Chapter 3

RSS Tools
INTRODUCTION

RSS Syndication or RSS Newsfeeds (RSS Feeds for short) all refer to the same thing. There are two parts to the process, the publisher, and the consumer. The publisher produces a small text file in a special format that lists the title and address of an article or resource published on the World Wide Web. The consumer uses a program, usually called an aggregator to read and display the contents of that simple text file, with links to the web page, or the consumer may visit a website that includes an aggregator program, and view the results as a web page. For example, Members of Yahoo.com can set their personal 'My Yahoo' pages to display the contents of any RSS feeds they select.

Some confusion has arisen because an RSS feed may be used in several ways. Calling it a 'newsfeed' is the first mistake, since RSS is used for much more than news. The most common situation is for the RSS items listed to have a short title, link to the original web page referred to, and a short description of the contents of that web page. But other people are including the complete contents of their resource directly in the RSS feed. So the feeds may contain a graphic image of a cartoon, an entire post to a weblog (or blog), or the complete contents of a newsletter, rather than just a link back to those resources on a web site. Other sites leave out the description, and just list titles linked back to their website. And some versions of RSS allow you to leave out the title, so long as you have a description.

Speaking of 'versions' of RSS, that is the source of even more confusion. RSS began with version 0.90, and was called 'RDF Site Summary' the RDF refers to 'Resource Description Framework,' the method of labelling different parts of the file. This early version was updated and changed through various incarnations, including versions 0.91, 0.92, 0.93 and 0.94, and they began to call RSS 'Really Simple Syndication.' Then someone came along with a different format, slightly more complicated, and called it RSS version 1.0. Supporters of version 0.94 didn't like the implication that version 1.0 was somehow an advance on version 0.94 when in actuality it was a completely different format, so they came up with
version 2.0 which was an improved version of 0.94, but still unlike version 1.0. Rather than take sides in all this squabbling, someone else came up with their own version and called it Atom, to distance themselves from the RSS battles. Someone else developed Blogrolls that use OPML (Outline Processor Markup Language). Most of these formats are either loosely or strictly based on XML, the parent mark-up scheme.

None of this confusion of method and purpose has helped spread this really useful tool. Most RSS aggregators can read any of these formats, so the situation is not as hopeless as it may seem, but many folks still throw the whole thing out when they can't figure out exactly how it is supposed to work.

RSS Syndication was designed to help people find out about new content on the web, long before the search engines get around to finding it. It makes it easy for people to find out about new content that interests them, without having to return to the search engines and wade through all the material they have seen before. For sites with frequently changing content, it has worked well for them to create their own RSS feed and update it as new content is added to their website. But what about all those sites that only add an occasional new article or story to their website, or who publish a newsletter once per month? Or those who just can't take the time to figure the ins and outs of formatting an RSS feed? An RSS feed that only gets updated once every few months is of little value, very few people will add it to their search list in their aggregator. Shared RSS solves this problem by lumping together articles from different sites covering the same topic, and lets them announce the availability of their new material in a feed shared with others publishing on the same topic. This makes the feeds more useful to the consumer, so they are more likely to add the link to their aggregator. It benefits the publisher by making more people aware of their material as soon as it is put online.

**RSS TOOLS**

Considering the ever-increasing support for RSS in online communities, we have compiled a list of resources and products that will benefit webmasters, web surfers and publishers in their quest to understand the power of RSS. RSS has rapidly become an alternative communication venue. In order to understand the full benefits, consider utilizing some of the following tools and resources.
1. RSS TOOLS

RSS feeds bring automatically updated information straight to your desktop. You can monitor or promote news, job listings, personals, and classifieds using RSS. The following tools assist webmasters in using RSS to maximize their time.

- **RSS Readers** - RSS readers are designed as tools to view RSS feeds, making it easier for users to view and manage the content of a feed. Feed readers make it easy to mark feeds as read or flag items that are important. The following are some of our favourite RSS readers:

  - **FeedDemon** - FeedDemon is a client that can retrieve and organize RSS feeds from the Internet. It comes pre-configured with several news feeds, and you can easily add your own by adding the URL for an RSS feed of your choice. FeedDemon offers an attractive and easy-to-use interface with integrated web browsing.
  - **FeedScout** - Feed Scout is a RSS/RDF reader that can be used directly from Internet Explorer. Feed Scout enables you to view RSS/ATOM feeds from different sites directly in Internet Explorer. You can even set your Home Page to show your favourite feeds.

