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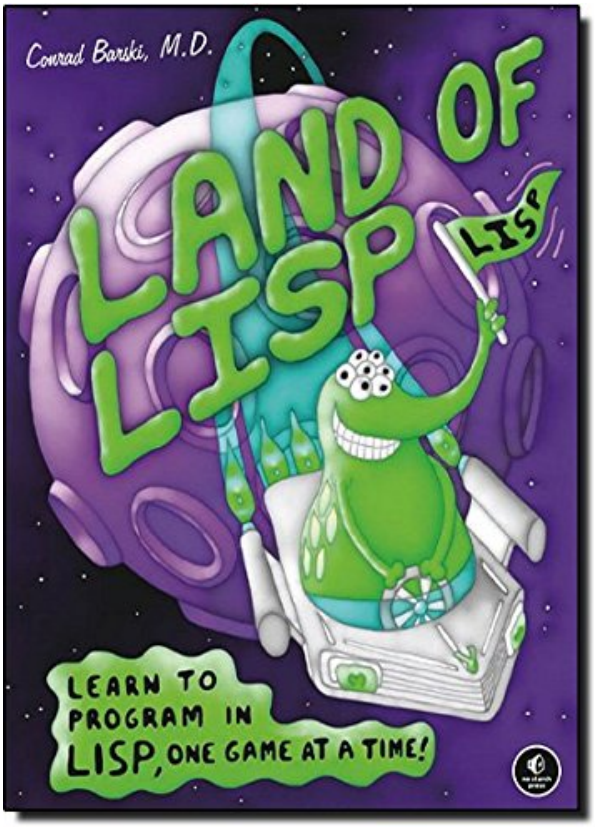

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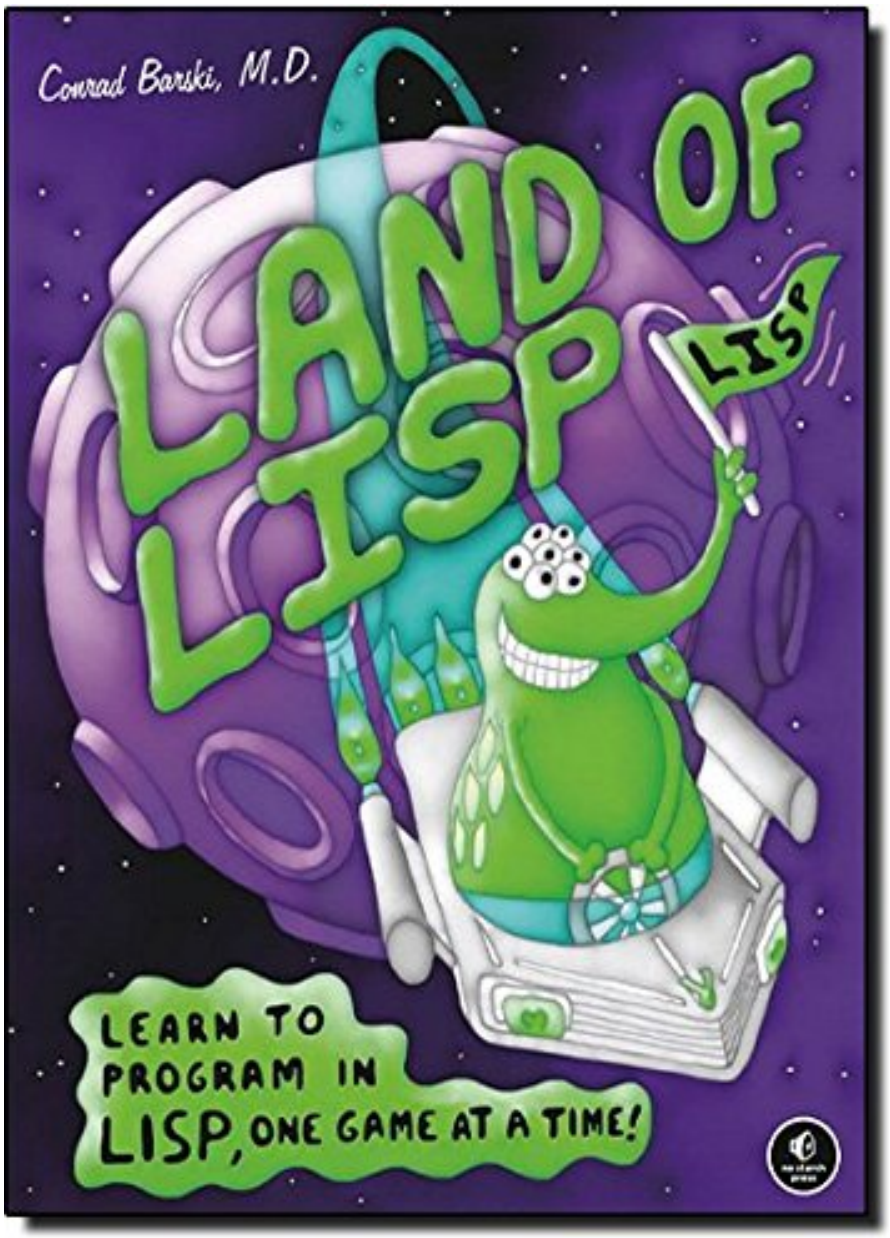

