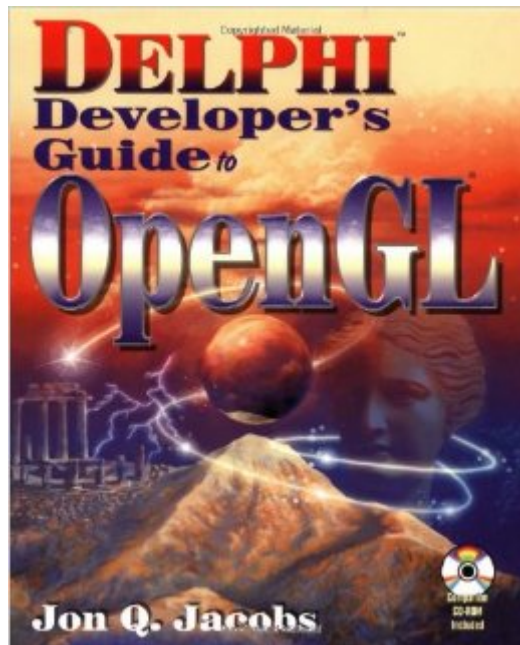


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Delphi Developer's Guide To OpenGL



Synopsis

A comprehensive title targeted at experienced 32-bit Delphi programmers and developers in the use of the industry graphics standard library, OpenGL, which has become a standard for programming in the animation and computer game industries.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

I'm a Delphi expert who's been coding in Pascal since the days of TP6. I bought this book and John Ayres' new DirectX Exposed book at the same time. I'm doing a new gaming project in Delphi and wanted the best (actually the only) references on Delphi graphics programming available. This book is *by far* the better of the two books. It beats Ayres' book hands down. Where Ayres sticks to simple 2D sprite strawmen, this book gets into true, real-world examples -- the kinds of things you'd see in modern games. Also, this book is written much better -- I found it easier to follow and read through than Ayres' book. In fact, I eventually gave up on the Ayres book and have yet to finish it. Being able to convey difficult concepts in a conversational manner is no mean feat, yet the author pulls it off splendidly, something Ayres could really learn from. I highly recommend this book -- it is the best book on Delphi graphics programming on the planet.

Now I'm really in two minds about this one... On the one hand, it's by no means a bad book. After all, it does its job of teaching the basics of OpenGL reasonably well. Besides, as far as I know, it's the only book on this subject written specially for Delphi programmers. This book deserves four

stars just for its uniqueness. On the other hand... I've just finished reading "Delphi COM Programming" by Eric Harmon, and it's so superior in terms of style, content and presentation that rating the OpenGL book equally or closely would simply be unfair to Mr. Harmon. So, two stars then. There you go.

Now down to explanations. Doesn't a glance at the book's beautiful cover make you sweat with excitement? Do the words "Delphi" and "OpenGL" in its title raise the images of an award-winning Quake-clone in your mind, a ground-breaking game written entirely with your favorite programming language? Well, forget it. Usually, when I buy a book with a cover CD on it, the first thing I do is to insert the CD into the CD-ROM drive and to try some advanced examples to see what I'll be able to do after reading the book. OK, I thought, let's try the same with this OpenGL tome. Double-click on "Source," double-click on "Chapter 14" (last chapter in the book), find an executable, run it... Wow! A green triangle on light-blue background! Not very motivating, really. Try Chapter 13... not much better. Maybe I am looking in a wrong place? A quick browse though the CD revealed, apart from the source code, an HTML file with Web links, a few ugly textures and the entire book's text in ASCII, plus all the screenshots. How very exciting! OK, another beer-mat, then.

Back to the book. Well, as other reviewers have rightly pointed out, it's quite well written. The author uses an informal, conversational style - so conversational in fact, that while reading one can almost imagine a university professor standing next to a blackboard. The author's idea was to make you read the book while simultaneously writing the example programs. This intention is not much helped by the fact that due to the binding used for this book, you cannot make it stay open unless you place something heavy on it. Besides, the try-and-see approach, while certainly useful in, say, a classroom (when there is a direct contact between the instructor and the student), requires that you do lots of wrong things before doing something right. In a written text, I would rather like to see the opposite: correct solution in the beginning of a chapter, followed by the explanation and the list of potential pitfalls. Of course, this is just a matter of taste. In a few places, I found the flow of the explanations a bit illogical and a few jokes rather dull (and unnecessary) - but again, some readers may like them.

