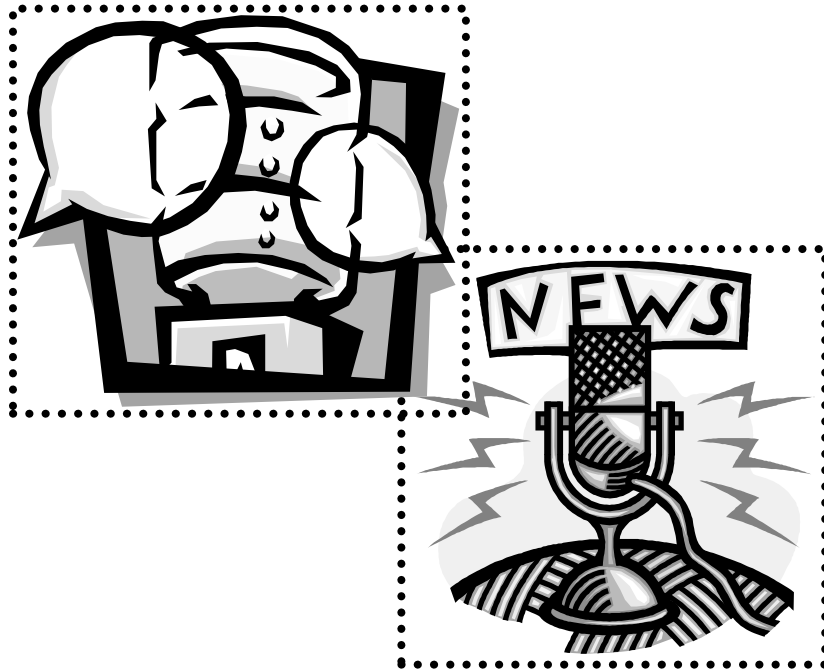


LIBRARY 2.0: RSS: GET AGGREGATED



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RSS = EFFICIENCY

WHAT IS RSS?





RSS has gone through several meanings: **Really Simple Syndication**, **Rich Site Summary** and **RDF Site Summary**.

Whatever it's called, it's an easy way for a publisher of information (news bureau, blog writer, podcaster, web site owner, etc.) to create a list of their latest news items or updates and put that list out to people who are interested in their information.

This is also referred to as **syndication** – it makes the information available for anyone to access, where and when they want to access it. These lists are like tables of contents, with information about the title, author, a description of the item and a link to the full text of the item.

To subscribe to RSS feeds, you need a software program called **news reader**. This software magically brings a list of all the latest items from your selected sources right to your fingertips when you want to read them. Just like subscribing to a newspaper or a magazine – they come to your door on a regular basis and you get to read whatever the editors decided to put in the paper or magazine.

The geeky side of RSS is that it uses a coding language called XML to create these feed lists. The code for an RSS feeds looks like this. Don't worry, you don't need to know how to read or write XML to read news feeds. It's just useful to know what it looks like so you won't be scared off by it!

Atom is another standard for feeds that works the same way. When you see little boxes similar to these:    , it means you can add them to your news reader. More on news readers later.

```
<?xml version="1.0" encoding="UTF-8" ?>
- <rss version="2.0">
- <channel>
  <title>Capital Region BOCES School Library System</title>
  <link>http://www.crbsls.org/</link>
  <description>Updates from the Capital Region BOCES School Library System
  <lastBuildDate>Mon, 29 Jan 2007 04:26:24 GMT</lastBuildDate>
  <generator>ListGarden Program 1.3.1</generator>
  <docs>http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/tech/rss</docs>
- <item>
  <title>Let Me See That! New Files</title>
  <link>http://www.crbsls.org/letmeseethat/</link>
  <description>New Files: Your Beatin' Heart (Science - all levels) and Tales
  </description>
  <pubDate>Mon, 29 Jan 2007 04:16:50 GMT</pubDate>
</item>
- <item>
  <title>Let Me See That! New Files</title>
  <link>http://www.crbsls.org/letmeseethat/</link>
  <description>New files for Patricia Polacco (Elementary Language Arts and
  </description>
  <pubDate>Tue, 23 Jan 2007 10:00:00 GMT</pubDate>
</item>
</item>
```

HOW DOES IT RELATE TO BLOGGING?

