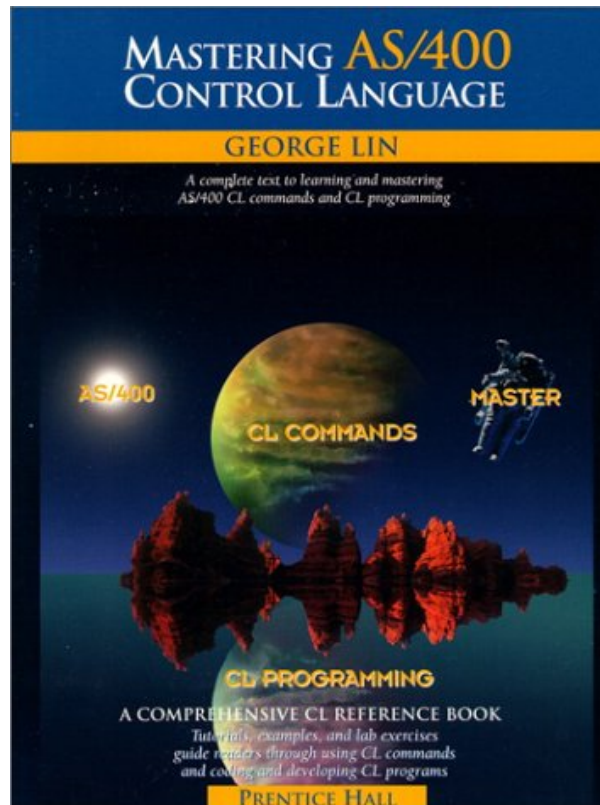
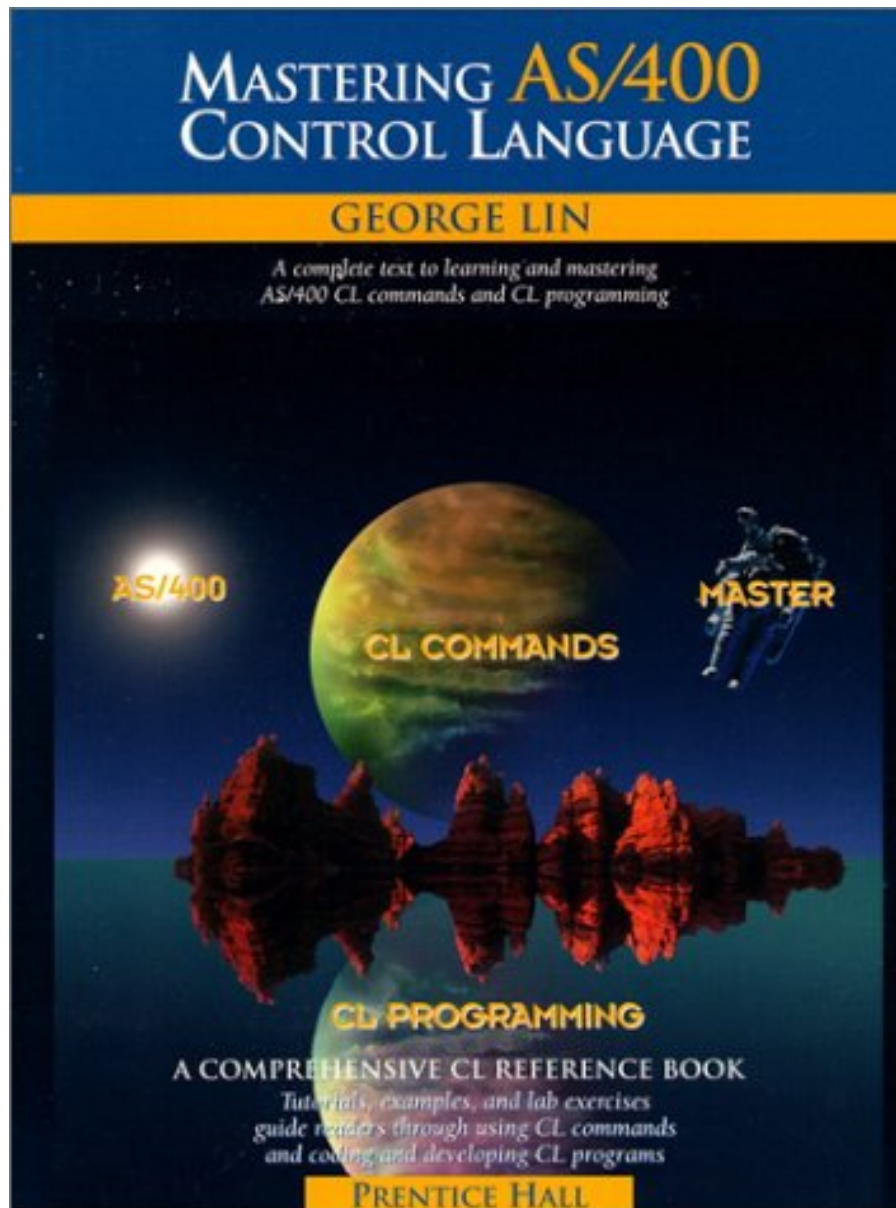


MASTERING THE AS/400 CONTROL LANGUAGE BY GEORGE LIN



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A tutorial taught by a teacher

By Acolin

An experienced programmer and teacher of more than 16 years, George Lin has created a 418 page tutorial book on Mastering AS/400 Control Language for beginning and intermediate programmers. It is an excellent format for a classroom syllabus. Of course, the 8 1/2 by 11" book on IBM's leading mid-range computer, is bound in blue. But, it is lighter than it feels and covers more depth than it seems. The book has an old appearance to it, like it was recently printed by a dot matrix printer. There are no photographs, screen shots or shaded graphics within. Every graphic looks like it was formed on the same word processor that created the text. It is okay that the book looks older than it is, since the subject is older than it should be. (The aging AS/400 technology and its attendant programs are reliable diesel freight trains that refuse to give way to the smaller and sleeker passenger trains.)

While Lin's book is divided into five sections, each one flows smoothly into the next and the sections are not so different from each other. He covers CL commands, programming functions, programming elements, calling programs, processing files and advanced topics (data areas, jobs, objects, messages, testing and debugging). Lin adds AS/400 information to the CL lessons. He mixes in the IBM standard Source Entry Utility and Program Development Manager programs, extending the value of the text beyond the theory of teaching into the reality of the working world. He does not cover programming logic or flow.

Throughout most of the book, the format remains the same. He explains each command with an introductory paragraph, displays an example with sidebar explanations, describes what the example shows, how it works, what the parameters are, walks through an example of how to use it, gives a lab exercise and includes review questions. Lin gives long examples towards the end, explaining each line of code over and over again. The answer section in the back gives additional explanations to the answers. The book layout is excellent; too bad it looks older than it is. Like a patient teacher, Lin repeats key concepts again and again, without ever suddenly picking up the pace, and zooming ahead, before settling down to another topic. One can only wish introductory math books could be written with such plodding thoroughness. No student would be left behind. There are as many programming manuals floating around my IT department as there are books in a professor's library, yet none of them debug the sheer stupidity of the terminal screen with the blinking cursor as well as Lin does for the "AS/400 challenged" individual. The book is as it claims to be, "distinct in its breadth, depth and ease of use." At a fifty dollar list price, the ticket for this ride is expensive, ("Dummies" books look and read better and cost less) but it will get you there.

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too much narratives and not much substances

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