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Timothy Trimble
FileMaker software developer



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About the Author

Timothy Trimble is a professional computer geek, writer, and software developer with over 25 years of industry experience. He started as a video game developer and worked his way into the PC and PDA software development markets on various commercial, corporate, and vertical market applications. He currently exhibits his geekish tendencies as a FileMaker developer at SolutionMakers, Inc. (www.solutionmakers.com) in Woodinville, WA.

Timothy has written a multitude of articles for various industry publications and wrote a book on flight simulation. He maintains a blog on the Art of Software Development at www.timothytrimble.info. Although he has significant publishing credits in the computer industry, he dreams of some day having his science fiction work published as well.

When Timothy is not cranking away at the keyboard, he likes to be with his family, entertain his friends by singing and playing guitar, and door-to-door to tell others about his faith. Feel free to contact Timothy with your comments on this book by e-mailing him at fmp4d@timothytrimble.info.

Dedication

To the WhoWeAre Band. Two CDs, the House of Blues,
and a wonderful, nine-year ride that I'll never forget!

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Introduction

With over 10 million units of FileMaker software sold around the world, FileMaker has become the diamond in the rough when it comes to creating and managing data. After over 20 years of use, today's FileMaker Pro 8 has matured from its humble beginnings to become the hottest cross-platform database-development environment available.

Though I hate to admit it, when I first took a look at FileMaker in the early '90s, I wasn't impressed. The database tables were flat (no relationships), and aside from being able to quickly throw together some forms, I couldn't see how or why this application had any appeal. Needless to say, I was blinded by my experiences with dBASE and Superbase. Yes, I was being narrow minded. I took another look with version 5.0, and though I was impressed with the improvements to the database structure and the ability to write programming scripts, I still felt that it was underpowered as a software development tool.

Then FileMaker 7 came out, and I was blown away! My socks rolled up and down! I was impressed with the ability of FileMaker to be utilized as a full-blown application development tool — not only for Mac OS X but Windows as well. Now with the release of version 8 (the current version as I write this book), the FileMaker folks have provided a serious, relational database design

and development system. After being in the computer industry since 1982 (yeah, I'm showing my age), I am finally excited about a programming environment again. By the time you get through this book, you'll be excited too!

About This Book

I wrote *FileMaker Pro Design & Scripting For Dummies* for all types of FileMaker users. Whether you're just starting out in developing applications or have experience in database design but are new to FileMaker, this book can help you get custom applications up and running.

You can select individual topics from the book to aid in gaining a deeper understanding of the power of FileMaker, or you can start at the beginning and cover each chapter in sequence. How you use this book is up to you, but regardless of your current FileMaker experience, I hope that you find out something new about this incredible product.

Because FileMaker is a cross-platform tool, this is a cross-platform book. Whether you work on a Mac or a PC, you find the pointers you need.

Foolish Assumptions

This is where I usually get into trouble — especially with my wife, when I assume that she knows what I'm thinking or when I assume that I know what she's thinking. Fortunately, with this book, I can make only some basic assumptions about you as the reader.

- ✓ First of all, to get to this spot, I'm assuming that you have a computer (either a Mac or a PC), you know how to use it, and that FileMaker Pro is already installed on it.

- ✓ To keep the focus on design and scripting, I also assume that you're fairly comfortable with the basics of using FileMaker. If you need more general information about working with FileMaker, check out *FileMaker Pro 8 Bible* by Dennis R. Cohen and Steven Schwartz (Wiley Publishing).

- ✓ I *don't* assume that you have any programming knowledge, or that you have done any database development before. It should be easy for you to grasp an understanding of these topics by reading this book.

How This Book Is Organized

This book is organized in a manner that allows you to quickly find what you're looking for. While a complete understanding of FileMaker Pro design and scripting could fill several books with thousands of pages, my intent with this book is to give you enough information to make you productive as a beginner.

Part I: Getting to Know FileMaker Pro

To kick off Part I, Chapter 1 introduces why FileMaker is such a great tool for application development, helps you choose the right version, offers tips for setting up FileMaker, and gives you a quick tour of the interface. In Chapter 2, I explain how you begin building your database, and Chapter 3 helps you tap into the power of scripts.

Part II: Building the Perfect Beast

Part II begins with one of my favorite chapters of the book, Chapter 4, which guides you through the process of designing a good FileMaker application. Here, you discover the fundamentals of database design, layout design, and what makes a good software program.

The remaining chapters in this part help you fine-tune your creation, and a sample application called Hey, Look at Me! is provided as a workbench. Chapter 5 explains how to make your database layouts look good while adding more functionality to your database application. Chapter 6 offers tips and tricks for adding searching and sorting capabilities to your application. And in Chapter 7, you discover how to assign functions to objects on the layout, use lists and menus, and more.