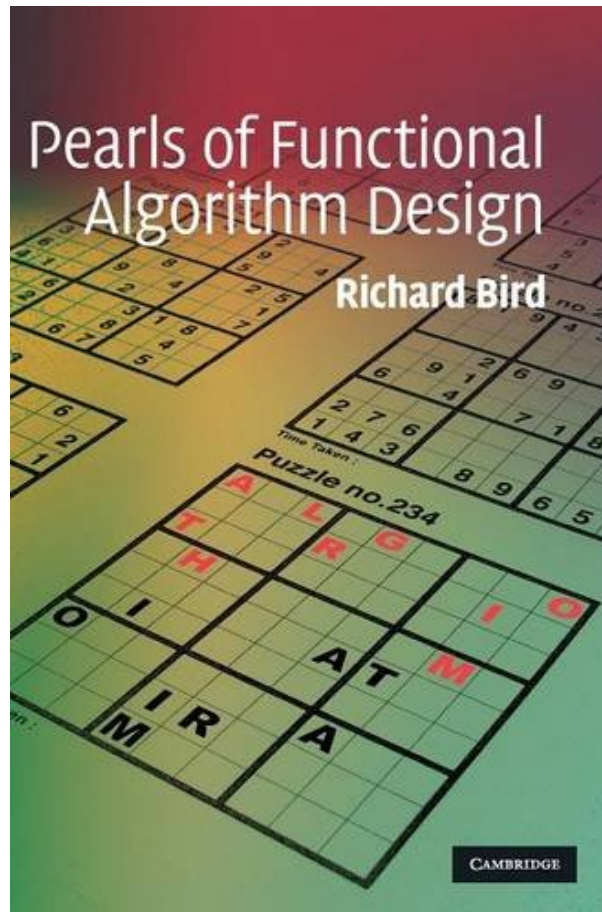
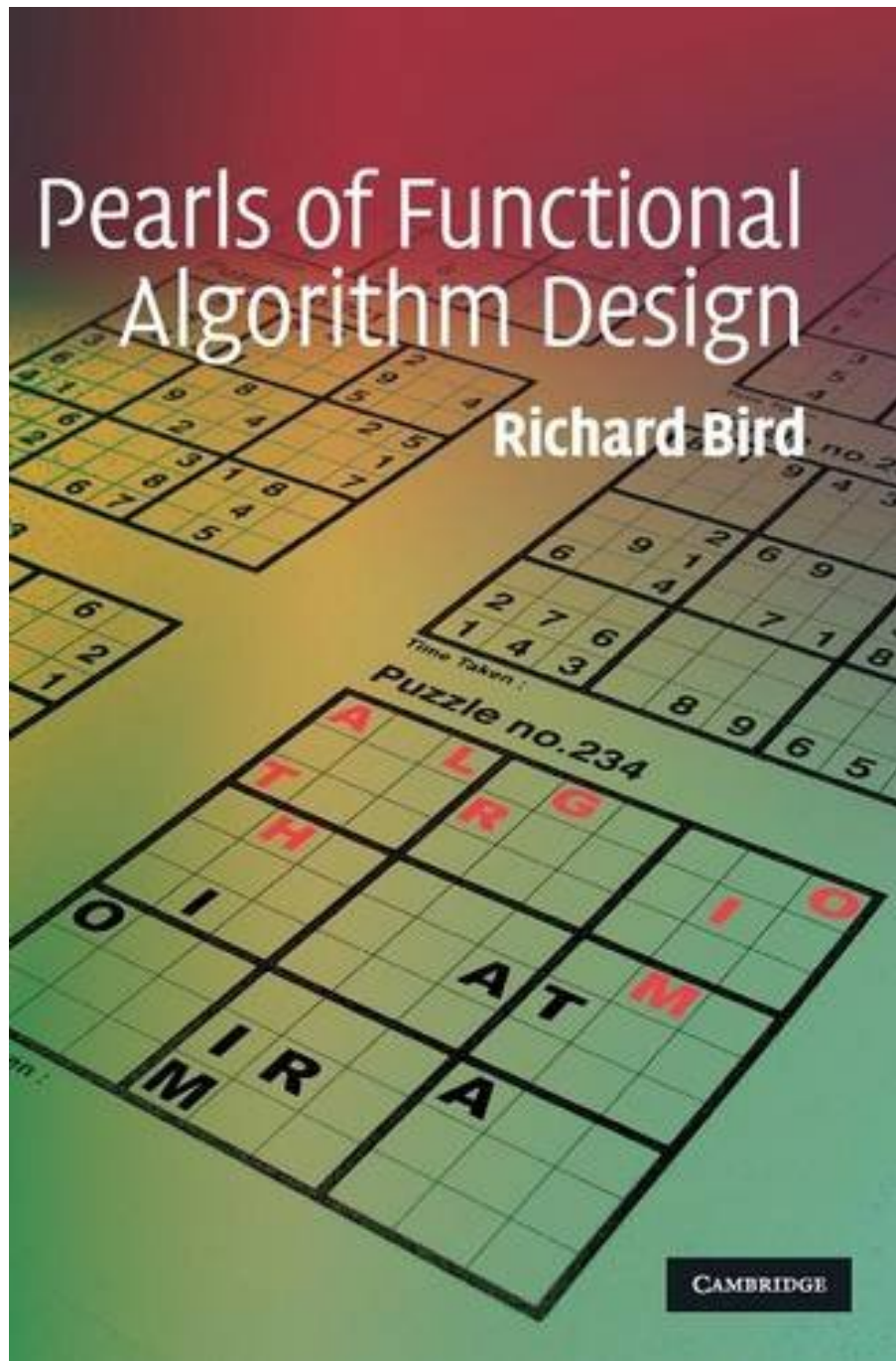