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About the Author

Conrad Barski has an M.D. from the University of Miami, and nearly 20 years of programming experience. This includes a stint developing an obscure Atari Jaguar game, and working on many medical software projects. Barski is also an avid cartoonist, having created the popular alien Lisp mascot and many graphical tutorials. He currently develops cardiology software and lives in Washington, D.C.

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Lisp has been hailed as the world's most powerful programming language, but its cryptic syntax and academic reputation can be enough to scare off even experienced programmers. Those dark days are finally over—Land of Lisp brings the power of functional programming to the people!

With his brilliantly quirky comics and out-of-this-world games, longtime Lisper Conrad Barski teaches you the mysteries of Common Lisp. You'll start with the basics, like list manipulation, I/O, and recursion, then move on to more complex topics like macros, higher order programming, and domain-specific languages. Then, when your brain overheats, you can kick back with an action-packed comic book interlude!

Along the way you'll create (and play) games like Wizard Adventure, a text adventure with a whiskey-soaked twist, and Grand Theft Wumpus, the most violent version of Hunt the Wumpus the world has ever seen.

You'll learn to:

- Master the quirks of Lisp's syntax and semantics
- Write concise and elegant functional programs
- Use macros, create domain-specific languages, and learn other advanced Lisp techniques
- Create your own web server, and use it to play browser-based games
- Put your Lisp skills to the test by writing brain-melting games like Dice of Doom and Orc Battle

With Land of Lisp, the power of functional programming is yours to wield.

- Sales Rank: #266092 in Books
- Brand: Barski, Conrad, M.D.
- Published on: 2010-11-15
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 9.25" h x 1.30" w x 7.00" l, 2.15 pounds
- Binding: Paperback
- 504 pages

Features

- ISBN13: 9781593272814
- Condition: New
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104 of 105 people found the following review helpful.
Eating parentheses for breakfast is delicious... and fun!
By Fogus
If for no other reason, you should buy Land of Lisp because of the extreme levels of unadulterated nerdery filling its pages. The price of the book is almost worth that very spectacle alone. However, as an added bonus the content of the book is top drawer. The first incarnation of Lisp was discovered by John McCarthy over 50 years ago, so it's difficult to imagine that a book on the subject bringing a fresh perspective, but Land of Lisp pulls it off in spades. The book manages to carve its own unique niche in the Lisp book landscape through a masterful blend of cartoons, game development examples, interesting prose, and a highly sharpened whit.

