

Library workshop: Tracking News and More with RSS

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What is RSS? Depending on whom you ask, it stands for either “Rich Site Summary” or “Really Simple Syndication.” In layperson’s terms, it’s a way to keep track of websites that are frequently updated (like news sites, or blogs, or even online versions of scholarly journals).



Any site that includes the “RSS” or “XML” icon has an RSS “feed”: a list of new entries or updates that you can track with an RSS feed reader.

What’s an RSS feed reader? It’s a device (either a downloadable program or an online service) that lets you gather many RSS feeds in one place. In other words, an RSS feed reader (a.k.a. “aggregator”) saves you the trouble of visiting lots of different sites every day by automatically notifying you of what’s new.

What can I use RSS for? Here are some examples:

- **News sites:** Follow news from CNN (<http://www.cnn.com/services/rss/>), *The New York Times* (<http://www.nytimes.com/services/xml/rss/index.html>), BBC news (<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/help/3223484.stm>), Reuters (<http://www.reuters.com/tools/rss>), etc.
- **Magazines and journals:** Magazines like the *New Yorker* (<http://www.newyorker.com/services/rss/summary>) are now offering RSS feeds on their websites. Many journal databases, such as Project Muse (<http://feeds.muse.jhu.edu/>), offer RSS feeds for new journal issues.
- **Blogs:** Most weblogs offer an RSS feed. Check out the Trico Libraries News and Notes blog for an example (<http://trilogy.brynmawr.edu/mt/trinews/>).
- **Saved searches:** If you search a site like Craigslist (<http://craigslist.org>) and you want to go back to the search without having to re-do it every time, you can use RSS to track it. Not every site does this, but it’s incredibly useful.
- **Weather:** Many weather sites (e.g. <http://www.weather.com>) offer RSS feeds for local weather forecasts.
- **New stuff in Tripod:** Click the “New Books, Videos, etc.” link on the main Tripod screen (http://trilogy.brynmawr.edu/cgi-bin/newbooks/newbook_choose.pl) to track what the libraries are buying in your areas of interest.

How can I get started?

- Web-based RSS feed readers: Bloglines (<http://www.bloglines.com/>) or Google Reader (<http://www.google.com/reader/>) are the easiest to use.
- If you use Mozilla Firefox, you can use your browser as a feed reader. From the main menu, select Tools > Options > Feeds, then use the “Live Bookmarks” option.
- Find out more about other RSS readers at <http://allrss.com/rssreaders.html>.
- Look for the RSS icon on sites you visit regularly.

Tell me more! The Tri-College Libraries have a good introduction to RSS at <http://trilogy.brynmawr.edu/trico/aboutrss/>.