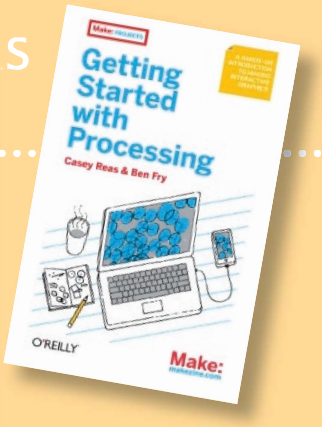
REVIEWS

Technology books

The introduction and uptake of Engineering Science in Scottish schools has sent Technical Education teachers scrambling back to their bookshelves for information and refreshers on electronics, processing and platforms.

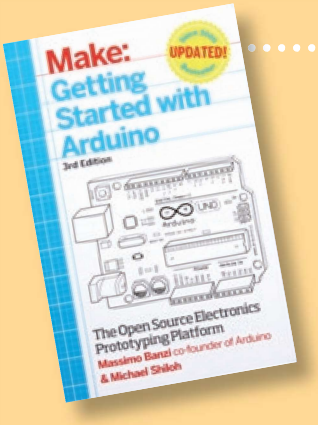
With the reasonable prices of open source platform kits, more and more departments are better able to equip their classes with various components and connectors. What is perhaps missing is the teacher confidence in successfully using them. Here we consider two popular titles that may help.



Getting Started with Processing, Casey Reas & Ben Fry

"This book is written for people who want a casual and concise introduction to computer programming, who want to create images and simple interactive programs." So while it is clear who this 200 page book is aimed at, once the initial tutorials are completed those of you who remember TurboCAD or early AutoCAD will be aware of the similarities of the good old days when you got a sense of achievement when typing in X, Y co-ordinates led to 2-D shapes that could be as complex as you wanted to make! The software required is basic and free to download (but feel free to make a donation to reward what were probably months of hard work by the creators!) and there is a real feeling of accomplishment when numerical choices link together and create visual shapes, which are moveable around the screen when you get it right. Towards the end of the book it moves to the transferring of processing sketches to Arduino boards, opening up a whole host of further links and lessons in developing skills.

O'Reilly 2010 - £12.99



Getting Started with Arduino (3rd Edition), Massimo Banzi & Michael Shiloh

Having a book co-authored by the co-founder of Arduino, you'd be forgiven for expecting page after page of a sales manual for the company's products. However this 3rd edition of the original best seller really does concentrate on getting the basic facts of making your kit work across to the reader with simple and concise language. Even if you feel you are being 'forced' to do Arduino with classes rather than 'wanting' to, the plain instruction, sketched images and extremely helpful Quick References at the end of the book probably mean that it won't be long before your book is full of highlighter penned paragraphs and pencil notes next to examples of circuits you can learn and teach your classes. Be warned however, you really need the Arduino hardware in front of you for lots of trial and error before you can expect to confidently lead 20 pupils through blinking lights, button sensors, debugging techniques and much more!

MakerMedia 2015 - £13.99