2. RSS CREATION TOOLS

As RSS feeds have increased in popularity and breadth publishers and webmasters have struggled to find a solution to create RSS feeds. The following tools will assist webmasters in creating RSS feeds:

- **FeedForAll** - Desktop software used to create, edit, manage and publish RSS feeds. New RSS feeds can be quickly and easily created with FeedForAll. Advanced features enable you to create professional-looking RSS feeds quickly. Existing RSS feeds can be repaired and enhanced with FeedForAll. RSS feeds generated by other means can be automatically repaired, so that they conform to the RSS 2.0 specification. Existing feeds can be enhanced to contain advanced feed properties, and give them a more professional look.

3. RSS ARTICLES AND TUTORIALS

Articles and tutorials based on RSS and designed to demystify Really Simple Syndication for users and publishers.
• **RSS Specifications** - RSS Specifications contains a collection of articles related to RSS and news feeds that assist both publishers and users in deciphering really simple syndication. Or the articles can be read in an RSS feed. Make RSS Feeds - Step by step instructional tutorial detailing how to manually create an RSS feed.

4. **eBAY MONITORING USING RSS**

Monitor online auctions for specific items of interest. As eBay has grown it has become difficult to discern and locate specific auction items. By using RSS tools users can easily receive instant notification when a specific item is being auctioned.

- **Free Bidding Tools** - Monitor online auctions for specific items of interest. As eBay has grown it has become difficult to discern and locate specific auction items. By using RSS tools users can easily receive instant notification when a specific item is being auctioned.

5. **WEB MONITORING**

Monitor the Internet for specific news items or blog topics of interest. A number of free online RSS tools make web monitoring very easy.

- **PubSub** - Monitor the Internet for specific news items or blog topics of interest. A number of free online RSS tools make web monitoring very easy. PubSub - Every day, PubSub's matching engine performs billions of matches of new items against user subscriptions. The instant a match is made, PubSub alerts the user via RSS. PubSub monitors more than 6.5 million blogs, as well as 50,000 USENET newsgroups, all SEC/EDGAR filings, press releases from major wire services, and FAA airport delay alerts.
- **Google News Monitoring Using RSS** - This free online tool turns a Google news search into an RSS feed.
6. OTHER RSS TOOLS

Alternative tools for creative webmasters.

- **RSS2Wap** - The RSS2Wap site is meant for online conversions of RSS feeds into WML for access on WAP devices (RSS2WML, RSS WAP or RSS-to-WAP). It's free and you can make a link on your web site.

7. RSS GRAPHIC TOOL

Websites that have RSS feeds available use colourful graphics as flags to indicate to web surfers that RSS feeds are available for specific content.

- **RSS Graphic Tool** - Websites that have RSS feeds available use colourful graphics as flags to indicate to web surfers that RSS feeds are available for specific content. RSS Graphic Tool - Customize RSS buttons. If you have limited time and lack artistic abilities, use this free online RSS graphic tool to create an RSS button. The button’s colour and text can be customized to suit the look and feel of your website.

8. DISPLAYING RSS

Many webmasters display the contents of RSS feeds on their web pages as a fresh source of content and information that changes on a regular basis.

- **Java Options** - Using Java to display RSS feeds is very easy way to provide dynamic content with very little effort. Unfortunately, when you use Java to display RSS feeds, search engines do not see the feeds content, so the content is not spidery and ultimately will not help with search engine optimization.
- **Quick RSS Feeds** - Free online tool that allows you to simply enter the URL of the RSS feed, define the number of items you would like displayed, and the Java script will be automatically generated.
- **FeedRoll** - A free service for syndicating popular RSS and ATOM news feeds on your website or blog. Select a feed, customize the design, then copy and paste the code provided onto your page.
- **RSS to JavaScript** - RSS-to-JavaScript.com was designed to easily convert any valid RSS, RDF or ATOM feed into easy-to-implement JavaScript. No XML or programming experience is necessary.
• **PHP Options** - The benefit to using a PHP script to display RSS on a website is that the content dynamically updates but search engines see the content as static.

