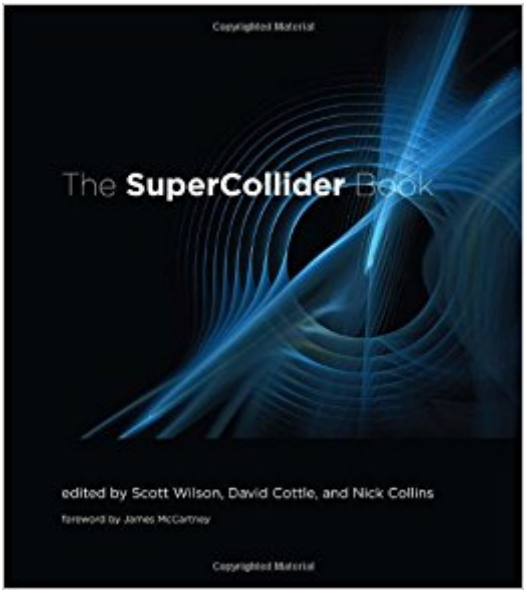
The SuperCollider Book (MIT Press)



Synopsis

SuperCollider is one of the most important domain-specific audio programming languages, with potential applications that include real-time interaction, installations, electroacoustic pieces, generative music, and audiovisuals. The SuperCollider Book is the essential reference to this powerful and flexible language, offering students and professionals a collection of tutorials, essays, and projects. With contributions from top academics, artists, and technologists that cover topics at levels from the introductory to the specialized, it will be a valuable sourcebook both for beginners and for advanced users. SuperCollider, first developed by James McCartney, is an accessible blend of Smalltalk, C, and further ideas from a number of programming languages. Free, open-source, cross-platform, and with a diverse and supportive developer community, it is often the first programming language sound artists and computer musicians learn. The SuperCollider Book is the long-awaited guide to the design, syntax, and use of the SuperCollider language. The first chapters offer an introduction to the basics, including a friendly tutorial for absolute beginners, providing the reader with skills that can serve as a foundation for further learning. Later chapters cover more advanced topics and particular topics in computer music, including programming, sonification, spatialization, microsound, GUIs, machine listening, alternative tunings, and non-real-time synthesis; practical applications and philosophical insigh"s from the composer’s and artist’s perspectives; and "under the hood," developer’s-eye views of SuperCollider’s inner workings. A Web site accompanying the book offers code, links to the application itself and its source code, and a variety of third-party extras, extensions, libraries, and examples.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

This book documents the SuperCollider language to an extent never before achieved and shows how it can be used to realize a wide variety of musical and technical applications. The scholarship is sound, as the chapter authors are leaders in the field and deeply knowledgeable on how SuperCollider may be used, taught, and learned. (Robert Rowe, Director, Steinhardt Music Composition Program, New York University)

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I have been using Supercollider since the first release in 1996. Since then it has become 'open source' and has (as it's creator James McCartney says in the introduction) taken on a life of it's own. Multitudes of creative minds in the field of computer music have added to the code and have made it such a rich and wonderful programming environment to work in. I am primarily a composer of acoustic chamber works, but what I have always liked about Supercollider is it efficiency. It has always seemed less cumbersome to me than CSound, and right out of the gate you are creating complex and interesting sounds with a minimal amount of code. In the spirit of Supercollider itself, the book is not written by one person but is authored by the top Supercollider gurus and practitioners from around the world. It starts with a straightforward tutorial by David Cottle and progresses quickly to more complex and specific subjects like granular synthesis and machine listening. But you will find, even from the preliminary code, that you are creating amazing, timbrally rich sounds. This book is a great achievement!!! We have waited a long time for this! Anyone who is interested in Supercollider and computer music needs this book!!

This book is a treasure trove for anyone interested in SC. The writing style throughout is accessible and enthusiastic, and the quality of information is truly impressive. Of course, any book like this one suffers from the rapid pace of software development, so some information is already outdated. However, as far as I can tell all the examples are useful as-is (barring system-specific dependencies). The book is not organized as a progressive series of tutorials, so the newcomer

may seem a bit bewildered by the array of SC’s possibilities and how best to go about learning them. I suggest the complete beginner read Cottle chapter to get started, then just jump into the other chapters as they become of interest.I’ve used SC with Linux on & off over the past years. The SC Book has been a great inspiration for me to get back into this wonderful language - I’m primarily a Csound-based composer, but I’m always on the look-out for interesting developments in similar languages and systems. Btw, the only reason I didn’t give it five stars is the absence of an accompanying disc, but in truth it isn’t necessary, the book will guide you to all necessary resources. So okay, I’m really giving it four and a half stars. :)

This is the bible. It goes over supercollider inside and out. The beginning is quite rocky as they seem to start giving you examples which aren’t well explained. Be prepared for some hair pulling. Regardless, this book along with some supplemental tutorials in the internet will get you going.

Great book

Omgomgomgomg

There are a lot of great things to say about this book. It is extremely well written by a large number of luminaries in the SuperCollider field, it contains an enormous store of knowledge on the subject, and it deals with rather important concepts of general programming and sound design that are necessary for any sound programmer to understand, to name a few good things. That being said, if you are a beginner to programming and/or sound and sound design, do NOT go to this book first. I had no programming experience when I first started making my way through this tome, and I believe that the only way I got through it was through previous knowledge of music, sound, and an unbreakable determination to actually learn how to program in SuperCollider. Problems that will arise for a beginner:1) The fact that it is written by so many different authors is a problem in itself. On one hand, you get a well-rounded, complete view of a myriad of different concepts and practices. On the other, there is very little connectivity between chapters, and as such it can be quite distressing to finish one chapter and then begin another feeling like everything you learned in the previous chapter doesn’t apply anymore.2) This book is very poor in terms of giving beginner examples. The first chapter starts you off well, but once you get past that, most every other chapter just dives right into very difficult and precise examples after giving very general conceptual explanations. Instead of saying, "You just learned how to add 1+1, so here’s how you add 1+1+2", it

often feels like "Now that you know how to add 1 and 1, here's how you do differential equations and lambda calculus". Oftentimes chapters will leave you feeling like you have a better understanding of what SuperCollider is capable of but with no means to actually apply any of it. Examples are generally very complex and poorly explained in terms of actually learning the language. There is NO hand holding, and if you don't know much about programming, it will take you a LONG time to understand what they're talking about and how to use their examples in a progressive, practical manner. The Help files on the IDE are almost more useful for examples than this book.3) There is no "order" to how you learn programming concepts in this book. Learning standard programming from other sources was immensely enlightening because most of the time they teach you concepts in logically reasonable steps (i.e. statements to variables to conditionals to functions and objects to classes to arrays etc...) whereas in this book, it's all extremely scattered. I had NO idea how to use conditionals, loops, or classes in SuperCollider until I learned how to do it in a standard programming language and by that time I had already gotten very far into the SuperCollider Book.My advice is to use a different book or to learn another, more standard language while you learn SuperCollider. It WILL help immensely and when you finally get this book (and you should definitely get it if you're serious about learning SuperCollider), you'll be much better off.