

# Reference MWAPI

by James Hay

*Reviewed by Keith Snell*

It is not often that an M Technology-related book is published and, to date, *Reference MWAPI* is the only book to tackle the subject of the M Windowing API. This is a subject very dear to my heart, due to my involvement over many years with the development of Micronetics' MSM-GUI products.

*Reference MWAPI* is published by Digital Press and is very well presented and professionally packaged. I particularly liked the convenient size of the volume.

[Note: *Reference MWAPI* is available from MTA. See page 29 for ordering information.]

The book sets out to give the reader the chance to learn the M Windowing API in a much simpler and more easily understood way than the terseness of an M vendor's reference manual set. To this end, it provides explanatory text and example code to help the reader understand the concepts involved. The book is aimed squarely at the technical person, but not necessarily someone who is M-aware. The preface states that if the reader is not an M user or is unfamiliar with the M language then an introductory explanation of the M syntax required for use of the MWAPI is furnished. I tried to put myself in the place of such a person, picking up the book in order to learn MWAPI, but found this difficult due to my familiarity with the subject. However, in my opinion, there did not seem to be enough explanation of what M was and what the M syntax meant, despite what is said in the preface, and the book really does need the reader to have an appreciation of the M language prior to tackling the examples.

The format of the book is well thought-out. Each chapter introduces new concepts that are then summarized in a "highlights" section and further reinforced by means of short exercises. The answers to these exercises can be found in an appendix of the book. I would have preferred the answers to not be so readily accessible—maybe on a CD-ROM provided or downloadable via the World Wide

Web. I feel that the appendix makes it too easy to look up the answer before really trying to tackle the question. Still this is only a minor nit, and it is much better to have the answers available than not be able to get hold of them at all.

The book starts with an explanation of event processing and talks about which events can be handled by MWAPI applications. It moves on to explain the concept of the display and its provided attributes. This is followed in subsequent chapters by an explanation of all attributes and event types for Windows and Gadgets. The chapter on Windows includes a well-explained example of parent and child windows and how they interact. In the next chapter all Gadget types, their attributes and events are explained, and then code is given for examples of the individual gadget types. A separate chapter covers use of the DRAW command and uses a generic box gadget to illustrate the use of the commands. Menus and timers are then covered, followed by a short chapter dealing with special variables and functions for error handling and font manipulation. The final chapter brings together the methods and concepts discussed in the rest of the book in a fully functional MWAPI checking account application. This consists of a main window together with error and information dialogs and provides full listings of the window structure together with the event code necessary for creation and processing of an account and display of check details. Images of the Windows are provided together with explanations of the code and structures. This is a very good way of reinforcing the lessons learned in the earlier chapters. The appendices contain the various function key, error and color codes, the answers to the questions and an at-a-glance reference to the MWAPI objects. Throughout the book the differences between MWAPI version 1.0 and 1.1 are clearly pointed out.

The idea of making the code samples available via the World Wide Web was very good. But when I visited the site mentioned on the rear cover I was unable to find the

code samples, despite finding the page, which referenced the book.

Overall, the book is a good introduction to the MWAPI syntax and its usage for an M-knowledgeable technical person. However, I would recommend that the non-M-aware reader learn the basics of the M programming language before tackling this book. Also I would recommend that the reader download and install a copy of MSM-Workstation from the InterSystems' web site so that they are able to work through the examples using an MWAPI implementation whilst reading the book. **M**

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