• **FeedForAll's rss2html.php** - If you are technically savvy and wish to host the script yourself check out FeedForAll, as they have a free PHP script available that will display RSS feeds on a website.

• **FeedRoll Pro** - A fee-based professional service that tracks statistical information for publishers displaying feeds. FeedRoll Pro incorporates a number of display options for publishers wishing to syndicate their content, giving users the choice of PHP or JavaScript.

• **RSS2HTML** - Display RSS feeds by selecting layouts and colour schemes on this free resource.

9. **RSS BLOGS**

Stay informed about the latest RSS industry news by monitoring RSS blogs. Daily posts bring readers current news, industry announcements and general RSS information.

• **RSS Specifications** - Everything you need to know about RSS. The RSS Specifications blog contains daily posts and RSS tidbits.

• **KbCafe** - Daily posts and editorials related to RSS and new RSS products that have emerged.

10. **PUBLISHING LIST / RSS NEWSGROUP**

New RSS Publishing List for publishers. The list is focused on marketing/publishing/operational issues rather than hardcore technical details of RSS, meaning that coding issues and disputes over the merits of RSS v/s. Atom are not the focus.

• **RSS Syndication** - Collection of RSS related news feeds displayed in an easy to read format.

11. **RSS RELATED FORUMS**

Forums can be a useful for anyone doing business online, both in terms of reading the content and actively participating in the discussions. There are following online RSS communities:
• **2RSS** - RSS forum for feed and related RSS discussions.
• **FeedForAll Forum** - RSS forum for RSS and feed creation-related discussions.
• **German RSS Forum** - German RSS forum for feed discussions.

12. LOCATE RSS FEEDS

• **Syndic8** - RSS and Atom news feeds on a wide variety of topics. Designed with directory structure and search functionality. Syndic8 also tracks statistical information related to RSS feeds.
• **Feedster's FeedFinder** - Use Feedfinder to search by keyword or by URL or a combination of the two in order to find feeds on that topic or by that organization.
• **RSS Discovery** - The websites you already read may have an RSS feed. Use the BlogStreet's RSS Discovery tool and enter in a website. If there is a feed available BlogStreet will provide the URL.
• **RSS Locator** - Directory and search engine for RSS content including weblogs, newsfeeds, forum feeds and related content feeds. Locate topic-specific RSS feeds for syndication. RSS Locator displays feed content in an HTML format so users can preview the feed's content.

SELECTION OF AGGREGATOR

In order to view RSS feeds without seeing raw XML markup, the user must acquire a “feedreader.” A feedreader is an aggregator that gathers chosen RSS feeds and formats them for display. The user is ready to select “feeds” (RSS files) available on specific Web sites of interest once a feedreader is installed. Effective use of XML feeds relies on the use of aggregator software, which converts the feeds into human readable format. There are two main types of aggregation software: Online and desktop.

➢ ONLINE AGGREGATOR:

One of the benefits of an online aggregator is that it can be accessed from anywhere and at any time, for example at work and at home. The Reading Room
itself can be seen as an example of a web based XML aggregator, with additional features to enable discussion and professional development. An online aggregator was not a viable option for use with the Reading Room because access to the Reading Room is restricted to the USQ network only.

**Examples of online aggregators:**

- **Bloglines** is a web-based news aggregator for reading syndicated feeds using the RSS and Atom formats. Mark Fletcher, former CEO of ONElist, founded the site in June 2003 and sold it in February 2005 to Ask.com/InterActiveCorp. In 2005, it hosted more than 200 million searchable blog articles. On July 23, 2007, Bloglines released an iPhone version of their site. On August 27, 2007 the company released a public beta version of their site, with new features such as drag-and-drop feeds in the feed tree and a customizable start page. Bloglines offers an application programming interface that can be used to write software that can read feeds, search its database of feed entries, and ping the service when a blog has been updated.
Bloglines

Find Articles  Find Articles

Scott Schwister's Higher Edison

the thin ends of wedges: on students 2.0 and beyond

chris deeds: communities of interest session

students 2.0

Here's an idea: I'll provide the hosting, the URL, etc, and you run with it for whichever "expansion" you want to spearhead. My edge is still dull from the last one.

I'm serious. I'll do the server admin stuff. You just take the managerial reins. (Or should we just join hands on this one straight out? I don't mean to fast it all on you. I'm just weary of playing Lone Ranger.)

