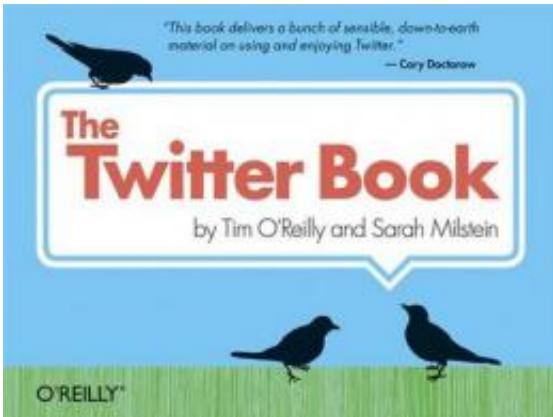# Review: New guide gives Twitterific advice

July 1 2009, By MICHAEL LIEDTKE , AP Technology Writer

In this image provided by O'Reilly Media Inc., the cover of "The Twitter Book" is shown. (AP Photo/O'Reilly Media Inc.)

(AP) -- Sometimes Twitter can make newcomers feel like twits because the online messaging service isn't as simple as it sounds.

The idea of sharing information in 140-character snippets is easy to grasp, but it can be confounding to navigate the communications crossfire while trying to learn Twitter's etiquette and idiom. Then there's the befuddling matter of trying to figure out whom you should follow and which Twitter tools you should use.

It all starts to make sense after reading "The Twitter Book," a primer co-written by two of the messaging service's early evangelists, Tim O'Reilly and Sarah Milstein. It's worth the suggested retail price of $20, though

Amazon.com was recently selling the book for $13.59.

The 234-page guide is so helpful that many readers no doubt will tweet its praises and thank "(at)timoreilly" and "(at)sarahm" - the authors' Twitter handles - for helping people understand why Twitter is emerging as the Internet's most powerful communications vehicle since e-mail.

If you really want to spread the word, you'll RT recommendations for the book. (If you don't know "RT" is shorthand for retweeting someone else's message, then you definitely should get this book.)

Even if you know what "RT" stands for, you probably could benefit from the book's suggestions - such as how to retweet properly to ensure the message's author gets due credit.

There are also smart tips on how to post information and observations that are more likely to be retweeted and expand your influence in the Twitterverse. Some of the advice is just commonsense, but didn't occur to me until I read the book. For example, if you are setting out to be retweeted, you probably should use less than the 140-character limit to leave room for someone to insert the RT and your username in their retweet. The book suggests limiting yourself to about 125 characters to encourage retweeting.

If you want to reach the biggest audience, the book recommends posting your pithiest material during Eastern Time business hours, especially on Tuesdays through Thursdays, when traffic is the heaviest.

Among other things, the book will teach you: the significance of a hashtag (the pound sign), which is inserted in messages tied to specific topics; how to pass along excerpts from an eavesdropped conversation (put an "OH" for "overheard" before the quote); and maybe even how frequently you should tweet (the average is four per day but those

looking attract a lot of followers tend to tweet more than 20 times a day).

"The Twitter Book" is well timed, given that most of the service's users hopped on this year and probably are still trying to learn the do's and don'ts. Twitter's worldwide audience has soared from nearly 4.4 million in December to more than 37 million in May, according to the Internet research firm comScore Inc.

Apparently, a lot of these folks wouldn't mind some hand-holding; more than 60 percent of Twitter's newcomers stop using the service after the first month, according to another research firm, Nielsen Online.

With so many people trying Twitter, there are all kinds of tools designed to make the service easier to use. These peripheral services can display photos through Twitter (twitpic.com), organize your Twitter priorities (Twhirl and TweetDeck), recommend smart people to follow (mrtweet.net, whoshouldifollow.com) and monitor what people are discussing (twitscoop.com) and why (whatthetrend.com).

"The Twitter Book" touches on these services too, making it easier for even high-tech dodoes to fit in with the rest of the flock.

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