Book Reviews

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Using XML: A How-To-Do-It Manual and CD-ROM for Librarians. By Kwong Bor Ng. New York: Neal-Schuman, 2007. 171p. $85.00 paper (ISBN 978-1-55570-567-1/1-55570-567-7). How-To-Do-It Manuals, no. 154.

Extensible Markup Language (XML) is not a new topic in the library community, and good selection of books is devoted to incorporating XML into library-related activities and applications. *Using XML: A How-To-Do-It Manual and CD-ROM for Librarians* differs from these publications because it is a basic introduction to XML syntax. The author, Kwong Bor Ng, an associate professor at the Graduate School of Library and Information Studies of Queen College, City University of New York, provides a step-by-step guide to learning XML-based resource description and bibliographic-data management.

While *Using XML* briefly discusses XML applications in libraries, the text refers interested readers to *XML in Libraries*, edited by Roy Tennant, which covers using XML for catalog records, interlibrary loan, and building digital collections.[1] This is not a shortcoming in the book because the author specifically states that *Using XML* "will focus on using XML to encode metadata, primarily bibliographic data" (14). The volume does not focus on particular XML applications; its strength is its broad overview of creating records in XML and adding structure, definitions, and style to those records. These basic concepts can then be applied to more specific applications on an individual level.

Although it is an introduction to XML, *Using XML* covers a variety of XML-related topics, making it a great resource both for beginners and for those with some XML experience. The book is structured into five parts, which are based on XML difficulty level (as determined by the author) starting with "Introducing XML," which discusses the concepts of XML, and ending with "Advanced XML Techniques," which covers schemas and Extensible Style Language (XSL). These parts are further broken down into manageable chapters and sections focusing on a specific topic. Readers with some XML experience can go directly to their needed information because the chapters and sections are listed in the table of contents, allowing easy access for readers who just need a refresher in a specific area.

This is a practical guide on XML whose major strength is its numerous exercises using real bibliographic data. Right after learning the basics of XML in the first part, "Basic XML Techniques" begins the exercises with the reader creating a basic XML document. As the reader progresses, that basic document evolves into a more complex XML document as the later exercises build upon it. The exercises are easy to follow because they stand out clearly from the rest of the text. A majority of the text is an explanation of those exercises, reinforcing their concepts. The accompanying CD contains an electronic copy of the exercises to which readers can compare their own exercises.

The CD does contain some errors. It can either display a Web page interface with links to all its files or be viewed just as files. The files include the XML exercises and further reading materials consisting of World Wide Web Consortium (W3C) documents on XML, all of which are freely available from the W3C Web site (www.w3.org). The major flaw in the CD is found only in the Web page–interface view in the chapter 9 exercises with the .xsd extension. Most of these files will not open properly because of incorrect link names. Yet all the files are present on the CD and can be accessed through viewing just the files display.

The appendixes are an excellent addition to the book. They contain a glossary and a handy listing of numeric references. Additionally, the author takes a further look at two XML-based Machine-Readable Catalog (MARC) formats: a simplified MARC DTD and the MARC21 SLIM schema. The author mentions these formats, along with many other XML-based metadata formats, several times throughout the book, but never goes into detail on any but the Simplified Dublin Core, and even that coverage is brief. Just as *Using XML* does not focus on specific XML applications, it also does not focus on actual metadata formats. Rather, it teaches readers how to create their own DTD or schema for their own bibliographic management. Even in the appendixes, the author touches only briefly on a simplified MARC DTD, but thoroughly discusses the more widely used MARC21 SLIM schema. The amount of detail in the MARC21 SLIM section is an unexpected, but pleasant, surprise as the author breaks the schema into several parts and discusses each of the parts in detail. The complete schema is included in the text along with an electronic copy on the CD.

Overall, *Using XML* is a basic introduction to XML syntax that complements books on incorporating XML applications into library activities. While readers could find an online XML tutorial or a general XML guide, *Using XML* is aimed at librarians and

uses exercises and jargon that make sense in the library world. Yet its broad XML coverage does not restrict this book to specific applications, allowing many different areas in technical services, digital libraries, and Web development to benefit.—*Tabatha Becker (tbecker@uccs.edu), University of Colorado at Colorado Springs.*

Reference

1. Roy Tennant, ed., *XML in Libraries* (New York: Neal-Schuman, 2001).

Using Interactive Technologies in Libraries. Eds. Kathlene Hanson and H. Frank Cervone. New York: Neal-Schuman, 2007. 105p. $59.95 paper (ISBN 978-1-55570-612-8). Library and Information Technology Association Guide, no. 13.