Posted by: Clay Burell | December 26, 2007 at 06:23 AM

Post a comment

If you have a TypeKey or TypePad account, please Sign In.

Name:
Clay Burell

Email Address: (Not displayed with comment.)
clayburell@gmail.com

URL:
http://beyond-school.org

Remember personal info?

Comments:

(http://www.bloglines.com)
Some other online aggregators are listed here:

- Feedster (http://feedster.com/)
- NewsGator Online (http://www.newsgator.com/ngs/default.aspx)
- Pluck Web Edition
- GoogleReader
- MyYahoo!
- MyMSN
- Newsburst
- AmphetaDesk
- NewsIsFree

➢ DESKTOP AGGREGATOR:

A desktop aggregator is a piece of software that is installed on the user’s desktop PC. There are many different aggregators available for the desktop with differing levels of functionality and styles of use. Some aggregators are integrated into a browser, others integrated into email programs such as Microsoft Outlook, and others are stand-alone products.

Examples of desktop aggregators include:

- SOFTWARE FOR WINDOWS:
Ricky Ponting International Cricket 2007 Achievements (Xbox 360)

Ricky Ponting International Cricket 2007 is a cricket simulation game released in Australia by Codemasters on the 23rd of March 2007. As funny as it might sound, the exact same game was released in Europe, too, under the name of Brian Lara International Cricket 2007. It is available on all major entertainment systems, like Xbox 360, PlayStation 2, PSP, and PC systems. Although the game was criticized for being too easy and for the lack of graphical improvements compared to the previous title...

Published: 04:06
Source: http://news.softpedia.com/newsRSS/Global-0.xml

(http://www.awasu.com/)
Omea Reader - Omea Reader makes staying up to date with RSS feeds, Usenet news and web pages a smooth experience tailored to your reading style and organizing talent with search folders, annotations, categories and workspaces.

(http://www.omeareader.com/)
**NewsGator** - Integrates into Microsoft Outlook.
Denton to pay bloggers based on traffic (Paul Boutin/Valleywag)

Techmeme  Yesterday 12:45 PM:
Denton to pay bloggers based on traffic — Gawker Media dark overlord Nick Denton (pictured) has launched a new pay system for all Gawker Media blogs, after testing it at four of his leading sites. Denton's goal is to discourage 'self indulgent' posts and ...

Can Pay-For-Performance Improve...
Publishing 2.0 Can Pay-For-Performance Improve...
Pay for traffic Incentive or distortion...

Google Artificially Promotes Recent Web Pages (Ionut Alex Chitu/Google Operating System)

Techmeme  Yesterday 5:00 PM:  Google Artificially Promotes Recent Web Pages — Google paid a big price when it started to index pages faster and show them in the search results minutes after they're published. The problem is that you can't rank a page that has just been created because...

Outrage At Skier For Suing 7-Year-Old Boy
People upset over a man who sued a 7-year-old boy over a ski collision have subjected him and his wife to "an electronic tar..."

5 Person of the Year Covers
A peek into the lives of American teens

Man On Food Stamps Returns $185,000
A fast-food worker who found a $185,000 check on a Norwich, Conn., sidewalk says he didn't think twice about trying to cash...

Baby Drivers Test New Tech
Putting infants behind the wheel is helping researchers shape new tools for disabled children.

Unmanned Seaplane Takes Off
Inspired by its namesake, the Flying Fish aircraft will monitor the ocean environment.

Juniper to stick to specialty
A look at Scott Kriens Juniper Networks Chief Executive Scott Kriens likes to talk about the $20 billion market opportunity...
Some other desktop aggregator:

- **Google desktop**: Stand alone product that includes additional functionality and Free RSS News Feed Reader.

- **NewsRanker** - claims to learn from your news reading to prioritize the feed items you receive.

- **Novobot** - Extracts headlines from feeds, and also web sites that you are interested.

- **Radio Userland** - Blogging tool with an integrated news aggregator.

- **Pluck**: A plugin for Microsoft Internet Explorer.

- **Sage**: An extension for Mozilla Firefox.

- **SharpReader**

- **FeedReader**

- **NewsWatcher**

- **Feedreader3**

- **Newz Crawler**

- **Internet Explorer 7**
From: GusMueller blog
Date: 5/3/05 2:05 PM

It's time to plug a couple of mac apps I like.