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Review

"Though the writing is crisp, and the explanations lucid, this is not an easy book to read. The difficulty lies in the density of ideas presented. The rewards of persevering are definitely worth it, though. In fact, once immersed, I started to ponder where this material would lead to: which algorithms could be even further generalized, what would many of these algorithms look like if implemented in Coq or Agda, and so forth. This is the effect that all good books have on me: well-presented and well-motivated material strives to become a stepping stone to further discovery. Any serious computer scientist would benefit from reading and properly understanding this book.

Jacques Carette, Computing Reviews

About the Author

Richard Bird is Professor of Computer Science at Oxford University Computing Laboratory.

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Richard Bird takes a radically new approach to algorithm design, namely, design by calculation. These 30 short chapters each deal with a particular programming problem drawn from sources as diverse as games and puzzles, intriguing combinatorial tasks, and more familiar areas such as data compression and string matching. Each pearl starts with the statement of the problem expressed using the functional programming language Haskell, a powerful yet succinct language for capturing algorithmic ideas clearly and simply. The novel aspect of the book is that each solution is calculated from an initial formulation of the problem in Haskell by appealing to the laws of functional programming. Pearls of Functional Algorithm Design will appeal to the aspiring functional programmer, students and teachers interested in the principles of algorithm design, and anyone seeking to master the techniques of reasoning about programs in an equational style.

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Jacques Carette, Computing Reviews

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Richard Bird is Professor of Computer Science at Oxford University Computing Laboratory.

Most helpful customer reviews

84 of 85 people found the following review helpful.

A Warning on the Kindle Edition

By JWS

While this appears to be an excellent text, the author uses a number of mathematical symbols which are not rendered correctly in the Kindle edition. They are sometimes rendered with a question mark or a rectangular box. This can make the derivations difficult to follow. Since this book is also somewhat expensive for a Kindle edition, if you can afford it, you should probably go for the paper version (assuming the paper version is typeset correctly).

31 of 33 people found the following review helpful.

A book for someone who wants to think

By John Wagner

Bird has written a fine book, the functional analogue to Bentley's fine pieces. If there is one thing that's common to the functional attitude in program design, it's an emphasis on proof and logical consistency. Bird goes into detail and carefully shows why algorithms perform, and what their costs must be in terms of time and space complexity.

One quibble: the reader, to follow the arguments, will want to write the short code selections for himself, to check Bird's arguments; he'll find himself having to define a number of Unicode mathematical operators, like U-2209, for example. But this isn't hard to do, in Haskell.

Each chapter is well-written, to the point, and closely argued. In showing the beauty of Haskell in a clear way, or showing the beauty of concrete maths in a clear way, Bird has done well.

12 of 12 people found the following review helpful.

Good learning but I would have liked more themes to hold it together

By Litsios James

Each chapter presents a problem, a simple approach to a solution, and then shows how that simple approach can be brought all the way to implementation, using a functional programming style. There are a few things happening in this book. The author's goal to teach you to believe in the morphing properties of functional programming. In effect, he is saying: do not optimize early, express and implement your algorithm sequentially, and you will see that the implementation can be changed (refactored) to meet performance and memory usage needs. To support this mission the book presents and implements a hodgepodge of algorithms, I say hodgepodge because they do not share a common theme. Finally, the book stays within a "first order of complexity" domain: the algorithms stay focused on the problem they are solving, there are no "higher order abstractions" (e.g. monads, arrows).

The lack of algorithmic or higher order theme of this book did bug me. And I would have been tempted to count this against it. Yet not long after having read much of this book, I was working with a list that I knew would no scale, hesitating to refactor it, I was happy leave it unchanged, feeling confident that I would be able to deal with it later. Part of that confidence was supported by the knowledge that that type of transformation is what this book does successfully, chapter after chapter.

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