

Keeping up-to-date using RSS

1. Introduction

RSS stands for Really Simple Syndication. An RSS feed supplies updates from a website you have subscribed to. Instead of following your bookmarks to find out if there's anything new, the information comes to you. This makes keeping up-to-date with the latest news, articles or blogs much quicker and easier. You can even subscribe to podcasts (audio and video files) via RSS.

You may have already seen the orange RSS icon on websites and wondered what it meant.

Learning outcome

By the end of this activity you will understand what RSS feeds are for and how to use an RSS feed reader to keep up-to-date.

2. Getting started

RSS feeds can be set up from many of the sites that are updated regularly, such as news sites or blogs. You can add new feeds or delete old ones at any time.

To use RSS feeds you need an RSS feed reader. There may be one built into your browser, or you can use a web-based reader, like Feedly.

Another option is to download a reader, which will store your feeds on your device so you can look at them offline.

Once you have a reader set up, you can subscribe to updates from web pages simply by clicking the RSS button.

Exercise

Have a look at, and compare, some RSS readers. Choose one that most appeals to you and sign up to it. There are some examples below, but you might want to search for others online or in your app store.

[Feedly](#)

[Netvibes](#)

Being digital Copyright © 2020 The Open University

[Inoreader](#)

3. Trying it out

Case Study

Michael has a keen interest in history and wants to make sure that he keeps up-to-date with news, comments and discussions on the subject.

He decides to use Feedly and has a look at some of the general feeds suggested there, just to get a feel for how it works.

Then he checks some of the sites he already visits to see if they offer an RSS service.

History.com makes it particularly easy to subscribe as they provide an [RSS feeds page](#) about their feeds.

He does a search for 'history blogs' and is excited to find the [On History blog](#) from the Institute of Historical Research in the UK has an RSS feed. He noticed the RSS symbol next to the details of their social media channels.

Exercise

RSS readers may suggest some 'pre-selected' content. Think of a topic that interests you, and then go to the RSS reader that you chose in the previous activity. Look through some of the pre-selected content that has been suggested. If you find any feeds that are of interest, sign up to them.

4. Summary

RSS feeds can be a really useful way of staying up-to-date with websites, blogs and other resources such as podcasts. By using an RSS feed reader you collect together a lot of information in one place, saving you time.

Next Steps

Check any websites or blogs you follow regularly and see if they offer RSS feeds which you can add to your feed reader!