**FuzzMeasure 1.2** was just released. It's used to measure the dynamics of your audio systems, which is good incase you are an audiophile I guess. Which I am not - but the developer, Chris Liscio is a good guy so I thought I'd mention it in case there are any audio freaks reading my site.

**SimpleChord** is a nicely made utility that I've been using to figure out different piano chords. SimpleChord + GarageBand + a M-Audio keyboard has been really painful for Kirstin, but really fun for me. And it's cheap!

SOFTWARE FOR LINUX:

Straw for GNOME

Roadster has gotten a lot better since my last post:

(Click for larger version and more screenshots.)

(http://www.nongnu.org/straw/)
RSS2email - Python script that sends you new messages from your feeds via email. (http://www.aaronsw.com/2002/rss2email/)

To enable effective use of the SDI environment provided by the Reading Room, a user needs to have an aggregator installed on their work PC. A side benefit of this is that users are able to aggregate feeds from other websites as well as feeds from the Reading Room.

At the time of implementation, a number of USQ Library staff were already using XML feeds for professional reading and current awareness, and were using a variety of different aggregators, e.g. Bloglines, Sage extension for Firefox, Pluck plugin with Internet Explorer.

The range of platforms obviously has implications for the level of staff resources needed for installation and support. The Library is currently working on a policy for aggregator use, which is likely to recommend no more than two standard platforms.

GENERAL USE OF TOOLS

1. Keep up to Date: Probably the single most useful that we can do with RSS feeds is use them to keep up to date with those web logs or news feeds that we can read on a regular basis.

2. Automating Searching: There may be searches that we wish to keep up to date with what happenings in a subject area of interest and we may until now have been doing them manually. Live at www.live.com offer RSS feeds. http://news.google.com by visiting Google news. www.icerocket.com allow user to run searches (in web logs, web pages news or images).

3. Watching Specific Pages: RSS feed can be created to do little more than keep you informed about when page is updated. Exp. http://web.freeprint.com/forum/bar/list.php forum for librarian to post questions
and comments has an RSS feed that keeps subscribers informed about additional postings to the services. www.download.com is a site that offers users the opportunity to download free software and it also has an RSS feed available that keeps subscribers up to date on what’s available. www.flickr.com, the photograph sharing website which has feeds for various different option, such as group discussions and specific individuals’ photograph streams. www.rsswhether.com information regarding a specific area find in an RSS format.

4. **Miscellaneous resources:** A lot of website owners have realized that by providing RSS they are infect leveraging their own site’s value and importance. It is not possible to provide a full listing.

**FUNCTION OF RSS FEEDS**

Without RSS, users must check needed sites daily for updates. An RSS feed (often called a news feed) can check sites using an RSS aggregator (a program that gathers and sorts out feeds). Since RSS data is small and fast loading, it can easily be used with services like cell phones or PDAs (w3 schoool2008). RSS uses XML to distribute web content from one web site to many other sites. RSS feeds are RDF compliant, and RSS files contain metadata that describes the content (James, 2000).

A website that wants to allow other site to publish some of its contents, create an RSS document and register the document with RSS publisher. Syndicated data can contain data like news, event listings, news stories, headlines, project updates etc. The special XML format that makes up an RSS feed is usually created in variety of ways. News sites and blogs are maintained using content management system that often creates RSS feeds as they are updated. Websites produced with tools like dream weaver generally do not create feeds automatically.

**FEATURES OF RSS READER**

At the moment, RSS Reader provides the following features:
1. **New Channel wizard**

This wizard allows you to create a new channel from an external RSS feed and save it as a file in the workspace. A variant of this wizard provides the ability to automatically detect published feeds in a web page.

2. **Channel Navigator**

The Channel Navigator provides a hierarchical view of the workspace, similar to the Resource Navigator, with projects, folders, and RSS channels. Each channel can be expanded to display its items. You can open the channels as well as their items in the configured link browser. In addition, the Channel Navigator allows you to view only new, unread channels.

3. **Channel Detail view**

This view displays a list of items belonging to the selected channel. To select a channel, click on the channel node in the Channel Navigator, or the channel file in the Resource Navigator. The channel as well as its items can be browsed using the configured link browser. The list can be sorted by column. Also, the view has an option to show only new, unread items.