Blogs are one of the services that use RSS to broadcast their latest offerings to the world. Many blogging services automatically create RSS feeds for your blog. You generally don't have to do a thing! When you update your blog, your feed is updated. Check your blog's tech support for details.

WHAT ARE LIBRARIES DOING WITH RSS?

- Libraries use RSS feeds to let **patrons subscribe to the library blogs**. A great way to announce the latest new books or events going on in the library. <http://www.waterborolibrary.org/blog.htm>
- Some libraries are using it to create **feeds for the contents of journals** that the library subscribes too. University of Saskatchewan has a great collection of these at:
http://library.usask.ca:9003/ejournals/rss_feeds.php
- **Research alerts** – handy to set up for a topic you follow on a regular basis. This library has well organized page explaining how to set up RSS feeds from a variety of sources.
<http://www.library.tufts.edu/ginn/tutorials/webfeeds/index.html>
- New York Public Library uses feeds for **event notices**, new **Internet sources** and more <http://www.nypl.org/rss/>
- Hennepin County Library and other libraries offer **RSS feeds from within their catalogs**. Do a search at <http://catalog.hclib.org/> and look for the RSS button. Very cool.
- Hennepin offers lots of RSS feeds. Check them out at:
<http://www.hclib.org/pub/search/RSS.cfm>

RSS AGGREGATORS – GET AGGREGATED, NOT AGGRAVATED

Feed readers, news readers and aggregators – all names for tools that let you subscribe to feeds from loads of sources and read them all in one place. You can subscribe to feeds from your favorite news sites, newsletters, blogs, podcasts, etc. Sort of like a newspaper clipping service, get all your 'headlines' in one place without having to visit site after site. What a time saver.

AGGREGATORS

- **Web-based:** Popular web-based feed readers include: **Bloglines** and **Google Reader**. Both are good options if you're reading tons of feeds. Google Reader has added an option to download content to your desktop, giving you the best of both worlds – online and offline access.
- **Desktop: FeedReader** and **FeedDemon** are two Windows based readers. Advantages of desktop readers is the ability to download content to your desktop for reading while offline.
- **Personal Home Pages:** These are more than RSS readers, they provide a handy start page for your browser. You can customize them with content of interest to you. Most services let you have multiple pages that you can use to store material on different topics. And they have the ability to add RSS feeds as well. This is a handy way to create a useful start page and aggregate your RSS feeds. **MyYahoo**, **iGoogle Home Page**, **Netvibes** and **Pageflakes** are popular choices in this category.

PERSONAL HOME PAGES & RSS

Personal or customized home page tools are cropping up all over the place and the competition is making for some great services. With these services you can set up a home page that has your local weather, news headlines, entries from your favorite blogs, flickr photos, health news, travel alerts, search boxes, calendars and tons of other bits of information and gadgets.

Some of the most popular services are **My Yahoo**, **iGoogle**, **Netvibes** and **Pageflakes**. It's very easy to add content to these pages and to customize them. Sign up for one and you'll have a custom page in just a few minutes. Take some time to organize the content and you'll have an efficient way to access tons of information.

HOW CAN LIBRARIES USE THEM?

Libraries can set up home pages and use them as a start page on library computers. These could contain popular search boxes, a search box for the library catalog, RSS feeds of library blogs and other news sources, library photos and more.

Most of these services let you set up multiple sections or tabs on your homepage. This lets you create a resource section for different topics on separate pages. For example, a new books page that has headlines from the NY Times Book Review, latest best sellers, hot books in your own library and more.

Some of the services encourage you to share your customized tabs of information. Set up a tab with great content related to your town and share it with the community. Anyone else using that service can add your tab to their own homepage. Instant content for your users!

