

# The usefulness of RSS to “Westy Watches the Wire” WWW

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## Summary

The following report looks at the internet communications and the use of Really Simple Syndication (RSS) in web sites to enhance the way of passing information to web site visitors. RSS feeds avails the latest information to users from various websites without the need of visiting each of the web sites. The application pushes the information to them and they can choose which information to read. To set up RSS one needs the internet, an RSS reader and a database with the information to be shared. RSS makes it possible to share information from incompatible databases as it uses XML files that can be used on different databases. This sharing of information can also become a privacy issue as information can be accessed by unauthorised persons. Hence, is important to protect the information of the users. This is done by implementing privacy policies.

## Key words:

*privacy, spam, blog, RSS, internet communication, advertisement.*

## 1. Introduction

Internet communications report is relevant in the field of communication today. The way of communicating has changed and more people are relying on the internet to get information. This information can be got from web sites, blogs, and online publications and so on. It is therefore important to look into the area of internet communications to be able to improve on the way information is availed and used over the internet.

The following report will explain how RSS is used on web sites to make communication easier. It was requested by Westy a web site owner who uploads comments about his TV show. Many people comment and he is finding it difficult to cope with the numerous e-mails he gets. He needs to know about RSS so that he can use it on his site so that he does not have to respond personally to the emails without losing control of his site. He needs to know how RSS is set, its maintenance, how to monitor information posted on his web site, how to protect his users' privacy, the benefits he can get from its installation and how to attract people to his web site.

## 2. Methodology

The information used in this report was collected from 8 October 2009 to 22 October 2009. The data for the topic Internet Communications- Research Report was collected

from secondary sources through a research online. A number of internet articles were used in compiling this report. It was not possible to gather information from primary sources due to time and financial constraints.

## 3. Findings

3.1 RSS is a format that is designed for delivering regular changing web content. RSS means Really Simple Syndication. This format is used mostly by news-related websites, online publishers and weblogs. They syndicate their content as an RSS feed to the people who may need it. The format is based on XML and the RSS feeds are use XML files that contain information in RSS specification [8]. RSS is not restricted to news only and can be used other ways such as updating changes in books [6].RSS enables one to get content posted on new sites and blogs without looking for it as it is pushed to the user in their RSS reader. Users are able to get fresh or up to date news and information [9].

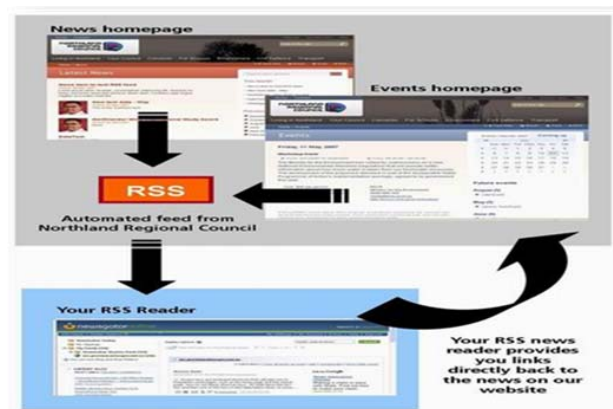


Figure 1: RSS\_Feed Diagram

A web site owner is able to maintain an RSS feed to send notifications to the people who have an interest in the site. The notifications are made possible by computer programmes known as RSS aggregators that are designed to automatically access RSS feeds from websites and a client is able to get RSS feeds from different web sites. RSS gives basic information in the notification. The information includes a title that describes the item and a

link to the web page where the full details of the information can be found.

This is an example of an RSS feed

Item 1:

Title: Sidewalk contract awarded

Description: The city awarded the sidewalk contract to Smith Associates. This hotly contested deal is worth \$1.2 million.

Link:

<http://www.gardencitynews.com/contractawards/sidewalk.htm>

(Software Garden, 2004).