The author, Conrad Barski M.D., takes the reader through a whirlwind tour of Common Lisp and some of the fundamental principles of game development, but interestingly enough it never feels rushed. He accomplishes this feat by sticking to a very important strategy summarized as, "providing something useful at every stage". That is, every example in the book is meant to fit into the context of the larger game examples (e.g. a text adventure, Dice of Doom, etc.) while simultaneously teaching a lesson about Common Lisp *and* provide utility in isolation. It's really a thing of beauty the way that Mr. Barski manages to build useable games piecemeal while teaching important concepts along the way. To illustrate what I mean, let me give an example. The Dice of Doom game example starts with a very small 2x2 board and the program parts needed to represent it. Mr. Barski then builds pieces on top of this substrate to generate positions, while extolling the virtues of decoupling the logic of the game from its representation. It's at this point that the game is playable against a human opponent, but at no previous stage was the code left in a state of flux -- each one was fully amenable to tinkering, tweaking, and experimentation. As an added bonus, the whole implementation by this stage was an incredible 13 lines! (that is actually not true, it's more than that, but by using Common Lisp the implementation was incredibly concise) As if this feat was not impressive enough, Mr. Barski then adds game AI into the mix while explaining the famous minimax search algorithm. He then makes the game more efficient using some techniques common in functional programming, including: closures, memoization, tail-calls (with caveats), and lazy programming. As expected the game itself becomes more feature rich as these lessons progress as stronger AI (i.e. better evaluation) is added, more efficient search techniques are introduced (i.e. alpha-beta pruning), and heuristics are used.

All in all, I am very impressed with the quality of Land of Lisp. As a co-author of a Lisp programming book I appreciate the amount of effort required to pull off a genuinely unique book -- I would be happy to achieve a fraction of the quality of Land of Lisp. This book will appeal to the long-time Lisper and the neophyte and I highly recommend buying it today.

26 of 26 people found the following review helpful.
Extreme Fun Learning A Classic & Powerful Programming Language
By Ira Laefsky
Not since the long out of print "A Fortran Coloring Book" by Roger Kaufman and MIT Press has there been a programming language textbook that was this much fun :-) Lisp is a powerful, self-extensible language; it is the second oldest programming language in continuous use; its implementation was based on a 1958

mathematical paper by John McCarthy on the Lambda Calculus. It also for many years was the main language taught in MIT's basic course for Computer Science 6.001 the "Structure and Interpretation of Computer Programs".

While this book would be worth purchasing for the Nerdly Jokes and Comics by themselves, it is a full but easily paced treatment of a language that allowed the implementation of most Artificial Intelligence research. The easy, carefully designed pedagogy (teaching) follows the development of several entertaining and challenging games including 1980's style text adventures (like Zork and Adventure). But advanced topics are covered in some level of depth with examples including development of a HTTP server, a full chapter on Functional Programming, and another on LISP Macro's and the development of Domain-Specific Languages (DSL's). Some Artificial Intelligence methods such as MINIMAX are briefly covered in the game examples developed in this book. Reader's seeking some understanding of Functional Programing will achieve this understanding in a widely used and classic programming language rather than the more recent and arcane Haskell.

This is a fun and relatively easy ride through one of the oldest higher-level programming languages and one with considerable life still in it. It could form the basis of a child's early programming background or a comprehensive adult's introduction to a powerful Computer Science tool. It is the interesting project of an MD's interestingly twisted obsession and valuable to anyone interested in techniques of programming. A great read...

--Ira Laefsky, MSE/MBA
IT & HCI Researcher and Consultant formerly on the Senior Consulting Staff of Arthur D. Little, Inc. and Digital Equipment Corporation

35 of 38 people found the following review helpful.
Good book but moves quickly
By Dustin
As a person who doesn't know Lisp, I bought this book hoping it would be a good place to start learning, but I feel like a person should have some familiarity with Lisp before reading this. I'm 6 chapters in and the pacing seems weird. I flew through the first 3 or 4 chapters but around chapters 4 or 5 new concpets started getting introduced really quickly. Also, I wish there was more emphasis on where were going with the game when coding it. I feel a little lost while I'm writing the code. I've concluded that the best way to go through this book for me is to read each chapter, then read it again while working through the code. I guess I just need a little more hand holding then this book provides. It is funny, I love the cartoons and I think if someone had a little familiarity with Lisp it would be a great book for them. I'd also like to see programming challenges at the end of each chapter to help reinforce what was learned. At the end of the day this book isn't bad but I'd start with The Little Schemer (which I'm reading now and is awesome), then move onto one of the free Lisp books online, then read this.

See all 58 customer reviews...

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