communiqué

bookmark reviewed by shel holtz, abc, iabc fellow

Points for style

While not especially well organized, this slim volume offers solid guidance on handling Web-related style issues

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I have to confess to being a bit confounded by *The Elements of Internet Style: The New Rules of Creating Valuable Content for Today's Readers.* There's an expectation that any book leveraging the strength of Strunk and White's *The Elements of Style* will mirror the organizational and structural approach taken by that ubiquitous reference guide. *The Elements of Internet Style,* though, is an odd mixture of narrative text and Strunk-ish listings. It's easy, for example, to discern what the editors at EEI Press—the book's authors— think of new or troublesome jargon. It's all contained in a single chapter, listed in alphabetical order. If you're seeking specific guidance on a particular dimension of writing for the Web, though, you're pretty much stuck with reading through an entire chapter on the subject.

Nevertheless, *The Elements of Internet Style* has found a home with the other reference books I keep within easy reach. Those chapters that do provide quick access to preferred styles have enough value to earn a spot with the *Harper Dictionary of Contemporary Usage, Words into Type, The Elements of Grammar, The Elements of Editing* and *Fowler's Modern English Usage,* not to mention my well-worn copy of Strunk and White.

I do wish the book were
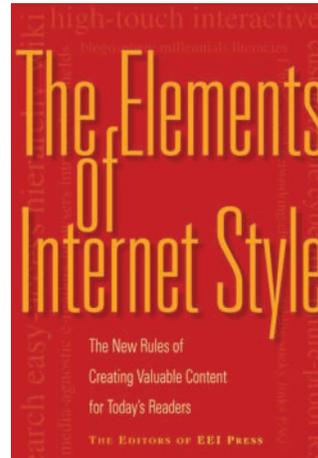
about the book
The Elements of Internet Style: The New Rules of Creating Valuable Content for Today's Readers
by EEI Press Editors
EEI Press (with Allworth Press), 2007
162 pages

organized to make it easier to find a rule. For example, suggestions on how to deal with abbreviations, currency, dates, numbers and units of measure appear in a catchall chapter called "The Rules Used to Matter. What Now?" So do rules on electronic citations (how, in print, would you display the citation for a web site or a CD-ROM?). The book does have a comprehensive index, which addresses some of the problems. Nevertheless, I would have preferred it to be as easy as it is to find advice on using the active voice in

"Principles of Composition" in Strunk and White.

You may not agree with everything you read in *The Elements of Internet Style.* One minor example: The authors advise against using *http://* and *www* when producing printed text containing URLs. I find it still useful for a number of reasons. Some URLs direct you to secure sites and use the *https://* form. It's necessary to include that in print; if people don't enter it, they won't get to their destination. And as long as you need to include those, consistency suggests you should include the basic *http://* as well. There are also some sites that don't use the *www* (such as my blog, at http://blog.holtz.com); adding the *http://* and, if there is one, the *www,* simply makes the URL crystal clear.

But the remaining advice on URLs is sound. The authors advise against breaking them into two separate lines and, when that's unavoidable, doing so after a slash but before a period "to avoid the appearance of terminal punctuation. And don't insert a hyphen when breaking a URL; since internal punctuation is part of the address, adding a hyphen where it doesn't belong can misdirect readers."

That's the kind of advice a lot of people are looking for, and *The Elements of Internet Style* is chock-full of it. ●

about the reviewer
Shel Holtz, ABC, IABC Fellow, is principal of Holtz Communication + Technology in Concord, California. With his co-host Neville Hobson, ABC, Holtz produces the podcast "For Immediate Release: The Hobson & Holtz Report," available at www .forimmediaterelease.biz.