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A Guide to RSS Aggregators

One of the most popular features of Internet portals, websites, pages and even emails is a frame that features an organized list of news headlines and periodic updates from other web sources. Really Simple Syndication, formerly "Rich Site Summary" or simply, RSS makes this possible.

Most users visit a lot of websites whose content continually change, such as news sites, community organization or professional association information pages, medical websites, product support pages, and blogs. As Internet surfing became an intrinsic part of business and leisure, it became important to get rid of the very tedious task of repeatedly returning to each website to see updated content.

RSS easily distributes information from different websites to a wider number of Internet users. RSS aggregators are programs that use RSS to source these updates, and then organize those lists of headlines, content and notices for easy reading. It allows computers to automatically retrieve and read the content that users want, then track changes and personalize lists of headlines that interests them.

The specially made computer programs called "RSS aggregators" were created to automatically find and retrieve the RSS feeds of pre-selected internet sites on behalf of the user and organize the results accordingly. (RSS feeds and aggregators are also sometimes referred to as "RSS Channels" and "RSS Readers".)

The RSS aggregator is like a web browser for RSS content. HTML presents information directly to users, and RSS automatically lets computers communicate with one another. While users use browsers to surf the web then load and view each page of interest, RSS aggregators keeps track of changes to many websites. The titles or descriptions are links themselves and can be used to load the web page the user wants.

RSS starts with an original Web site that has content made available by the administrator. The website creates an RSS document and registers this content with an RSS publisher that will allow other websites to syndicate the documents. The Web site also produces an RSS feed, or channel, which is available together with all other resources or documents on the particular Web server. The website will register the feed as an RSS document, with a listed directory of appropriate RSS publishers.

An RSS feed is composed of website content listed from newest to oldest. Each item usually consists of a simple title describing the item along with a more

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complete description and a link to a web page with the actual content being
described. In some instances, the short description or title line is the all
the updated information that a user wants to read (for example, final games
scores in sports, weblogs post, or stock updates). Therefore, it is not even
necessary to have a web page associated with the content or update items listed
-- sometimes all the needed information that users need would be in the titles
and short summaries themselves.

The RSS content is located in a single file on a webpage in a manner not very
different from typical web pages. The difference is that the information is
written in the XML computer code for use by an RSS aggregator and not by a web
user like a normal HTML page.

There are 2 main parts that are involved in RSS syndication, namely: the source
end and the client end.

The client end of RSS publishing makes up part of the system that gathers and
uses the RSS feed. For example, Mozilla FireFox browser is typically at the
client end of the RSS transaction. A user's desktop RSS aggregator program also
belongs to the client end.

Once the URL of an RSS feed is known, a user can give that address to an RSS
aggregator program and have the aggregator monitor the RSS feed for changes.
Numerous RSS aggregators are already preconfigured with a ready list of RSS feed
URLs for popular news or information websites that a user can simply choose
from.

There are many RSS aggregators that can be used by all Internet users. Some can
be accessed through the Internet, some are already incorporated into email
applications, and others run as a standalone program inside the personal
computer.

RSS feeds have evolved into many uses. Some uses gaining popularity are:

·For online store or retail establishments: Notification of new product
arrivals
·For organization or association newsletters: title listings and notification
of new issues, including email newsletters
·Weather Updates and other alerts of changing geographic conditions
·Database management: Notification of new items added, or new registered
members to a club or interest group.

The uses of feeds will continue to grow, because RSS aggregators make access to

any information that individual users like more convenient and fun.