4. **Link Browsers**

You may choose, using the Channel Properties dialog, how to view the contents of channel and item links. By default, two methods are available: (a). Using the configured Help Browser, or (b). Using a file editor that understands the article format (eg. HTML). In addition, users of WSAD running under MS-Windows have an option to use its embedded web browser. 3rd-party providers may offer additional link browsers.

5. **Preference page**

The included preference page allows you to specify the default channel update interval and select the default link browser, which are used when creating new channels. In addition, the included link browsers have their own preference pages; the former allows you to select a configured help browser, and the latter an editor to use for browsing channel items.
6. Property page

Each channel file has a property page with RSS-specific options, such as the update interval, source translator, and link browser. These can be modified even after the channel has been created.

7. Search page

The RSS-specific search page allows you to use the familiar Search dialog to find RSS items whose titles and descriptions contain the specified search term.

8. RSS feed translators

RSS feeds based on various formats and versions are translated into a uniform channel model, which allows the various RSS views to present their contents in a uniform fashion. The default translator understands RSS versions 0.90, 0.91, 0.92, 1.0, and 2.0. 3rd-party providers may offer translators for new RSS versions, or entirely different formats.

9. Periodic updates

For each channel you may specify an interval, in minutes, which dictates how often the channel's contents are updated from its source feed. After an update, any new items are flagged and displayed with different icons and colours in the various RSS views, until they are read.

10. Channel content caching

RSS channels are represented in the workspace as files, which contain information on where to get the updates, how often, etc. The channel content, after an update, is cached in a temporary location outside of workspace. Thus it is possible to share the channel files using a Version Control System (eg. CVS); each user then gets its own copy of the channel contents.

How RSS feeds are structured

RSS feeds contain the basic information about the RSS feed itself and the individual RSS feed content items that actually carry the content you want to deliver to your target audiences or syndicate to other websites. All of this
information is carried within different prescribed RSS feed elements that are used for different purposes.

Now you don't actually need to know how to create an RSS feed, since your RSS publishing software will do that for you, but you need to know what to put in these elements to make the most from them.

**ELEMENTS OF RSS FEEDS**

RSS feed elements describe the RSS feed. Each element encloses the actual discretionary information, just like an HTML tag.

The most important elements you need to pay attention to for increasing marketing results are:

1. **RSS feed title**

   The name of the RSS feed, which will be displayed in the RSS Reader when someone accesses your feed, as well as the search engines and so on.

   You need to craft your title so that it stands out among other feeds in your subscribers RSS Readers and attracts them, and is at the same time rich with your most important keywords to assure you achieve better search engine placement for your feeds.

2. **RSS feed description**

   A short sentence that describes the RSS feed. Just as with the title element, the description needs to attract your target audiences (in many RSS Readers the description is displayed just below the feed title) and at the same time assure better placement within the search engines.

   So keep it user-attractive, conveying the main content points covered in your feed and the key benefits for your readers, as well as search-engine-friendly, with your most important keywords.
3. RSS feed image

The image element is used to display your logo on the RSS feed presentation in RSS Readers. The default width for the logo is 88 px and the maximum width is 144 px. Default image height is 31 px and the maximum height is 400 px.

Including your logo in your feed will make your feed more memorable for your subscribers, thus helping you increase actual readership, as well as provide additional branding for your business.

ELEMENTS OF RSS CONTENT ITEM

While the RSS feed elements define and describe an RSS feed on the level of the entire feed, individual content item elements describe and carry the actual information you want to deliver to your audiences.

Each content item may then contain some or all of the elements that describe that content item and provide information.

1. RSS content item title

The title of the specific content item that is of course displayed in the RSS Reader and everywhere else where you're content appears.

Your content item titles are one of the most important things in your RSS feed, determining whether your readers will actually read the rest of the content or whether the search engines will rank it high enough for you.

Just think of the title as an e-mail message subject line and webpage title in one. The e-mail subject line is what makes your recipient decide whether he's going to read the entire message or not. You need to keep it to the point and give just enough information to make it inviting to read on.

The webpage title has much weight with the search engines, helping you get higher rankings for your content for the keywords you're trying to optimize your webpage for. The RSS content item title performs both of these functions for you at the same time.
2. **RSS content item link**

The URL pointing to a webpage on your website where the user can read the entire content of the content item, if you're publishing your RSS feeds in summary format. A "read more" type of destination.

