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Designing for Scalability with Erlang/OTP

Erlang/OTP可扩展性设计指南（影印版）

Francesco Cesarini,
Steve Vinoski 著

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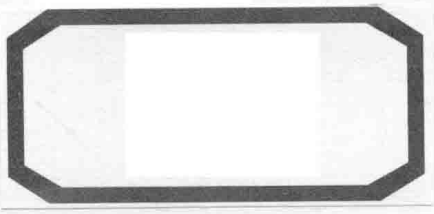

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To Alison, Peter and baby Bump for being patient and supportive.

—Francesco

To Dooley and Ed, for teaching me how, and to Cindy, Ryan, Erin, Andrew, and Jake, for being why.

—Steve

To Joe, Mike, Robert, for making that phone call.

—Francesco & Steve

Preface

This book is what you get if you put together an Erlang enthusiast who worked on the R1 release of OTP in 1996 and a Distributed Systems specialist who discovered a decade later how Erlang/OTP allows you to focus on the real challenges of systems development while avoiding accidental difficulties.

By describing how OTP behaviors are built and why they are needed, we show you how to use them to architect standalone nodes. In our original proposal to O'Reilly, we stopped here. But when writing the book, we decided to push the bar further, documenting our practices, design decisions, and common pitfalls when architecting a distributed system. These patterns, through a set of design choices and tradeoffs we make, give us the scalability, reliability, and availability for which Erlang/OTP is well known. Contrary to popular belief, this does not happen magically or out of the box, but it sure is much easier to achieve than with any other programming language out there that does not emulate Erlang's semantics nor run on the BEAM virtual machine.

Francesco: Why This Book?

Someone once told me that writing books is a bit like having children. Once you've written one and are holding your paper copy, excitement takes over, you quickly forget the hard work and sacrifices, and you want to start writing another one. I've been intending to write the sequel to *Erlang Programming* (O'Reilly) since first holding the paper copy in June 2009. I had no children of my own when I started this project, but it ended up taking so long that my second one is now on its way. Whoever said that good things are not worth waiting for?

As with the first book, we based *Designing for Scalability with Erlang/OTP* on the examples in the Erlang Solution's OTP training material I developed. I used the examples and started explaining them, converting my lectures and approach to teaching into words. When done with a chapter, I went back and ensured the parts students struggled to understand were clear. Questions that were commonly asked by

the best students ended up in sidebars, and long chapters were divided into smaller ones. It all went well until we reached Chapter 11 and 12, because there was no unified way of doing release handling or software upgrade. Rather, there were tools, many of them. Some were integrated in our client's build and release cycle, others worked out of the box. Some were unusable. The chapters are what we hope will become the ultimate guide to anyone wanting to understand how release handling and software upgrade of systems works behind the scenes. They also explain what you need to know should you have to troubleshoot existing tools or write your own.

But the real trouble started with Chapter 13. Not having examples or training material, I found myself formalizing what was in our heads and documenting the approaches we take when architecting Erlang/OTP systems, trying to align it with the theory of distributed computing. Chapter 13 turned into four chapters that took as long to write as the first ten. For those of you who bought the early access, I hope the wait was worth it. For those who wisely waited for us to finish before buying your copy, enjoy!

Steve: Why This Book?

I first discovered Erlang/OTP in 2006 while researching ways to develop enterprise integration software faster, cheaper, and better. No matter how I looked at it, Erlang/OTP was clearly superior to the C++ and Java languages my colleagues and I had long been using at that time. In 2007 I joined a new company and began using Erlang/OTP for a commercial product, and it turned out to be everything my earlier investigation promised it would be. I taught the language to some colleagues and before long, fewer than a handful of us were developing software that was more capable, more reliable, easier to evolve, and ready for production far faster than similar code being written by a significantly larger team of C++ programmers. To this day I remain wholly convinced of the impressive practical effectiveness of Erlang/OTP.

