



Jefferson Township Public Schools Office of Instructional Technology

"Developing 21st Century Skills One "Byte" at a Time"

Newsletter

Summer 2009

RSS FEEDS DEMYSTIFIED



Have you seen this symbol from time to time on websites that you visit?

It is called an RSS Feed (Real Simple Syndication). It allows a user to subscribe to content on a particular website.

Many of us have a number of websites that we like to check on a daily or weekly basis. This may be for news headlines, sports scores, updates on professional websites, weather reports or new articles from our favorite publications.

Checking for these updates can be very time consuming. We sometimes can miss information that might be important to us. Other times we might find a website that has really great information. The problem is we forget about it and therefore we miss out on updated information and articles.

What is an RSS Feed EXACTLY?

RSS is a solution to this problem. By subscribing to an RSS Feed you can get updates for any website delivered to one webpage that manages your feeds. You can make that web page your start page for the Internet. Each time you open up the Internet you will see all of the updates that you subscribe to in an easy-to-read and navigate format.

They show up as individual squares on the page. Each square (called a widget) contains the title of the site (feed) and the 3-4 newest content items that were added as links.

I subscribe to various educational technology sites, news sites, blogs, magazines, journals, sports sites and Technology Resource sites.

What are some of the things I can subscribe to?

Many people in our professional network maintain blogs. These are postings that contain peoples' thoughts and opinions on a topic. They are also utilized to inform people about new ideas, resources, products, instructional strategies, web resources etc. There are also people who post blogs on almost any subject. Politicians, celebrities, athletes, educators, moms, dads, business leaders, and doctors are just a small sample of the types of people who have blogs online.

All blogs have RSS feeds. That means that you can subscribe to a blog. Every time the author posts a new posting it will show up as a link on your Feed Reader Webpage (called an aggregator).

I subscribe to many blogs. Most of the blogs I subscribe to are authored by leaders in educational technology. Some are teachers, journals, magazines, and others are Network Administrators. By checking these feeds daily I not only have a network to draw upon, but I am kept up to date on changes, ideas and resources that come up in my profession.

The same idea applies to podcasts. Podcasts are audio or video recordings that are posted online. You can subscribe to them in your feed reader. You can also subscribe to them in iTunes. I currently subscribe to podcasts. My iTunes feeds from ESPN, CNN, and various educational technology leaders who post their workshops as free downloads.

Almost all journals, news sites, newspapers, magazines, websites with resources, organizations and companies offer RSS Feeds for content on their site. Many of them offer feeds for specific sections of content (ex: world news, baseball, local weather, teaching math in middle school, etc)

How do I set up a Feed Reader Website?

There are three major websites that you can use to setup a feed reader (aggregator).

www.google.com/ig
www.yahoo.com
www.pageflakes.com

My recommendation is *GOOGLE*. Everyone should have a Google Username and Password. Besides getting access to a feed reader you can set up a Gmail e-mail account, access to Google Docs, Google Reader and a host of other great applications.

To create a Google account, visit www.google.com and click on Sign In on the top right. Follow the links to create a Google account. Once you have created a Google account visit www.google.com/ig. This is where you can create your feed page. As long as you remain signed in on the computer you will open to this page that you set up when you visit Google. You can start adding your feeds immediately.

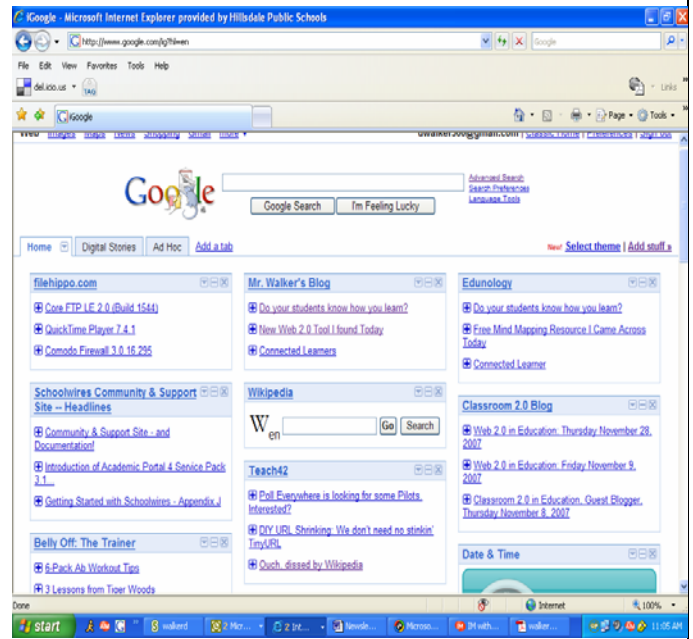
One of the best features of this is that your start page is accessible from any computer as long as you sign in. Google has another Reader called Google Reader. This allows you to capture feeds in an organized place as well. They offer a short video in the help section to learn how to use it. I also use this function for feeds I do not need to see on my home page but still want to stay on top of. www.google.com/reader

THE PICTURE ON THE RIGHT SHOWS A SCREEN SHOT OF MY GOOGLE PAGE WITH MY FEEDS.

