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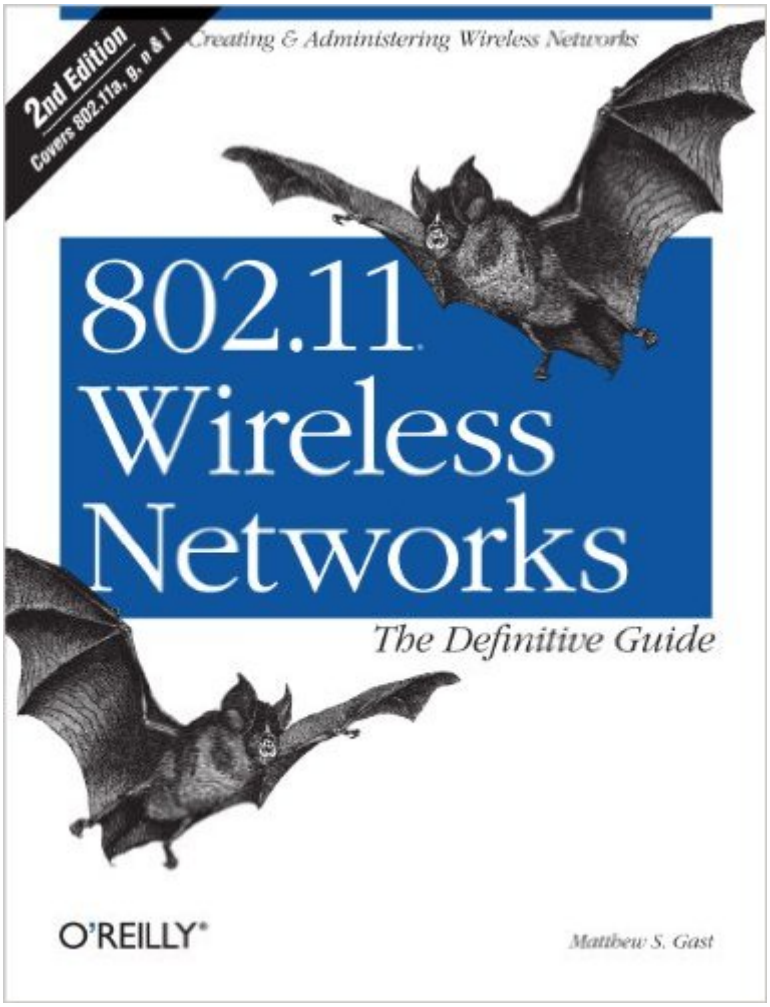
802.11 Wireless Networks: The Definitive Guide: The Definitive Guide



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Synopsis

As we all know by now, wireless networks offer many advantages over fixed (or wired) networks. Foremost on that list is mobility, since going wireless frees you from the tether of an Ethernet cable at a desk. But that’s just the tip of the cable-free iceberg. Wireless networks are also more flexible, faster and easier for you to use, and more affordable to deploy and maintain.The de facto standard for wireless networking is the 802.11 protocol, which includes Wi-Fi (the wireless standard known as 802.11b) and its faster cousin, 802.11g. With easy-to-install 802.11 network hardware available everywhere you turn, the choice seems simple, and many people dive into wireless computing with less thought and planning than they’d give to a wired network. But it’s wise to be familiar with both the capabilities and risks associated with the 802.11 protocols. And 802.11 Wireless Networks: The Definitive Guide, 2nd Edition is the perfect place to start.This updated edition covers everything you’ll ever need to know about wireless technology. Designed with the system administrator or serious home user in mind, it’s a no-nonsense guide for setting up 802.11 on Windows and Linux. Among the wide range of topics covered are discussions on:deployment considerationsnetwork monitoring and performance tuningwireless security issueshow to use and select access pointsnetwork monitoring essentialswireless card configurationsecurity issues unique to wireless networksWith wireless technology, the advantages to its users are indeed plentiful. Companies no longer have to deal with the hassle and expense of wiring buildings, and households with several computers can avoid fights over who’s online. And now, with 802.11 Wireless Networks: The Definitive Guide, 2nd Edition, you can integrate wireless technology into your current infrastructure with the utmost confidence.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

802.11 Wireless Networks: The Definitive Guide lives up to its title and provides virtually everything you could need to know about 802.11 networks.802.11 is a family of specifications for wireless networks developed by the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers (IEEE). There are currently four specifications in the family: 802.11, 802.11a, 802.11b, and 802.11g, all of which use the basic Ethernet protocols.Within the last few years, wireless networks have become extremely popular. No longer must a physical cable be run (at both a time and monetary expense) to each network host. With wireless technology, impromptu meetings can be set up just about anywhere, from conference rooms to airplanes, hotel rooms, and more.Anyone who has looked at network standards can attest to how boring they are to read. However, Gast does a wonderful job writing about wireless Ethernet in a way that is not only "not boring," but actually interesting. This is due to his expertise with the subject matter and the many real-world scenarios that he shares.Gast acknowledges that most readers who simply want a methodical, but not all-inclusive, overview of 802.11 can skip chapters 3 through 11, as they deal with the low level details of 802.11. He clearly states that just as it is quite possible to build a wired network without a thorough and detailed understanding of the protocols, the same is true for wireless networks. Nonetheless, there are a number of situations where one may need a deeper knowledge of the underpinnings of 802.11, and those underpinning are exhaustively detailed in chapters 3 through 11.Chapters 3 and 4 address the MAC layer and 802.11 framing. Chapter 5 deals with the greatest weakness of 802.11 -- namely its lack of security.

The author, Matthew Gast, seems to have a dearth of relevant experience on 802.11. His bio in the back of the book (and on O'Reilly's website) gives no single specific experience - academic, professional, or otherwise - he had relating to 802.11. The bio instead is left to boast that Gast is a "renaissance technologist" and a "voracious reader on science and economics". I find it telling that

the publishers spent more space discussing the design of the book's cover than on Gast's bio. If you don't know a subject well, you'll have a difficult time teaching it to others, and that appears to be the case here.I noticed that Gast wrote other networking books for O'Reilly, so I assume he's their go-to guy on networking. Why they would do that on a hot subject like 802.11 is a mystery, and it produced a poorly written mess.As for the book, it appears that he researched as much substance on 802.11 and haphazardly threw it together. The flow of the book is atrocious and seems poorly planned. For example, he advises readers to skip more than half the middle of the book and come back to it later if necessary since he feels it may be too complicated for most. Why not put that portion of the book at the end, or better yet, write clearly enough so that it's not too complicated? This is an 802.11 book, after all.He also spends the first two chapters explaining the most rudimentary details of wireless networks, yet expects the reader to be well versed in Ethernet. If Ethernet is so vital to understanding 802.11, why didn't Gast devote a chapter as an Ethernet primer, especially since he found it compelling to include two chapters of the most basic of wireless network primers?His clarity is also awful. The book is very dense with acronyms and technical terms.

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