

Despite these small weaknesses, there's a lot to like. The book is well organised, relentlessly practical, and addresses many of the needs of its intended audience. It won't make you a data management professional, but if you are a research scientist, you might learn enough to get out of a hole and you might start managing your data better. It is data management for researchers who really care about other subjects but have to jump through some administrative hoops. Along the way, Briney aspires to help her audience care a little more.

Simon Wall  
Australian Bureau of Statistics  
 [simon.wall@abs.gov.au](mailto:simon.wall@abs.gov.au)

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**Practical Ontologies for Information Professionals**, David Stuart, London, Facet, 2016, viii + 184 pp., GBP£59.95 (paperback), ISBN 978 1 783300 62 4.

Stuart's *Practical Ontologies for Information Professionals* is a timely work; a point the author agrees with when stating that the book comes at 'a pivotal point in the history of ontologies' (p. 21). Introducing the now-familiar background of a scenario of information overload, the author suggests that an understanding, and appropriate application of, semantic ontology is a way to address the collapse in meaning that is threatened by this situation. The audience for this practical primer is a broad-sounding 'information professionals', which appear on further investigation to be limited by the author to library and cultural heritage institutions. The rationale behind this limitation is not clear to this reviewer since the benefits outlined in the text are as applicable to the work of government archivists and records managers as to those involved more explicitly in cultural heritage organisations or libraries. It is an odd note in a work that is effectively advocating crossing the streams of the information profession(s) – but it does not significantly detract from its effectiveness.

The first two chapters are largely concerned with defining some of the – admittedly complex and often unfamiliar – terms involved. Unlike some other attempts, this section also includes some discussion about the reasons why an information professional might want to understand this complexity, establishing an idea that time investment has a return for the reader. This is of great benefit, but might have come before some of the definitions in order to avoid readers succumbing to existential dread while expanding their professional vocabulary. The definitions are solid though and are recommended for anyone trying to come to grips with the simultaneously new and old ideas involved in non-philosophic ontology. The third chapter discusses some of the more prevalent extant ontologies and puts them in some context. At this point the lack of glossary of the terms used, especially for the *many* acronyms involved, is a striking omission. Although these terms become rapidly familiar for a practitioner, it is fairly intimidating for the intended audience and newcomers may need to make recourse to a search engine if intuition fails.

Chapters four and five cover the adoption and building of ontologies and were the chapters most eagerly read by the reviewer. The chapter on adoption is a good mix of theoretical and pragmatic and is well supplied with clear diagrams to assist in interpretation. The chapter on building ontologies is also solid, but neglects a discussion of alternative methods which had been a pleasant surprise in preceding chapters. The absence of much mention of competency question-driven ontology authoring techniques was unexpected, but it is possible that this approach has not become popular in Stuart's information professional circles because there is less of a need

for subject matter experts and modellers to communicate, owing to the fact that the information modellers often are the subject matter experts (so-called ‘double experts’; p. 22). Chapter six deals with the interrogation of ontologies, or how they might be used for information retrieval and knowledge discovery. This is a straightforward introduction to SPARQL, the semantic web query language. Stuart has a background in the analysis and measurement of information retrieval, and this chapter reflects this expertise and a laudable desire to bring practical examples into the discussion of a topic that can sometimes become extremely conceptual.

The final chapter is a short summation of the topics of the book and a kind of encouragement for information professionals to become aware of and involved in the community of ontology use. Stuart argues that information professionals have contributions to make to this community, as well as things to gain from it. It is highly interesting that the author notes there is genuine promise in the use of machine analytics and natural language processing, but at the same time stresses the significance and value of continued involvement of human beings in information management activities (p. 156). This insight is an important one; the move to greater use of machines should not remove human involvement, but rather significantly change its nature.

*Practical Ontologies for Information Professionals* must be considered a success in terms of creating a useful, succinct primer that covers a great deal of ground and makes sensible benefits-related claims about why to engage in serious thought about ontologies rather than merely describing what they are or explaining how to use them.

John Machin  
Department of Finance

 [John.Machin@finance.gov.au](mailto:John.Machin@finance.gov.au)

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