The stated objective of *Using Interactive Technologies in Libraries* is to "help you see through the buzz to determine the most useful applications" (xi) to implement in your library. The editors strive to help librarians not only understand new technology but also to learn how to use it themselves. Kathlene Hanson and H. Frank Cervone have achieved this goal by selecting authors who have concrete experience on which they have based their contributions to this text.

A major challenge of writing a book about technology is that it could easily become outdated before it even hits the press. The editors of *Using Interactive Technologies in Libraries* avoid this potential pitfall by selecting tried and true technologies for their focus. The book focuses on technologies that, despite being at the peak of their "hype cycles" (xi), have been tested and have lasted longer than the latest passing craze. In five chapters, this volume addresses four unique technologies: RSS (two chapters with different foci), wikis, blogs, and podcasts. Each author gives a brief introduction of the technology and goes on to describe how it might be applied in libraries. This description of applica-

tions is often based on the authors' own experiences using the technology. The practicality of the chapters makes this book useful to any novice user of any one of the technologies addressed.

With the exception of the chapter titled "Wiki as Research Guide," all of the chapters deal in some way with RSS feeds. For example, in "An Introduction to Podcasting," John Iliff and Tyler Rousseau highlight that RSS feeds help make podcasts accessible. One might question whether there should have been more diversity in the selection of topics; however, RSS feeds are such a successful and ubiquitous technology that there is almost no avoiding them, and certainly no harm in addressing their use in a variety of contexts.

It might be expected that a book about *using* technology would be completely optimistic about the subject. That is not entirely true in this case. In "Library Blogs: The New Technology Bandwagon" the author uses a critical eye to address the potential issues of leaping into a technology trend without a full understanding of whether it will be an improvement to library service. The author describes the results of a survey he conducted at his academic institution in which students indicated their lack of understanding of and interest in RSS feeds. These survey results were the reason for his reluctance to enter into the world of blogging. The title of this chapter is somewhat misleading because it actually describes the potential for failure of library blogs while providing one possible solution. But the author's skepticism does balance out the views of the other seemingly unwavering fans of technology featured in this text.

While the technologies addressed could be easily implemented in any library setting, the examples are from academic libraries. The inclusion of an example of a successful implementation of one of these tools in a public or special library would have rounded

out the book nicely.

Using Interactive Technologies in Libraries is a slim, accessible guide to implementing four of the most popular technologies within library settings. Both librarians new to technology and those with an existing interest will find this book to be a useful addition to their technology toolkits. —*Sarah Wickett, (wicketts@queensu .ca), Queen's University, Kingston, Ont.*

Sudden Selector's Guide to Business Resources. By Robin Bergart and Vivian Lewis. Chicago: ALCTS CMDS, 2007. 70p. $28.00 (ALA members $25.65) paper (ISBN-13 978-0-8389-8414-7; ISBN-10 0-8389-8414-2) ALCTS/CMDS Sudden Selector's Series, no. 1.

It is not unusual for librarians to be asked to take on new work assignments, including collection management for a new subject area. If this has happened to you, you know how valuable it would be to have a mentor, advisor, or a written guide to get you started in mastering the new collection development assignment. What you need is a nuts-and-bolts, how-to-do-it guide to provide basic resources and encouragement. This is exactly what the new ALCTS/CMDS Sudden Selector's series provides.

This first volume in the series offers advice to librarians who are new to business subject fields and who lack formal education in management or business. The authors state that the purpose of the book is to help the librarian through the first few months on the job through "becoming a competent selector of business resources and all that this role entails: joining associations, finding mentors, monitoring electronic discussion lists, and of course, learning how to select materials for your collection" (xii). This is a sizable mission for a seventy-page book. But, from the start, the authors make it clear that this is not a comprehensive book outlining all major resources in business, but rather a beginning point