

Coding with XML for Efficiencies in Cataloging and Metadata: Practical Applications of XSD, XSLT, and XQuery

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Abstract:

Review of Cole, T. W., Han, M. & Schwartz, C. (2018). Coding with XML for Efficiencies in Cataloging and Metadata: Practical Applications of XSD, XSLT, and XQuery Chicago: ALA Editions.

Keywords: *xml, xQuery, RDF, metadata, cataloging*



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Coding with XML for Efficiencies in Cataloging and Metadata is an Association for Library Collections and Technical Services (ALCTS) monograph published by the American Library Association (ALA) written with the practitioner in mind. Like other texts in the ALCTS monograph collection, this title functions as a practical guide on specific topics relevant to the work found in library technical services departments or divisions. Using XML and leveraging it for the work that many catalogers and metadata librarians presently do – manipulating and transforming large batches of metadata - is a pertinent topic for an introductory guide.

Coding with XML for Efficiencies in Cataloging and Metadata is a product of an ALA pre-conference workshop held by the authors in 2015, hence the text's approachable, hands-on style. Cole and Han are authors of an earlier text, *XML for Catalogers and Metadata Librarians* (2013), on the same topic of utilizing XML for metadata workflows in libraries and addressing the competencies needed to do so. Schwartz has also published on the topics of cataloging, metadata, and using XQuery, extending the expertise of the other co-authors.

The text is comprised of twelve concise chapters, with each one establishing the context and basic knowledge needed for the subsequent chapter. The first three chapters provide a quick introduction to XML as a serialization format and way to encode data while discussing its application for metadata-related library work. Chapters four and five introduce XML schema (XSD), XSLT, and XPath before demonstrating their use in a brief case study presented in chapter six. Chapter seven introduces HTML + RDFa and how to utilize it and XSLT for linked data workflows while providing another brief case study to illustrate the process.

Chapters eight through ten cover XQuery and discusses key concepts like regular expressions. The penultimate chapter provides another illustrative case study for how XQuery is used in metadata workflows before concluding with chapter twelve and the appendices. Chapter twelve provides lists of recommended resources for further study, while the following appendices expand upon some of the code and materials referenced in earlier chapters.

As a practical guide, this text achieves what it sets out to do. It functions well as a way to introduce new concepts and support the continuing education efforts of the busy cataloger. The plethora of workflow examples and case study illustrations make abstract concepts that might not seem readily applicable relevant to the types of projects metadata librarians and catalogers encounter. The fact that each author pulls examples from previous metadata projects that they have worked on at their respective institutions strengthens the text's relevancy to catalogers and metadata specialists. Additionally, the authors were able to strike the fine balance between providing enough information to understand the basics of XML without overburdening readers with too much detail. This is especially important if the reader who picks up this text is completely new to using XML and its related technologies. On the other hand, the fact that the text does not delve too deeply into the topics presented means that it may not be as useful to readers with more experience with XML applications.

Another strength of this text is that it approaches the topic of linked data workflows in a manner that is more accessible to readers who may be new to the concept. Written works on linked data can be highly conceptual or focus more on cutting edge technologies, which can

be potentially off putting to novices. Having a chapter in this book that outlines a hands-on approach to adding URIs and other transformations that prepare library metadata for the semantic web using a mature, well-integrated technology standard makes it more approachable. Although it is not the cutting edge of library technology, using HTML + RDFa is a way that most libraries can easily start experimenting with linked data in their own metadata without completely upending current practices. Again, the brief workflow examples provided in chapter seven aids this purpose by illustrating how the work can get done with existing standards.

Coding with XML for Efficiencies in Cataloging and Metadata serves the specified audience of metadata and cataloging practitioners, as it is optimized as a quick and succinct method to aid in self-study. Since this text is aimed at working librarians, there is a certain level of technology proficiency that the reader is assumed to have – making this text less ideal for general audiences or librarians with specializations outside of technical services or resource discovery. Overall, this text is a welcome addition to a collection that supports the professional development or training for stated audience.