player provides a convenient means of transcribing the sound files. Using Wave Player, the recorded answers may be transcribed into text fields in Microsoft Access. For more on ACASI visit:

<http://www.teratech.com/ads/>

Visual Basic 7

The next version of VB will deliver the number one most-requested feature—and a whole lot more. Intended features include: **Code-based and visual inheritance**. The next version introduces the code-based inheritance everyone has been asking for. It also introduces form, or visual inheritance,

the ability to create form templates and extend them through inheritance. The next version is a fully object-oriented language, with all that entails, including inheritance, over-loading, and constructors.

Free threading. VB is often criticized as inadequate for server-side processing of Web apps. The addition of free threading should go a long way toward diminishing these complaints.

Structured exception handling. That's right! The next version lets you implement error handling without any much-maligned GOTO statements. It adopts the same approach used in C++ and Java.

Full Story:

[www.http://www.devx.com/free/newsletters/vb/ednote0215.asp](http://www.devx.com/free/newsletters/vb/ednote0215.asp)

Fusebox vs. Allaire Spectra

Who will take a shot at clearly describing the development framework of FuseBox and that of the up-and-coming Spectra? FuseBox is a development method that relies on separating code into files of different types which are then called in a regular and predictable manner by using a central file that makes logical decisions about which files to include depending on the fuseaction. Spectra is Allaire's version of an XML middleware server bundled with a set of utilities for managing content distribution and security. It builds applications that are made up of "objects" that seem to be XML elements in a fairly thin disguise. An engine is included that allows the instances of these elements to be stored in a variety of back end databases. Lots of custom tags are included that use the resulting structures to manage things like syndicating content and managing security. Spectra forces the user to think of their application as a set of defined objects and their properties and methods and provides a lot of built in functionality. Beyond this, large and complex projects will probably still require some development method to be applied in order to stay manageable.

Spectra is an easy-to-use tool for people with no knowledge of CFML or HTML to move their already existing business to the

Web. Fusebox uses a method of bringing object form-writing to CF.

—Shawn Regan

Mishaps of AltaVista

Wedding photographer Jon C. Domke was surprised to discover a sudden spike in traffic to his web site in early January. Surprise became shock when he checked his traffic logs and discovered that people searching for porn on AltaVista were reaching his site by mistake. Somehow, AltaVista crosslinked his web address with the title and description of a phone sex site. So instead of being listed as "Total Photo Image," Domke's site appeared as "Adult Phone Sex with Amateur Phone Flirts." Not happy with the situation, Domke tried to reach someone at AltaVista for help, but no one responded to his requests. A local television station and newspaper covered his situation, both of which brought the matter to the search engine's attention. They claim it was a technical glitch and assured the TV stations that it would not happen again in the future. Domke's site was not the only one listed with misleading information. His web site, which contains no porn -- probably to the disappointment of some people who found it via AltaVista.

Quote of the Month

"If you can't beat your computer at chess, try kickboxing."—Anon

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