

RSS newsfeeds

Practical Guide for Business & Community Engagement





RSS Newsfeeds

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Introduction

RSS Newsfeeds are internet services that provide a standard and simple way to publish recent updates to web sites and news from an organisation. RSS stands for Really Simple Syndication. You can use Newsfeeds to keep in touch with the latest subject related news or your organisation can use a Newsfeed to keep your community, partners and customers up-to-date.

This module provides an introduction to Newsfeeds and how they can be used. It explores a range of examples of their use and looks at how they can be integrated with other internet technologies.

Who is it for?

This module is aimed at those broadly involved in Business and Community Engagement.

These areas of work might also be termed:

- Third Stream
- Third Strand
- Third Mission
- Employer and Community Engagement
- Knowledge Exchange
- Enterprise and Innovation
- Knowledge Transfer

This is not a technical module but you should be familiar with the use of a web browser such as Internet Explorer.

Useful resources that help with this module include:

Organisations using News Feeds (RSS):

The Journal of Technology Transfer

<http://api.ingentaconnect.com/content/klu/jott?format=rss>

Higher Education Empirical Research Database

<http://heerd.open.ac.uk/view/theme/theme-bcri-kti.html>

Task 1. Exploring RSS Feeds

- Objectives** To learn what RSS is and how it can be used.
- Method** You will view RSS in a browser, then subscribe to selected RSS feeds. You will then compare this method to the use a web-based RSS service.
- Comments** RSS provides a standard way to summarise new items on a website in a form that can be accessed without having to visit that site. They are increasingly used on websites and also underpin technologies such as blogs, wikis and podcasts.

Task 1.1 Go to the BBC News site at:

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/>

This site contains a huge amount of information that can be distracting. RSS provides a summary of information from such sites, reducing the need to browse.

Task 1.2 From the menu to the left of this click [news feeds](#)

This will open page describing how o use RSS. Briefly read through this page.

From the right of the page, under the heading CHOOSE A FEED click a link to a feed of interest – e.g. Science/Nature.

The contents of the feed will be displayed in your browser as shown below.

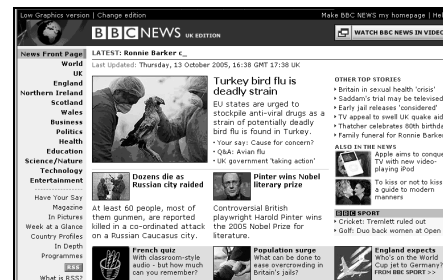


Figure 1-1 BBC news

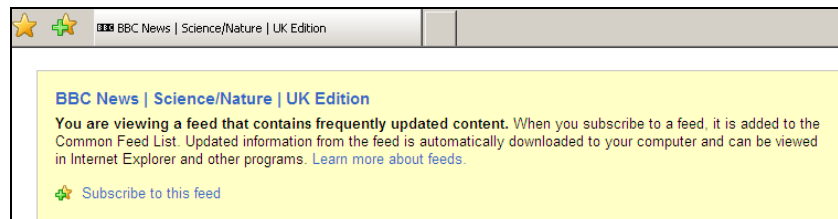


Figure 1-2 RSS feeds in Internet Explorer 7

Note that IE7 has a built-in RSS reader that turns the RSS code into a readable web page. Other browsers may display the RSS code (To see this, select View > Source).

Task 1.3 The power of RSS is in allowing users to view these items without visiting the site providing them.

From the top of the page click the link [Subscribe to this feed](#).

IE7 will now track changes to this RSS feed, allowing you to preview new items.



Figure 1-3 Subscribe to a feed

Task 1.4 From the top of the page click on the new link [View my feeds](#)

This will open the Favourites Center.

This lists all the RSS feeds to which you are subscribed.

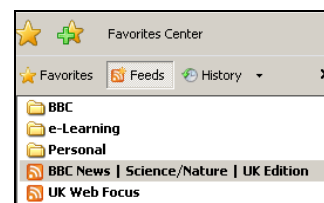


Figure 1-4 RSS favorites center

Task 1.5 Hover your mouse over an item. This will display the number of new (unread) articles and the time the feed was last updated. This allows you to check for new content without visiting the site manually.

Task 1.6 Now click on an item. This will bring up a preview of each item in the web page.

Click the title of an item to open the full article.

Return to the RSS feed page by clicking back.

Now notice the additional navigation features provided, such as sort order, filter by category and search.

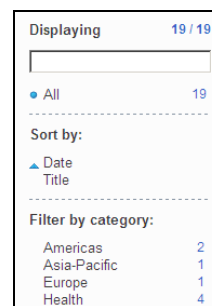


Figure 1-5 IE7 RSS navigation

Optional A more flexible way to use RSS is using a web-based RSS client such as newsgator. This allows access via a browser from any location.

These tasks require registration. If you would prefer not to do this, move onto Task 2 which covers using Google as a web-based RSS reader.