When it comes down to the code, however, I see some problems. First, the code for later chapters is based on the code written for earlier chapters, and it gets updated, corrected and changed back many times within a chapter. The full text of programs is given, unfortunately, very rarely. As a result, unless you are following the book very carefully, you soon lose track of what your program should look like. Of course, it is always possible to copy the files from the CD - but in a way this destroys the purpose of the step-by-step approach to the explanations. At another extreme, a lot of listings contain nothing but "form as text" - you know, this list of on-screen objects together with some of their properties. I don't know anyone in his right mind who would type these listings by

hand! Come on, if a Delphi programmer does not know how to place components on a form to make the form look more or less like the one shown on the picture, this guy should not be programming at all! Perhaps I am too cynical, but I think the sole purpose of all this was to make the book thicker. By the way, the oversized typeface used for the text also adds to my suspicion. And then the graphics... Sure, in a book like this you would expect if not full-color figures then at least a colorful insert in the middle. Wrong. All the figures are presented in glorious black-and-white and - since the print is too dark - are essentially useless. And, having tried a few programs, you almost understand it's for better! OK, this is not a book for graphics designers, but ugly is not the right word to describe the choice of colors and textures. OpenGL is supposed to help creating beautiful scenes! Red and green cubes on blue background, anyone? Come on...I hate criticizing this book so much - it's not that bad, really, and the author's attention to detail is exceptional - it's just that it could have been so much better. If this text were a series of articles in a magazine (with downloadable code), I would heartily recommend it. As a book, it is a disappointment.

The thing I like about this book is its attention to detail. I purchased it at the same time as I bought John Ayres book on graphics programming. This book puts Ayres' book to shame. It covers the essential topics thoroughly -- no stone is left unturned. Ayres' book, OTOH, covers 2D sprite games only -- what a waste of time! Also, this book is written quite well, if I may say so. The Ayres book isn't. Jacobs' explanations are lucid and to the point. I really liked this one and highly recommend it to anyone who's already familiar with the Win32 API but wants to learn graphics programming. I'd also recommend this book to Mr. Ayres. He could learn a lot from it.

First of all. This is a great book, where everything gets explained line by line, there is no way of not understanding a concept. This simplicity enables one to breeze through the book and get a general idea of how OpenGL works. Now, for those wanting to do something more sophisticated than working with 3D primitives and ugly textures, you will need something more, get for example the OpenGL Bible, the source code there is in C, but the OpenGL commands are the same ones, so translating C to Delphi is rather easy. I recommend looking within the Delphi OpenGL community for examples, which you learn to read and understand with the present book, you won't yearn for more, having these 3 ingredients for your OpenGL Delphi progies. Recommendation to the author, do a 2nd book with advanced examples, maybe a Quake like level editor and a basic Quake like game, which is definitely within reach for a volume 2, the Delphi community would *LOVE* you for that and heck I'd be the first to buy it. But anyway, I definitely love the book, it explained to me how OpenGL works,

step by step. Two thumbs up.

The perfect book for a developer that understands how to use Win API and Delphi but knows nothing about OpenGL or graphics.

The book uses easy to understand sample applications that make learning a new function or process much easier. Jon has done a good job of covering a multitude of topics that are commonly used in game and graphics development. I believe that any OpenGL developer's library is not complete without Jon's book. Now the down side. There are a few topics that I had hoped to see in the book that were not covered, things like transparent Textures and using shiny surfaces with Textures. In talking with Jon (Another good part, he is always willing to help), though I have found the answers to the questions that I had.

I am adding my two cents worth just to offset the fool who gave this book only one star because he said "forget about Delphi". Delphi is by far the best development language there is, and I have programmed in many. This book is a good intro to programming OpenGL in the best damn development language on the planet.

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