

HTTP/2 In Action

First Review Author Feedback Summary

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Overview

17 reviews were received from a variety of people, all of whom seems to fit the intended reader. There was a wide range in how the reviewers categorized their expertise from 2 to 8, with an average of 5.8. So most were aware of the technology with more than a few veering towards the expert end of the scale.

The “How many stars would you give it on Amazon” rating is showing in below graph with an Average of 4.2 which I think is very positive for a first review:



What were the repeated themes for improvements?

Despite being instructed not to be too concerned with grammar errors and typos for this raw manuscript stage, most reviewers spotted various typos, minor errors...etc. - some of the feedback had typos themselves (e.g. “I would, for one, certainly remove the too many topo's of Chapter 3”), perhaps proving how difficult writing is! 😊

I actually found the highlighting of these typos useful though, and have fixed the ones highlighted already. I do wonder how many if these typos knocked a star off (particularly reviews 4, 6, 8, 15 who stated the typos were the things holding it back from 5 stars), which I guess is why reviewers are told not to concentrate on these?

Anyway, ignoring the typos and looking at the bigger picture, these were the points of improvement/interesting comments made:

1. A number of the reviews questioned the need to include all the installation instructions for all the platforms I did, and noted it made the text repetitive. Several suggested moving these to an Appendix.

This is a fair point, though I was conscious of alienating users of particular web servers by only showing one (technical people can be picky and at least one of the proposal reviewers warned against making assumptions here, though he was the implementer of HTTP/2 in one server so is perhaps not representative and certainly not one of the intended readers this book is aimed at).

I think I should however move most of these to the Appendix and aim for more general instructions in the chapter itself, with perhaps one of the examples (or perhaps one per platform) in the chapter itself. To be discussed with Kevin on Monday's review meetings.

2. A couple of reviewers suggested adding a diagram to the bullet points in section 1.1.2. This has been called out by Kevin and Thomas too so definitely need to do something here.
3. Some reviewers expressed minor issues with certain images and suggested better annotations of certain diagrams and one reviewer (5) stated that they needed to "jump back and [forth] to [the diagram on the previous page] understand the passage". However, on the whole, most reviewers stated the figures/screenshots were well presented and annotated so think this just requires some minor clean up.
4. The feedback on sections on history of HTTP were interesting. This is something various people at Manning and I have discussed a few times as there was concern that this history was potentially unnecessary background and/or made the book too referencey and less "In Action". One reviewer (17) was of this same opinion, and would have preferred to get straight to HTTP/2, another (11) suggested "less emphasis on HTTP/0.9 stuff" and another (13) felt confused as to the intention of the book due to this history.

However, far more seemed to like the approach using the history and felt it gave the context necessary, and provided a natural flow to the book. Chapter 1 (where most of this history is) got the most positive feedback, with Chapter 2 closely behind it. Additionally, two reviewers (1 and 12) stated that the introductory chapters meant the MQR was perhaps unnecessary restrictive and the book could be useful to a wider audience.

On the whole, I feel these reviews vindicated the approach I have taken, and I would therefore like to keep this. Of course, you can't please all of the people all of the time, but with a full book, readers can skip parts they feel they are more familiar with and dedicating 1 chapter out of 9 or 10, to the introduction and history still feels very appropriate to me.

5. A couple of reviewers (8,13) stated there were too many forward references ("We'll be covering this later", "We'll see more of this in chapter x"). This was intentional to be honest and one reviewer (14) stated this was a good thing ("This is helpful to know that something I might not be familiar with - which the author is talking about - will be discussed in detail later, rather than

having to go off and research that piece on my own.”). I would like Manning’s opinion of whether I shouldn’t do this at all, or am doing it too much at present.

6. Some reviewers picked up on topics they would like to see covered more (detail of HTTP/2, ALPN/NPN, more HTTP Tools, more Web Performance Analysis). These **will** be covered in later chapters (and a few conceded this might be the case) but perhaps could make the ToC clearer on this. One reviewer (16) suggested adding a section on GRPC which I am definitely now considering.

All in all, I think the first point is the main point of improvement I have taken away from these reviews and that I should definitely review this. Points 2 and 3 are worth seeing about improving and points 4-6 should hopefully not require much, if any, corrective action, though worth bearing in mind as I continue the book.

Pleasingly there were very few comments about passages requiring repeated reading to understand and most said the writing style was clear, the pacing was about right, and the book encouraged readers to move forward.

To Do list for each chapter

Chapter 1

- Add a diagram to section 1.1. *Done, but not entirely happy with this. Trying to find a mental model for this.*
- Perhaps add more detail on TCP? *Done but in chapter 2*
- Remove section 1.1.3 as repeated in 2.1. *Done.*
- Consider adding a diagram to 1.4.1

Chapter 2

- Section 2.1 – Replace graph as number of complaints on it. It’s a direct screenshot from the source, but still could be improved. *Done.*
- Section 2.4.1 – consider annotating the diagram better and/or repeating parts of the diagram on subsequent pages. *Done.*

Chapter 3

- Move some (all?) of the installation instructions to an Appendix. Consider removing completely.
- Review Reverse Proxy (3.2.2) and CDN (3.2.3) wording as some comments that it required re-reading.
- Consider location of 3.5. Should it come before the installation instructions? Or possibly a forward reference to it?

All

- Watch for repeated words in particular:
 - complex/complicated
 - hypothetical
- Fix the typos mentioned. *Done.*

Title

One of the things we have struggled with is the Title (currently “HTTP/2 in Action”). There is some concern it’s not enough “In Action”. There were a wider variety of suggestions in the reviews, including a few who seemed to suggest just “HTTP/2”, but the most popular title seems to be to keep “HTTP/2 In Action”.

MQR

Most felt the MQR was appropriate but at least two reviewers (1, 12 and 13) suggested it could be useful for a wider audience and, given the good introduction in chapter 1, some of the prerequisites may be higher than they needed to. This is positive, since it doesn’t seem to be putting too many of the more advanced readers off (reviewer 17 aside) and widens the market for the book. Should consider this feedback carefully as the book progresses and when designing the back cover and the “About this book” section.

Overall Assessment

Overall, I am very positive following this feedback. This is my first book, so I have nothing to compare this to other than the feedback on the initial proposal (who were mostly more advanced than this book’s audience), but I expected a lot more negative (or should I say “constructive”) feedback and certainly a lot less 5-star reviews. Maybe I was overly concerned on this, and this is typical feedback, but quotes like “Well done! One of the better Manning manuscripts I’ve read” suggest this is not the case. Even those who scored the chapters lower (3 stars) found plenty of positives.

The real-world examples (particularly the Amazon one) seem to have gone down very well, and there seem to be the right amount of them, and that they are given at the appropriate points.

My take of it so far, is that the book is progressing on the right track and that there **is** an audience for the book. If this is also the view of Manning, then once a little tweaking is done, I think the book to ready to enter MEAP and for that theory to be put to the test. It’s also comforting that I don’t need to completely rewrite large sections of the first 3 chapters!

Before publishing to MEAP though, we should discuss the diagrams as I have a few questions:

1. Are the current ones acceptable for MEAP or should I spend time on print read diagrams now?
2. What format should images be in?
3. Are there any copyright issues I need to consider (e.g. Figure 1.4 and Figure 2.7 are from cnn.com image, and there are many screenshots of WebPageTest.com, caniuse.com and from web browsers).
4. Are there any other copyright concerns I need to consider when quoting other’s work, or referencing other links? Will a legal department review the text before it goes into MEAP?

Will be good to discuss with Kevin on Monday as to how typical this feedback is or if I’m reading too much into it but I’m very happy with the feedback.