Over the years I've published quite a bit of technical material, and my intended audience for all of it has always been other practitioners like me. This book is no exception. In the first 12 chapters we provide the deep level of detail that practicing developers need in order to fully understand the fundamental design principles of OTP. With those details we mix a number of useful nuggets of practical knowledge—modules, functions, and approaches that will save you significant time and effort in your day-to-day design, development, and debugging efforts. In the final four chapters we shift gears, focusing more on the big picture of the tradeoffs involved in developing, deploying, and operating resilient, scalable distributed applications. Due to the staggering amount of knowledge, approaches, and tradeoffs involved in distributed systems, fault tolerance, and DevOps, writing these chapters concisely proved difficult, but I believe we hit just the right balance of providing plenty of great advice without getting lost in the weeds.

I hope this book helps you improve the quality and utility of the software and systems you develop.

Who Should Read This Book

This book's intended audience includes Erlang and Elixir developers and architects who have made their way through at least one of the introductory books and are ready to take their knowledge to the next level. It is not a book to start off with, but rather the book that picks up where all others leave you. Chapters 3–12 build on each other and should be read sequentially, as do Chapters 13–16. If you do not need an Erlang primer, feel free to skip Chapter 2.

How To Read This Book

We wrote this book to be compatible with Erlang Release 18.2. Most of the features we describe work with earlier releases; major features that don't are indicated in the book. Currently unknown incompatibilities with future releases will be detailed on our errata page and fixed in the book's github repository. You are encouraged to download the examples in the book from our github repository and run them yourself to better understand them.

Acknowledgments

Writing this book has been a long journey. While undertaking it we've had a lot of great help from a lot of wonderful people. Our editor Andy Oram has been an endless source of ideas and suggestions, patiently guiding us, giving us feedback while providing ongoing encouragement. Thank you Andy, we couldn't have done it without you! Simon Thompson, coauthor of *Erlang Programming* helped with the book proposal and laid the foundation for the second chapter. Many thanks to Robert Virding for contributing some of the examples. We've had many readers, reviewers and contributors give us feedback as we drip-fed them the chapters. At the risk of forgetting someone, they are: are Richard Ben Aleya, Roberto Aloi, Jesper Louis Andersen, Bob Balance, Eva Bihari, Martin Bodocky, Natalia Chechina, Jean-François Cloutier, Richard Croucher, Viktória Fördős, Heinz Gies, Joacim Halén, Fred Hebert, Csaba Hoch, Torben Hoffmann, Bob Ippolito, Aman Kohli, Jan Willem Luiten, Jay Nelson, Robby Raschke, Andrzej Śliwa, David Smith, Sam Tavakoli, Premanand Thangamani, Jan Uhlig, John Warwick, David Welton, Ulf Wiger, and Alexander Yong. If we missed you, our sincere apologies! Drop us an email and you will be promptly added. A shout-out goes to the staff at Erlang Solutions for reading the chapters as they were being written and everyone else who submitted to the errata as part of the early release. A special thank you goes to all of you who cheered us on through social media channels, especially other authors. You know who you are! Last,

but not least, thanks to the production, marketing, and conference teams at O'Reilly who kept on reminding us that it's not over until you are holding the paper copy. We really appreciate your support!

Conventions Used in This Book

The following typographical conventions are used in this book:

Italic
: Indicates new terms, applications, URLs, email addresses, filenames, directory names, and file extensions.

`Constant width`
: Used for program listings, as well as within paragraphs to refer to program elements such as variable or function names, databases, data types, environment variables, statements, and keywords. Also used for behaviors, commands, and command-line options.

`Constant width bold`
: Shows commands or other text that should be typed literally by the user.

`Constant width italic`
: Shows text that should be replaced with user-supplied values or by values determined by context.

This icon signifies a tip or suggestion.

This icon signifies a general note.

This icon indicates a warning or caution.

Using Code Examples

Supplemental material (code examples, exercises, etc.) is available for download at: *https://github.com/francescoc/scalabilitywitherlangotp*

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