Students can use them to track feeds for research topics. Help them learn to organize and select better content by subscribing to feeds from databases, journal tables of contents, news services, professional blogs, del.icio.us bookmarks and so much more.

This would be a great topic for a technology talk/training session for staff and/or the public.

PERSONAL USE

These make wonderful personal start pages. You can gather headlines from all the blogs you like to read on one tab, search boxes for your favorite search tools on another and so on.

IGOOGLE HOME PAGE

(<http://www.google.com/ig>)

Google is a good example of this type of service, though it is more limited than **NetVibes** and **PageFlakes**. Nevertheless, it has plenty of content to get you started.

GETTING STARTED

- Go to **<http://www.google.com/ig>**
- If you already have a Google account, sign in.
- If not, create one. It's handy to have one to try out all the services Google is now providing.
- After you create your account, you'll be returned to the home page service.
- Your page will have some default content on it.
- Customize the weather box by adding a zip code.
- Content can be deleted by clicking on the **x** in the top right corner.

ADDING CONTENT

- Click the **Add Stuff** link and start browsing. There's a ton of stuff you can add to your page.
- Narrow down the options by selecting a category on the left sidebar.
- Or search by keyword in the box at the top.
- To add something, click on **Add it Now**
- Return to your page to see the content – **Back to Homepage** link at top left.

ADD A TAB

- Click on the **New Tab** tab.
- Give the tab a name and click on OK.
- If your tab has a common name, content will automatically be added. Try adding a tab for: health, science, travel, golf, sports, etc.

MOVE THINGS AROUND

- Grab an item by the blue bar to move things around. Click, hold and drag it to where you want it.
- To move something to a different tab, drag it and drop it on the new tab.

ADDING FEEDS WITH A URL

- Visit **<http://www.cnn.com>**
- Click on the RSS logo at the bottom of the page.
- On the next page, select a CNN news feed and copy the URL in the middle column. (Right click → Copy Shortcut also works.)

- Return to your Google home page.
- Click on the **ADD STUFF** link in the top right corner.
- Look for the link **ADD RSS FEED**
- Paste the URL in the Feed/URL box on the right and click on **ADD**.
- If was successful, you see a red checkmark.
- Use the link at the top left to go **Back to Homepage**
- You'll see your new content has been added at the top left of the page.

MAKE THIS YOUR HOMEPAGE

- Use your browser's **Tools** menu to change the home page setting.
- This might be under Internet Options, Options or something similar, depending on your browser choice.

SEARCHING FOR FEEDS

There are a number of directories and search tools that help you find feeds. Blog search tools will also help you find feeds, since many blogs have feeds.

General Topics

- **Technorati** (www.technorati.com)
- **Google Blog Search** (blogsearch.google.com)

Library Blogs & Feeds

- **LibWorm** (www.libworm.com) – Library related feeds: blogs, wikis, podcasts, vendor info and more.
- **LisZen** (www.liszen.com) – Search library related blogs.

NOTE: Be on the lookout for logos     that indicate a page has a feed. Click on the box, copy the URL for the resulting page and add it to your feed reader.

MORE FEEDS TO TRY

ADD THE SALS BLOG FEED

- <http://salsblog.sals.edu/index.php/feed/>

ADD A LIBRARY CATALOG FEED

- Visit the Hennepin County Library catalog (catalog.hclib.org)
- Do a subject search.
- When you have a list of results, look for an orange XML logo.
- Click on the logo and copy the URL from the next page. Paste it into Bloglines the way you did for the CNN example.
- Now whenever Hennepin County PL gets books on that topic, they'll show up in your feed.

GOOGLE NEWS

- Visit <http://news.google.com>
- Do a search
- Note the **RSS** feed option on the left side of the results page.
- Save the feed URL and paste it into your news reader.
- You'll get updated results for that news search without having to re-run the search.