- **Is the RSS complicated or difficult to the Set up?**

3.2 To set up *RSS* one can use desktop applications or use online services. It is difficult to write *RSS* manually and most people prefer to use online services where one submits a feed into search engines as well as directories [5]. One requires an XML code. XML makes it easy to create a feed that can generate automatically because it is a publicly accessible text file. With XML one creates data that can be accessible. It simplifies data storage as well as sharing. When contrasted with HTML it is better because in HTML one would require to a lot of time to edit data every time changes occur. With XML data is stored in separate XML files thus no changes are required in HTML as with the use of JavaScript a file can be read externally as XML by updating the content of HTML. XML makes it easy to easy to share data because computer systems use databases that contain incompatible formats whereas XML stores data in plain text that can easily be shared [4]. This way no human effort is required to update a web site [1]. To make an *RSS* feed public one needs internet to put the feed, a database that has descriptions of the content and a server-side scripting language that can access the database or a *RSS* reader. A reader can be obtained freely or bought. There are popular *RSS* readers such as NewsFire used on Mac, pRSS reader, free software for PocketPC, YeahReader used with windows, Liferea for use with linux and Bloglines that reads feeds online.

- **Is the RSS complicated or difficult to the Maintenance?**

3.3 Maintenance of *RSS* feeds is very important so that the users are given current information. *RSS* is very important as it gives users information without having to visit web sites. One can subscribe to an *RSS* maintenance website or buy software created for that purpose. This is because creating and maintaining *RSS* might be difficult at first for a novice. *For example*, there is the Feed Editor that edits *RSS* and offers additional functionality. It makes

sense to use *RSS* because it will update information automatically. This reduces the chance of forgetting to update information on one's web site.

- **RSS: monitor posts and placing ads?**

3.4 The web site can be monitored to ensure that people do not leave libellous comments and place ads only, by using a software that can detect such messages. The users should also be required to give their emails as sign accountability. The site owner should also reserve the right to remove a comment that is found to be libellous. This will discourage visitors from publishing such kind of messages. The site owner can also delay publishing of the messages so that they are checked for suitability before publishing. Visitors should also be given conditions to follow and they should be advised against leaving derogatory messages. To limit the number of ads a user can place the site owner should give a limit and probably require them to do something before they are allowed to publish their adverts. *For example*, they can be charged for the advertisements. This will ensure that the number of advertisements is reduced.

- **RSS: embed clips in YouTube pages?**

3.5 Embedding posts from you tube to a web page requires one to copy the code in the box labelled 'embedded.' It is found at the box named 'about this video.' Once the video is copied it is pasted into the web page. This video is also embedded on other websites that are linked using *RSS*. To disable videos from being embedded on other web sites one clicks in their account the button named 'my uploaded videos', which can be reached by the following link: ([http://youtube.com/my\\_videos](http://youtube.com/my_videos)). Then click on "edit video info" in the right corner of the video section, and under "sharing options" click to "no external sites may not be embedded and play this video." [3].



Figure 1: Embedding video

- **RSS: people's privacy and spam lists?**

3.6 Protecting people's privacy is very crucial because personal information can be used by malicious people to hurt someone. The site owner should have a clear privacy policy on how the information given by the users will be used. The site should also not ask for personal information that is not relevant to the site. Giving emails can be made optional. The visitors should also be advised about giving personal information on the site. They should be made aware of how their privacy may be affected by the information they give on that site [7]. The site visitors should not publish comments that give information such as physical addresses or phone numbers. The privacy policy should be well stated and easily understood. It should not contain verbose language. The site owner should also join a privacy guarantee programme that will monitor how the site uses visitors' information.

- **RSS: make money and Selling advertising, subscriptions, t-shirts?**

3.7 Money can be made from web sites. Selling products on one's web site can earn someone money. This is enabled by e-commerce and Westy can sell products such as T-shirts. The site can also refer visitors to other sites that sell products and get paid a commission. The other way of making money is by introducing subscriptions to the site. The subscriptions can be a onetime payment or can be renewed at a regular period. Making money from a web site is possible. The site owner can sell advertising space to businesses that want to reach the kind of audience the site attracts.