If you're publishing your feeds in full-text format the link can serve for archiving purposes, for example if your customers would either want to click through to your site and then bookmark your content in their internet browser.

Of course, if you don't want to provide a back link to your site, you don't have to, as the link element is optional. This could come useful if you're using your RSS feed merely as a direct communicational channel to send a quick message to your customers or anyone else, without also providing that content on your website.

But since most RSS users actually expect to be able to click through it's highly recommended that you always provide the link.

3. **RSS content item description**

This is where the actual body content of the information you're trying to deliver comes in the actual story you're trying to tell.

The description element can either be a short summary, or can contain full-text content of the story, with images and almost everything else (there are some restrictions).

**STANDARDS OF RSS**

RSS is an acronym used as an umbrella to describe a family of XML file formats commonly used to facilitate the syndication of data available on a web site for the use of RSS reader programs or other websites displaying that data for their visitors. Although the goal of RSS is to make the publishing of web based information like weblogs (blogs) and news headlines extremely easy and hassle free, the large amounts and largely differing standards can make the job of
choosing the right feed more difficult than actually using them for publishing. For
the purposes of this project, the result of this incoherence is that the RSS Reader
needs to be able to take into account all the feeds currently in use including but not
limited to the two separate branches that the original specification forked into.

There have been three standards of RSS that have been cleared for use and
these are:

1. **RSS 0.91; Rich Site Summary**

   RSS 0.91 or Rich Site Summary was actually an update to the 0.9
   specification detailed below. Work on 0.91 was initially started by Netscape, who
   then dropped development of it when they got out of the web portal business.
   Another vendor, User land Software, picked up development of the project to use
   in its web logging and other web publishing software. The aim of 0.91 was to be
   simpler to use than the original 0.9. RSS 0.91 is an incredibly simple and easy to
   use format for syndication. In 0.91 a feed consists of a channel which is the highest
   level of the RSS hierarchy, having a title, a link and a description. Within each
   channel is a series of items, each having their own title, link and description?
   Example shows version 0.91 feed in which you can see the clearly defined
   structure and how human readable the simplified code is-

   **Example**

   `<rss version="0.91">

   `<channel>

   `<title>Example RSS Feed</title>

   `<link>http://www.rss.com</link>

   `<description>An example of the format that an RSS feed version 0.91 is presented in</description>

   `<item>

   `<title>Example Item</title>
The original 0.9 specification was developed by Netscape as a way to easily populate its web portal with headlines from mainstream news sites. When Netscape dropped development of its own update, 0.91 developments branched into two separate trees. The first is detailed in 2.1.1. The second was a non-commercial group who felt that the 0.91 standard was straying too far from the guidelines and standards originally set out in version 0.9. This group developed a new format based on the Resource Description Framework (RDF) and is called RSS 1.0. This format is quite a bit more verbose than 0.91 and can is particularly useful for RDF based applications or anything that requires RDF specific modules. As can be seen in Example, RSS version 1.0 separates the items from the channel in the feed. Instead, within the channel, an <items> and RDF object called Seq lists the resources that the items use later on in the feed. Not shown here, is the fact that item level authors and publishing dates can be included which is not supported by version 0.91.

