

Book Review: A Guide to Software Configuration Management

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In my opinion this book is a fair introductory text to Software Configuration Management (SCM) that is in desperate need of a good editor. I say that because I became very tired of reading the same text over and over again. There is a saying I learned in speech class – “tell them what you are going to tell them, tell them and then tell them what you told them”. This book takes that saying literally. The first 90 pages are an introduction to configuration management. The next 90 pages repeat major topics (and sometimes it seemed like entire paragraphs) from this material with only a little added information. Even within chapters and sections I found that an idea, concept or even an exact phrase would be stated multiple times.

So putting the annoying repetitiveness aside, what did I like about this book. I think the chapter on Software Configuration Management Tools is excellent. It includes:

- ◆ A discussion of the benefits and advantages of having automated SCM tools
- ◆ A list of how SCM tools support major SCM functions (e.g., version management, change management, problem tracking, promotion management, system building, status accounting)
- ◆ An overview of SCM tool selection and a discussion on selection criteria with examples and additional references
- ◆ A discussion of issues related to SCM tool implementation

If you are in the market for SCM tools this chapter, coupled with the information in Appendix A might make this book an excellent investment for you. Appendix A includes a list of SCM tools currently available on the market by type and a list of major SCM vendors with a description of their tools and contact information.

In fact the appendices may be the most valuable part of the book. Appendix B includes information on various SCM standards. Appendix C includes an extensive and annotated list of Internet sites for additional information on SCM. Appendix D is an SCM bibliography. There is also a glossary of SCM terms and acronyms.

Besides people who are considering the purchase of SCM tools, this book might provide a good, fundamental introduction to SCM for project managers, software developers & testers or anyone trying to understand the basics of this topic and its language. It is written in an easy-to-read and jargon free style that makes these concepts understandable. However, I would not recommend this book to anyone who is actually charged with the SCM role. This book does not include the depth or detail needed for the actual implementation of the concepts discussed. For example, in that there are only six brief pages defining Configuration Audits and Reviews at a very high level with no “how to” information at all.