YAHOO SUBJECT SEARCH

If you frequently run the same searches in Yahoo, try adding a search feed to your news reader. This one isn't obvious, Yahoo doesn't put the RSS feed link on the search results page, but it's there in the page source code.

- Visit <http://www.yahoo.com>
- Do a search of any sort
- When you get your results page, use your browser's VIEW menu to open up the HTML code for the page.
- About 10 lines down in the code, you'll see a URL that starts with:

<http://api.search.yahoo.com>

- Copy the whole URL and paste it into your news reader.
- The full URL will look something like this:

http://api.search.yahoo.com/WebSearchService/rss/webSearch.xml?appid=yahoosearchwebrss&query=guilderland+library&adult_ok=1

LIBWORM SEARCH FEED

A handy way to keep up on library news. LibWorm searches the content of over 1500 library related sources. Once you've done a search, that search can be subscribed to via the RSS link at the top of the search.

FLICKR FEEDS

The flickr photo sharing site provides loads of feeds. If you have your own account, look at the bottom of your photos page for the RSS feed. There's also an RSS feed on your **Contacts** page – this will show you recently added photos from your contacts. And you can get an RSS feed of all the photos that have a particular **tag** added to them.

Adding an RSS feed that pulls out all the public photos that have been taken in your library or your town will help you connect with others in your community. So you might do a search for **Guilderland Library** and turn up a dozen or so photos that have those two words as tags. But where's the RSS feed? Flickr doesn't give you a link to a feed when you search for multiple tags. Still it can be done. Here's the format for the feed:

http://api.flickr.com/services/feeds/photos_public.gne?tags=guilderland,library&format=rss_200

This retrieves public photos with the tags 'guilderland' and 'library'. Just add your tags, separated by a comma.

ADD FEEDS FROM DEL.ICIO.US

The del.icio.us social bookmarking service is full of RSS feeds. Add the RSS feed for a topic to your iGoogle page.

RSS formats from del.icio.us:

- **Bookmarks from a single user:** <http://del.icio.us/rss/grdnldy>
- **Bookmarks for a single tag:** <http://del.icio.us/rss/tag/bananas>
- **Two tags:** <http://del.icio.us/rss/tag/music+dance>
- **One user/one tag:** <http://del.icio.us/rss/grdnldy/summerreading>
- **One user/two tags:** <http://del.icio.us/rss/grdnldy/igoogle+gadgets>

AND MORE FEED IDEAS...

- **Library Elf** (<http://www.librarelf.com>)
Notifies you when your library items are due! Handy. Some are concerned about privacy issues. I love it though. Never have an overdue again. RSS and email notification options.
- **Technorati** (<http://www.technorati.com>)
Search for you library, school, business, community. Subscribe to a feed that will lead you to relevant blog entries.
- **YouTube** (<http://www.youtube.com>)
Search for you library, school, business, community. Subscribe to a feed that will keep you up to date on new videos. NOTE: don't put this kind of open feed on your web site! You never know what you might find! YouTube feeds have this format:

feed://www.youtube.com/rss/tag/tag.rss Replace tag.rss with a tag word. Eg: **feed://www.youtube.com/rss/tag/library.rss**

- **Findarticles.com** (<http://www.findarticles.com>)
Do a search and subscribe to that search through the RSS feed at the bottom of the page. Or find a journal title and subscribe to its contents.
- **Kebberfegg** (<http://www.researchbuzz.org/tools/kebbberfegg.pl>)
Enter a keyword search and this amazing utility produces feeds from a number of different sources.
- **Topix.net** (<http://www.topix.net>)
News on over 300,000 topics. Find your topic and subscribe to its news feed.
- **Library of Congress** (<http://www.loc.gov/rss/>)
- **Hennepin County Library** (<http://www.hclib.org/pub/search/RSS.cfm>)
- **Publisher's new book feed - Wiley** (<http://www.wiley.com/>) **Penguin UK** (www.penguin.co.uk) More publishers should do this!
- **Page2RSS** (<http://www.page2rss.com/>)
Use this to monitor changes to pages that don't have RSS feeds. The feed will notify you when the page is updated.
- **Check with your commercial vendors to see if they offer any RSS features.**

