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Makers of the Award-Winning Cascade Server content management software

Everything You Need to Know About RSS

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For those of you who frequent the “blogosphere,” you’re likely completely comfortable with the term RSS and understand the benefits of subscribing to RSS feeds. But for those of you who don’t read many blogs, or aren’t familiar with RSS technology and how it can save you TONS of time and effort when surfing the web, read on.

First of all, you may be wondering:

Why do I care about an RSS feed? Why would I want to use RSS?

Most of us surfing the web have anywhere from a handful to 30-40 sites we frequent regularly. Maybe you read CNN.com daily to get an update on the news, or maybe you’re looking for a new CMS and frequent CMSwatch.com; in any case, using RSS technology is the fastest and easiest way for you to quickly access new information on the websites you frequent most often and to be alerted when new content appears on your favorite websites. Instead of having to type in the URL of the site you are interested in, and browse each site for new content updates, an RSS feed takes all the most recent content from all of your favorite or specified sites, and aggregates them in a news-feed-esque manner.

What is exactly is an RSS? How does it work?

RSS stands for ‘Really Simple Syndication,’ and RSS feeds are based on XML . When a publisher publishes new content to the web that is available for subscription via an RSS, he/she publishes an RSS XML file known as a “feed.” These RSS feeds have a URL associated with them, and by subscribing to that URL, you are able to automatically receive notifications of updates from your favorite pages. RSS icons letting you know you can subscribe to a page or feed appear all over the Web in different forms; here’s just a sampling of some of the icons you may see:

Why shouldn’t I just bookmark my favorite pages?

Bookmarking web pages is helpful for sites you don’t frequently visit, but may want to save in case you need to visit them later to reference a favorite recipe or jot down an address. Using bookmarks for pages you may want to visit later, but don’t frequently change, is also helpful. However, if you are still using bookmarks to keep track of sites with frequently updated content such as blogs and news stories, STOP! Bookmarking requires that you manually return to a page in your Bookmarks list on a regular basis, or when you remember, to find new articles and content updates. Instead, using an

RSS feed for these pages allows you view new headlines and updates without even navigating to the page itself.

OK, I get why an RSS feed is helpful. But how do I subscribe to one? Can I subscribe to any page?

There are a number of different ways you can subscribe to different pages and content. There are stand-alone RSS Feed Reader applications, web browser plug-ins such as Mozilla Firefox's [Live Bookmarks](#), and programs for many varieties of email programs such as, [intraVnews](#) for Outlook, which makes Outlook RSS feeds and allows for filtering, searching, and management of RSS feeds. However, many web surfers out there find it easiest to use free and fairly simple web-based RSS Feed Readers, such as [Google Reader](#) to get updates from their favorite sites.

Once you've set yourself up with an RSS Feed Reader, setting up which feeds you want to subscribe to is simple. The actual icons and steps may vary *slightly* depending upon which Feed Reader you're using, but in most cases, you'll need to navigate to the site you want content aggregated from (just once), and either:

1. Click on the RSS icon next to the URL of the page in your web browser or on the page itself:

Example 1: Mozilla Firefox - Example 2: Internet Explorer -

Example 3: Safari -

1. Navigate to 'Bookmarks' and click 'Subscribe to this Page'
2. Use your Feed Reader of choice and navigate to the 'Add Feed' option and enter the URL of the desired RSS

When you subscribe to an RSS feed, your Feed Reader will automatically and continually check that page for new content. Whenever there is new content, it will be displayed directly in your Feed Reader. RSS Feed Readers allow you to subscribe to the feeds of your choice from any variety of sites you would like.

Can I create RSS Feeds and use External RSS Feeds in Cascade?

Yes! Creating an RSS output in Cascade is exactly like creating any other output: You'll need to create a new target, destination, and template. You'll also need to attach an RSS stylesheet and include links between the individual templates. Additionally, Cascade Server allows for the inclusion of external RSS feeds in internally managed pages through the use of an XML Feed Block.

Conclusion

So now that you know the benefits of using an RSS and just how easy it is, go get started! If you'd like, you can start by subscribing to the Hannon Hill Team Blog! Either simply click the RSS icon in the browser next to our blog URL:

Or, manually add the Hannon Hill Team Blog! Feed URL to your Feed Reader: <http://www.hannonhill.com/news/blog/rss.xml>.

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