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Something to Think About -- A Moment's Destruction

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forms. Throughout the book the author uses library terminology and library based examples to illustrate key concepts and definitions, a practice which will help librarians better understand the terms and concepts that are explained.

Using straightforward language, real-world terminology, and clear definitions, Westman begins by explaining how database-backed Web pages can be beneficial to library Websites. The introduction points to advantages such as providing users with accurate and up-to-date information in real time as well as easier site maintenance and data publishing. The introduction also provides a clear explanation of the open source software movement, what advantages it has over proprietary software, and how open source software can benefit libraries.

Moving on from the introduction, the text is divided into three parts. The first addresses database basics, setup, and administration with a particular focus on relational databases. Westman takes the mystery out of technical terms as he explains, using simple examples, how relational databases management systems work, examines Structured Query Language (SQL), and describes open source alternatives for relational database systems. Moving on from these explanations, the book uses a practical hands-on approach to walk readers through the steps of creating a database, importing data into MySQL tables, and establish accounts that can access the data via the Web.

The second section of the text focuses on programming and creating reports. As a librarian with little programming experience, this reviewer was apprehensive about the level of experience necessary to understand the programming chapters of this book. Using a cooking metaphor, Westman effectively introduces basic programming concepts that readers will need to be familiar with. The reader will gain an idea of how programs are structured as well as an overview of different types of programming languages that can be used. Westman takes the introduction to programming one step further when he outlines, step by step, how to use PHP to create a variety of reports. Hands on experience is invaluable when it comes to many aspects of Web development, and this book expertly combines background information with introductory exercises so the reader can see firsthand how concepts can be applied to actual databases.

Finally, this book examines a database-based Web project step-by-step from the original idea and design through programming and implementation. This section of the book builds on exercises explained in previous chapters. In doing this, the reader truly gets a sense of the effort, knowledge, and steps required to create a database backed Web page.

The text also includes a complete glossary of terms used and an appendix of programming standards. The clearly written style of this book coupled with the increasing user demand for dynamic Web pages make this a title worth considering for any librarian who is interested in Web development.