Task 1.7 Go to the newsgator site at:

<http://www.newsgator.com/>

If you already have a newsgator account, sign in and go to Task 1.8.

To create an account, click Sign Up and complete the short registration form. Make a note of your username and password for later use.

Agree to the terms and conditions, tick the box and click Next.

In Step 2: Account Level select NewsGator Online FREE! and click Next

Leave the rest of the options at their default values and click Next to create your account.

Task 1.8 From the newsgator breadcrumb menu click Add Feeds (Figure 1-6).

This page allows you to browse or search for RSS feeds to add to your account.

Scroll down to the section Enter a Search Term

Enter **Netskills** and press Go.

Newsgator will list Netskills' RSS feeds.

Select Netskills: Forthcoming Workshops and click Add

Now click View in NewsGator Online.

This feed will now appear in your listings.

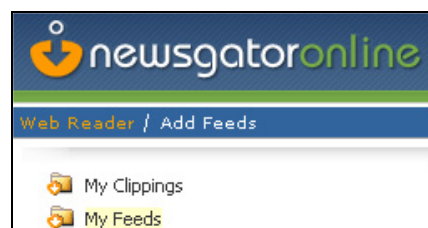


Figure 1-6 Newsgator feeds

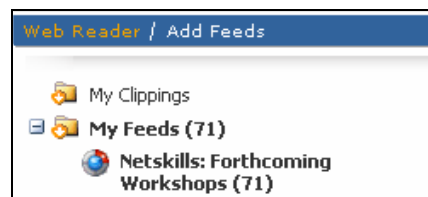



Figure 1-7 Netskills events feed

Task 1.9 Click Netskills: Forthcoming Workshops.

This will display the items in the RSS feed.

From the top of the page click the icon  next to Display Options. Experiment with some of these feed settings.

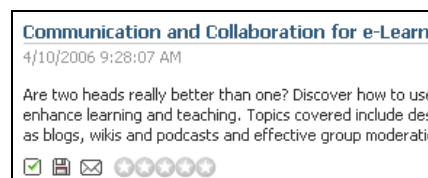




Figure 1-8 RSS feed management

Task 1.10 Now notice the icons under each item:

Mark post as read: item will no longer appear in listings if displaying new items only.

 *Add to clippings*: permanently save items from any feed to the MyClippings folder.

 *Email*: send item via email.

Task 1.11 Return to the Add Feeds section and add any other feeds that are of interest.

Task 2. iGoogle

Objectives To explore the use of RSS through iGoogle.

Method You will use a Google account to create a customised page to which you will add content from other sites provided through RSS newsfeeds.

Task 2.1 In your web browser enter the address:

<http://www.google.co.uk/>

From the top-right of the page click the link [Sign in](#).

If you already have a Google account, enter your details and click [Sign in](#).

If you need to create a Google account, click [Create an account now](#).

Follow the on-screen instructions to create an account and log in to Google.

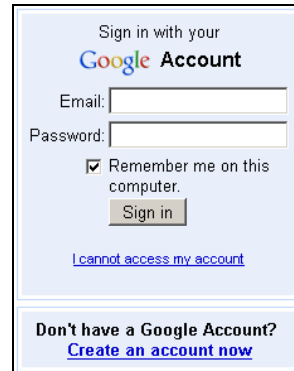


Figure 2-1 Google sign in

Task 2.2 Return to the Google homepage at:

<http://www.google.co.uk/>

From the top-right corner of the page, click [iGoogle](#).

Task 2.3 By default, this page displays content recommended by Google.

However, you can customise this to display information of interest to you.

Click [Make it your own](#).

Leave the options as they are and click [Show my page](#).

Your customised page will now be displayed.



Figure 2-2 Personalise your home page

Task 2.4 To add more content, from the top-right of the page click [Add stuff >>](#).

The page shown in Figure 2-3 should appear.

You can browse or search for content, or select from the recommended items.



Figure 2-3 Adding content

Task 2.5 Explore some of the content available, adding them to your page by clicking [Add it now](#)

Once you have finished adding content, click [Back to homepage](#).

Task 2.6 As well as content recommended by Google, you can also add in any RSS feed.


To do this, from the top-right of the page again click [Add stuff >>](#).

This time, from next to the search box click the link [Add by URL](#).

Enter the address any RSS feed (you may wish to paste this in, rather than type it) and click [Add](#).

Return to your homepage to see how the content of your new RSS feed is displayed.

Task 2.7

Notice that some items have an edit button next to it: [edit](#) 

Click on one of these to explore the extra options to customise the content (e.g. for Weather you would be able to choose different locations).

Task 2.8

Finally, hold your cursor over one of the titles of a piece of content so that your mouse pointer turns into a cross.

You can now drag and drop this piece of content to a different place on your page – try this out!



Figure 2-4 Moving content