MORE RSS RESOURCES & TOOLS

- **All RSS** (<http://allrss.com>)
Lists and lists of all things RSS.
- **Fagan Finder > All About RSS**
(<http://www.faganfinder.com/search/rss.shtml>)
A nice overview of RSS and how it works.
- **The State of Online Feed Readers**
(<http://www.techcrunch.com/2006/03/30/the-state-of-online-feed-readers/>) Comparison of leading feed readers.
- **RSS4LIB** (<http://www.rss4lib.com/>)
Innovative ways libraries use RSS.
- **FeedBlitz** (<http://www.feedblitz.com>) **RSS to email service**
 - Sign up for their free service and add some code to your blog. Your readers sign up through a subscription box on your blog and receive daily email with the latest updates to your blog. Emails are

only sent if there was a post that day, so no need to worry about sending 'blank' messages. Example sign up box on my blog at:
<http://pafa.blogspot.com>

- Can also be used to convert a feed to an email alert. Sign up for the free account. And use the Add Subscription option to add an RSS feed URL. Updates to that feed will be emailed to you.
- **R|Mail** (<http://www.r-mail.org/>)
RSS to email service.
- **FeedBurner** (<http://www.feedburner.com>)
Track subscribers to your blog's RSS feed. Add your feed URL and you'll be able to track subscribers and provide them with an easier way to subscribe to your feed.

ADDING FEEDS TO YOUR WEB PAGES

A number of services let you pick from a list of feeds and provide JavaScript code to place that feed on your web page. Every time your web page loads, it checks for the latest headlines for that feed and puts them on your web page. This is a handy way to have up to date content on your web site. The downside? It can take time to retrieve the feed headlines, slowing down the loading of your page.

FEED2JS EXERCISE

Feedroll lets you put the contents of any RSS feed on your own web page. It takes the RSS Feed URL you provide, lets you do some basic formatting on the look of the output and then generates some JavaScript code for you to put on your web page where you want the feed content to appear.

- Start at **<http://news.google.com>**
- Do a search for a topic of interest.
- Click on the RSS feed link on the left sidebar of the results page.
- Copy the URL from that page

- Go to **<http://www.feed2js.org>**
- Click on the **BUILD** link
 - **URL:** Paste your Google News feed address into the **URL** box.
 - **Channel:** Choose to have the Author and Title of the feed showing or not.
 - **Show/Hide descriptions:** How much of the article/posting to show.
- Click on the **Preview Feed** to see a preview of the feed in a pop up window.
- Close that window and change settings if desired. Preview again.
- Click on the **Generate Javascript** button when you're satisfied with the feed.
- Copy the JavaScript in the **Get Your Code Here** box.
 - If you're familiar with CSS, there are instructions for customizing the appearance of your feed.

- Open **Notepad**, paste the JavaScript and save the file as **feed2js.html**
- Use your browser to open the **feed2js.html** file.

MORE RSS TO WEB TOOLS

- **RSSxpress-Lite** (<http://rssxpress.ukoln.ac.uk/lite/include>)
When you enter the URL of an RSS feed, a bit of JavaScript code is generated. Copy that code and paste it into your webpage where you want the content to appear. This service provides a bit of help with using CSS to style your feed. Photo thumbnails show up in the feed.

- **Feed2JS** (<http://feed2js.org/index.php?s=build>)
Use the free service on this website or install the software on your own server for faster response time. Many options for displaying headlines, descriptions, photo thumbnails and more. Use their CSS styles or create your own. **Use HTML = yes to display flickr thumbnails.**
- **FeedDirect** (<http://www.feeditdirect.com>)
Pick from a pre-selected list of feeds. Menus used to select formatting of feeds. Feeds include advertising. No option for entering your own feed address. Code is sent to your email address.
- **FeedoStyle** (<http://www.feedostyle.com/>)
Alternative to FeedRoll. Pick from a list of feeds or add your own feed URL. Combine up to 5 feeds in one. Doesn't show photo thumbnails in the feed. Free option includes advertising.
- **Feed Digest** (<http://www.feeditdigest.com/>)
Limited free service, upgrade for more control and more feeds. Lets you sort headlines alphabetically. Handy for creating subject guides based on del.icio.us tags, where you want the lists of resources to be alphabetical.

