Another excellent resource is Ajax Patterns (ajaxpatterns.org), mentioned earlier. Michael Mahemoff maintains Ajax Patterns, and although the updates may not be quite as frequent as Ajaxian, the site has impressive depth for such a new area. Don’t be dissuaded by the word Patterns in the title, the site has plenty of information on Ajax basics, frameworks, and common gotchas.

Ajax Matters (ajaxmatters.com/r/welcome) has a great collection of articles and books related to Ajax. You’ll find more than just references to the XMLHttpRequest object—you’ll find excellent resources on JavaScript and CSS as well. Ajax Matters includes a blog, though it isn’t updated frequently.

Another blog worth tracking is the appropriately named Ajax Blog (ajaxblog.com). This blog features a number of contributors and, as you would expect, covers a wide variety of topics in the Ajax space. Like Ajax Matters, it does a good job of discussing topics related to Ajax such as browser compatibility and tutorials.

Besides just using Google to search for information on Ajax, stopping by Google Labs (labs.google.com) from time to time is advisable. While not every application or feature Google Labs adds to its beta area is Ajax based, features such as Google Maps and Google Suggest certainly are primary reasons why Ajax is receiving so much attention these days. Within a few days of Google deploying something really cool, chances are good someone will have it dissected.

It’s worth keeping an eye on the good people at Adaptive Path (www.adaptivepath.com). We owe the term Ajax to Jesse James Garrett, a founder of Adaptive Path; in addition, the company was a co-organizer, with O’Reilly, of the Ajax Summit. Without a doubt, Adaptive Path is a true leader in the Web design space and undoubtedly will have more to say on the topic of Ajax.

If you haven’t heard of Rails or Ruby yet, head over to www.rubyonrails.org/ and www.ruby-lang.org/en/. Rails is an open-source Web framework that was developed by David Heinemeier Hansson of 37signals while working on the project management tool Basecamp, and it’s written in the object-oriented scripting language Ruby. Proving that all good frameworks are extracted from living applications, Rails incorporates a number of fascinating features. What draws many to Rails is its convention-over-configuration approach along with its built-in ability to generate the basic scaffolding of a typical application that has a Web front end for a relational database, which seems to be all the rage these days. Several people have reported productivity gains using Ruby on Rails that are frankly staggering, and by following any of several tutorials at this site you can have an application up and running in mere minutes.¹

What makes Rails interesting in the context of this book is its amazing support for Ajax right out of the box. Rails includes libraries to handle drag-and-drop actions along with other common Ajax approaches, and helper packages exist to ease the burden of performing tasks such as using autocomplete, calling the server, and submitting a form in the background. It’s no surprise that Rails has such great support for Ajax—several of the original applications built with it are shining examples of what can be done with Ajax. Take a look at Basecamp, Backpack, and Ta-da List to get some inspiration for your next application. It’s worth keeping an eye on 37signals (www.37signals.com), which is truly pushing the boundaries of the traditional Web applications.

¹ The authors have indeed done this and can verify it takes longer to actually download all the components than to get an application running. One author was told about a project that took four months using the latest in the lightweight Java stack that was rewritten with Ruby on Rails in four evenings (not days, evenings).