

RSS News Feeds: The “New” Table of Contents Service



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Overview

- RSS Definition and Basic Concepts
- Consuming RSS feeds
 - Methods to read RSS feeds
 - Finding RSS feeds
 - Health sciences RSS feeds, including PubMed
- Delivering and Generating RSS feeds
 - Anatomy of an RSS feed file
 - Delivering other people's content
 - Ways to generate RSS feeds

Objectives

- Understand basic RSS concepts and definitions.
- Be able to explain “what is RSS?”
- Learn methods for discovering and reading RSS feeds
- Learn how to build custom PubMed feeds
- Learn how to deliver and generate content via RSS

Definition and Basic Concepts



What is RSS?

- No idea, don't know, don't care
- Heard of it, but sounds geeky and can't possibly be relevant to what I do
- Sounds important, want to investigate, but how to get started?
- The “new” Current Awareness Service

RSS News Feeds

- RSS = “Real Simple Syndication” or “Rich Site Summary”



Another way to look at it

- The “Oprah” definition: “I’m Ready for Some Stories”
- http://cravingideas.blogs.com/backskinkyjeans/2006/09/how_to_explain_html

“I’m Ready for Some Stories”

What does RSS mean?
“I’m Ready for Some Stories”

RSS is a way to get a quick list of the latest story headlines from all your favorite websites and blogs.

RSS makes it a lot easier and faster for you to get the stories you care about from around the web.



RSS News Feeds

- News articles on particular topics delivered to your e-mail or news reader
- You personalize what you want to read
- New articles are delivered as they come out
- Sound familiar?

Some Jargon

- **RSS Feed:** a text file containing the news items, in XML format
- **XML:** Extended Markup Language, a structured language to deliver content
- **Subscribe:** telling your news reader that you want to receive new articles in a feed as they come out
- **OPML:** an XML file containing lists of RSS feeds. You might use this to share your list of feeds with others
- **News Aggregator:** really the same as a news reader



Everything You Need to Know...

- RSS Specification Site
- Well written with FAQ's, list of programs and resources, etc.
- <http://www.rss-specifications.com/>

Reading RSS Feeds



Discussion

- Do any of you currently read RSS feeds?
- If so, what method do you use?



Ways to Read RSS News Feeds

1. In an e-mail program
2. Online news readers in a browser
3. Browser extensions or Live Bookmarks
4. News reader stand-alone applications

What's the "Right" Way?

- It's a personal decision
- Think about how you read newspapers
 - Do you have it delivered to your house?
 - Pick it up daily at the store?
 - Buy it once in a while?
 - Rely on online news?
- Try a few methods and see what works for you:
 - What's useful but not overwhelming?



How To Subscribe to a Feed

- Regardless of which method you choose, concept is the same:
- Copy the web address of the feed (usually .xml)
 - Right click on the RSS icon
- Copy it into the "Add a feed" or "Subscribe to a feed"



E-Mail

- Mozilla Thunderbird has built-in news reader
- <http://www.mozilla.com/thunderbird/>
- Thunderbird demo



Firefox Live Bookmarks

- Read RSS feeds through your bookmarks
- <http://johnbokma.com/firefox/rss-and-live-bookmarks.html>
- IE 7 has similar feature
- Demo



Firefox Extensions

- Sage
 - <http://sage.mozdev.org/>
- Demo



Online News Readers

- Bloglines: <http://www.bloglines.com>
- Google Reader: <http://www.google.com/reader/view/>
 - Integrates video / audio content
- Demo



News Reader Applications

- Installed as a separate program on your computer
- List of news readers
 - Tiny URL for clicking:
 - <http://tinyurl.com/7r2gg>
 - Real URL for reference:
 - http://dmoz.org/Reference/Libraries/Library_and_Information_Science/Technical_Services/Cataloguing/Metadata/RDF/Applications/RSS/News_Readers

RSS Feed Content for Healthcare Professionals



HealthCare Feed Examples

- NLM
 - NIH Clinical Alerts and other noteworthy feeds
 - http://www.nlm.nih.gov/listserv/rss_podcasts.html
- Audio podcasts for NEJM, Lancet, etc.:
 - <http://www.journaljunkie.com/>
- Biowizard: user-submitted research articles
 - <http://www.biowizard.com/>
- Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations
 - <http://www.jointcommission.org/NewsRoom/rss.htm>

HealthCare Feeds: Journals

- University of Wisconsin
 - Lets you subscribe to table of contents for many journals
 - <http://ebling.library.wisc.edu/bid/journals/rss/index.cfm>
- Individual journals
 - Check your favorite journal home page
 - For instance, NEJM:
 - <http://content.nejm.org/>

PubMed Customized RSS Feeds

- Set up RSS Feeds for any PubMed search
- Instructions:
 1. Conduct a search in PubMed (can be any search, simple or advanced).
 2. No need to select records -- simply click on the **Send to** drop-down and select **RSS Feed**.
 3. In the new screen, you can limit the number of records you want to receive each time you invoke the feed (default is 15).
 4. Name your feed.
 5. Click the **Create Feed** button.
 6. In the new screen you'll see an XML icon. Right mouse-click and select **copy shortcut** to copy the custom-feed URL.
 7. Paste the shortcut into your news feed reader.

