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Review of Blogging and RSS: A Librarian's Guide

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Blogging and RSS: A Librarian's Guide

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BLOGGING AND RSS: A LIBRARIAN'S GUIDE

BLOGGING AND RSS: A LIBRARIAN'S GUIDE. Sauers, Michael P. *Medford, N.J: Information Today, 2006, 272 pp., ISBN: 1-57387-268-7, $29.50.*

Michael Sauers' book is what its title states: a librarian's guide to blogging and RSS. This detailed guide can be read as outlined by the author, either in its entirety or by individual chapters of interest. Each chapter can stand on its own and be easily comprehended. The first half of the book covers blogs, while the remainder explains RSS. It seems well-suited to librarians falling in the range of knowing nothing about blogs to those who have an intermediate level of understanding of the topics.

The chapters are arranged in progressive order starting with an introduction to blogs, the creation of blogs, then moving on to RSS, aggregators, and feeds. Each of the subjects is covered comprehensibly. For example, chapter 1 is a good introduction to blogs – giving definitions, types, and reasons to blog. Chapter 4 gives step-by-step instructions and guidelines on creating and publishing a blog. Several screenshots are used throughout this and several other chapters. These views are somewhat useful, but the font size and grayscale make most of them unreadable. Also covered are reasons why one should blog, including three important guidelines: "1) have something to say, 2) have something to say regularly, and 3) have something to say responsibly."

Chapter 2 shows numerous librarian and library blogs and postings, which are especially useful and popular among librarians. A wide range of interesting blogs and postings are included. Chapter 3 contains interviews of the librarian bloggers behind the blogs. This section could easily be skipped unless one has a special interest in learning more about these bloggers, as the interviews can be somewhat redundant and tedious.

The second half of the book gives an introduction to RSS and feeds. The author takes a subject that can seem complicated and simplifies it by clearly explaining the role of RSS in subscribing to a blog, RSS vs. Atom feeds, and how to locate feeds. The use of aggregators to

read and manage feeds is also extensively covered, including detailed examples of Bloglines, a free Web-based aggregator. A helpful feature of Bloglines is the notifier, which checks for new items in one's blog subscriptions and gives on-screen, pop-up notifications. Podcasting is also briefly mentioned.

A list of library and library-related feeds and RSS services follows in chapter 7, which is really a continuation of the blog listings in chapter 2. Several additional interesting blogs are presented, such as Librarians Internet Index, New York Times, and Topix.net. The final chapter explains how to create one's own hand rolling, semi-automated, or fully-automated feed.

Overall, the book is very effective for learning about blogs and RSS. The step-by-step instructions make it very simple to create a blog, subscribe to a feed, or create a feed. Included is a glossary of terms used throughout the book and an appendix of feed code examples. A recommended list of books and articles is also given for further information on blogs and RSS.

Michael Sauer sums up his book in the afterword and effectively ties it all together. The ultimate goal is not just learning the "mechanics" of blogging and RSS, but practically applying these tools to market one's library. He states that "librarians are bad at publicity." Instead, we need to promote our libraries and library events both before and "after" the event. This is an interesting and seemingly unique approach – to write about an event after it takes place. But it makes sense – after all, to blog is to tell a story.

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