

What is it?

RSS, which stands for Really Simple Syndication or Rich Site Summary, is an easy way to keep up with your favorite news and information.

RSS is a family of Web feed formats used to publish frequently updated content such as blog entries, news headlines, and podcasts in a standardized format. An RSS document (which is called a "feed" or "web feed" or "channel") contains either a summary of content from an associated web site or the full text. RSS makes it possible for people to keep up with web sites in an automated manner that can be piped into special programs or filtered displays.

More info:

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/RSS>

http://webdesign.about.com/od/rss/a/what_is_rss.htm

Why use it?

The benefit of RSS is the aggregation of content from multiple Web sources in one place. RSS content can be read using software called an "RSS reader", "feed reader" or an "aggregator", which can be web-based or desktop-based. A standardized XML file format allows the information to be published once and viewed by many different programs. The user subscribes to a feed by entering the feed's link into the reader or by clicking an RSS icon in a browser that initiates the subscription process. The RSS reader checks the user's subscribed feeds regularly for new content, downloading any updates that it finds and provides a user interface to monitor and read the feeds.

RSS solves a problem for people who regularly use the web. It allows you to easily stay informed by retrieving the latest content from the sites you are interested in. You save time by not needing to visit each site individually. You ensure your privacy, by not needing to join each site's email newsletter.

More info:

www.whatisrssl.com

Why the community service and volunteer field should use it:

How to boost your community service or volunteer program by using a wiki:

1. Subscribe to feeds to keep up-to-date on important topics in the volunteer and community service sector.
2. Use an RSS feed on your website or blog so people can subscribe whenever you post an update, resource, funds available, or volunteer opportunity.

How to do it?

The first step is to choose an RSS reader. RSS news readers are small software programs that aggregate RSS feeds and display the story information. They allow you to scan headlines from hundreds of news sources in a central location.

A wide range of RSS readers can be easily downloaded from the Web. Some readers are Web-based while others require you to download a small software program onto your desktop. Most are free to use.

- A comprehensive list of RSS readers provided by the DMOZ Open Directory Project can be found here:
http://www.dmoz.org/Computers/Software/Internet/Clients/WWW/Feed_Readers
- Microsoft's Internet Explorer 7 and Mozilla's Firefox 3 both have RSS readers build into them – both a free downloads and easily installed on non-CNCS computers.

Each reader has a slightly different way of adding a new feed (also called a "channel"). In most cases, here's how it works:

- Click on the small XML button near the channel you want. You'll see a page displaying XML code.
- From your browser, copy the URL that appears in your Address Bar. For example, the URL you would copy for Corporation for National and Community Service News Stories is:
<http://www.nationalservice.gov/rss.asp>
- Paste that URL into the 'Add New Channel' section of the reader. You should be all set! The RSS feed will start to display and regularly update the headlines for you.

More info:

http://www.servicelearning.org/instant_info/marketing_101/index.php

Examples

 Community service and volunteering examples:

Visit the Corporation's RSS feeds and Social Networking information and subscription page here:

<http://www.nationalservice.gov/about/newsroom/rss.asp>

Keep in mind

If you are using a feed on your site or blog, make sure to update regularly. If you have static content on your site then adding a feed won't do much for you.

RSS feeds should make your life easier. Subscribe to feeds from sites and blogs that will save you time in reading them in this format. It's easy to get lost and oversubscribe which doesn't end up making this useful in the long run.