Example

```xml
<rdf:RDF

xmlns:rdf="http://www.w3.org/1999/02/22-rdf-syntax-ns#"

xmlns="http://purl.org/rss/1.0/

xmlns:dc="http://purl.org/dc/elements/1.1/">

<channel rdf:about="http://www.rss.com/about.html">

<title>Example RSS Feed</title>

<link>http://www.rss.com</link>

<description>An example of the format that an RSS feed version 1.0
is presented in</description>

<items>

<rdf:Seq>


</rdf:Seq>

</items>

</channel>

<item>

<title>Example Item</title>

<link>http://www.rss.com/item1.html</link>

<description>An example item</description>

</item>

</rdf:RDF>

3. RSS 2.0; Really Simple Syndication

RSS 2.0 is the current culmination of the work that User land Software began with 0.91. Using a hybrid of 0.91, having items inside the channel as well as having no default name space or RDF, and 1.0 in that it has the ability to use name spaces if and when they are needed. For example, to create a feed using version 2.0, it is possible to create it as though you were creating a feed using 0.91, however if you decided that you would like to include the authors of the items you are publishing, it is not possible to have an author field in 0.91. Using 2.0 however, it is possible to include the name space for Dublin-Core, which describes item elements for metadata like authors and dates and thus you get the functionality of 1.0 without having to use RDF objects.
HOW CAN RSS BE USED?

There are many practical applications for RSS for the purpose of distributing content. Here are two examples:

• An individual can use an RSS aggregator application to subscribe to RSS feeds from websites which they visit regularly. The aggregator checks the feeds at regular intervals and collects updated items together in one location. For example, 'Live Bookmarks' in Firefox displays RSS feeds as a list of bookmarks which update when the feeds do, while Google Reader has an "All new items" view which shows new items from all the feeds on one page.
A website can be built to incorporate information received via an RSS feed. You can see an example of this at the website of a free RSS feed reader intended for use on websites (http://rssfeedreader.com/); the example uses the Yahoo! News RSS feed to display the latest headlines automatically, and the content will update during the day without user intervention.

RSS DIRECTORY

An aggregator is a web site or system that collects RSS feeds from multiple sources and then does something with them. Usually this will involve collating and displaying the contents of each feed and perhaps creating new composite feeds from them. Here are a few of the larger aggregators:

- **Syndic8** - The largest aggregator with almost 10,000 feeds recommends your own or another's created by Jeff Barr.
- **Userland** - UserLand Software is a U.S. software company founded by Dave Winer in 1988. UserLand sells Web content management and blogging software packages and services.
- **OnContent** - Add your feed to their database and use their server to syndicate your content registering allows you to display feeds from there on your own site.
- **Calaba's XMLTree** - A directory.
- **NewsIsFree** - By Mike Krus has headlines from a fast-growing collection of more than 3,600 feeds.
- **News4Sites** - A commercial aggregator that monitors 8,000 web pages from 2,500 domains producing more than 25,000 news headlines organized into over 2,200 channels of up to 20 headlines per channel. Feeds are generated in ten formats: JavaScript, RSS, PHP, ASP, C#, VB.NET, WDDX, XML RPC, CDF, and PERL. They can be parsed or delivered by email. The feeds are available for free with advertisements.
- **Daypop** - If your channel offers news or current events; add to this excellent Google-like search of over 7,500 news feeds. Use Daypop Backlinks to see who is linking to you.
• Shanti Braford's PopDex: The website popularity index crawls sites and analyzes links to rank the most popular stories from Internet news sites, blogs, and weblogging resources. Use Popdex Citations to see who is linking to you and Searchbox to search other blogs from your site.

• Backwash- A PHP driven community site of independent columnists who recommend the best specific Internet content. Bills itself "the ultimate recommendation engine."

• Morton Frederickson's Syndication Subscription Service consolidates the multiplicity of aggregation services. A green subscribe icon on a page will take you to a page that lets you choose the subscription link for the aggregator of your choice. Clicking the icon there will add the linked RSS feed to your subscription list.

**What Kind of Information can be delivered in RSS Feeds?**

• Blogs Feed

  Many blogs are catalogued in an RSS feed, with each blog entry summarized as a feed item. This makes it easy for visitors to scan blog posts for items of interest.

• Article Feed

  Articles are often placed into feeds to alert readers when new articles and content are available. The feed entry is typically an article summary or introduction. Readers can then ascertain if the article is interest and read further.

• Forum Feed

  Many forums now have add-ons that allow participants to receive forum posts via RSS. The RSS feeds often will show the latest discussion topics, if users are interested they simply click to enter the forum to participate in the discussion. As the topic is updated they will see new entries in the RSS feed.
• **Schedule Feed**

Schools, clubs and organizations will often use feeds to communicate meeting times, places and events that might be occurring. The RSS feeds are often used to publicize events notify the community of schedule changes or meeting agendas.

• **Discounts / Specials Feed**

Retail and online stores have begun using RSS feeds to deliver their latest specials and discounted offers. Some online retailers have taken this step further, allowing users to create their own feeds based on keywords or phrases.

• **Ego / News Monitoring**

Companies or individuals interested in receiving headline news based on a specific brand or keyword can use RSS feeds to monitor news sources.
REFERENCES


Available at: http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/tech/rss