- **RSS: attract people?**

3.8 Attracting people to the site. *RSS* help site owners to attract visitors to their web sites due to its quality. If one provides an attractive *RSS* feed their site can become popular. This is because the feed is also sent to other sites and visitors in those sites can see it and follow the link provided. Site owners should also update their feed often so that the visitors get relevant information in good time. The site should be kept simple and easy to understand. This will make the site user friendly and visitors will find it simple to use. The login procedure should also be kept simple as it increases *RSS* subscribers. The main page should have an attractive design to capture the attention and interest of visitors so that they will find the site useful to their needs. Furthermore, the web site should focus on its theme and this can be brought out in the text choice, colour and images. The site is basically for posting comments by viewers of the show. This means that that Westy should write about things or topics that will interest

the web users and make them want more. If this is done they will keep visiting the site and even recommended their friends to visit the site as they feel it is worthy of their time. Text boxes will give visitors a chance to comment or give their suggestions about the show or other visitors' comments. Replies should be programmed so that the visitors can feel that the site owner takes time to read their comments and this will make them loyal to the web site thus increase traffic [2]. Video marketing can be used to increase visitors to a site. YouTube is very popular and videos uploaded on it are watched by many people. By uploading a creative video related to services or products being offered on one's web site it can increase visitors because they are more likely to see the video. A link to the website can be included in the YouTube video as it is ranked highly on search engines due to the high traffic it receives. The other way is to use online sites that allow free classifieds. Such sites get many visitors daily. Placing an advertisement in such a site like Craigslist will direct many visitors to a web site that placed the advert and hence more visitors to the web site [2].

## 4. Conclusion

We are in the new era of communication based on the internet. The *RSS* is usually used to bring out frequently updated knowledge in standardized pattern. Most people are using this tool to find information about many topics. Some use it for entertainment, general knowledge or academic research. This information is hosted on websites. It is therefore imperative that web sites are user friendly so that users can benefit from using the information carried on them. The way of communicating has changed and people want a type of communication that easy and fast to access. This has led to development of products like *RSS* which make getting information from a number of web sites easy as information is availed as soon as it is up dated or changed. This ensures that people have the latest information. Site owners are required to update their websites so that they can transmit information to their users in real time. This can be done by incorporating *RSS* feeds which use XML type of files to avail information to their users wherever they are as long as they have access to the internet. On the other hand, web site use comes with its implications concerning privacy. The users should be protected against exploitation or harm that may be caused by exposing their information to strangers. On the other hand, web sites can be used to make money. Web site owners can sell advertising space, products or services through e-commerce. The customers who buy such products or services are required to give personal information about their credit cards and this information has to be protected from landing into wrong hands.

## 5. Recommendations

5.1 Web site owners should upgrade their web sites by using the latest technology to reach their users more efficiently and keep them updated with the latest information. They should adapt RSS use and encourage their uses to do so.

5.2 Due to the different uses that the internet has. The way of and sharing information has changed. People are able to share information with people from all over the world just by a click of a button. To do so they have to sign up with providers of such services and when they do so they are required to give personal information. They can also be traced using their computers' IP address. This information can be used wrongly to harm them. Thus, the privacy of internet users should be safeguarded. This should be a collective responsibility among the users, site owners and the government. Strict privacy policies should be enforced to protect the internet users from hackers.

5.3 Information exchanged over e-commerce transactions should be safeguarded by the businesses to prevent exposing credit card numbers to hackers who may use that information to rob people of their money in banks.

5.4 Web site owners should also strive to ensure that the information posted on their sites by their visitors is appropriate. The information should be filtered so that we do not end up with derogatory messages on the web sites as they may lower the reputation of the web sites.

5.5 Web sites should take advantage of the traffic they get to their sites and make some money. However, this should be done legitimately as there are so many web sites conning people of their hard earned money.

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