MAKE YOUR OWN FEEDS

Most blogging software packages will automatically create an RSS feed for the postings in your blog. But what if you have a regular web page that has news posted on it now and then, but it isn't done with blogging software and you want to create an RSS feed for it? You'll need to create an .xml page with the current information from your news page. Don't worry you won't need to learn XML to do this!

There are a number of tools that will write the xml code for you. But this isn't an automatic process, every time you update the web page, you'll need to update the .xml RSS feed file as well. Not as daunting as it might sound!! There are a number of tools to help you do this. **RSS Headliner** is a web based tool and easy to use. **ListGarden** (<http://www.softwaregarden.com/>) is a free download that creates and manages feeds.

Code Your Own

Perhaps the quickest way to get an RSS feed is to write your own. Start with a copy of someone else's feed and put your content in it. There's a template for an RSS feed in your class files: **rss-sample.xml**

- Open the sample file `rss-sample.xml` with Notepad.
- Examine the content, it really is pretty easy to follow
- `<channel>` : The information in the `<channel>` section describes your web site in general. The name of your web site, link to the web site, short description and the date your feed file was last updated.
- `<item>` : The `<item>` section gets repeated for each bit of news you want to add to the file. The first one is the most recent.
- Keep as many items in the file as you like. Just keep adding the most recent one at the top of the list.
- Save the updated file and put it on your web server.
- Don't forget to add a link to your web site advertising that you have a web feed

For example: (replace *feedfile.rss* with the name of your .rss file)

`Subscribe to this page`

RSS Headliner

This free web based tool will generate a very simply .xml RSS feed file for you. You just fill in the blanks, copy the code, paste it into Notepad, save it as yourfilename.xml and move it to your server.

- Open **www.webdevtips.co.uk/webdevtips/codegen/rss.shtml**
- Select how many headlines your feed will have.
- A form is generated with blank fields for all the information you'll need in your feed.
- What do you put in your feed? If your library has a newsy sort of web page, use that. If not, take a look at <http://www.crbsls.org> as a sample site.
- Enter the **Title** of your web site, the **URL** and a **short description**.
- In the feed highlight each of the latest items on your web page. These will become the 'headlines'. Each news item will be a separate headline.
- Type in a **headline** and the **URL** for the page that news story appears on. Then enter a **short description** of the news item or the first few sentences from the item.
- **Repeat** as necessary for all the news you want to send out in your feed.
- Click on **Make the Code**
- Copy that code to a **Notepad** file. Save it as **mylibrarynews.xml** Name it anything you like, as long as it has .xml on the end. The instructions tell you to save it with .rss on the end. That won't work!
- Save that file to your server.
- Edit your web page include a link to your new RSS feed. Users will then be able to subscribe to it with their newsreaders.
For example: (replace *feedfile.rss* with the name of your .rss file)

Subscribe to this page

- This service doesn't add the date and time to your feed. You can add it yourself in notepad:
- **<pubDate>Thu, 15 Mar 2007 18:04:22 GMT</pubDate>**
- **Updating your feed:** You can open the file in your text editor and update it directly or use the RSS Updater tool found on the same site.
http://www.webdevtips.co.uk/webdevtips/codegen/rss_update.shtml

Other tools to generate RSS feeds include **ListGarden** and **FeedSpring**.

VALIDATE YOUR FEED

Once you have your feed on your web server, use a feed validator to double check that it's written correctly. **Feed Validator** (<http://feedvalidator.org/>) is an easy one to use. Follow the directions on the screen.

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