
Subject: Looking for Eyeballs

Posted by [David Fanning](#) on Tue, 27 Dec 2005 20:10:31 GMT

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Hi Folks,

After having a bit of an epiphany a couple of weeks before Christmas, when I woke up in the middle of the night with a complete outline for the book I wanted to write in my head, I have been working steadily (and, surprise!, passionately) on it every since. After working through the night and well into the next day on the outline, I heard an interview on NPR with Larry McMurtry (Lonesome Dove, etc.) in which he gave away his writing secret. He writes five pages a day, every day, 365 days a year. When he finishes his five pages, he stops for the day and reads his mail, scratches the dog, etc.

I've decided to emulate him. So far, it is working well, although I'm sure some of you who have never tried to write a book are laughing about just five pages. "Ought to be able to knock that out before breakfast," is what I originally thought myself. But, alas, it is harder than that, and some days five pages don't get finished until well into the evening.

But that's my problem, not yours. The point is, I am writing. And in the process I have discovered what it is about this book that has defeated me for so many years: I can't stand to read the damn thing anymore. :-)

I don't mind writing it, and I thoroughly enjoy learning something new about IDL every single day, but reading it depresses me. I don't know why. I don't mind teaching the material. I just don't want to read about it. (It could well have something to do with the writing. Not everything, God knows, comes out right the first four or five times you spit it out. Sometimes it takes 20-25 tries to get it right. Sometimes it just never comes out right, and you finally just say the hell with it and go with what you've got.)

So, I have decided to seek editorial help, which is where you come in. I'm looking for people to review chapters of the book as I finish writing them and before I get to the "Oh, the hell with it" stage. I'm thinking that together we might be able to produce a better book than I could myself.

I'm not offering much in the way of remuneration. (You don't make, uh, much money when you spend all your time writing a book.) You might

learn a thing or two about IDL you didn't know before. You will get to see first-hand how a book is *really* put together, will all the false starts, and loneliness, and *decisions* that have to be made. You might gain some sympathy for authors everywhere. That's about it. I might mention you on the dedication page if your comments are particularly pithy and funny and keep my spirits up.

So here is the deal. I don't plan to send you the whole book. I'll send you a chapter a month or something like that. You review it. Correct factual errors, if you can. Tell me what you like about it, what drives you crazy, what else you would like to see covered, etc. I get your comments back, make changes, then send the chapter to someone else. And we iterate our way through it. I plan to change into my editing clothes once my five pages are done for the day, so this is not the kind of thing that will take hours and hours of your time. Each chapter is 20 - 50 pages, roughly. You can take a week or so to get back to me. (If you take longer than that I may have already corrected the pages and your comments will not be as relevant to me.)

It's strictly volunteer. I try not to overwork you, and you can quit at any time. If you don't get back to me, or your comments are such that I don't think you're reading carefully, you don't see any more chapters and you have to buy the book when it's published. I'll have a non-disclosure form you will have to sign and return to me stating that you won't quote from the book or discuss what you read there until the book is published. Naturally, as an author who makes LOTS of mistakes, I would like you to destroy the pages I send you after you correct them and send me your comments. You won't be held responsible for errors in the finished product, and the last thing I need is a paper trail dogging my every professional step. :-(

Anyone interested?

Happy New Year!

David

P.S. I'm not necessarily looking for IDL "experts". I would prefer lurkers with a sense of humor and adventure, truthfully. :-)

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Coyote's Guide to IDL Programming: <http://www.dfanning.com/>