



Head First Labs



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Featured Author: Michael Morrison on Head First Behind the Scenes: Storyboarding

By Caitrin McCullough

Today is the first installment from *Head First JavaScript* author Michael Morrison. Enjoy!

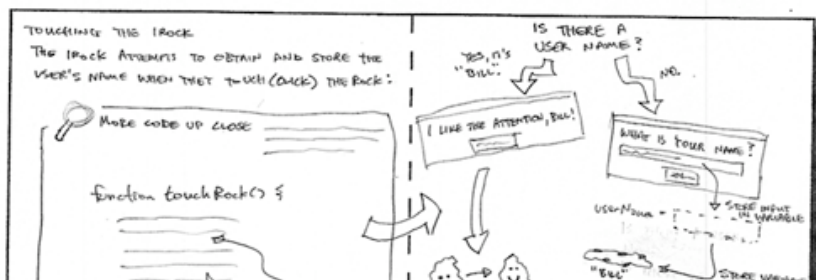


So this week the Head First team is turning the blog reins over to an author. And a loose cannon of an author at that...hope I don't disappoint.

Since I am an author, I thought it might be fun to kick things off this week with a look behind the scenes at how these books come together. I was more than a little surprised when I first learned that Head First books are written entirely by hand on paper before they ever make their way to electronic form. That's right, the Head First team keeps it old school!

Seriously, pretty much every page of every Head First book first exists as a scribbly drawing on paper before it ever makes its way into page layout software. Same deal with my book. In fact, my entire book was written on paper in pencil before I ever laid out a single page electronically. That version of a Head First book is known as storyboards, or boards for short. The idea is that you sketch up the core visual elements of each page in the boards. And by steering clear of software layout tools with fancy visual effects, you're forced to stick within the realm of concepts. No characters, no cute graphics, just core visual concepts and whatever your artistic ability can muster. It's all about focus.

As an example of how this works, check out these real storyboards from Head First JavaScript. In this spread (two facing pages), I'm showing how browser cookies are used to recall the user's name when they touch a virtual pet rock (the iRock). The main thing to notice is that although there is some text on the pages (apologies for the handwriting), the real focus is on how the teaching will be carried out visually. First the code is shown on the left side of the spread, then the flow of the script code is shown on the right side of the script, complete with little hand drawn screen shots of the dialog boxes that appear.



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