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Using XML: A How-To-Do-It Manual and CD-ROM for Librarians

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USING XML: A HOW-TO-DO-IT MANUAL AND CD-ROM FOR

LIBRARIANS

USING XML: A HOW-TO-DO-IT MANUAL AND CD-ROM FOR LIBRARIANS. Kwong Bor Ng. *New York: Neal-Schuman Publishers, Inc., 2007, xi, 177 pp., ISBN 978-1-55570-567-1.*

In today's electronic world, librarians are encountering applications that use XML (eXtensible Markup Language) for rendering, transmitting, storing, and presenting data. XML is an international World Wide Web Consortium (W3C) standard for delivering and presenting content and is widely used on the web. Libraries are increasingly using XML for many tasks: creating web sites, transferring metadata between standards, harvesting content for digital repositories, delivering services through the web among many other tasks. Librarians working in technical services need to have a working knowledge of XML because it is prevalent everywhere.

This work provides an easy-to-read introduction to XML written in everyday language for users who have no previous knowledge of XML and for those who have had only cursory introductions to XML. It may also be a good text for those who will be teaching XML to beginners, as it combs through the finer points of the language that may be tacitly known to the expert user. The author's hope is that "after reading these pages and completing the exercises, you will have a fundamental education in XML-based resource description and bibliographic data management (p. xi)." It is clear that this work was written with the beginner in mind as it shows step-by-step tutorials of how to create XML documents. The included CD-ROM contains some of the example XML documents used in the tutorials.

Readers will learn about the different types of XML documents and how each can be used to manipulate data in different ways. Each chapter builds upon the knowledge established in the previous one beginning with an explanation of what XML is and how it evolved from SGML (Standard Generalized Markup Language). Librarians will learn how to display their XML

encoded documents on the web by using Cascading Style Sheets (CSS) or Extensible Stylesheet

Language (XSL). Document Type Definitions (DTDs) are a type of XML document that define

the grammar and content of XML documents created to serve a particular need. This work

provides instruction on creating a custom DTD to meet the data needs of one's library and gives

an introduction to the more complex XML Schema Language, which is another way of assigning

structure to XML documents. The four appendices of this work include a MARC DTD, the

MARC21 Slim Schema, a glossary of basic XML terms, and table of common references

(entities). This book includes an index.

When reading this work, it may be useful to pair it with other reference materials.

Although it provides a low barrier of access to learning the fundamentals of XML, it does not

always present the information in a way that one can reference well when creating XML

documents. While completing the exercises included in this work, it is difficult to quickly

reference the defined symbols and terminology needed to create XML documents. The

information is not missing from the work as it is present as text within the paragraphs, but it is

not always laid out in tables and figures for easy reference.

This work provides the nuts and bolts of learning XML from the ground up. Though it is

not a defect of the work, it seems important to mention that this is not a guide to implementing

library technologies that take advantage of XML. This book is highly recommended to anyone

who wants to learn the basics of creating XML documents, especially those learning XML for

the first time.

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