Book Reviews

GILBERT HELD
Token Ring Networks. John Wiley, 1994, £29.95, 309 pp., hardbound, ISBN 0 471 94041 0

Token Ring (TR) networks appeared on the LAN market a little later than Ethernets, but their operating rules were much more sophisticated. This is the reason why they are more expensive. They found users first of all in the office environment and among IBM customers. General books about computer networks contain only short, incomplete or disjointed descriptions of this standard. I was very glad to see a book exclusively devoted to TR standards.

The author assumes that this book is for readers with 'divers backgrounds of knowledge and experience'. Readers with little knowledge and experience should be able to read the first two chapters of this book while those with general knowledge about models used in computer networks can skip these chapters.

The presentation of TR nets is done atypically. The author begins with elements with which the user is familiar, i.e. cabling system, devices and network operating systems (Chapter 3). Afterwards, he presents data formats and operational details (Chapter 4).

An interesting, but controversial idea is to include in a book about TR also a chapter about FDDI networks (Chapter 5). The same topology and the presence of a token are not sufficient grounds to say that FDDI is a kind of TR net (p. 59). The only reason to include this chapter is to explain to the end-user of big mesh networks with an FDDI backbone the differences between TR and FDDI. Unfortunately this is not clearly done. My doubts found confirmation in the absence of FDDI networks in Chapters 6 and 7.

An important part of this book is dedicated to devices which enable networks to grow (Chapter 6 and 7). With bridges and routers one can build big and wide structures. The author concentrates his attention on internetwork devices. He also explains many routing algorithms. It will be useful to see more examples of network structures which set off advantages and disadvantages of bridges, routers and routing algorithms. These structures are very important in order to understand how to use well-known devices.

As we approach the end of this book we cease to move in a world of ideas and we are in the world of products. In Chapter 8 we have IBM gateway devices and software, in Chapter 9 the author presents parts of different network management software. The goal of this presentation is to illustrate the facilities needed to realise management tasks.

It is a very good book for TR network users who want to know 'which way the wind lies'. It is a clearly written book with many examples and illustrations.

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AMIT SHAH and G. RAMAKRISHNAN
FDDI: A High Speed Network. 1994, PTR Prentice-Hall, £45.50, 229 pp., hardbound, ISBN 0 13 308388 8

This is the first book completely dedicated to FDDI networks, which I have found. Even though the book is not so big one can find all that is needed for future administrators of FDDI networks. One can find here the history of this standard, comparison of FDDI nets with older solutions, cabling and hardware descriptions, and a complete description of operational rules at all network levels.

There is one particularly important matter: we can find information about management of FDDI-based computer networks. One could not forget that FDDI nets are used in many cases as backbone networks and metropolitan networks. To manage such sophisticated and complex structures with so many different users requires an administrator with very large experience and qualifications. This book will be very useful for such people before they become acquainted with concrete firmware.

This book has also disadvantages. I expected more of the kind of information needed to decide when to use or to think about FDDI networks. Such a decision has not only technical aspects but also an economical dimension. Without doubt we must use these nets in all multimedia applications, but is this really true for all client–server solutions? I am sure it is not. This is not a marginal problem. FDDI is a new solution on the computer network market and I know of some cases of unnecessary installation.

Thus, this a book for all who want to know details about FDDI nets, who want to use FDDI nets in future projects, but it is not a book for those who have to answer the question: 'FDDI, or could it be something cheaper?'.

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JOHN B. GOSLING
Simulation in the Design of Electronic Systems. Cambridge University Press, 1993, 273 pp., softbound £15.95, hardbound £45.00, ISBN 0 521 42672 3

They say that you should not judge a book by its cover and as I read the preface I wondered if this sentiment should be extended to include this too, since it contained so many errors. The first paragraph read well enough until the part which says '... a comprehensive introduction to all aspects of ...', at which point I questioned the validity of the use of 'all'. Was I being too pedantic? Unfortunately I encountered no fewer than 49 syntactic and semantic errors in 3 pages. Not a good start for a