Medical Directories of RSS Feeds

- Medical directories
 - <http://davidrothman.net/2006/08/08/medical-rss-directories/>
 - Comments and links to 4 medical directories, including Medworm Beta
- Medworm Beta:
 - Indexes 2500 feeds
 - <http://www.medworm.com/>
 - Demo

Discussion

- Would you use RSS feeds to keep up with the latest news and articles in your field?

Delivering RSS Feeds



Anatomy of an RSS File

- An RSS file is a structured XML file
- Written in plain text
- Tags identify the type of content
- Content itself is listed between tags



Sample Item in an RSS File

```
<item>
  <title>
    New Director of Lister Hill National Center for Biomedical
    Communications
  </title>
  <link>
    http://www.nlm.nih.gov/news/new_lhncbc_director06.html
  </link>
  <description>
    Clement J. McDonald, M.D. has been appointed as Director, Lister Hill National
    Center for Biomedical Communications at the National Library of Medicine,
    effective October 29, 2006. Dr. McDonald is a distinguished physician-
    scientist and one of the nation's most accomplished and most productive
    experts in the field of electronic health record systems. He was previously
    Regenstrief Professor of Medical Informatics at the Indiana University School
    of Medicine and the Director of the Regenstrief Institute for Health Care, a
    privately endowed research institute internationally renowned for the study of
    health-care quality and economic issues. For more information on Dr.
    McDonald's accomplishments see <a
    href="http://www.nlm.nih.gov/news/new_lhncbc_director06.html">http://www.nlm.n
    ih.gov/news/new_lhncbc_director06.html</a> /ch
  </description>
  <author>NLM MidContinental Region</author>
  <category>NLM Announcements</category>
  <pubDate>Tue, 26 Sep 2006 08:42:55 +0100</pubDate>
</item>
```

Delivering RSS Feeds

- Deliver an RSS feed on your web page
- This can be your own content or feeds produced by others



Delivering feeds on your web page

- Place news headlines from your own or others' feeds on your web page
- Easiest way: use an online service
- Usually free, no programming
- List of online services:
 - <http://davidrothman.net/rss2webpage.html>
- Feedsweep as one example:
 - <http://www.feedsweep.com/>
- Demo

Creating Your Own Original Content Feeds

- Figure out what you want to say
- Build the RSS file
- Advertise it on your website
- Users subscribe to it using their favorite reader



How To Create an RSS File

- Manually, with Notepad...
- Create a blog
- Using various feed generator programs
- From a database



Create a Feed: From a Blog

- The easiest way – RSS feeds come for “free” with blogs
- Most blog software has a built in RSS feed
- Blogging software to try:
 - Blogger.com – online, free
 - <http://www.blogger.com/>

Create a Feed: With a Program

- Stand alone or online programs that ask you for content and then generate the feed
 - FeedForAll – Evaluation version
 - <http://www.feedforall.com/>
 - \$40 to buy
 - List of feed creator programs
 - <http://www.rss-specifications.com/create-rss-feed.htm>

Create a Feed: With a Database

- You can use a program to pull information from a database
- Will require some knowledge of databases and programming
- FeedCreator
 - <http://www.bitfolge.de/rsscreator-en.html>

Creating Feeds

- People can subscribe to your feed from your blog or web page
- Keep your news file updated with new information so the user receives “fresh” news regularly



Discussion and Questions

- Delivering RSS feeds on your web page?
- Creating your own content?

Summary



Summary: Basic Concepts

- Basic concepts
 - “I’m Ready for Some Stories”



Summary: Consuming RSS

- Subscribe to RSS feeds and read news by:
 - E-mail
 - Browser extensions
 - Online programs
 - Stand-alone programs
- Use discovery sites to find relevant feeds
- Subscribe to RSS feeds through PubMed or journal sites to keep current

Summary: Delivering RSS

- Deliver your own or others' RSS feeds on your webpage
- Use an online service like FeedSweep



Generating RSS Content

- Generate your own content
 - RSS feed files are simple structured text files, not scary!
 - Generate RSS feeds using:
 - Blog software
 - Stand-alone feed generating programs
 - A database

Questions, Comments?



Thank You!

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