

## RSS (Real Simple Syndication)

### What is RSS?

- RSS stands for Rich Site Summary or Real Simple Syndication.
- As opposed to constantly checking for updates on your favourite websites, news sources, and blogs RSS allows for that material to come to you. This will save you time and help you to organize the wide range of resources on the web.
- Most websites have a RSS feed, which you can then subscribe to using a reader/aggregator. This reader/aggregator will constantly check for new updates on all the websites you have subscribed to. It will then display these updates for you to see in one convenient location.
- A few effective and popular aggregators are **Bloglines** (<http://www.bloglines.com>), **Netvibes** (<http://www.netvibes.com/>) and **Google Reader** (<http://www.google.com/reader>).
- Since readers/aggregators are housed online, you can access your feeds from anywhere with an internet connection.



### What are some applications and benefits for RSS?

- **Simplifying Instructor's Research.** For busy Instructors who want to easily keep up in their field of study, RSS allows for access to all new research via news articles, blogs, and websites through one simple interface.
- **Staying up to date with Student activities.** If students have class blogs (such as one for group projects, discussion groups or lab groups) then RSS can keep you up to date with any new activities on their blogs. You can check to see if the content is appropriate, comment on their posts, or see the participation levels in discussions. (For more information on using blogs in education, please see the EDC's guide on blogging)
- **Allowing students to easily keep up with Course.** If you have a course blog or website you can allow students to use RSS to keep track of changes. This can allow for you to give them information almost instantly about what is happening in your course and in your field. If other classes use RSS then students can compile all their class RSS feeds in one easy to access location. (For more information on using blogs in education please see the EDC's guide on blogging)
- **Class/Social Bookmarking.** RSS can be used to create a list of useful websites that the professor or the students have visited that relate to the class or a particular project. This can be done in class through a community class blog publishing web links, or made easy and streamlined through the use of online applications built for social bookmarking which allow for rating and annotating (See resources at end for recommended sites).
- **Targeted Searching.** RSS feeds can be used as a way to bring news on a certain topic for a paper or project to directly to your reader/aggregator. All the information on a certain topic can be found by a search engine such as Google and then converted to a RSS feed and put into your reader/aggregator. Searching feeds can also allow for a wealth of useful research finds.

### What are the disadvantages of RSS?

- Many sites do not offer RSS feeds which make them much harder to track when they have updates. These websites will often fall through the cracks and be forgotten.
- RSS readers/aggregators lose parts of a website's design when the feed is taken to the **Continued on reverse.**

reader/aggregator. This can mean that some formatting and pictures could be lost.

- Not all content is appropriate for RSS, such as journals, books, and any other item that is not updated regularly.
- Student privacy must always be taken into consideration. If professors or other students wish to publish pictures and work by a student they must follow the FIPPA guidelines.
- There are many advanced features and uses possible with RSS, but these can be very time consuming to research and set up.

### How to get started with RSS:

This will show you how to get started with a reader/aggregator. It will be done using Google Reader, but both Bloglines and Netvibes are also good reader/aggregators using a similar process (For more information on using blogs in education please see the EDC's guide on blogging)

1. Choose the reader/aggregator you wish to use. For Google Reader, visit <http://www.google.ca/reader>. It will ask you to sign in with your Google account. If you do not have one you can click Create an account now.
2. Once you have created an account or have logged in with your pre-existing account, you will be taken to your reader home page.
3. Once you have found a blog you like (possibly your students blogs) go to their blog and copy the URL.
4. On your Google Reader click Add Subscription and paste the URL into the space provided. (You can use the Browse feature to also find blogs manually or to search for feeds of interest).
5. Your new feed will appear in the left hand panel where you can click on the title to read the feed. The title will be bold if there is a new post in the feed for you to read. You can also sort your feeds through tags, to enhance organization and ease of use.



### Embedded RSS Feeds

Consider embedding course-content related blogs into your WebCT page or course website, including your own blogs or student blogs if appropriate. To do this, you simply need to convert your RSS feed into Javascript, then embed the code into the target webpage. A list of sites which help you do this easily can be found at **RSS Specifications** (<http://www.rss-specifications.com/display-rss.htm>).

### Resources

#### Blogs

For more information on using blogs in education, please see the EDC's guide on blogging. Recommended top hosts are: **Blogger** (<http://www.blogger.com/home>), **Wordpress** (<http://www.wordpress.com>), and specifically targeted to the field of Education, **Edublogs** (<http://edublogs.org/>; <http://uniblogs.org/>).

#### Searching

Justin Fister's Site (<http://www.justinpfister.com>) will take a topic and use Google news to turn it into a RSS news feed.

#### Bookmarking

Furl (<http://www.furl.net>) allows you to create a class or personal bookmarking page which than can be added to your RSS. Consider also del.icio.us (<http://www.del.icio.us.com>) or magnolia (<http://www.ma.gnolia.com>) for equally popular interfaces with more style choices.

Remember that EDC is here to help you with your technology projects!  
Set up a meeting with a Technical Assistant or review our other online and print guides on our website. **We can be reached by mail at [edc@carleton.ca](mailto:edc@carleton.ca) and by phone at extension 4433.**

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