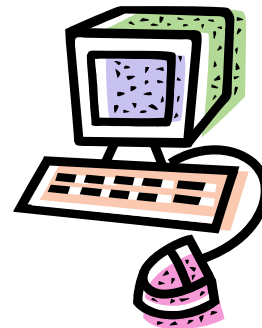
Here are some other resources for you to learn about RSS Feeds:

http://www.commoncraft.com/rss_plain_english - This is an excellent short video that explains RSS.

<http://web2tutorial.wikispaces.com/RSS> - Teacher designed Wiki that talks about uses of RSS



Continued.....



Summer Assignment

Develop your Personal Learning Network

What are your summer plans? For many of us they include traveling, the beach, time with family and an opportunity to get things done around the house. For some of us it also includes working.

Do you have a plan to address your professional growth during the summer? This is sometimes that hardest to find the time for.

Advances in technology and the availability of information have presented an opportunity to create a personal learning network or "PLN".

Social networks, blogs, wikis, web authoring tools, and podcasts have opened up numerous opportunities for on-demand learning. We now have the ability to connect with individuals who share similar interests and professions without leaving our homes. By building a personal learning network we are able to leverage the expertise of a network of individuals. Learning has never been so easy!

This summer, make a commitment to starting to develop your personal learning network. Here are some ideas to get you started.

1. Create a Social Bookmarking account on www.delicious.com. Social bookmarking allows you to save all of your favorite websites online. They can be accessed from any computer with an internet connection.

You can also network with other users of the service. This will allow you to share bookmarks with each other. Why spend an hour finding interactive websites for use on a smartboard when you can search your networks bookmarks for sites tagged "smartboard". For more information on how to get started with social bookmarking you can visit my online course on the topic at <http://www.edunology.com/moodle>.

2. Start to Read and Subscribe to Blogs.

In the previous article I spoke about RSS feeds giving you the ability to subscribe to blogs. Blogs are a great place to interact with fellow educators. I subscribe to numerous blogs written by principals, supervisors, classroom teachers, educational technology specialists and consultants. Everyday I look through my blog subscriptions. There is not a day that goes by that I do not learn something new.

You can start reading blogs by searching for educational blogs here: or start with my [Jefferson Instructional Technology Blog](#).

[Click Here for a listing of Blogs that might interest educators](#)

3. Review and Subscribe to Podcasts.

Podcasts are audio and/or video recordings of workshops, events, lectures, interviews etc.. They syndicated through RSS feeds. The most popular place to find and subscribe to RSS feeds is Itunes. Visit www.itunes.com to download and install itunes for free. Once installed open it up and click on itunes store. At the store you can search for podcasts-education- k12. You can also visit itunesU (itunes university) where you can find podcasts of college courses from some of the top universities in the country.

4. Join a Social Network Site

Social networking sites can be a great resource for connecting with other educators. They are places to ask questions, share ideas and find resources. I am a member of a few social networking sites. Each one contributes to my success as an educator. I subscribe to the forum discussions in my igoogle page. Each time I visit the feeds I learn something new. I frequently post questions to the forums when looking for resources, ideas or "how to" explanations.

Take a look at some of these social networks.

Most of these sites are hosted on www.ning.com. You will need to visit this site and create a "free" username and password to join these networks.

www.classroom20.com the largest social network for educators who integrate technology.

<http://iteachsocialstudies.ning.com> - a network for social studies teachers.

<http://hslateachers.ning.com> - a network for high school language arts teachers.

<http://elementaryteachersnetwork.ning.com> - a network for elementary teachers.



2009-2010

I look forward to an exciting year in 2009-2010. I will be introducing some new technologies over the summer that will enhance our technology program and our instructional areas.

I am looking forward to working with our faculty and staff to integrate technology into the curriculum. Please do not hesitate to contact me to start planning a project or a lesson together. Below are some areas I hope to work on next year.

Digital Storytelling - Using pictures, drawings or video. Grades K-12

Collaborative Writing - Using wiki's, blog's and web authoring tools.

Class or Project Wiki

Google Earth Tours - Literature tours, social studies tours, math tours.

Collaborative projects - connecting with other schools or within our own groups of students. Utilizing wikis, blogs, or a social network.

Social Networking - Discussion forums, blogs, and group pages.

Multimedia Presentations - PowerPoint animations, online books, interactive diagrams, digital books, digital stories.

Webquests - Interactive web adventures

Interactive white board training and lesson development.

Podcasting- Create a classroom radio broadcast, conduct interviews, produce test review materials, record foreign language lessons, math tutorials, digital stories.



Enjoy the Summer!