

What is RSS?

If you have your own web site, or if you are a web designer, this article will be of interest to you. Web sites that are updated on a regular basis, such as news sites or content-driven web sites, can pose a problem for the user. It is cumbersome for the user to have to scan through every page of a web site in order to locate any new information that has been posted.

To solve this dilemma, RSS feeds were created. RSS stands for Really Simple Syndication. They are coded in XML file format. They contain descriptions of or links to any new information that has recently been posted on the web site. These may be links to articles, or links to certain pages of the web site where new content has been published. These feeds can be used for almost any purpose, such as listing recent company announcements for a company web site, or providing the scores for professional sporting events from the night before (RSS is used on a lot of sport-themed websites in this manner).

It is important to utilize RSS feeds not only to make it easier for the user to find new or updated information, but so that those who connect to the web site with a wireless device will easily be able to navigate through the web site. Web browsers installed on wireless devices are often not compatible with many elements of the HTML programming language. However, all web browsers are compatible with XML, because XML files are simple text files; XML merely defines and lists data, it does not force the browser to display it in a certain way. Thus, RSS Feeds, which are created with XML, can be viewed on any web browser, and can help the user to navigate through the web site, which is sometimes not possible with web sites created only with HTML.

RDF Site Summary was the first version of RSS. It was created by Dan Libby of Netscape in 1999. This version was known as 0.9. Later that same year, Libby combined 0.9 with an XML syndication format created by Dave Winer to create 0.91, which gave birth to the other versions that would follow it, such as 1.0 and 2.0.

One of the advantages of having an RSS feed is that if you have one, you can register it with an aggregator service. Aggregators search through feeds all over the net and display links to content on other sites so that webmasters can select content that is of interest to them and link to it on their website. This is a good way for webmasters to get sites to link to them, which is helpful because link popularity is perhaps the most important factor used to rank web sites on search engines. Also, some search engines will rank sites that have organized RSS feeds higher than sites that do not make use of them.

A feed is extremely simple to create. The syntax is not complicated. There are plenty of online tutorials that can teach you how to create one in only a few minutes. I recommend the World Wide Web Consortium web site (W3C). If you have a web site that contains a lot of content that is updated frequently, using RSS is not an option; it is a necessity.

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About the Author

Jim Pretin is the owner of <http://www.forms4free.com>, a service that helps programmers make email forms.