

## **What is RSS and how can I take advantage of it?**

RSS (Really Simple Syndication) is a method used by websites—mostly blogs and news organizations—to turn the content they post into a subscription. The content is delivered to you, so you don't have to visit the website to see if there's anything new!

In order to take advantage of RSS, you have to set up an RSS aggregator, which collects links to new content on the sites you've subscribed to. Think of it this way: you get subscriptions to your favorite magazines so you get new issues right away—they're delivered to your mailbox so you don't have to check the bookstore or news stand every few days. An RSS aggregator is like a mailbox for RSS feeds from blogs and some websites—new content comes to you, so you don't have to check the website!

Lots of libraries and librarians have started blogging, and they've added RSS feeds to their blogs. Reading some of these is a great way to keep up with new developments, ideas and resources within the field of librarianship.

## **That sounds great! So how do I do this?**

There are a lot of RSS aggregators to choose from—you can use some web browsers as an RSS aggregator, Microsoft Outlook and Mozilla Thunderbird include aggregators, and there are some programs you can download to your computer. There are also web-based services—when you set up a web-based RSS aggregator, you can log into your account and read your subscriptions from any computer that has an Internet connection! This handout includes instructions on how to set up a Yahoo! or Google personalized homepage, which includes RSS feeds. We've also developed a handout to walk you through setting up Bloglines (that PDF is linked right next to this one, so go back and grab it!) If you think you'd rather use another type of aggregator, check out Wikipedia's list of aggregators, linked below.

## **OK, but first I'd like to learn a little bit more about this stuff.**

Here are some resources if you'd like to learn more about RSS feeds and aggregators.

### **MIT Libraries RSS Introductory Course**

Part 1: <http://news-libraries.mit.edu/techtalks/rss-part-1/>

Part 2: <http://news-libraries.mit.edu/techtalks/rss-part-2/>

### **Kelly Robinson's Presentation**

PowerPoint & audio file on the ASIS&T website: <http://web.simmons.edu/~asist>

### **Wikipedia Articles**

What is RSS?: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/RSS\\_\(protocol\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/RSS_(protocol))

List of aggregators: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List\\_of\\_news\\_aggregators](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_news_aggregators)

### **A more technical article**

<http://www.xml.com/pub/a/2002/12/18/dive-into-xml.html>

### **Blog search engines**

Technorati (just blogs): <http://www.technorati.com>

Daypop (blogs and news organizations): <http://www.daypop.com>

### **What sort of icons to look for**

There are a lot of different icons currently being used to denote RSS feeds. The most common is a small yellow button that says "RSS" or "XML" in white text. But take a look at this page to see what other types of icons you might encounter: <http://www.cadenhead.org/workbench/news/2872/support-common-feed-icon>

## Setting up a Yahoo! or Google personalized homepage

Yahoo! and Google both offer personalized homepages that you can set to be the default page that opens when you launch your browser (Firefox, IE, Safari, etc.). You can also log in and access them from public-use computers. These are easy to set up and allow you to see, at glance, whether you have new mail in your Yahoo! or Gmail account, check the weather, and see if any of your favorite feeds have been updated. Even if you set up Bloglines, these can be a great supplement.

There are plenty of other homepage services that you can use as well. Take a look at [www.netvibes.com](http://www.netvibes.com) and [www.protopage.com](http://www.protopage.com). Both of these work similarly to MyYahoo! and Google Personalized Homepage. All four of these look different, so take a look at them and see which one you prefer – and don't be afraid to switch if you change your mind once you're using one of them! A personalized home page is pointless if you don't use it.

### MyYahoo!

1. Visit [www.yahoo.com](http://www.yahoo.com) and click "MyYahoo" at the top right.
2. If you already have a Yahoo! account, click on the blue "Sign In" link at the top. If not, hit the big yellow "Save" button. On the next page, click the blue "Sign Up" link under the login boxes. Follow the instructions to register. If Yahoo! doesn't direct you back to the MyYahoo page, repeat step 1.
3. Under the Yahoo! search box on your MyYahoo! page, you'll see that you can Add Content, Change Layout, and Change Colors. Play around with these to change the look and content of your homepage.
4. The Yahoo! homepage is made up of modules which you can drag-and-drop to rearrange (if you want to move something from one column to another, use "Change Layout"). To delete a module you don't want, click the X in the top right corner of the module. To hide or view the content of a module, click the > to the left of the title.
5. When you click "Add Content," Yahoo! offers you several ways to pick from popular feeds. If you've already got the URL of a particular RSS feed handy, click "Add RSS by URL" to the right of the search box, and paste in the URL. (See the Bloglines instructions if you're not sure what this means!)

### Personalized Google Homepage

1. Visit [www.google.com](http://www.google.com) and click "Personalized Home" in the top right.
2. If you already have an account, click "Sign In" in the top right. If you do not have a Google account, at the bottom of the page click on the link in the phrase "Save this page and take it with you using your Google account." Follow the instructions, and if Google does not take you back to the Personalized Home page, repeat step 1.
3. The Google Personalized Homepage is made up of modules which you can drag-and-drop to rearrange. To delete a module you don't want, click the X in the top right corner of the module. Click "edit" to set how many items (such as headlines) to display in any given module.
4. To add content, click the "Add Content" button in the top left of the screen. Here, you can quickly add popular RSS feeds. If you've already got the URL of a particular RSS feed handy, click "Create a Section," and paste in the URL. (See the Bloglines instructions if you're not sure what this means!)